William Charles Pearce



Rank: - Able Seaman

Number: - 187900

Regiment: - Royal Navy H.M.S. “Pembroke”

Died of Exposure: - 11th June 1915 aged 36 years

Cemetery: - Shotley (St Mary) Churchyard, Suffolk, England R.N. Plot 40

Family Details

William Charles was born in Stepney, London on 16th May 1879 the son of William Charles and Kate Pearce nee Thompson.

He married Ruth Phoebe Taylor in Kensington, London in 1901. They were living at 392, Portobello Road, London and both their fathers were deceased.

In 1911 they were living at 46, Oaks Road, Soothill, Batley with three children who were all born in Notting Hill, London. They were Eugene Amelia 1904, who was baptised at St. Mark's Old Street, London when her father's occupation was given as a bus conductor, Jesse 1906 and William 1908 the census also shows that one child had died in infancy. Jack Rollinson was born in the latter part of 1911.

William was reported to be of a reserved disposition but was liked by all with whom he came in contact.

He was in the Navy for 14 years before he came to live in Batley going to work at Soothill Coke Ovens.

Ruth married Wilfred Ernest Armitage Almond on 28th October 1918 at St. Thomas's Church, Batley and they went to live at 55, Primrose Hill, Batley.

Service Details

William Charles enlisted in the Royal Navy as an Ordinary Seaman on the 16th May 1897 and was described as being 5ft. 3inches tall with a pale complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He became an Able Seaman the following year. He served on various ships when his character was described as very good until 8th August 1902.

William accepted an invitation to rejoin the service when war broke out. At first, he was rejected as being physically unfit but when he learnt of the problem, he had an operation so that he could once again fight for his country. He disembarked on the 25th February 1915 and at Easter 1915 was appointed to H.M. Torpedo Boat Destroyer "Laverock" but was later transferred to another boat. This boat was torpedoed and although William was saved from drowning, he suffered greatly from exposure in the water and was sent to Shotley Hospital where he died sometime later of nephritis (inflammation of the kidney's).

The funeral service took place at Shotley Naval Cemetery on Monday 14th June, where the remains of another sailor were interred at the same time. Both coffins were mounted on gun carriages, draped with the Union Jack and pulled by Bluejackets. The sailors lowered the coffins into the grave and the "Last Post" was sounded.

William Charles is remembered with Honour at St. Luke's Church, Soothill, St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton and Batley War Memorial.

He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group