Thomas Nelson Wilcock



Rank: - Stoker 1st Class

Number: - K/7713

Regiment: - Royal Navy H.M.S. “Queen Mary.”

Killed in Action at Battle of Jutland: - 31/05/1916 Age: 23 years

Memorial: - Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Hampshire, England Panel 20

Family Details

Tom Nelson (Birth Reg) was born at Nailors Fold, Batley Carr on the 14th June 1892 the son of George and Mary Wilcock nee Starkey who had married on the 24th December 1887 at St. Philip the Apostle (Mission) Church, Dewsbury.

He was baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Batley Carr on 29th June 1892, on the same day as his elder brother Fred born 1889. George gave his occupation as a telephonist. Clara was born in 1888.

John Willie was born in 1894 in Batley Carr but the family moved to Fulham, London before the births of Mabel in 1896, George Whitfield 1898, Harry 1901, Albert Edward 1905, and twins, Freda Winifred and Harold 1907. In 1911 the family was living at 18, Hartopp Avenue, Fulham, London.

Service Details

Thomas enlisted at Portsmouth on the July 1910 as a stoker for 12 years. He was described as being 5 ft. 4 inches, brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion with tattoos on his arms. He saw service on various ships including " Victoria 2" "Bulwark" and "Venerable" and in 1915 was transferred to the "Queen Mary". He was with this ship from the 1st July 1915 until the 8th October and again from the 16th October until 23rd November, 24th November until 13th March 1916 and again from the 21st March, the ship was sunk on the 31st May at the Battle of Jutland.

The **battle** unfolded in extensive manouvering 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 battleships.

On 31 May 1916, *Queen Mary* put to sea with the rest of the Battlecruiser Fleet to intercept a sortie by the High Seas Fleet into the North Sea. The British were able to decode the German radio messages and left their bases before the Germans put to sea.

The German fire was accurate from the beginning, but the British overestimated the range, as the German ships blended into the haze. *Queen Mary* opened fire about 15:50 on SMS Seydlitz, using only her forward turrets. By 15:54, the range was down to 12,900 yards (11,800 m), and Beatty ordered a course change two points to starboard to open up the range at 15:57. During this period, *Queen*

Mary made two hits on *Seydlitz*, at 15:55 and 15:57, one of which caused a propellant fire that burnt out her aft superfiring turret.

Queen Mary had been hit twice by *Seydlitz* before 16:21 with unknown effects, but the German battlecruiser hit the turret face of 'Q' turret at that time and knocked out the right-hand gun in the turret. By 16:25, the range was down to 14,400 yards (13,200 m), and Beatty turned two points to starboard to open the range again. This move came too late for *Queen Mary*, however, as *Derfflinger*'s fire began to take effect, hitting her twice before 16:26. One shell hit forward and detonated one or both of the forward magazines, which broke the ship in two near the foremast. Stationed inside 'Q' turret, Midshipman Jocelyn Latham Storey survived and reported that there had been a large explosion forward which rocked the turret, breaking the left gun in half, the gun breech falling into the working chamber and the right gun coming off its trunnions. Cordite in the working chamber caught fire and produced poisonous fumes that asphyxiated some of the turret's crew. It is doubtful that an explosion forward could have done this, so 'Q' turret may have been struck by the second shell. A further explosion, possibly from shells breaking loose, shook the aft end of the ship as it began to roll over and sink. Tiger, the battlecruiser behind her, was showered with debris from the explosion and forced to steer to port to avoid her remains.

1266 crewmen were lost; eighteen survivors were picked up by the destroyers Laurel, Petard, and Tipperary, and two by the Germans.

His mother lived at 37, Kilmaine Road, Fulham, London.



HMS “Queen Mary”

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

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial, Addenda.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group