

THOMAS EDWIN PENNY

Chief Petty Officer 118609



Thomas Edwin Penny¹ was born at East Stonehouse, Plymouth on 14 November 1866, the son of John and Harriet Penny of Plymouth. After working as a farm labourer, he enlisted in the Royal Navy and joined his first ship, HMS LION, as a Boy 2nd Class on 12 January 1882. There followed service afloat, briefly in HMS INVINCIBLE and for some three years in HMS SUPERB. By the time he came ashore in 1886 for training as a gunnery specialist he was an Able Seaman, advancing to Leading Seaman in 1890 and Petty Officer in 1894. Much of this time was spent in shore establishments such as HMS EXCELLENT in Portsmouth and HMS VIVID, HMS DEFIANCE, HMS CAMBRIDGE and HMS RALEIGH all in the Plymouth area. He achieved the rate of Chief Petty Officer in November 1890. He served afloat in HMS RETRIBUTION from April 1895 to March 1898, in HMS SNIPE for a year, and then had two years in HMS CRESSY before eventually being discharged to pension on 9 December 1904.

Penny's wife, Bertha Jane, came from Torre in Yealmpton. A daughter, Bertha Mary Irene was born in 1907 and a son, Victor George, was baptised in Holy Cross Church on 24 September 1911. At Holy Cross on 14 May 1924 Irene married Fernley Leslie Shepherd (a brother of William Henry Shepherd who died in HMS MONMOUTH).

Although out of the Royal Navy, Penny remained on the books of the Royal Fleet Reserve Devonport and rejoined on 2 August 1914 at the outbreak of World War 1. He was immediately drafted to the light cruiser HMS HIGHFLYER. Later that month the ship was employed on the north-west African coast protecting British trade. On 27 August she met the German armed ship KAISER WILHELM DER GROSSE off the Oro River, and after a short engagement in which HIGHFLYER lost one man killed and about six wounded, the German ship was sunk.

Penny's days at sea ended when he left HIGHFLYER on 17 March 1915. For almost a year he was based at HMS VIVID 1, the Devonport barracks, and died from an hepatic abscess on 11 March 1916 at the Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth. He was aged 51. He is remembered with honour at Ford Park Cemetery (church J.2.51).

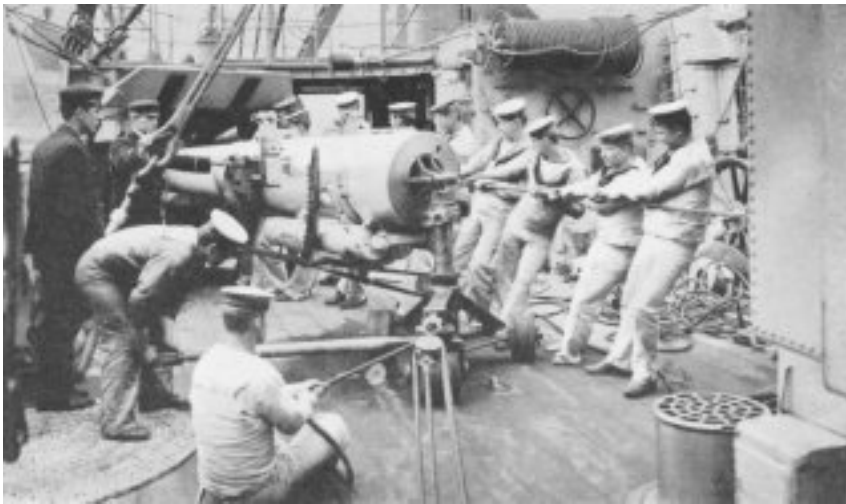


¹ Both his Record of Service and the entry in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show his name as Edwin Thomas Penny.
Nov 2005



HMS HIGHFLYER

Chief Petty Officer Penny was serving in this cruiser when on 27 August 1914 she engaged and sank the German armed ship KAISER WILHELM DER GROSSE off the west coast of Africa. She was armed with 11 6" guns, had a speed of 20 knots and a complement of 675.



A 6" gun is
dismantled for inspection