

Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent



Lest We Forget

World War 1



301882 PETTY OFFICER STOKER

G. S. CLARK

H.M.S. "FORMIDABLE"

ROYAL NAVY

1ST JANUARY, 1915 Age 29

George Samuel Roland CLARK

George Samuel Rowland Clark was born at Unley, South Australia on 19th April, 1885 to John Samuel & Harriet Clark (nee Holmes).

A death was registered in 1890 in the district of Norwood, South Australia for Harriett Clark. Harriet Clark died on 1st May, 1890 at Kent Town, South Australia.

George Samuel Clark joined the Royal Navy on 7th October, 1902 for a period of 12 years. He was 5ft 8 ¼ in with dark brown hair, blue eyes & a fresh complexion. His occupation was listed as Seaman. George Clark stated his date of birth was 19th April, 1881, implying he was 21 years of age, when he was actually only 17 years old. He was given a service number of 301882 (Chatham).

George Samuel Clark was rated Stoker 2nd Class when he joined H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 7th October, 1902. He was transferred to H.M.S. *Albemarle* on 12th November, 1903 then transferred & served on H.M.S. *Clio* from 16th February, 1904.

George Clark was rated as Stoker on 1st July, 1906 while still serving on H.M.S. *Clio*. Stoker George Clark was transferred to H.M.S. *Argonaut* on 1st August, 1906 then back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 9th October, 1906. He was transferred H.M.S. *Repulse* on 27th November, 1906 then back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 8th February, 1907. Stoker Clark was transferred to H.M.S. *Leander* on 15th February, 1907 then transferred to H.M.S. *Sapphire II* on 5th March, 1907. Stoker Clark was transferred to H.M.S. *Blenheim* on 1st May, 1907 then back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 19th January, 1909. From there he served on H.M.S. *Vindictive* from 25th January, 1909 then transferred to H.M.S. *Thetis* on 4th February, 1909. Stoker Clark was transferred to H.M.S. *Iphigenia* on 7th December, 1909.

Stoker George Samuel Clark was rated Leading Stoker II on 31st December, 1909 still serving on H.M.S. *Iphigenia*. He was transferred back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 23rd July, 1910 then transferred to H.M.S. *Duncan* on 9th August, 1910.

The 1911 England Census recorded George Samuel Clark, aged 29, as Crew on H.M.S. *Duncan*, a First Class Battleship which was positioned in the Grand Harbour, Malta on the night of the Census – 2nd April, 1911. The Captain was Frederick Laurence Field. George Clark was listed as married, a Leading Stoker, born Adelaide, Victoria, Australia. His religion was Church of England.

Stoker George Samuel Clark was rated as Stoker Petty Officer on 4th January, 1912 while still serving on H.M.S. *Duncan*. He was back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 27th May, 1913 then transferred to H.M.S. *Wildfire* on 7th June, 1913. Stoker Petty Officer Clark was transferred back to H.M.S. *Pembroke II* on 8th May, 1914.

Petty Officer Stoker George Samuel Clark was transferred to H.M.S. *Formidable* on 30th July, 1914.

H.M.S. *Formidable*

HMS *Formidable*, the third of four ships of that name to serve in the Royal Navy, was the lead ship of her class of pre-dreadnought battleships. Commissioned in 1904, she served initially with the Mediterranean Fleet, transferring to the Channel Fleet in 1908. In 1912, she was assigned to the 5th Battle Squadron, which was stationed at Nore.

At the beginning of the First World War, *Formidable* and the 5th Battle Squadron were based at Portland and assigned to the Channel Fleet to defend the English Channel. After covering the safe transportation of the British Expeditionary Force to France in August 1914, *Formidable* took part in the transportation of the Portsmouth Marine Battalion to Ostend on 25 August.

On 14 November, *Formidable* and the other ships of the 5th Battle Squadron were rebased at Sheerness because of concern that a German invasion of Great Britain was in the offing. The squadron was relieved by Duncan-class battleships of the 6th Battle Squadron and transferred to Portland on 30 December.

Under the command of Vice-Admiral Commanding, Channel Fleet, Sir Lewis Bayly, the 5th Battle Squadron spent 31 December participating in gunnery exercises off the Isle of Portland, supported by the light cruisers *Topaze* and *Diamond*. After the exercises, that night the fleet remained at sea on patrol even though submarine activity had been reported in the area. With rough sea conditions and the wind increasing, submarine attacks would have been difficult to carry out and so were not thought to be a significant threat. *Formidable* was steaming at 10 knots (19 km/h; 12 mph) at the rear of the squadron off Portland Bill just 20 nmi (37 km; 23 mi) from Start Point, when at 02:20 on 1 January 1915 a torpedo from U-24 struck the number one boiler port side. It was thought that she might be saved by reaching the coast but by about 02:40 she had taken a list of 20° to starboard and the Captain Noel Loxley gave the order to abandon ship. Darkness and worsening weather made it difficult to get the men and boats over the side; some small boats were thrown into the water upside down.

At about 03:05, *Formidable* was struck by a second torpedo on the starboard side. Amidst a 30 ft (9.1 m) swell the pinnaces and launch along with other boats (one of which capsized soon after) were launched and the two light cruisers came alongside and managed to pick up 80 men in the deteriorating weather. By 04:45, she seemed in imminent danger of capsizing and a few minutes later she rolled over onto many of the men in the water and sank quickly. Captain Loxley had remained on the bridge along with his Fox terrier Bruce, calmly overseeing the evacuation of the ship.

In rough seas near Berry Head, the crew of a Brixham trawler *Provident* BM291, Skipper William Pillar, First Hand William Carter, Second Hand John Clarke and Apprentice (the boy) Daniel Taylor (né Ferguson), picked up the men from one pinnace before it sank, saving 71 members of the crew. The second pinnace took off another 70 men, of which 48 were brought ashore alive after it was eventually spotted from the shore the following night, 22 hours after the sinking. The loss of life of *Formidable* was 35 officers (including Captain Loxley) and 512 men from a complement of 780.

Formidable was the third British battleship to be sunk and the second to be sunk by enemy action, during the First World War.

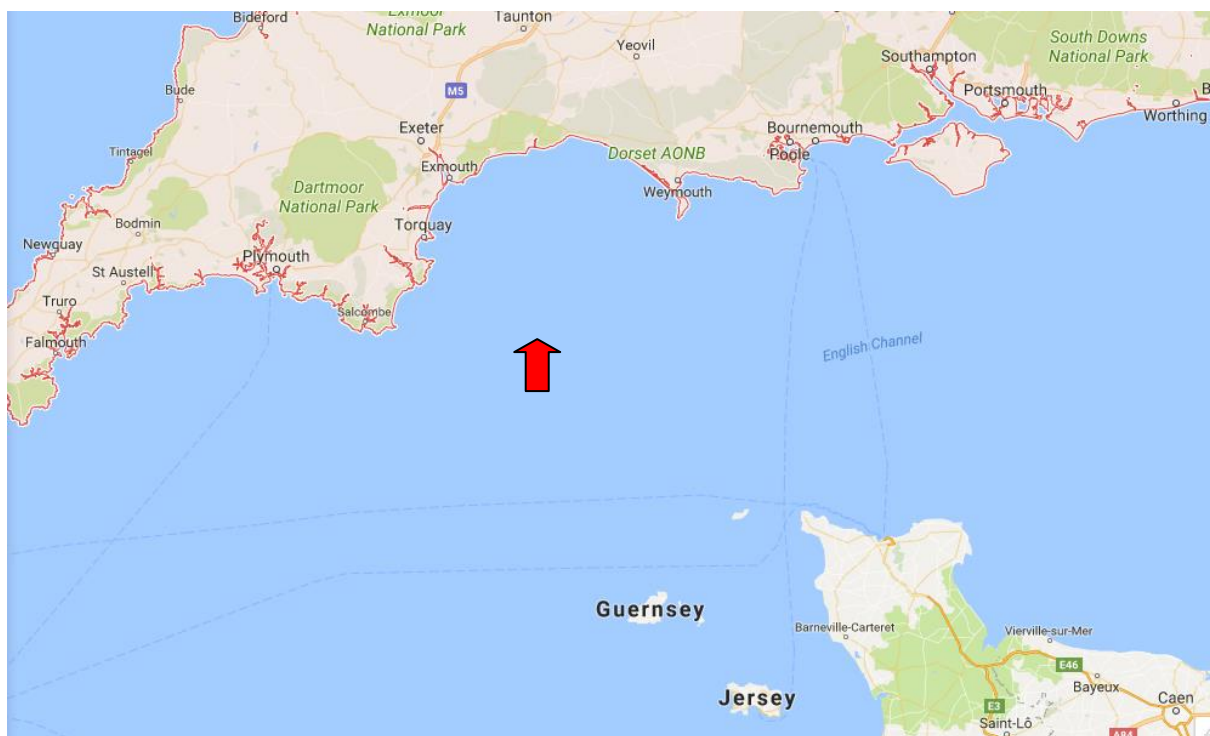
(Extract of information on H.M.S. Formidable from Wikipedia)



H.M.S. *Formidable*

Petty Officer Stoker George Samuel Clark was lost at sea when H.M.S. *Formidable* was torpedoed twice on 1st January, 1915 in the English Channel. His body was not recovered for burial. His friend – Miss Edith Dingley, of 16 Edith Road Faversham, Kent was notified.

H.M.S. *Formidable*'s wreck site is designated as a controlled site under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986.



Location of the wreck of H.M.S. *Formidable*

Petty Officer Stoker George Samuel Roland Clark was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Petty Officer Stoker George Samuel Roland Clark – service number 301882, aged 29, of H.M.S. “Formidable”, Royal Navy. He was the son of John Clark, of Salisbury St., North Unley, South Australia.

Petty Officer Stoker G. S. R. Clark is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (*Capital Photographer*)

Newspaper Notices

PERSONAL

By the last mail from England Mr John Clark, of Salisbury-street, North Unley, received news of the death of his eldest son, George Samuel Roland, who was senior petty-officer on the ill-fated Formidable. It will be remembered that the Formidable was torpedoed, and sunk in the English Channel, on New Year's Day, only 199 of the crew being saved. Mr Clark was born at Unley in 1885, and had been a member of the British navy for 12 years. His marriage with an English lady was arranged to take place in June next.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 27 February, 1915) & (Chronicle, Adelaide, South Australia – 6 March, 1915)

DEATHS

CLARK – On the 1st January, in the English Channel, on board the Formidable, George Samuel Roland Clark, eldest son of John Samuel Clark, of Salisbury-street, North Unley, aged 29 years.

No loving friends stood round his bed to bid a last farewell;

Or roof above his brave young head, save the cold, icy Channel.

His life, one of the bravest, for his country he has given,

And now at peace he's resting in his Father's home in heaven.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 27 February, 1915) & (Chronicle, Adelaide, South Australia – 6 March, 1915)

Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England

Chatham Naval Memorial overlooks the town of Chatham, Kent, England. It commemorates more than 8,500 Royal Navy personnel from World War 1 & over 10,000 Navy personnel from World War 2 who were lost or buried at sea.

After the Armistice, the Naval Authorities and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were determined to find an appropriate way to commemorate naval personnel who had no grave.

An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain - Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth - should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping.

The Chatham Naval Memorial was unveiled by The Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, on 26 April 1924.



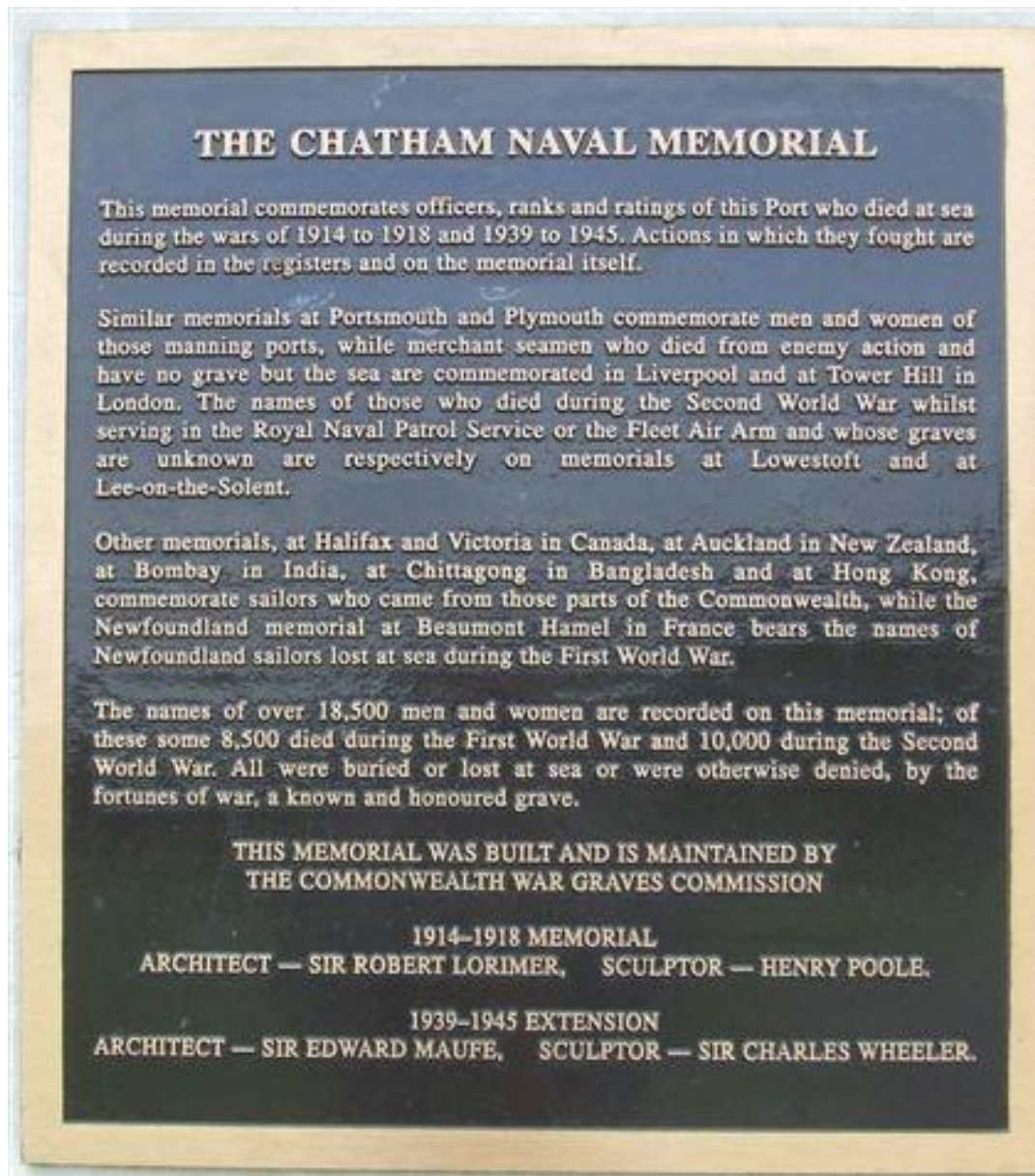
(Photo from CWGC)



Chatham Naval Memorial *(Photo by Clem Rutter)*



Chatham Naval Memorial (Photo from CWGC)

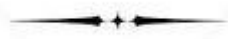


(Photo by Geoffrey Gillon)

Petty Officer Stoker G. S. Clark is remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England as he has no known grave - Memorial reference 11.



(Photo by Brad Evans)



Research on the Australians remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England was completed as part of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's "For Those In Peril" project.

'For Those in Peril' is an initiative to encourage people to research, remember and share local stories of those who left their homes to join the war at sea, whose names are engraved on the Commission's three naval memorials at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham.

The project has been launched to coincide with the opening of the Poppies: Wave at the CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial, presented by 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions, to mark the centenary of the First World War.



Poppies: Wave By Paul Cummins, Artist and Tom Piper, Designer

at CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial

23 August - 19 November, 2017

(Photo from 1418 NOW)

Poppies: Wave, a sweeping arch of bright red poppy heads suspended on towering stalks, was originally seen at the Tower of London as part of the installation Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red. It can currently be seen at the CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial.



(Photo from 1418 NOW)