



John William Mills (14 October 1878– 22 September 1914)

John William Mills was known as William. He was the son of George and Susan Mills (nee Taylor) who married in Woolwich in 1871. George was born in Kent and Susan in Fulham. George worked as a Market Gardener near Dartford in Kent and at least from 1891 onwards, the family were living in Danson Lane, Welling, Kent . George and Susan had 12 children and 10 were still living in 1911, so William grew up with 6 brothers and 3 sisters. All the children were born in Kent. In 1911 William married Alice Clara Pollard. At that time her family were living in Isleworth at 25 Percy Gardens, North Street.

William joined the Royal Navy at Chatham in January 1896 when he was aged 17. Initially his rank was Boy but he fully enlisted when he was 18 in October 1896 and became an Ordinary Seaman. A year later he was promoted to the rank of Able Seaman. From 1898 -1904 he served on HMS



HMS Cressy

Barfleur and HMS Diadem in the Far East. In June 1905 he transferred to the Royal Navy Fleet Reserve. As a Reservist he was called back to the Royal Navy in August 1914 and joined the crew of HMS Cressy on the 2nd of the month.

HMS Cressy was assigned to the 7th Cruiser Squadron after the outbreak of war. The squadron was tasked with protecting the supply routes between England and France

at the eastern end of the English Channel. On 22 September HMS Cressy was patrolling with her two sister ships, HMS Aboukir and HMS Hogue, without any escorting destroyers, as these had been forced to seek shelter from bad weather. At 6.20 HMS Aboukir was hit by a torpedo from a U boat and within half an hour she had capsized. The captain thought that he had hit a mine so ordered the two other ships to close in to pick up his crew. HMS Hogue stopped and lowered her boats to assist survivors but was struck by two torpedos at 6.55 and sank in 20 minutes. HMS Cressy unsuccessfully attempted to ram the U-boat and resumed rescue efforts until she too was torpedoed at 7.20. There were 837 survivors picked up by Dutch ships and British trawlers but 62 officers and 1,397 enlisted men were lost from the 3 ships. 560 of those were lost from HMS Cressy, including William, age 36. His body was not recovered for burial but he is commemorated on Chatham War Memorial in Kent. He is also remembered at All Saints and St John's Churches in Isleworth.

William's wife Alice's younger brother George Thomas Pollard joined the Middlesex Regiment and was killed in France in September 1916. He is also listed on the Isleworth War Memorial. Alice did not re-marry. From 1919-1924 she was living at 12 Gumley Gardens, Isleworth. She died in Ealing in 1963.

