

# Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent



*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1



224906 ABLE SEAMAN

**W. E. FESTER**

H.M.S. "ABOUKIR "

ROYAL NAVY

22ND SEPTEMBER, 1914 Age 27

## William Ernest FESTER

William Ernest Fester was born on 9th October, 1886 in Sydney, Australia to parents John Matthias Fester and Mary Jane Fester (nee Cole). His birth was registered in 1887 in Sydney, NSW.

William Ernest Fester was listed as an admission to St. Mark's School, Westminster, London, England on 22nd May, 1894. His date of birth was listed as 9th August, 1887 in Sydney, NSW & his address was 23 Elgin Terrace.

The 1901 England Census recorded William Fester as a 13 year old, living with his widowed mother – Mary J. Fester (Tailoress, aged 50, born Cornwall) & his sister – Flora Fester (aged 18, born London) in a 2 roomed dwelling at 225 Shirland Rd, Paddington. London. Four households were listed at the address.

William Ernest Fester joined the Royal Navy on 23rd January, 1903, aged 16 years. He was a Labourer & was given a service number of 224906 (Chatham).

William Ernest Fester was assigned to H.M.S. *Ganges* (Training Ship) on 23rd January, 1903 as Boy 2nd Class. He was rated as Boy 1st Class on 23rd October, 1903 while still with H.M.S. *Ganges*.

William Ernest Fester signed on with the Royal Navy on 9th October, 1904 for a period of 12 years, having attained the age of 18. He was 5ft 4 ½ in with brown hair, brown eyes & a fair complexion. He had a bracelet tattoo on his right wrist & a star on his right forearm.

Boy 1st Class William Ernest Fester was transferred to H.M.S. *Minotaur* on \_\_\_ November, 1903 then transferred to H.M.S. *Boscawen II* on 1st January, 1904. Boy 1st Class Fester was transferred to H.M.S. *Boscawen III* on 25th June, 1904 & rated as Ordinary Seaman on 9th October, 1904 while still serving on H.M.S. *Boscawen III*.

Ordinary Seaman William Ernest Fester was transferred to H.M.S. *Pembroke* on 15th October, 1904 then transferred to H.M.S. *Fisgard* (Shore Establishment) on 26th October, 1904. He was transferred back to H.M.S. *Pembroke* on 15th March, 1905 then transferred to H.M.S. *Bedford* on 1st April, 1905. Ordinary Seaman Fester was transferred to H.M.S. *Black Prince* on 27th March, 1906 then back to H.M.S. *Pembroke* on 15th November, 1906 where he was rated as Able Seaman.

Able Seaman William Ernest Fester was transferred to H.M.S. *Actaeon* on 31st March, 1908 then transferred to H.M.S. *Pembroke I* on 16th May, 1908. He was transferred to H.M.S. *Inflexible* on 27th September, 1908 before being transferred back to H.M.S. *Pembroke I* on 19th October, 1910. Able Seaman Fester was transferred back to H.M.S. *Actaeon* on 23rd November, 1910 then transferred back to H.M.S. *Pembroke I* on 2nd February, 1911 till 3rd February, 1911.

William Ernest Fester joined the R.F.R. (Royal Fleet Reserve) at Chatham on 4th February, 1911. He was given a service number of B. 7345.

The 1911 England Census recorded William Fester as a 24 year old worker employed by the London Fire Salvage Corps, Walling Street.

William Ernest Fester married Florence A. Crawley in the June quarter, 1913 in the district of West Ham, Essex, London, England.

Able Seaman William Ernest Fester joined H.M.S. *Aboukir* on 9th (?) August, 1914.

### **H.M.S. *Aboukir***

HMS *Aboukir* was a Cressy-class armoured cruiser built for the Royal Navy around 1900. Upon completion she was assigned to the Mediterranean Fleet and spent most of her career there. Upon returning home in 1912, she was

placed in reserve. Recommissioned at the start of the First World War, she played a minor role in the Battle of Heligoland Bight a few weeks after the beginning of the war.

On the morning of 22 September, *Aboukir* and her sisters, *Cressy* and *Hogue*, were on patrol without any escorting destroyers as they had been forced to seek shelter from bad weather. The three sisters in line abreast, about 2,000 yards (1,800 m) apart, at a speed of 10 knots (19 km/h; 12 mph). They were not expecting submarine attack, but they had lookouts posted and had one gun manned on each side to attack any submarines sighted. The weather had moderated earlier that morning and Tyrwhitt was en route to reinforce the cruisers with eight destroyers.

U-9, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Otto Weddigen, had been ordered to attack British transports at Ostend, but had been forced to dive and take shelter from the storm. On surfacing, she spotted the British ships and moved to attack. She fired one torpedo at 06:20 at *Aboukir* that struck her on the starboard side; Captain John Drummond thought he had struck a mine and ordered the other two ships to close to transfer his wounded men. *Aboukir* quickly began listing and capsized around 06:55 despite counter flooding compartments on the opposite side to right her. By the time that Drummond ordered "abandon ship" only one boat was available because the others had either been smashed or could not be lowered as no steam was available to power the winches for the boats.

As *Hogue* approached her sinking sister, the ship's captain, Wilmot Nicholson, realized that it had been a submarine attack and signalled *Cressy* to look for a periscope although his ship continued to close on *Aboukir* as her crew threw overboard anything that would float to aid the survivors in the water. Having stopped and lowered all her boats, *Hogue* was struck by two torpedoes around 06:55. The sudden weight loss of the two torpedoes caused U-9 to broach the surface and *Hogue's* gunners opened fire without effect before the submarine could submerge again. The cruiser capsized about ten minutes after being torpedoed as all of her watertight doors had been open, and she sank at 07:15.

*Cressy* attempted to ram the submarine, but did not hit anything and resumed her rescue efforts until she too was torpedoed at 07:20. She too took on a heavy list and then capsized, before sinking at 07:55. Several Dutch ships began rescuing survivors at 08:30 and were joined by British fishing trawlers before Tyrwhitt and his ships arrived at 10:45. The combined total from all three ships was 837 men rescued and 62 officers and 1,397 enlisted men lost. Of these, *Aboukir* lost a total of 527 men.

*(Extract of information on H.M.S. Aboukir & photo from Wikipedia)*



**H.M.S. Aboukir**

Able Seaman William Ernest Fester was killed in action in the North Sea on 22nd September, 1914, as a direct result of enemy action. His body was not recovered for burial. His widow – Mrs Florence Fester of 50 Woodhouse Rd, Leytonstone, London was advised.

Able Seaman William Ernest Fester was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour:

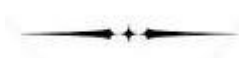
Fester, William Ernest, A.B. (R.F.R., B. 7345), 224906), H.M.S. Aboukir; lost in action in the North Sea, 22 Sept. 1914.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Able Seaman William Ernest Fester – service number 224906, aged 27, of H.M.S. "Aboukir", Royal Navy. He was the husband of Florence Alice Fester, of 552A Katherine Rd, Forest Gate, London. Native of Sydney, New South Wales.

Able Seaman W. E. Fester 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

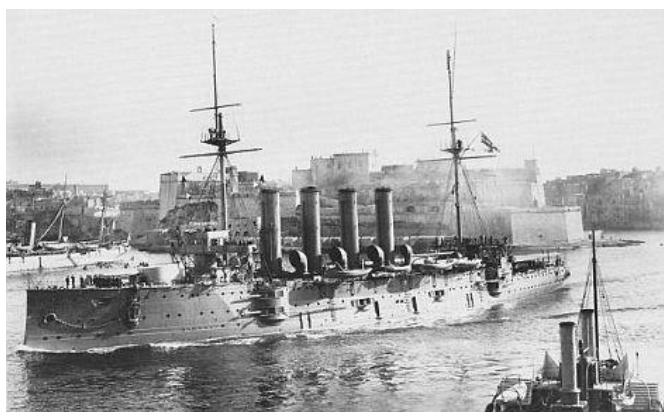
### **An insult to our war dead:**

### **Dutch vessels ransack sunken British warships containing the bodies of 1,500 sailors for scrap metal**

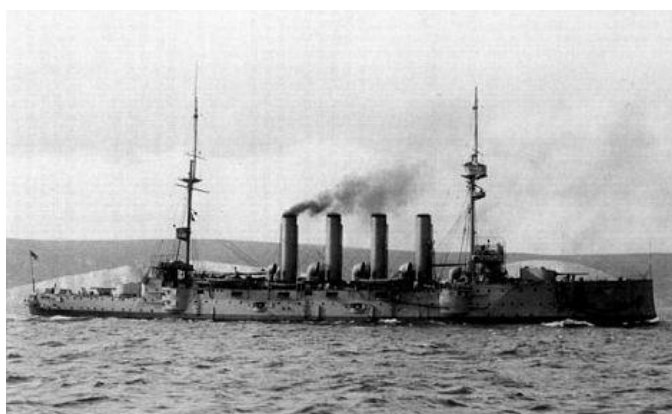
Dutch salvage vessels are illegally ransacking three sunken British cruisers in an attempt to find valuable scrap metal, it has emerged.

Looters have enraged the British naval community by scouring through the remains of the three warships sunk in the First World War and which are the final resting place of 1,500 sailors.

Netherlands police are now attempting to end the looters' activity, which has seen them use heavy-duty claws on cranes to tear through the shipwrecks 22 miles off the Dutch coast.



HMS Aboukir, above, HMS Hogue, below, and HMS Cressy, bottom, which were sunk off the Dutch coast by a German torpedo in 1914. They are the last resting places of 1,500 British seamen.



According to The Times, the Ministry of Defence and the Dutch Cultural Agency have condemned the disturbance of the war grave.

Vice-Admiral John McAnally, president of the Royal Naval Association, urged the metal hunt to stop in telling the paper: 'Leave our sailors alone. Let them rest in peace.'

The three ships were sunk off the Dutch coast on September 22, 1914, after being hit by torpedos from a German submarine.

HMS Aboukir was struck at 6.20am, while its fellow British warships Hogue and Cressy were also unable to avoid the German torpedos.

An estimated 1459 British soldiers aboard the armoured Royal Navy cruisers perished during the attack by the German U-9 sub.

The Times reported that local dive operators raised the alarm about the illegal salvage after seeing the damage to one of the North Sea's most popular diving sites.



Netherlands coastguard officials confirmed that salvage vessels were on the site and that they had been found with pieces of wreckage, but the destruction has not been stopped.

Marine conservationists and maritime historians have now warned Britain of the scavenging in a letter to the Ambassador to the Netherlands.

It has been alleged that two ships in the port of Scheveningen, the MS Bernica and MS Bela, are the ones responsible for the raids.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence said: 'We do not condone the unauthorised disturbance of any wreck containing human remains.'

(Daily Mail - 28 September, 2011)



## 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.



**Chatham Naval Memorial** (Photo above by Clem Rutter)



Chatham Naval Memorial (Photos from CWGC)



**THE CHATHAM NAVAL MEMORIAL**

This memorial commemorates officers, ranks and ratings of this Port who died at sea during the wars of 1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945. Actions in which they fought are recorded in the registers and on the memorial itself.

Similar memorials at Portsmouth and Plymouth commemorate men and women of those manning ports, while merchant seamen who died from enemy action and have no grave but the sea are commemorated in Liverpool and at Tower Hill in London. The names of those who died during the Second World War whilst serving in the Royal Naval Patrol Service or the Fleet Air Arm and whose graves are unknown are respectively on memorials at Lowestoft and at Lee-on-the-Solent.

Other memorials, at Halifax and Victoria in Canada, at Auckland in New Zealand, at Bombay in India, at Chittagong in Bangladesh and at Hong Kong, commemorate sailors who came from those parts of the Commonwealth, while the Newfoundland memorial at Beaumont Hamel in France bears the names of Newfoundland sailors lost at sea during the First World War.

The names of over 18,500 men and women are recorded on this memorial; of these some 8,500 died during the First World War and 10,000 during the Second World War. All were buried or lost at sea or were otherwise denied, by the fortunes of war, a known and honoured grave.

THIS MEMORIAL WAS BUILT AND IS MAINTAINED BY  
THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

1914-1918 MEMORIAL  
ARCHITECT — SIR ROBERT LORIMER,    SCULPTOR — HENRY POOLE.

1939-1945 EXTENSION  
ARCHITECT — SIR EDWARD MAUFE,    SCULPTOR — SIR CHARLES WHEELER.

(Photo by Geoffrey Gillon)

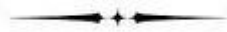


Able Seaman W. E. Fester is remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England as he has no known grave - Memorial reference 2.



(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**

*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.*



*(Photos from 1418 NOW)*