

William John HUTCHINGS

Born 1 April 1886, Ellacombe, Torquay

Died 31 May 1916, age 30

Able Seaman, Royal Navy, Service No: 224640 (Dev)

H.M.S.BROKE

William John Hutchings was the second of seven children of Charles Thomas Hutchings, born in Kennford (1860-1942) and Louisa Margaret (Holding), born in Torquay (1862 – 1948). The children were Herbert C (1885-), **William John (1886-1916)**, Walter George (1889-), Charles Thomas (1891-), Henry Ernest (1894-), Lilian Louisa Bedford (1895-) and Winifred M (1898-).

In 1891 the family were living at 19 Sandhill Road, Torquay, and the father was shown as a labourer. By 1901 they had moved to 1 Alma Place, Tormoham, Torquay and the father was working as a carter for a coal merchant. *(Such place names have since changed-ed)*

William joined the Royal Navy on 17 January 1903 as a Boy Seaman at the age of 16 and served aboard HMS Northampton which was one of the Navy's training ships for boy seamen. His service record shows that he had been working as a gardener. On his 18th birthday he signed on for a 12 year service, on 1 April 1904.

He served aboard various ships until December 1905 when he joined H.M.S.CAMBRIDGE, the Gunnery Training Ship that was a 'wooden wall' hulk moored in the Hamoaze off Devonport. Gunnery practise took place ashore at the Trevol ranges, Torpoint, and at sea in a number of ships.

William was rated Able Seaman in June 1905 and his service record shows a VG (very good) for character in each subsequent ship.

He stayed attached to H.M.S.CAMBRIDGE until April 1907, and during this appointment he married Lilian Elizabeth Ford in 4th quarter 1906.

Lilian Ford was the seventh of sixteen children of John and Mary Ford of Dawlish. Their father was a tailor in 3 Park Street, Dawlish in 1901 and 3 Strand Hill *(formerly Park Street)* in 1911.

John and Mary Ford's grandson, Frederick George Ford was living with John and Mary Ford in 1901 and 1911 and he died in the Gallipoli campaign on 9th May 1915. (see separate entry).

Lilian Ford was born in Q4, 1883 and had an illegitimate son, Thomas Herbert Foster Ford (1905-1962) who was subsequently brought up by his aunt, Ann Morrish (nee Way) who was a sister of her mother.

William and Lilian Hutchings had a son, William John Ford Hutchings (1908 – 1986) and in 1911 mother and son were living at 15 Elm Road, Highweek, Newton Abbot, while **William** was serving aboard H.M.S. ABOUKIR, an armoured cruiser. (She was living close to her Ford relatives at 11 Commercial Road, Dawlish when her husband was killed.)

In June 1911 he was posted to H.M.S.BLAKE which was a Destroyer Depot Ship based at Portland. His next posting in May 1914 was to the Naval Barracks, Devonport, then Portsmouth, and again to H.M.S.BLAKE (BROKE), which was then the depot ship to the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla

at Rosyth. This was followed by H.M.S.HECLA, taking the part of Depot Ship to the 4th Destroyer Flotilla at Scapa Flow where H.M.S.BROKE was one of twenty one destroyers, and was the Flotilla Leader (2nd in command).

H.M.S.BROKE had been built by J Samuel White in 1911 for the Chilean Navy. She was one of four ships incorporated into the Royal Navy during World War One. Three surviving ships were returned to Chile after WW1.



H.M.S.ZULU, a Destroyer of the same general form as H.M.S.BROKE

In the major naval engagement in the North Sea, known as the Battle of Jutland, that began on 31 May 1916, there were more significant British naval losses than German, but the outcome was to persuade the Kaiser to instruct his navy to remain in port.

Towards the end of the battle, during darkness, the 4th Destroyer Flotilla encountered German forces that damaged H.M.S.TIPPERARY, the Flotilla Leader, and H.M.S.BROKE, became the senior ship in the Flotilla. She was then hit by *SMS Westfalen*. This blast destroyed the bridge, while the ship was in the middle of a turning manoeuvre to bring torpedo tubes to bear on the German ship.

She continued to turn and collided with H.M.S.SPARROWHAWK. A young officer of H.M.S.SPARROWHAWK saw the ship approaching fast and was thrown onto the other ship, where he lay for a few minutes unconscious. When he awoke he was welcomed by a colleague with the words: "Who in hell are you?!?". Now chaos reigned on the collided ships. Both captains assumed they were sinking, and so ordered the crew onto the other ship. Finally, both ships were freed. But just at this moment H.M.S.CONTEST, another destroyer, collided with the stern of the H.M.S.SPARROWHAWK.

In this confusion, a German battle cruiser neared the crippled H.M.S.SPARROWHAWK. Although she fired the only gun that she could, the other ship carried on, but suddenly it sank just before hitting the destroyer. What ship this was is still a complete mystery.

About this time the Captain of the *SMS Lützow*, Viktor Harder, ordered his crew to abandon his sinking ship and to sink her with destroyer torpedoes. The loss of this ship was the most hurtful loss for the German fleet. There is still discussion about whether the ship was still in a condition to be saved, as *SMS Seydlitz* survived the battle in a similar condition.

Only half an hour later, at 3.15am the destroyer H.M.S.OBEDIENT met the German 2nd squadron. She launched a torpedo, which hit the German pre-dreadnought *SMS Pommern*, which went down in a huge explosion. In this last engagement, the German destroyer *SM V 4* was also lost. This marked the end of the battle.



PHOTO shows William with his wife Lilian Elizabeth

Ford

Commonwealth War Graves entry:

William John Hutchings Able Seaman, Service No: 224640 Date of Death: 31/05/1916
Age:29 Royal Navy - H.M S"Broke."
[Plymouth naval memorial](#), Panel 12. Husband of Lilian Hutchings, of 11, Commercial Rd.,
Dawlish, Devon.

The Battle of Jutland, 31 May 1916. **Fourth Destroyer Flotilla**, Able Seaman Hutchings one of 47 casualties aboard H.M.S.BROKE.

In total the British Fleet lost ships amounting to 113,300 tons and 6,784 men. The Germans lost ships totalling 62,300 tons and 3,039 men. (wikipedia)

A B Hutchings is listed on the Dawlish War memorial inscription: HUTCHINGS W. A.B. R.N.
He is also included in the Devon Roll of Honour, but no date of death or location is shown.

UK, RN andRM War Graves Roll: generally as above, Buried at Sea.
Widow: Lilian, 3 Strand Hill, Dawlish.

Dawlish World War One Project

The Devon Heritage site info:

224640 Able Seaman William John Hutchings of the Royal Navy, H.M.S.BROKE. Parents not known. Husband of Lilian (nee Ford) of 11 Commercial Road, Dawlish. Born nr Exeter 1 April 1886. Died 31 May 1916 aged 29 in the Battle of Jutland. *(Some of this early detail is corrected by material above -ed.)*

He does not appear on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour, having been brought up in Torquay before joining the Royal Navy.

References: CWGC UK RN & RM War Graves Roll BMD and census entries FORD family history document, including family photographs.

Master Ford – Petherick File family tree (Ancestry) Service Record. Naval-History.org
Andrews/DaBell/DeLee/Walker/Atkinson family tree (Ancestry)

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