



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Royal British Legion Dickleburgh and District Branch NEWSLETTER

June/July 2021

Keep Calm and Carry On - Edition 18

Although we have not yet been fully released from restrictions, and Covid infections seem to be on the rise again, we do have a few more freedoms, so in recent weeks we have enjoyed coffee with friends at home and in cafes, a tour (not a virtual tour!) of some local artists' studios as part of the Harleston and Waveney Art Trail and an outdoor birthday party. John, our standard bearer (and chairman), has taken the standard to the annual Dunkirk veterans' commemorative service at Honingham and will attend a veteran's funeral next month, as well as parading at Dickleburgh on Armed Forces Day. Unfortunately, the extension of Covid restrictions means that we cannot yet restart branch meetings or Bun, Cuppa and Chat, but as soon as we get the green light, we will let you know.

My thanks to Sylvia, John, Wendy and Norman for their contributions to this issue.

A Message from our Chairman

Hello All,

Pearl and I hope you are all keeping well. The extra freedom we had hoped for on 21st June has not materialised but in view of the spread of the Delta virus it was not unexpected; let's hope the 19th of July brings a better result.

We were able to hold a short service at the war memorial on 26th June to mark Armed Forces Day, conducted by our Padre, Revd Norman. This was a chance to remember the ongoing service and sacrifice made by our service men and women, and their families, and to remind ourselves of the commitment of ourselves and our communities to support them.

We have organised a tri-partite Zoom meeting with the parish council, church and ourselves to make arrangements for the annual Remembrance Day parade and service in Dickleburgh, which this year will take place on Sunday 14 November. We hope by then all restrictions will have been lifted.

Let's hope this tee shirt to raincoat weather is soon over and things warm up again. Good luck with the quiz.

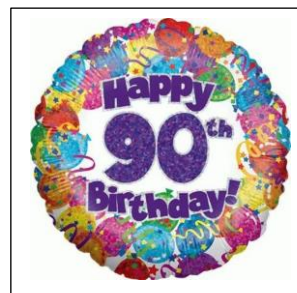
Take care and stay safe,

John

Lockdown Blessings

In September last year, my daughter Rosemary and her husband John came over from Majorca to attend my grandson's wedding. Due to Covid restrictions though, the numbers allowed at the wedding were limited, so they were unable to attend. Unlucky for them, but lucky for me, as they are now stopping at Peacehaven.

I think they were my saviours as I now have company and am being thoroughly spoilt. This past weekend was my 90th birthday and what a weekend. My children arrived on Saturday and Sunday, though sad to say, Susan could not make it from Majorca, but she was able to see and speak to her family on Rosemary's phone.



Flowers, chocolates, garden bench, you name it, I had it. What a lucky girl am I! I may be 90, but God willing, I am aiming for my 100th! My garden and my children have given me new life. I hope you are not bored with my little tale, but I am so lucky and happy that I wanted to share it with you.

God bless you all, Sylvia.

RBL Dickleburgh Family News

Many congratulations to Sylvia, who celebrated her 90th birthday with family and friends earlier this month. As you will have seen, she has written a short piece for this newsletter about how lockdown has brought her unexpected joy.

David Shipp, another of our members in his 10th decade, has been in hospital for several weeks, but is now home and sounding very cheerful. Our best wishes go to Daphne and David as he convalesces among family and friends, supported by their lovely dog, Alfie, and I look forward to seeing the 1000-piece jigsaw completed next time I pop round!

The Live Bait Squadron

In memory of Able Seaman Charles A. Sheppard (1883-1914)

Wendy Hall

Charles Alfred Sheppard was my great grandfather. Born in Woolwich on 22 September 1883, he joined the Royal Navy in 1900, as a Boy 2nd Class, aged 16, training on HMS Ganges in Suffolk. He progressed to Boy 1st Class and on reaching the age of 18 in 1901, he was promoted to Ordinary Seaman and served on several ships, including HMS Aboukir, during his twelve years of service. In 1913, he was transferred to the Royal Fleet Reserve in Chatham, but on the 2 August 1914, two days before war was declared, he was posted to HMS Aboukir again. He went down with the ship on 22 September 1914, his 31st birthday. He was married with two young children.



208670 Chatham 20867

Name in full Charles Alfred Sheppard Date of Birth 22 September 1883
Place of Birth Woolwich, Kent
Occupation Stoker.

Date and Period of C. S. Engagements.	Age.	Height. Ft. in.	Hair.	Eyes.	Complexion.	Wounds, Scars, Marks, &c.
22 September 1901-12 yrs	18	5' 6 5' 7	Blk. brn.	dark	dark	Scar on l. calf.

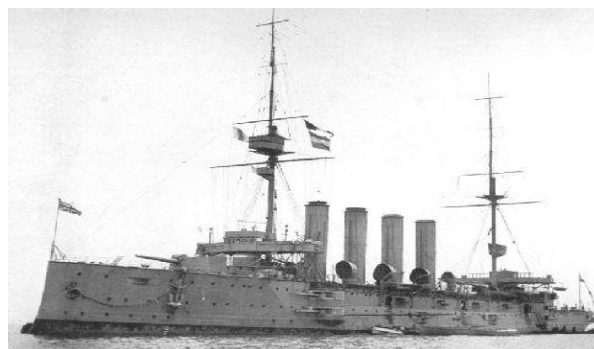
Ships, &c., served in.	List and No.	Rating.	Sub-ratings.		Badges.	Period of Service.		Character.	If Discharged, Whither, and for what Cause.
			Rating.	From To		From To			
Ganges	152-5313	Rec.	Full	21.8.02	15.03	22.9.02	13 Sep 02		
Minotaur	160-144	"	L.G.	22.5.03	23.10.03	21.9.03	16 Sep 03		
Ganges	152-5313	"	Rec.	22.10.03		12 Dec 03	30 Dec 03		
Minotaur	158-4342	"				31 Oct 04	15 Jan 05		
Agincourt	15-9890	"				16 Jan 05	28 May 05		
Jupiter	5-1339	"				29 May 05	19 June 05		
		Ord.				20 June 05			
		AB				22 Sep 05			
						21 Dec 05	24 Jan 06		

Able Seaman Charles Sheppard and an extract from his Seaman's Service Record (Ancestry)

HMS *Aboukir* was a Cressy-class armoured cruiser built for the Royal Navy and completed in 1902. She had a displacement of 12,000 tons and was capable of 21 knots. The ship spent most of her service with the Mediterranean Fleet and was in reserve by 1912 but was recommissioned on the outbreak of the First World War.

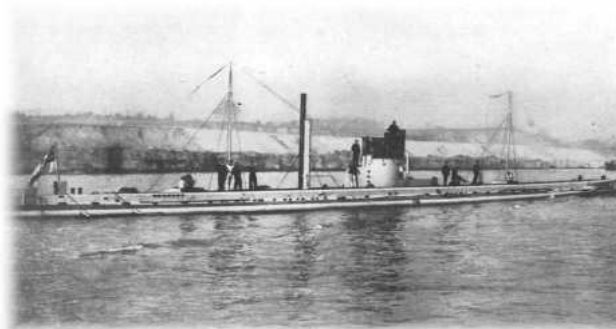
During the early months of the war, the Royal Navy maintained a patrol of old Cressy-class cruisers in the area of the North Sea known as the Broad Fourteens. Many senior naval officers opposed the patrol, given the vulnerability of the outdated ships to attack by modern German surface

vessels, although there was less concern about submarine attacks at this point in the War, as the U-boat threat was not taken seriously by many in the Royal Navy. The patrol was nicknamed the 'Live Bait Squadron'.



HMS *Aboukir*

In the early hours of 20 September 1914, the cruisers *Euryalus*, *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy* were preparing to go on patrol under the command of Rear Admiral Christian in *Euryalus*. The weather was too bad for destroyers to escort them and *Euryalus* had to drop out of the patrol, with Christian delegating command to Captain Drummond on *Aboukir*. Early on 22 September, the German submarine U9, under the command of Commander Otto Weddigen, sighted the three ships steaming at 10 knots without zigzagging. The old cruisers could not reach the required 12-13 knots, and the zigzagging order was frequently ignored as no submarines had previously been sighted in the area.



German U-boat, U9

At about 6.25 am, U9 fired a single torpedo at *Aboukir*, which struck her port side. She suffered heavy flooding, lost engine power and developed a 20-degree list. Captain Drummond ordered the crew to abandon ship, but only one boat had survived the attack, so most of the crew jumped into the sea. Captain Nicholson of HMS *Hogue* had stopped the ship to lower boats to rescue the crew of the *Aboukir* but as the *Aboukir* rolled over and sank, U9 fired two torpedoes at *Hogue* from a range of 300 yards, hitting her amidships which rapidly flooded her engine room. The submarine briefly surfaced, and although both *Cressy* and *Hogue* fired on her, it had no effect. *Hogue* sank within ten minutes, but U9 was now heading for HMS *Cressy*, which had also stopped to lower her boats, but was under way again. At about 7.20am, U9 fired two torpedoes at *Cressy*, one of which hit her on the starboard side. Although this was not fatal, within minutes U9 had turned and fired her final torpedo and *Cressy* sank within 15 minutes.

Survivors were picked up by HMS *Lowestoft* and by Dutch and British merchant ships, and although the 286 men who were taken to neutral Holland should have been interned there, they were quickly returned to Britain. A total of 1459 men from the three ships died, with 837 survivors. Many of the crew were young cadets or, like my great-grandfather, reservists, so were older men likely to have families.

A court of enquiry laid blame on various senior officers, including Drummond and Christian, who did not properly brief Drummond to call for the destroyer escort when the weather cleared but the most blame was directed at the Admiralty for continuing the patrol with outdated ships and against the advice of many seagoing officers.

Many of those lost from the three ships have no known grave and, like Charles Sheppard, are commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial in Kent.

One of the men who served and survived was 15-year-old Wenman 'Kit' Wykeham-Musgrave (1899-1989), a midshipman on the *Aboukir* who was torpedoed on all three ships but lived to tell the tale. As his daughter recalled:

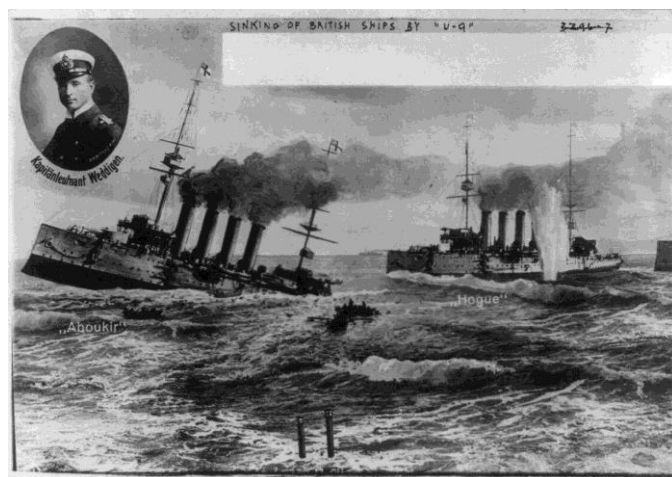
He went overboard when the *Aboukir* was going down and he swam like mad to get away from the suction. He was then just getting on board the *Hogue* and she was torpedoed. He then went and swam to the *Cressy* and she was also torpedoed. He eventually found a bit of driftwood, became unconscious and was eventually picked up by a Dutch trawler.



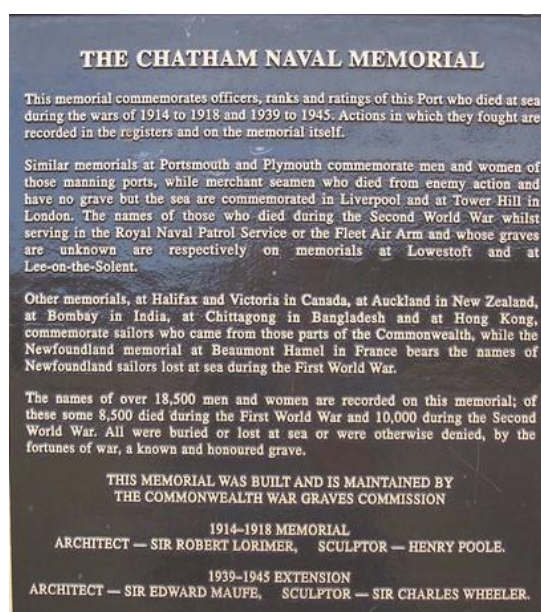
'Kit' Wykeham-Musgrave

The site is a registered war grave, but sadly the British government sold off the salvage rights in the 1950s. Hopefully, it will not be disturbed. There is an excellent and moving documentary about the sinking of the vessels: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6DDXtQkzQw>, if you want to know more.

Image from the wreck sites 25 miles off the Dutch coast, taken by a Yorkshire diving team in 2003.



German propaganda postcard depicting the sinking of the ships



Norman's Chuckle Corner

- ✚ A new vicar arrived at the church. The churchwardens timed his first sermon at 20 minutes, which they felt was a bit long but acceptable. The next Sunday it was over half an hour, which they just about tolerated it as it was not a bad sermon. On the third Sunday, the sermon went on for 45 minutes; that was the last straw and the wardens complained that the sermons were too long. "I'm sorry", said the vicar, "but the trouble was my new teeth. On the first Sunday, they were a little too tight and I had to stop after 20 minutes. On the second Sunday they were comfortable so I could carry on." "What about today?" said the Warden "Ah", said the vicar, "I was in such a rush that I picked up my wife's teeth by mistake and just could not get them to stop."
- ✚ The chef flew into a rage at his new assistant, "Didn't I tell you to notice when the soup boiled over?" he yelled. "I did" said the assistant, "It was half past eleven".
- ✚ A very thin guy went for a job as a lumberjack. The boss could not believe it considering his puny frame and said, "Sorry mate you are too weak". "I may look weak", said the man "but I am not, give me a chance and I can prove it". The foreman with a smirk gave him an axe and told him to cut down a very large oak tree in the yard. Half an hour later to the surprise of the foreman, the tree was lying on the ground and logged. "Where did you learn to cut down trees like that?", said the foreman. "The Sahara Forest". "You mean the Sahara Desert?" "Sure, if that is what it's called now!"
- ✚ The vicar knelt at the altar before giving his sermon. His six-year-old son asked his mother what his daddy was doing. "He is asking God to help him preach his sermon." "Then why doesn't he, Mummy?" asked the boy.
- ✚ Picked up a hitchhiker. Seemed like a nice guy. After a few miles, he asked me if I wasn't afraid that he might be serial killer. I told him the odds of two serial killers being in the same car were extremely low.
- ✚ It's been a bit of a strange day. First, I found a hat full of money, then I got chased down the road by an angry man with a guitar.

Quiz - Association of dates and world events

1900 BRIC Boxer Rebellion in China (example)

1901 QVD	1916 LGBPM
1902 BWE	1917 USAEWWO
1903 FWSIB	1918 EOFWW
1904 BCB	1919 TOV
1905 FOTAA	1920 PIUSA
1906 HC-BBPM	1921 IFSF
1907 JWB	1922 FOBBC
1908 LTHOG	1923 FCFW
1909 LBFATEC	1924 FLGF
1910 AOGV	1925 MTB
1911 IONI	1926 GS
1912 SOTT	1927 FOA
1913 FCFS	1928 AFDP
1914 SOFWW	1929 WSC
1915 SOTL	1930 FFWCTH

Have fun, answers in the next Newsletter.

John



Despite being double jabbed, Norman was not taking any chances when friends came round for coffee recently!

**Contributions or comments, please, to the Editor,
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If you have received this Newsletter, but are not involved with the Royal British Legion, don't worry, we just wanted to spread a little fun and humour around the area!