Thomas William Jackson

Private Thomas William Jackson, born in January 1876 in Buckingham and baptised there in October 1879, was the oldest son of George Jackson and Julia Phoebe Hill, who are recorded living at 43 Newton Road, Isleworth in 1911. Thomas had married Ellen Elizabeth Sturgeon on October 26th 1902, at St Paul's in Battersea and, by the time war was declared, the couple had two children George 10 and Ivy who was 8.

Thomas served in the Royal Marine Light Infantry Regiment on the British Warship HMS Hawke. In October 1914, the 10th Cruiser Squadron was deployed in the North Sea as part of efforts to stop German warships from attacking a troop convoy from Canada. On 15th October, the Hawke, along with four other Cruisers, were on patrol off Petershead Scotland, when it was torpedoed by a German submarine U-9.

A member of the U boat crew gave this account of the torpedoing. "The Cruisers, big armoured fellows, came zig-zagging. We picked one and manoeuvred for a shot. It was tricky work. She nearly ran us down. We had to dive deeper and let her pass over us, else we would have been rammed. Now we were in a position for a stern shot at an angle, but she turned. It was a fatal turning, for it gave us an opportunity to swing around for a clear bow shot at 400 metres. We dived beyond periscope depth and then came up for a look. The Hawke had already disappeared. She sank in eight minutes. Only one boat was in the water. It was the mail dory that had been lowered before the torpedo explosion. At the rudder the boat officer hoisted a distress signal on the boat's staff. That little dory with half a dozen men aboard was all that was left of the proud warship."

One of the survivors described what had happened to the newspapers "We were struck right amidships between the two funnels quite close to one of the magazines. All hands were on deck, and it was a terrible explosion. The vessel immediately took a heavy list to starboard. I have never been on a ship so well equipped with life- saving apparatus, but the way the vessel heeled over made it almost impossible to get the boats out. The boat in which I was saved had a narrow escape from being taken down with the suction".

The Hawke sank in a few minutes with the loss of 498 men listed behind this text, including Thomas William Jackson (aged 39). Mr and Mrs George Jackson of Isleworth lost Thomas in 1914…….they would lose a younger son, Frederick Victor, at the Somme on 18th November 1916. Thomas has no known grave. He is remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial and also honoured on the Memorial at St John's Church, Isleworth.

Let those who come after see to it
That their names be not forgotten