



ELLESMERE PORT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

Stoker BERNARD WILLIAMS

Royal Navy
Died 1917

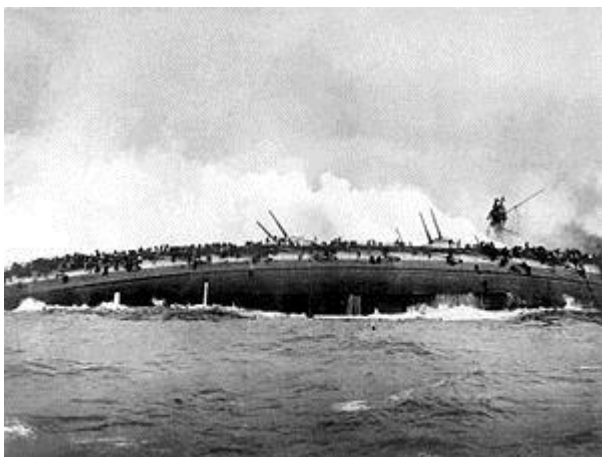
Bernard Williams was the son of John Joseph Williams, a ship and engine repairs worker on the adjacent dockyards, and his wife Jane. Bernard lived with six brothers and sisters in 9 Upper Mersey Street, Ellesmere Port. Another four had died in infancy. John Williams was born in Stoneclough near Bolton, and Jane in St Helens, while all their children were born in Ellesmere Port.



By 1911 Bernard was aged 16 and working as a hydraulic crane drive at the Shropshire Union Canal and Railway Company at their docks opposite to Upper Mersey Street (and now the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum).

When the war began he was already in the forces, having joined the Navy in February

1914. After war broke out he was engaged as a stoker on a minesweeper and on 24 January 1915 he was involved in the **Battle of Dogger Bank**, a naval battle fought near the Dogger Bank in the North Sea between squadrons of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet.



Decoded radio intercepts had given the British advance knowledge that a German raiding squadron was heading for Dogger Bank, so they dispatched their own naval forces to intercept it. The British found the Germans at the expected time and place; surprised, the smaller and slower German squadron fled for home. During a stern chase lasting several hours, the British slowly caught up with the Germans and engaged them with long-range gunfire. The British disabled **Blücher** (left), the rear German ship, but the Germans put the British flagship **HMS Lion** out of action with heavy damage. Due to a signalling mixup, the remaining British ships

broke off pursuit of the fleeing enemy force to sink **Blücher**. By the time this had been done, the German squadron had escaped; all the remaining German vessels returned safely to harbour, though some had heavy damage requiring extended repairs.

Lion made it back to port but was out of action for several months. Since the British lost no ships and suffered few casualties, while the Germans lost a ship and most of its crew, the action was considered a British victory. **Stoker Williams** was involved in the rescue of the German crew of the **Blücher** from the freezing waters of the North Sea. Meanwhile, Bernard's older brother John Joseph was also serving in the Royal Navy.

For reasons yet unknown, Bernard suffered serious paralysis, bad enough to cause his discharge from the Navy. After he returned home, and still aged only 20, he had some quality of life on his Navy pension and was able to work as a waterman at the nearby Stuarts Wharf owned by the Shell Bond works (on the Manchester Ship Canal side of the Shell Stanlow Refinery).

However, he seems to have succumbed from his debilitation and died in 1917 at the age of only twenty-two.

The funeral took place in the Methodist Chapel in Queen Street shown on the left of this view, a few yards from the Williams' home, in Upper Mersey Street.

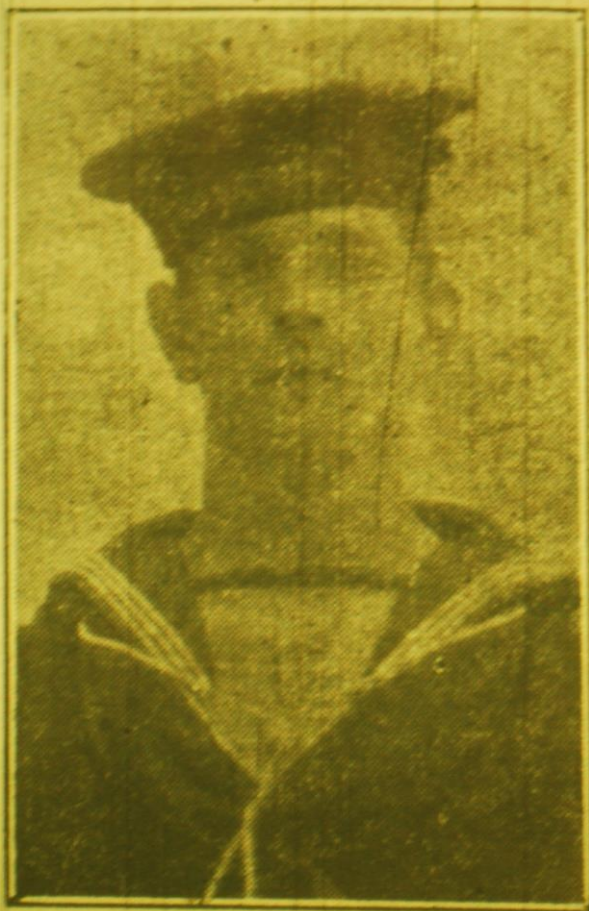


An account of his funeral was carried in the pages of the Birkenhead Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian in 1917;

THE ADVERTISER AND W
"DID HIS BIT."

HERO OF DOGGER BANK

DIES AT ELLESMERE PORT.



SEAMAN BERNARD WILLIAMS.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Bernard Williams, one of the patriotic sons of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Williams, Upper Mersey-street, Ellesmere Port, whose portrait we reproduce herewith. The deceased, who was in his 23rd year, had served as a stoker in H.M. Navy since

We regret to record the death of Mr. Bernard Williams, one of the patriotic sons of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Williams, Upper Mersey-street, Ellesmere Port, whose portrait we reproduce herewith. The deceased, who was in his 23rd year, had served as a stoker in H.M. Navy since February, 1914. After war was declared he was engaged in gathering the mines sown by the Huns. During the Dogger Bank affair, when the Blucher was sunk, deceased assisted in ingathering the struggling masses from the waters after the action had ceased. He became a victim of paralysis, which was responsible for his being discharged from the Navy; and he lived a brief well-earned period on pension as a waterman in the employ of the Shell Bond at Stuart's Wharf. The funeral took place on Wednesday afternoon, and was attended by many friends and sympathisers, conspicuous among them being a number of wounded and discharged soldiers. The coffin, which was covered with the Union Jack, was borne to the churchyard by a party of active service men from the Royal Naval Depot, Liverpool. They were accompanied by a bugler, who sounded the "Last Post" at the graveside. Service at the Queen-street Primitive Methodist Church was conducted by the Rev. John Swindon. The hymn, "Nearer my God to Thee," was sung, and as the cortege left the building, Mr. T. H. Whitby played the "Dead March" on the organ. Among the chief mourners were deceased's father and mother, brothers Eric, Reg., and Joseph, Ethel (Mrs. Elwell (sister), Mr. W. Elwell (brother-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. Gallis (uncle and aunt), Mrs. Williams, Prenton (aunt), Mr. W. Catterall (uncle), Mr. A. Williams (uncle), Mr. T. Williams (uncle), Mr. J. Catterall (uncle), Mrs. T. Williams (aunt), Mr. E. Williams (grandfather), Miss Catterall, Mrs. Challiner, and Miss Hughes (cousins), Mrs. Hughes, and Miss (Chesterton), friends. Among the many beautiful floral tributes were the following, "Father, mother, and family"; "Grandmother and Grandfather," Shell Bond, Sister and Brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Elwell, Mr. and Mrs. J. Catterall, Mr. and Mrs. Sallis, Mr. and Mrs. Williams (Prenton), "Uncles and Aunts," Mr. Griffiths, "May and Annie," Mr. and Mrs. Woods, Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell, Mr. and Mrs. Millington, Mr. and Mrs. E. Percival, Mr. and Mrs. J. Jones, Oak-street, Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, Miss Betty Woodward (Wallasey), Miss Dooley (Little Sutton), Miss Hurren, Miss Venables, Mr. and Mrs. F. Rose. A wreath was sent by a Mrs. Thomas, who herself lost a son in the North Sea, and the family appreciate the kind sympathy all the more because she is an unknown sympathiser, who they specially desire to thank. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Messrs. Thos. Warrington and Sons.

Number of Schedule 179
(To be filled up by the Enumerator
after collection.)

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

Census 1911

**Researched and written
by
Mike Royden**

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