



George Oscar Munson (13 December 1892 – 30 December 1915)

George was the son of Joseph and Bessie Munson (nee Watling) who married in Wandsworth in 1884. Joseph was born in Clapham and Bessie in Battersea. Joseph worked as a Hackney Cab driver. Joseph and Bessie had 11 children but only 9 were still alive by 1911. George grew up with 3 brothers and 5 sisters and all of them were born and lived most of their young lives in Fulham. By 1911 the family had moved from Fulham and

Joseph, Bessie and six of their children were living at 65 Linkfield Road, Isleworth. The two oldest sons were working. Arthur, aged 26, was a tea packer in a warehouse and Harry, age 20, was a marble cleaner.

George enlisted in the Royal Navy at Chatham in September 1908. He was age 16 and held the rank of Boy. In December 1910, when he was 18, he enlisted for 12 years. Initially he was an Ordinary Seaman but was then promoted to Able Seaman and then Leading Seaman. Finally he achieved the rank of Petty Officer in July 1915.

He joined the crew of HMS Natal in September 1912. HMS Natal was a Warrior Class armoured cruiser that had been launched in 1905. The ship was given the duty of carrying the body of the US Ambassador to Great Britain back to New York in December 1912. In World War I, HMS Natal was assigned to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron of the Grand Fleet. She spent much of 1915 patrolling in the North Sea. On 5 December 1915 she was with the Cruiser Squadron at Scapa Flow and 12 days later sailed to Cromarty Firth. She was still there on 30 December when, shortly after 15.25, without warning, a series of violent explosions tore through the rear part of the ship. The ship capsized and sank 5 minutes later. Initially it was thought that she might have been hit by a torpedo or struck a



65 Linkfield Road



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mine. However an Admiralty investigation established that her loss was caused by an internal ammunition explosion. Three hundred and ninety members of the crew died, including George. He was aged 23. His body was not recovered for burial. He is commemorated on the Chatham Naval War Memorial in Kent and at St John's Church.