

H.M.S. Formidable Funeral Centenary ~ Lyme Regis Cemetery

On the 6th January 1915 six men of the Royal Navy, who lost their lives in the torpedoing of H.M.S. Formidable were buried in one grave in Lyme Regis cemetery. Exactly one hundred years later to the day, a service of remembrance was held at the graveside. 35 officers and 512 men died on New Year's Day 1915 when the ship sank, the majority of whom have no known grave. The sacrifice of all those who perished were not forgotten during the service.

Twelve standards of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association flanked the grave. A short and poignant service was conducted by the Reverend Jane Skinner. Gathered around the graveside were officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, members of the Royal British Legion



and Royal Naval Association, the Mayor of Lyme Regis, members of the Wessex Branch WFA, family descendants, many of whom had travelled to Lyme Regis from various parts of the country and local townspeople.

After prayers, the Exhortation was recited, the Last Post sounded followed by two minutes silence and reveille. Wreaths were then laid on the grave by Commodore Jamie Miller R.N., Councillor Sally Holman the Mayor of Lyme Regis, the Chairman and Secretary of the Lyme Regis Branch of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association, the Secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the Royal British Legion, the Wessex Branch WFA and family descendants.

Among the latter was Alison Eley whose great uncle, William is buried in the grave. She had seen the article about H.M.S. Formidable on the Wessex Branch WFA web-site and contacted our secretary for any further information. Subsequently, the author of the article forwarded newspaper cuttings and other associated articles to Alison. Extremely pleased with the Wessex branches response to her enquiry she travelled down from London to lay a wreath on behalf of her Liverpool based family.

At the end of the ceremony the Reverend Skinner blessed all those present who then began to disburse. All who attended were invited to a buffet and refreshments provided by the landlord of the Pilot Boat Inn. It was to this public house that some of the survivors and six of the dead who landed in a whaler at the Cobb Gate were taken.

Each year on the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday the Lyme Regis Branch of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association hold a short wreath laying ceremony at the graveside ensuring that all the victims of H.M.S. Formidable are not forgotten. Any visitors who may wish to attend are very much welcomed.

For a fuller account the torpedoing of H.M.S. Formidable please refer to 'A New Year's Day Tragedy' on the Wessex Branch web-site.

Roger G. Coleman