



John James Foreman Stoker 1st Class - K/15000

John James Foreman (known mostly as James) was born in Crockerton on 21st December 1891. He was baptised in Crockerton on 14th February 1892. (Many records record his birth as 1892 but the registration of his birth occurred in the March Quarter of 1892 so we presume he was born in 1891). He was the son of John James and Ellen Foreman (nee Goodwin) who had married in 1890.

The 1901 Census shows the family residing at Ireland, Southwick and comprised as follows:-

John J. Foreman, Head, 31, Carter on farm, Born in Warminster; Ellen, Wife, 27, Born in Bath, Somerset; James J., Son, 9, born in Crockerton; Lily E., Daughter, 7, Born in Warminster; William, Son, 5, Born in North Bradley; Ernest, Son, 2, Born in North Bradley.

The 1911 Census records the family at the same address with more children making up the family they included Mabel Daisy, 9; Albert Clarence, 7; Bertie Reginald, 5; and Violet Edith, 3. All were born in North Bradley. John James, Jnr. Is now working as a farm labourer.

On 24th May 1912 John James signed up for 12 years with the Royal Navy at Portsmouth as a Stoker 2nd Class at the training vessel Victory II. He was described as being 5' 2¼", Chest 35½", dark brown hair, brown eyes with a dark complexion. On 24th May 1913 he gained promotion to Stoker 1st Class joining the crew of the HMS Queen Mary on 4th September 1913.

The battle cruiser HMS Queen Mary Captained by C. J. Prowse was one of the newest ships to take part in the battle of Jutland. She was a unit of the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron, comprising HMS Princess Royal, flagship of Rear Admiral O. de B. Brock and HMS Tiger. Her complement was 60 officers and 1,215 men. In addition to the above there was the battle cruiser HMS Lion, flagship of Vice-Admiral Beatty.

At noon on May 31st 1916, the first Battle Cruise Squadron, led by HMS Lion and zig-zagging at 19 knots, was at 56° 46' N., 3° 36½' E. The 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron (two ships only) was three miles on the port bow, and the 5th Battle Squadron of HMS Queen Elizabeth battleships was five miles astern. The battle of Jutland, involving many hundreds of ships, and spread over a vast area of the North Sea has necessarily to be taken in phases as it developed, and it was in the first of these phases that HMS Queen Mary met with disaster.

At the same time that Admiral Beatty was steaming to his assigned position, Admiral Hipper, commanding the German Scouting Force of five battle cruisers and numerous light craft, was about 50 miles to the eastward. Both admirals were unaware of each other's approach and it was only by chance that the light cruiser HMS Galatea and the German light cruiser Elbing sighted each other when overhauling a merchantman from opposite directions. At 2.20 HMS Galatea made the signal, 'Enemy in sight; two cruisers, probably hostile, bearing E.S.E., course unknown'.

On receipt of this message Admiral Beatty called the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron, HMS New Zealand and HMS Indefatigable, into line astern, opening fire on the enemy at 3.45 p.m. at a range of about 16,000 yards. Unfortunately there was some confusion in the British fire orders, a signal by flags from HMS Lion not being seen by HMS Queen Mary and HMS Tiger owing to the smoke. As a consequence there was an unequal distribution of fire, the German battle cruiser Derfflinger remaining immune from salvos for ten minutes. The five German battle cruisers were the Lutzow (flagship), Derfflinger, Seydlitz, Moltke and Von der Tann.

After ten minutes HMS Queen Mary perceived that the Derfflinger was not a target and at once commenced to fire at her. A similar mistake had arisen in the German line, the Derfflinger firing at HMS Queen Mary, which was already the target of the Seydlitz. At 14,500 yards she was struck by a plunging salvo on the forward deck. The explosion was followed by a heavier deeper one from within the ship and she blew up, sending a column of smoke 600 feet high into the air. Only three officers and six men were saved, of whom one officer and one man were picked up by the Germans. The total loss of life was 57 officers and 1,209 ratings.

John James would have had little chance of escape, working in the engine room. The wreck is a designated war grave.

John James is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on the Esplanade at Southsea, Hampshire and on the North Bradley War Memorials. He is also named in the North Bradley Section of the Diocese of Salisbury Memorial Book held by Salisbury Cathedral.

At the time of his death his mother now a widow, her husband having died in 1914, was living in Church Lane, North Bradley. The family had previously lived in Woddmars, North Bradley.