



MASTER AT ARMS WILLIAM CLARK

SERVICE NO.180547

HMS HAMPSHIRE, ROYAL NAVY

DIED 5TH JUNE 1916 AGED 37

William was born c. 1879 in Bartley Heath, Odiham. He was the fifth child of Joseph, a fishmonger/hawker and Elizabeth Clark(e)¹.

From his service record detailed below it appears that he became a factory hand after leaving school².

In August 1894 at the age of 15 William began service with the Royal Navy as a Boy second class in HMS St Vincent, the training establishment in Gosport. From his service record we learn that he was just 5' 2¾" tall, and had brown hair, hazel eyes and a fair complexion and that he eventually grew to 5' 7¼". He remained at HMS St Vincent until December 1895, when he transferred to the battleship HMS Inflexible until the end of January 1896. Over the next few years he was based in a number shore establishments and ships. He appears to have worked diligently for throughout his career his character has been classified as 'Very good'. This was reflected in the way he worked his way through the sub-ratings – to Boy First Class in 1898 to Ordinary Seaman in 1903. Between 1903 and 1913 he rose through the ratings to Ordinary Seaman, Able Bodied Seaman, Leading Seaman, Petty Officer, had Senior Rank confirmed after one year, Ship Corporal (1911), and finally Master At Arms in 1913³.

On 14 February 1906 William had married Rosa Jane Stokes at Holt, Wiltshire. He was a 22 year old Ship's Corporal at Portsmouth at the time⁴. In 1911, although William was not at home on census night, he had completed the census form on Rosa's behalf. She was living with their two children, Wilhelmina Maud (aged 4) and Reginald George (aged 4 months) at 84 Timpson Road, Landport⁵.

The second sheet of William's service record is not available and we cannot therefore see what his wartime service entailed. We do know that in 1916 he was Master at Arms in HMS Hampshire, that ill-fated Devonshire-class armoured cruiser.

¹ 1881 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref: RG11, Piece: 1249; Folio: 46; Page: 8

² The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services; Class: ADM 188; Piece: 300 – www.Ancestry.com.uk

³ ibid

⁴ Source – England Marriages 1538-1973 www.findmypast.co.uk

⁵ 1911 Census, Landport, Hampshire, Ref: Class RG14; Piece: 5570; Schedule No: 124 www.ancestry.co.uk



In 1915 the Hampshire became part of the Grand Fleet and formed part of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron. On 31 May 1916, although not directly involved with the enemy, HMS Hampshire was present at the Battle of Jutland. It is almost certain that William was serving in the vessel at the time, for the Hampshire was then required to make her way to Scapa Flow to collect Lord Kitchener, who was journeying to Archangel for an important meeting with Russian diplomats⁶. Due to bad weather on 5 June, HMS Hampshire was diverted from the planned route hoping for shelter by sailing through Pentland Firth. After meeting the escort destroyers Unity and Victor at 5.45pm the gale strengthened and changed direction. The convoy now had to sail directly into the storm. Two hours later the Hampshire, now well ahead of Unity and Victor, was close to mainland Orkney when she hit a mine, which exploded through the ship, resulting in a hole between the bows and the bridge. In the heavy seas it was almost impossible to lower the lifeboats, which smashed against the sides of the ship. At about 7.55 pm the Hampshire sank. Only 12 men survived. 737 men, including Lord Kitchener and William Clark, did not.⁷

William was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal 1914-19.⁸

⁶ Source – Part of an article on the Hampshire Commemorative Wall website – <https://kitchenerhampshire.word.press.com>

⁷ Source - ibid

⁸ UK Naval Medal and Award Rolls, 1793-1972, www.ancestry.co.uk