

## Able Seaman George Stone's grave Headstone

As a part of the "Great War to end all war" 100 year commemorations Saltash Heritage members have been busy trying to put identities to all those named on the Borough of Saltash and St. Stephens-by-Saltash War Memorials, this includes photographing the graves of those listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) as buried in local graveyards.

One of those CWGC listed graves is that of Able Seaman George Stone. Though listed by the CWGC as a war casualty his grave has a personal, family provided, small cross headstone: and not a Headstone provided by the CWGC.



George Stone's small cross Headstone was found and photographed. It had been snapped off at ground level and broken into at least two pieces.

Saltash Heritage informed the CWGC who said that, "if they were given the necessary permission from the Burial Authority and Church, they would provide and place one of their CWGC headstones in place of the broken cross." Permission was obtained from the Co-chairmen of the Burial Authority and forwarded to the CWGC.

George Stone was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1900. Heritage research of Census returns shows that he was raised in Exeter by his Grandparents, William and Fanny Stone. His occupation prior to joining the Royal Navy was 'Factory Boy'.

His service records show that he joined the Royal Navy as a 15 year old Boy Seaman for a 12 year engagement. His 12 year engagement would not have started until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1918 as time served before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday would not count towards completing either the 12 year engagement or towards 22 year pensionable service. When he enlisted his height was 5ft 4ins, he had a 31½ inch chest, his hair and eyes were brown and his complexion was 'fresh'. Most of his Boy Seaman Service was during WWI.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1916 he joined his first ship, HMS Impregnable, as a Boy Seaman second class. He then served on a variety of Devonport based sea going ships and shore establishments. In due course he became a Boy Seaman first Class. By his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he was an Ordinary Seaman and then Able Seaman: the highest rating he obtained. Throughout his service his 'character' was assessed as 'Very Good'. Initially his 'ability' was assessed as 'Satisfactory' but in later years his 'ability' was 'Superior'. Although never rated above Able Seaman his 'ability' was superior to that of his Able Seaman colleagues.

In 1921 George married Constance the widow of Walter John Carro. Prior to her marriage to Walter, Constance already had a son 'out of wedlock'. She and Walter had had a son, who was also called Walter.

The 1939 register lists Constance living at Hillsboro, Long Park Road, Saltash. Servicemen were not included on the register. George and Constance had four daughters.

Able Seaman George Stone died on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1939 from an illness, at that time he was serving on HMS Furious. He had served in the Royal Navy at the end of WW 1, the time of peace between both world wars, and the beginning of WW 2. He was 39 years and 3 days old and, ignoring his time as a Boy Seaman, had completed 21 years and 3 days service in the Royal Navy. *He was just short of completing the twenty-two years 'man's time' necessary to qualify for the award of a Royal Navy pension.*

After his death Constance remarried twice.

Though George Stone is buried in St. Stephens Churchyard and is listed as a War Casualty by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, he is one of twenty-two CWGC listed WW1 & WW2 War Casualties buried in St. Stephens whose names are not on either the Borough of Saltash or St. Stephens-by-Saltash War Memorials.

Saltash Heritage has tried very hard to contact any of George Stone descendants, but to-date this has not been successful.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is installing George Stone's CWGC Headstone on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2017. Soon afterwards on 29th March, it is hoped that the Saltash Priest-in-charge, the Rev Cathy Sigrist, will conduct a short 'service of dedication'. It is also hoped that Saltash Mayor Hilary Frank will attend. Anyone else is also very welcome to attend the dedication service.