

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.

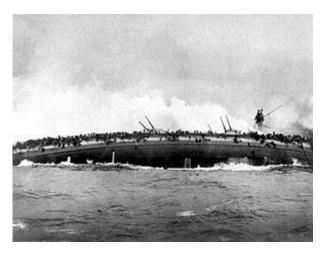




By 1911 Bernard was aged 16 and working as a hydraulic crane drive at the Shropshire Union Canal and Railway Company at their docks opposite to Upper Mersey Street (and now the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum).

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;

"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 reproduze herewith. The deceased, who was in his 23rd year, had served as a stoker in M. W.

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, 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 nimes sown by the Huns. During the Dogger Bank affair, when the Blacker was sunk, deceased assisted to ingather the struggling masses from the waters after the action had ceased. He became a violation of paralysis, which was responsible for his being discharged from the Navy; and he lived a brief well-carned period on pension as a waterman in the employ of the Shell Bond at Stuart's Wharf. The fuzeral took place on Nechanilary afternoon, and was attended by many friends a brief well-carned period on pension as a watenman in the employ of the Shell Bond at Stinat's Wharf. The fureral took, place on Nechosiday afternoon, and was attended by many friends and sympathisers, conspicuous amongs, them being a number of wounded and discharged addiers. The coffin, which was covered with the Union Jack, was borne to the chirchyard by a party of active service men from the Royal Naval Depot, Liverpool, They were accompanied by a bagler, who sounded the 'Last Post' at the graveside. Service at the Queen-street Primitive Methodist Church was conducted by the Rev. John Swindon. The laymn, 'Neares my God to Thee,' was sung, and as the cortege left the building, Mr. T. H. Whithy plaved the 'Bead March' on the organ. Among the chief mourners were deceased a father and inother, brothers Eric, Reg., and Joseph, Ethel (Mrs. Elweil (sister), Mr. W. Elwell (brother-law), Mr. Ind Mrs. Gallis (uncle and aunt), Mrs. Williams, Prenton (aunt), Mr. W. (atterall (uncle), Mr. A. Williams (uncle), Mr. T. Williams (uncle), Mr. A. Williams (uncle), Mr. T. Williams (uncle), Mr. A. Williams (grandfather), Miss Catterall, Mrs. Challiner, and Miss Hughes (cousins), Mrs. Hughes, and Miss Conde (Chester), friends. Among the many beautiful floral tributes were the following, 'Father, mother, and formity': 'Grandmother and Grandfather,' Shell Bond, Sister and Prother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Elwell, Mr. and Mrs. Williams (Prenton). "Uncles and Aunts," Mr. Griffiths, "May and Annie," Mr. and Mrs. Williams (Prenton). "Uncles and Aunts," Mr. Griffiths, "May and Annie," Mr. and Mrs. Woods, Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell, Mr. and Mrs. Williams (Prenton). "Uncles and heart 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 bocause she is an unknown sympathiser, who they specially desire to thank, The funeral arrangements were cirried out by Messrs, Thos, Warrington and Sois.

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1901 page 2 – Bernard shown at the top

	RELATIONSHIP	TIONSHIP AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.						PROPERTY	BIRTHPLACE	NATIONALITY of every Person				
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of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, (1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included.	State whether "Head," or "Wife," Son," "Daughter," or other Belative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant,"	under e state in mo. "under or " one :	infants one year the age nths as ie month," month," te. Ages	Write "Single," "Married," "Widowe," or "Widow," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Completed years the present Marriage has lasted.	Children Total Children	mach Married Won n this Schedule, ti number of :- hildren born aliv present Married (If no children b live write "None Column 7). Otal Children still		be clearly indicated.	the precise branch of anufacture, &c. of or Manufacture, the done, and the Artick ked or dealt in should	the employer. If this is clearly shown in Col. 10 the question need not be answered here. So entry needed for Demestic Servants in private employment. If conforced by a patible body	engaged in any Trade or Industry, (1) "Employer" (that is employing persons other than densestic necroants) or (2) "Worker" (tha is weeking for an employed), or (5) "Gun Account	Whatler Working at Home. Write the wards 'At Rome' opposite the name of each person carrying on Trule or ladestry at home.	(1) If been in the United King- dom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish. (2) If born in any other part of the British Empiles, write the name of the Dependency, the Province or State Province or State (1) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country. (4) If born at saw, write "At Son, Norm.—In the case of persons from delowbers than in England or	jeet by parent- age." (2) "Naturalised British sub- jeot." giving year of natu- ralisation. Or (3) If of foreign nationality, state whether "French." "Graman"	(3) "Tota Deaf," or "I and Dumh," (2) "Totally Bli (3) "Lunatic, (4) "Imbecile or "Fee minded," state the infir opposite that son's name,
For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedula.)		Ages of Males.	Petnales.		" under one,"	Born Alive.	Living.	Diod.	(See Instructions 1 to 8 of Schedule.)	and Examples on back	(See Instruction 9 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	(that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employer).		Wales, state whether "Resident" or "Visitor" in this Country.	"Russian,"	the age at be or she l afflicted.
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Researched and written by Mike Royden

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