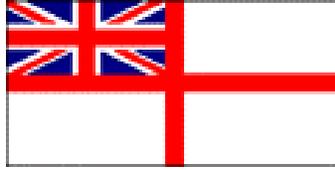


WILLIAM HENRY SHEPHERD

Leading Stoker K/4530



William Shepherd was born on 8 May 1889¹, one of twelve children of John and Leah Shepherd. They lived at Honeysuckle Cottage, overlooking the slipway in Riverside Road East. He was baptised at Holy Cross Church on 19 July 1889, and attended Newton Ferrers School (Roll No. 318) from 9 May 1892 to 15 February 1902.

After working as a farm labourer (like his father), William Shepherd joined the Royal Navy on 5 October 1909. Following initial training, he served in the battleship HMS NEW ZEALAND from February 1910 to July 1911. He then spent almost three years in the cruiser HMS CUMBERLAND before joining the armoured cruiser HMS MONMOUTH on 30 July 1914.

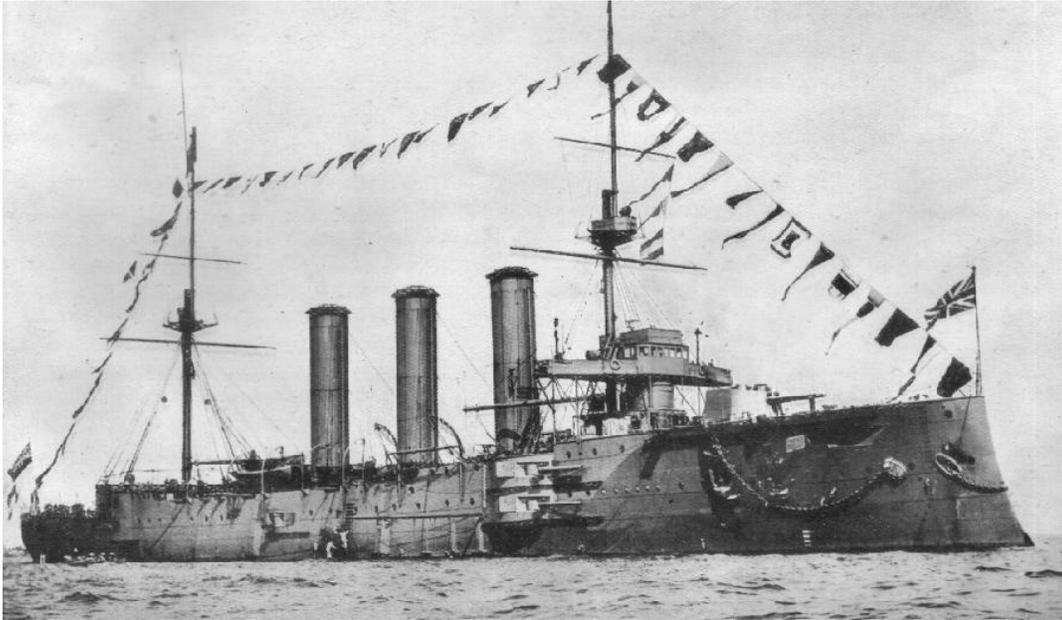
At the outbreak of war, HMS MONMOUTH was part of a squadron commanded by Rear Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, tasked with countering German naval units threatening merchant shipping around the coast of South America. The main threat was the powerful squadron of Admiral Graf Von Spee operating in the Pacific. The squadrons met at the Battle of Coronel off the coast of Chile on 1 November 1914. With MONMOUTH were the armoured cruiser GOOD HOPE, the light cruiser GLASGOW and the armed merchant cruiser OTRANTO. They were totally outclassed by their German opponents in every respect – firepower, speed, training and experience. Furthermore, the British ships were silhouetted against the setting sun, whilst the Germans were hard to spot in the gathering dusk. The outcome was inevitable. After an hour of action GOOD HOPE blew up, having taken 35 direct hits. Half an hour later MONMOUTH limped out of the line, badly damaged, and was finished off by the cruiser NURNBERG. GLASGOW and OTRANTO escaped.

The Royal Navy lost two cruisers and some 1600 men – there were no survivors. Three German sailors were slightly wounded. However, the German squadron was destroyed on 8 December 1914 when the Royal Navy took its revenge at the Battle of the Falklands.

Leading Stoker Shepherd is remembered with honour on Panel 3 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial.

A younger sister, Lilian Kate, married Stoker 1st Class Reginald Staddon, who died in HMS COURAGEOUS on 14 September 1939. A younger brother, Fernley Leslie, married Bertha Penny at Holy Cross Church on 14 May 1924 – Bertha's father, Chief Petty Officer Thomas Penny, also appears on the Roll of Honour.

¹ Shepherd's Record of Service opposite shows his date of birth as 12 May 1891 – this is incorrect. There are many other examples in this book of variations in date of birth.



HMS MONMOUTH

An armoured cruiser in which Leading Stoker William Shepherd was serving when she was sunk at the Battle of Coronel on 1 November 1914. Completed in 1903, she displaced 9,800 tons and had a top speed of 23 knots. Her main armament was 14 6" guns, but at the battle those in barbets (eg below the forward funnel) could not be used because of the high sea state.

There were no survivors from her crew of 675.