Willie Sutton Fisher





HMS “Black Prince”

Rank: - Ordinary Seaman

Number: - J/41122

Regiment: - Royal Navy H.M.S. “Black Prince.”

Killed in Action: - HMS Black Prince sunk with loss of all 903 lives during Battle of Jutland, 31/05/1916 Age: 20 years

Memorial: - Plymouth Naval Memorial Panel 13

Batley News, 10 Jun 1916 (photo)

Family Details

Willie was born in Carlinghow on the 25th December1895 the only son of Herbert & Ellen Fisher nee Sutton who had married on 20th August 1892 at Batley Parish Church. He was baptised at St. John's Church, Carlinghow on the 27th August 1895 when the family lived at Providence Terrace and his father's occupation was a porter. His sister Mary Ann was born in1894 at Carlinghow but before 1901 Birstall born Herbert had changed his occupation and moved his family to live at 42, New Street, Hemsworth and he was employed as coal belt man (above ground).

Sarah Ann was born in 1901 and Emma late 1902 at Kinsley, Yorkshire followed by Lizzie in 1909 at Birstall. In 1911 the family was living in an eight roomed home at 6, Brookroyd, Batley and Herbert was a wool dyer. Emma died in 1918.

Before he enlisted Willie worked in the rag department of Messrs. George Hirst and Sons, Britannia Mills, and was a member of Birstall Liberal Club. He was also connected with Brownhill, St. Saviour's Church. The family moved yet again to live at Brownhill Road, Batley.

Service Details

William enlisted in May 1915 and served on HMS "Gibraltar" and HMS "Vivid" and went to the "Black Prince" in September 1915. He was home on leave for a week in November 1915 when his parents last saw him.

The Battle of Jutland unfolded in extensive manoeuvring and three main engagements (the battlecruiser action, the fleet action and the night action), from 31 May to 1 June 1916**,** off the North Sea coast of Denmark's Jutland Peninsula. It was the largest naval battle in that war and the only full-scale clash of "dreadnought" battleships. The German High Seas Fleet hoped to weaken the Royal Navy by launching an ambush on the British Grand Fleet in the North Sea. German Reinhard Scheer planned to lure out both Admiral Sir David Beatty's Battlecruiser Force and Admiral Sir John Jellicoe's Grand Fleet. Scheer hoped to destroy Beatty's force before Jellicoe arrived, but the British were warned by their codebreakers and put both forces to sea early.

Jutland was a confused and bloody action involving 250 ships and around 100,000 men. The Germans damaged Beatty's flagship HMS "Lion" and sank

HMS “Indefatigable” HMS “Queen Mary” both of which blew up when German shells hit their ammunition magazines. During the deployment, Rear Admiral Sir Robert Aubuthnot, ran dangerously close to Vice Admiral Sir David Beatty’s flagship. In fact, of his four ships, only two managed to cut across- HMS “Defence” and HMS “Warrior”. The Duke of Edinburgh and HMS “Black Prince” got left behind. Searching for her sister ships in the night “Black Prince” stumbled on the entire German battle line and was blown to pieces. The German line was between 750-1,200 yards distant. At that distance they did not have a chance although they had managed to turn away and were launching torpedoes at their aggressors. She went down fighting sending 857 officers and men to their graves.

His parents had received no news from him in the fortnight previous to the battle but they received news from the Admiralty to say that the Black Prince had been sunk and with no other evidence to the contrary it must be assumed Willie had lost his life.

It was reported that Batley men John Hermann Howe and Thornton Parker went down with the HMS “Queen Mary.”

Leading Seaman, Percy Clayton, of Industrial Avenue, Birstall survived the battle and gave a report of his experience to the Batley News reporters the following Wednesday which is in the Batley News dated 10th June 1916.

Willie was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. Saviour’s, Brownhill; Birstall Liberal Club and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group