

HENRY BOWEN

OF FARNDON

Fireman on the *RMS Lusitania*



When the *Lusitania* left New York for Liverpool on 1 May 1915, few of those who had booked their passage realised she was a vulnerable target for German submarines and that she would not be viewed as a neutral passenger liner carrying civilians including women and children. Yet the Germans had made their stance clear before she sailed, and a warning was carried in the New York Times. There is no question she was carrying ammunition, and the German Navy saw no reason to see the vessel as neutral, irrespective of which flag she was flying.

Several telegrams were received on board the vessel before she sailed, warning particular passengers not to travel, while a gaggle of reporters on the gangway demanded a meeting with the captain. This they were denied, and instead they scrambled to surround arriving passengers, eager to obtain a quote in reaction to the German warnings. What was there to worry about? It was generally believed that the *Lusitania* had the power to outpace any ship above or below the water and many of the passengers came to the simple conclusion that a luxury liner simply was not a legitimate target of the Germans as it had no military value. Any passenger

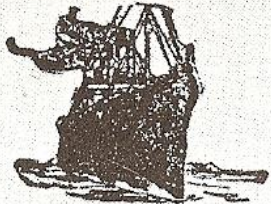
who had doubts was given further confidence when many rich and famous people boarded – why would they take a risk of travelling if there was any truth in the reports? But as she left New York shortly after noon, there was none of the usual party atmosphere on board, many now being aware of the warnings issued by the German Embassy.

On board that day as part of crew in the boiler room was Henry Bowen who was born in Farndon. Henry was the son of John Bowen from Chester, who with his father, John senior, was living in the home of farm labourer Edward Bithell in Farndon in 1851. Ten



OCEAN STEAMSHIPS.

CUNARD



EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL LUSITANIA

Fastest and Largest Steamer
now in Atlantic Service Sails
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.
Transylvania, Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.
Orduna, - - Tues., May 18, 10 A.M.
Tuscania, - - Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.
LUSITANIA, Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.
Transylvania, Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.

Gibraltar-Genoa-Naples-Piraeus
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

years on, John junior was working as a carter on the farm of William Morris on the Stretton Hall estate near Farndon. By 1864, John was married to Sarah Ann Whitley, a Welsh girl from Cymmau, Caergwle, just the other side of Wrexham, and was now the father of a newly born son Henry. Still living in Farndon, their second child Jane was born in 1866, but by the end of the decade they had moved into Abermorddu Smithy Houses, Caergwle, where John had found work as a coal miner in the local colliery. Their stay near his wife's birthplace was a short one, as by 1878 the family had relocated to Birkenhead, now a growing town with increased opportunities. They moved into 2 Elgin Street, close to Birkenhead Docks, where two more sons were born - John in 1878 and Robert in 1880.

In July 1889, Henry Bowen, had met local Birkenhead girl Mary Ann Lane, and they were married in Liverpool, both aged twenty-five. They found a place to rent in nearby Dacre Street, while Henry was spending time at sea, now working as a sailor.



LIVERPOOL, LUSITANIA AT LANDING STAGE.

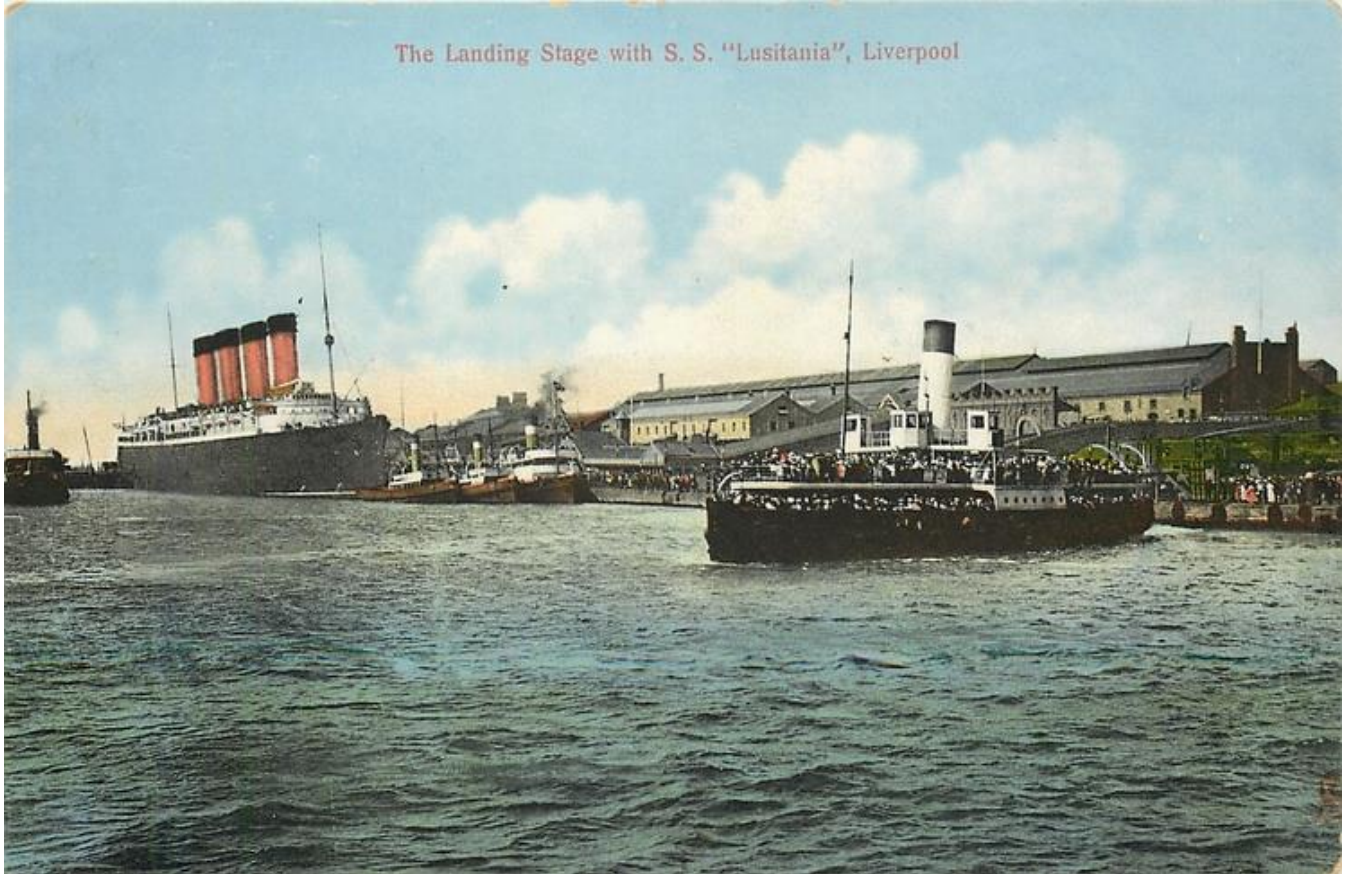
However, the demands of bringing up a young family brought Henry ashore, and he took up work as a cattle driver, while his wife Mary gave birth to John Henry Edward Bowen (1892), Margaret Jane Bowen (1894), Mary Adeline Bowen (1897), and Henrietta Bowen (1899). The family moved twice



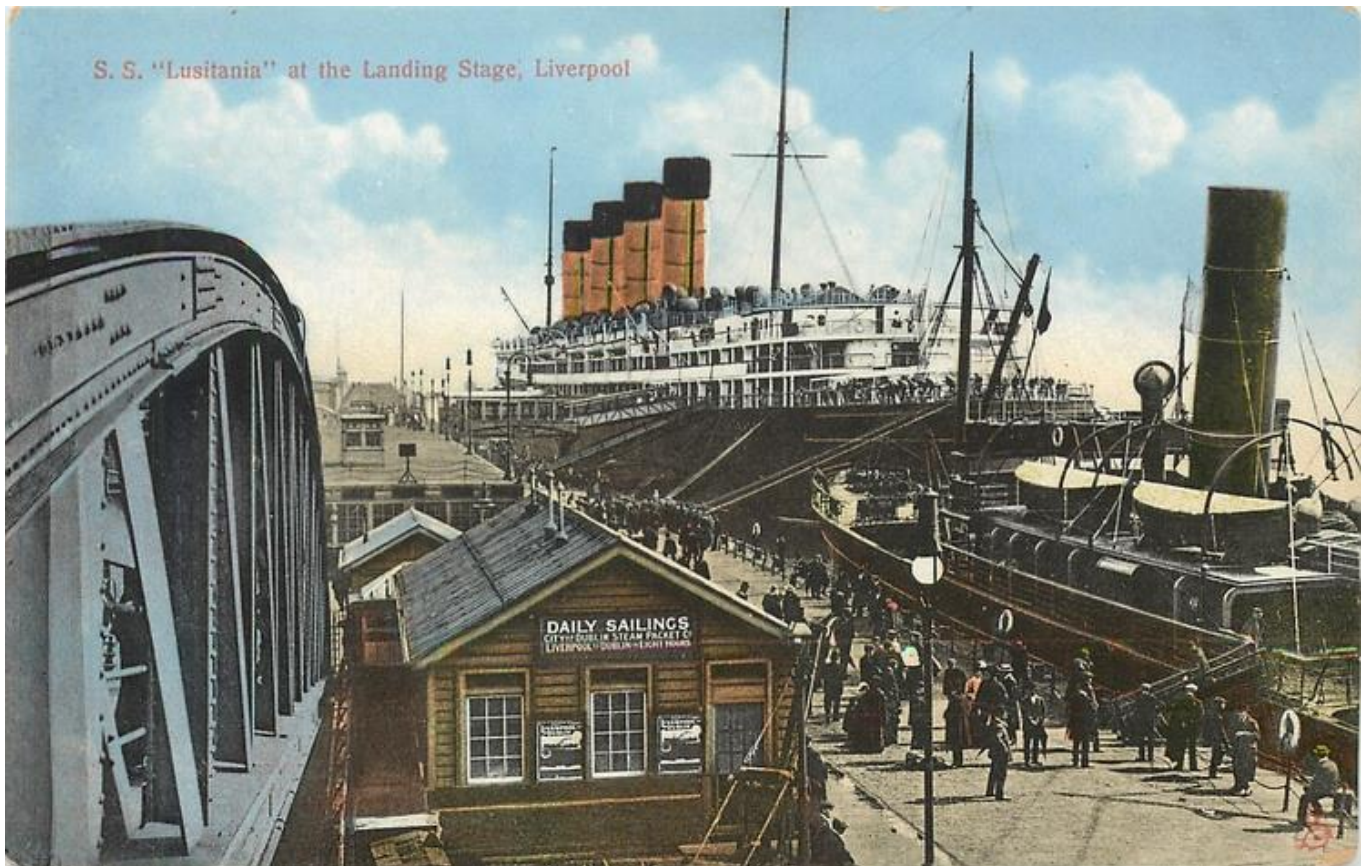
On Princes Landing Stage

LIVERPOOL

The Landing Stage with S. S. "Lusitania", Liverpool

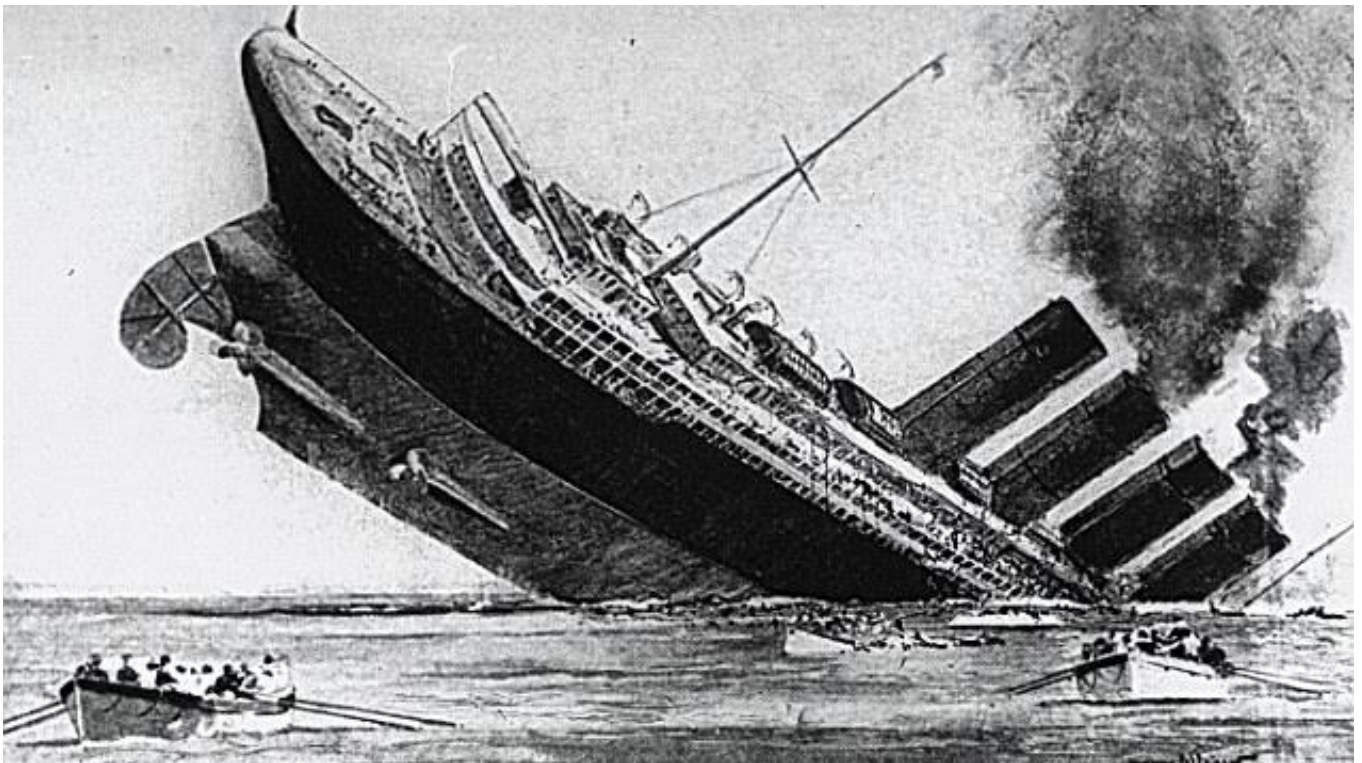


S. S. "Lusitania" at the Landing Stage, Liverpool



more - to Adelphi Street by 1901, then Jackson Street by 1911, all within a stone's throw of each other in Birkenhead.

By 1911, Henry decided to return to sea. This, after all, was the port of the greatest liners in the world at their zenith, with White Star and Cunard Line vessels and their recognisable four funnels regularly gliding along the Mersey to their berths alongside the Pier Head. Three of his four children were also employed, bringing a wage into the household - the eldest, John, working as a plate riveter in the adjacent shipyards of Cammell Lairds. No doubt Henry was confident that his wife and family were in a stable enough situation to enable him to spend weeks away at sea. When he joined *Lusitania* is not known, but is likely he was on board when she left Liverpool for New York in April 1915, as crew were recruited on return voyage contracts. Two Cunard vessels had already put into Queenstown in January, wary of proceeding to their destination due to intelligence about an imminent U-boat threat. When the *Lusitania* moved to the Irish Sea on 17 April, she was no less safe. However, the voyage passed without incident and she docked in New York on the 24th.



And so it was on her return crossing that she became a target of U-boat 20 off the Old Head of Kinsale, Southern Ireland, while on her last leg towards Liverpool. It was at 14.09 on the 7th that the torpedo struck her amid-ships and she went down within twenty minutes. The speed and the angle of sinking made it extremely difficult to launch the life boats and the first one that did get into the water spilled its occupants into the sea. Henry Bowen was among the 1,153 passengers and crew who were lost.

The effects of the sinking have been well documented elsewhere, not least in the irreparable damage caused to relations between the USA and Germany, while the tragedy was also exploited by those running the campaign for recruitment into the allied forces.

The British propaganda machine went into overdrive condemning the sinking as an act of piracy. *The Times* condemned the brutality of the Germans;

"the hideous policy of indiscriminate brutality which has placed the German race outside of the pale. The only way to restore peace in the world, and to shatter the brutal menace, is to carry the war throughout the length and breadth of Germany. Unless Berlin is entered, all the blood which has been shed will have flowed in vain"

Controversy has continued to the present day over whether the RMS Lusitania was a legitimate war target due to the question over whether or not she was carrying weapons and munitions. Irrespective of this new approach to all-out war, the 'Lusie' was regarded by the Allies as a civilian vessel and beyond the scope of the conflict. This war, which was witnessing horrors on a new level on the battlefield, by this action, together with the air raids, confirmed that the enemy no longer had to wear a uniform and carry a weapon. This realisation caused increased anti-German sentiment, and at home riots erupted in numerous cities across the country, including Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Sheffield, Rotherham, Newcastle, South Wales, London and elsewhere. Over two hundred businesses were destroyed in Liverpool alone, while in London, only two of the 21

REMEMBER THE LUSITANIA

THE JURY'S VERDICT SAYS:
 "We find that the said deceased died from their prolonged immersion and exhaustion in the sea eight miles south south-west of the Old Head of Kinsale on Friday, May 7th, 1915, owing to the sinking of the R.M.S. Lusitania by a torpedo fired without warning from a German submarine."

"That this appalling crime was contrary to international law and the conventions of all civilized nations, and we therefore charge the officers of the said submarine, the Emperor and Government of Germany, under whose orders they acted, with the crime of wilful and wholesale murder before the tribunal of the civilized world."

IT IS YOUR DUTY TO TAKE UP THE SWORD OF JUSTICE TO AVENGE THIS DEVIL'S WORK.

ENLIST TO-DAY

"All the News That's Fit to Print."

The New York Times.

EXTRA
 8:30 A. M.

VOL. LXXV., NO. 28,981. 1915.
NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1915.—TWENTY-FOUR PAGES.
FOUR CENTS.

LUSITANIA SUNK BY A SUBMARINE, PROBABLY 1,260 DEAD; TWICE TORPEDOED OFF IRISH COAST; SINKS IN 15 MINUTES; CAPT. TURNER SAVED, FROHMAN AND VANDERBILT MISSING; WASHINGTON BELIEVES THAT A GRAVE CRISIS IS AT HAND

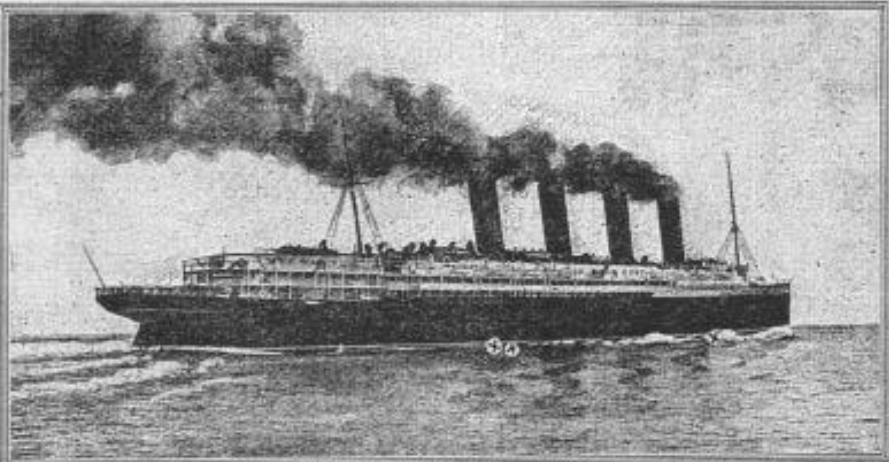
SHOCKS THE PRESIDENT
 Washington Deeply Stirred by the Loss of American Lives.

BULLETINS AT WHITE HOUSE
 Wilson Reads Them Closely, but is Silent on the Nation's Course.

HINTS OF CONGRESS CALL
 Loss of Lusitania Recalls First Term of Our First Warning to Germany.

CAPITAL FULL OF RUMORS
 Reports That U.S. War Will be Declared Before Battle of the Marne.

Special to the New York Times.
 WASHINGTON, May 7. — "When news first came that the Lusitania had been sunk, the White House was thrown into a state of commotion," says a reliable source here. "The early reports said that there had been no loss of life, but later reports said that some 1,200 persons were lost."



SOME DEAD TAKEN KNOWN
 Several Hundred Survivors at Queenstown and Kinsale.

STEAMBOATERS' FORECAST
 One Torpedo Crashes into the Disabled Liner's Bow, Another into the Engine Room.

SHIP LISTS GIVE TO PHR
 Making it impossible to know many details, the Maritime must have been down.

ATTACKED IN BROAD DAY
 Passenger at Loughswilly-Morning Post Boat Lost by German U-Boat and Ship Left New York.

Only 650 Were Saved, Few Cabin Passengers
 QUEENSTOWN, Ireland, May 8, 4:28 A. M.—Survivors of the Lusitania who have arrived here and reports that about 650 of those aboard the vessel were saved, and that about

The Lost Cunard Steamship Lusitania
 X Where the First Torpedo Struck. — SS Where the Second Torpedo Struck.

Metropolitan police districts were free from riots.

Liverpool had the closest ties with the vessel, owners Cunard were based on the Pier Head, the vessel was heading for the port, and many of the crew were from the city. In the town, most of the pork butchers and shoe makers were run by German families and were generally well integrated and respected in local society. All this changed in May 1915. Riots began in the Irish north end of the city on 8 May, before spreading to the city itself and other suburbs. In the south of the city the Liverpool Echo reported on 11 May,



‘A large pork shop at the corner of Smithdown Road and Arundel Avenue had been absolutely wrecked. All the windows had been smashed and the stock commandeered or thrown into the street. Women hurled strings of sausages at one another and one woman in a neighbouring street went down on her knees and scrubbed the pavement with a joint of pork. Other women went home with their aprons full of pork and bacon. After sacking shops, the invaders went into the living room upstairs and spread destruction everywhere. The piano was splintered to matchwood and hurled into the street. A man came to the gaping hole where the front window had been and, waving a handsome mirror over his head, smashed it to fragments against the stone sill amid cheers from the crowd below.’



After a few days of disturbances, the decision was taken to use the recent legislation, and police began to round up local Germans to be interned, although in many cases it was for their own safety. What was more distressing was that many were arrested and taken away in handcuffs and even housed in the cells of the city bridewells. As they swiftly became overcrowded, they were moved to camps at Hawick in Scotland. There were numerous instances where police came knocking to arrest men they knew to be of German birth, only to be met with disdain and to be informed they were away in France fighting with the British Army. Many Liverpool Germans ended up on the Isle of Man where two internment camps were set up at Douglas and Knockaloe near Peel. Knockaloe was purpose built using prefabricated huts and a railway link, while a former holiday camp and B & B's on the promenade were utilised at Douglas. Large numbers were repatriated after the war and had to fight their cases to be allowed to return to Britain.

Liverpool resident Pat O'Mara recorded his memories and his own involvement in the riots in *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Slummy*,

'That night Freddie and I, clad in our American tailored suits, started for a dance over at Paddy's Market in St Martin's Hall. We never attended it, however. Before entering the Hall, we walked around Scotland Road listening to the cries of the women whose husbands had gone down with the 'Lusie' and we heard the bitter threats against Germany and anything with a German name. We walked down Bostock Street, where practically every blind was drawn in token of a death. All these little houses were occupied by Irish coal-trimmers and firemen and sailormen on the Lusitania ... On the corner of Scotland Road, ominous gangs were gathering – men and women, very drunk and very angry. Something was afoot; we could sense that and, like good slummy boys, we crowded around eager to help in any disturbance. Suddenly, something crashed up the road near Ben Jonson Street, followed in turn by another terrific crash of glass. We ran up the road. A pork butcher's had had its front window knocked in with a brick and a crowd of men and women were wrecking the place – everything suggestive of Germany was being smashed to pieces.'

Later, on his way home to Toxteth, he joined in the 'fun', when he helped to wreck Mr Cook's butchers shop. Mr Cook was a Yorkshireman who had become 'fair game' as he was a pork butcher. The fact that he was English had become lost in the desire to wreck anything that could be associated with a recognised common German livelihood in the city. Such indiscriminate targeting was not isolated. In the Scotland Road area, a public house on Breck Road was wrecked, despite the fact that the licensee's son was in the British Army fighting in France. He later lost his life in 1918, to complete a thoroughly miserable period for his parents. [Scotland Road was an area just north of the city centre, where the predominantly Liverpool-Irish community were living in very poor court housing].

At the newly developed Pier Head, two liver birds had recently been hoisted into place on top of the Liver Building. They were designed by German sculptor, Karl Bernard Bartels, a wood carver who came to England from Stuttgart in 1877. He took British nationality, and after building up a business in Harringay, he entered and won a competition to design the liver birds, completing the 18ft high copper sculptures in 1911. He was arrested at the start of the war as a German citizen and

interned in the Isle of Man, then if that wasn't bad enough, he was forcibly repatriated at the end of the war despite his British citizenship and a wife in London. After several years he was able to return to Harringay where he lived and worked until his death in 1955. His crucial role in the creation of the iconic birds was effectively erased from history due to his nationality. It took Liverpool City Council until 2011, on the 100th anniversary of the building, before he was officially recognised, when a citizen of Honour Award was presented by the Lord Mayor to Bartel's great-grandson.

The reaction to the sinking wasn't confined to those at home, as these letters to family from soldiers in the 1/7th Kings Liverpool Regiment fighting at the Battle of Festubert in May 1915 reveal,

'...no sooner had we got over the parapet than the Germans commenced rapid fire on us...I can tell you it was not very palatable waiting there with thousands of little pills whizzing over your head...we were encouraged by one of our sergeants who kept shouting, "Come on the King's, avenge the Lusitania"...The Germans do not like the bayonet...they came running out of their trench crying "Mercy, mercy, Comrade boon"...It was a horrible sight the next morning, looking across to our lines, the ground strewn with dead and wounded. It is a sight I do not want to see again. If I have to witness such a spectacle I pray to God He will bring me safely through.

Private Greaves, A Company, *Formby Times* 5th June 1915

The night was pitch dark except from the fire from bursting shells...Over our trench crept No.4 platoon, under Lieut. Adams, with the platoons of the other regiments (from KRR, 1st King's, Staffords, Berks, 5th King's)... Our men had crept within 100 yards of the Germans, who were 600 yards from our trenches...Alas! they were spotted. Out from dozens of Maxims came the terrible bullets, and shell began bursting round them. It was hell on earth but on they went through the murderous fire. Our men were cut down like grass...It was here poor Bob Balshaw was killed. He died fighting like a lion. Poor Lieut. Adams was shot on the trench, urging his platoon on, who mostly follow him... "Don't forget the Lusitania"...Our men drove the Germans out. The 1st King's got at them. They would not have the bayonet, and started coming into us in hundreds under the white flag.

Private Thomas Murray (letter to his mother) *Formby Times* 29th May 1915

One of the Germans came running in my direction. I let him have a couple in memory of 'Lusie' and other things besides. I have got his helmet. I am going to send it to you along with some more souvenirs. If you get it all right you can put it in your shop window.

Private Farrington, *Crosby Herald*, 29th May 1915

[The 1/7th King's left for France in March 1915, joining the 2nd (Regular) Division, passing through the 7th (Regular) Division, until rejoining the 55th (West Lancashire) Territorial Division. They fought at Festubert, Guillemont, Ypres and Givenchy and returned to Britain in early 1919.]

But none of this, of course, could help the family of poor Henry Bowen. A century on, the pain is still felt by his family, as on 18 October 2014 Anne Angel said,

‘My granddad’s brother, Henry Bowen, was on the Lusitania as a crew member, a fireman. He was never found. I presume he got blown to pieces if he was in the boiler room. His wife only received two day’s pay that was owed to him. Why were they not compensated, does anybody know? It still upsets me, the sheer horror of it.’

[As became apparent following the Titanic sinking, the crew were paid up to the moment the vessel foundered. As far as the owners were concerned, that was the end of the contract. Families and survivors received no further pay relating to that voyage.]

Mike Royden





© Ken Marschall



In Memory of
Fireman
Henry Bowen

S.S. "Lusitania" (Liverpool), Mercantile Marine who died on 07 May 1915 Age 49

Son of the late John and Sarah Bowen; husband of Mary Bowen (nee Lane), of 36, Jackson St.,
Birkenhead. Born at Famdon.

Remembered with Honour
Tower Hill Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission