

**Woodlands Road Cemetery,  
Gillingham, Kent  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**STOKER SS/111470**

**T. R. MILLS**

**H.M.S. "GLATTON"**

**ROYAL NAVY**

**16TH SEPTEMBER, 1918**

## Thomas Richard MILLS

Thomas Richard Mills was born in Sydney, NSW to parents Thomas Richard & Ellen Mills (nee Smith). His baptism records show that he was born on 11th June, 1891 & was baptised on 2nd March, 1893 along with his brother & sister – Henry James Mills (born 1st October, 1889) & Ernestina Hephzibah Mills (born 3rd November, 1892) at Christ Church, Springwood, NSW. The family lived at North Springwood & Thomas Richard Mills (father) was listed as a Painter.

A death for Thomas R. Mills, father of Thomas Richard Mills (jnr), was registered in 1906 in the district of Springwood, NSW.

Thomas Richard Mills joined the Royal Navy on 19th October, 1911 with a service number of SS/111470 (Portsmouth). His occupation was listed as Ordinary Seaman. According to the Royal Navy records – Thomas Richard Mills was born on 11th July, 1890.

Thomas Richard Mills was posted to H.M.S. *Victory II* as Stoker 2nd Class on 19th October, 1911. He was transferred to H.M.S. *Renown* on 12th November, 1911 then transferred back to H.M.S. *Victory II* on 9th March, 1912. Stoker 2nd Class Mills was then transferred to H.M.S. *Minerva* on 11th August, 1912. He was promoted to Stoker 1st Class on 19th October, 1912, still serving on H.M.S. *Minerva*.

Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills was transferred back to H.M.S. *Victory II* on 4th *December, 1912 then transferred to H.M.S. Minerva II on 22nd July, 1913. He was then transferred to H.M.S. Dido II on 29th August, 1913 then back to H.M.S. Victory 2 on 16th December, 1913. Stoker 1st Class Mills was transferred to H.M.S. Psyche on 29th May, 1914 then to H.M.S. Penguin on 23rd January, 1915. He was transferred to H.M.S. Proserpine on 1st July, 1915 then back to H.M.S. Victory 2 on 7th September, 1917.*

Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills was transferred to H.M.S. *Glatton* on 24th August, 1918.



**H.M.S. Glatton**

## **H.M.S. Glatton**

*HMS Glatton and her sister ship Gorgon were originally built as coastal defence ships for the Royal Norwegian Navy, as Bjørgvin and Nidaros respectively. She was requisitioned from Norway at the beginning of World War I, but was not completed until 1918 although she had been launched over three years earlier.*

*After completion, Glatton sailed for Dover on 11 September 1918 to prepare for the offensive planned for later that month. At 6:15 on the evening of 16 September, Glatton's midships 6-inch magazine had a low-order explosion that ignited the cordite stored there. Flames shot through the roof of 'Q' turret, starboard midside, and started to spread aft. The ship's captain—Commander N. W. Diggle—ordered the forward magazines flooded, but the crew were unable to flood the rear magazines as the flames blocked access to the magazine flooding controls. The presence of the ammunition ship Gransha only 150 yards (140 m) away risked a massive explosion that would devastate Dover if Glatton's rear magazine exploded and set off Gransha's ammunition. Vice-Admiral Keyes—who had been walking with Commander Diggle when Glatton's magazine exploded—boarded the recently arrived destroyer Cossack once apprised of the danger. He ordered Cossack to torpedo Glatton in an attempt to flood the magazine before it detonated. Cossack's first 18-inch (460 mm) torpedo struck the anti-torpedo bulge amidships, but failed to explode because it had been fired too close to Glatton. Her second torpedo blew a hole in Glatton at 7:40, but the torpedo's 200-pound (91 kg) warhead was too small to penetrate through her bulge and Glatton remained afloat, still burning. Keyes transferred to the destroyer Myngs and ordered her to fire on Glatton with her 21-inch (530 mm) torpedoes at 8:15. They were aimed at the hole blown in Glatton's starboard side by Cossack's second torpedo and succeeded in causing Glatton to capsize until her masts and superstructure rested on the harbour bottom and dousing the fire. Casualties were heavy: 60 men were killed outright and 124 were injured of whom 19 later died of their burns.*

### **Inquiry**

*A Court of Enquiry held immediately afterwards found that the explosion had occurred in the midships 6-inch magazine situated between the boiler and engine rooms. The cause was more difficult to establish, but the Court did note that the stokers were in the habit of piling the red-hot clinker and ashes from the boilers against the bulkhead directly adjoining the magazine to cool down before they were sent up the ash ejector. The magazine was well insulated with 5 inches (13 cm) of cork, covered by wood planking .75 inches (1.9 cm) thick and provided with special cooling equipment so it was not likely that the cordite had spontaneously combusted. The magazine of Glatton's sister ship Gorgon was emptied and examined. The red lead paint on the bulkhead was blistered beneath the lagging and tests at the National Physical Laboratory demonstrated that it had been subject to temperatures of at least 400 °F (204 °C). Recorded temperatures inside the magazine did not exceed 83 °F (28 °C) and a test of red-hot ashes was inconclusive as the temperature in the lagging only reached 70 °F (21 °C) with occasional hot spots of 150 °F (66 °C). Other tests did reveal that the cork could give off flammable fumes under high heat and pressurized air. While not entirely satisfied with this conclusion it found in April 1919 that "The slow combustion of the cork lagging of the 6-inch midship magazine of the Glatton led to the ignition of the magazine and then to the ignition of the cordite in it and so caused the explosion."*

*As a precaution, Gorgon's lagging was stripped out and replaced with silicate wool, revealing the real cause. Part of the cork was missing and folded newspapers were found in the empty space which were left there by the dockyard workers during construction. Furthermore, a number of rivets were entirely missing which meant that 0.5 inches (12.7 mm) holes were present, which could have allowed the hot ashes to ignite the newspapers. The forced-draught pressure in the boiler room would have supplied air through the rivet holes, causing the cork to give off flammable gases, and eventually ignite the cordite charges.*

### **Aftermath**

*Glatton remained in Dover Harbour, an obstruction to shipping, with her hull visible at low tide as the Harbour Board could not afford the £45,000 quoted on average by salvage companies. Finally they asked the Harbourmaster, Captain John Iron, if he could do it for less. He estimated it would cost about £5,000 if he was granted use of the salvage craft already at Dover. The Board accepted his offer and work began in May 1925. Some 12,000 short tons (11,000 t) of silt were removed from underneath Glatton and her mainmast and superstructure were blasted away from the wreck. Four lifting lighters, with a capacity of 1,000 long tons (1,000 t), were hired, but they would not suffice to lift a water-logged 5,000 long tons (5,100 t) ship. It was necessary to seal all of the holes on her topside and pump air into each compartment at a rate of 70,000 cubic feet (2,000 m<sup>3</sup>) per minute to restore her buoyancy. The first attempt to lift her began on 2 December 1925 and was successful in breaking the suction holding her to the bottom in combination with the rising tide. That was enough for the first try and the major lifting effort began the following day. Slowly she was moved, taking advantage of the tides, until on 16 March 1926 she was moved to a deep gully*

next to the western pier of the submarine harbour, close by the shore. The total cost was considerably more than originally estimated, but still far less than that quoted by the salvage companies, at no more than £12,000. There she remains, buried by landfill underneath the current car ferry terminal.

### **Memorial**

A memorial was erected at St Mary's Church and Grange Road cemetery in Gillingham, Kent. It was used from 1867 until 1973 when the site was largely cleared of memorials to provide a community open space for the local population. Then Woodlands Road Cemetery was used and this is the site of HMS Glatton's Memorial with the graves of one officer and 56 men.

(Information of H.M.S. Glatton from Wikipedia)

Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills died on 16th September, 1918. He was killed or died by means other than disease, accident or enemy action.



**H.M.S. Glatton capsized In Dover Harbour**

Newspaper item – *The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia – 30 November, 1918:

### **WAR SHIP ON FIRE AT DOVER**

#### **Torpedoed to Avert Disaster**

*A great disaster was narrowly averted at Dover just before the last big Allied advance in Belgium. The details of the incident have now been disclosed.*

*The monitor Glatton, which was anchored in Dover harbor, took fire. Several explosions occurred, shaking the town, and the fire spread, threatening to ignite the Glatton's magazines and other war ships and an ammunition ship which were lying near. Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes secured military help to keep the crowds from the harbor front, and himself boarded the Glatton. Many tugs and pinnaces assisted in removing the wounded. In order to prevent a greater disaster Sir Roger Keyes ordered the destroyer Broke to torpedo the burning ship. Accordingly three torpedoes were fired, and the Glatton sank. The Admiralty report at the time stated that 50 lives were lost.*

Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills is remembered on Naval Memorial in Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham, Kent, England – Plot number Naval. 15. 804-6. The remains of 1 officer and 56 ratings lost with H.M.S. *Glatton* were interred in Gillingham New Cemetery, Naval Reserves Graves 805 & 806 on 3rd April, 1930.

Newspaper item – *Western Morning News*, Plymouth, Devon, England – 27 March, 1930:

#### **FULL NAVAL HONOURS FOR H.M.S. GLATTON VICTIMS**

*The remains of the one officer and 57 men who perished when H.M.S. Glatton was sunk in Dover Harbour on September 16, 1918, will be buried in the naval section of Gillingham (Kent) Cemetery on April 3. All the remains will be conveyed in one coffin, which will be placed on a gun-carriage. The interment will be accompanied by full naval honours.*

Newspaper item – *Dover Express*, Dover, Kent, England - 28 March, 1930:

#### **THE REMAINS FROM THE “GLATTON”**

##### **UNFOUNDED STATEMENTS AS TO SACRIFICE OF MEN**

*It is stated that the bones found in H.M.S. “Glatton” when it was broken up about two years ago have now been removed to the Royal Naval Hospital at Chatham and will be buried at Gillingham on April 3rd. The remains found were several skulls and a number of bones. The London newspaper on Wednesday, when stating this, added that the “Glatton” was torpedoed with these men on board to save Dover. The statement in its implication that the vessel was torpedoed with men alive on board is wholly untrue. The explosion on the “Glatton” occurred at 6.20 pm The fire did not gain very quickly. All who could be found alive were rescued and a good many dead removed. The vessel was sunk between 8.30 and 8.45 pm, and at that time was a mass of red hot steel with shells exploding every minute, and it is not conceivable that anyone alive could be on board. The men of the “Glatton” are buried at St. James’ Cemetery. The proposal is now to inter the remains found on the wreck apart from their comrades.*

Newspaper item – *Western Morning News*, Plymouth, Devon, England - 4 April, 1930:

#### **NAVAL HEROES HONOURED**

##### **BURIED 11 ½ YEARS AFTER TRAGIC END**

*The remains of one naval officer and 56 men who lost their lives when H.M.S. Glatton was destroyed in Dover Harbour on September 16, 1918, were to-day laid to rest in Gillingham New Cemetery with full naval honours.*

*The Glatton had on board a large quantity of explosives when she caught fire and she was torpedoed in order to save Dover from destruction. The remains of the 57 men who perished in the vessel were recovered when the Glatton, which was raised and beached in February, 1926, was being broken up. It is believed that they were all killed by the explosion in the magazine and not by the sinking of the vessel, Today, eleven and a half years afterwards, the relics of the men who had died together were all buried in one coffin.*

#### **PUBLIC DO HONOUR**

*Torrential rain was falling as the funeral procession emerged from the gates of Gillingham Naval Hospital, the starting point, but, despite the downpour, crowds of sightseers had gathered in adjoining streets, and the entire route of the procession was lined with people. Naval funeral do not attract undue attention in Gillingham, but it was obvious that the public wished to do special honour to this occasion, and blinds were lowered and many business premises temporarily closed.*

*Rain robbed the procession of some of its pageantry, as the blue jacket mourners wore their service oilskins, hiding all medals and decorations, and the full dress uniforms of the officers were hidden by their overcoats. Relatives of the dead men did not follow the procession, but met the cortege on arrival at the cemetery, with the exception of two elderly men carrying wreaths, who walked all the way behind the sailors.*

#### **SAD SCENE AT GRAVESIDE**

*When near the cemetery gates the service mourners altered their pace from quick march to solemn slow march, and*

*the gun-carriage bearing the solitary coffin jolted its way towards the grave between lines of men from Chatham Naval Barracks resting on reversed arms. About one hundred relatives had gathered at the graveside, and formed a pathetic group in the pitiless rain. They were men and women of varying ages, and from all parts of the country.*

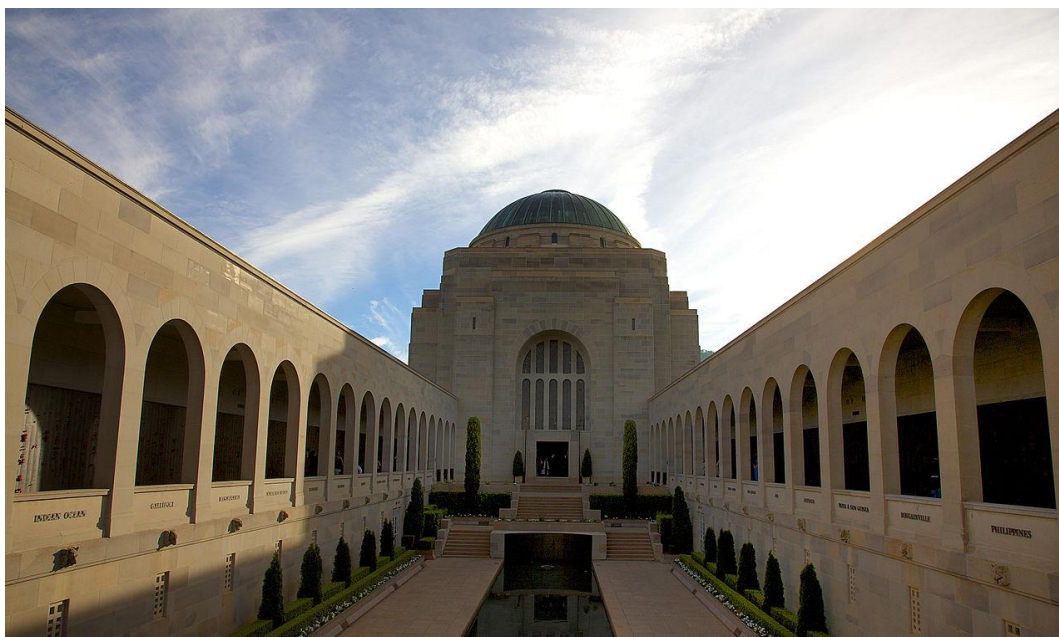
*As the service proceeded many women wept quietly, the sorrow of their bereavement becoming very poignant after nearly twelve years. There was no hysteria, only quiet, but deep, grief simply expressed.*

*Among the officers who attended were Admiral Sir Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair, Commander –in-Chief at the Nore, himself recently bereaved by the death of his wife, and Rear-Admiral A. J. B. Sirling, Admiral-Superintendent, Chatham Dockyard. Nearly 300 officers and men attended from Chatham Naval Barracks. The Royal Marines were represented by a strong detachment, and there were representatives of the Atlantic and Reserve Fleets.*

*The committal portion of the burial service was recited by Church of England, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist chaplains.*

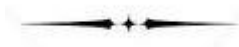
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills, service number – SS/111470, of H.M.S. Glatton, Royal Navy. He was the son of the late Ellen Kearns (formerly Mills), of Holland-Dene, North Springwood, New South Wales, Australia.

Stoker 1st Class Thomas Richard Mills 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)

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial & National Archives





**Thomas Richard Mills** (Photo from *The Blue Mountain Echo* - 20 Dec 1918)



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **Killed in Action**

#### **THOMAS RICHARD MILLS**

Our heroes fall at sea as well as on land, and it is with regret we record the passing of a young son-of –the-sea, who had 3 ½ years' service to his credit. Over the week, Mrs Ellen Kearns, of North Springwood, received official information that her son, Thomas Richard Mills, Str. 1st class, was killed while in naval action on the H.M.S. "Glatton" during her destruction in Dover Harbour on 16th September, 1918. The young sailor, who had passed his 27th milestone, joined the British Navy in October, 1911, and for the past 3 ½ years was on active service in the doings on the deep sea. He was a brother to Frank L. Mills, with the A.I.F. in France, and step-brother to H. J. Smith, late of the A.I.F., now residing at North Springwood.

(*The Blue Mountain Echo*, NSW, Australia - 20 December, 1918)

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#### **RETURN THANKS**

Mr and Mrs Kearns and family, of North Springwood, return Thanks for all letters and kind expressions of sympathy during their late sad bereavement on the loss of their son and brother, Thos. R. Mills, H.M.S. "Glatton", killed in action.

(*The Blue Mountain Echo*, NSW, Australia - 20 December, 1918)

## Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham Kent, England

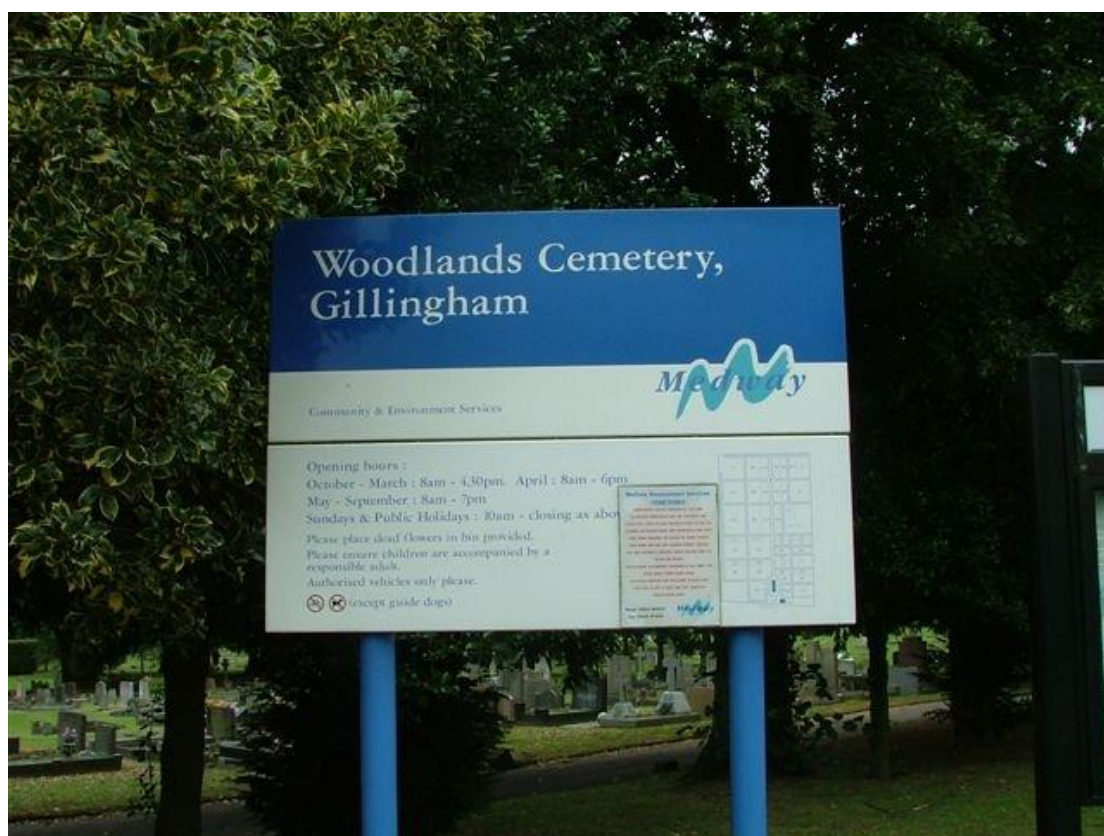
There is a large naval section in Gillingham (Woodlands) Cemetery which was reserved by the Admiralty and served the Royal Naval Hospital in Windmill Road. The section contains most of the war graves as well as burials of the pre-war and inter-war years.

Among the First World War burials in the naval section are those from HMS 'Bulwark', blown up in Sheerness Harbour in November 1914, HMS 'Princess Irene' which suffered an internal explosion in May 1915 and HMS 'Glatton' which suffered the same fate in Dover Harbour in September 1918 (the bodies were not recovered until March 1930). The plot also contains a number of graves resulting from the air raid on Chatham Naval Barracks on 3 September 1917.

In all, Gillingham (Woodlands) Cemetery contains 837 burials and commemorations of the First World War. 82 of the burials are unidentified and there are special memorials commemorating a number of casualties buried in other cemeteries in the area whose graves could not be maintained. Second World War burials number 385, 21 of these burials are unidentified. Most are in the naval section. There are 2 Foreign National war burials and 2 non war service burials.

There are six Australian burials here – two from World War 1 & one serving with the Royal Navy & four from World War 2.

*(Information from CWGC)*



*(Photo from Geoffrey Gillon)*





*(Photos from CWGC)*

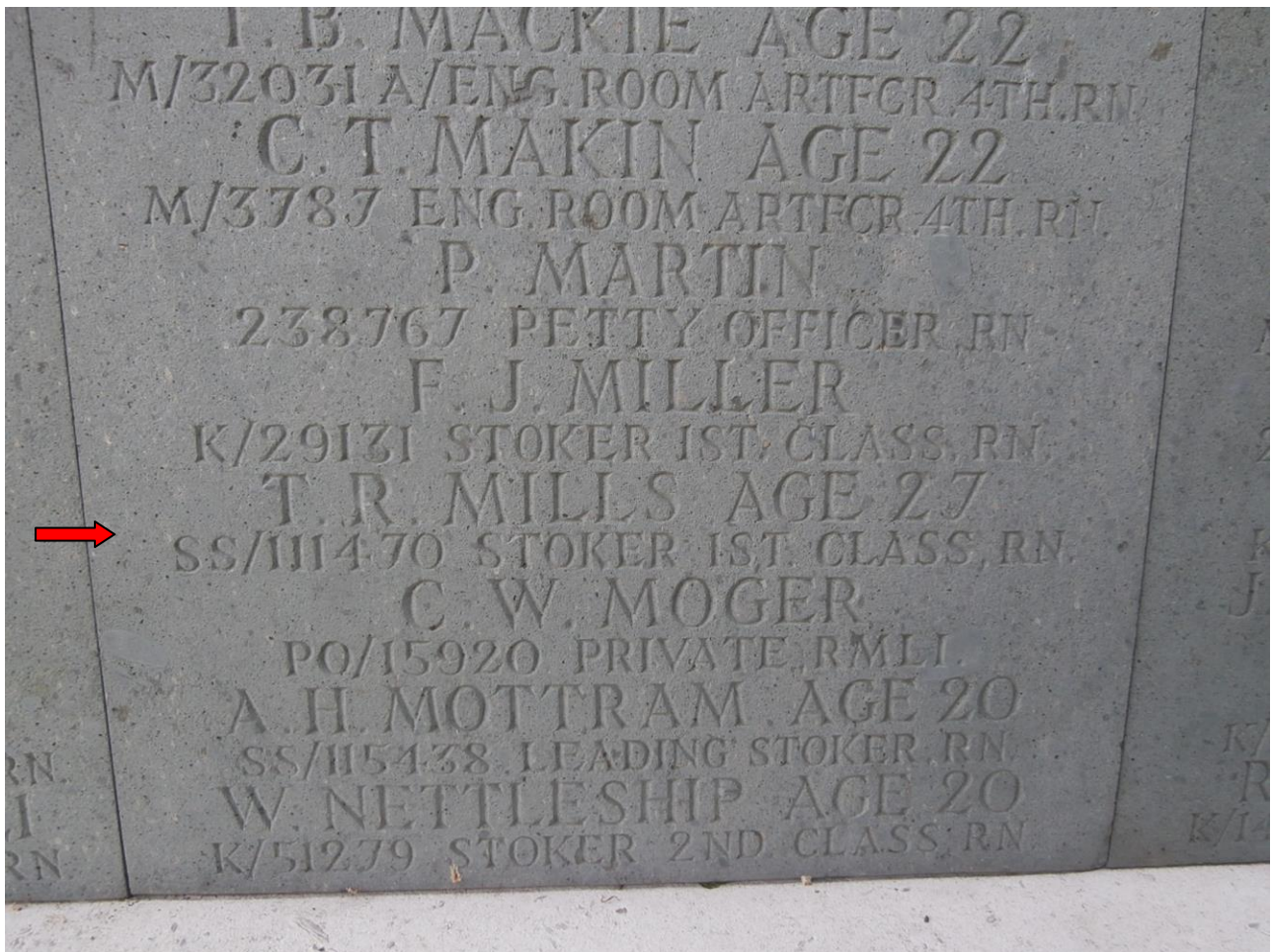


Photo of Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class T. R. Mills' name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Naval Memorial in Woodlands Cemetery, Gillingham Kent, England.



H.M.S. Glatton War Memorial, Woodlands Road Cemetery, Gillingham (Photos by David Anstiss)

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND OF FOUR OFFICERS AND THEIR LIVES THROUGH THE ON THE 16TH SEPTEMBER 1918 MEN ARE BURIED		TO THE HONOURED MEMORY NINETY-FOUR MEN WHO LOS DISASTER TO H.M.S. GLATTON ONE OFFICER AND FIFTY-SIX IN THIS GRAVE	
A. ALFORD AGE 34 308073 STOKER PETTY OFFICER RN	W. G. GROVE AGE 30 K/39457 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	G. A. OWEN AGE 36 201273 ACT. CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RN	F. RHODES AGE 25 M/2451 SHIPWRIGHT 2ND CL RN
G. ALLANTON AGE 19 J/36211 ORD. SEAMAN RN	P. J. R. HARDEN AGE 18 J/35740 ORD. SEAMAN RN	F. W. SHADWELL AGE 26 M/10909 ENG. ROOM ARTICR. 2RD RN	A. B. SHAW AGE 28 M/22794 2RD WRITER RN
W. AMES K/25984 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	W. F. HARDEN AGE 32 LZ/5095 ABLE SEAMAN RNVR	A. J. SMALL AGE 19 K/51313 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN	F. W. SIMPSON AGE 30 M/32151 A/ENG ROOM ARTICR. 4TH RN
A. BAKER 288508 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	C. B. HEATH AGE 29 K/41973 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	M. SMALL AGE 19 K/51318 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN	T. SMITH K/51330 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN
B. BARLOW AGE 22 J/15962 ABLE SEAMAN RN	A. H. HILL AGE 41 354708 OFFICERS COOKST. CL RN	T. STAMP 191430 STOKER PETTY OFFICER RN	C. A. STARKEY AGE 29 K/3796 STOKER PETTY OFFICER RN
A. BEATTY AGE 22 M/28409 A/ENG ROOM ARTICR. 4TH RN	C. HOWARD K/13989 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	W. STENSON AGE 39 K/4005 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	G. STUBBS AGE 19 K/51329 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN
W. S. BENNETT AGE 26 K/19444 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	A. J. JOHNSON K/23408 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	M. SULLIVAN AGE 28 M/2503 SHIPWRIGHT 2ND CL RN	M. SULLIVAN AGE 28 M/2503 SHIPWRIGHT 2ND CL RN
J. W. BENSON AGE 30 M/15317 ENG ROOM ARTICR. 2ND RN	W. T. JONES AGE 20 K/35845 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	G. H. TAYLOR AGE 35 298837 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	G. H. TAYLOR AGE 35 298837 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN
T. BRIDGE AGE 23 55116362 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	E. KNAPP K/17749 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	M. WAUGH AGE 19 K/51311 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN	J. J. WHITTINGTON AGE 17 H/10879 BOY SEAMAN RN
W. A. CARD AGE 25 K/7261 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	P. KNIGHT K/26123 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	J. WILLS AGE 21 K/11520 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN	R. MCC WRAY AGE 27 K/51312 ACT. LEADING STOKER RN
H. CAVE AGE 29 K/7775 STOKER PETTY OFFICER RN	W. LAKE AGE 33 222452 PETTY OFFICER RN		
R. CLIFTON AGE 18 J/83010 ORD. SEAMAN RN	T. B. MACKIE AGE 22 M/22074 A/ENG ROOM ARTICR. 4TH RN		
W. J. COPP AGE 25 J/109584 PETTY OFFICER RN	C. T. MAKIN AGE 22 M/3787 ENG ROOM ARTICR. 4TH RN		
C. COWDREY 271332 NCH. E. G. R. ARTICR. 2ND RN	P. MARTIN 238767 PETTY OFFICER RN		
A. CURT AGE 16 J/26100 ORD. SEAMAN RN	F. J. MILLER K/29171 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN		
T. DICKSON K/23972 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN	T. R. MILLS AGE 27 SS/11470 STOKER 1ST CLASS RN		
R. J. B. DREW RN AGE 30 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER	C. W. MOGER PO/15920 PRIVATE RMLI		
R. A. GENEE AGE 29 312415 STOKER PETTY OFFICER RN	A. H. MOTTRAM AGE 20 SS/11638 LEADING STOKER RN		
R. D. GREENWOOD AGE 21 M/25851 ENG ROOM ARTICR. 4TH RN	W. NETTLESHIP AGE 20 K/51329 STOKER 2ND CLASS RN		



(Photo by Brad Evans – Find a Grave)



