

278566 CHIEF STOKER WILLIAM GODFREY

ROYAL NAVY

William Godfrey was born on the 19th September 1871 at Stanford, Norfolk the son of Reuben and Mary Ann Godfrey. He was baptised at the local parish church of All Saints on the 15th October 1871. Today, the village of Stanford is a deserted village. It was taken over by the Army during the Second World War as part of a battle training area for the infantry. The church has been fitted with blast-proof sheeting to protect the structure and wire fencing surrounds the church and churchyard for protection during military exercises.

The census of 1881 recorded that the Godfrey family household members at that time were Reuben, a labourer aged 47, his wife Mary Ann, aged 47, a daughter Martha aged 12, and sons William and Harry aged 10 and 8 years respectively. All the family had been born in Stanford and Martha and William were attending the local village school.



William left his Stanford home at the age of 19 and was living in 1891 as a boarder with the family of James Wilson, at 19 Gasholder Street, Hunslet, Yorkshire. Mr Wilson was a labourer at an Iron Works and Carrie, his wife looked after their young family of two sons and two daughters with ages ranging from 6 years to nine months. William was employed as a railway porter.

Three years later he joined the Royal Navy at Portsmouth on the 27th December 1894 for a twelve year engagement, giving his occupation as that of a boiler makers labourer. William was described, as being, 5ft 4-inches in height, with light brown hair, grey eyes, and a fair complexion. He had a scar in the palm of his right hand, a tattoo of a girl's head on his right arm and clasped hands and a flag on his left arm.

Record of Service

<u>Ship Served In</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Period of Service</u>	
		<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Victory II	Stoker 2 nd Class	27 Dec 1894	13 Jan 1894
Revenge	Stoker 2 nd Class	14 Jan 1896	
Revenge	Stoker	9 Mar 1896	5 Nov 1896
Victory II	Stoker	6 Nov 1896	19 Dec 1896
Victory I	Stoker	20 Dec 1896	31 Dec 1896
Victory III	Stoker	1 Jan 1897	20 Feb 1897
Victory III	Stoker	21 Feb 1897	12 Mar 1897
Melpomene	Stoker	13 Mar 1897	13 Aug 1897
Victory II	Stoker	14 Aug 1897	22 Apr 1898
Victory III	Stoker	23 Apr 1898	8 Aug 1898
Victory II	Stoker	9 Aug 1898	
Duke of Wellington II	Stoker	1 Apr 1899	4 Sep 1899
Andromeda	Stoker	5 Sept 1899	
Andromeda	Ldg. Stoker	26 Dec 1900	
Andromeda	Ldg. Stoker	18 Mar 1902	10 Feb 1903
Duke of Wellington	Ldg. Stoker	11 Feb 1901	30 Sep 1903
Firequeen	Ldg. Stoker	1 Oct 1903	28 Oct 1903
Vernon	Ldg. Stoker	29 Oct 1903	3 Sep 1904
Firequeen	Ldg. Stoker	4 Sep 1904	31 Mar 1905
Victory II	Ldg. Stoker	1 Apr 1905	28 Aug 1905
Hampshire	Ldg. Stoker	29 Aug 1905	

Hampshire	Stoker Pty. Off.	1 Jul 1906	19 Aug 1907
Victory II	Stoker Pty. Off	20 Aug 1907	16 Sep 1907
Hecla	Stoker Pty. Off	17 Sep 1907	28 Jan 1908
Blenheim	Stoker Pty. Off.	29 Jan 1908	25 Sep 1908
Victory	Stoker Pty. Off.	26 Sep 1908	7 Oct 1908
Vengeance	Stoker Pty. Off.	8 Oct 1908	19 Feb 1909
Bellerophon	Stoker Pty. Off.	20 Feb 1909	
Bellerophon	Act. Ch. Stoker	17 Apr 1910	31 Jan 1911
Victory	Act. Ch. Stoker	1 Feb 1911	1 Feb 1911
Hecla	Act. Ch. Stoker	2 Feb 1911	
Hecla	Chief Stoker	17 Apr 1911	30 Apr 1912
Topaz II	Chief Stoker	1 May 1912	31 Jul 1912
Minerva II	Chief Stoker	1 Aug 1912	4 Mar 1913
Victory II	Chief Stoker	5 Mar 1913	7 Jun 1913
Princess Royal	Chief Stoker	8 Jun 1913	10 Nov 1916
Victory II	Chief Stoker	11 Nov 1916	7 May 1917
Attentive (Crusader)	Chief Stoker	8 May 1917	24 May 1917
Victory II	Chief Stoker	25 May 1917	27 Aug 1917
Comus	Chief Stoker	28 Aug 1917	14 Apr 1918
Victory II	Chief Stoker	15 Apr 1918	27 Mar 1919*
Victory II	Chief Stoker	14 Jun 1919	21 Jun 1919
Excellent	Chief Stoker	22 Jun 1919	21 Dec 1919**

*Provisionally Demolished

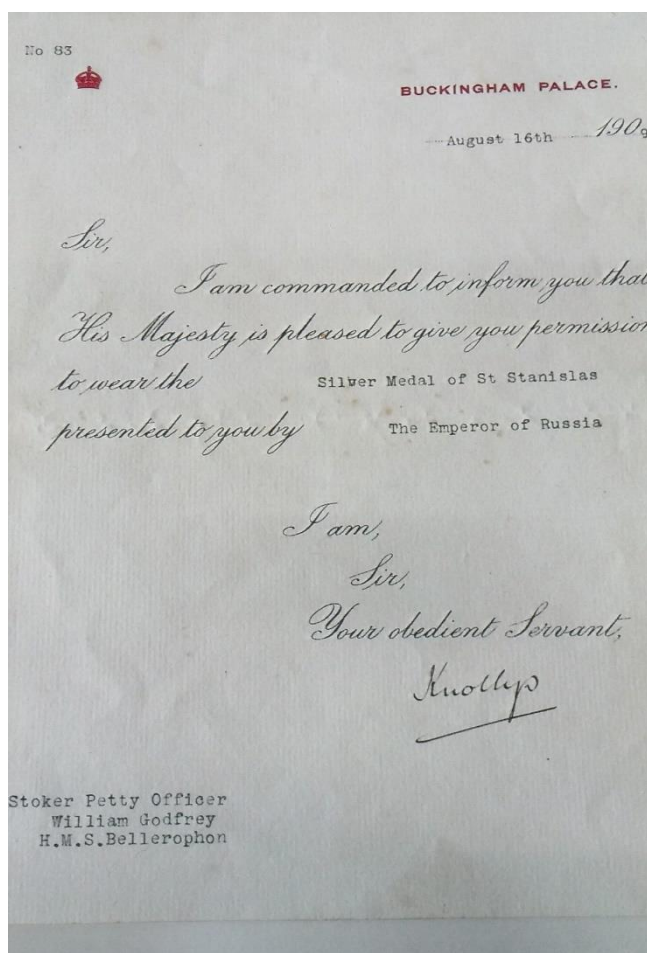
** Demobilised

William began his naval career as a Stoker 2nd Class, and after two years on the 9th March 1896 he qualified as a Stoker, whilst serving on HMS Revenge. He was granted his first Good Conduct Badge on the 27th December 1897. After three years as a Stoker he was promoted to Leading Stoker 2nd Class, on HMS Andromeda on the 26th December 1900. Two years later he qualified as a Leading Stoker 1st Class and gained his second Good Conduct Badge on the 27th December 1902. During his service on HMS Hampshire, he became a Petty Officer Stoker (1) on the 1st July 1906. On completing his twelve years' service in the Royal Navy, William re-engaged on the 25th December 1906 to complete his service for pension. His personal details remained the same except for his height which was recorded as being 5ft 4½-inches. On Christmas Day 1907 he was granted his third Good Conduct Badge and the following year became a Stoker Petty Officer (2). Whilst he was serving on HMS Blenheim between January and September 1908, he was granted his Stokehold Certificate.

William joined HMS Bellerophon, which had been assigned to the 1st Division of the Home Fleet, on the 20th February 1909 as a Stoker Petty Officer (2). In June and July HMS Bellerophon participated in combined fleet manoeuvres and was reviewed by King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas II of

Russia who was on a visit to this country Letter Granting Permission To Wear Russian Medal

with his family. In August during Cowes Week the Tsar presented William with the Tsar Nicholas II Silver Medal for Zeal. He received a letter from Buckingham Palace dated the 16th August, 1909 giving him permission to wear the Russian medal. The letter, signed by Francis Knolls, 1st Viscount Knollys (1837-1914) was a royal courtier, and served as private secretary to King Edward VII from 1901 to 1913, erroneously gave him 'permission to wear the Silver Medal of St Stanislas'. He may have been unfamiliar with Russian medals and most probably the Tsar had presented St Stanislas medals to some of the officers on the ship and presumed the Tsar had presented other members of the crew with the same medal. The main concern for



William was that he had written permission from King Edward VII to wear the Russian medal given to him by the Tsar. Service personnel receiving foreign medals had to have permission to wear them on their uniform from the reigning sovereign.

William served on HMS Bellerophon for just over two years from the 20th February 1909 until the 31st January 1911 and during that period as a Stoker Petty Officer he received his Royal Naval Long Service & Good Conduct Medal (Obverse – King Edward VII in Admiral's uniform). On the 17th April 1910 he was promoted Acting Chief Stoker.

HMS Bellerophon was a Bellerophon-class dreadnought, one of three, built at Portsmouth Dockyard for the Royal Navy. She was ordered in October 1906, laid down on the 3rd December of the same year, launched on the 27th July 1907, completed in February 1909 and commissioned on the 27th. Her technical details were as follows:-

Displacement ~ Normal 18,600-tons; Full Load 22,000-tons.

Length ~ 526-ft Overall; 490-ft Between Perpendiculars; Beam 82-ft 6-inches; Mean Draught 27-ft 6-inches; Maximum Draught 30-ft 11-inches.

Installed Power ~ 23,000 SHP; 18 x Babcock & Wilcox Boilers.

Propulsion ~ 4 x Shafts; 2 x Parson Direct Drive Steam Turbines; Speed 21-knots.

Fuel ~ Coal – Normal 900-tons; Maximum 2,648-tons; Fuel Oil 842-tons.

Range ~ 5,720 Nautical Miles at 10-knots.

Armament ~ 10 x 12-inch Guns – Director Controlled; 10 x 4-inch Guns – Director Controlled; 2 x 4-inch A.A. Guns; 4 x 3-Pounders; 5 Machine Guns; 3 x 18-inch Torpedo Tubes – Stern Tube Removed During FWW.

Armour ~ Krupp Cemented Armour: Lower Belt 10-9-inch; Upper Belt 8-inch; Lower & Upper Belts (Bow) 7-6-inch; Belt (Stern) 5-inch; After Bulkhead 8-inch; Barbettes 10-9-inch; Gun-houses 11-inch; Forward Conning Tower 11-inch (4-inch Tubes); After Conning Tower 8-inch (4-inch Tubes); Main Deck 1¾-¾-inches; Middle Deck 3-1¾-inches; Lower Deck 4-1½-inches; Screens to Magazines, Boilers and Engine Rooms.

Complement ~ 733 – 793 Officers and Ratings.

Building Costs ~ £1.7 million.

After commissioning in February 1909 HMS Bellerophon was assigned to the Nore Division of the Home Fleet renamed in March the 1st Division. In the First World War she conducted patrols with the Grand Fleet and during the Battle of Jutland engaged several German warships but sustained no battle damage. After the war HMS Bellerophon became a gunnery training ship. Having become obsolete, she was placed in reserve, listed for sale in the spring of 1921 and sold for £44,000 in November to the Slough Trading Company. She was resold the following year to a German company and broken up. The other two warships of the Bellerophon-class were HMS Superb built at Armstrong Whitworths Shipyard, Elswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and HMS Téméraire built at Devonport.

William joined HMS Princess Royal as a Chief Stoker on the 8th June 1913 and served on her until the 10th November 1916, a total of three years and five months. During that period of his service, HMS Princess Royal, part of the Grand Fleet engaged the German High Seas Fleet at the Battle of Jutland, 31st May – 1st June 1916.

HMS Princess Royal was a Lion-class battlecruiser, one of two, built by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness for the Royal Navy and designated a ‘contingent dreadnought’. Ordered under the 1909 Estimates, she was laid down on the 2nd May 1910, launched on the 29th April 1911, and commissioned on the 14th November 1912. She was named after Princess Louise, The Princess Royal and Duchess of Fife, the eldest daughter of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. HMS Princess Royal’s technical details were as follows:-

Displacement ~ Normal 26,350-tons; Full Load 29,700-tons.

Length ~ 700-ft Overall; 660-ft Between Perpendiculars; Beam 88-ft 7-inches; Mean Draught 27-ft; Maximum Draught 32-ft.

Installed Power ~ 42 x Yarrow Boilers; 70,000 SHP.

Propulsion ~ 4 x Parsons Direct Drive Steam Turbines; 4 x Shafts; Speed 28-knots.

Fuel ~ Coal Normal 1,000-tons; Maximum 3,500-tons; Fuel Oil 1,135-tons.

Range ~ 5,610-Nautical miles at 10-knots.

Armament ~ 8 x 13.5-inch Guns – Director Controlled; 16 x 4-inch Guns – Director Controlled; 2 x 3-inch A.A. Guns; 4 x 3-Pounders; 2 x 2-Pounders (pom-pom); 5 Machine Guns; 2 x 21-inch Torpedo Tubes (Submerged).

Armour ~ Krupp Cemented Armour – Total 5,200-tons; Lower Belt 9-inch/6-inch/5-inch; Upper Belt 6-inch/5-inch/4-inch; Bulkheads 4-inch; Barbettes 9-8-inch; Gun-houses 9-inch; Funnel Uptakes 1½-inch; Conning Tower 10-inch; Sighting Hood 6-3-inch; Torpedo Conning Tower 1-inch; Upper Deck 1-inch; Amidships (Lower) 1½-1-inches; Amidships (Lower Ends) 2½-inch; Special Screens to Magazines.

Complement ~ 1,061 Officers and Ratings.

Building Costs ~ £2,087,000

After commissioning HMS Princess Royal was assigned to the 1st Cruiser Squadron, renamed the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron in 1913. She participated in the Battle of Heligoland Bight in August 1913 and in the Battle of the Dogger Bank in January 1915. At the Battle of Jutland HMS Princess Royal was the flagship of the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron. During the ‘Run to the South’, she was struck by two shells from a salvo fired the SMS Derfflinger¹, a battlecruiser, which damaged ‘A’ turret.

Later during the ‘Run to the North’ two shells fired by the battleship SMS Markgraf², disabled ‘X’ turret, and pierced her armoured hull. Shells fired from HMS Princess Royal’s struck the SMS Lützow³ and the SMS Seydlitz⁴ causing structural damage. HMS



Princess Royal was struck Medal Group Of Chief Stoker William Godfrey Royal Navy nine times by German shells and sustained 22 killed and 81 injured. At the conclusion of the Battle of Jutland HMS Princess Royal underwent emergency repairs at Rosyth and then sailed to Devonport where she was dry docked for permanent repairs to be undertaken. These were completed in mid-July and HMS Princess Royal then returned to Rosyth. For the remainder of the war, she was deployed on patrols and support duties in the North Sea but had no further engagements with German warships.

After the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet, HMS Princess Royal was re-assigned to the Atlantic Fleet in the Spring of 1919. Placed in reserve the following year it was proposed to sell

her to the Chilean navy. In February 1922 she became the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief Scottish Coast. At the end of that year, she was sold for scrap to fulfil the tonnage limitation placed upon the Royal Navy by the Washington Naval Treaty and broken up in 1923. The other warship in the Lion-class was HMS Lion built at Devonport.

Chief Stoker William Godfrey served throughout the First World War and beyond his normal service time until he was provisionally demobilised on the 27th March 1919. He was retained for a few months and discharged ashore on the 2nd December 1919 after twenty-five years' service in the Royal Navy. His conduct throughout was exemplary. On his discharge after a medical examination, he was described, as being 5ft 5-inches in height, with grey hair, blue eyes, and a fresh complexion. He received a gratuity payment on the 17th January 1917 and was granted a pension on the 14th February 1918, which was increased on the 9th May 1919. His accumulated service by the 17th April 1919 was over 9 years. For his service in the Royal Navy he received the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-1920, Allied Victory Medal 1914-1919, Royal Naval Long Service & Good Conduct Medal (Obverse: King Edward VII in Admiral's uniform) and the Tsar Nicholas II Silver Medal For Zeal.

William married in January 1897, Maud Mary Louisa Millington, who was born at Havant, Hampshire in 1876. Subsequently they had two children. The 1911 Census recorded that Maud was living with her two children Freda and Cecil, a boarder Louisa Briston, who was a school-teacher at Staunton House, 1 Staunton Road, West Street, Havant. William Godfrey was recorded in the 1911 Census in the List of Officers, Crew and Royal Marines on Board His Majesty's Ship Bonetta. HMS Bonetta, a Torpedo Boat Destroyer was anchored in St Helen's Roads, Isle of Wight. There is no mention of him being on this warship in his service record. There are civilians recorded in this census record, so perhaps William was visiting a shipmate, and was included with all those present on board HMS Bonetta. Whatever the reason the truth is shrouded in the fog of history.

The 1939 Register recorded that William was aged 68, a fitter's mate and Maud aged 63, were living at 21 Melbury Crescent, Southampton. Maud died in 1943 and William in October 1951 aged 80 years.

¹SMS Derfflinger was scuttled in Scapa Flow on the 21st June 1919 and raised in 1939. Due to the Second World War, she remained afloat upside down until she was broken up at Faslane after the end of the war.

²SMS Markgraf was scuttled in Scapa Flow on the 21st June 1919 but was not raised and remains on the bottom of the bay where she sank.

³SMS Lützow was severely damaged during the Battle of Jutland and was unable to reach her home port and was sunk by torpedoes fired the German Torpedo Boat G38 on the 1st June 1916.

⁴SMS Seydlitz was scuttled in Scapa Flow on the 21st June 1919 and was raised on the 2nd November 1928 and was broken up within two years at Rosyth.



c.1900 Photograph Of William Godfrey

William is wearing on the upper sleeve of his right arm a distinguishing badge, which indicates his branch and specialty – engineering branch – and his rank as a Leading Stoker who had passed for Petty Officer. On his upper left arm, he has one chevron – his first Good Conduct Badge – and badge for Petty Officer. Although qualified for the latter he was not made substantive in that rank until July 1906.

Text of letter giving permission to William Godfrey to wear the Russian Medal of St Stanislas (sic) ~ Tsar Nicholas II Silver Medal For Zeal.

No.83

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

August 16th 1909

Sir,

I am commanded to inform you that

His Majesty is pleased to give you permission

To wear the Silver Medal of St Stanislas

Presented to you by The Emperor of Russia

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) Knollys

Stoker Petty Officer

William Godfrey

H.M.S. Bellerophon

Sources

Jane's Fighting Ships Of World War I. First published by Jane's Publishing Company in 1919.
Re-published by Studio Editions 1990. ISBN 1 85170 378 0.

Service Record ~ William Godfrey – National Archives Ref: ADM 188-444-278566

Wikipedia Web-Site ~ www.wikipedia.org – HMS Bellerophon; HMS Princess Royal; Francis Knollys;

Ancestry Web-Site ~ www.ancestry.com

Royal Naval Ratings Insignia WWI ~ www.uniform-reference.net

Original Letter ~ Permission for William Godfrey to wear his Russian Medal.

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