

MISSING STOKER FOUND DROWNED

William George Alexander Adams was born on the 15th April, 1892 at Widnes, Lancashire, the third son of William and Isabella Adams. In 1902 the family were living at 14 Cliffe Street, Widnes and the household members were William (father) aged 43, Isabella aged 39, Thomas aged 14, William aged 9, John aged 6 and Oswald aged 3 years.

The 1891 Census recorded that William and Isabella four children, Ernest aged 8, Annie aged 6, Thomas aged 4 and Edith aged 1 year. The family were then living at 30 Eleanor Street. Ernest, Annie and Edith are not recorded on the 1901 Census. William (senior) was born at Oswestry, Shropshire and was a house painter by trade. As a young man he had served in 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot for twelve years and was discharged in the rank of sergeant. The 77th Regiment had

been raised in 1787 and in 1881 amalgamated with the 57th (West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot to form the Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex) Regiment. Isabella and her children were all born in Widnes.



Portland Royal Naval Cemetery

William had in all probability received a basic education locally in Widnes and later became a wage earner to help with the family expenses. Whatever his circumstances were at the age of 22 years he joined the Royal Navy 'For Hostilities Only' at Portsmouth, on the 9th April, 1915. He was described as being 5ft 5-inches in height, had brown hair, brown eyes, a fresh complexion and a chest measurement of 37½-inches. His distinguishing marks were scars on his buttocks and tattoos on his left forearm. It is unclear as to precisely what his occupation was when he joined the Royal Navy. It may be a poor interpretation of the hand writing by the person recording Williams personal details who wrote down his occupation as a 'Flat Man'. However, William's service details were as follows:-

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Period of Service</u>		<u>Character/Ability</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
		<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>		
Victory II	Stoker 2 nd Class	9 Apl 1915			
Victory II	Stoker 1 st Class	10 Jun 1915	11 Nov 1915		9 Days Cells
Victory II	Stoker 1 st Class	21 Nov 1915	17 Jan 1916		
Glasgow	Stoker 1 st Class	18 Jan 1916	25 Oct 1916		21 Days DB
Glasgow	Stoker 1 st Class	16 Nov 1916	23 Sep 1917		14 Days Cells
Glasgow	Stoker 1 st Class	6 Oct 1917	26 Feb 1918		
Victory II	Stoker 1 st Class	27 Feb 1918	30 Sep 1918		
Implacable	Stoker 1 st Class	1 Oct 1918	19 Nov 1918		14 Days Cells
Implacable	Stoker 1 st Class	4 Dec 1918	25 Mar 1919		DD

William spent the first nine months in the Royal Navy serving on HMS Victory II a land based training establishment for stokers and engine room artificers based in Portsmouth. In 1915 it was transferred to Crystal Palace as a Training Depot for the Royal Naval Division. At the end of the war HMS Victory II was relocated back to Portsmouth.

From the 18th January 1916 until the 26th February, 1918 William served on the light cruiser HMS Glasgow, one of five Bristol or Town Class light cruisers. Her technical details and history were:

Builder ~ Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, Govan; Built Under The 1908 Estimates;

Laid Down ~ 25th March, 1909; Launched 30th September, 1909; Completed September 1910;

Displacement ~ 4,800-tons;

Length ~ 453-ft Overall; 430-ft Between Perpendiculars; Beam 47-ft; Mean Draught 15-ft 3-inches; Maximum Draught 17³/₄-ft;

Machinery ~ 2 x Parsons Steam Turbines Driving Four Propellers Shafts; Rated SHP 22,000; Speed 25-knots; 12 x Yarrow Boilers;

Fuel ~ 1,375-tons Coal; 260-tons Oil Fuel;

Range ~ 5,830 Nautical Miles at 10-knots;

Armament ~ 2 x Single 6-inch Guns; 10 x Single 4-inch Guns; 4 x 3-Pounder Guns; 2 x 18-inch Torpedoes;

Armour ~ Deck 0.75-inches to 2-inches; Conning Tower 6-inch;

Complement ~ 480 Officers & Ratings;

After her commissioning in 1910, HMS Glasgow was briefly attached to the Home Fleet and then assigned to South America for patrolling duties. After the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 she captured the SS Santa Catherina, a German merchant vessel. In company with HMS Monmouth they patrolled the southern coast of South America. On the 28th August they rendezvoused with the Armed Merchant Cruiser Otranto and in mid-September joined up with Rear-Admiral Christopher Craddock's flagship HMS Good Hope. After coaling at Montevideo, Uruguay the squadron was tasked to search for enemy warships of the German East Asia Squadron. The British squadron arrived at the Falkland Islands on the 1st October, where the warships coaled. Leaving Port Stanley they sailed to the area around Tierra del Fuego and continued on up the southern coast of Chile. On the 1st November, they encountered and fought the German East Asia squadron, commanded by Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee off the coast of Chile, in the Battle of Coronel. The more powerful enemy sank HMS Good Hope and HMS Monmouth. During the battle HMS Glasgow sustained relatively light damage and returned to Port Stanley to wait for reinforcements under the command of Vice-Admiral Doveton Sturdee. When the German East Asia squadron arrived off the Falkland Islands they were surprised by the number of British warships in the harbour. The latter rapidly got underway to pursue the enemy warships. In what became known as the Battle of the Falkland Islands, the British warships sank four of the five German ships on the 8th December, 1914. HMS Glasgow was tasked to hunt for the SMS Dresden, a German light cruiser, which had escaped during the battle. It was not until March 1915 that the SMS Dresden was located at Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fernández Islands by HMS Glasgow and HMS Kent. HMS Glasgow opened fire on the enemy warship which surrendered after being set on fire and holed below the waterline. The crew abandoned the ship after opening seawater valves to scuttle and sink the warship.

HMS Glasgow remained in the South Atlantic to protect Allied shipping and search for enemy commerce raiders. In the summer of 1918 she was transferred for duties in the Adriatic. At the

end of the First World War HMS Glasgow was placed in reserve and later between 1922 and 1926 was used as a training ship. The following year she was sold and scrapped.

William joined HMS Glasgow on the 18th January, 1916 when the ship was at St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands. He arrived there, with other ratings on the Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS Carmania. St Vincent is one of the Barlavento Islands in the northern group within the Cape Verde archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean off the West coast of Africa.

After he was discharged from HMS Glasgow William was drafted to HMS Victory II for seven months and then to HMS Implacable where his service came to an untimely end. HMS Implacable was one of three 1898 Formidable-class battleships. Her general characteristics and technical details were:

Builder ~ Devonport Dockyard;

Laid Down ~ 13th July, 1898; Launched 11th March, 1899; Completed July 1901; Commissioned 10th September, 1901;

Displacement ~ 14,500-tons; 15,800-tons Full Load;

Dimensions ~ 431-ft Overall; Length at Waterline 411-ft; Beam 75-ft; Draught 25-ft 11-inches; Maximum Draught 29-ft;

Installed Power ~ 20 x Belleville Water-Tube Boilers; Designed HP 15,000; Speed 18-knots;

Machinery ~ 2 x 3-Cylinder Triple Expansion Steam Engines; 2 x Propeller Shafts;

Coal ~ Normal 900-tons; Maximum 2,200-tons;

Range ~ 6,330 Nautical Miles at 10-knots;

Armament ~ 4 x BL 12-inch Mk IX Guns; 12 x BL 6-inch Mk VII Guns; 10 x QF 12-Pounder Guns; 6 x QF 3-Pounder Guns; 4 x 18-inch Submerged Torpedo Tubes;

Armour (Krupp) ~ 9-inch Belt Amidships; 2-inch Belt Bow; Bulkheads 9-inch to 12-inch; Barbettes 12-inch; Turrets 10-inch; Casemates 6-inch; Conning Tower 14-inch; Deck 1-inch to 3-inch;

Complement ~ 780 – 810 Officers & Ratings;

Average Building Costs ~ £1,000,000

After commissioning in September 1901 HMS Implacable was assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet until 1908. The following year she was transferred to the Channel Fleet and then to the Atlantic Fleet. Considered to be obsolete by comparison to the new dreadnought class battleships she was assigned to the 5th Battle Squadron and attached to the Home Fleet in 1912.

On the outbreak of the First World War, HMS Implacable and the 5th Battle Squadron was transferred to the Channel Fleet and based at Portland. She was temporarily attached to the Dover Patrol in October 1914. A month later she rejoined the 5th Battle Squadron at Sheerness due to reports of an imminent German invasion which failed to materialise and the squadron returned to Portland. On the 13th March, 1915 HMS Implacable accompanied by HMS Queen sailed to join the British and French fleets in the Dardanelles. They arrived on the 25th March and HMS Implacable joined the



Grave Of Stoker W.G.A. Adams Royal Navy

1st Squadron and participated in the landing at Cape Helles on the 25th-26th April and later in support of the Anzac forces in May. Later that month she was withdrawn and joined the newly formed 2nd Detached Squadron in the Adriatic Sea to support the Italian navy after Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary. In November she was assigned to the 3rd Detached Squadron based at Salonika to reinforce the Suez Canal Patrol and assist the French Navy in the blockading the Aegean coasts of Greece and Bulgaria. Based at Port Said, Egypt from the end of November she was ordered back to the United Kingdom in March 1916 for a refit. On completion of her refit she rejoined the 3rd Detached Squadron at Salonika. HMS Implacable returned to the United Kingdom in July 1917 and was paid off at Portsmouth. Laid up until March 1918 she then became a depot ship for the Northern Patrol. Decommissioned after the end of the war she was placed on sale list and sold for scrap in November 1921.

During his naval service William's character and ability were marked variously as 'Good', 'Fair' or 'Satisfactory'. These markings possibly reflect the number of times he had spent in detention or the cells.

William joined HMS Implacable on the 1st October, 1918 at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands and served on her until March 1919. On the 25th March, he did not return to his ship which was berthed at Portland and as the circumstances were unknown for his absence he was marked as 'RUN', a very serious naval offence, if proven. It was not until the 1st May, that the reason for his absence became clear. His body was found floating in Portland Harbour.

Southern Times ~ Saturday, 10th May, 1919.

Inquest On Two Sailors

One Drowned – The Other Found Dead In His Hammock

The South Dorset Coroner (Mr G.P. Symes) held two inquiries at the R.N. Hospital on Monday morning. The first concerned William George Adams, 1st Class Stoker Royal Naval Reserve, of H.M.S. Implacable, a native of Runcorn, Cheshire. Deceased, who was 27 years of age, had been missing from his ship since March 25th. Mr W.T. Wilkinson, (Admiralty Law Agent) was present at the inquiry.

Thomas Godden, chief gunner H.M.S. Implacable, produced deceased's certificates. He communicated with the man's home in Cheshire after he was missing, but nothing was known there. Joseph Elliott, coxswain of the Government steam launch Scout, said he found the body at 5.20 p.m. the previous Thursday, floating at the entrance to the Camber. Edward Hems, leading stoker, H.M.S. Implacable, giving evidence of identification said that on the left forearm there were two tattoo marks and a dagger. Adams had been missing since March 25th. On that date deceased went ashore on leave, and should have returned at 10.30 p.m. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

The second inquest was on Dennis Driscoll, leading stoker, H.M.S. Venerable, a single man who was found dead in his hammock early on Saturday morning. George William Abner Fisher, stoker 1st class, H.M.S. Venerable gave evidence of identification. Deceased was 43. He had known him about nine months. The man had complained of pains in his head and had been in hospital several times. He last saw him at 12 o'clock midnight on May 2nd. He went to wake him up at four o'clock and found him dead in his hammock. Thomas Jarvis Brunton, stoker petty officer, said deceased was lying in his hammock on his right side. He was a very steady man.

Surgeon Lieutenant Firman Edwards, H.M.S. Implacable, said he was called to see the deceased at 5 a.m., and

found him lying on a blanket beneath his bunk. There was nothing to show the cause of death, and the only marks on the body were two superficial injured to the nose. He held a post mortem examination and



found the right lung Grave Of Stoker W.G.A. Adams R.N. ~ Portland Royal Naval Cemetery affected with tuberculosis, and on opening the skull he found haemorrhage at the base of the brain, but it was due to arterial degeneration and not to any injury. The cause of death was cerebral haemorrhage. A verdict was returned in accordance with the medical testimony.

Stoker 1st Class William George Alexander Adams was buried in Portland Royal Naval Cemetery with full military honours. Grave Location: Plot 590. He was 27 years of age when he died. For his service in the Royal Navy during the First World War he received the 1914-15, British War Medal 1914-1920, Allied Victory Medal 1914-1919 which, were forwarded to one of his brothers. It is not clear which one and presumably he also received the Bronze Memorial Plaque and Scroll and later William's War Gratuity payment.

A claim for a Dependent's Pension was submitted by his cousin Miss Annie Rowe of 11 Porter Street, Runcorn, Cheshire. There is no indication whether she was successful as the Case No: 2/6/3433 on the record card has the status marked as 'Pending Application'.

Portland Royal Naval Cemetery

Portland Harbour is a manmade harbour attached to the north of Portland. Originally it was a natural anchorage known as Portland Roads, protected by Portland to the south, Chesil Beach to the west and mainland Dorset to the north. Portland Roads was transformed into a naval base following the building of two breakwater arms in the mid-19th century. The Cemetery was established by the War Office in 1876 for the burial of the soldiers garrisoned at Verne Citadel

(part of the harbour defence fortifications) and Royal Navy sailors based at Portland. In 1907 the site was transferred to the Admiralty, who went on to extend the site to the west in 1914. Throughout the First World War, Portland Harbour was used regularly for training exercises and patrols for German U-boats. There are 67 burials from the First World War, 50 of which are unidentified. In addition, there is a Special Memorial to a casualty buried in Portland (St George) Churchyard. After the War the maintenance of the Cemetery was passed to the Imperial War Graves Commission and in November 1926, the Cross of Sacrifice was unveiled in the presence of detachments from ships stationed at Portland and the local garrison. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Portland continued hosting training exercises. However, after Germany's successful invasion of France, the naval base quickly became the target of air attacks. On the 4th July, 1940 HMS Foylebank was attacked while at Portland Harbour, which resulted in her sinking on the 5th. Over 70 crew members lost their lives, some of whom are buried at Portland Royal Naval Cemetery, the rest are commemorated on memorials to the missing. By May 1944, both Portland Harbour and Weymouth Harbour were used as part of the D-Day preparations. They were major embarkation points for American troops, particularly the US 1st Division who embarked for 'Omaha Beach' in June 1944. There are 103 burials (including 1 Norwegian Merchant Navy seaman and 12 German airmen) 10 of which are unidentified, from the Second World War, the majority of which are in the Church of England section, near the Cross of Sacrifice. The Cemetery was extended eastwards in the mid-20th century, where many post-Second World War burials are found. In 1996 the Naval Base at Portland was closed.

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Source

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Wikipedia Web-Site ~ www.wikipedia.org ~ HMS Glasgow; HMS Implacable;

Southern Times ~ Saturday, 10th May, 1919.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Web-Site ~ www.cwgc.org

Ancestry Web-Site ~ www.ancestry.co

UK Medal & Award Rolls 1793-1972 ~ Ancestry

National Archives ~ Stoker 1st Class W.G.A. Adams RN Service Record – ADM 188/91725237

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