

08-20-1943 – UK – Eric Leslie Valentine – LEO Attempted Surf Rescue

PC Eric Leslie Valentine

http://www.policerollofhonour.org.uk/forces/england/merseyside/merseyside_roll.htm

Died 20 August 1943, aged 34

Drowned while attempting to rescue a woman in difficulties in a rough sea.



Eric Valentine

<https://www.liverpoolcitypolice.co.uk/roll-of-honour/eric-valentine/>

By Peter Delliuss Retd.

Eric Leslie Valentine joined the Wallasey Borough Police in the early 1930's and was allocated the collar number 1. He attended a recruits course at the Liverpool City Police Training School in Everton Terrace, Liverpool to undergo his training after which he commenced his duties in Wallasey. He was a married man with two young children at the time of the incident that I am to relate and was popular with his supervisors and fellow officers.

At mid-day on the 19th August 1943, Constable Valentine was on cycle patrol on the Promenade near Harrison Drive when he was approached by frantic members of the public who informed him of people having difficulty in the River Mersey.

The tide was in with a heavy swell running. Constable Valentine went to the river wall and saw three young women well out in the river and



PC Valentine (seated) together with two other Wallasey PCs. The photograph was taken in the early 1930s in the grounds of Everton Terrace Police HQ, Liverpool, where Wallasey Borough men (and other local small forces) were trained with the City men.

screaming for help. (It later transpired that they were all ATS girls from the nearby Army Camp)

The officer immediately divested himself of his tunic and dived into the river. He swam to the nearest female and taking hold of her he returned to the river wall where she scrambled to safety. The officer rescued the second female and on taking her to the river wall discovered that the first female in her panic had fallen back into the river, Constable Valentine rescued her a second time but by now the third woman was well out in the Mersey.

Constable Valentine again braved the treacherous tide, rescued the third woman and returned her to land to tremendous applause from the watching crowd.

A unique and extraordinary rescue but nothing to the events of the following day :

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At about mid-day on the 20th August 1943, Constable Valentine was again cycling along the Promenade near to the coastguard station and not far from the scene of the previous days rescue, when he was approached by a distressed child who told him there was a woman drowning in the river. When the Constable went to the river wall he saw a young woman a considerable way out and obviously in great difficulty. The river was extremely fierce and there was a heavy swell. Once again Constable Valentine divested himself of his tunic and dived into the river. He swam out to the woman and took her in tow back towards the river wall. What happened next can best be described by an eye witness at the scene : -

"The Constable swam back with the girl and we all cheered him. Suddenly he let go of her and she turned face down and floated away. The Constable tried to swim back towards the river wall, he turned and shouted something, and he raised his arms above his head and then disappeared straight down below the waves" Later that evening as the tide went out, a search was made and the body of Constable Valentine was discovered in a gully near to the coastguard station.

At the inquest into the Constables death (The young lady, a Miss Boote, also perished) the then Chief Constable of Wallasey, Mr. Ormrod, gave evidence as to the state of the river that day and went on to say " Only a person with the heart of a lion would have entered that river"

Constable Valentine now rests in Rake Lane Cemetery, Wallasey. The officer was awarded the Silver Marine Medal of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society for the rescue of the three Auxiliary Territorial Service girls on the 19th of August 1943.

For the attempted rescue of Miss Boote on the 20th August, 1943 the officer was posthumously awarded the same Society's Gold Memorial medal and was created a Carnegie Hero.

The Constable was not rewarded with a Kings Police Medal nor any Crown Recognition.

A Gallant Man Indeed.

Eric Leslie Valantine

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167251581/eric-leslie-valantine>

BIRTH - 1908 - BRENTFORD, LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW, GREATER LONDON, ENGLAND

DEATH - 20 AUG 1943 (AGED 34-35) - CHESHIRE, ENGLAND

BURIAL - WALLASEY, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL, MERSEYSIDE, ENGLAND

PLOT - SECTION 19C

MEMORIAL ID - 16725181



BORN IN BRENTFORD - THEN IN MIDDLESEX, NOW PART OF GREATER LONDON.

PC 1 OF THE WALLASEY BOROUGH POLICE.

HE WAS AWARDED THE SILVER MARINE MEDAL OF THE LIVERPOOL SHIPWRECK AND HUMANE SOCIETY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL RESCUE OF THE THREE ATS GIRLS WHO GOT INTO DIFFICULTY IN THE MERSEY OFF HARRISON DRIVE ON THE 19TH OF AUGUST 1943.

THE FOLLOWING DAY HE ATTEMPTED TO RESCUE ANOTHER WOMAN (A MISS BOOTE) FROM THE MERSEY IN THE SAME PLACE. ON THIS OCCASION HE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL AND BOTH WERE DROWNED.

HE WAS POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED THE LIVERPOOL SHIPWRECK AND HUMANE SOCIETY'S GOLD MEMORIAL MEDAL AND WAS MADE A CARNEGIE HERO.

