

**Acton Cemetery,  
Greater London  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**9111/S STOKER**

**W. RICHARDS**

**ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE**

**H.M.S. *HINDUSTAN***

**12TH MAY, 1918    Age 38**

## William RICHARDS

William Richards was born in Canterbury, Kent, England on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1879 to parents Alfred & Mary Richards (nee Hollands). William Richards was baptised on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1880 at Harbledown, Kent.

Alfred Richards, father of William Richards, died in March, 1881 at Harbledown, Kent. He was buried on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1881.

The 1881 England Census recorded William Richards as a 1 year old living at Rough Common, Harbledown, Kent with his widowed mother & siblings. His mother was listed as Mary Richards (aged 25, born Harbledown, Kent). William was the youngest of five children listed on this Census – Ann Elizabeth Richards (Scholar, aged 7, born Canterbury, Kent), Alfred Richards (Scholar, aged 6, born Harbledown, Kent), George T. Richards (Scholar, aged 5, born Harbledown, Kent), Stephen H. Richards (Scholar, aged 4, born Harbledown, Kent) then William. Also listed was George Hollands (Agricultural Labourer, widower, aged 56, born Harbledown, Kent), father of Mary Richards.

Mary Richards married Elias Pilcher Fedarb in the September quarter, 1883 in the district of Canterbury, Kent.

The 1891 England Census recorded William Richards as an 11 year old living with his brother, mother & stepfather & step siblings in a four roomed dwelling at Rough Common, Harbledown, Kent. William's mother was listed as Mary Fedarb (aged 35) & her new husband was Elias Fedarb (Farm Labourer, aged 38, born Canterbury, Kent). Also listed was William's older brother – George Richards (aged 15). There were four other children of Elias & Mary Fedarb listed on this Census – Allen Fedarb (aged 6), Emily Fedarb (aged 6), Edward Fedarb (aged 6 months) & Minnie Fedarb (aged 4).

[\*Elias Pilcher Fedarb, born 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1852, Canterbury, Kent had previously served in the Royal Navy from 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1870 as an Ordinary Seaman & became an Able Seaman. He served for 10 years.]

[The 1901 England Census recorded the Fedarb family still living at Rough Common, Harbledown, Kent. The family listed at the address consisted of Elias Fedarb (Labourer on Farm, aged 48), Mary Fedarb (aged 45), Alfred Fedarb (Navy Man - Seaman on \_\_\_ Ship Daslin (?), aged 26), Stephen H. Fedarb (Labourer on Farm, aged 23), Edward Fedarb (aged 10) & Lucy Fedarb (aged 8).]

[The 1911 England Census recorded Elias Fedarb as a 59 year old Widower Inmate in the Canterbury Union Workhouse, Nunnery Fields, Canterbury. Mary Fedarb (Married, Housekeeper, aged 55) & her daughter Luch Fedarb (Housekeeper, aged 18) were listed in the household of Stephen Henry Richards (Single, Gravel Quarry Man, aged 34) living at Black Row, Rough Common, in the district of St. Nicholas Hospital and Harbledown near Canterbury, Kent.]

[A death was registered for Mary Fedarb, aged 55, in the March quarter, 1912 in the district of Bridge, Kent.]

William Richards enlisted with the Royal Naval Reserve. He was a Stoker & had a service number of 9111/S.

William Richards married Frederica Rose Keeble Wimpey on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1914 in All Saints' Church, South Acton, Middlesex. Their marriage was registered in the September quarter, 1914, in the district of Brentford, Middlesex. William Richards was a 34 year old Stoker living at 12 Leythe Road. His father was listed as Alfred Richards, Gardener, deceased. Frederica Rose Keeble Wimpey was aged 26, from 12 Leythe Road. Her father was listed as Frederick Wimpey, Pianoforte Maker.

A birth was registered for William A. Richards, mother's maiden name Wimpey, in the September quarter, 1915 in the district of Brentford, Middlesex. Frederica Rose Keeble Wimpey also had another son – Phillip Frederick Waters Wimpey who was born on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1910. William Richards may have been his father.

Stoker William Richards died on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1918 at Chatham Hospital. Cause of death as recorded on Service Registers and Registers of Deaths & Injuries – "Status Epilepticus. Heart & Resp. Failure."

A death for William Richards, aged 38, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Medway, Kent.

Stoker William Richards is remembered on the Screen Wall Panel 6 (Section C, Row C, Grave 1) at Acton New Cemetery, Willesden Lane, Acton, Greater London & is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

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According to details found on the Naval Casualties Indexes – War Grave Rolls First World War – Relatives details – Widow – remarried & resident in Australia. Sister – Mrs A. E. Bailey, 12 Lythe Road, Acton.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Stoker William Richards – service number 9111/S, aged 38, of H.M.S. *Hindustan*, Royal Naval Reserve. He was the son of the late Alfred and Mary Richards, of Rough Common, Canterbury; husband of Mrs Frederic Burney\* (formerly Richards), of Lillyhulme, Harris St., Paddington, Sydney, Australia. (\*Correct name is Frederica Burney. Frederica R. K. Richards remarried in September quarter, 1919, in the district of Rochford, Essex. She married Thomas Burney.)

### **HMS Hindustan**

Upon completion in March 1905, HMS *Hindustan* was placed in reserve. She went into full commission on 22nd August, 1905 at Portsmouth Dockyard for service in the Atlantic Fleet. She transferred to the Channel Fleet in March, 1907. Under a fleet reorganization on 24th March, 1909, the Channel Fleet became the 2nd Division, Home Fleet, and *Hindustan* became a Home Fleet unit in that division. She underwent a refit at Portsmouth in 1909–1910.

Under a fleet reorganization in May, 1912, *Hindustan* and all seven of her sisters of the King Edward VII class (*Africa*, *Britannia*, *Commonwealth*, *Dominion*, *Hibernia*, *King Edward VII* and *Zealandia*) were assigned to form the 3rd Battle Squadron, assigned to the First Fleet, Home Fleet. The squadron was detached to the Mediterranean in November, 1912 because of the First Balkan War (October, 1912 – May, 1913); it arrived at Malta on 27th November, 1912 and subsequently participated in a blockade by an international force of Montenegro and in an occupation of Scutari. *Hindustan* and *Africa* returned to the United Kingdom in February, 1913 and rejoined the Home Fleet; they were attached to the 4th Battle Squadron, then transferred back to the 3rd Battle Squadron upon that squadron's return to the United Kingdom and the Home Fleet on 27th June, 1913.

Upon the outbreak of World War I, the 3rd Battle Squadron was assigned to the Grand Fleet and based at Rosyth. It was used to supplement the Grand Fleet's cruisers on the Northern Patrol. On 2nd November, 1914, the squadron was detached to reinforce the Channel Fleet and was rebased at Portland. It returned to the Grand Fleet on 13th November, 1914.

*Hindustan* served in the Grand Fleet until April, 1916. During sweeps by the fleet, she and her sister ships often steamed at the heads of divisions of the far more valuable dreadnoughts, where they could protect the dreadnoughts by watching for mines or by being the first to strike them.

On 29th April, 1916, the 3rd Battle Squadron was rebased at Sheerness, and on 3rd May, 1916 it was separated from the Grand Fleet, being transferred to the Nore Command. *Hindustan* remained there with the squadron until February, 1918.

*Hindustan* left the 3rd Battle Squadron in February, 1918 when she selected to serve as a parent ship for preparations for the Zeebrugge Raid and first Ostend Raid and served as depot ship for the raids. She was stationed in the Swin in this capacity until May, 1918, and collided with and badly damaged the destroyer HMS *Wrestler* in May, 1918. (Wikipedia)



**HMS Hindustan**

Symonds & Co - This is photograph Q 21350 from the collections of the Imperial War Museums (collection no. 2107-01)

## Zeebrugge Raid

The Zeebrugge Raid was an attempt by the Royal Navy to block the Belgian port of Bruges-Zeebrugge. The British intended to sink obsolete ships in the canal entrance, to prevent German vessels from leaving port. The port was used by the Imperial German Navy as a base for U-boats and light shipping, which were a threat to Allied shipping, especially in the English Channel. Several attempts to close the Flanders ports by bombardment failed and Operation Hush, a plan to advance up the coast in 1917, proved abortive. As shipping losses to U-boats increased, finding a way to close the ports became urgent and a raid was considered.

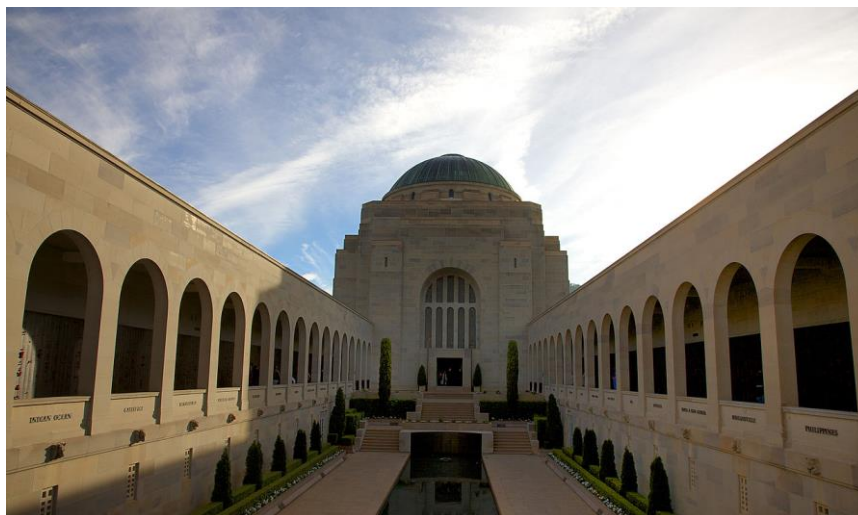
The first attempt on Zeebrugge was made on 2nd April, 1918 but cancelled at the last moment, after the wind direction changed and made it impossible to lay a smoke-screen.

On 23rd April a second attempt was made, in conjunction with a raid on the neighbouring harbour of Ostend. The raid began with a diversion against the mile-long Zeebrugge mole. The attack was led by an old cruiser, *Vindictive*, with two Mersey ferries, *Daffodil* and *Iris II*. The three ships were accompanied by two old submarines, which were filled with explosives to blow up the viaduct connecting the mole to the shore. *Vindictive* was to land a force of 200 Royal Marines at the entrance to the Bruges Canal to destroy German gun positions. At the time of the landing the wind changed and the smoke-screen to cover the ship was blown offshore. The marines immediately came under heavy fire and suffered many casualties. *Vindictive* was spotted by German gun positions and forced to land in the wrong location, resulting in the loss of the marines' heavy gun support. Eventually the submarine HMS C3 commanded by Lt. R. D. Sandford, destroyed the viaduct with an explosion. Sandford was awarded the Victoria Cross for this action.

The attempt to sink three old cruisers, to block the flow of traffic in and out of the Port of Bruges-Zeebrugge failed. The failure of the attack on the Zeebrugge mole resulted in heavy German fire on the three blocking ships, HMS *Thetis*, *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia*, which were filled with concrete. *Thetis* did not make it to the canal entrance, after it hit an obstruction and was scuttled prematurely. The two other ships were sunk at the narrowest point of the canal. The submarines C1 under Lieut. A.C Newbold and C3 under Lieut. R.D. Sandford were old, each with a volunteer crew of one other officer and four ratings. They had five tons of amatol packed into their fore-ends and were to be driven into the viaduct and then blown up, to prevent reinforcement of the German garrison on the mole.<sup>[20]</sup> The crews were to abandon their submarines shortly before the collision with the viaduct, leaving the submarines to steer themselves automatically. During the passage from Dover, C1 parted with its tow and arrived too late to take part in the operation. Sandford, commanding C3, elected to steer his ship into the viaduct manually instead of depending on the automatic system.

British casualties were 583 men and German losses were 24 men; the raid was publicised by the British around the world as a great success and many medals were awarded. (Wikipedia)

Stoker William Richards 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)

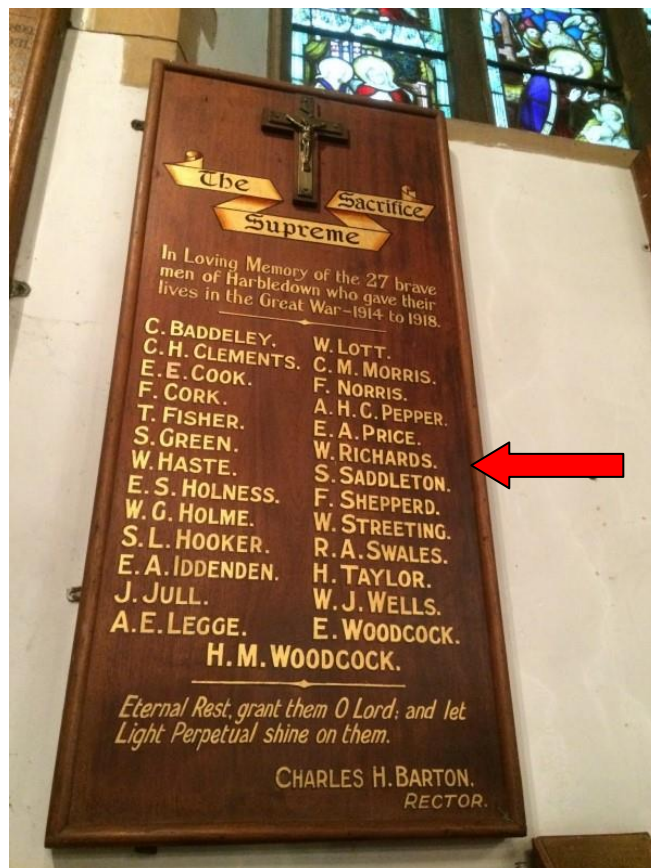


W. Richards is remembered on the Harbledown War Memorial located in Churchyard of St. Michael and All Angels' Parish Church, Summer Hill, Harbledown, Canterbury, Kent, England.



**Harbledown War Memorial** (Photo by KentFallen)

W. Richards is also remembered on the Roll of Honour Board located inside St. Michael and All Angels' Parish Church, Summer Hill, Harbledown, Canterbury, Kent, England.



**St. Michael and All Angels' Parish Church Roll of Honour, Harbledown** (Photo by J. Cotterill 2015)

Stoker William Richards Service Record Card is available to purchase from National Archives, UK.



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **A WHITE MAN'S GRAVE**

Described by his superiors as "a white man and one of the best of them." Stoker W. Richards was given a naval funeral at Acton.

He stoked on a warship in the dash on Zeebrugge, but the day after his return from special leave he was found lying unconscious in the stokehole and died seven hours afterwards.

*(Birmingham Daily Gazette – 23 May, 1918)*

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### **ZEEBRUGGE HERO'S SUDDEN DEATH**

#### **A NATIVE OF ROUGH COMMON, NEAR CANTERBURY**

A Naval funeral was accorded the remains of Stoker William Richards, aged 38, of Acton, who died suddenly in Gillingham Naval Hospital, near Chatham. He was on one of the warships that formed the escort in the dash on Zeebrugge Harbour, and for his part in that achievement, he was granted four days' special leave. He was home on the day prior to his death, and then seemed to be in good health. The next day he was picked up unconscious in the stokehold of a battleship, and was at once taken to hospital, where he lay for seven hours, oxygen being applied without effect. He passed away without regaining consciousness, death due to apoplexy. Deceased leaves a widow and two young children.

Stoker Richards was born and brought up in the village of Rough Common, near Canterbury, and lived there until old enough to join the Navy. He was the youngest son of Mr A. Richards, who died about the same time William was born. Mr A, Richards, his father, was brought up at Cherry Garden Farm, where his parents lived for many years. William's mother was the daughter of Mr and Mrs G. Hollands, and all lived for many years at Rough Common and died there.

For about 15 years Stoker Richards had been well-known in the neighbourhood of Acton, which he frequently visited during his seafaring life. He had been for some ten years in the Naval Reserve prior to the outbreak of war, and had done stoking on liners as well as on land for the Kensington Borough Council.

*(Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald, Whitstable, Kent – 15 June, 1918)*

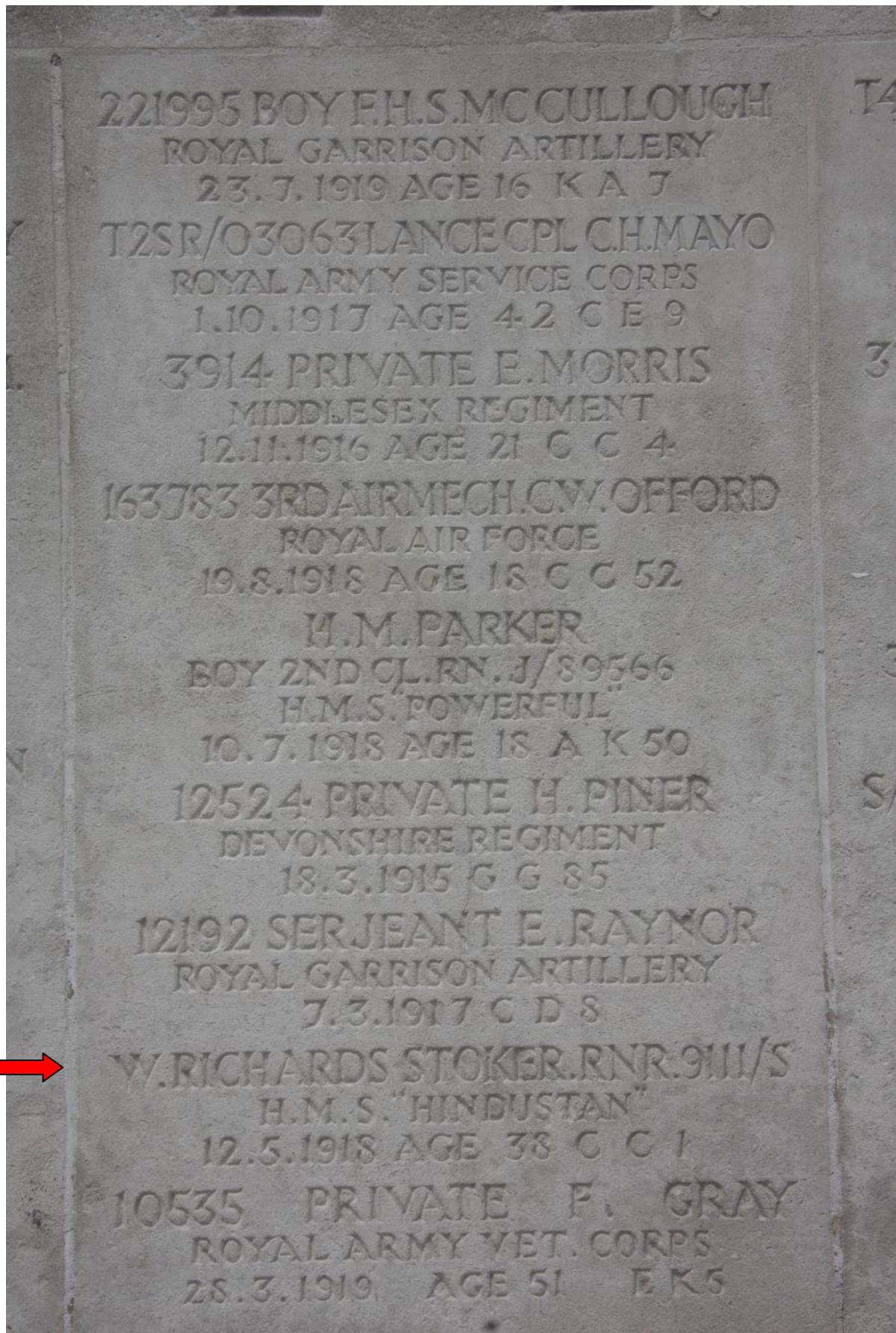
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### **Acton Cemetery, Greater London**

The graves of both World War casualties are scattered throughout the cemetery. There are now 80 war casualties from World War 1 and 60 from World War 2 commemorated in this site. Of these 140 almost 60 are named on a Screen Wall, which is to be found to the left of the main entrance, as is the Cross of Sacrifice.



Photo of Stoker William Richard's name of the Screen Wall at Acton Cemetery, Middlesex, England.



(Photos by julia&keld)





Acton Cemetery - Cross of Sacrifice (Photo by David Hawgood)