

Reginald Charles BRIGHT

Born: Holcombe, 1 January 1897 Lost at sea 19 February 1918, aged 21
Able Seaman, Royal Navy, No J/19710 H.M.S. MONS

The Bright surname is of great antiquity. It derives from a pre-600 A.D. word "Beorht" meaning bright or shiny. Over time it became a nick-name and by the Middle Ages it had become a surname.

At first sight **Reginald Charles Bright** has no clear connection to Dawlish. His grandfather, John Bright (1845-1906), was a farmer who was born in Colyton and married Jane Dunster from Dunkerswell. They had a large family and Frederick Bright (1875-1932) was their fourth son to be born in Colyton.

Frederick (1875-1932) was to be the father of **Reginald Charles Bright**.

Frederick Bright married Charlotte Jarman (1874-1946) of Holcombe in 1896 (GRO Oct-Dec ref Honiton, Vol 5b, p29). Charlotte was the daughter of Charles Abraham Ware Jarman (1844-1933) and Agnes Ann Honour (1848-1910) of Holcombe, a family that connected with five men who are listed on Holcombe and Dawlish war memorials. The Jarman family profile is recorded in the note on Thomas Frederick Jarman (q.v.) who died on 22 June 1915.

As was customary at that time, Frederick had to find work wherever he could. This entailed moving on a regular basis and it was so for this family. From the census and birth records we have a glimpse of their hardships. In 1897 they were in Holcombe. In 1899 they were in Awliscombe, in 1901 they were living in Kerswell Cottage, Kenn, in 1904 Dalwood and in 1911 at Burrows Farm, Clayhidon. This lack of stability meant that the family suffered many hardships and **Reginald** was poorly educated. He left school in 1911 at the age of 14 and worked as a farm boy.

Reginald Charles Bright was one of twin boys, the other being Hubert John Bright (q.v.), born in Holcombe on 1st January 1897. Their births were registered by Agnes Jarman.

The census of 1901 shows that Frederick and Charlotte were living at Kerswell Cottage, Kenn with four children. Frederick was 26 and an agricultural labourer.

By 1911 they were living at "Burrows", Clayhidon, Wellington, Somerset with a niece, Vera Jarman, 2, staying with them. The census data from 1911 shows that they had seven children, all still living. They were;

Hubert John	1897-1917	born	Holcombe
Reginald Charles	1897-1918		"
Frederick Leonard	1899 -		Honiton
Florence Agnes Rose	1901 -		Exminster
Mary Jane	1904 -		Dalwood
Winifred	1906 -		"
Thomas	1908 -		Honiton

A further child, Harry George, was born in 1912.

In 1911 **Reginald Charles Bright** was living with his maternal grandfather, Charles Abraham Ware Jarman, market gardener, and his daughter Mary Drusilla Jarman who was sub-Postmistress. Reginald was shown as a gardener. His grandfather was born at Holcombe in 1844 and was a ship's master and at sea in 1861, 1881 and 1891, and thus likely to have influenced his grandson about joining the Navy.

Reginald Charles Bright joined the Navy as a Boy Seaman on 12 August 1912 at age 15 and was sent to the Boy Seaman's Training Ship *H.M.S. Impregnable*, a wooden hulk moored in the Hamoaze off Devonport (formerly *HMS Howe* until 12.2.1913. This was a three masted timber "first rate" ship built in 1860. At the time of construction she was a 121 gun screw-propelled ship but, by the time she was ready for service, she was made obsolete by the first iron clad battleships.).

After initial training he was posted to *H.M.S. Gibraltar*, an Edgar class cruiser built in 1892 and which had been converted into a depot ship in 1912, and he stayed from February to May 1913. He returned to Barracks in Devonport, *H.M.S. Vivid*, and then had short spells aboard *H.M.S. Lancaster*, a Monmouth class armoured cruiser built in 1902, that had been placed in reserve, and *H.M.S. Talbot*, an Eclipse class cruiser operating in the English Channel until joining *H.M.S. Skirmisher* on 7th October 1913. He was made up to Ordinary Seaman on 7th July 1914 and signed on for a 12 year engagement on 1st January 1915, at the age of 18. He was made up to Able Seaman on 21st December 1915.

H.M.S. Skirmisher was a light-cruiser of the Sentinel type of just under 3,000 tons displacement and laid down in 1905. *Skirmisher* was designed to act as a leader of a destroyer flotilla but like other ships of this type was soon proved to be too slow for the role. As faster turbine-engined destroyers came into service, they were rendered obsolete.

On 16th December 1914 the Germans raided the Yorkshire coast, shelling Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby. *Skirmisher* headed a flotilla of eight torpedo boats to intercept but due to bad weather, did not see or engage the enemy.

In May 1915 *Skirmisher*, still based on the Humber, joined the 6th Light Cruiser Squadron, with duties including patrolling to spot German Zeppelins. By October 1915, the 6th Light Cruiser Squadron had been broken up, and *Skirmisher* had joined the Mediterranean Fleet. *Skirmisher* remained part of the Mediterranean Fleet throughout 1916 and into 1917.

From 25th July to 6th December 1917 **R C Bright** returned to Devonport and was based in Barracks, *H.M.S. Vivid*.

On 7th December 1917 he was posted to *HMS Blake*, a depot ship to the 11th Destroyer flotilla in Harwich. **R C Bright** served aboard *H.M.S. Mons*, a Moon class destroyer. She was one of one hundred and three destroyers of the M Class built for the Royal Navy during the Great War. *Mons* was designed by Messrs Yarrow Ltd and first commissioned in July 1915. They were 270 feet overall with a displacement of 890 tons and a designed speed of 35-36 knots. In heavy seas it is quite likely that waves could break across decks of these small fast ships.

The record shows that a Court of Enquiry determined that **Reginald Charles Bright** "was washed overboard and drowned on 19 Feb 18. No blame is attributable to anyone."

Reference would need be made to the ship's log at N.A. Kew to determine approximate location of the ship at the time.

Reginald Charles Bright is listed on memorial tablets in Holcombe Church.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: BRIGHT, REGINALD CHARLES Able Seaman J/19710
19/02/1918 Age: 21 Royal Navy H.M.S. "Mons." Accidentally drowned in heavy
weather.

Panel Ref: 27. [Plymouth Naval Memorial](#)

Son of Frederick and Charlotte Bright, of Egypt Cottage, Hemyock, Devon. Native of Clayhidon,
Wellington, Somerset.

His name is also recorded on the Clayhidon War Memorial.

His twin brother Hubert, his uncle Thomas Frederick Jarman, and his 1st. cousins, Bertram
Charles Honour and Reginald Alexander Honour also died serving their country in the Great
War.

Last known address: Post Office, Holcombe, Devon (1911 census)

Next of kin: Mother: Charlotte Bright (1875-1946) of Hatchet Brandy, Clayhidon, Nr
Wellington, Somerset

References:

Holcombe Church roll of lives lost 1914-1918,

Jane's Fighting Ships

naval-history.net

Draft profile by Campbell Brown, Holcombe

refs via susbscription website (ancestry.co.uk)

BMD and Census entries.

UK,Royal Navy and Royal Marines War Graves Roll.

Smith and Hawkins Family Trees