

## Biog 15 W G McGilp, HMS Queen Mary

### Morag Cross 7 December 2013

#### \*\*\*15.1

Although it was principally a land-based conflict, the Great War did see one major naval engagement, the Battle of Jutland, fought off Denmark on 31 May -1 June 1916. The Battle of Verdun was raging on the Western Front, and 64 British, allied and neutral ships had been 'lost to enemy submarines, mines and cruisers' in May alone. [Source: *Lloyd's War Losses*, quoted in *World War 1 Chronology: Political and Military Background to the War at Sea*, rearranged from HMSO "Principal Events, 1914-1918", Online Resource, at [www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-World\\_War\\_1\\_Timeline\\_or\\_Chronology\\_1916.htm](http://www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-World_War_1_Timeline_or_Chronology_1916.htm)].

#### \*\*\*15.2

The German High Seas Fleet planned to lure out, and decisively defeat the British Grand Fleet, based at Scapa Flow, Orkney. This would break the British naval dominance of the North Sea, which seriously affected German supplies for its war effort, as well as deplete British naval power, a potentially major propaganda coup for the enemy. Unknown to the Germans, the British had been planning a similar operation, in reverse, against the German Imperial Navy. [Source: Chapter XVI, 'The Eve of Jutland', from the official *History of the Great War: Naval Operations*, Vol 3, by Sir Julian S Corbett (1923), published London: Longmans, accessed at [www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvi](http://www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvi)].

#### \*\*\*15.3 both – panorama of memorial and closeup of plaque with name

'William Graham McGilp, Assistant Paymaster, Royal Naval Reserve, late of the Clydesdale Bank Ltd, Glasgow and Tarbert', was one of the 57 officers and 1209 men lost from the battlecruiser HMS Queen Mary. W. G. McGilp (1891-1916) was one of from Tarbert in South Knapdale, Argyllshire, where his father was an 'estate grieve', or farm manager. He was the third of four brothers and two sisters, whose mother came from the island of Bute. [Sources: W G McGilp, Testament 1920, SC51/32/75 Dunoon Sheriff Court, at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk); *The Battle of Jutland 1916 - Casualties Listed by Ship*, Online Resource, at [www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/jutland/jellicoe\\_dispatch\\_1916.htm](http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/jutland/jellicoe_dispatch_1916.htm)].

#### \*\*\*15.4

Like his brothers, McGilp left home to seek work, and in 1911 was a clerk for the Clydesdale Bank in Rothesay, being visited by his Gaelic-speaking grandmother on the night of the census. At that date, his brothers were a grocer in Springburn, and a merchant naval officer (aboard the Glasgow-docked 'Calavies'). [Sources: Census 1901, 1911, at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk)].

#### \*\*\*15.5

McGilp was also posted to the bank branches in Tarbert and Moore Place, Glasgow (now 134 West George St), where he was working before he received his Royal Naval commission in October 1915. [Sources: Census 1901, 1911, at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk); Obituary, *Glasgow Herald*, 5 June 1916, p8].

### \*\*\*15.6

On 30 May 1916, HMS Queen Mary left Rosyth, with the rest of Vice-Admiral Beatty's 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron, to rendezvous in the with the British Scapa Flow contingent under Admiral Jellicoe, off Norway. The following day, the enemy was engaged near the Danish coast, and opening salvos were fired around 2.28 pm [Source: Chapter XVII, 'Jutland: The First Phase', from the official *History of the Great War: Naval Operations*, Vol 3, by Sir Julian S Corbett (1923), published London: Longmans, at [www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvii](http://www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvii)].

### \*\*\*15.7

The official account of the sinking of the Queen Mary reads:

*The 'Queen Mary' at from 15,800 to 14,500 yards, became the target of [the German ships Derfflinger and Seydlitz. For about five minutes she stood it gallantly ... The Germans say full salvos were coming from her with fabulous rapidity ... when at 4.26 a plunging salvo crashed upon her deck forward ... there was a dazzling flash of red flame ... and then a much heavier explosion rent her amidships.]*

### \*\*\*15.8

*'Her bows plunged down ... [as] her propellers were still slowly revolving high in the air. In another moment [there was] a shower of black debris ... nothing of her left but a dark pillar of smoke rising stem-like till it spread hundreds of feet high in the likeness of a vast palm tree.'* [Source: Chapter XVII, 'Jutland: The First Phase', from the official *History of the Great War: Naval Operations*, Vol 3, by Sir Julian S Corbett (1923), published London: Longmans, at [www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvii](http://www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-RN3b.htm#xvii)].

### \*\*\*15.9

Of her 1286 crew, only twenty were rescued; 'She was sent to the bottom within a few moments'. The Tyne-built Queen Mary was commissioned in 1913, with engines by John Brown & Co, Clydebank, carried eight 13.5 in guns, and her wreckage, discovered in 1991, is a protected war grave. The respective losses were: British 14 ships, 6,094 men. German: 11 ships and 2,551 men. [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 3 June 1916, p7; 6 June 1916, p5; 'HMS Queen Mary', *The Wreck Site*, Online Resource, at <http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?10779>; *The Battle of Jutland*, Imperial War Museum Online Resource, at [www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-battle-of-jutland#](http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-battle-of-jutland#)].

### \*\*\*15.10

In Glasgow, with its strong maritime traditions, 'groups gathered in the streets, scanning the journals and anxiously discussing the information' on 2 June. A Glasgow junior officer wrote: 'I was never quite sure what was going on and had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing enemy ships from our own.' [Sources: *Glasgow Herald*, 3 June 1916, p7; 10 June 1916, p5].

*The Scotsman* noted the strange effect of the fighting on the water itself: 'Calm at the beginning, it soon looked as if it were under the influence of a gale, so great was the turmoil caused by the ploughing of the ships. The sea, also seemed to be stiff with fish, killed by the shells bursting in the water. Cod ... by the thousands, floated listlessly'. [Source: *The Scotsman*, 5 June 1916, p5].

\*\*\*15.11

At Rosyth, where the Queen Mary's crew had been 'rehearsing ... a review called *The Busy Bee*' in the YMCA hall, complete with theatrical costumes from London. 'By the time the performance was to be given on [31 May] the cruiser had gone to the bottom of the sea. Up till ... Saturday night none of the ... staff had felt inclined to dismantle the hall of its theatrical paraphernalia.' [Source: *The Scotsman*, 6 June 1916, p5].

\*\*\*15.12 AND 15.13 ie both the total view of the plaque, and the closeup of the name; addition of WW2 names to board is mentioned in story so need both names

William McGilp's father received £54:6:8d for the loss of his son's effects in the sinking of the Queen Mary. W. G. McGilp, who died aged 24, is commemorated on the family gravestone at Tarbert, on the Clydesdale Bank Head Office's War Memorial, St Vincent Place, Glasgow, and on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. [Source: W G McGilp, Testament 1920, SC51/32/75 Dunoon Sheriff Court, at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk)].

\*\*\*15.14