

# remembrance ni



*HMS Aboukir*

## The Live Bait Squadron - Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue

During the early months of World War 1 the Royal Navy maintained a patrol of old Cressy class armoured cruisers, known as Cruiser Force C, in the

**area of the North Sea known as the Broad Fourteens. It was nicknamed 'The Live Bait Squadron'.**

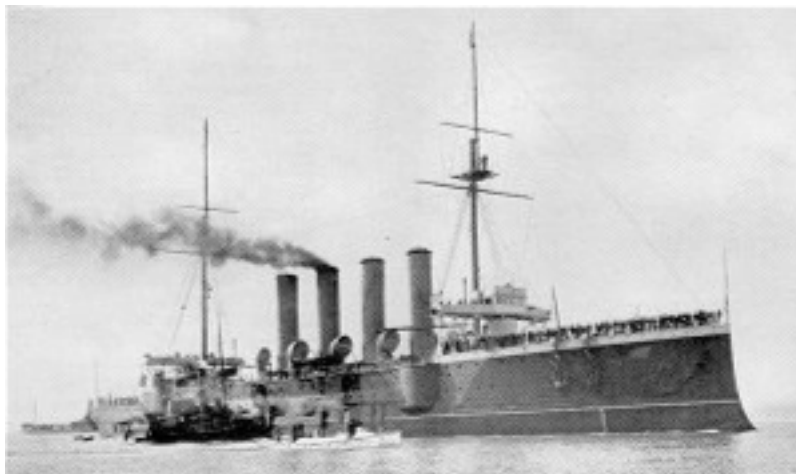
In September three Cressy class ships were sunk in a matter of minutes with the loss of 60 officers and 1,400 men. It was to be the first of two major actions within three weeks which announced the arrival of the U Boat and the impact submarines could have on naval warfare.

At least twenty men from Northern Ireland were lost in this engagement. There were eight serving in HMS Aboukir, ten in HMS Cressy, and two in HMS Hogue.

All these ships were long past retirement. They had been in reserve until the outbreak of the war prompted their recall to service, crewed mostly by reservists. Newer, faster cruisers were not yet ready. The Cressys were despatched to that area of the North Sea known as the Broad Fourteens.

There was opposition to this patrol from many senior officers, including Admiral Jellicoe and Commodores Keyes and Tyrwhitt, on the grounds that the ships were very vulnerable to a raid by modern German surface ships and the patrol was nick named the "live bait squadron". The Admiralty maintained the patrol on the grounds that destroyers were not able to maintain the patrol in the frequent bad weather and that there were insufficient modern light cruisers available.

So, outdated vessels were accompanied by outdated thinking. In the early hours of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1914. the cruisers HMS Euryalus, HMS Aboukir, HMS Hogue and HMS Cressy were preparing to go on patrol under Rear Admiral Christian in Euryalus...



### HMS Cressy.

The Cressy was a prototype of a class of six heavily armoured cruisers which when finished would be among the most powerful ships of their class. She was the first of the Cressy Class to be built. Built at Fairfield at Govan on the Clyde and laid down on the 12th October 1898, launched 4th December 1899 and completed 28th May 1901. On completion HMS Cressy went to the China station. and In 1906-1907 Cressy went to the North American and West Indies station as Boy training ship. In August 1909 joined the 3rd Fleet at the Nore until April 1910 when she went to Chatham and into reserve. In January 1911 joined the 4th Division of the home fleet. and In August 1914 joined Cruiser Force C. Torpedoed and sunk by U -9 on 22nd September 1914 while picking up survivors of HMS Aboukir. 560 lives was lost out of 760. Sister ships were HMS Aboukir, HMS Bacchante, HMS Euryalus, HMS Hogue and HMS Sutlej.

... Normally the patrol was under command of Rear Admiral Campbell in HMS Bacchantes but he was absent so Christian helped fill the gap although he had other duties.

The seas off the Dutch coast had been choppy for several days. The squadron's commander felt it was choppy enough to deter any U-boat threat. Submarines did not operate in such weather. The old cruisers did not zigzag

The weather was too bad for destroyers to be at sea and unfortunately Euryalus had to drop out due to lack of coal and weather damage to her wireless, Rear Admiral Christian had to remain with his ship rather than transfer to another ship as the weather was too bad to transfer. He delegated command to Captain Drummond in Aboukir although he did not make it clear that Drummond had the authority to order the destroyers to sea if the weather improved, which it did towards the end of 21<sup>st</sup> September.

Early on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1914 the German submarine U9 under the command of Commander Otto Weddigen sighted the Cressy, Aboukir and Hogue steaming NNE at 10 knots without zigzagging. Although the patrols were supposed to maintain 12-13 knots and zigzag, the old cruisers were unable to maintain that speed and the zigzagging order was widely ignored as there had been no submarines sighted in the area during the war. They steamed side-by-side 2,000 yards apart and at a modest 10 knots.

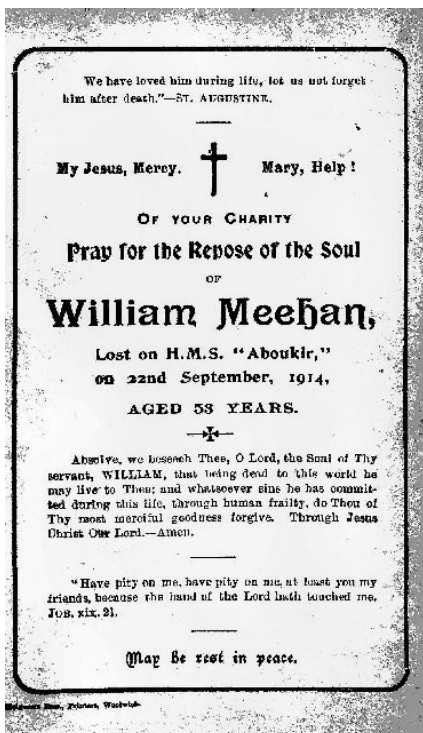
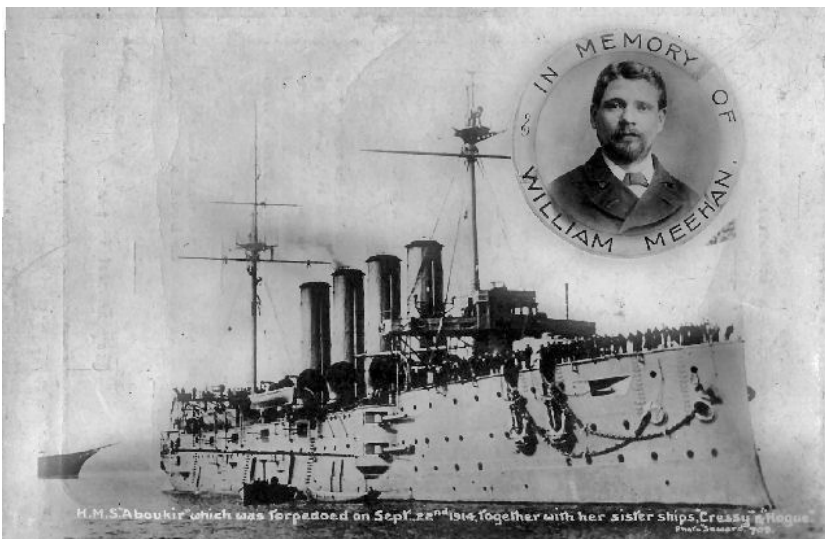
Twenty four miles from the Dutch port of Schevingen, U-boat 9 was brought to the surface under command of Kapitanleutenant Otto Weddigen. His 500 tonne boat



A door of the Cressy was recovered. It is very impressive. It is made of solid wood, so it may have served as a lifebuoy and perhaps saved someone's life.

According to a Welsh tradition, Edward I promised to provide Wales with a prince "who could speak no word of English," and when his son Edward of Carnarvon was born he presented him to the assembly, saying in Welsh *Eich dyn* (behold the man).

The more general belief is that it was the motto under the plume of John, King of Bohemia, slain by the Black Prince at **Cressy in 1346**, and that the Black Prince who slew the Bohemian assumed it out of modesty, to indicate that "he served under the king his father." - *Cobham Brewer's, Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*



Memorial cards were distributed for the men who died on HMS Aboukir.

The image above is the front of the card to and the image to the left is the reverse of the card.

William Meehan, Chief Engine Room Artificer 124820, H.M.S. "Aboukir", Royal Navy. Lost 22nd September 1914. Aged 53. Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Son of Gladwin and Margaret Meehan, of Dublin; husband of the late Mrs. W. Meehan. Awarded Egyptian Medal and Khedive's Bronze Star. He served on a gun boat that sailed up the Nile for the relief of Khartoum. Chatham Naval Memorial Panel 3.

## **S.M.Unterseeboot 9**

U9 had a crew of 29 and was the most famous German submarine of the First World War. Otto Weddingen joined the German Navy in 1901 and became commander of a U-boat in 1911. A month after sinking the Cressy he also destroyed the Cruiser [H.M.S. Hawke](#) on 15 October 1914.

Otto Weddingen transferred to the U29, he sunk four merchant ships in February 1915 and attacked the British Battle Fleet near the Orkneys in March. Returning to Germany following this attack, H.M.S. Dreadnought detected the U-boat in the Pentland Firth (North Sea) and rammed and sank U29 with its whole crew on March 18 1915. This was the only action H.M.S. Dreadnought saw and she remains the only battleship to have sunk a submarine.

In contrast U9 survived the war and surrendered to the Royal Navy. In March 1919 it was moved from Harwich to Morecambe on the west coast. During the tow, a towrope broke and the submarine ran aground near Dover. After about a month the U9 was freed from the sand and reached its last harbour - Morecambe - where it was broken up.

had ridden out the heavy seas fifty feet down.

The German army, aware of the apparently unhindered shipping of men and materiel between Britain and Ostend had put pressure on their navy.



U9 was on the surface recharging its batteries and its second-in-command Johannes Spiess spotted smoke and a mast. The boat dived. Through its periscope Weddingen saw not one but the three four funneled ships.

U9 manoeuvred to attack and at about 6.25 am., U9 launched a single torpedo at Aboukir, from a range of only 550 yards which thirty odd seconds later stuck her on her port side. Aboukir rapidly suffered heavy flooding and despite counter flooding developed a 20 degree list and lost engine power. It was soon clear that she was a lost cause and Captain Drummond ordered her to be abandoned, although only one boat had survived the attack so most crew had to jump into the sea.

At first Drummond thought that Aboukir had been mined and signalled the other two cruisers to close and assist but he soon realised that it was a torpedo attack and ordered the other cruisers away, but too late.

As Aboukir rolled over and started to disappear, half an hour after being attacked, U9 fired two torpedoes at HMS Hogue that hit her amidships and rapidly flooded her engine room. Captain Nicholson of Hogue had stopped the ship to lower boats to rescue the crew of Aboukir, thinking that as he was the other side of Aboukir from U9 he would be safe. Unfortunately U9 had manoeuvred around Aboukir and attacked Hogue from a range of only 300 yards.

The firing of two torpedoes affected the trim of U9 which broke the surface briefly and was fired on by Hogue without effect. The torpedoes according to an eye-witness nearly cut Hogue in half and the No. 3 funnel collapsed like a house of cards. In five minutes the upper decks of Hogue were being lapped by the sea.

It only took Hogue ten minutes to sink as U9 headed for HMS Cressy. Cressy, under Captain Johnson, had also stopped to lower boats but got underway on sighting a periscope. However at about 7.20 am. U9 fired two torpedoes, one of which just missed but the other hit Cressy on her starboard side, Cressy briefly firing on U9s periscope with no effect.

The damage to Cressy was not fatal but U9 turned round and fired her last torpedo which hit Cressy sinking her within a quarter of an hour. Before the Harwich force of light cruisers and destroyers arrived, survivors were picked up by several nearby merchant ships including the Dutch Flora and Titan and the British trawlers JGC and Corainder. Flora returned to Holland with 286 rescued crew who were quickly returned to Britain even though the neutral Dutch should have interned them. A survivor,

Donald Hickman, said they were seen as heroes and treated with great kindness. In all 837 men were rescued but 1459 died, many of which were reservists or cadets.

In the aftermath of the attack the patrol by armoured cruisers was abandoned, the stopping of major ships in dangerous waters banned and the order to steam at 13 knots and zigzag re-emphasised. A court of inquiry was set up and found that some blame was attributable to all of the senior officers involved - Captain Drummond for not zigzagging and for not calling for destroyers, Rear Admiral Christian was criticised for not making it clear to Drummond that he could summon the destroyers and Rear Admiral Campbell for not being present and for a very poor performance at the inquiry at which he stated that he did not know what the purpose of his command was. The bulk of the blame was directed at the Admiralty for persisting with a patrol that was dangerous and of limited value against the advice of senior sea going officers.

### **Captain CJG Sawle and officers**



## **HMS ABOUKIR ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **CLELAND, Matthew**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS105670. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/09/1914. Age 23. Son of James Cleland, Beersbridge Rd., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

### **DONNELLY, H**

RN. Stoker. HMS Aboukir. College Sq., North, Belfast

### **FOSTER, John**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS/104740. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/09/1914. Age 27. Son of Archie and Jane Foster, Spring St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5.

### **KERR, William Johnston**

Stoker 1st Class. SS105934. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/09/1914. Age 25. Born Belfast. Son of John Kerr, Temple St., Belfast, and the late Mary Kerr. Chatham Naval Memorial.

### **MARTIN, William**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. K11808. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/09/1914. Age 22. Born Belfast. Son of William and Ellen Martin, Belfast; husband of Isabella Martin, Waterford St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial

### **McBRIDE, Gilbert**

Stoker 1st Class. SS103628. HMS Aboukir . Died 22/09/1914. Age 26. Born Belfast. Son of Elizabeth McBride, Mayflower St., Beersbridge Rd., Belfast, and the late William McBride; husband of the late Sarah McBride. Chatham Naval Memorial

## **HMS ABOUKIR ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **SANDS, Hugh**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS/109990. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/9/1914. Age 24. Son of the late John and Mary Sands. Fortingale St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5.

### **QUINN, T**

RN. SS/100714. HMS Aboukir. Died 22/9/1914. Age 29. Son of Thomas and Susan Quinn; husband of Annie Quinn, Avoniel St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5.

## **HMS CRESSY ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **CHANCELLOR, Samuel**

Stoker 1st. Class. SS110580. HMS Cressy. Died 22/9/1914. Age 22. Son of John and Emily Chancellor, Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

### **HILLAND, Joseph**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS106892. HMS Cressy. Died 22/09/1914. Age 24. Born Belfast. Son of John and Esther Hilland; husband of Eliza Jane Hilland, Renfrew St., Belfast. Gravenzande General Cemetery, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands. Great Victoria Street - PCI RH

### **HUGHES, Thomas Joseph**

RN. Stoker 1st Cl. SS103750. HMS Cressy. Died 22/09/1914. Age 29. Born Belfast. Son of James Hughes; husband of Mary Ann Hughes, Dunville St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

## **HMS CRESSY ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **LOGAN, John**

SS106972. Stoker 1st Class. HMS Cressy. Died 22/09/1914. Age 23. Born Belfast. Son of Henry and Sarah Logan, Upper Meadow St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

### **MARSHALL, Isaiah**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS/106977. HMS Cressy. Died 22/9/1914. City St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5.

### **McMURRAN, Henry**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS103004. HMS Cressy. Died 22/9/1914. Age 27. Born Whitehead. Son of James and Margaret McMurrans, Sullatober, Carrickfergus. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5. Carrickfergus WM

### **NEILL, Charles**

Stoker 1st Class. SS106586. HMS Cressy. Died 22/09/1914. Age 26. Born Belfast. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. Neill, of Belfast; husband of Annie Anderson White (formerly Neill), York Rd., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

### **REDMOND, William Joseph**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS/104015. HMS Cressy. Died 22/9/1914. Age 29. Husband of Annie Redmond, Gracehill St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 5

## **HMS CRESSY ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **SINGLETON, Joshua.**

RN. Leading Carpenters Crew. 345952. HMS Cressy. Died 22/09/1914. Age 37. Born Hillsborough. Son of David and Eliza Jane Singleton, and husband of Elizabeth Singleton, Railway View, Culcavey, Hillsborough. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 6. Hillsborough WM.

### **WRIGHT, William**

RNR. ERA. 425EB. HMS Cressy. Died 22/9/1914. Husband of Sarah Wright, Glenrosa St., Belfast. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 6. Rosemary Street - PCI RH

## **HMS HOGG ROLL OF HONOUR**

### **CLAIR, William**

RNR. Seaman. 1406U. HMS Hogue. Died 22/09/1914. Ardmore Ave., Belfast. Cooke Centenary - PCI RH. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 8.

### **GRAHAM, David**

RN. Stoker 1st. Class. 307260. HMS Hogue. Died 22/09/1914. Age 36. Born Whiteabbey. Son of David and Lizzie Graham, of Whiteabbey, Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial.

The following are the numbers saved from each ship:-

Aboukir, 17 officers, 237 men; total 254. Cressy, 14 officers, 190 men; total 204. Hogue, 29 officers, 352 men; total 381. Totals 60 officers, 779 men. Grand total, 839.



**Above - The crew of U9 after the decoration with the Iron Cross. Left - Kptlt. Otto Weddigen (1880 - 1915)**

In Germany, SM U-9's success was regarded as an outstanding heroic deed. The German Emperor awarded the whole crew the Iron Cross, and SM U-9 was permitted to carry this medal as the boat's crest on its conning tower: A tradition which still is in effect with all German

submarines ever named U-9. October 1914 proved to be another fairly unhappy month for the Entente Cordiale, when on 11th October 1914 SM U 26 sank the Russian cruiser Pallada (7,900 tons) in the Gulf of Finland and again SM U-9 under Weddigen managed to sink the light cruiser HMS Hawke (7,000 tons) off Aberdeen. For his continued excellent performance, Otto Weddigen was awarded the Pour le mérite (or "Blue Max" as the British called it), the highest German decoration for valour at that time.

## remembrance ni

---

**Copyright** - all material in this **remembrance ni** publication is copyright, and must not be reproduced in print or electronically.

The **remembrance ni** programme is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD who served as Chaplain to 102 and 105 Regiments Royal Artillery (TA), as Hon. Chaplain to RNR and as Chaplain to the RBL NI area and the Burma Star Association NI. Dr McKelvey is a Past President of Queen's University Services Club. He may be contacted at [houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com](mailto:houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com)

