

# The ROYAL NAVY Life of Leading Seaman WILLIAM MORTIMER (1883-1917)

WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER was born on AUGUST 12, 1883 in Oxford, England, the son of Coal Merchant, Richard Charles Mortimer and Elizabeth Bricknell.

His Father died in 1895 and, when his Mother died in 1898, William enlisted in the Royal Navy on August, 22, 1899 in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England.

We have obtained a copy of William's SERVICE RECORD from August 1899 - April 1908:

Portsmouth 205678 205678

Name in full: William Thomas Bricknell Mortimer Birth: 12 August 1883  
 Birth: Oxford, Oxon. Occupation: S.S. Mercury

| Date and Period of C. S. Engagements. | Age.     | Height. Ft. in. | Hair. | Eyes. | Complexion. | Wounds, Scars, Marks, &c. |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 12 August 1901-12 yrs                 | 28<br>18 | 5-11            | Brown | blue  | fresh       | W.R. forearm              |

| Ships, &c., served in. | List and No.         | Rating. | Sub-ratings. |          | Badges.  | Period of Service. |            | Character.  | If Discharged, Whither, and for what Cause. |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------|--------------|----------|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|---|
|                        |                      |         | Rating.      | From To  |          | From To            |            |             |   |
| Hedea                  | 16 55                | Boysc.  | J.M.         | 1.2.03   | 21.10.02 | 22 Aug 99          | 23 Aug 99  |             |   |
| Impregnable            | 15 <sup>a</sup> 1016 |         | S.B.         | 27.10.02 | 22.6.01  | 24 Aug 99          |            |             |   |
|                        | 15 953               |         | S.B.         | 23.6.01  | 11.10.02 | 28 Feb 99          | 27 Feb 01  |             |   |
| Guinecourt             | 15 <sup>c</sup> 9200 | "       | S.B.         | 12.10.02 | 20.9.07  | 28 Feb 01          | 14 Mich 01 |             |   |
| Sibyllat               | 15 57                | "       | S.B.         |          |          | 15 Mich 01         |            |             |   |
| Despatch               | 15 <sup>a</sup> 1485 | Ord.    | S.B.         | 1.10.07  |          | 12 Aug 01          | 10 Dec 02  | 06 31.2.01  |   |
|                        |                      |         |              |          |          | 11 Dec 02          |            | 09 31.12.02 |   |
|                        |                      | Ord.    |              |          |          | 1 Feb 03           | 9 May 03   | 05 31.12.03 |   |
| Excellent              | 15 1203              |         |              |          |          | 10 May 03          | 15 Feb 04  | 08 01.12.04 |   |
|                        | 15 1236              |         |              |          |          | 16 Feb 04          | 11 Jan 05  | 09 01.12.05 |   |
| George                 | 16 <sup>a</sup> 155  |         |              |          |          | 12 Jan 05          |            | 11 01.12.05 |   |
|                        | 5 69                 |         |              |          |          | 1 Oct 05           | 14 Feb 06  | 05 31.12.07 |   |
| Excellent              | 15 <sup>a</sup> 7025 |         |              |          |          | 15 Feb 07          | 10 Jan 07  |             |   |
| Sanoforo.              | 5 <sup>a</sup> 1221  |         |              |          |          | 14 Jan 07          | 4 Apr 08   | 04          | and disease of feet                         |

Class for Conduct.

■ William's SERVICE RECORD shows he was assigned to initially to the TRAINING SHIP *MERCURY*, one of a number of similar, mostly static training ships located round the coasts of Britain and founded during the Victorian period to provide boy recruits for the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine.

The TRAINING SHIP *MERCURY* was founded in 1885 as a charitable venture by Charles Arthur Richard Hoare, a well-known Banker and Cricketer, with the objective of rescuing poor boys of good character and training them for Royal Navy service. Initially the facility was based at BINSTEAD on the Isle of Wight where the boys lived in the barque *ILLOVO*.

The entire establishment was moved from Binstead to HAMBLE near Southampton in 1892.



Training Ship HMS *Mercury* moored at Hamble, Hampshire



**Training Ship HMS *Mercury* moored at Hamble, Hampshire**

# **R** OYAL NAVY FULL DRESS UNIFORM circa 1900



*Petty Officers and Seamen of the Royal Navy. 1900.*

**Left to right:**

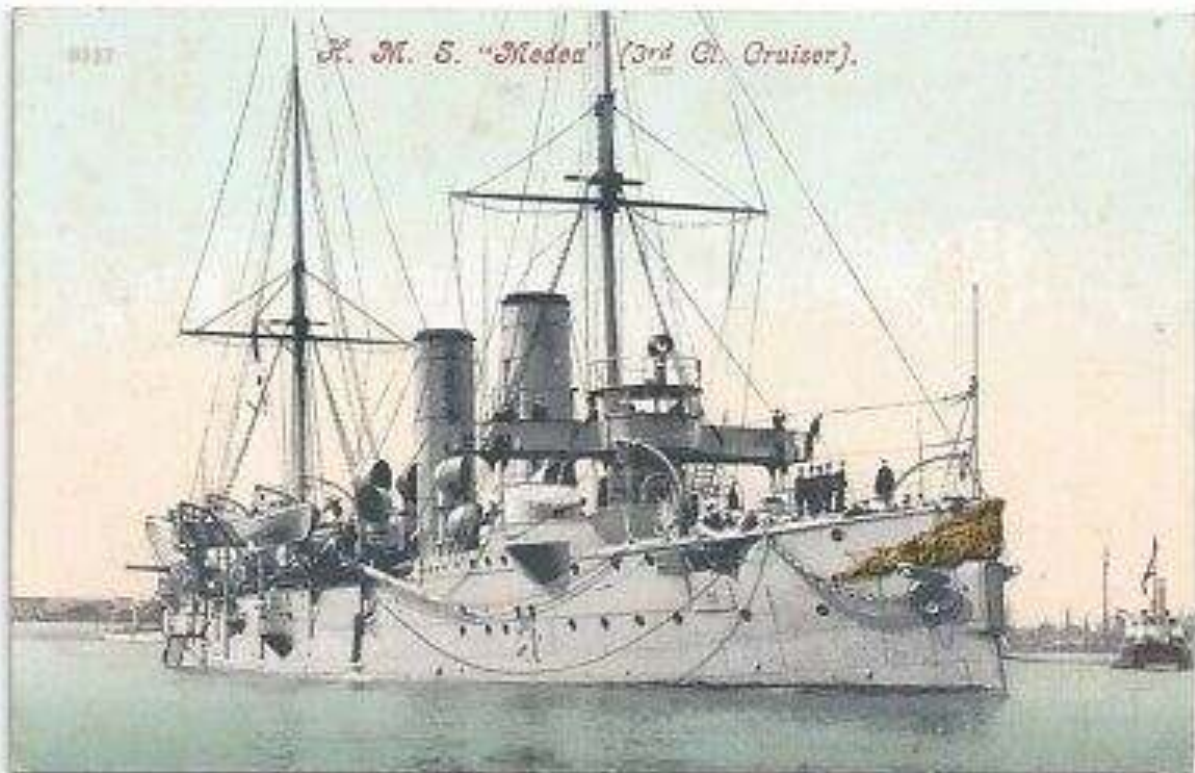
- **Seaman (full dress),**
- **Ship's Corporal (full dress),**
- **Seaman (every day dress),**
- **Second Class Petty officer (landing party under arms),**
- **Seaman (white working dress),**
- **Master at Arms, Chief of Police (full dress),**
- **Chief Gunner's Mate (full dress).**

# HMS Medea

WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER was initially assigned to this CRUISER on the first day of his induction into the ROYAL NAVY on August 22, 1899.

The *MEDEA* class were a class of destroyers that were being built for the Greek Navy at the outbreak of World War I but were taken over and completed for the Royal Navy for wartime service. All were named after characters from Greek mythology as result of their Greek heritage.

The *MEDEAS* were a private design roughly similar to their various Royal Navy M-class contemporaries. They had three funnels, the foremost of which was taller, and unusually, the mainmast was taller than the foremast, giving rise to a distinctive appearance. They shipped three single QF 4 inch guns, one on the forecastle, one between the first two funnels and the third on the quarterdeck.



# **H**MS IMPREGNABLE

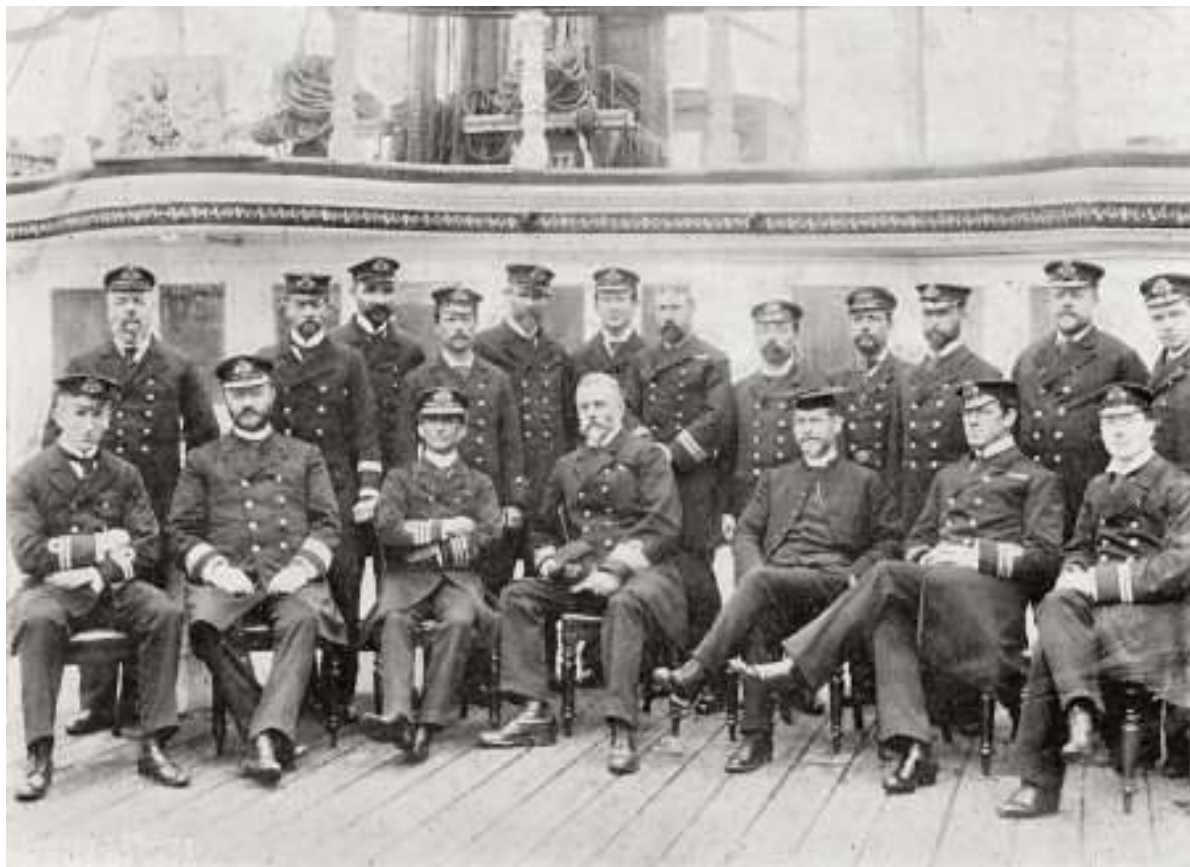
**WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER** served on this **TRAINING SHIP** for 18-months from August 24, 1899 - February 27, 1901

This was one of the last of the Royal Navy wooden, sail driven **SHIPS Of The LINE**. She was used as a **TRAINING SHIP** from 1896.

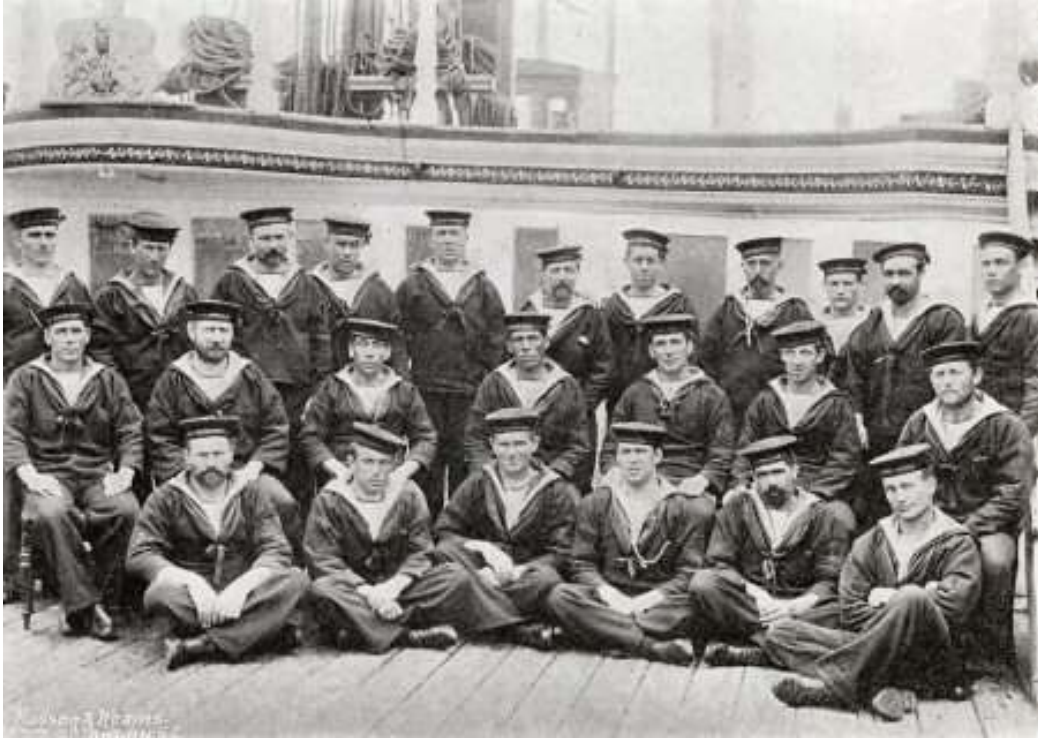


A SHIP OF THE LINE was a type of Naval Warship constructed during the “Age of Sail” from the 17th Century to the mid-19th Century. The “ship of the line” was designed for the naval tactic known as the “line of battle”, which depended on the two columns of opposing warships maneuvering to volley fire with the cannons along their broadsides. In conflicts where opposing ships were both able to fire from their broadsides, the opponent with more cannons firing – and therefore more firepower – typically had an advantage. Since these engagements were almost invariably won by the heaviest ships carrying more of the most powerful guns, the natural progression was to build sailing vessels that were the largest and most powerful of their time.

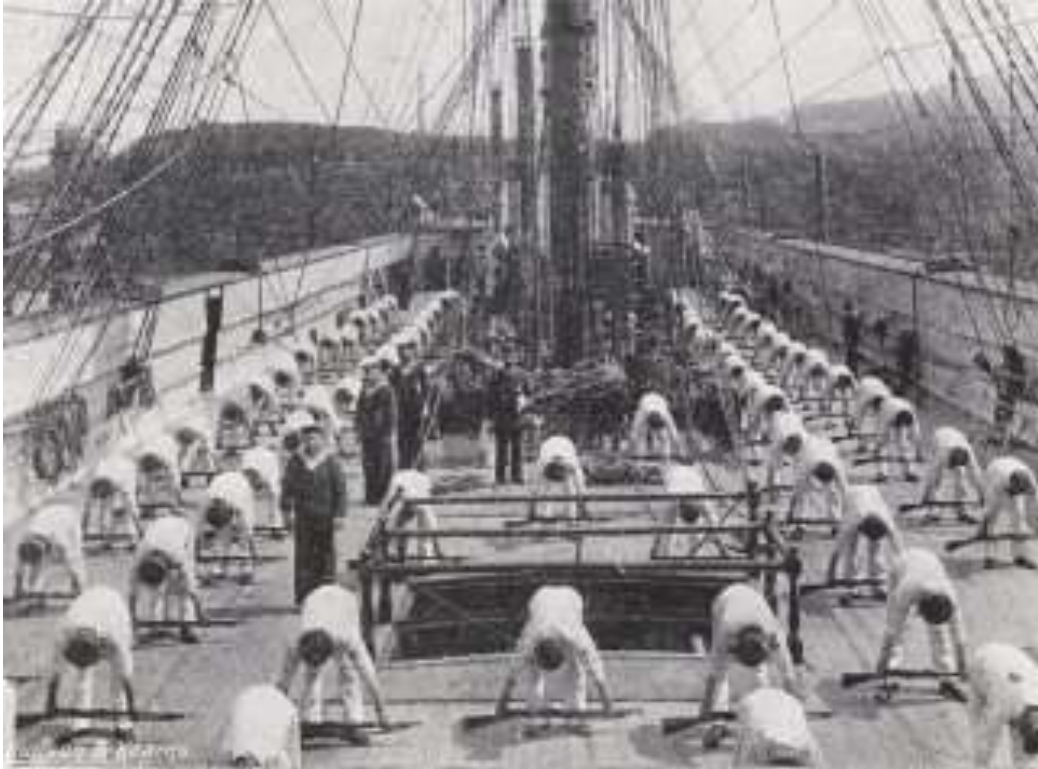
From the end of the 1840s, the introduction of steam power brought less dependence on the wind in battle and led to the construction of screw-driven wooden-hulled ships of the line; a number of purely sail-powered ships were converted to this propulsion mechanism. However, the rise of the ironclad frigate, starting in 1859, made steam-assisted ships of the line obsolete. The ironclad warship became the ancestor of the 20th-century battleship, whose very designation is itself a contraction of the phrase "SHIP OF THE LINE OF BATTLE" or, more colloquially, "BATTLESHIP OF THE LINE".



OFFICERS on the TRAINING SHIP IMPREGNABLE (1896)



**INSTRUCTORS on the TRAINING SHIP IMPREGNABLE (1896)**



**DRILL-TIME on the TRAINING SHIP IMPREGNABLE (1896)**



**Reefing the Topsails on board HMS IMPREGNABLE**



**The Lads of the TRAINING SHIP "IMPREGNABLE" in 1896.**

**There were some 1,100 young boys aged 15-years to 16.5-years.**

# HMS Agincourt (BROADSIDE IRONCLAD)

WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this TRAINING SHIP for only 2-months from February 1901 - March 14, 1901.

HMS AGINCOURT, a 10,690-ton *Minotaur* class broadside ironclad, was built at Birkenhead, England. Though her keel was laid in October 1861 and she was launched in March 1865, the new ship was not completed until 1868, by which time her design was somewhat outdated.

One of three British battleships built with five masts, *AGINCOURT* was employed in June and July 1869 to help tow a large floating drydock to Madeira, where it was handed over to HMS *Warrior* and HMS *Black Prince* for further passage to Bermuda.

With this unusual assignment completed, *Agincourt* served with the CHANNEL SQUADRON until 1875. In 1871 she ran hard aground near Gibraltar and was only gotten off after several days of hard work. Between 1875 and 1877 she was refitted with larger guns and was then sent to the Mediterranean Sea.

IN FEBRUARY 1878 she steamed through the DARDANELLES in bad weather, in company with other British warships, as a show of force directed at Russian policy towards the Turkish Empire. Later in that year *Agincourt* returned to the Channel Fleet, with which she operated until 1889.

After four years in reserve, she was used as a harbour training ship at Portland and Harwich between 1893 and 1909.

The old battleship was then reduced to a coal hulk. She was finally scrapped in 1961.

# HMS Gibraltar

WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this Edgar-Class CRUISER for 6-months from March 15, 1901 to August 11, 1901.

On completion of this tour of duty on August 11, 1901, WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER signed up for a 12-YEAR TOUR OF DUTY to run from AUGUST 12, 1901 to AUGUST 11, 1913.

WILLIAM was also PROMOTED to the rank of ORDINARY SEAMAN from the rank of "Trainee". He remained on HMS GIBALTAR until December 10, 1902.

During her early career HMS GIBALTAR served mainly on foreign stations. In late 1899 she had a complete refit at Portsmouth dockyard. In March 1901 she was commissioned by CAPTAIN ARTHUR LIMPUS, with a complement of 544 officers and men, to take the place as flagship of Rear-Admiral Arthur Moore, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief on the Cape Station. She arrived in Durban in early September 1901.

In July 1902 she was head of a group of seven Royal Navy ships visiting Zanzibar for a show of force following the death of the Sultan and accession of his son, Ali bin Hamud. The following month she visited Kenya, and Beira, Mozambique, before she was back in South Africa in September.

Despite her obsolescence, she saw service in the First World War, first with the 10th Cruiser Squadron on Northern Patrol and from 1915 as a depot ship for this group, based in the Shetland Islands. Two of her QF 6-in Mk I guns were dismantled from the cruiser and moved to Swarbacks Head on Vementry, a headland that overlooks the entrance to Swarbacks Minn between the islands of Vementry and Muckle Roe, Shetland for shore based defence. The two guns still exist on this site and can be visited.



**HMS GIBRALTAR (1892)**



**Guns from HMS Gibraltar  
on the Island of Vementry,  
Shetland**

**HMS GIBRALTAR was  
sold in August 1923 to  
JOHN CASHMORE LTD  
for breaking up at  
Newport, Wales.**

# HMS Duke of Wellington

**WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this 131-gun SHIP OF THE LINE for 6-months from March 15, 1901 to August 11, 1901. He served a further 5-months from December 11, 1902 - May 9, 1903.**

**William was Promoted to ABLE SEAMAN in January 1903.**

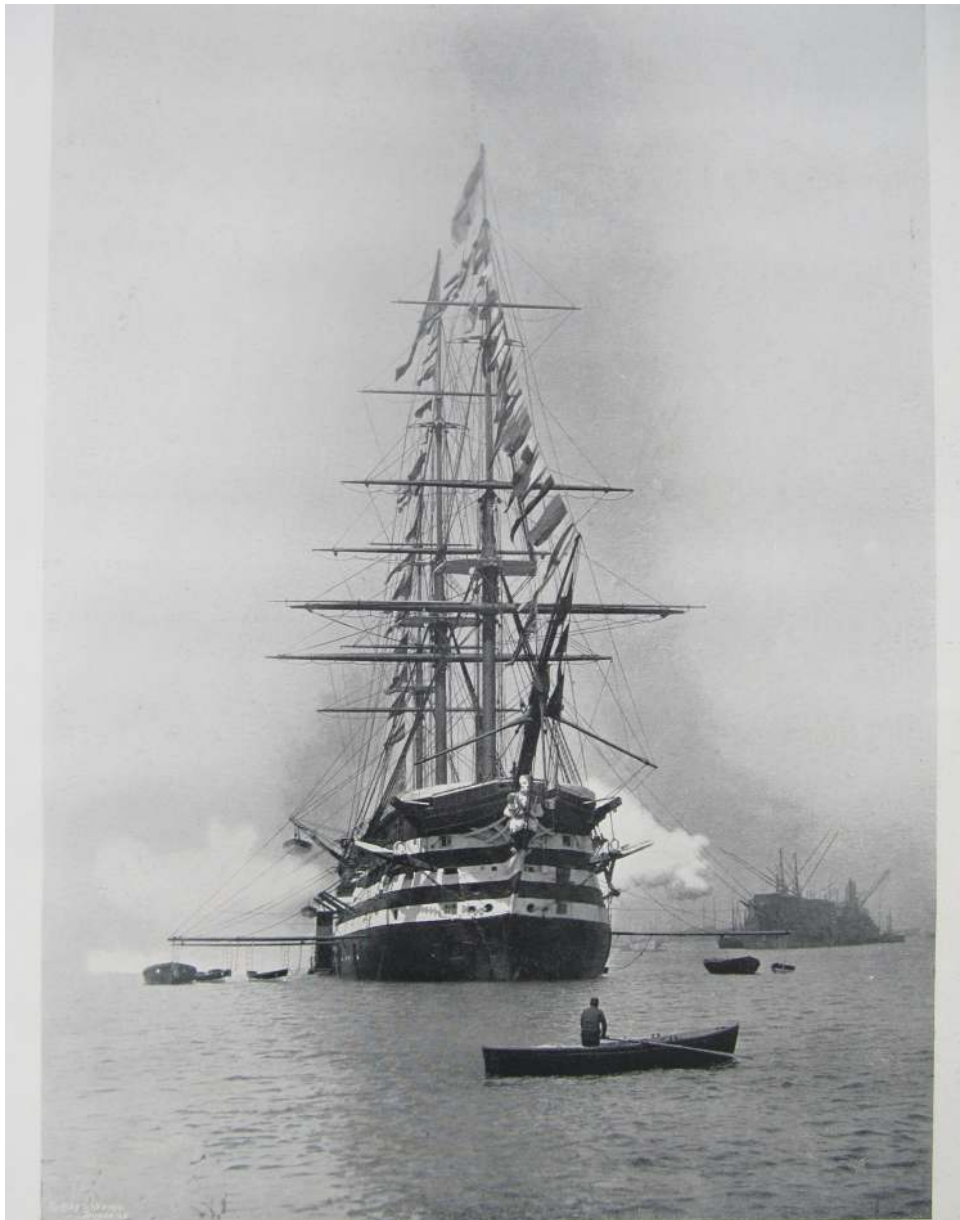


Photo. SYMONDS & CO., Portsmouth.

*The "Duke of Wellington" firing a Royal Salute as Flagship at Portsmouth.*

First christened HMS WINDSOR CASTLE, she was the first of a class of four that represented the ultimate development of the wooden three-decker ship of the line which had been the mainstay capital ship in naval warfare for 200 years. She was originally ordered in 1841 to a design of Sir William Symonds, the Surveyor of the Navy, but was not laid down until May 1849 at Pembroke Dock by which time Symonds had resigned and the design had been modified by the Assistant Surveyor John Edye.

At this stage the ship was still intended as a sailing vessel. Although the Royal Navy had been using steam power in smaller ships for three decades, it had not been adopted for ships of the line, partly because the enormous paddle-boxes required would have meant a severe reduction in the number of guns carried. This problem was solved by the adoption of the screw propeller in the 1840s.

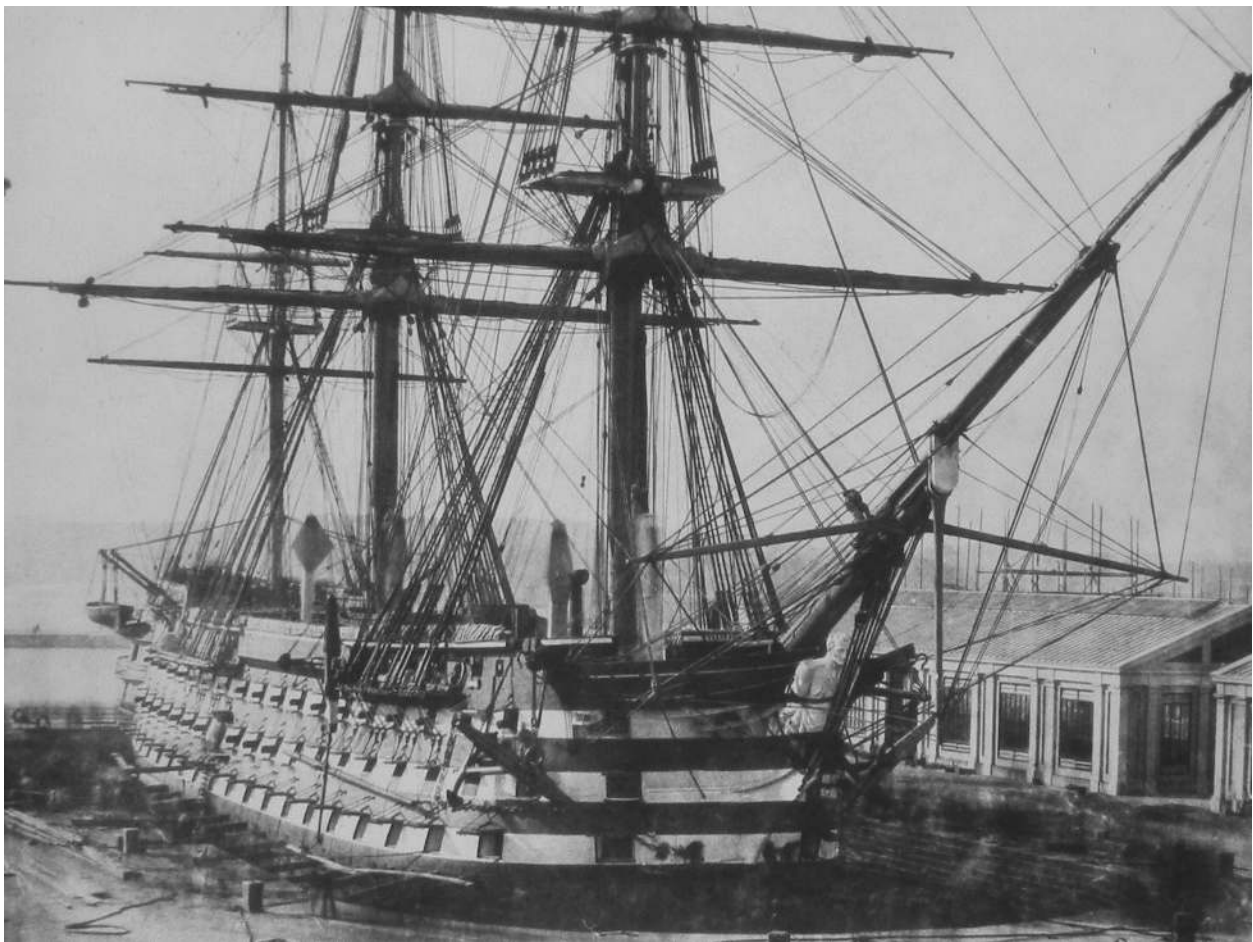
Under a crash programme announced in December 1851 to provide the navy with a steam-driven battlefleet, the design was further modified by the new Surveyor, Captain Baldwin Walker. The ship was cut apart in two places on the stocks in January 1852, lengthened by 30 feet (9.1 m) overall and given screw propulsion. She received the 780 hp engines designed and built by Robert Napier and Sons for the iron frigate *Simoon*, which had surrendered them on conversion to a troopship.

The ship was launched on 14 September 1852. On that day the DUKE OF WELLINGTON died, and she was subsequently re-named in his honour and provided with a new figurehead in the image of the duke.

When completed on 4 February 1853, HMS DUKE OF WELLINGTON was, on paper at least, the most powerful warship in the world (and would remain so until the completion of the French *Bretagne* in 1855) and the largest yet built for the Royal Navy, twice the size of Nelson's *Victory* and with a far bigger broadside. She was 240 feet (73.1 m) long, displaced 5,892 tons, and carried 131 cannon, weighing a total of 382 tons and mainly firing 32 lb balls.

After service in the Western Squadron of the Channel Fleet, she was designated the flagship of the fleet that Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier was to lead to the Baltic on the outbreak of the war with Russia (later known as the Crimean War). *DUKE OF WELLINGTON* served as his flagship throughout the Baltic campaign of 1854 and returned to the Baltic the following year as the flagship of Napier's successor in the command, Rear-Admiral Richard Saunders Dundas, being present at the bombardment of Sveaborg, Finland.

The personnel stationed on the *DUKE OF WELLINGTON* eventually moved into RN Barracks Portsmouth in 1903 and she was finally sold to be broken up in 1904. Ship's timbers discovered on the Thames foreshore at Charlton have been identified as being from the *Duke of Wellington*.



Note the Figurehead of the *DUKE*

# HMS EXCELLENT

HMS EXCELLENT is a Royal Navy "stone frigate" (shore establishment) sited on Whale Island near Portsmouth in Hampshire.

HMS EXCELLENT is itself part of the MARITIME WARFARE SCHOOL, with a headquarters at HMS *Collingwood*, although a number of lodger units are resident within the site, the principal of which is the headquarters of FLEET COMMANDER (NAVY COMMAND HEADQUARTERS).



■ Able Seaman WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this "shore establishment" for 1-year and 8-months from May 10, 1903 to January 11, 1905.

This lengthy posting in PORTSMOUTH allowed William to spend off-duty time at home with his young wife, ANNIE GERTRUDE MORTIMER (born NEAL) who had just lost her first-born, a boy in 1904 and had given birth to a girl in 1905. (She would lose 3 of her 8-Children before the age of 4-years.)

# HMS PRINCE GEORGE

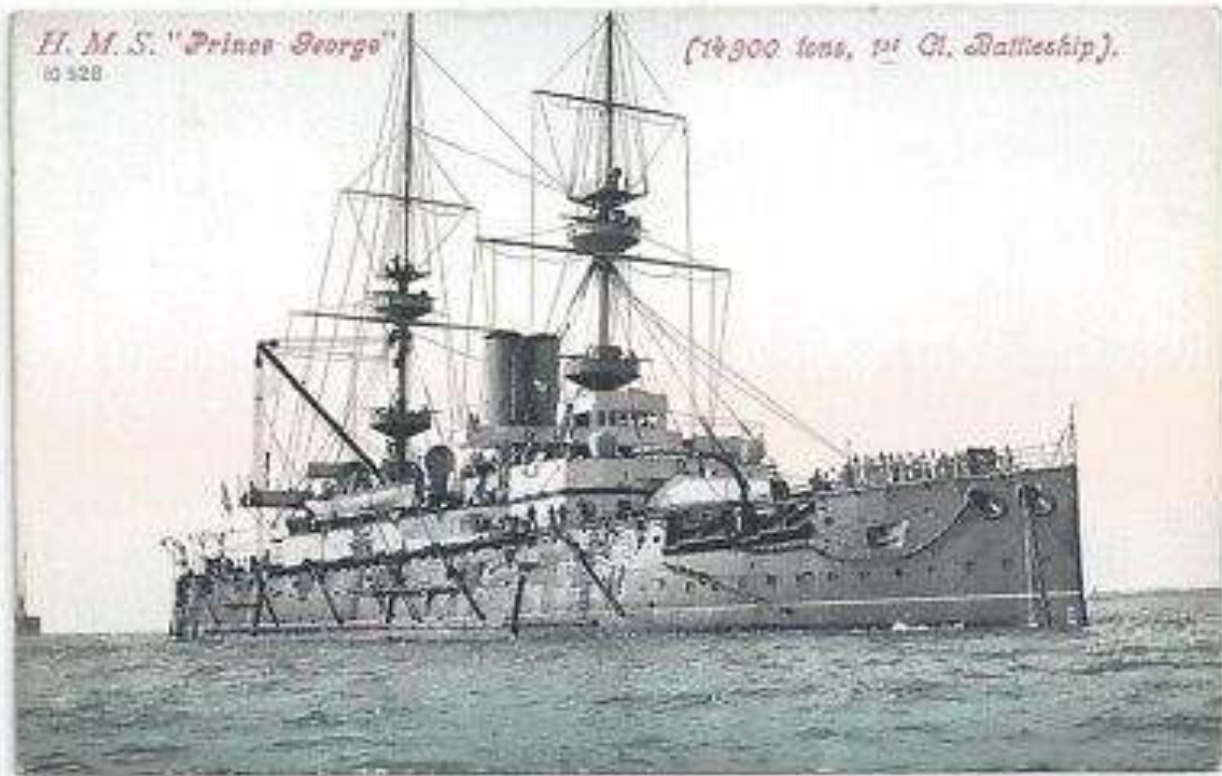
WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this Royal Navy battleship for 2-years & 2-months from January 12, 1905 - March 4, 1907.

William was promoted to the rank of LEADING SEAMAN in 1905.

HMS PRINCE GEORGE was a Majestic Class battleship of the Royal Navy that served with the Channel Squadron until 1906, after which she transferred to the Home Fleet as Flagship until 1909. She collided with the cruiser, HMS SHANNON, in December 1909 and was later refitted and in June 1912 became part of the 7th Battle Squadron.

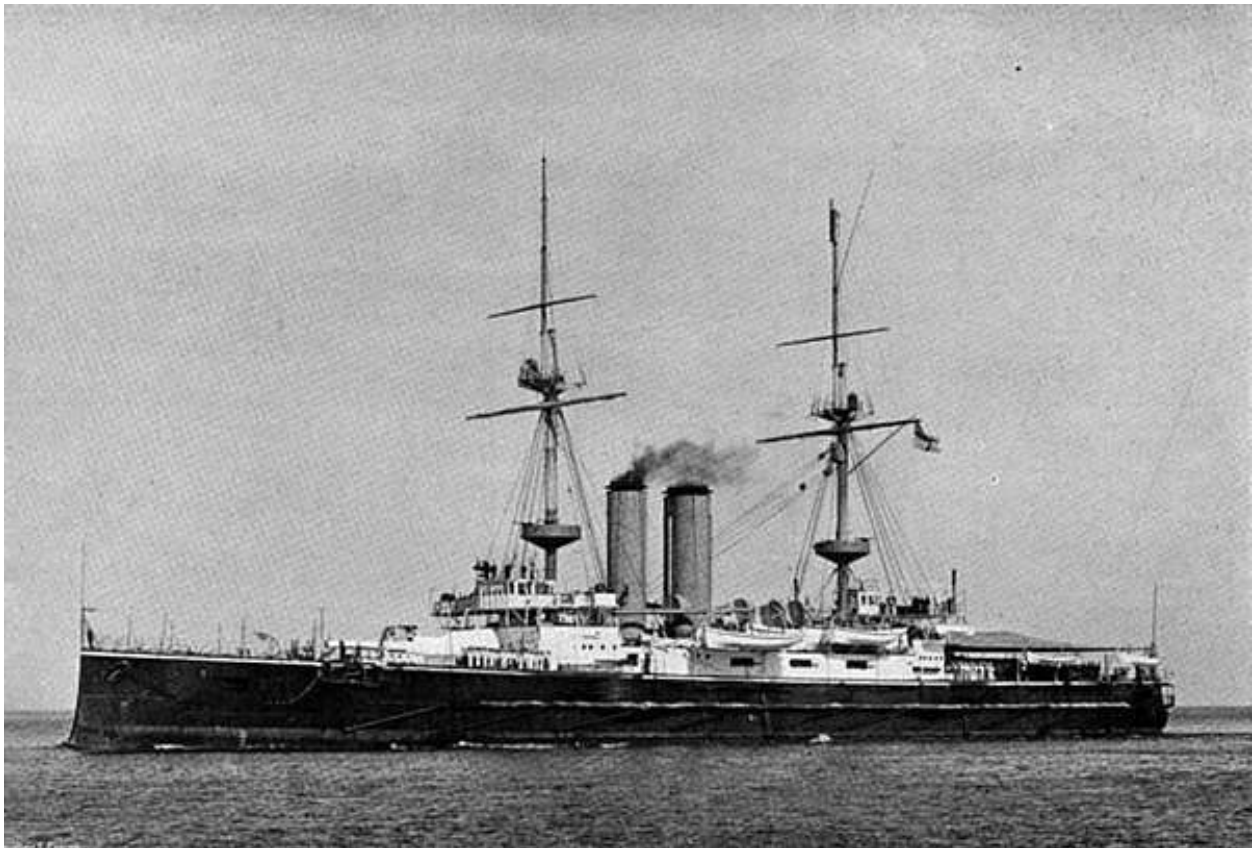
She became flagship to the 7TH BATTLE SQUADRON stationed in the Channel in 1914 and later served at the Dardanelles taking damage from Turkish gunfire. Prince George had a lucky escape when a torpedo which failed to explode struck her off Cape Helles.

She was briefly renamed HMS VICTORIOUS II in 1918 until February 1919 and foundered in 1921.



# HMS CANOPUS

HMS *CANOPUS* was a pre-dreadnought Battleship of the British Royal Navy and the lead ship of the *CANOPUS* CLASS. Intended for service in Asia, *CANOPUS* and her sister ships were smaller and faster than the preceding *Majestic*-class battleships, but retained the same battery of four 12-inch (305 mm) guns. She also carried thinner armour, but incorporated new Krupp steel, which was more effective than the Harvey armour used in the *MAJESTICS*.



Canopus circa 1901

HMS *CANOPUS* was laid down in January 1897, launched in October that year, and commissioned into the fleet in December 1899.

HMS *CANOPUS* served in the Mediterranean Fleet upon commissioning until 1903, when she was decommissioned for refitting. In 1905, she was sent to East Asia, but the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that year rendered her presence in Asian waters unnecessary. She instead returned to Britain and served with several fleet commands in British waters, including the Atlantic Fleet, the Channel Fleet, and finally the Home Fleet.

Another short deployment to the Mediterranean followed in 1908–1909. Upon returning to Britain, HMS *CANOPUS* was placed in reserve.

■ Leading Seaman WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER served on this Royal Navy Battleship for 9-months from June 11, 1907 - April 9 1909.

■ In April 1908 Leading Seaman WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER was discharged from the Royal Navy on medical grounds. He was diagnosed with “disease of the teeth”, which today is called PERIODONTAL DISEASE and can lead to heart attack or stroke if not treated.

Leading Seaman WILLIAM MORTIMER was 25-years old and he had served in the ROYAL NAVY for some 9-years and now returned home to 37, Brookfield Road, Fratton, Portsmouth and his 26-year old wife, ANNIE MORTIMER and their 3 surviving Children. He and Annie were destined to have 8-Children by 1916 of whom 3-Children would die before their 4th. Birthday.

WILLIAM THOMAS BRICKNELL MORTIMER would die in 1918 just as the FIRST WORLD WAR would come to an “end”.

But as we now know, 1918 was not the end of World War.

[For further reading go to: <https://wardfamily.blog> ]