

William George MASTERS

Born: 15th April 1877, Padstow, Cornwall
Occupation: Naval instructor
Enlisted: Devonport: 2nd August 1914 (Royal Fleet Reserve)
Unit: HMS King Alfred
Rank/number: Able Seaman: No.181926
Death: Myocarditis: 13th September 1917
Detail:



William was invalided out of the Royal Navy in October 1916 and died at home in Church Street, Padstow the following September. The cause of death was given as myocarditis, which is inflammation of the heart muscle. Symptoms can resemble a heart attack. The disease is often due to viral infection. William was buried at St Petroc's Church in Padstow.

Age at death: 40

Military info:

William had retired from the Royal Navy in 1907 after a long career at sea during which he served on ten warships. In March 1908 he joined the Royal Fleet Reserve which required him to return to sea in the event of hostilities. This he did on 2nd August 1914, two days before Britain official declared war. From the first year of the war William served in *Argonaut*, a 14-year-old heavy cruiser with sixteen 6-inch guns and 21 knots of speed. Formerly used as a training ship for stokers, she was hurriedly brought back into service and sent to join the 9th Cruiser Squadron patrolling off Cape Finisterre on the West Coast of Spain. *Argonaut* captured the German naval supply ship *Graecia* on 10th October 1914. In 1915 it was decided that *Argonaut* should be converted into a hospital ship at Portsmouth and in September 1915 William and the rest of the crew were transferred to *King Alfred*, a more modern armoured cruiser serving in the same squadron. For the next year William served aboard this ship as she helped to maintain the blockade against Germany, stopping and searching vessels to ensure vital war supplies did not get through. But in October 1916 William's poor health meant he had to be invalided home. He was disembarked at Gibraltar and returned to England. His health gradually deteriorated and, after being sent home, he died on 13th September 1917.

Grave/memorial: William is buried and commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and is also commemorated at on the Padstow War Memorial.

Family info: Father: Samuel Masters, born in Padstow, Cornwall in around 1850. Farm worker. Mother: Catherine Mitchell Edyveane, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1854. Wife: Laura Jane Oldham, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1882. They married on 13th April 1905. They lived in Church Street and also Fentonluna Lane, Padstow. They had two daughters, Charity and Jean, and 8 grandchildren.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com

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