

Statue planned for Enigma code hero

TAMWORTH branch of the RNA and other Naval veterans have joined in a campaign to fund a statue of one of the Royal Navy's greatest, but least known war heroes.

He was AB Colin Grazier, a native of the Staffordshire town who in 1942 lost his life at the age of 22 while recovering from a sinking U-boat coding documents whose capture has been estimated to have shortened the war by at least a year.

The fund-raising drive was instigated by the local newspaper, the Tamworth Herald, and the town's Civic Society after they learned that AB Grazier's George Cross was awarded posthumously for an act of which not even his family could be informed for over 30 years.

The codes were seized when the destroyer HMS Petard forced U-559 to the surface in the Mediterranean on the night of October 30. They were of vital importance to Britain's Enigma codebreakers at the top-secret intelligence centre at Bletchley Park.

AB Grazier, Lt Antony Fasson and Naafi canteen assistant Tommy Brown swam naked to the U-boat, abandoned on the surface and sinking. As they recovered the information, the submarine slipped beneath the waves, taking with her Lt Fasson and Colin Grazier. Brown was rescued but still a teenager, died two years later while attempting to save his sister from a houses fire.

All three were awarded the GC, but because it was imperative that the enemy did not know of the coding seizure, not even those closest to the three men could be told of the magnitude of their achievement.

Robert Harris, author of the best-selling book Enigma is backing the campaign. He said of Grazier: "His action enabled us to win the Battle of the Atlantic and change the whole course of the war. Without his bravery we wouldn't have been able to break the Enigma code and D-Day may never have happened."

And Naval historian Ralph Erskine, in an official history, wrote: "Few acts of courage by three individuals can ever have had so far-reaching consequences."

Also involved in the memorial campaign are the 30 members of the HMS Petard Association and Olive Grazier. Colin's widow who married him just two days before he left for the last time in the Petard. "We should have been on honeymoon when Colin set sail in the Petard." she said, "it was so sad that he died like he did. He went down heroically. He was a wonderful man who always looked after others."

Deputy Editor of the Tamworth Herald, Phil Shanahan, told Navy News: "The appeal for a permanent memorial for Colin Grazier has captured the hearts of our readers, and so far we have around £ 4.800 pledged. However, we need more to provide a quality statue which will be placed in a prominent location in Tamworth town centre.

We hope the monument will one day become an important part of the town's heritage and possibly even a tourist attraction.

Grazier deserves international recognition, yet sadly he is barely known even in his home town. He has never had the recognition he so richly deserves. Our aim is to change that and make future generations aware of the enormous importance of the heroic act which cost him his life."

Mr Shanahan said it was planned to invite the members of the HMS Petard Association to the unveiling of the statue.

Navy News readers who wish to support the appeal should make cheques payable to The Colin Grazier Memorial Fund and address them to:
The Colin Grazier Memorial Appeal, Ventura Park Road, Bitterscote, Tamworth, Staffs B78 3LZ.