



STOKER 1ST CLASS GERALD PERCY GREY

OFFICIAL NO. 100998

(RFR/PO/B/3266), HMS GOOD HOPE, ROYAL NAVY

DIED 1ST NOVEMBER 1914 AGED 32

Gerald, the youngest child of Stephen, a labourer, and Elizabeth Grey of Broad Oak, Odiham, was born on 25th April 1882ⁱ. He had one older brother, Thomas, and four older sisters, Sabina, Rose, Annie and Doraⁱⁱ. Gerald attended London Road Board School from 25th March 1889 until 19th March 1896, when he 'went to work'ⁱⁱⁱ. In 1901 he was employed as a baker^{iv} and living at home with his parents at Broad Oak. In July 1901 he completed the attestation process to the Militia Corps in Aldershot^v. From this attestation document we find that Gerald's employer was Mr Catchlove in Odiham. He was 5 feet 4½ inches tall, had an expanded chest measurement of 35 inches, light brown hair, a fair complexion and grey eyes. His militia service began as a private on 27th July when he was 'posted'. He was 'embodied' on 14th September 1901 and on 25th January 1902 he 'volunteered under Sec.2: Reserve Forces and Militia Act 1898'. From that date until 26th September 1902 he served in South Africa.

On 6th August 1904 Gerald enlisted in the Royal Navy. He was now recorded as being 5 feet 5¾ inches tall, his chest measured 37 inches and he had tattoos on his forearms, a ship on the right and a dog and flag on the left. He was attached to HMS Nelson, an old training cruiser for stokers, at Portsmouth until the end of the year^{vi}. For the next few years he served in HMS Fire Screen, HMS Goliath, HMS King Edward VII, HMS Victory II and HMS Forward. His conduct was recorded as 'very good' during this time. On 13th August 1909 Gerald transferred to the Royal Navy Reserve at Portsmouth and returned home to Broad Oak. In 1911 he was working as a coal carman^{vii}. On 13th July 1914 Gerald was back in the Navy in HMS Good Hope^{viii}, the crew of which mainly comprised reservists with no experience of firing the guns on board. Moreover, the vessel's speed was slow, being only able to achieve a maximum of 17 knots. Between 15th and 30th July Gerald was in HMS Victory II and then, days before the start of the war, he returned to HMS Good Hope, a Drake Class armoured cruiser of the 1st Cruiser Squadron, which became the flagship of Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock^{ix}.

Orders were then received to reinforce the 4th Cruiser Squadron in the search for the German Far East Squadron, which operated in the Pacific under the command of Vice Admiral Maximilian von Spee, whose main aim was to threaten and destroy British shipping and convoys^x. Spee's squadron was much stronger. It had two armoured cruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, a light cruiser, *Nürnberg* and, by the



time it reached the coast off Coronel in Chile on 1 November 1914, a further two light cruisers, *Leipzig* and *Dresden*. These ships were modern and had well experienced crews. By contrast, Cradock's squadron had only two armoured cruisers, *Good Hope* (old design, under-armed and very slow) and *Monmouth* (old design, very inexperienced crew and exceedingly slow), a light cruiser *Glasgow*, which was modern, speedier and had a regular crew, and an auxiliary cruiser *Otranto*, a former liner which was slow, had only a few old guns and no armour. In the early evening of 1st November the German squadron advanced in failing light and opened fire on Cradock's squadron, which had turned to face them, thus disadvantaged by being 'silhouetted by the setting sun'^{xi}. HMS *Good Hope* suffered catastrophic damage in the ensuing action and sank with all 919 hands on board. There were no survivors. Gerald Grey was one of those casualties.

He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal^{xii}. He is commemorated on the Coronel Memorial^{xiii} and De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-1918^{xiv}

ⁱ London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885

ⁱⁱ 1881 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref. Class: *RG11*; Piece: *1249*; Folio: *69*; Page: *19*.

ⁱⁱⁱ London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885

^{iv} 1901 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref. Class: *RG13*; Piece: *1102*; Folio: *79*; Page: *16*.

^v Source – British Army Service Records 1760-1915, www.findmypast.co.uk

^{vi} Source – Royal Navy Seamen Records 1899-1919, www.findmypast.co.uk

^{vii} Source - 1911 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref. Class: *RG14*, Piece: *6248*; Schedule Number: *97*.

^{viii} Source – Royal Navy Seamen Records 1899-1919, www.findmypast.co.uk

^{ix} Source – HMS *Good Hope* (1901), www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Good_Hope_1901

^x Source – A concise History of World War 1, by Brigadier General Vincent J. Esposito, USA 9ret), Pal Mall Press, London, p.238

^{xi} Source – World War 1 Naval Combat, the Battle of Coronel www.worldwar1.co.uk/coronel.html

^{xii} Source – UK Naval Medal and Award Rolls 1793-1972. www.ancestry.co.uk

^{xiii} Source - The Coronel Memorial. www.coronel.org.uk

^{xiv} Source – De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-1918. www.findmypast.co.uk