

## ***And We Go On and SS Ohio***

### ***And We Go On***

Dear All

Gill and I attended Dunmow, Essex, C of E Parish Church with Mike and Zanna and Renny on Pentecost-Whitsun Sunday morning.

Parenthetically this is from later in the day.

L to R: Grandma Gill, Granddaughter Renny, two-and-a-half, stirring the crumble, Dad and Son Mike

During the service Tom the minister asked for anyone who wanted to share any thoughts for Pentecost Sunday to inform him during the next hymn.

Having explained to Tom that Gill and I were with Mike, Zanna and Renny, I spoke to him about Canadian Corporal Will Bird who served in France and Flanders 1917-1918 and wrote of his experiences there in his book<sup>1</sup> *And We Go On*.

I explained how the title seemed to fit Psalm 130:5 **I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope** which I quoted along with these scriptures in turn.

Romans 5:5 **And hope maketh not ashamed...** because we have

Proverbs 22:21 **...the certainty of the words of truth...** Therefore the Lord promises

John 1:18 **I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.**

which scriptures by inspection are interlinked.

I then mentioned that Corporal Bird wrote that on returning to Canada after the war aboard a troop transport and nearing their destination he and his surviving comrades-in-arms came on deck one evening\* and that in his own words "*We saw the lights of Halifax Nova Scotia... We saw the lights of home.*" \*It was actually 3 a.m. and the quote is a free quote.

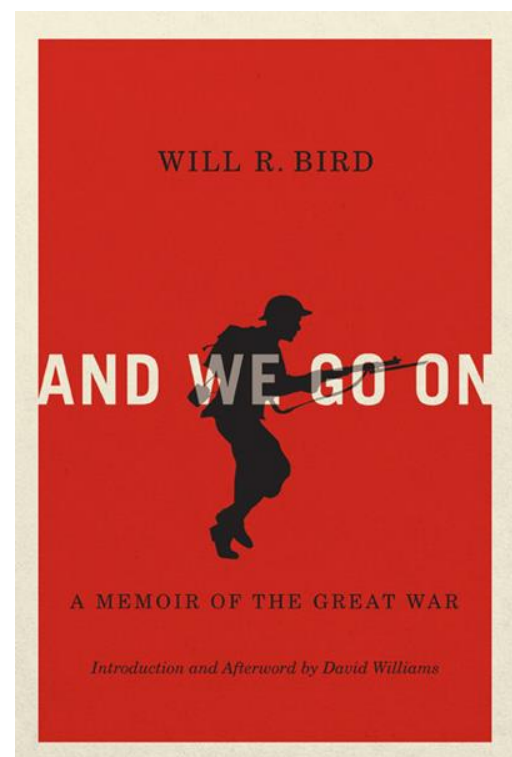
I said that we would soon see the lights of home, the lights of New Jerusalem, Revelation 3:12, 21:2, because the Lord would soon return. I therefore quoted Paul's exhortation of 2 Thessalonians 3:5 **And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,** concluding with "*And we go on*" and thanking the congregation for their attention.

The minister was encouraged, I think. I think the presentation went down well with the congregation and I trust that it stays with them.

After the service, one gentleman who might have been an ex-serviceman earnestly thanked me for my presentation and shook my hand. So did another gentleman, Ken, married to Iris, both about my age.

That was encouraging. Therefore **Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh** James 5v8.

Alan and Gill



## SS *Ohio*

The American merchant vessel SS *Ohio*<sup>2</sup> was the super tanker of her day and key to Operation Pedestal, the salvation of Malta and indeed key to ensuring the Allied victory in WW2.

SS *Ohio* carried 11,500 tons of kerosene and diesel fuel oil, vital for Malta's RAF fighter defence and RN submarine forays against Axis convoys supplying Rommel's Afrika Corps.

*Malta's strategic airfield was key to holding the Mediterranean, but food and oil had to get through past German and Italian bombers. The 250,000 Maltese and 20,000 British defenders were dependent on imported food and oil... Operation Pedestal in August 1942 [Convoy WS21S<sup>3</sup>] was the final effort to supply Malta before she was forced to surrender.* Emphases in source

WS21S, bereft of air cover by the early loss of carrier escort HMS *Eagle*, was savaged by repeated enemy air and submarine attacks. SS *Ohio* was severely damaged, her engines put out of action and her keel broken. Her rudder was jammed so that tows were ineffective. Dudley Mason, the ship's captain, estimated that the ship would sink in twelve hours.

Two RN destroyers, see top graphic, HMS *Penn* (left) and HMS *Ledbury*\* (right) were lashed to the sides of SS *Ohio* to provide motive power. Protected by RAF Spitfires as they neared Malta and skilfully negotiating the narrow channel through the island's defensive minefield SS *Ohio* and her escorts entered Malta's Grand Harbour to a rapturous welcome. See lower graphic. A tug has taken over from HMS *Penn* to guide the *Ohio* to her berth. \*Not HMS *Bramham* as stated by the *Narrow Escapes* documentary.

The *Ohio*'s precious fuel supplies were unloaded having sustained negligible loss. She did sink but simply settled on the harbour bottom three feet below her keel. SS *Ohio* could not be made seaworthy again but she provided valuable service as a storage depot. Post-war, with repairs, she was towed out to sea and sunk. That was her end but SS *Ohio* had fulfilled her mission. Thanks to her vital fuel resupply and, with Spitfire reinforcements, Malta was saved and the ultimate Allied victory ensured.

### Individual Mission and Burden Bearing

Like the SS *Ohio* each of **them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints** 1 Corinthians 1:2 has a vital mission to fulfil via his or her ministry after the manner of Colossians 4:17 **And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.**

Sometimes, as with SS *Ohio*, help is needed. Therefore remember and apply Galatians 6:2 **Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**

### References

<sup>1</sup> [www.amazon.com/We-Go-Memoir-Carleton-Library/dp/0773543961](http://www.amazon.com/We-Go-Memoir-Carleton-Library/dp/0773543961) *And We Go On: A Memoir of The Great War* by Corporal Will R. Bird, pp 230-231

<sup>2</sup> [www.usmm.org/malta.html](http://www.usmm.org/malta.html) *Operation Pedestal and SS Ohio save Malta*  
[www.imdb.com/title/tt2320776/?ref=tttep\\_ep12](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2320776/?ref=tttep_ep12) *Narrow Escapes of WWII Operation Pedestal*

<sup>3</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Ohio\\_%281940%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Ohio_%281940%29) *SS Ohio (1940)*

