

The Great War Record for Charles Robert Tutton

When the unfortunate time came to clear out my mother's house it became quite clear how big a hoarder she really was. In many cupboard, drawers and boxes there were family documents and artefacts. It is only now becoming clear how much of a living history gold mine this lifetime of hoarding has become. So far we have only looked through one small writing box but it has produced about eighty documents and over a hundred photographs dated between 1900 and 1950. This record mostly describes the life story of my grandfather and his life in the Navy during the First World War and his business enterprises from the 1920s until his death in 1951.

Charles Robert Tutton was born in Southampton in 1899. We have little record of his early life except at the age of thirteen years that he lived in the Freemantle District of the town at 53 English Road and his occupation was described as a messenger boy.

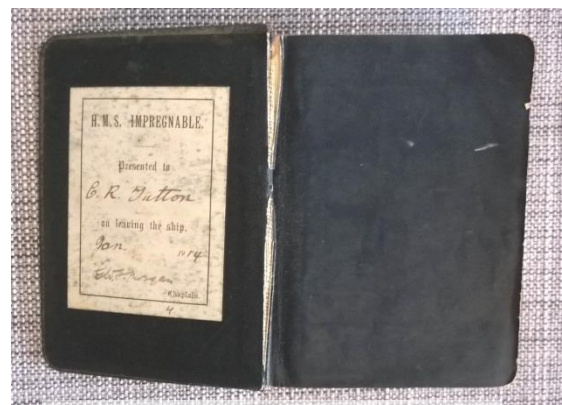
Just before his fourteenth birthday in 1913 he joined the Navy at HMS Impregnable as a Boy Second Class. The Impregnable was the Navy's largest training ship and was moored off Devonport. It was a great honour at the time to join the Navy as a boy with nine out of ten applicants being rejected. To join the Navy guaranteed a boy a trade and boys were only accepted if they could demonstrate that they were physically fit and also proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic. On entry Charles was described as being 5ft 1 ¹/₄ in stature with a , 31 ¹/₂ inch chest, red hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion. He would have been given his basic uniform and necessary equipment along with a "ditty box", bible and combined prayer and hymn book. It was his old ditty box that housed our archive of his documents including his original Naval records and his old bible and prayer book.



Charles Tutton as a Boy Sailor



Royal Navy Ditty Box 1914



Bible presented to Charles Tutton

The Windsor Magazine describes life on board the Impregnable as being "vigorous and thoroughly healthy. The instruction as at present carried on is the result of long experience and the aim is to enable the lads to acquire as much general, educational, and seamanlike knowledge as can be assimilated in about fifteen months."

On 13th December 1913 he was promoted to Boy First Class. His training continued on board HMS Royal Arthur, a cruiser that was part as part of the training squadron based in Queenstown, Southern Ireland. After four months he was transferred to HMS Victory which was afloat in Portsmouth harbour and used as a final preparation school before men were sent off to their first posting. Finally, after three weeks, in May 1914 he joined HMS Cochrane

HMS Cochrane was a Warrior-class armoured cruiser built for the Royal Navy in the first decade of the 20th century. She served in the 2nd Cruiser Squadron during the First World War under Rear-Admiral Herbert Heath, taking part in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. As a battle Jutland was the only major fleet battle of the First World War. The battle of Jutland was indecisive, with more British ships being sunk than German ships but the German fleet remained in port after the battle and both sides claimed victory. Fortunately for our family the Cochrane remained unengaged throughout the battle and did not fire her guns. Of the nine British battle cruisers that were present at the battle three were sunk as part of their involvement in the action. A report from the Admiralty at the time blamed the thickness of the armour plating on our ships but an independent report indicated a lack of communication, leadership and a lack of understanding on how to fight with armoured ships

In 1916 Charles applied to join the submarines service and a request was received through the Commander of HMS Dolphin. A duplicated memo was sent stating that "This man's name having been placed on the Roster of Volunteers for Service in Submarines, it is requested that any changes in character, ability Ratings etc, the Commander(s) may be informed." It is further requested that this memo may be attached to the man's service certificate" Joining the Submarine service was really a very brave thing to do. At the beginning of the war the Royal Navy had 77 submarines with a further 15 under constructions, making a total of 92 boats. A submarine is a boat in the Royal Navy as it has only one deck. Of these 50 boats were lost during the war, some through enemy action but many through poor design, collisions with surface crafts in our own fleet and lack of experience in command.

At the age of eighteen years. in 1917 Charles was advanced to man's rating and he is described in his Naval records as being 5ft 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches tall with a 38inch chest and auburn hair. He was growing up and he had passed exams making him a Torpedo man. In June 1917 he gained his post aboard K5, HMS Fearless a K class submarine. The K class of submarines was the brainchild of Admiral Jellicoe and a complete design disaster causing more deaths in the submarine service than any other craft. Jellicoe wanted a submarine that could sail with the rest of the fleet. The single design feature that governs the maximum speed of a surface craft is its length and long boats can go faster than short ones. A fast boat at the time also needed to be fitted with oil fired steam turbines. The result was that at 339 ft long the K ships were nearly twice the size of most other submarines and at this length they could achieve a top speed on the surface of 24 knots. Unfortunately this meant that when the submarine dived, the bow could be at crush depth, about 200 feet, whilst the stern was still near the surface. As the submarines were steam driven they also had two funnels that had to be retracted before the dive could take place, and this was a constant source of leaks and problems, and was of particular concern in the case of a crash dive or bad weather.

During 1917 & 18 the K5 spent a great deal of time patrolling the north sea coast from Hull up to Scapa Flow. It also spent much time in port with a routine of painting, drills & exercises along with "Bring and Buy Sales" once a month on a Sunday. The German fleet stayed in port during this period

and it was the role of the Royal Navy to make sure that it stayed there. Over the Christmas period, half the crew were granted leave at any one time , so they were obviously not expecting trouble.

At the end of the war Charles Tutton was awarded with three medals. Firstly the 1914-15 star, that was awarded to all who saw active service before December 1915. This was in all probability for being at the Battle of Jutland and was presented in September 1920. Secondly the British War medal 1914 -1918 and this was awarded to all those who left their native shores as part of their active service. Lastly the Victory medal 1914 -1919 that is inscribed on the back "The Great War for Civilisation". These last two medals were both presented in June 1922.



He finally left the Navy in August 1922 at the age of twenty five and took up a profession as a demolition contractor with his father-in-law in Hull. One reason that he may have left the Navy was the loss of the K5 submarine that sank with the loss of all 57 hands while Charles was at the training ship HMS Dolphin. The submarine K5 signaled its intention to dive on 20 January when 120 miles south west of the Scilly Isles. She never surfaced, and it was presumed that she had exceeded her safe depth. All fifty seven officers and men were killed. All that was recovered was a battery cover and a sailor's ditty box.