

Memorial: (WMR 88176) Halling, Kent

PRIVATE

HARRY HIGGINS

Service Number: CH/15690
Regiment & Unit/Ship Royal Marine Light Infantry
(RMR/B/1987). H.M.S. "Aboukir."
Date of Death Died 22 September 1914
Buried/commemorated at CHATHAM NAVAL MEMORIAL
7.
United Kingdom

Born: 14-May-1889
Baptised 30-Aug-1889 at St John the Baptist, Halling.
Parents Henry George and Harriett Rose
Address Monarch Hill, Upper Halling

1911 Census Royal Navy At Sea and Abroad. HMS "Irresistable"

[Source worldwar1.co.uk]

During the early months of World War 1 the Royal Navy maintained a patrol of old Cressy class armoured cruisers, known as Cruiser Force C, in the area of the North Sea known as the Broad Fourteens. There was opposition to this patrol from many senior officers, including Admiral Jellicoe and Commodores Keyes and Tyrwhitt, on the grounds that the ships were very vulnerable to a raid by modern German surface ships and the patrol was nick named the "live bait squadron". The Admiralty maintained the patrol on the grounds that destroyers were not able to maintain the patrol in the frequent bad weather and that there were insufficient modern light cruisers available.

In the early hours of September 20th 1914 the cruisers HMS Euryalus, HMS Aboukir, HMS Hogue and HMS Cressy were preparing to go on patrol under Rear Admiral Christian in Euryalus. Normally the patrol was under command of Rear Admiral Campbell in HMS Bacchantes but he was absent so Christian helped fill the gap although he had other duties. The weather was too bad for destroyers to be at sea and unfortunately Euryalus had to drop out due to lack of coal and weather damage to her wireless, Rear Admiral Christian had to remain with his ship rather than transfer to another ship as the weather was too bad to transfer. He delegated command to Captain Drummond in Aboukir although he did not make it clear that Drummond had the authority to order the destroyers to sea if the weather improved, which it did towards the end of September 21st.

Early on September 22nd 1914 the German submarine U9 under the command of Commander Otto Weddigen sighted the Cressy, Aboukir and Hogue steaming NNE at 10 knots without zigzagging. Although the patrols were supposed to maintain 12-13 knots and zigzag the old cruisers were unable to maintain that speed and the zigzagging order was widely ignored as there had been no submarines sighted in the area during the war.

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U9 manoeuvred to attack and at about 6.25 AM fired a single torpedo at Aboukir, which stuck her on her port side. Aboukir rapidly suffered heavy flooding and despite counter flooding developed a 20 degree list and lost engine power. It was soon clear that she was a lost cause and Captain Drummond ordered her to be abandoned, although only one boat had survived the attack so most crew had to jump into the sea. At first Drummond thought that Aboukir had been mined and signalled the other two cruisers to close and assist but he soon realised that it was a torpedo attack and ordered the other cruisers away, but too late.

<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Regiments/images/HMSAboukir.jpg>

