

## A Walk Around Monkwearmouth in 1934

It is a Sunday morning as we stand at the Wheatsheaf, the month is November, the year is 1937, today is Armistice Day.

The transport office's clock at the Wheatsheaf that we stand under shows eleven o'clock. The policeman in the middle of the Wheatsheaf, in his box from which he directs the tramcars and other traffic, holds up his hands to stop all the traffic.

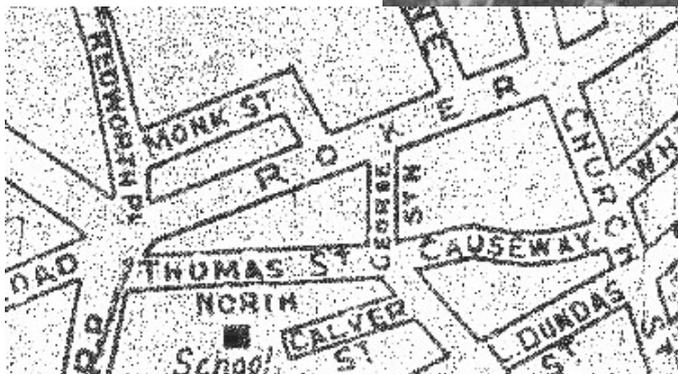


As the clock begins to chime eleven, a deathly hush falls over the whole town. The men, under the clock, take off their caps and stand still for two minutes until the policeman looks at his watch and waves the traffic on.

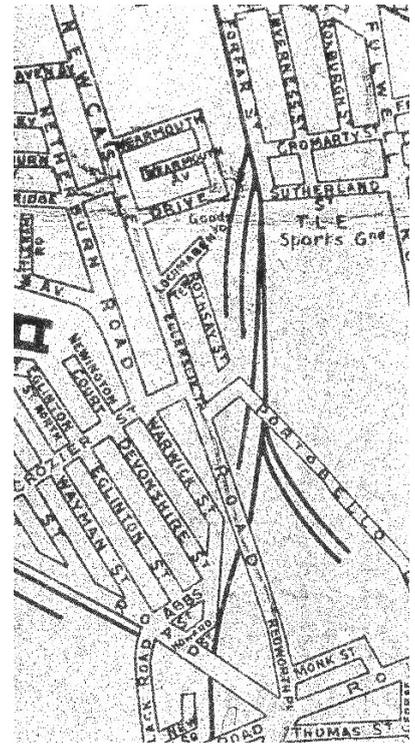
Above our heads, if we look up, are all the electric wires that drive the tram cars, like a massive spiders web reaching from each lamppost, all leading to the middle post where they meet.



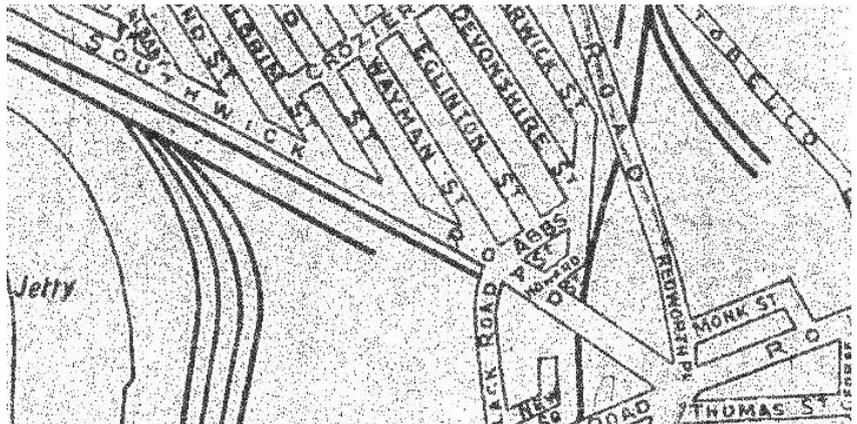
If we look down Thomas Street from where we are standing, we can see on the right hand side, the scrap yard next to the cement works. Then, next again, Thomas Street school with the high iron railings around it.



It's a fine day, the sun is shining so we will take a walk around Monkwearmouth, first a look up Newcastle Road to Venerable Bede's church on the right hand side with Wilson's Sawmills next door.



Looking up Southwick Road, we can see the Tramcar coming over the iron bridge down past the Cora Picture Palace. Sutton's Smithy is on the corner, with the Colliery school opposite, and the wooden Police Box sunk into the wall around the School. The tram is on it's way to Bridge Street and the town.

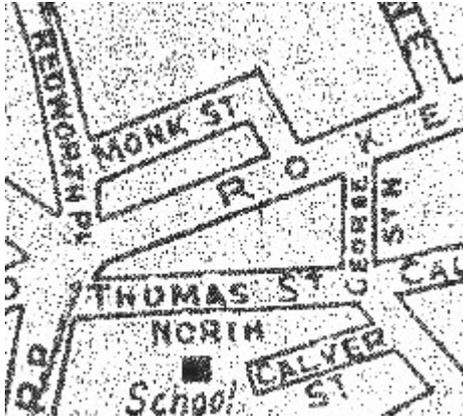


Then we start off in Roker Avenue at the Wheatsheaf bar, with the lighthouse on the opposite corner, and make our way down the avenue past the Roker cinema on the right and the co-op store. On the left is the Miners Hall with all of the carved gargoyle's heads high up on the front of the buildings.

It's surprising how many people don't notice them as they pass the hall.



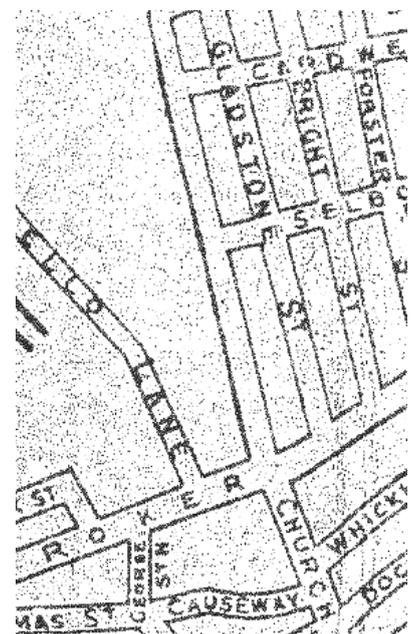
Or our way down the avenue we look down George Street at the Britannia Inn and Monkwearmouth Working Man's Club, further down the avenue is St. Benet's Hall with Craven's Rope Works opposite and the Blue Bell Pub. An opening next to the pub leads to the cattle mart and the railway sidings.



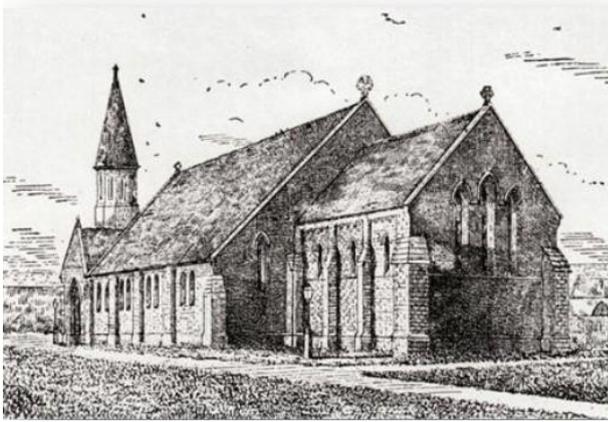
On a market day the cattle are driven through the streets to the cattle market, there to be auctioned and loaded onto trucks at the railway sidings. Then there is the Ropery with its white tiles. Next to the Ropery is the old Monkwearmouth Infirmary with the clock outside that tells the Ropery lass's it's time for work. The infirmary has been taken over by the Ropery now.



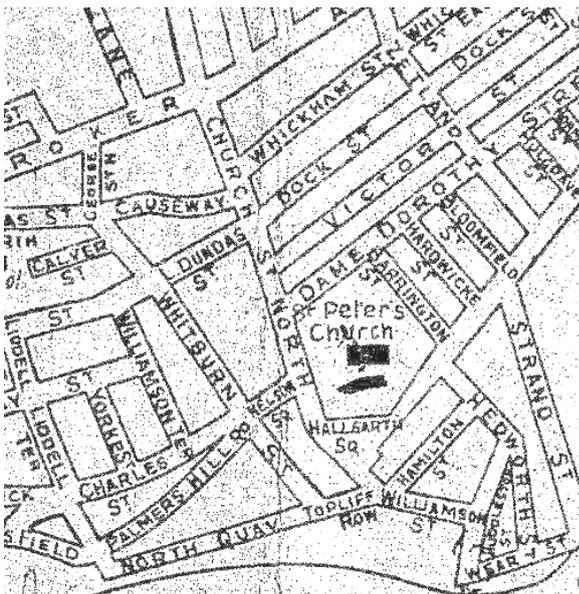
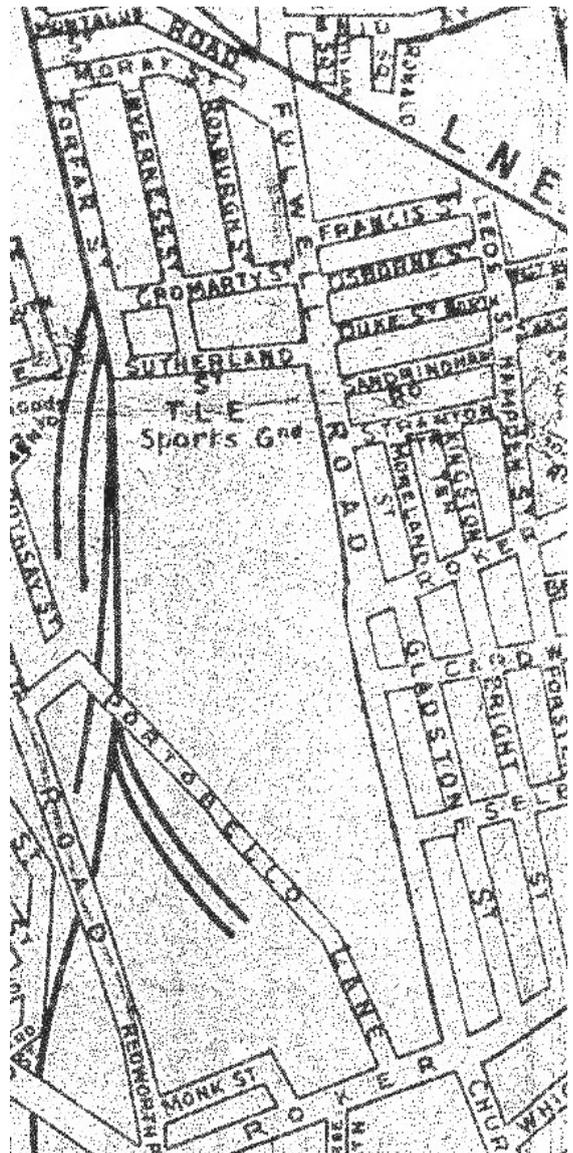
A glance up Dixon Square we will see St. Benet's School yard with the Hope Tavern in the square. Past the square, if we look further down the avenue, we can see past Gladstone Street to the vicarage of Venerable Bede and all of the houses with the wrought iron railings around the fronts, very soon to be taken away for the war effort.



Looking down Fulwell Road we can see the Ropery down both sides until it reaches All Saints Church



with Tyzack's Brick Works next to the church and the Roker Laundry opposite. Then we turn right at The Fort Hotel down Church Street, past the library with English's Buildings opposite and all the shops on the right hand side that sell fruit and meat, cakes, hardware, snuff and tobacco.



As we pass Whickham Street we can see Speedings Sail Works and the first of the arches that were built over the back lanes to get an extra room in the buildings. Down Church Street again to Dock Street, a very long street with iron railings around all the houses, Cherrett's Chemist is on the corner and if we look further down Church Street we

can see St. Peter's Church and grave yard just past Victor Street and Dame Dorothy Street. Here we turn right up Dundas Street past the Alexandra Bar (also known as The New Bar and Jackson's).

Here is the main shopping centre for the whole of Monkwearmouth. Whenever you shop here you are bound to meet a relation or friend doing their shopping too. A few of the shops we will pass on the way up Dundas Street are:

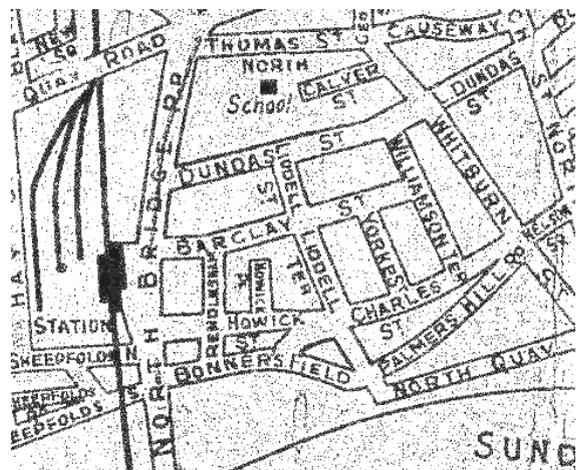
- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| W. B. Hunter  | boots and shoes |
| A. Williamson | butcher         |
| Robson's      | confectioner    |
| W. Gregg      | tobacco         |

J. P. Chapman	grocer
W. B. Hunter	hosier
J. Horton	small ware
Burnley	chemist
W. R. Hodgson	confectioner
W. P. Crawford	butcher
E. Hall	tripe shop
Benson	drapers
T. Simmons	confectioner
McConnell's	grocers
M. Atley	fruiterer
Snowdon	watchmaker
Smiths & Stevenson	baker & confectioner
F Thwait's	hairdresser
A. F. Fowler	pawnbroker
Doud's	pork butcher
Gallons	grocers
Duncan	grocers
N. C. Stewart	shopkeeper & newspapers
Rowell's	undertaker
J. W. Cuthbertson	wireless dealer & post office
B. Burns	fruit
Tuckerman	undertaker

As we walk up Dundas Street and across Whitburn Street we look up and can see, in Whitburn Street, Allison's Flour Mill where the women buy their wholemeal flour and the men their pigeon corn. There is also an open space in the street where a cinema stood called the Star that was bombed during a Zeppelin raid in the Great War.

Further up Dundas Street we come across the old cellar basements that people live in. The front of these houses have iron railings in the front to prevent people from falling into the cellars. Thompson's Memorial Hall is on the left with Tuckerman's undertaking shop on the right. As we turn to go down Liddell Street we can see Suffield Dentist's house on the corner. Above the rooftops we can see the spire of the Scotch Church towering above everything around.

On down into Liddell Terrace there is the Bee Hive Inn. As we cross over Barclay Street we come across the old Police Station with the cells in the basement, a fine Victorian building with iron railings around it. It's now the Sunderland Education Domestic school. We are now in Liddell Street and at the bottom of the street is the Pineapple Inn. About the middle of the street we turn right into an archway with rooms above it leading to the pokey, narrow, cobbled back-lanes around Howick Place with the little whitewashed cottages here and there.



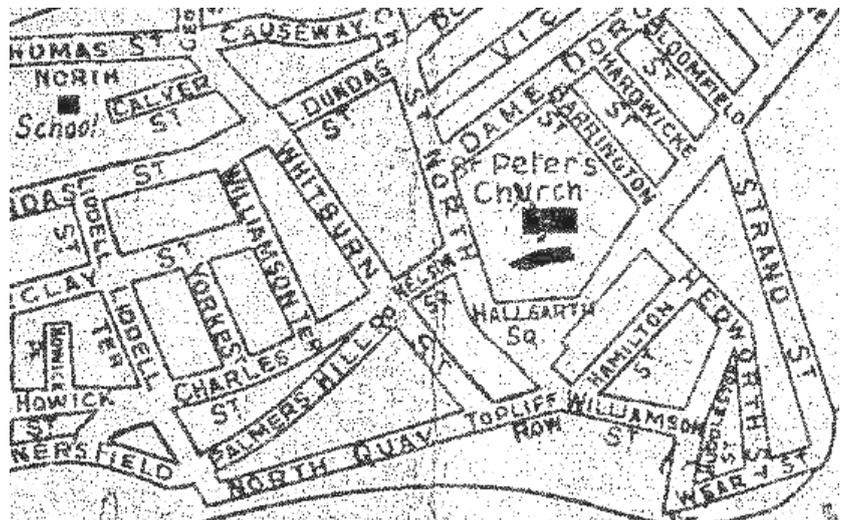
It's surprising how many entrances there are leading into these lanes for folk with no front doors. There is a piece of waste ground in the corner of the square, caused by a bomb that was

dropped by a Zeppelin during the first world war. A quick call in to No.3 to visit my grandmother then off again.

Down the square, turning left into Howick Street brings us to Charles Street, with the four story houses with only two stories above ground all sharing what is known as the Big Yard. Down the bank into Charles Street, past York Street and Williamson Terrace that is off Charles Street. We pass the fish shops of Tommy Johnson and Grice. An arch on the right, next to the fruiterer, will lead us to the notorious Dickenson's Steps that led to the engine works on the Quay. There are about two Hundred steps that not many men working down there can manage in one go unless he is very fit or young.

Behind Charles Street, on the right hand side in the narrow back lane, are a fine row of white-washed cottages facing on to the back-lane. Each of the corner cottages have a hard stone built into the corner of the house to stop the horse and carts demolishing the side of the house. In some parts of the town old cannons that were brought back from some war were put on the corner of the houses. There is one still there, just off Newcastle Road in one of the narrow back-lanes in Bartram Street. All of these back-lanes are cobble with shining brown stones that are very slippery when it rains and cause a lot of the horses to fall.

As we go off down Charles Street we come to the parish church school and next to it the Jack Crawford bar with the wooden figure of Jack Crawford hanging on to a ship's mast standing out from it. Behind the pub, Waterloo Place is almost opposite at the foot of the Cage Hill, where the children of Monkwearmouth dig for their chalk in the old ballast to make their hopscotch squares in the streets.



Down the bank is the Social Tavern, along Nelson Square and on the left is what was Society Lane and Garden Court, now pulled down. We come now to Lower Church Street and call in to see my Great Grandmother in number 112. Opposite is St. Peter's Church which has a great stone wall around the graveyard and a gate with the lantern hanging above it. These houses have a set of stone stairs outside leading into the house upstairs. There is also a little arch running through the houses leading to the back. There are shops, here and there, all down the street with the Bath Hotel among them. We set off again on our walk down Church Street to the bottom until we come to some of the oldest houses in Monkwearmouth next to the church. Then on to Hallgarth Square which must have been an imposing place years ago with the trees and flowers growing in the grassed area in the middle.

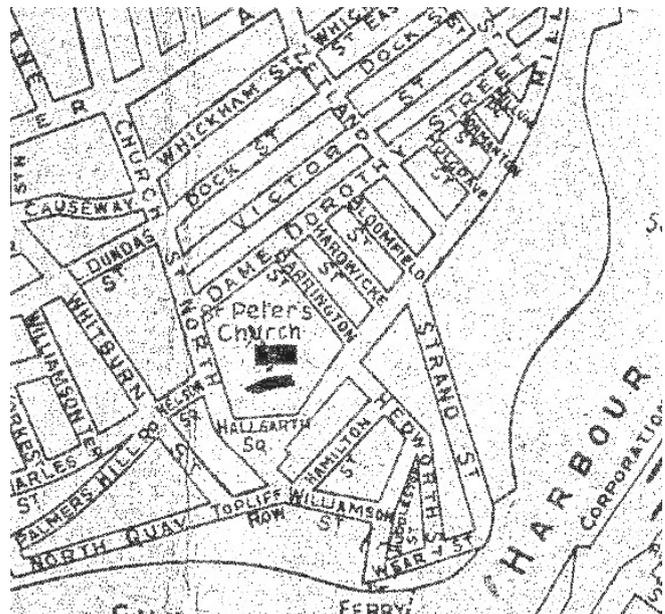
We cross the road to the public bath and wash-house and come to Hamilton Street. Looking up, we can see St. Cuthbert's Church then we go down Williamson Street where back-stables were behind, and which are now gone.

Then on to Wear Street we come to the ferry landing with the seats along the wall and the glass roof.

Standing a while watching the ferry cross the river, we see further along the landing the boys catching crabs on an old bicycle wheel with a fish head on it.



We walk along Wear Street till we come to Strand Street and then walk up the bank till we come to Millum Terrace with the shipyards and offices all down the right hand side. It's very quiet because this is Sunday. If it had been any other day the noise would have been deafening from the riveters in the shipyards. On the left is the little gate into St. Peter's then Barrington Street, the Barrington Bar on the corner. Next is Hardwick Street with the Princess of Wales bar, then we come to Bloomfield Street then to Zetland Street passing the Vulcan bar on to Mulgrave Street, then Normanby Street, Millum Place where we come to the Look Out Inn, the Wolsey and the Derby. If there is one thing, there it is plenty of it's bars.



At the Derby Hotel we cross the road to the allotments at the bottom of Roker Avenue overlooking the North Dock. Looking down on the dock we stand and watch a ship coming in. All around the North Dock we can see the Pilot Office, the Dock Office, the Harbour Master's Office, Addison's & Armstrong's Wood Yard with the old steam cranes running on rails around the yard, Dorking's Scrapyard and the big tanks of the Power Petroleum. Over the river we can see a big ship being broken up at the ship-breaker's yard opposite.



Now we walk along Harbour View and over the stone bridge which runs over the cable railway that runs down to the dock. We pass the round wooden tram shed on the right and the First Christian Science Church, with the bibles in the window of the shop at the side of it, opposite

the Volunteer Life Brigade house. The Brigade House, and the Cart House next to it, stands on a dirt road that leads to the wood yard and the scrap yard on its way to the old North Pier.

We then come to the Bungalow Cafe and we look out over the German Sea as the sign that points to sea says.

As we look out over the sea below us, we can see the old North Pier Lighthouse, and the shape of the ribs of the wreck of the ship Iona in the sand next to the old pier.



Just below us is the Blockyard with the blocks still there that the ships stood on years ago. In the summer, a fair would be held there on the Blockyard.

We can see an iron bridge across the new North Pier and just in front of the bridge, on the Seaward side, is an old steam-crane getting up steam to run along the rails there. Just in front of the Lighthouse Man's cottage is a wooden fence cutting off



the Blockyard with a path leading alongside it on to the Bathing Sands, there are still some old bathing huts still there on the beach from years ago.

As we look down the cobbled narrow road with the bollards across it that leads to Roker Beach, we can see the wrought iron shelter on the prom at the bottom of the bank, then there is the beach shops with the new paddling pool and then the cafe with the Chinese roof and tower. In the corner, alongside the cliff, is Sunshine Corner where in the summer the stage is. On this stage the travelling players will put on shows. Also on the prom, on a warm night, there will be dancing to an accordion, with many people sitting on the grass slopes watching. Reaching out to sea is the Holey Rock with the caves running through it.

The end of the Holey Rock is to be demolished by dynamite because it is unsafe and a granite sea-wall is to be put around it. Having finished our walk it's now time to go home. We catch the tram car outside the Bungalow Cafe, pay our penny and set off back the way we came. This time going up the Roker Avenue past houses with the carved flowers and heads on each side of the door posts. The tram takes us up past the United Methodist Free Church on the right hand side of the avenue, until we arrive back at the Transport Offices at the Wheatsheaf where we started from.

Written by J.P. Agnew, 1934

**John Bridge GC, GM, KC (WW2  
Bomb Disposal Expert)**

George Cross George Medal & Bar  
King's Commendation for Brave  
Conduct

**Rank Lieutenant-Commander**  
(Major / Wing Commander  
equivalent )



**Sub-Lieutenant John Bridge - Front Row Centre**

John Bridge was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1915 in a village called Culcheth, near Warrington in Lancashire. He was an excellent scholar and attended Leigh Grammar School. Later, he read physics at the University of London and then trained as a teacher. His first teaching post was at Firth Park Secondary School in Sheffield. In 1940, John volunteered for the Royal Navy. After his military discharge, in 1946 he returned to teaching. His career progressed and in 1963 he became Director of Education for Sunderland Council. John retired in 1976.

**Whilst commendable, what makes John Bridge the teacher so remarkable?**

So far the story of John Bridge story has merit but is hardly outstanding. It was John's military record that was so extraordinary. Lieutenant Commander John Bridge, George Cross, George Medal & Bar, was a bomb disposal expert at the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. He was the first person to be awarded a Bar to the George Medal (the equivalent of winning it twice).

John Bridge received the George Medal for having led a bomb disposal squad which defused a delayed action bomb in September 1940.

In March 1941, he defused 15 bombs. One bomb had fallen into the Naval dockyard at HMNB Devonport. Following this, he received a King's Commendation for Brave Conduct. In October 1941 he was awarded a bar to his George Medal after defusing a bomb in Falmouth docks. John Bridge also served in Sicily, and in 1943 he cleared mines and depth charges from Messina harbour. This was essential preparation for the Allied invasion of Italy.



Clearing Messina harbour involved John making 28 dives in order to defuse whole groups of booby-trapped depth charges and making safe another 207 other mines and depth charges which were suspended at or below the waterline. His longest dive lasted

for an incredible twenty hour.

John Bridge received the George Cross from King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1945. The citation read:

*"For the most conspicuous and prolonged bravery and contempt of death in clearing Messina Harbour of depth charges. The recommending officer stated that he had never before had the fortune to be associated with such cool and sustained bravery as Lieutenant Bridge displayed during the 10 days of the operation."*

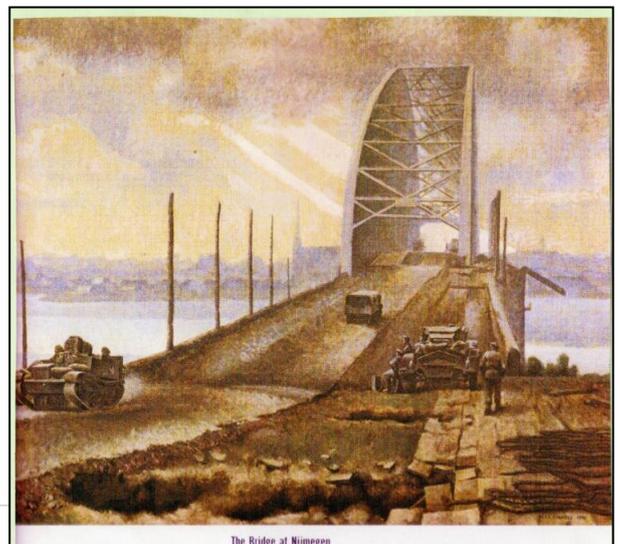
In recognition of his work in Messina harbour, John Bridge was awarded the George Cross in June 1944. Through various circumstances, the award ceremony for this did not take place until March 1945.

In June 1944, John served as a naval bomb safety officer during the Normandy landings, defusing many shells, bombs and mines. In September 1944 he defused and cleared mines from the river Scheldt and a number of harbour basins. Afterwards he was posted back to England and promoted to lieutenant commander.

The headquarters of the Fleet Diving Squadron of the Royal Navy was named The Bridge Building after John Bridge. Unfortunately, before the building could be named, John died on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006, aged 91.

The Guard of Honour at his funeral was formed by members of the Royal Navy Clearance Divers. John Bridge is considered one of the founders of the branch.

He wrote a volume of wartime memoirs entitled 'Trip to Nijmegen'



The Bridge at Nijmegen