

# Popular war veteran was torpedoed at age of 17

A POPULAR Caister war veteran who survived being torpedoed twice during the second world war has died at the age of 79.

Les Liffen died at the James Paget Hospital on November 12 and was buried on Friday.

He was born on March 18, 1924, in Newtown and at the age of 16 was sent to the Prince of Wales Naval Training School, near North Walsham, before joining the Merchant Navy.

The first time a ship he was on was torpedoed was just over a month before his 18th birthday when he served on SS Silver Ray during the Battle of the Atlantic.

The crew spent two days drifting in lifeboats before being rescued by American coastguard cutter The Campbell off the coast of Newfoundland and Mr Liffen spent several months recovering from frostbite in the Grace Memorial Hospital, St John's, Newfoundland.

The second attack came just over three years later — and two weeks before VE Day — when HTMS Monarch was torpedoed near Harwich on the North Sea.

After the war ended Mr Liffen joined Great Yarmouth lighthouse and lightship suppliers Trinity House and worked on lightships and also as a deep sea diver.

He helped to build the power station at South Denes and then continued to work there until his retirement.

Daughter Jeanette Martin said: "My father was a very simple man. He liked to go to the pub, have a pint and a cigarette, and watch the world go by.

"The church was absolutely packed for his funeral. It was just so lovely.

"He was a very popular man and we will miss him a great deal."

She said every year her father would take a day trip on the Balmoral and cast a wreath near the spot where HTMS Monarch lay in memory of his dead shipmates and all lost merchant seamen.