Grimsby Fishermen at Work and War

James Clifford (1878-1950) and his family

By John Clifford

Church Lane, Derby, where my great-great grandparents, Thomas and Annie Clifford, made their first family home. Their house was no.3, the first door on the right. Thomas and Annie were married two miles (3.2 km) to the north in their home village of Darley Abbey in 1875. Three of their children were probably born in Church Lane. These were my great grandfather Charles in 1876, his brother James in 1878 and their sister Catherine Annie in 1880. Church Lane is seen here around 1960. It was demolished around 1970. (Pete Davies; Derby Telegraph)

Derbyshire origins

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Beginnings

This could be the story of many fishermen around the British coast from the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. I am not qualified to describe their practices and skills in detail, but I will attempt to recreate their world through the life of one of them, and the circumstances and events with which he would have been familiar.

James Clifford was born on 23 September 1878. He was the brother of my great grandfather Charles Clifford, born in 1876. Charles and James' sisters, Catherine Annie and Helena, arrived in 1880 and 1882.

Their father Thomas Clifford, my great-great grandfather, was born in north-west Leicestershire in 1850. He and his siblings grew up in Allestree and Darley Abbey, just north of Derby. Thomas married my great-great grandmother Annie Norton in Darley Abbey in 1875. They made their first home at 3 Church Lane, Derby, where three of their children were probably born. Thomas was a locomotive fireman with the Midland Railway at the time. Charles was baptised 'back home' in Darley Abbey and, on 7 September 1879, so was James when he was nearly a year old.

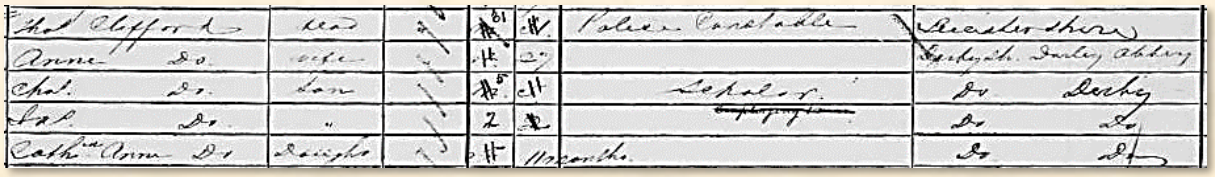
Charles was named after Thomas' father, my 3x great grandfather. He was an agricultural labourer and had died in 1857 aged just 34. James was named after one of Thomas' brothers. Catherine Annie was named after Thomas' mother Catherine, my 3x great grandmother, although she too would be known within the family as 'Annie'. Helena was named after Thomas' sister. The children's uncle James and grandmother Catherine both died in early 1880, so only Charles among his siblings would have had memories of them. Neither did they know their other grandmother, also Ann Norton, who died in 1877.

Derbyshire Constabulary

In April 1880, Thomas, Annie and the children moved 33 miles (53 km) north to Norton Woodseats, which was then in north Derbyshire on the southern edge of Sheffield. Thomas worked in the area as a police constable. Charles started school and Helena was born while they lived there. James's earliest memories would have been of a village increasingly overshadowed by the expanding industrial city.

James may have been aware of PC Thomas having to deal with stray animals, careless horse-and-cart drivers, gamblers, drunks and street violence. James may have witnessed Annie taking messages for Thomas and even supervising his detainees temporarily in the house. Their faces may sometimes have reflected tragedies in the community due to accidents and work-related diseases. The children may have also noticed that Thomas sometimes came home badly bruised.

In the end, Thomas' heart was not in policing and he resigned in July 1883. It is possible that the family moved six miles (9.5 km) east to Mosborough, and that James started school there with Charles. Thomas may have struggled to find work as he re-joined Derbyshire Constabulary in April 1884. He was posted 8 miles (13 km) to the south-east in the rural village of Elmton near Bolsover. The children's grandfather, Joseph Norton, died in Darley Abbey later that year.



Extract from the national census of April 1881 for Norton Woodseats, just south of Sheffield. My great-great grandparents, Thomas and Annie Clifford, were living at 275 Derbyshire Lane with their first three children, all born in Derby. Thomas is described as a "Police Constable" born in "Leicestershire". Annie was born in Darley Abbey, just north of Derby. Charles ("Chas"), my great grandfather, was a five-year-old schoolboy ("Scholar"). Little James ("Jas") and Catherine Annie are also named. Their sister Helena would be born the following year. (FindMyPast.co.uk)

*Assault on a police constable at Croxton Park horse racing course in Leicestershire in 1883. In August 1881, PC Thomas Clifford was violently assaulted in the middle of an unsympathetic crowd after he tried to stop a street fight in Greenhill just south of Sheffield. (*Illustrated Police News*, 12 May 1883; British Library Newspaper Archive)*

In January 1885, Thomas was fined for offences against regulations and, in the March, he had to resign for gambling and neglect of duty. As in the army, discipline for misconduct was common among policemen who fell foul of the behaviour they were supposed to be confronting. Annie must have been distraught. This was one drama that they could not hide from the children, and James was old enough at six and a half to understand what had happened.

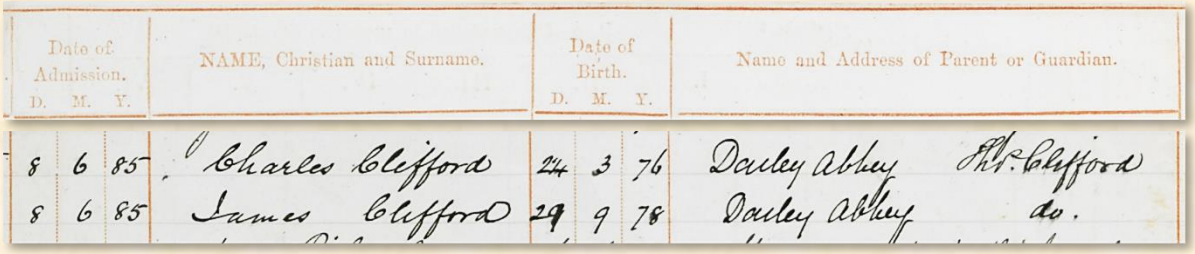
Back to Darley Abbey and Derby

The family moved back to Darley Abbey and lived at 1 Darley Street on the west bank of the River Derwent, just downstream from the local cotton mill. In June 1885, Charles and James were admitted to the village school. Also attending were some of their cousins, children of Thomas' sister Helena.

In February 1887, little Annie started school with her cousin Ethel, daughter of

Thomas' youngest brother William. The children would have enjoyed the celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in the June.

An engraving from 1862 of the Boar's Head cotton mills at Darley Abbey, just north of Derby. From the 1850s and into the early twentieth century, several members of the Clifford family and their relatives worked here. Others worked at the cotton mill in Milford, five miles (8km) to the north. (Illustrated Times; with thanks to Darley Abbey Historical Group)

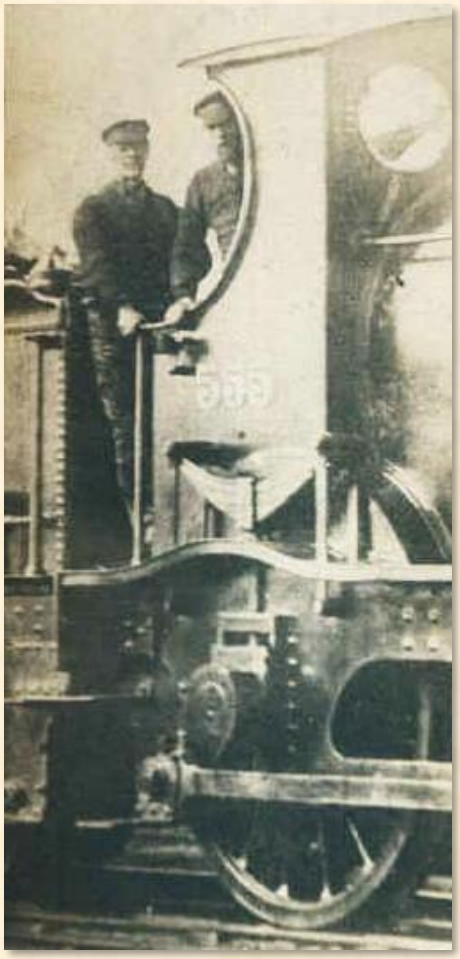


Date of Admission. D.	M.	Y.	NAME, Christian and Surname.	Date of Birth. D.	M.	Y.	Name and Address of Parent or Guardian.
8	6	85	Charles Clifford	24	3	76	Darley Abbey Thos. Clifford
8	6	85	James Clifford	29	9	78	Darley Abbey do.

Extracts from a page of the register for Walter Evans School, Darley Abbey, showing the admission of Charles and James Clifford on 8 June 1885. According to James's naval service record from 1918, his date of birth was 23 September rather than the 29th. (FindMyPast.co.uk)

Thomas was able to re-join the Midland Railway as a locomotive fireman in August 1887. The family then moved back into Derby. The boys may have attended Peartree School but little Annie continued at school back in Darley Abbey until April 1889. Thomas was promoted to become an engine driver in the September and would remain so for the rest of his working life.

Male and female relatives were working or had worked in the cotton mills, mainly at Darley Abbey and Milford. They included the children's mother Annie, three of their grandparents and some of their aunts, uncles and cousins. Some of the women and girls worked in the clothing industry making dresses, hats, hosiery, lace and silk, and some were domestic servants. Like Thomas, some of the men worked for the Midland Railway, as labourers on the railway lines or at the various works in Derby where locomotives, carriages, wagons and signals were made. Others worked at the city's iron foundries. None of these industries would define the lives of Charles or James.



A Midland Railway Class 480 locomotive, built between 1863 and 1869, seen here at Lancaster in the 1880s. James's father Thomas Clifford would have been familiar with these locomotives as a fireman in the 1870s and as a driver from 1889. (With thanks to Steve Rabone, whose great grandfather John Edward Rabone is on the left)

Loss of a mother

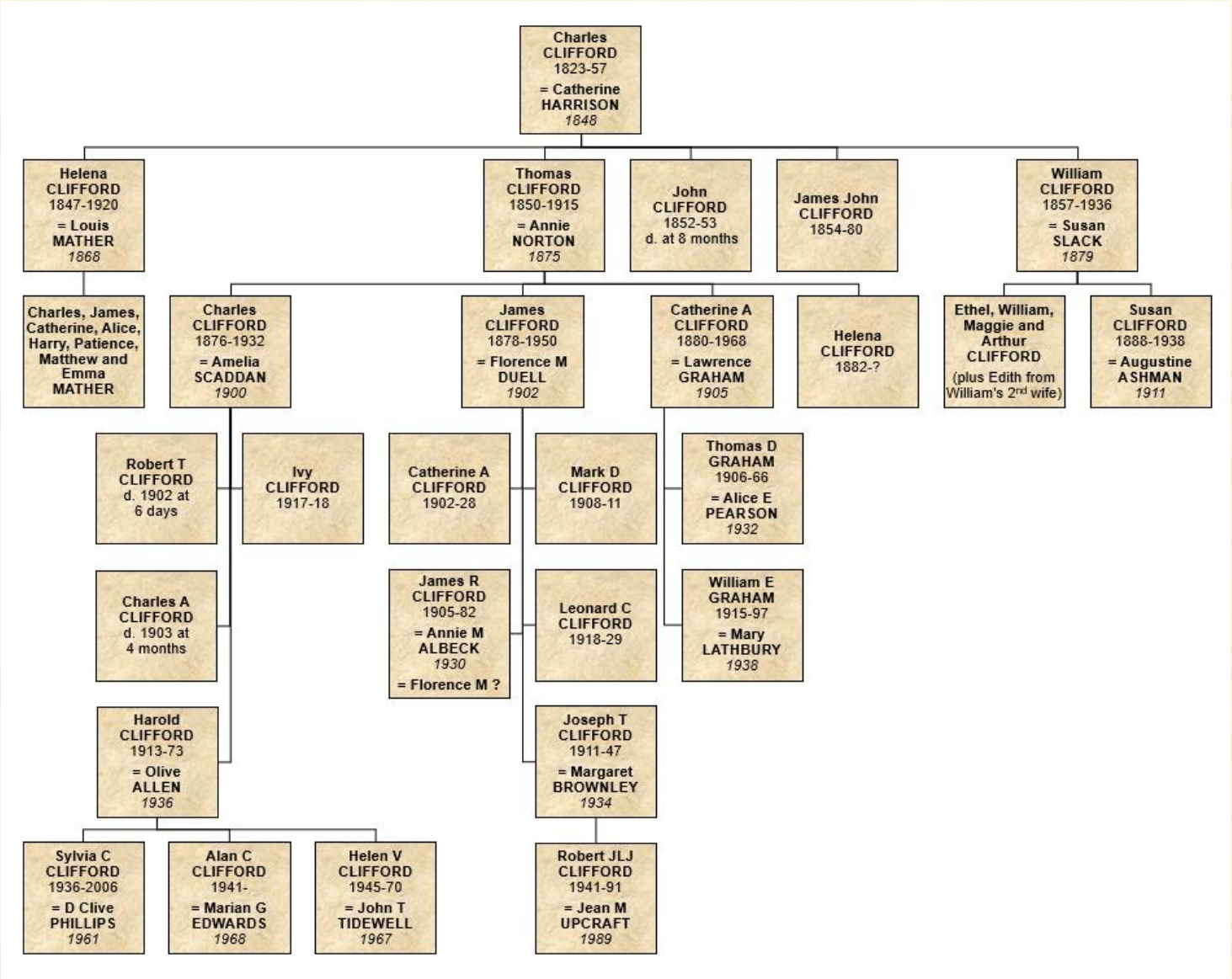
Thomas, Annie and the children were living at 43 Shaftsbury Crescent in the Peartree suburb of Derby when Annie died in January 1891 aged 35. By the time the next national census was taken on 5 April, Thomas had moved with the children to 13 Sidney Street in the Litchurch suburb.

Charles was now 15 and working as an iron moulder at a local foundry. James was a 12-year-old errand boy. Their sisters Annie and Helena, aged 11 and 8, were at school. From this point in the story, the name 'Annie' refers the daughter rather than her deceased mother.

Thomas	Clifford	Head	Widr	41		Railway Engine Driver
Charles	do	Son	S	15		Moulder
Catherine A.	do	Daur	S		10	Scholar
James	Clifford	Son	S	12		Errand Boy
Helena	do	Daur	S		8	Scholar

Extract from the national census of April 1891 for the Litchurch suburb of Derby. Thomas was a recently widowed "Railway Engine Driver", living at 13 Sidney Street with his four children, Charles, James, Catherine Annie and Helena. (FindMyPast.co.uk)

Family tree


Charles CLIFFORD 1823-57 = Catherine HARRISON 1848
Helena CLIFFORD 1847-1920 = Louis MATHER 1868
Thomas CLIFFORD 1850-1915 = Annie NORTON 1875
John CLIFFORD 1852-53 d. at 8 months
James John CLIFFORD 1854-80
William CLIFFORD 1857-1936 = Susan SLACK 1879
Charles, James, Catherine, Alice, Harry, Patience, Matthew and Emma MATHER
Charles CLIFFORD 1876-1932 = Amelia SCADDAN 1900
James CLIFFORD 1878-1950 = Florence M DUELL 1902
Catherine A CLIFFORD 1880-1968 = Lawrence GRAHAM 1905
Helena CLIFFORD 1882-?
Ethel, William, Maggie and Arthur CLIFFORD (plus Edith from William's 2nd wife)
Susan CLIFFORD 1888-1938 = Augustine ASHMAN 1911
Robert T CLIFFORD d. 1902 at 6 days
Ivy CLIFFORD 1917-18
Catherine A CLIFFORD 1902-28
Mark D CLIFFORD 1908-11
Thomas D GRAHAM 1906-66 = Alice E PEARSON 1932
Charles A CLIFFORD d. 1903 at 4 months
James R CLIFFORD 1905-82 = Annie M ALBECK 1930 = Florence M ?
Leonard C CLIFFORD 1918-29
William E GRAHAM 1915-97 = Mary LATHBURY 1938
Harold CLIFFORD 1913-73 = Olive ALLEN 1936
Joseph T CLIFFORD 1911-47 = Margaret BROWNLEY 1934
Sylvia C CLIFFORD 1936-2006 = D Clive PHILLIPS 1961
Alan C CLIFFORD 1941- = Marian G EDWARDS 1968
Helen V CLIFFORD 1945-70 = John T TIDEWELL 1967
Robert JLJ CLIFFORD 1941-91 = Jean M UPCRAFT 1989

Going to sea

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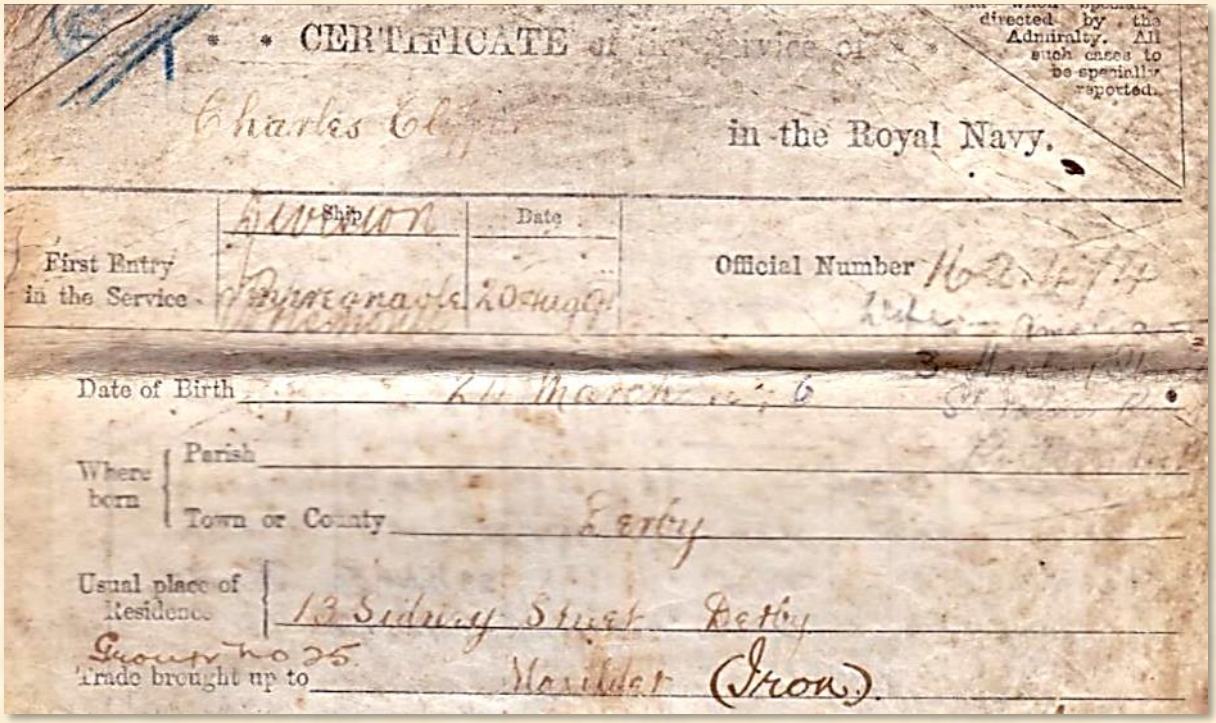
Charles joins the Navy

Thomas remarried in June 1891, just five months after the children's mother had died. His new wife was Eliza White, also a widow. Perhaps as a reaction, Charles left home to join the Royal Navy. He travelled 240 miles (386 km) south-west to sign on at Devonport near Plymouth in Devon. Charles enlisted on 20 August aboard the boys' training ship *HMS Impregnable*. On the 26th, he transferred to the training ship *HMS Lion* and remained there until January 1893.



Top of the first page of Charles Clifford's naval service papers. Visible are his service number 162474 and entry to the boys' training ship at Devonport, HMS Impregnable*, on 20 August 1891. Also visible are his date of birth of 24 March 1876, and the life he had left behind, working as an iron moulder while living with his family at 13 Sidney Street, Derby. (Family collection)*

In September 1893, Charles relocated to Portsmouth in Hampshire, where he would spend most of his life and career. He began training during the first of seven periods that he would spend at the *HMS* Vernon Torpedo & Mining establishment.

Sea mines had been used for centuries. They were so named because cables attached to sinker weights on the seabed positioned them to detonate underneath a ship's hull, in a similar way to explosives being placed in tunnels excavated to undermine land-based structures. Sea mines were difficult to see as they hung just a few feet below the surface. The 1870s had seen the introduction of mines with protruding features on their upper surfaces. These were known as 'Hertz horns', developed in 1866 by German scientist Heinrich Hertz. Each 'horn' contained a glass vial which,

when crushed against a ship's hull, released sulfuric acid which trickled down to create a lead–acid battery. This would cause the electrical triggering of detonation.

Mines were also known as torpedoes, named after a type of slow-moving, seabed-dwelling ray fish, from the Latin *torpidus* meaning 'paralysed'. The term began to be used mainly for self-propelled mines, which travelled to strike their target in a manner that was anything but torpid.

Torpedoes were developed successfully from the 1860s onwards by the English engineer Robert Whitehead. His initial customer was the Austro-Hungarian government and he was based at the world's first torpedo factory in Fiume, Croatia, known today as Rijeka. Whitehead dispensed with clockwork propulsion in favour of compressed air. An ingenious combination of a pendulum and a gyroscope enabled his torpedoes to achieve accuracy by self-correcting course and depth. In 1890, Whitehead set up a manufacturing and test site in Portland Harbour, Dorset.

From late 1894, Charles gained six months of seafaring experience on *HMS Active*. In mid-1895, he trained at the onshore gunnery school known as *HMS Excellent*. In March 1896, Charles joined the cruiser *HMS Intrepid* of the North America & West Indies Squadron, based at Halifax, Nova Scotia. Cruisers patrolled in distant waters, policing the Empire in Britain's case. They were large and well-armed but lighter and faster than battleships. Their purpose during a conflict was to disrupt and attack merchant shipping and search for an enemy battle fleet.

James discovers Grimsby

By 1894, Thomas and his second wife Eliza were living at 12 Shaftsbury Crescent, Derby, with James and his sisters Annie and Helena. As Charles had been, James was working at an iron foundry, and he too decided at age 15 that this was not the life for him.

James left home and moved 90 miles (145 km) north-east to Grimsby in north-east Lincolnshire, on the south bank of the estuary of the River Humber. On 14 April 1894, he was registered as a 'fisherlad' apprentice at the Board of Trade's Mercantile Marine Office at Grimsby Fish Dock. James's height was recorded as 5 ft 1 in (1.55 m) and his physical characteristics were recorded as hair "light", eyes "blue" and "scar under chin". His lodgings were at 42 Bridge Street South.

Grimsby developed throughout the nineteenth century to become the world's premier fishing port. Its position on the Humber estuary was favourable to foreign trade with access to the North Sea, then known commonly in Britain as the German Sea or German Ocean. Britain's second largest fishing port was upstream at Kingston upon Hull, known as 'Hull', on the north bank of the Humber. Between them, Hull and Grimsby landed as much fish as all other English and Welsh ports combined.

The Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR) reached Grimsby in the late 1840s. James's working environment on land was the world's first modern docks, developed from 1849. Prince Albert laid the foundation stone. A monument erected 30 years later records an extract from his speech, in which he said that the dock would be not only

> "a place of refuge and refitment for our mercantile marine, and calculated to receive the greatest steamers of Her Majesty's Navy, but I trust it will be the

> foundation of a great commercial Port…a new centre of life with the vast and ever increasing commerce of the world, and a most important link in the connection of the East and West."

A new national dish had been born around 1860 when the world's first shop to combine fried fish and chopped potatoes opened in Bow, east London. After this British delight was introduced to the Mossley suburb of Manchester in 1863, demand spread far and wide, and 'the rest is history'!

The commonly used fishing vessel was the two-mast 'smack', from the Dutch term *smak* for a sailing boat. Typically, the main was taller than the aft mast known as the 'mizzen', originally from a Latin-based description meaning 'middle' although ship building development placed the mizzen towards the stern. The mizzen mast was positioned forward of the rudder post in smacks that were 'ketch-rigged', from the word 'catch'. The mizzen was aft of the rudder post in 'yawl-rigged' configuration. This term possibly originated from Jutland and was known in Dutch as a *jol*. Some ketches were 'dandy-rigged'. This referred to a triangular variant of mizzen sail attached to a spar extending beyond the stern known as a 'boomkin' or 'bumpkin', from the Dutch *boomken* meaning 'tree branch'.

Herring slip at Grimsby Fish Dock, seen here around 1910. James Clifford may have known some of these men personally. Note the barrels for packing the herring with salt. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL08823)

The estuary and the sea provided a rich harvest for Humber-based fishermen, including turbot, sole, eels, shellfish, crabs and shrimp. Smacks using long 'drift' nets

to catch herring were known as drifters. Some catches were smoked and delivered to British towns by railway. Others were salted, packed into barrels and transported by sea to European ports from where they were taken inland by rail to customers in central and eastern Europe.

Smacks towing trawl nets across the seabed were known as trawlers, from the Dutch word *tragelen* meaning ‘to drag’. They were larger and travelled further than drifters. Trawlers caught fish such as cod, plaice, skate and haddock. A trawler design that had emerged earlier in the nineteenth century from the fishing port of Brixham in Devon was sleeker, taller, faster and more robust. It enabled ocean trawling on a larger scale and was adopted in many British and European ports.

Grimsby’s Fish Dock around 1890. James Clifford learned his trade here as an apprentice from 1894 to 1899. Most fishing vessels were still sail-powered as steam trawlers had only been introduced to Grimsby in the previous decade. (Francis Frith & Co; National Maritime Museum, G2570)

As the industry developed, many fishermen migrated to ports on the North Sea coast including Grimsby. They came from East Anglia, Devon, from other ports along the south coast and from London. 45,000 tons of fish were landed at Grimsby in 1880.

They worked in fleets of 100 or more. Steam transport vessels went out to collect their catches, packed them in ice and brought them to port to be taken inland quickly by rail while still they were fresh. This enabled the trawlers to stay at sea for up to eight weeks at a time. The men would have a week on shore before going out again to face the filth onboard, constant soaking, freezing temperatures, relentless skin

damage from salt water, and the danger of injury that every task presented. Each year, around 350 men and boys of the North Sea fishing fleets lost their lives at sea.

Supplies of alcohol, tobacco and salacious literature were brought out to them from Dutch ports. In opposition, Mission smacks from British ports went out to provide medical care, cut-price tobacco, reading classes and lectures, spiritual comfort and encouragement in 'temperance' rather than drunkenness. The Methodist community in Grimsby and Cleethorpes was strong. The Mission smacks also brought donated illustrated newspapers, Bibles, hymnbooks and other wholesome publications such as sermons by the Baptist preacher C H Spurgeon, tracts by the Anglican Bishop J C Ryle, inspiring biographies such as that of General Gordon, books on history and science, and novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

For his apprenticeship, James was taken into the business of the Moss family. William Moss had moved from Westmorland with his family to Grimsby. National census records reveal how the business developed. In 1861, William was a blacksmith and grocer. By 1871, he had become a boat builder, described as a "Shipsmith Master employing 2 men and 4 boys". William expanded into fishing with his own boats and, in 1881, he was a "Shipsmith & smack owner employing 16 men and 10 boys".

Two of William's sons, Thomas Campbell Moss and Frederick Moss, also became shipsmiths before starting a fishing business together as TC & F Moss Ltd. The master to whom James Clifford was apprenticed was Frederick Moss. The vessel on which James could expect to gain his first experience at sea was the dandy-rigged trawler *Patterdale*, built in 1883 and registered to William Moss. Her hull was typical at 75 ft 6 in (23 m) long and 19 ft 4 in (5.88 m) wide. This accommodated a crew of three men and two apprenticed boys, who cooked the food and cleaned the deck. The cabin was about 10 ft (3 m) wide and 12 to 17 ft (3.7 to 5.2 m) in length.

Navigation

James was literate, unlike many fishermen, and some could not even swim. But he would have acquired from them a great deal of practical knowledge, including taking depth soundings with lead weights on lines known as 'plummets' – from the Latin *plumbum* meaning 'lead'.

Author and war correspondent Edward F Knight described the

> "rough, hard-bitten fishermen, as fine sailors as use the seas…many of the trawler skippers could not read or write…Charts they despised; with compass and lead alone they found their way unerringly…for they carried a mental chart in their memories, and had an intimate knowledge of the soundings of all these waters. They could smell their way across the North Sea in the thickest weather".

Where the Humber meets the North Sea, they passed Spurn Point at the head of a narrow 'spit' of land three miles (5 km) in length, stretching down from the north bank of the estuary. Out to sea, they knew the positions of various fishing grounds and sand banks. Some were to the south-east off the Lincolnshire and Norfolk coasts. 40 miles (64 km) to the east of Spurn Point is the Outer Dowsing sandbank where its light vessel, a floating lighthouse, aided navigation. 60 miles (100 km) to the north-

east is a large shallow of 160 by 60 miles (260 by 100 km) known as Dogger Bank, named after a type of Dutch medieval fishing boat.

Further to the north are the Fisher banks, and further east is the area known as the German Bight. A bight is an area of sea bounded by a curved coastline, in this case with the Netherlands to the south, the Jutland peninsular of Denmark to the east and the German coast between them. The southern part of the German Bight, inland of the Heligoland islands, is known as the Heligoland Bight, 350 miles (560 km) due east of Grimsby.

The Humber Estuary depicted on Admiralty Chart no.109, published in 1878. To the left on the south bank are the developing town of Grimsby and the villages of Clee and Cleethorpe. Reaching down from top centre is Spurn Point, the head of a 'spit' three miles (5 km) long. In the middle of the channel is Bull Sand. Haile Sand is at bottom centre. Through knowledge gained by experience, local fishermen had little need of such charts. The Royal Navy preferred to be more scientific. This chart was produced from a survey with depth soundings conducted from 1875 to 1877 by officers aboard HMS Porcupine*. (Scale 1:48,696; National Maritime Museum, F6965; Commons.Wikimedia.org*

Some fishing trips could take weeks. East Coast fishermen reached Iceland and the Barents Sea, far above the Arctic Circle to the north of Norway and Russia. To the south, they worked off the Portuguese coast and even in north African waters.

Steam power

James witnessed the increasing introduction of steam engines at sea, the workings of which his father Thomas would have understood. Initially, sailing trawlers started

using steam engines to power the winches for hauling in the nets, which took up valuable cabin space. The ropes, known as ‘warps’, were replaced by wires. Steam-driven propellers were first installed on fishing vessels in the 1870s, greatly reducing dependence on weather and tides. They travelled at speeds of 9-11 knots (10-13 mph, 17–20 km/h). These were introduced to Grimsby in the 1880s.

Trawlers also started being built with steel hulls which had watertight compartments. The fore mast was retained for use as a crane for lifting a catch onto the dockside. Steam trawlers were larger and could accommodate more fish than their wooden, sail-powered counterparts. Typical dimensions were 110 ft (34 m) in length and 20 ft (6 m) in width. Crew members benefitted from increased cabin space. A typical trawler had a crew of twelve including nine deck hands and a fireman to manage the steam engine’s boiler. In addition to their duties on sailing smacks, an apprentice would work as a ‘trimmer’ in the coal bunkers for the steam engine, distributing the coal by hand to ensure that the vessel sat in the water at the right angle or ‘trim’.

The steam trawler Weelsby, *built in Hull in 1891, registered at Grimsby as GY299 and seen here with her crew around 1900. She was named after a hamlet on the east side of Grimsby which had been absorbed as the town expanded.* Weelsby *would be sunk by a U-boat in 1916 – see page 61. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL02645)*

Some Humber-based vessels were built at Hull and Grimsby. Many emerged from yards with river links to the Humber including Beverley on the River Hull and Selby on the River Ouse, both in Yorkshire. Others were built at English yards such as

North Shields on the River Tyne, and at Scottish yards including Dundee, Aberdeen and at Govan near Glasgow. Due to their cost and the need for significant investment, these trawlers were owned by companies rather than individuals which had been common in the past.

The Moss family started adding steam trawlers to their fleet but James began learning the trade in sailing smacks. Steam was gradually replacing sail and James would soon get his chance to transfer.

Maritime regulations

Ships had always been identified by the names given to them by their owners, but national registration of most vessels became compulsory in 1786. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 placed supervision of all merchant shipping under the Government's Board of Trade, and introduced an official numbering scheme for all registered ships.

The Sea Fisheries Act of 1868 extended registration to fishing vessels. They were required to have a port-specific code painted in a prominent position, comprised of the port's prefix letters and an individually allocated number. James would therefore have known fishing vessels by both their names and registration numbers. For example, the prefix for Hull was 'H'. Grimsby vessels used 'GY'. The fishing smack to which James was first assigned as an apprentice, the *Patterdale*, was registered as GY895. The Scarborough prefix was 'SH', Aberdeen used 'A', and 'M' was for Milford in south-west Wales. When vessels transferred to other ports, they were re-registered and their old numbers were re-used for newly resident vessels.

From 1835, lists of merchant ship crews and agreements made with them for longer voyages had to be officially submitted. The Sea Fisheries Act of 1883 provided for records of fishermen and fishing vessels to become part of general shipping records. However, fishermen were always employed as casual labourers and did not have the rights to which other seafarers were entitled. Fishermen's employment ended when they got back to port. If it was not a longer voyage, their presence was not recorded.

Larger vessels had been required to include apprentices in their crews from 1823. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 extended this to fishing vessels. However, the apprenticeship system had already been in use by fishing businesses for some time, where lads were legally bound or 'indentured' to complete their term. James may have been able to save money using a seaman's savings bank established in 1856.

Under the 1854 Act, seamen and apprentices could be imprisoned for up to twelve weeks for desertion and up to ten weeks for being absent without leave or refusing to join a ship. Senior crew members had the power to force them onboard or take them to a court of law. The Merchant Seamen (Payment of Wages) Act of 1880 included a provision that was intended to enable apprentices to avoid imprisonment by giving 48 hours' notice that they did not wish to sail. At Grimsby, this was interpreted as breaching their indentured obligations, and imprisonments continued here until 1902.

Fisherlad apprenticeship

Already recognising the need for future fishermen, the Grimsby & North Sea Steam Trawling Co Ltd had built the Fisherlads' Institute in 1879. This was on land close to

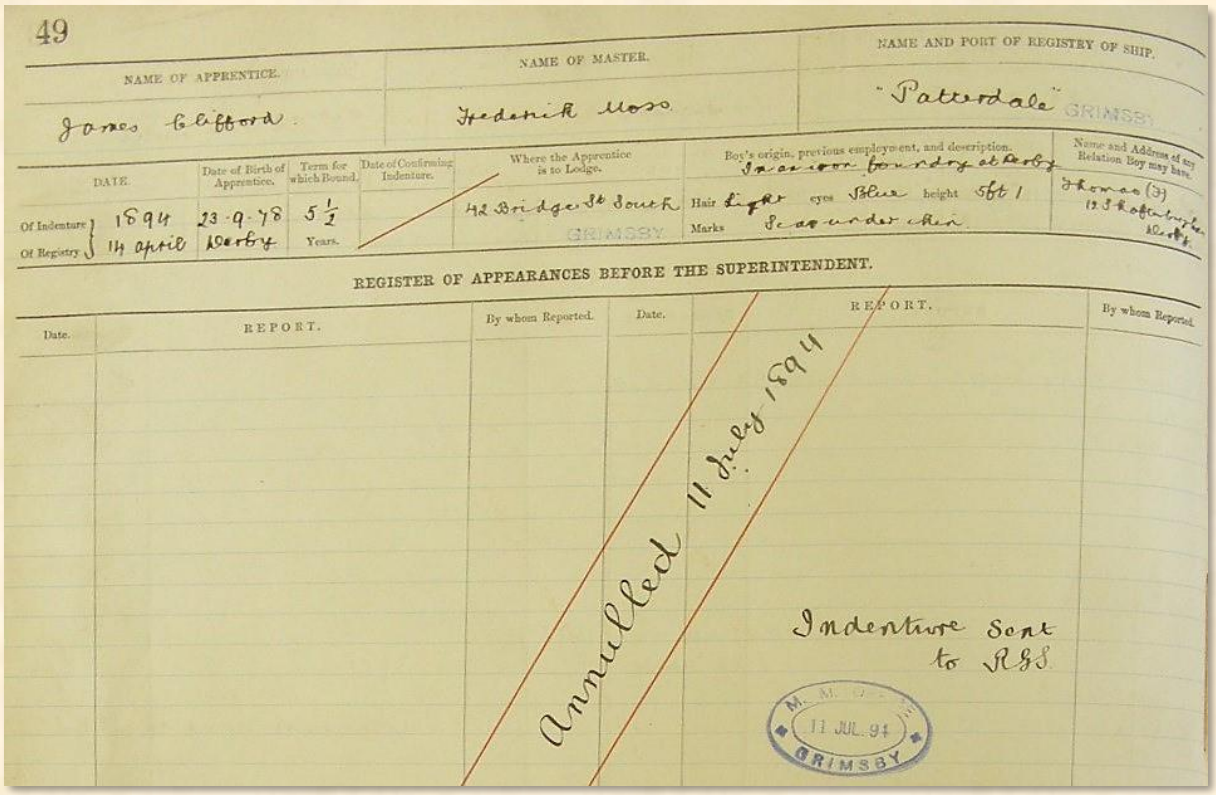
the Fish Dock between Orwell Street and Riby Street, purchased from the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR). In addition to living accommodation at the Institute, there were classrooms including for instruction in navigation, a library and reading room, workshops, dining and laundry facilities, a lecture hall and gymnasium, swimming bath, smoking room, sick room and an outdoor yard. James may have attended classes and benefitted from the facilities at the Institute.

Fisherlads' Institute, Orwell Street, Grimsby, during the construction of the 'New Wing' extension in 1907. (Grimsby Fisherlads' Institute County Bazaar souvenir brochure; Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL11293)

Net-making and net-mending room at the Fisherlads' Institute in Grimsby, where James may have attended classes. (Conservation of Fish, Birds and Game Committee, Commission of Conservation, Canada; Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto, Ontario, 1916; Freshwater and Marine Image Bank, FMIB 34644, University of Washington Libraries)

However, boys had often not been treated well in the preceding decades. As the industry grew, more hands were recruited. Many were from workhouses and orphanages in other parts of the country, brought to Grimsby to learn the trade. Bad treatment was not universal but many were brutally beaten and degraded in various unpleasant ways if they failed to perform satisfactorily. They were arrested for drunkenness and many were given brief prison sentences for absconding. It is hardly surprising that they sometimes preferred gaol, which caused public outcry, not to mention finding some relief from the harsh working conditions.

We can hope that James's experience was not among the worst, but the first months of his apprenticeship did not go well. His initial indenture was annulled after just three months on 11 July 1894. At the request of Frederick Moss, the outcome was recorded as "Lad sent home".

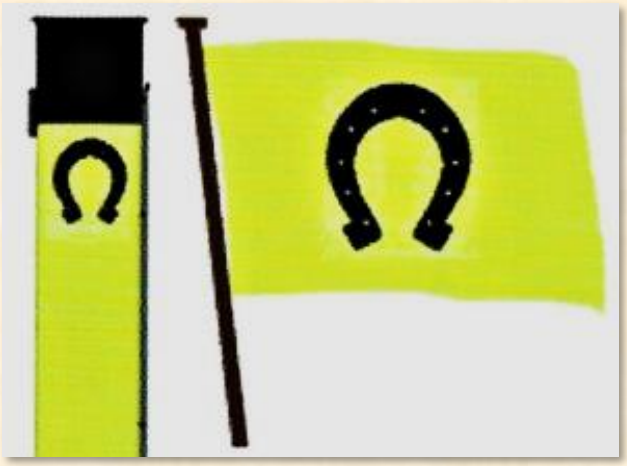


Top of the page of the record beginning on 18 April 1894 for James Clifford in the Register of Apprentices, kept by the Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office at Grimsby Fish Dock. Note the name of James's master, Frederick Moss, the Patterdale *(GY895) on which James could expect to gain experience at sea, and his lodgings at 42 Bridge Street South. Also recorded are James's date of birth, physical characteristics, previous employment at a Derby iron foundry, and his father Thomas' address of 12 Shaftsbury Crescent, Derby. Unfortunately, James did not get on well with his initial experience and, at Frederick Moss's request, he was sent home after just three months. (With thanks to North East Lincolnshire Archives)*

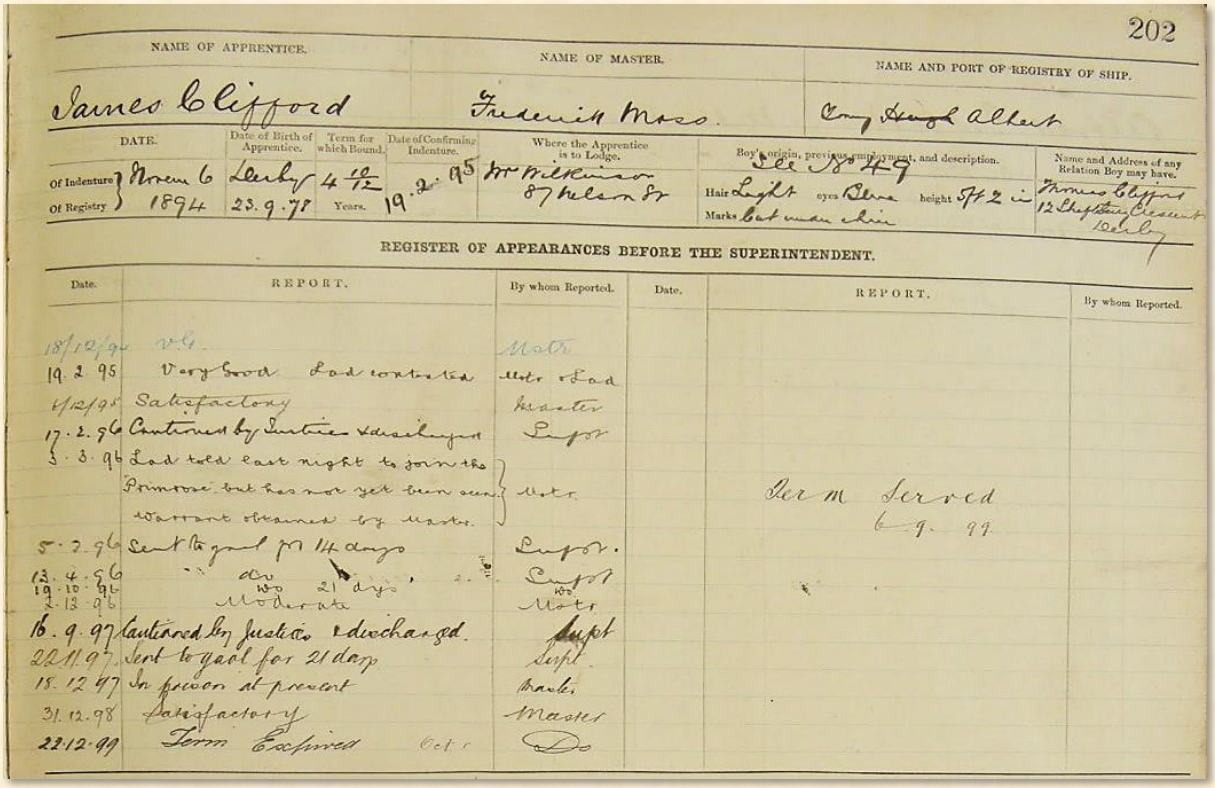
After four months back in Derby, during which James turned 16 on 23 September, he was persuaded to return to Grimsby and try and again. Frederick Moss gave him another chance and he was indentured afresh on 6 November 1894. James had

grown an inch since he had first attempted to become an apprentice and his height was recorded as 5 ft 2 in (1.57 m). He would grow another four inches.

Apprentices were indentured for five and a half years. Boys were paid a shilling a week for the first year, an additional sixpence in their second and third years, 3s in the fourth, 4s in the fifth and 5s in their final year.Some fishing companies bought homes to house their apprentices.
Other apprentices lived with their masters' families. The Moss family had done likewise. However, James was given new lodgings with a Mr Wilkinson at 87 Nelson Street.



The flag and steam funnel insignia of TC & F Moss Ltd, the company that employed James Clifford as an apprentice. (With thanks to Trevor Halifax, DeepSeaTrawlers.co.uk)



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NAME OF APPRENTICE: James Clifford — NAME OF MASTER: Frederick Moss. — NAME AND PORT OF REGISTRY OF SHIP: Young Albert

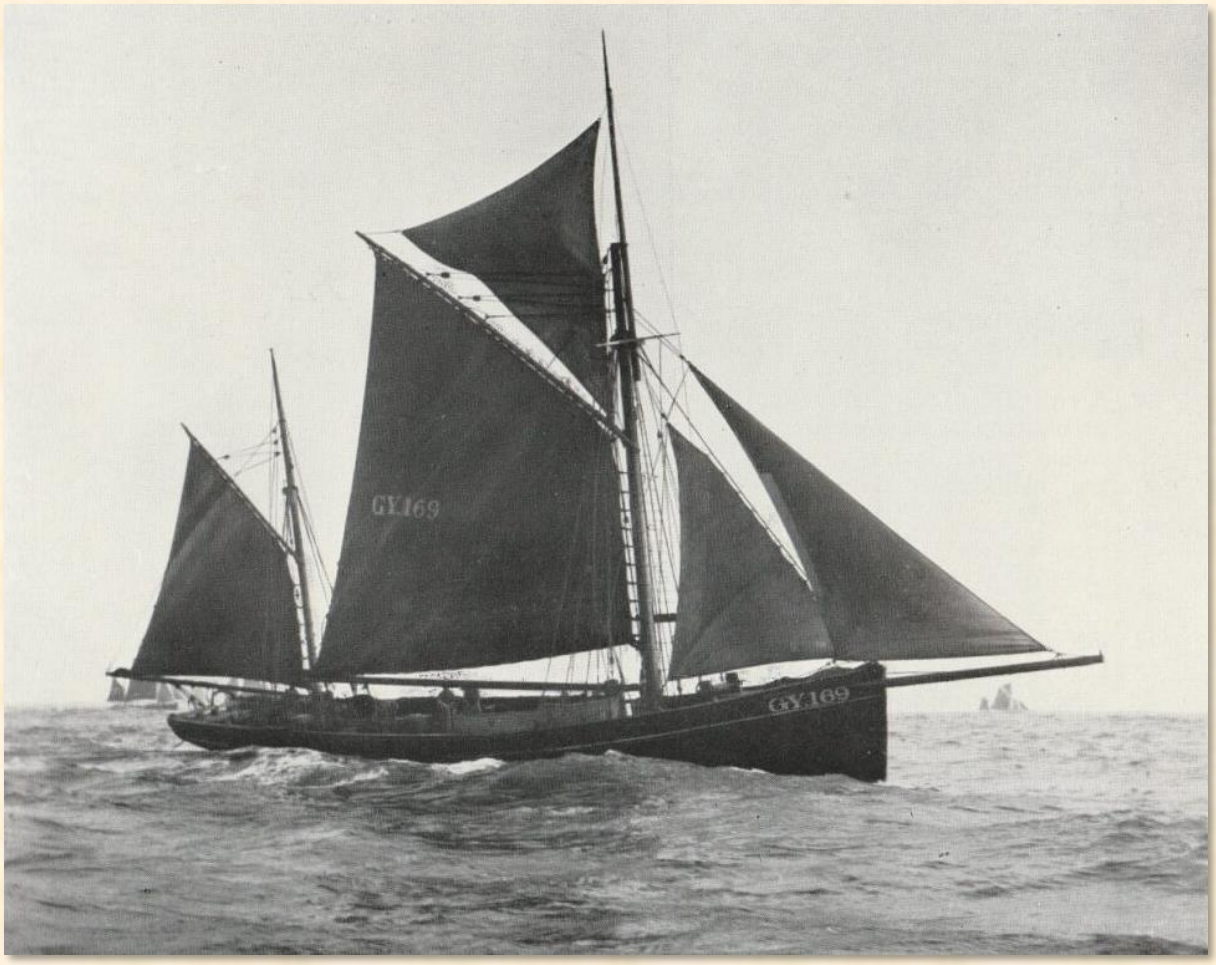
DATE.	Date of Birth of Apprentice.	Term for which Bound.	Date of Confirming Indenture.	Where the Apprentice is to Lodge.	Boy's origin, previous employment, and description.	Name and Address of any Relation Boy may have.
Of Indenture Nov.m 6 1894 / Of Registry	23.9.78	4 12 Years.	19.2.95	Mr Wilkinson 87 Nelson St	See 18 49 Hair Light eyes Blue height 5ft 2 in Marks Cut under chin	Thomas Clifford 12 Clayton Crescent Derby

REGISTER OF APPEARANCES BEFORE THE SUPERINTENDENT.

Date.	REPORT.	By whom Reported.	Date.	REPORT.	By whom Reported.
18/12/94	V.G.	Mate			
19.2.95	Very Good Lad contracted	Mate of Lad			
1/12/95	Satisfactory	Master			
17.2.96	Cautioned by Justices discharged	Supt			
5.3.96	Lad told last night to join the Primrose but has not yet been seen Warrant obtained by Master.	Mate		Term Served 6.9.97	
5.7.96	Sent to gaol for 14 days	Supt.			
13.4.96	do do 21 days	Supt			
19.10.96	do do	Supt			
1.13.96	Moderate	Mate			
16.9.97	Cautioned by Justices & discharged.	Supt			
22.11.97	Sent to gaol for 21 days	Supt			
18.12.97	In prison at present	Mate			
31.12.98	Satisfactory	Master			
22.12.99	Term Expired	Do			

Top of the page in the Grimsby Register of apprentices recording James Clifford's second and successful attempt to serve his apprenticeship, beginning on 6 November 1894. Frederick Moss had given him a second chance, and he was assigned to the Young Albert *(GY574). James's lodgings this time were at 87 Nelson Street. As was common among fisherlads, James got into trouble several times during 1896 and 1897 and spent a number of weeks in gaol. (With thanks to North East Lincolnshire Archives)*

This time, James was assigned to the dandy-rigged trawler *Young Albert* (GY574), built in 1876 and owned by Thomas Campbell Moss. Frederick Moss recorded James's behaviour after the first six weeks as "Very good". With another report of "Very good" and "Lad contented" on 19 February 1895, James's indenture was confirmed. His previous months were taken into account and the remaining term of his apprenticeship was set at 4 years and 10 months.



The Hibernia*, built in Boston in 1877 and registered in Grimsby in 1888 as GY169. Note the 'ketch-rigged' configuration with the main mast taller than the mizzen mast and a 'dandy' mizzen sail. This was the type of fishing vessel on which James Clifford did his apprenticeship.* Hibernia *sank on 18 July 1895 after colliding with a German trawler 25 miles (40 km) north-west of Heligoland. (With thanks to Trevor Halifax, DeepSeaTrawlers.co.uk)*

Frederick Moss recorded James's performance over his first full year on 6 December 1895 as "Satisfactory". Unfortunately, James would get into trouble a few times over the next two years. According to the *Stamford Mercury* of 21 February 1896, he appeared before justices on the 12th and "pleaded guilty of disobedience by neglecting to go to sea in the smack *Bonnie Belle*. Prosecutor did not wish to press the case, which was therefore dismissed." This was recorded on James's apprenticeship record on 17 February by Thomas Porteous, Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office, as "Cautioned by justices & discharged." The ketch-rigged

Bonnie Belle (GY162), built in 1888, was registered to Frederick Moss's younger brother William.

Two weeks later, James was assigned to the yawl-rigged *Primrose* (GY901), built in 1883 and also owned by Thomas Campbell Moss. On 3 March 1896, James's record was updated with a note that "Lad told last night to join the 'Primrose', but has not yet been seen. Warrant obtained by Master." Frederick Moss obviously believed that James needed a short, sharp shock. On 5 March, Superintendent Porteous noted that James had been "Sent to gaol for 14 days". This was reported the same day in the *Hull Daily Mail*, which added that "Defendant was let off at the last court, and has since then refused to sail." James continued to struggle with compliance and, five weeks later, he began another fourteen days in custody on 13 April.

Back in Derby, James's family was experiencing further change. His father Thomas was widowed again after five years of marriage when James's stepmother Eliza died on 17 May 1896 aged 51. In June and July, Thomas' nephew Arthur Clifford, a 1st cousin to James, was living with Thomas and James's sisters Annie and Helena. Arthur was ten years old and was attending Peartree School.

Arthur's father William Clifford was Thomas' youngest brother. William too had been widowed when his wife gave birth in January 1888 to their fifth child, Susan. Already with four children to care for, William had given Susan up for adoption. She was taken from Derby to County Durham where her adoptive father worked as a coal miner. William could perhaps have kept Susan after all, as he remarried in 1890 and had a sixth child.

Six months after his last incarceration, James was back 'inside'. This time, it was for 21 days from 19 October 1896, reported on in the *Hull Daily Mail* the next day. On the day he was scheduled to be released, 9 November, his father got married in Derby for a third time. James's new stepmother was Matilda Sheldrick, who had also been widowed. James's performance as an apprentice was sufficient for Frederick Moss to record it on 2 December as "Moderate".

The MS&LR which transported fish from Grimsby was renamed as the Great Central Railway (GCR) in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Towards the end of that year, James experienced a final period of encounters with the law and with a new Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office, James Inkerman Miller. Superintendent Miller noted that James was cautioned and discharged on 16 September but that, on 22 November, he was again "Sent to Gaol for 21 days". The *Hull Daily Mail* for that day added that "He had a very bad record."

Finally a fisherman

A year later, James performance was once again "Satisfactory", recorded by his master on New Year's Eve 1898. His term was deemed to have been served on 6 September 1899. He turned 21 on the 23rd of the month. His apprenticeship was recorded as "Term expired" on 22 December. He was now a 'smacksman'.

Meanwhile, James's brother Charles had returned from the North America & West Indies Squadron in May 1899. While quartered at Portsmouth's *HMS Victory* barracks, he got married in June 1900 to my great grandmother, Amelia Scaddan. Thomas and his third wife Matilda travelled from Derby to attend the wedding.

James Clifford's father Thomas, second step-mother Matilda, brother Charles and sister-in-law Amelia. They are seen here at Portsea, Portsmouth, on 11 June 1900, at the wedding of Charles and Amelia, my great grandparents. (Family collection)

The North Sea was now being fished by 20,000 men. Almost 1,000 of Britain's 3,000 trawlers were registered at Grimsby. Fish landed there fed the nation. Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901 and was succeeded by King Edward VII. On 31 March, the next national census was taken. James's location that day is not recorded, probably because he was at sea catching some of those fish!

Terraced streets

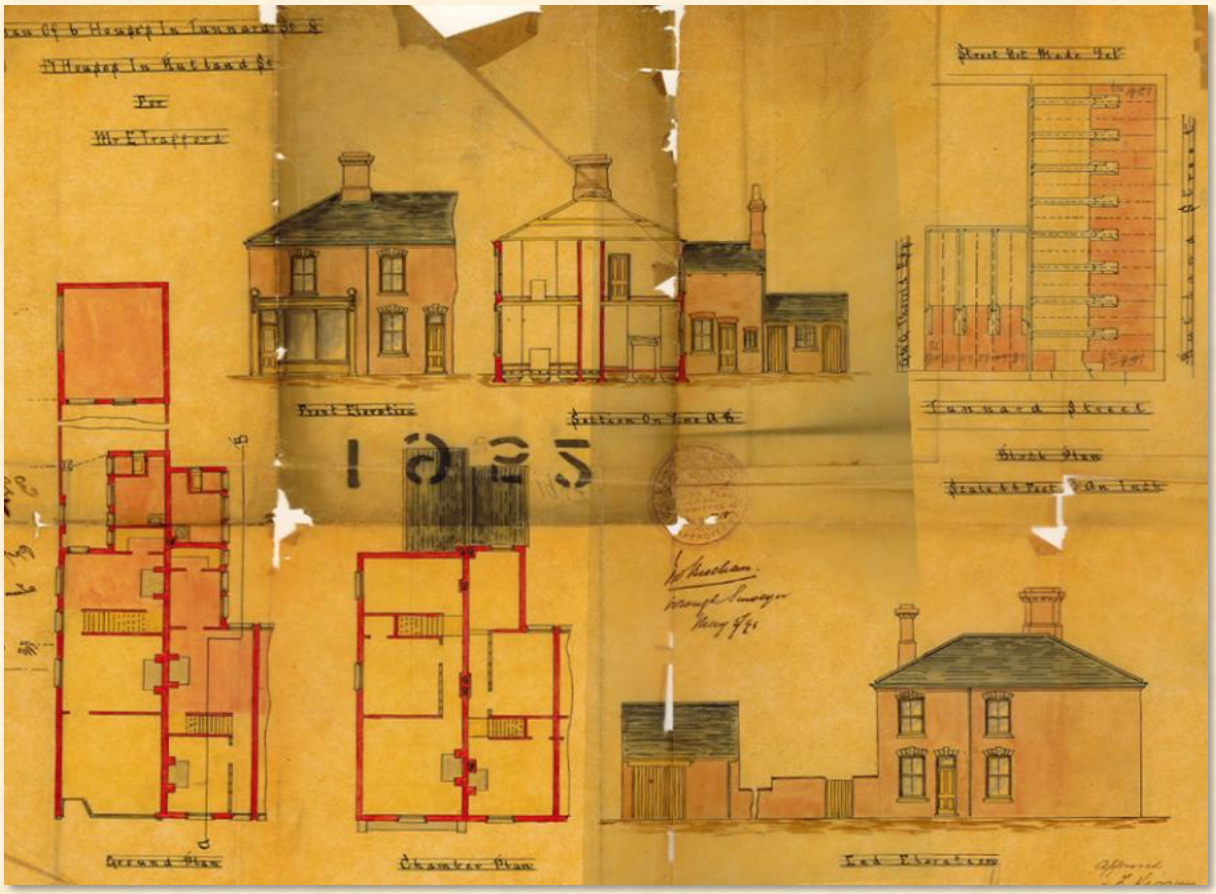
Top

The girl next door

The numbers of men surrounding James at the port reflected the fact that, over the previous century, Grimsby's population had grown from 1,500 to 75,000. Street after street of terraced houses were built to accommodate the incomers.

The town was still modernising. Horse-drawn trams had been introduced in the 1880s. In 1901, these were replaced with electric trams, and electric street lighting replaced gas lamps.

James met Grimsby girl Florence May Duell, known as 'Flo'. He had her initials 'FMD' tattooed on his left arm! He was living at 141 Rutland Street at the time. According to the 1901 census, Flo was working next door at no.143 as a general servant. Her employers were fisherman James Roach and his wife Jane, who had a five-year-old son John. Flo's own family lived around the corner at no.54 on Duke Street, which adjoined Rutland Street. Their immediate neighbours included fishermen, a ship's rigger, dock labourers and a dressmaker.



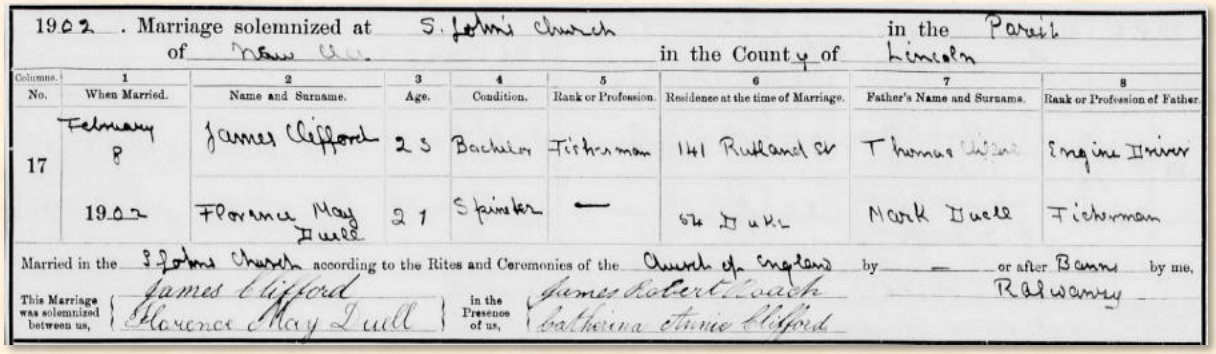
Architect's plans drawn in May 1891 for 127-159 Rutland Street, Grimsby. James and Florence May Duell, his future wife, were living next door to each other in 1901 at nos.141 and 143. They were married in 1902. In 1908, they were living at no.151. (With thanks to North East Lincolnshire Archives – building plans 3/708/1952)

Flo was born in Grimsby in 1880 to Mark and Isabella Duell, and was the third of their eight children. Mark and his younger brother George were fisherman. They had both moved north from the hamlet of Longdown near Eling in the New Forest area of Hampshire, just west of Southampton. Their accent would have added to the mixture in Grimsby from all over the country. George was living with Mark and his family at 108 Albion Street when Flo was little. One of their neighbours, Joseph Griffin, was a fisherman from Brixham in Devon. Flo was attending King Edward Street School when the family moved to 24 Armstrong Street. They moved again around 1892 to 54 Duke Street.

On 8 February 1902, James and Flo were married in the church at the end of Rutland Street, St John the Evangelist. This was on Cleethorpe Road in the New Clee suburb of Grimsby. One of the witnesses was James Roach, Flo's employer.

The church of St John the Evangelist, Cleethorpe Road, built in 1879 in the New Clee suburb of Grimsby, seen here no later than 1900. Visible at bottom-right are the rails for horse-drawn trams. The junction is with Rutland Street, where both James and Flo lived before they were married at St John's. Three of their five children were baptised there. James's funeral service would be held here in 1950. The church was one of a number of buildings demolished in the 1970s to make way for the widening of Cleethorpe Road. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL11365)

The other witness was James's sister Annie, who had travelled from Derby to attend the wedding. She was a spinner at Derby silk mill, still living with their father Thomas and their second stepmother Matilda. James gave Thomas' occupation as "Engine driver". James's other sister Helena was a domestic housemaid at the time, at a nursing home in Nottingham.



1902 . Marriage solemnized at S. John's Church in the Parish of New Clee in the County of Lincoln

Columns. No.	1 When Married.	2 Name and Surname.	3 Age.	4 Condition.	5 Rank or Profession.	6 Residence at the time of Marriage.	7 Father's Name and Surname.	8 Rank or Profession of Father.
17	February 8	James Clifford	23	Bachelor	Fisherman	141 Rutland St	Thomas Clifford	Engine Driver
	1902	Florence May Duell	21	Spinster	—	56 Duke	Mark Duell	Fisherman

Married in the St John's Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by — or after Banns by me, Rd Wansey

This Marriage was solemnized between us, James Clifford / Florence May Duell

in the Presence of us, James Robert Roach / Catherine Annie Clifford

Record of the marriage of James Clifford and Florence May Duell on 8 February 1902 in the register of New Clee St John. The witnesses were Flo's employer, James Roach, and James's sister Catherine 'Annie' Clifford. (FindMyPast.co.uk)

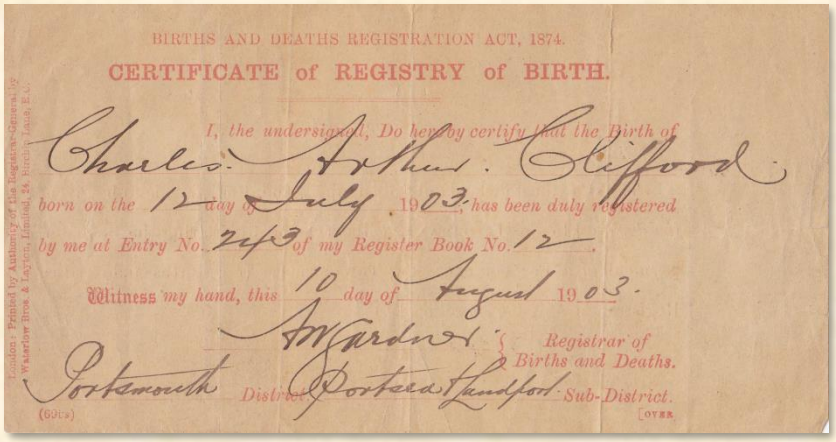
The staff of Moores Bakers and Confectioners at 124 Rutland Street. James and Flo lived a few doors down on the other side of the street and were probably very familiar with the shop. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL05276)

First homes and children

James and Flo made their first home a few streets away at 56 Sussex Street in neighbouring Cleethorpes. Their first child, Catherine Annie Clifford, named after James's sister, was probably born there on 2 September 1902. She was baptised at New Clee St John on 26 September.

In Portsmouth, Charles and Amelia lost their first two children in infancy. Robert Thomas died at 6 days' old in 1902. Charles never met his second son, Charles

Arthur, who died aged 4 months in 1903. Charles was on the other side of the Atlantic at the time, having re-joined the North America & West Indies Squadron as a member of the ship's company of the cruiser *HMS Ariadne*. He was promoted to Petty Officer during his time on *Ariadne*. On leaving her in July 1905, Charles was recommended to become a torpedo instructor. He returned to the *HMS Vernon* Torpedo & Mining establishment in Portsmouth and did indeed become an instructor the following year.



BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ACT, 1874.

CERTIFICATE of REGISTRY of BIRTH.

I, the undersigned, Do hereby certify that the Birth of Charles Arthur Clifford born on the 12 day of July 1903 has been duly registered by me at Entry No. 243 of my Register Book No. 12.

Witness my hand, this 10 day of August 1903.

A.W. Gardner Registrar of Births and Deaths.

Portsmouth District Portsea Landport Sub-District.

[OVER.

Registration slip for the birth on 12 July 1903 in Portsmouth of Charles Arthur Clifford, James's nephew. He was the son of Charles and Amelia. He died four months later, an older brother to my grandfather whom he would never meet. (Family collection)

In June 1905, Charles and James's sister Annie was married in Derby to Lawrence Thomas Graham. One of the witnesses was their youngest sister Helena. I have found nothing about Helena's life beyond that. Annie and Lawrence moved 40 miles (64 km) south-west of Derby to the Ladywood suburb of Birmingham. Lawrence was a letter press machine minder at Morland & Impey's 'Kalamazoo' printing works in nearby Northfield. Their first child, Thomas Douglas, was born in August 1906.

Back in Grimsby, James and Flo moved to 44 Guildford Street. Their son, James Robert Clifford, was probably born there, on New Year's Eve 1905. He was baptised at Grimsby St Andrew on 17 January 1906, and would be known in the family as 'Jim'.

Charles spent 1907 on the depot ship *HMS Hecla* at Chatham on the River Medway in Kent. He returned to Portsmouth in January 1908 and, in the October, he travelled to Gibraltar to join the depot ship *HMS Cormorant*.

When James and Flo's third child, Mark Duell Clifford, was born on 11 January 1908, they were back in Rutland Street at no.151. He was baptised at New Clee St John on 20 January and was named after Flo's father. Mark senior was no longer at sea and had become a storeman. He died a year later aged 54.

By 1910, the family was living once more on Guildford Street, now at no.17. The children attended Weelsby Street school, two streets away. When the national census was taken on 2 April 1911, James was probably at sea again. Flo completed the form and did not name him as present in the house that day.

Sadly, little Mark died on 21 June aged three and a half. He was buried at Scartho Road Cemetery. Flo was around five months' pregnant and their third son, Joseph Thomas Clifford, was born on 8 September. He was baptised at New Clee St John on 22 September.

Some of Grimsby's many terraced streets built in the late nineteenth century, including those on which James and Flo Clifford lived. Rutland Street runs from just right of bottom-centre up to top-right where it reaches the railway sidings at the docks. At mid-right is the church of New Clee St John, where Rutland Street crosses Cleethorpe Road, along which the electric tramway is indicated. Duke Street is in the centre, running across to Rutland Street. Guildford Street runs up from bottom-left. Parallel to the right is Weelsby Street where James and Flo's children attended school. (Ordnance Survey, 1933; with thanks to North East Lincolnshire Archives)

Infants school on Weelsby Street, Grimsby, from which children progressed to the upper school next door. The schools were named after James Meadows (1818-95), a Justice of the Peace who had owned many of the port's fishing vessels and was Chairman of the Council of the Fisherlads' Institute. James and Flo Clifford's children attended these schools over the first 30 years of the twentieth century. The infants school is seen here in 1965. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL08813)

As Catherine Annie. Jim and Joseph got older, they would have become increasingly aware of what it meant for their father to go to sea. In her book, *Cleethorpes, Grimsby Central Hall and Fishing Memories*, Rosita Bird relates Gillian Richardson's recollections of her father, George Richardson, in a later decade:

> "…sitting on my mam's knee by the blazing coal fire…you would sometimes see smoke pour from pieces of coal like smoke pouring from a ship's funnel. My mam would…say that's your dad's ship coming home…I loved it when dad came home from sea…I was always excited as to what goodies and surprises would be inside the big black kit bag…over his shoulder…
>
> Dad used to let me pull out all of his smelly fishy work gear and dig down to the bottom…a tin covered in ladies dressed in beautiful bonnets and bows and beautiful dresses, and gentlemen dressed in old fashioned soldiers' uniforms…the colourful sight inside sparkling like jewels. They were of course

> ‘Quality Street’. Sometimes mam and I took a taxi down the dock to meet dad’s ship…all dressed up in my best clothes…He always stood at the bow waving to us.
>
> Sometimes on landing day dad would take me down the dock. I would clamber onboard the ship (with a little help) then we would go down below decks. I remember his crew mates playing cards around a small table and there were always treats for anyone’s children…The fishermen were always very generous with their money and I never came home empty handed.
>
> …if any of us kids in the family heard word of a trip to Gleadies mentioned, we knew we were in for a treat of some new clothes. My mam always kept us spotlessly clean. She worked hard looking after all of us, and even harder when dad was at sea.
>
> …I always felt shy of my dad when he came in from sea. I hated it when dad went back to sea and I would cry and ask if I could fit inside his sea bag. I remember worrying a lot about my dad when he was at sea in bad weather, but thankfully he always came home safe.”

Many fathers did not come home safely in this dangerous occupation.

Steam trawlers at Grimsby Fish Dock around 1905. In the background is the 309 ft (94 m) water tower of 1852, standing at the entrance to the Royal Dock. (Original postcard from around 1905; with thanks to Kath and David Tappin, Tappin-Family.org.uk)

The naval arms race

Top

Deteriorating international relations

For decades, ship development had been making relatively new designs out of date soon after their expensive development and construction had been completed. They would then be relegated to more mundane purposes such as depot ships or floating training schools.

Charles Clifford had witnessed this first hand. The ship on which he enlisted in the Navy in 1891, *HMS Impregnable*, was the renamed floating 'hulk' of the old wooden-hulled battleship *HMS Howe*, launched in 1860. Before she was finished, she had been rendered obsolete by France's 'ironclad' *Gloire* of 1859, the first ocean-going wooden-hulled warship to be armour-plated with iron. As a response, Britain quickly made *Gloire* obsolete with *HMS Warrior*, commissioned into the Navy in 1861. *Warrior* was the first warship to have iron armour plating added to an iron hull. France introduced steel-hulled warships in the 1870s.

These were all sailing ships with supplementary power from a steam engine driving a propeller, which had been common for several years. It was this combination that Prince Albert had in mind when he made his speech at Grimsby's new docks in 1849. But *Warrior* became obsolete herself from 1873 when *HMS Devastation* was commissioned. *Devastation* was the first battleship to dispense with sails, and to carry her main armament in turrets on top of her hull rather than having guns firing through openings or 'ports' in the sides of the hull. The development of guns firing explosive-filled shells – cylindrical projectiles weighing hundreds of pounds with aerodynamically pointed noses – meant that armour plating had to be constantly developed. Charles knew *Warrior* from 1904 as one of the old hulks that accommodated the *HMS* Vernon Torpedo & Mining establishment.

The Russian, French, German and Japanese navies were becoming more powerful. Britain's Naval Defence Act of 1889 enabled the Royal Navy to expand and modernise. The aim was to maintain a position of being as powerful as the world's next two largest navies combined. This became known as the 'two-power standard'. Britain's relationship with Germany had been worsening for decades. A naval arms race began in 1897 when Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz planned to expand and modernise the *Kaiserliche Marine*, the Imperial German Navy. He wanted a 'High Seas Fleet' powerful enough to force Britain to make diplomatic concessions. The names of German naval vessels were prefixed with 'Seiner Majestät Schiff' (SMS), His Majesty's Ship.

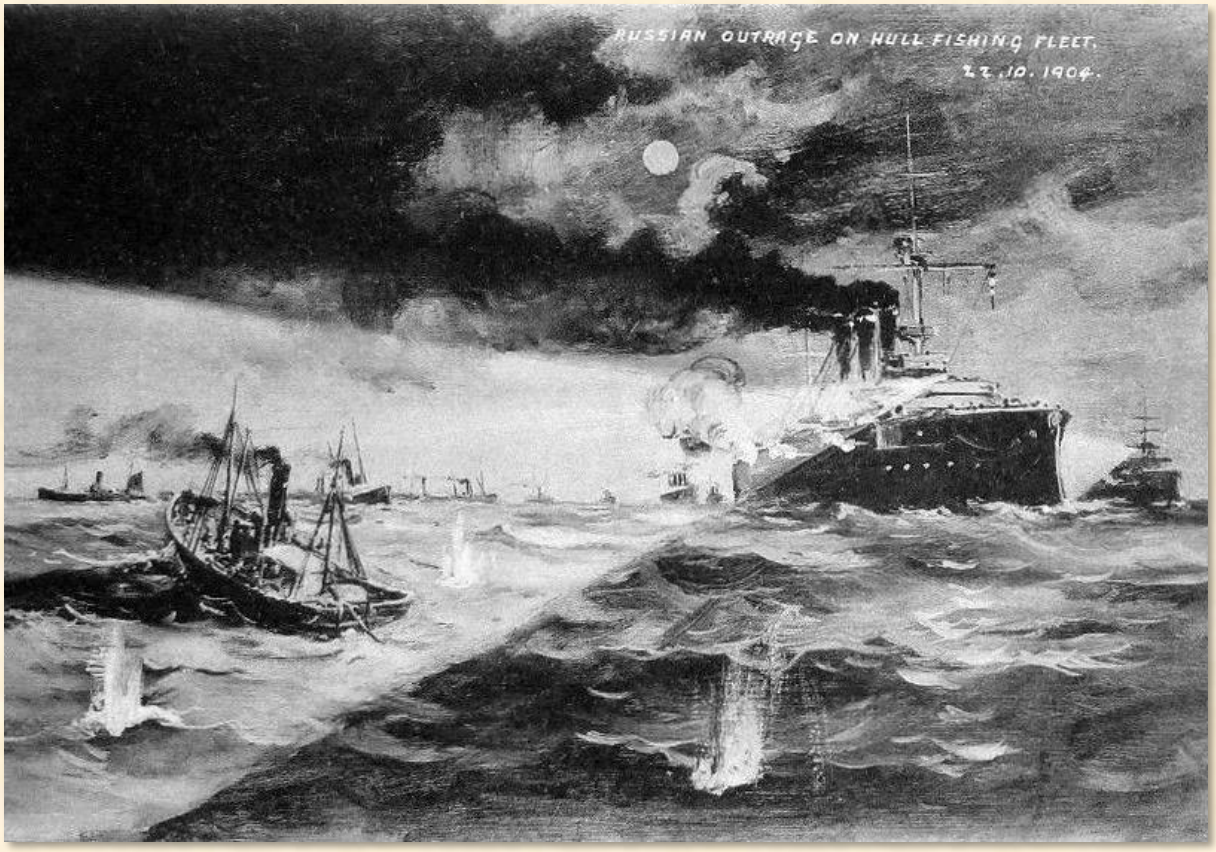
At the time, the Commander-in-Chief of the North America & West Indies Squadron, under which Charles Clifford was serving, was Vice Admiral John 'Jacky' Fisher. The cruiser that Charles was on, *HMS Intrepid*, had been ordered under the Naval Defence Act. Fisher was increasingly promoting improvements in naval gunnery, torpedoes and wireless telegraphy.

Charles and his serving comrades were not the only naval sailors that Britain could call on. The Royal Fleet Reserve (RFR) was formed in 1901 for enrolling experienced former sailors. They were paid a retainer and could be recalled in times of emergency. In 1903, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) was created to

recruit civilians who had no prior seafaring experience. These organisations were seen as necessary supplements to the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) which had been established in 1859 to enrol merchant seamen and fishermen who could be called on in wartime to serve in the Navy.

James and Flo would have been aware of ‘invasion literature’. This had been popular in Britain since the 1870s and had shaped politics. A famous example published in 1903 was the best-selling novel, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service* by Erskine Childers. In the story, the Germans use canals and railways to supply an invasion force comprised of fleets of barges. These would be towed out of channels among the sand flats between the East Frisian Islands, and then across the North Sea. Childers wrote the story deliberately to alert the British public and politicians to such a threat. Winston Churchill later acknowledged its influence.

Jacky Fisher became the most senior officer in the Navy in 1904 when he was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet and appointed as First Sea Lord. He answered to the First Lord of the Admiralty, a political appointee. The Admiralty was the Government department responsible for advice on naval affairs and administration of the Navy. Fisher urged the development of submarines and faster ships, and developed plans for blockading the German coast in the event of war.



The Dogger Bank incident of the night of 21-22 October 1904, also known as the ‘Russian Outrage’. A group of trawlers from Hull were caught in the searchlights of Russian battleships and cruisers which mistook them for Japanese torpedo boats and fired on them. Three fishermen and one trawler were lost. (Valentine Series postcard, 1904; Commons.Wikimedia.org)

Doomed Russians

James, Flo and their neighbours would have been horrified to hear that, on the night of 21-22 October 1904, a group of trawlers from Hull had been attacked in the North Sea near the Dogger Bank. Three fishermen were killed, one trawler was sunk and two others were badly damaged.

Their attackers were battleships and cruisers of the Russian navy. They were on their way from the Baltic, heading for the African Atlantic coast, the Indian Ocean and ultimately Japan. They mistook the Hull trawlers for torpedo boats of the Imperial Japanese Navy, which they believed had been sent around the world to attack them. In their confusion, the Russians also fired on each other.

Torpedo boats were small, fast ships which launched torpedoes at their targets. They were a great threat to large or ‘capital’ ships which could not manoeuvre quickly. The Russians were doomed to meet their end at the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, partly by striking mines placed in the water by the Japanese. The Russians returned the favour with their own mines. None of the world’s navies had yet developed ways of mitigating this threat. Within ten years, James Clifford would be among the fishermen of the Humber and other British ports who would encounter thousands of mines planted in their own waters, grouped as ‘minefields’.

Dreadnought

Charles Clifford witnessed the Navy approaching the peak of its power. Admiral Fisher chaired the Admiralty’s Committee on Designs, driving the development and construction of new capital ships. The most famous of these was *HMS Dreadnought* launched in 1906. She was the world’s first battleship to have primary armament consisting entirely of the largest guns available. In each of her five main turrets were mounted a pair of guns firing 12-inch (305 mm) diameter shells weighing 850 lbs (386 kg) each. These could be fired effectively at targets up to 14 miles (23 km) away. *Dreadnought* was also bristling with 27 quick-firing 12-pounder guns firing shells of that weight (5.5 kg). She was also the first battleship to be driven by powerful and efficient steam turbines engines.

Fisher’s committee also produced a new type of cruiser. These were armed similarly to *Dreadnought* with pairs of 12-inch guns mounted in four main turrets, supplemented by 16 single guns firing 4-inch (102 mm) shells. These new ‘battlecruisers’ took the calculated risk of using thinner armour plating to save weight and achieve higher speeds. The first example was *HMS Invincible*, launched in 1907. They could still patrol the waters of the Empire but they were also powerful enough to join a battle fleet.

In response, Germany’s naval construction increased further, and widening of the Kiel Canal was started to enable its warships to pass through. Since 1895, the canal had connected the Baltic to the North Sea to avoid having to pass around the Danish Jutland peninsular to the north.

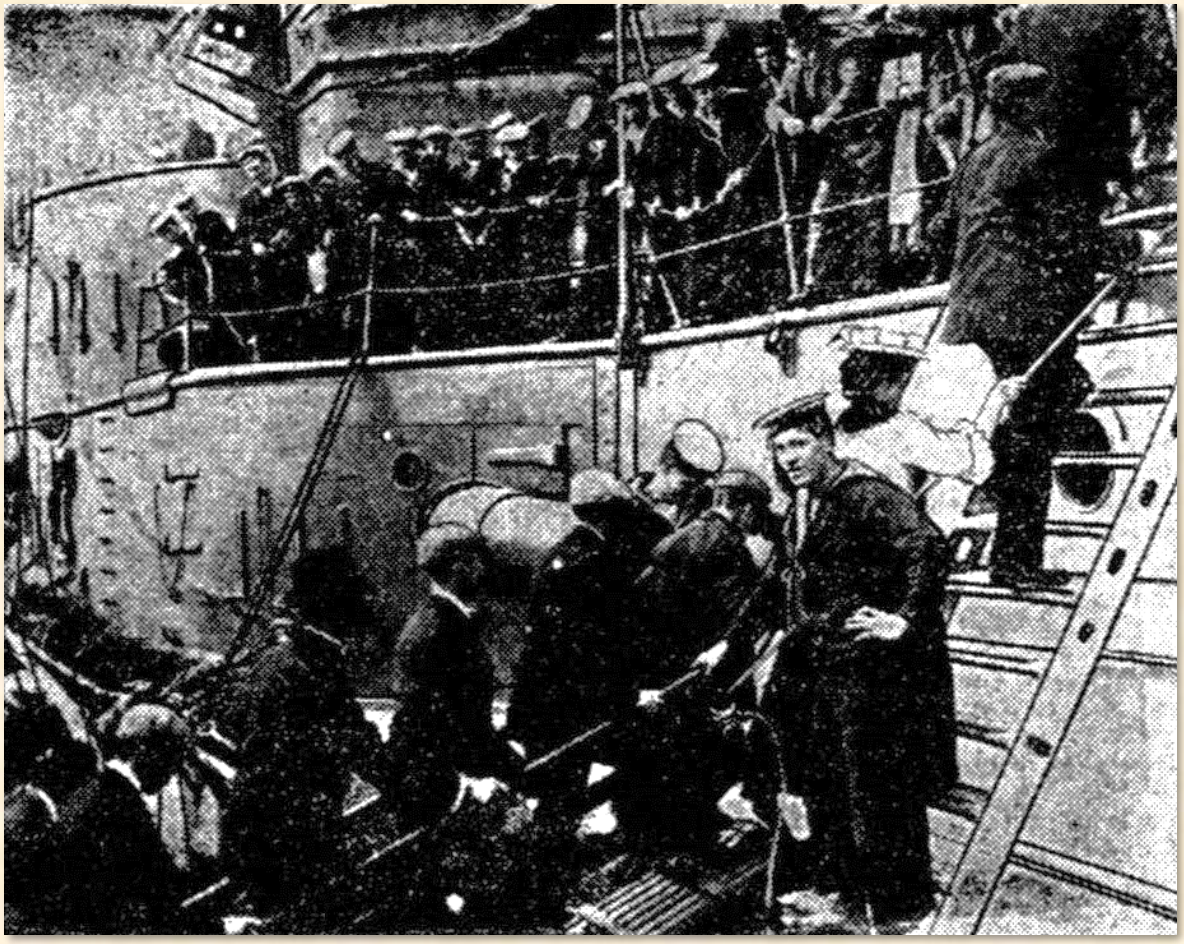
Minesweeping techniques

A group of warships of the south coast-based Channel Fleet and their Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Charles ‘Charlie’ Beresford, visited East Coast ports in June 1907.

The ships included the now-obsolete pre-Dreadnought battleships *HMS King Edward VII*, *HMS Hindustan*, *HMS Illustrious*, *HMS Britannia* and *HMS Swiftsure*, and the ageing cruisers *HMS Gladiator* and *HMS Talbot*.

They were accompanied by a flotilla of small ships known as destroyers. These were developed from the 1880s to defend capital ships from torpedo boats. They were known initially as Torpedo Boat Destroyers (TBDs) and later simply as destroyers. Their role broadened including defending against submarines and attacking enemy capital ships by launching torpedoes themselves. They were fast and became known as the 'greyhounds' of the fleet.

Grimsby hosted the visitors on 27 June. James and Flo Clifford may have brought little Catherine Annie and little Jim down to the docks with their neighbours to see the warships, and the streets decorations and festivities which welcomed the ships' companies. They were joined by trainloads of people from other towns. Boats took supplies out to the ship, and passenger steamers from Grimsby and Cleethorpes took 30,000 visitors out for guided tours of the battleships and cruisers.



An excited crowd arrives on a passenger steamer for a guided tour of a battleship of the Channel Fleet, anchored half a mile out from the Grimsby piers on 27 June 1907. (Nottingham Evening Post, 1 July 1907; British Library Newspaper Archive)

Admiral Beresford inspected a number of trawlers and met with Councillor George Alward, who had been involved in the development of steam trawlers and winches.

Beresford realised that trawlers were strongly built, and that the fishermen were more adept than many naval sailors at handling boats, winches and rope and wire warps. Opportunities for fishing would be greatly reduced during war, and the fishermen's skills could instead be adapted for removing or 'sweeping' mines from the water to keep the approaches to Britain's ports open.

Frontispiece illustration from The War in the Air: And Particularly How Mr Bert Smallways Fared While It Lasted*, written by H G Wells in 1907. Published in instalments in 1908 in* The Pall Mall Magazine*, this was an example of popular 'invasion literature' which James and Flo Clifford would have been aware of, speculating about the threat from Germany. (Gutenberg.net.au)*

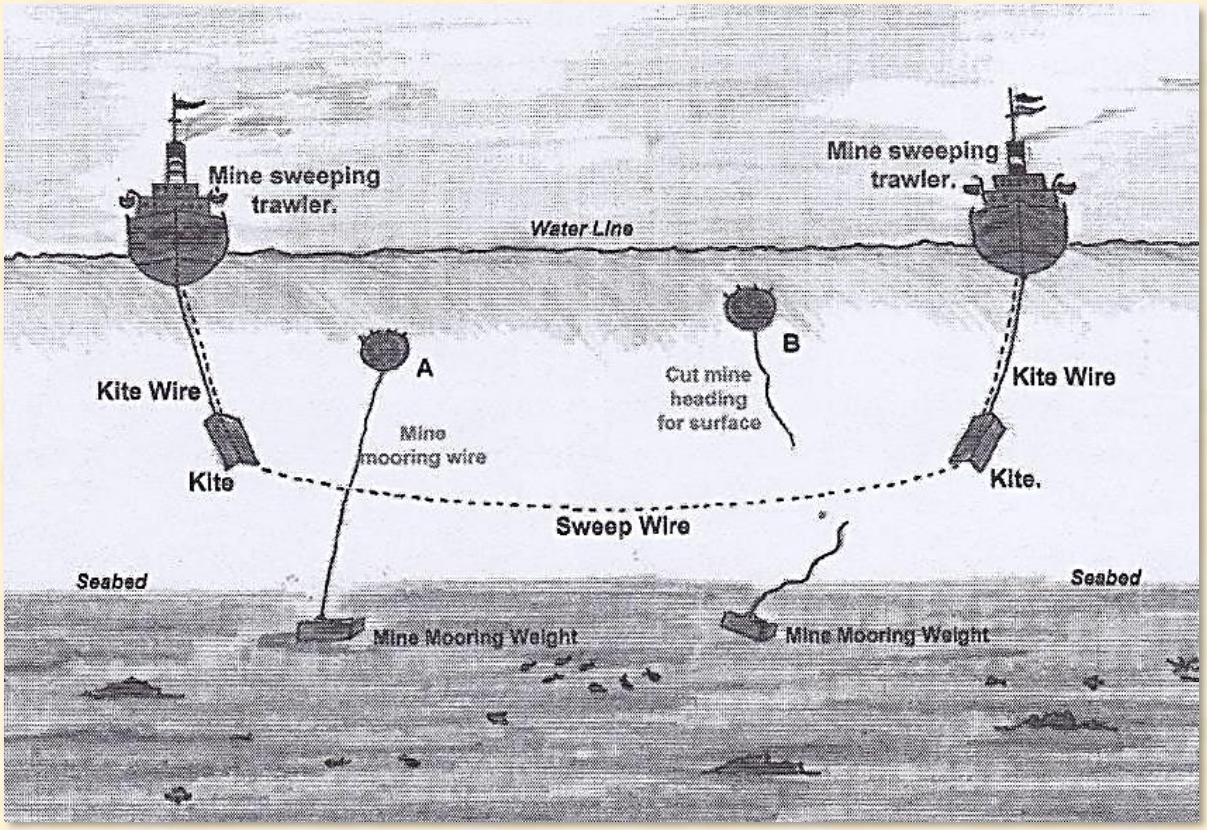
In February 1908, two of Grimsby's most modern steam trawlers and their crews were selected and purchased for mine-sweeping trials off the island of Portland on the Dorset coast. These were *Andes* (GY5) and *Algoma* (GY6), both built in North Shields in 1899. They developed a method using wires strung between them, positioned about 400 yards (370 m) apart. Underwater 'kites' regulated the depth of the wires.

The Admiralty purchased six more trawlers in 1909 for experimental development of minesweeping techniques and training at the Admiralty's torpedo schools, including *HMS Vernon* which received two of them. The crews knew that they had snagged a mine's mooring cable by the way the wires 'sang' as they pulled taught. The wires were able to break the mooring cables, and the mines then floated to the surface where they could be detonated by rifle fire.

Back in Grimsby in May 1909, Member of Parliament Sir George Doughty caused alarm. He claimed that two German ships from Hamburg with soldiers onboard had conducted one of several invasion exercises by proceeding up the Humber Estuary before returning home. Other reports suggested that a naval radio station at Humberston, just south of Cleethorpes, had been attacked, that German spies had taken photos of Grimsby docks, and that hundreds of airships had been seen over eastern England. James and Flo would have been unnerved by advice that residents should be ready to hide in cellars and avoid large gatherings in case of bombardment. All these reports proved to be unfounded and had merely fuelled invasion hysteria. Some journalists suggested that Sir George was merely trying to secure Government support and funding for strengthening naval defences near Grimsby.

The Trawler Reserve

The Trawler Section of the Royal Naval Reserve, abbreviated as RNR(T), was established in 1910. It was also referred to as the Trawler Reserve. The plan was to hire 100 fishing vessels for use as minesweepers. First Sea Lord Jacky Fisher did not get on well with Admiral Charlie Beresford but he supported this plan. The hired vessels would be termed as His Majesty's Trawler (HMT). They were painted grey and their civilian port registration numbers were obscured, replaced with Admiralty numbers.



Two trawlers with a minesweeping wire strung between them to break the mooring cables of mines, which then floated to the surface where they could be detonated by rifle fire. This method was developed at the Admiralty's torpedo schools in 1909 using trawlers from Grimsby. (Ken Knox; with thanks to Dr Robb Robinson, Blaydes Maritime Centre, University of Hull)

A thousand men would be enrolled to crew them as reservists and given naval uniforms. They could be called up at short notice and would be paid 20 per cent less than their normal commercial expectations. Reserve officers were trained at *HMS Vernon* to command the trawlers.

The first enrolments took place successfully in Aberdeen, the largest of the Scottish fishing ports. Men of the Humber ports were less enthusiastic. One of their concerns was that they did not want to be transferred to other types of naval ships. Captain Clement Greatorex visited Grimsby and made an extra effort to win over the officials of the relevant trade unions. James Clifford may have known some of the men who volunteered.

Upper class officers and naval discipline were alien to the fishermen who insisted on wearing their naval caps at jaunty angles. Sailors were allowed to wear full-facial beards whereas fishermen in the Trawler Section of the Royal Naval Reserve were at least permitted to grow moustaches, an opportunity which they made the most of.

Britain forges further ahead

Jacky Fisher was made a Baron in 1909 and went into semi-retirement in 1910. In reference to his battleship design, he added to his coat of arms the motto, "Fear God and dread nought".

The final example of the first generation of his Dreadnoughts was *HMS Hercules*. She was launched in 1910 at Palmers shipyard on the River Tyne at Jarrow, County Durham. At 546 ft (166 m) in length, she was a little larger than the original *Dreadnought*. One of the shipyard workers who probably helped to build her was plater and riveter Augustine Ashman. In August 1911, Augustine married Susan Clifford, Charles and James' 1st cousin who, as previously mentioned, had been adopted twenty years before. Susan already had a son, John Clifford, born in 1909. His sister Enid was born to Augustine and Susan in 1913. The two children were second cousins to James's children.

The Dreadnought *battleship* HMS Hercules *at Palmers shipyard in Jarrow shortly before being commissioned into the Royal Navy on 31 July 1911. On 8 August, Charles and James's cousin Susan married Augustine Ashman, a plater and riveter at Palmers who probably helped to build* Hercules*. (National Maritime Museum, ALB0697)*

An appointment was made in 1911 to the Government post of First Lord of the Admiralty. Its new holder was the Member of Parliament for Dundee, Winston Churchill. From 1912, Fisher chaired the Royal Commission on Fuel and Engines, to develop plans to introduce oil-fired or diesel engines into warships. These two men were of very similar temperament and their relationship would be volatile.

Meanwhile, continuing with Fisher's philosophy, larger and more heavily armoured battleships were fitted with guns firing 13.5-inch (343 mm) shells weighing 1,250 to 1,400 lbs (567-635 kg). These were known as 'Super Dreadnoughts'. Battlecruisers started receiving the same calibre of guns. An example was *HMS Queen Mary*, launched at Jarrow in 1912. She was named after the wife of King George V, who had succeeded to the throne on the death of his father Edward VII on 6 May 1910. At the time, *Queen Mary* was the largest warship yet built in Britain at 700 ft (213 m) in length, accommodating a 'compliment' of 1,284 men. She was also the fastest capital ship in the fleet with a speed of 28 knots (32 mph, 52 km/h). Augustine Ashman probably had a hand in building her too. New light cruisers were also still being built.

Trying to catch up by building more ships was proving too expensive for Germany and they did not install guns larger than 12-inch. From 1912, they concentrated on developing the capability to destroy merchant shipping using the *Unterseeboot* or 'under-sea boat', the U-boat submarine.

From 1913, the calibre of guns installed on Super Dreadnoughts was increased once more to 15-inch (381 mm) firing shells weighing 1,938 lbs (879 kg), although the number of main turrets was reduced to four. An example built at Jarrow while Augustine Ashman worked there was *HMS Resolution.* 15-inch guns would soon achieve an effective range of up to 19 miles (30 km).

The Trawler Reserve would have plenty more vessels and crews to call on if necessary. Britain had the world's largest and most modern fishing fleet. Grimsby's own fleet continued expanding and, in 1912, they landed 193,000 tons of fish. In 1913, Britain's 100,000 fishermen landed 800,000 tons of fish. Of 7,200 fishing vessels, 3,200 were now steam-driven. Thousands more workers were employed in fish processing and distribution.

King George V and Queen Mary with Lieutenant Commander J H Pitts inspecting the uniformed crew of a minesweeper in the Trawler Section Royal Naval Reserve (RNR). (Leeds Museums and Galleries)

Before I go any further, I must state that I am particularly indebted to Dr Robb Robinson of Blaydes Maritime Centre, University of Hull. Much of the information in this story on the fishing industry before and during the Great War, including minesweeping and the Trawler Reserve, can be found in Dr Robinson's book, *Fishermen, the Fishing Industry and the Great War at Sea*, published by Liverpool University Press in 2019.

Charles Clifford had returned to Portsmouth from Gibraltar in late 1910 and continued as a torpedo instructor at *HMS Vernon*. In April 1913, he joined a ship's company of 70 on the two-year-old destroyer *HMS Beaver*. She was a member of 1st Destroyer Flotilla, based at the Rosyth naval dockyard on the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh.

Beaver was 246 ft (75 m) long, twice as long as the trawlers that Charles's brother James was familiar with. *Beaver* was armed with two 4-inch guns and two 12-pounder guns. She also had two tubes for torpedoes of 21-inch (533 mm) diameter, which Charles probably operated. Her geared steam turbines propelled her at speeds of up to 30.7 knots (35 mph, 57 km/h), three times as fast as James was used to travelling on water. She was one of the fastest ships in the Navy at the time, although she would soon be eclipsed by the next generation of designs to enter service.

While Charles was at Rosyth, Amelia provided him with their son Harold, my grandfather, on 12 December 1913. Harold was a 1st cousin to James's children and the children of Annie, Charles and James's sister.

Charles was promoted to Acting Chief Petty Officer on 1 June 1914. On the 28th, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a Serb in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

James Clifford's brother, Charles, sister-in-law Amelia and nephew Harold, my grandfather. They are seen here in mid-1914. Charles was probably on leave from 1st Destroyer Flotilla as a member of the ship's company of HMS Beaver. *based at Rosyth on the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh. (Family collection)*

The Great War at sea begins

Top

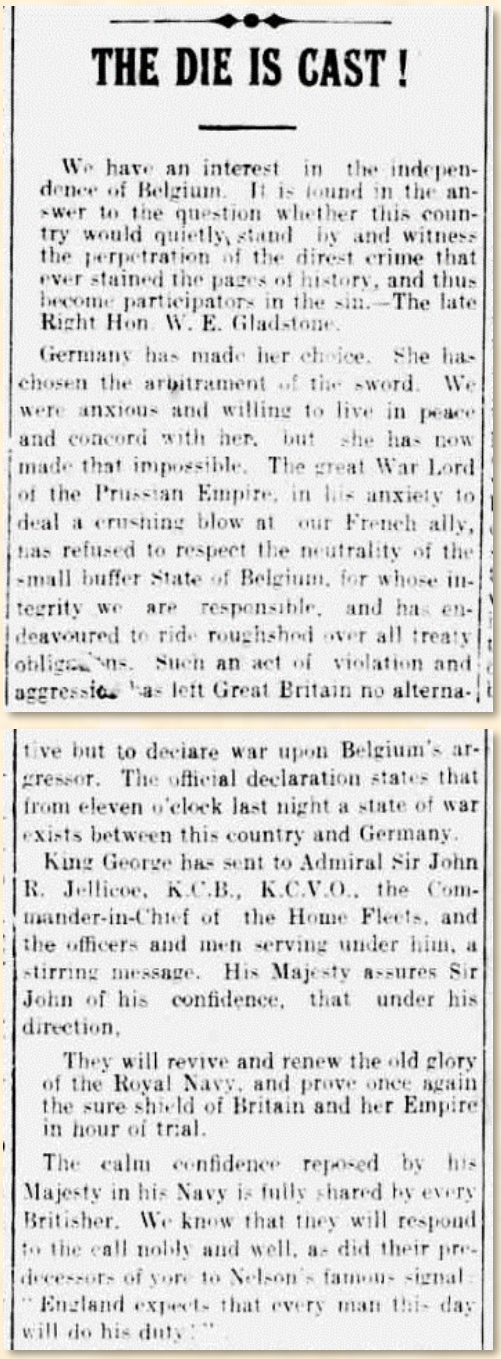
Domino effect

Despite the worsening of international relations, the beginning of a new European war on 28 July 1914 still came as a shock. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand had given Austria-Hungary the excuse it was looking for to declare war on Serbia, encouraged by Germany. Russia mobilised its military in support of Serbia. Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August, and signed an alliance with the Turkish Ottoman Empire on 2 August. Together with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they became known as the Central Powers.

France mobilised in support of Russia and Germany declared war on France on 3 August. Germany invaded Belgium on 4 August to outflank the French army, triggering a declaration of war from Britain in response to the violation of Belgian neutrality. Britain imposed an immediate naval blockade to prevent supplies including food from reaching Germany by sea. This took all industries by surprise including fishing.

At 08.15 on 4 August, harbour masters at all East Coast ports received a telegraph message from the Admiralty that all fishing in the North Sea must cease. Due to concerns about protection of fishing vessels, none were allowed to leave port and all those out at sea were to return as quickly as possible.

Word would have travelled around the streets of Grimsby. If James Clifford was in port he was stuck there. If he was at sea, Flo would have had an anxious wait with the other wives, counting the boats back in. Fishing vessels of both sides were initially released from each other's waters and ports. There was hardly room in Grimsby and Hull for all of the returning vessels to berth.



THE DIE IS CAST !

We have an interest in the independence of Belgium. It is found in the answer to the question whether this country would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin.—The late Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

Germany has made her choice. She has chosen the arbitrament of the sword. We were anxious and willing to live in peace and concord with her, but she has now made that impossible. The great War Lord of the Prussian Empire, in his anxiety to deal a crushing blow at our French ally, has refused to respect the neutrality of the small buffer State of Belgium, for whose integrity we are responsible, and has endeavoured to ride roughshod over all treaty obligations. Such an act of violation and aggression has left Great Britain no alternative but to declare war upon Belgium's aggressor. The official declaration states that from eleven o'clock last night a state of war exists between this country and Germany.

King George has sent to Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleets, and the officers and men serving under him, a stirring message. His Majesty assures Sir John of his confidence, that under his direction,

They will revive and renew the old glory of the Royal Navy, and prove once again the sure shield of Britain and her Empire in hour of trial.

The calm confidence reposed by his Majesty in his Navy is fully shared by every Britisher. We know that they will respond to the call nobly and well, as did their predecessors of yore to Nelson's famous signal: "England expects that every man this day will do his duty."

Grimsby Daily Telegraph *for 5 August 1914 announcing Britain's declaration of war on Germany the previous evening. This may have been James and Flo's first confirmation that the war had begun, unless word of mouth from the docks reached them first. (BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk)*

The Trawler Reserve was instructed to mobilise the 146 vessels on its books, to be crewed by nearly 1,300 men in the RNR. North Sea fishing was in crisis. Flo and the children had James safely at home but it was not clear how the fishermen or those working in related industries could continue to make a living or contribute to the food supply for customers at home or aboard.

German minelaying and British minesweeping

On the night of the 4th, fishing vessels about 30 miles (50 km) off the Suffolk coast spotted the passenger steamer *SS Königin Luise* laying mines. She had been requisitioned by the German navy and converted as a minelayer. The next morning, the light cruiser *HMS Amphion* and a number of destroyers from Harwich on the Essex coast attacked the *Königin Luise*. She attempted to escape by leading them through the minefield she had just laid, but British fire was accurate. Her captain then ordered the crew of 100 to scuttle her and abandon ship before she sank, making her the first German naval loss of the war. The British rescued 46 of them.

The British ships headed back towards Harwich on 6 August but found themselves back in the minefield. *Amphion* struck two mines and sank, becoming the first British naval loss of the war. 150 British sailors and 20 of the rescued German sailors died. Vessels of the Trawler Reserve based at Harwich left immediately to sweep the mines laid by the *Königin Luise*. This was a sign of things to come.

On 7 August, Grimsby trawler *Tubal Cain* (GY88) was intercepted off the west coast of Iceland by the German battleship *SMS Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*. The fishermen were taken prisoner, and the sinking of *Tubal Cain* by gunfire probably marked the war's first loss of a British fishing vessel. However, the British ban on fishing was relaxed a few days later, so James and his crewmates could go back to sea. Back in Derby, Thomas Clifford now had to worry about both of his sons being on the maritime front line.

The next problem was that fishing vessels were not insured for loss due to enemy action. This was largely resolved through discussion within Government between the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Admiralty, including new regulations to keep fishing vessels away from minefields.

Over the course of a few months, large minefields were laid by the Germans in fishing grounds along the Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and East Anglian coasts. This was intended to starve Britain of vital food, material and munitions supplies from her Empire, and from allies such as the Netherlands, which remained neutral, and the United States of America. The British laid similar minefields along the North Sea's continental coast, all though the spring-loaded detonators of their mines were unreliable compared to the Hertz horns of the German mines.

The Harwich Force

Amphion and the destroyers which had intercepted the *Königin Luise* were members of the Harwich Force. This was a squadron comprised of flotillas of cruisers commanded by Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt, and submarines commanded by Commodore Roger Keyes. The Force had been formed in the April to patrol the North Sea, partly to protect merchant shipping. They also supported the Royal

Navy's main battle fleet, known as the 'Grand Fleet', based in the sheltered waters of Scapa Flow within the Orkney Islands. It was vital that the German High Seas Fleet should not reach the Atlantic, either via the English Channel or between Norway and the Scottish islands. The Dover Patrol Force performed a similar role at the southern end of the North Sea..

The Harwich Force increased in size on 13 August when 1st Destroyer Flotilla's 20 destroyers arrived from Rosyth with their leader, the cruiser *HMS Fearless*. The Flotilla's 4th Division included the destroyer *HMS Beaver*. Petty Officer Charles Clifford was still a member of the ship's company. He would have become familiar with requisitioned fishing vessels from seeing those based at Harwich.

War Channels

Only continual minesweeping could enable commercial shipping lanes like the Humber estuary and the approaches to ports like Harwich to be used. The Trawler Reserve planned to create an East Coast War Channel for the safety of all shipping. This would extend from the Outer Dowsing sandbank beyond the mouth of the Humber all the way south to the South Goodwin Sands offshore from Deal on the Kent coast. They would sweep the channel clear of mines every day in all weathers, To add to the number of trawlers available for the task, steam herring drifters were also requisitioned and termed His Majesty's Drifter (HMD).

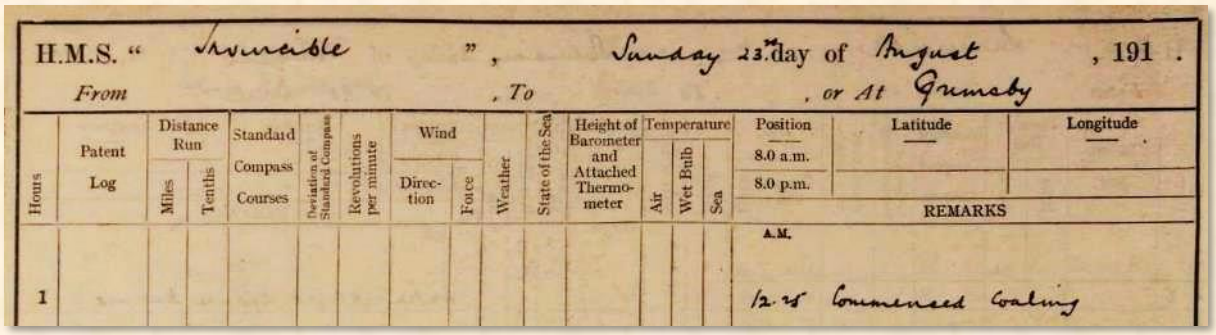
The War Channel would eventually be extended north to the Shetland Islands. It would also continue along the south coast as far as Weymouth in Dorset. Additional channels would be maintained from the Shetlands to Bergen on the Norwegian coast, from East Anglia across to the Netherlands, and from Kent to France. Introduction of convoys of merchant ships, escorted by British warships through War Channels, were very effective at avoiding losses to U-boat attacks. Convoys from Dutch waters were escorted by Harwich Force destroyers. This task was known as the 'Beef Trip'.

Grand visitors

On 22 August, the battlecruiser *HMS Invincible* steamed north from Deal and proceeded into the Humber. She docked at Grimsby that night and started 'coaling'. By 05.00, she had taken on 800 tons of coal to stoke the boilers for her steam turbines. Around 09.00, she was joined by the battlecruiser *HMS New Zealand*. *Invincible* was 567 ft (173 m) long. Her compliment numbered more than 1,000 men. *New Zealand*'s was over 800. She was even longer at 590 ft (180 m), almost the length of two football pitches.

Grimsby residents would soon learn that the Battle of Mons took place in Belgium that day, the first major action of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of regular soldiers sent to reinforce the French. The British retreated, suffering around 1,600 casualties of dead, wounded and captured. German losses were significantly higher.

No doubt James, Flo and their neighbours came down to the docks to get a good look at the battlecruisers. Sight seers would not have been allowed near, as they had been when the Channel Fleet visited seven years before. Over the next few days, onlookers may have seen and heard the ships venturing out for firing practice with their guns, parts being painted or cleaned, and manning defence stations at night.



H.M.S. " Invincible ", Sunday 23rd day of August , 191 .

From , To , or At Grimsby

Hours	Patent Log	Distance Run: Miles	Distance Run: Tenths	Standard Compass Courses	Deviation of Standard Compass	Revolutions per minute	Wind: Direction	Wind: Force	Weather	State of the Sea	Height of Barometer and Attached Thermometer	Temperature: Air	Temperature: Wet Bulb	Temperature: Sea	Position 8.0 a.m. / 8.0 p.m.	Latitude	Longitude
1															A.M. 12.25 Commenced Coaling		

REMARKS

Top of the page for 23 August 1914 from the log of the battlecruiser HMS Invincible*, recording her presence at Grimsby. (Naval-History.net)*

A crowd at Lyttelton, New Zealand, in May 1913, greeting their symbol of national pride, HMS New Zealand*. No doubt a similar crowed welcomed her to Grimsby on 23 August 1914 just before she participated in the Battle of Heligoland Bight. (Press Collection, Alexander Turnbull, National Library of New Zealand, 1/1-002307-G)*

Around 05.15 on 27 August, four destroyers of the Harwich Force arrived and anchored. They were *HMS Badger*, *HMS Beaver*, *HMS Jackel* and *HMS Sandfly*, comprising the 4th Division of 1st Destroyer Flotilla. Onboard *HMS Beaver* was Petty Officer Charles Clifford. He probably knew that James lived nearby but, even if

official secrecy did not prevent Charles from making contact, he may not have been allowed ashore. In any case, he was there for only five hours. Prayers were said aboard *Invincible* at 09.15 and the ships set off at 10.30.

HMS Beaver, the ship's company of which included *James Clifford's brother Charles from April 1913 to September 1915. She was one of four destroyers that escorted* HMS Invincible *and* HMS New Zealand *from Grimsby to the Battle of Heligoland Bight in late August 1914. (Symonds & Co Collection, Imperial War Museum, Q 021001 A)*

The Battle of Heligoland Bight

The destroyers escorted the battlecruisers down the Humber in single file, 'line ahead'. At 13.18, *Invincible* passed the Outer Dowsing light vessel. At 17.15, her crew reported sighting a mine in the water.

They were heading for the Heligoland Bight where they went into battle on 28 August in the first major naval engagement of the War. Commodores Reginald Tyrwhitt and Roger Keyes of the Harwich Force planned to ambush German destroyers and cruisers on their daily patrols. The Force sent out 31 destroyers, two cruisers and submarines, and were supported by another six cruisers.

The battle was 'touch and go' until the arrival of five British battlecruisers, including *Invincible* and *New Zealand* and their escorting destroyers. Another of the battlecruisers was *HMS Queen Mary*. She had been built in Jarrow at Palmers Shipyard where Augustine Ashman, husband of Charles and James's cousin Susan, was a member of the workforce.

British casualties at Heligoland Bight included 35 killed with damage to four of the 54 ships that took part. Commodore Tyrwhitt's flagship, the cruiser *HMS Arethusa*, was

badly damaged by shells from two of the German cruisers. Of 37 German ships which participated, three cruisers and a destroyer were sunk with the loss of 712 men. With Commodore Roger Keyes onboard, the destroyer *HMS Lurcher* rescued from the water 220 crew members of the cruiser *SMS Mainz*. She had been among the minelaying forces which captured so many Grimsby and Boston trawlermen two days earlier.

James and Flo would have learned in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* of a great British victory. But there had been confusion in planning and communications. Lessons would not be learned soon enough to prevent serious losses in future engagements. The newspapers also suggested that socialist revolution caused by starvation due to the naval blockade would force Germany to capitulate within a month. They also reported suggestions that the war might be 'over by Christmas', but this was not the official view.

Over 800 miles (1,350 km) to the east, the Battle of Tannenberg ended with a German victory over the Russians on 30 August. Russian casualties were well over 100,000, ten times the level on the German side. In early September, the First Battle of the Marne in France ended with an Allied victory but the casualties were around quarter of a million on each side.

Grimsby goes to war

'Pals' Battalions' of patriotic volunteers were being formed in towns across Britain including Grimsby. They enlisted together and would remain together. The 10th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment was an example, known as the 'Grimsby Chums'. This was raised initially by a Grimsby grammar school headmaster, and then by Grimsby town council, which accepted men from other Lincolnshire towns. James and Flo would have known some of the families whose men came forward.

Flo may have been among the women of Grimsby who joined voluntary organisations like the Red Cross or the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) which provided nursing care for military personnel. Another option was the Women's Emergency Corps which trained medical personnel and provided motorcycle messengers. Others helped to keep hospital supplies moving. Local people also helped to organise food and fuel supplies, or kept watch on the coast and the skies for signs of attack. Over 1,000 men would join Grimsby's Special Police Force. They patrolled the streets and made sure that lights were put out at night to avoid attracting bombing raids by 'Zeppelin' airships.

While James continued fishing, Flo had plenty to worry about. Fishing vessels sometimes caught mines in their nets. Whether they were armed or not, they were attacked by ships and U-boats using torpedoes and guns, or bombed by aeroplanes and Zeppelins.

Justifying admiralty and public concerns, while *Invincible* and *New Zealand* had been in the Humber, 16 trawlers from Grimsby and from Boston in south-east Lincolnshire were sunk in the North Sea on 25-26 August by German minelaying forces. The fishermen were taken prisoner aboard torpedo boats. They had to watch as explosives blew their trawlers to bits, together with their catches and all the equipment they owned.

The prisoners were transferred to the minelaying cruisers, which unloaded their

cargoes of hundreds of mines each between the mouths of the Humber and the Tyne, before heading back to Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven. As they were marched through the streets, the fishermen were assaulted by civilians before being taken inland to Sennelager prison camp near Paderborn. They would later be transferred with Belgian, French and Russian prisoners to Ruhleben internment camp near Berlin. They were treated brutally, given little food or shelter and occupied with hard labour. Their families were kept in ignorance of their fate for many weeks, although British port communities were able to arrange for food and clothing to be sent to the prisoners. Many more fishermen would be taken prisoner as the war progressed.

A German explosive sea mine 'swept' out of harm's way on 16 September 1915 by the passenger paddle streamer Britannia*, built in 1896. On being requisitioned in January 1915 and converted as a mine sweeper, she was given the temporary name of* HMS Britain *and Admiralty number 190. Clearly visible are the mine's 'Hertz horns'. These contained chemicals which, when crushed against a ship's hull, triggered an electrical detonation.* Britannia *would be requisitioned again for the duration of the Second World War. (Original postcard; with thanks to Dirk Bruin)*

Requisitioning more fishing vessels

Trawlers and their crews were being lost continually as they tried to remove the mines from the water. They had only practised with dummy mines before the war, the sweep wires often became detached, and they only had rifles to defend themselves. They often struck the unseen mines they were searching for. Manoeuvring close together to begin sweeping in heavy seas meant that collisions were the second highest cause of losses. They would speak to fellow crews one day who would be lost the next, and they never knew when their own time might come.

In the September, many Grimsby fishermen briefly refused to go out to sea. With every crew lost, several families in close-knit fishing communities like Grimsby were

devasted. They included teenage boys and grandfathers with extensive seafaring experience. James and Flo would have known many of them personally. Many of those whose bodies washed up on the shore were buried in the churchyards of the nearest coastal towns or villages.

Nevertheless, fishermen now had a real incentive to join the Trawler Reserve, which was clearly inadequate for the scale of the task. Many of James's colleagues around the county bravely volunteered to crew hundreds more vessels which were hired and requisitioned for patrolling and minesweeping. Passenger paddle steamers were also converted into minesweepers.

While hunting and destroying or capturing German minelayers, minesweepers and non-combatant trawlers, British warships like those of the Harwich Force were assisted by requisitioned fishing vessels. Trawlers and drifters were tasked as auxiliary patrol vessels, which included searching for and attacking U-boats. They were armed with 3-pounder or 6-pounder guns and explosive depth charges. But they were out-gunned by U-boats which had larger calibre guns that were effective over longer ranges. U-boats were also faster and could outrun the patrol vessels.

Drifters lowered hydrophones – underwater microphones – into the water and remained silent while they listened. Plotting the course of a U-boat by the sound of its engines, they waited until it was underneath them before dropping their depth charges.

Some armed trawlers maintained the appearance and behaviour of being unarmed fishing vessels, concealing their deck guns. Along with other types of civilian vessels with disguised armaments, these were known as 'Q-ships'. They would wait until the last moment before opening fire on a U-boat or ramming it. U-boat crews learned to watch trawlers carefully to notice when warps and fishing equipment were not in use and when their deck guns were poorly concealed.

Requisitioned fishing vessels also rescued crews and passengers from ships that were wrecked by mines, despite the danger posed by more undiscovered mines. Few of them had wireless radios to report the positions of discovered mines. Most used carrier pigeons or semaphore signal flags for communicating with the shore. Pigeon 'fancying' was common in East Coast ports and birds were loaned to the trawlers. At Grimsby, a special loft was built for them.

Public outrage

Off the Dutch coast on 21 September, the German submarine U-9 torpedoed and sank the obsolete cruisers *HMS Aboukir*, *HMS Hogue* and *HMS Cressey* in less than an hour. *Hogue* and *Cressy* were trying to rescue the crew of *Aboukir* when *Hogue* was hit. Her captain, Wilmot Nicholson, who had commanded *HMS Dreadnought* between 1912 and 1914, gave the order to abandon ship. This left *Cressy* to try and complete a double rescue before she too was hit. Nicholson survived but all three ships quickly capsized with the loss of 1,459 men.

From the October, the German 'Flanders Flotilla' of U-boats was based at the captured Belgian ports of Ostende and Zeebrugge, and would menace Allied shipping for the next four years. The First Battle of Ypres in Belgium from mid-October to mid-November would result in well over 100,000 casualties on each side. Meanwhile, the Super Dreadnought *HMS Audacious* sank on 21 October after hitting

a mine. This had been laid by the converted passenger steamship *SS Berlin* off the north-west coast of Ireland. *Audacious*' entire ship's company of 860 men was saved. She was little over a year old and had cost nearly two million pounds to build, the equivalent of over £175 million today.

The sea war was not going well for Britain. The Grand Fleet needed protecting by requisitioned fishing vessels as much as the other way around. The current First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg, who had held the post since 1912, resigned in October 1914. At age 74, Jacky Fisher was recalled to the position by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill.

Prince Louis had married Princess Victoria of Hesse, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who were members of the houses of Hanover and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha respectively. Prince Louis' resignation in 1914 was partly due to awkwardness about his German ancestry and family connections.

Anti-German sentiment in Britain and her Empire was inevitably growing. Grimsby laid its share of suspicion and persecution on local residents with German names or other connections. James and Flo probably felt no different. Three years later, Victoria and Albert's grandson King George V would respond to the dilemma by proclaiming that the royal family would abandon all of its German aristocratic titles and adopt the family name of Windsor.

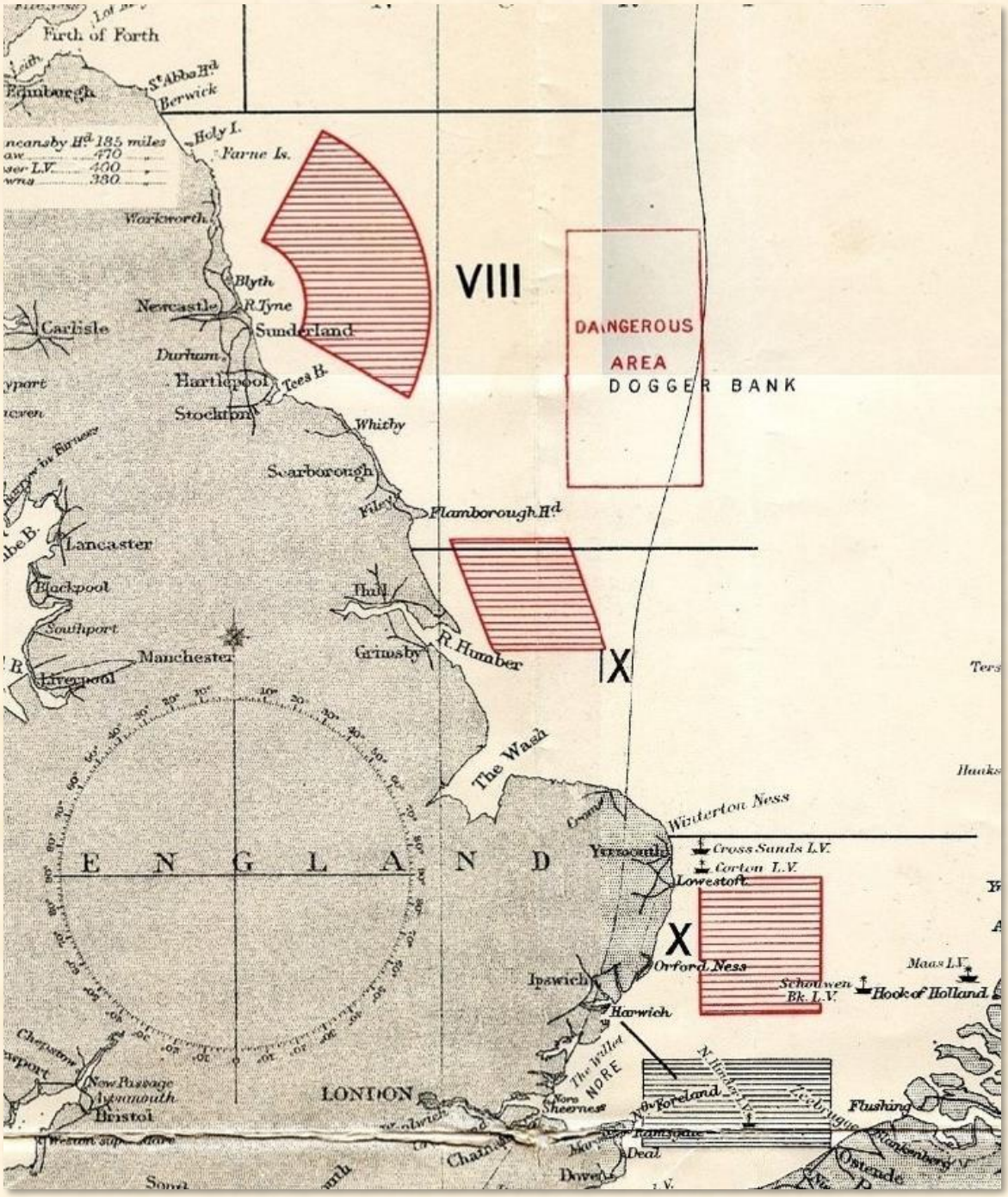
The term 'North Sea' would also be adopted in Britain, consistent with its name in French and Dutch and to avoid dignifying any sense of German entitlement.

Bombardment of East Coast towns

James and Flo would have shared in further horror among North Sea fishing communities in late 1914. On 3 November, the battlecruisers *SMS Seydlitz*, *SMS Von der Tann* and *SMS Moltke* bombarded Great Yarmouth, supported by the older cruisers *SMS Blücher*, *SMS Straßburg*, *SMS Graudenz*, *SMS Kolberg* and *SMS Stralsund*. The latter laid the 120 mines she carried. The bombardment did little damage but the mines caused 21 deaths when they sunk a steamer and a submarine which tried to intercept the raiders.

On 16 December, the same three battlecruisers plus their sister ship *SMS Derfflinger* and the cruiser *SMS Blücher* , ironically named after the Prussian general who supported the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, bombarded Scarborough and Whitby on the Yorkshire coast and Hartlepool on the Durham coast. The historic ruins of Whitby Abbey were badly damaged and seven were killed. In Scarborough, 18 people were killed as over 500 shells struck the town during 15 minutes of terror. In Hartlepool, 86 were killed and over 400 were injured during the 40 minutes in which 1,150 shells rained down on the town.

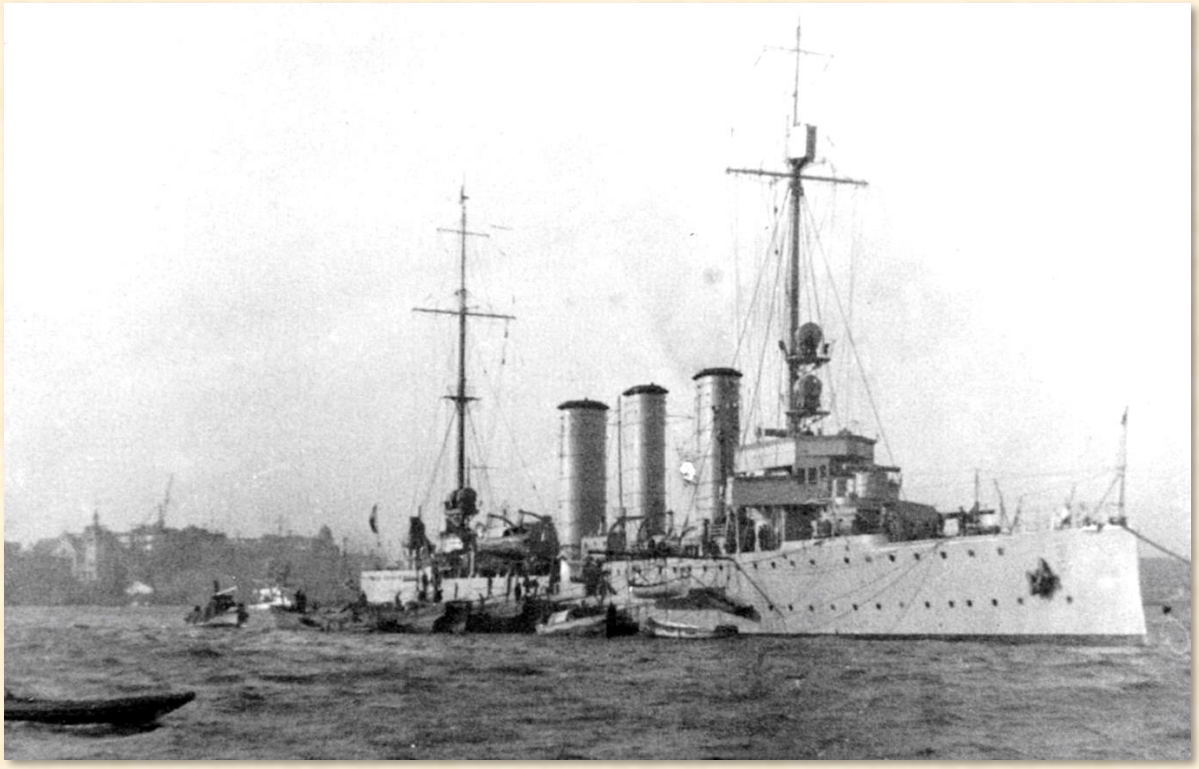
The Grimsby trawler *Manx Queen* (GY174) was sunk and her crew captured by one of the torpedo boats accompanying the bombardment force. Several British ships were sent to intercept the raiders but they were unsuccessful. They included the old battleships *HMS King Edward VII*, *HMS Hindustan* and *HMS Britannia* which had visited Grimsby in 1907. This was the first attack on the British homeland. The raid increased British public outrage against both the German Navy and the Royal Navy for failing to prevent the raid. The propaganda value for encouraging men to join the armed forces was not missed. James and Flo will have seen the posters.



*German minefields laid between August and December 1914. These were off the coasts of Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including the approach to the Humber estuary, and East Anglia with the southern edge level with Harwich. The minefield between the Thames Estuary and Belgium was laid by the British. The narrow spaces between the coast and the minefields were kept clear as a 'War Channel' by British minesweepers. (*History of the Great War: Naval Operations*, Volume 2 (1921), by Sir Julian S Corbett; naval-history.net*)

During the bombardment, the cruiser *SMS Kolberg*, which could carry 100 mines, was busy laying another minefield off the Yorkshire coast between Flamborough Head and Whitby. This would claim many more ships including working trawlers and

minesweepers. By the end of 1914, British minesweepers had managed to remove 300 mines. But the Germans had laid 840, and more than 50 fishing and merchant vessels had been lost. German ships and U-boats would lay thousands more mines throughout the war.



The German cruiser SMS Kolberg*, which laid a minefield off the Yorkshire coast on 16 December 1914 while German battlecruisers were bombarding Hartlepool, Whitby and Scarborough. (With thanks to René Griesinger, Militaer-Wissen.de)*

The Cuxhaven Raid

Charles Clifford was kept busy in the North Sea. On Christmas Eve 1914 aboard the cruiser *HMS Arethusa,* Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt led a number of the Harwich Force's cruisers, destroyers and submarines to a location west of the Heligoland islands. With them were three requisitioned cross-channel ferries carrying seaplanes of the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). One of the cruisers was *HMS Aurora*, now commanded by Captain Wilmot Nicholson who had survived the sinking of *HMS Hogue* by submarine U-9 a few weeks before.

Early on Christmas Day, the seaplanes were lowered into the water from the ferries by crane. They took off and headed for Cuxhaven in Lower Saxony at the mouth of the River Elbe. The seaplanes intended to attack the Zeppelin airship sheds nearby at Nordholz. This was the first time that aircraft had been used to strike land targets after being launched from the sea. An observer and navigator in one of the aircraft was Erskine Childers, author of *The Riddle of the Sands*. He had been allowed to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) in the August with support from Winston Churchill.

Meanwhile, *HMT Night Hawk* (GY643), requisitioned in August 1914, was busy

sweeping the minefield laid off the Yorkshire coast by the German cruiser *SMS Kolberg.* Around the time the aircraft were taking off on the other side of the North Sea, *Night Hawk* struck a mine which blew out the entire bottom of her hull. Six crew members were killed and she sank in a few seconds. Seven men were saved in the life raft.

Charles Clifford participated in a diversion to distract from the attack on the Nordholz Zeppelin sheds. *HMS Beaver* was among ten Harwich destroyers which positioned themselves near the mouth of the River Ems. This forms the north-west German border with the Netherlands at the western end of the East Frisian Islands, exactly where Childers' novel had been set. The aircraft were unable to find the Zeppelin sheds due to fog, but several other sites were attacked. As the British force turned for home, it was harassed unsuccessfully by Zeppelins, seaplanes and U-boats.

Contemporary postcard depicting the Cuxhaven Raid by the Harwich Force on Christmas Day 1914. The target was the Zeppelin airship sheds at Nordholz, using aircraft launched from the sea to strike a land target for the first time. Aboard one of the aircraft was Erskine Childers, author of the invasion novel, The Riddle of the Sands *(1903). While the action was going on, members of 1st Destroyer Flotilla (named at bottom-right), including* HMS Beaver *with Charles Clifford aboard, created a diversion near the mouth of the River Ems. (Cuxpedia.de)*

As in every British home, Christmas for the Cliffords at 17 Guildford Street in Grimsby would have felt very different. Catherine Annie was 12, Jim would turn nine on New Year's Eve and little Joseph was three. The war was clearly nowhere near over. However, in France and Belgium, an informal truce had developed over the previous few days between around 100,000 soldiers in various places along the line of the Western Front. British, French and German soldiers emerged from their trenches and ventured into 'no man's land'. They lit candles, sang carols and offered

each other seasonal greetings and gifts in the form of food, drink, tobacco and souvenirs. They also exchanged prisoners and buried their dead without fear of gunfire. At least one location saw a football match played. In some places, the truce lasted until New Year's Day.

Long wet hours in wind, fog, rain and dark

Minesweeping would involve long hours of drudgery, alternating with the high tension of great danger when mines were discovered. The crews would be out for at least four days at a time with short breaks back in port for rest and refuelling.

Most of the German High Seas Fleet withdrew to the safety of the Kiel Canal, but the British had to be constantly vigilant. The fishermen's experience, whether fishing, minesweeping or patrolling, would have been very familiar to Charles Clifford and the destroyer crews. Edward F Knight met a number of men of the Harwich Force. He described their experience as

> "some strange dream – the weary, watchful patrolling through storm or fog, with no lights showing on sea or shore; the feeling of the way by dead reckoning and lead [depth soundings] in dark wintry weather along the enemy's coasts."

Captain H Taprell Dorling experienced destroyer operations during the war. He described "the usual North Sea weather" as "a thick haze accompanied by occasional rain." He said that

> "the green seas came over everywhere, while the ship lurched and tumbled, pitched and rolled, wallowed and buried herself without ceasing. The water found its way through our oilskins, and down into our sea-boots, within a quarter of an hour of leaving harbour. One remained wet, or partially so, for four or five days on end, and snatched what meals one could".

Filson Young, a journalist, war correspondent and Lieutenant in the RNVR, joined the battlecruiser *HMS Lion* for six months from November 1914. His role as an observer was approved by First Sea Lord Jacky Fisher. Young described the special quality of patrolling at night, admittedly high above the water and clear of the spray and waves that made the crews of smaller vessels so wet:

> "The dark shapes round you melted into the surrounding void, the loom of the land faded into the universal blackness, and there set in that blowing which is the wind of destiny, which would not cease until you touched the shores of death or of home again. Before you and on either hand was absolute blackness; behind you one shadow of grosser blackness, which was the ship astern; and from blackness into blackness, nose to tail, thirty thousand tons apiece, we were rushing at twenty miles an hour. And that also was routine."

Young also described prolonged periods of inactivity during which sailors would finding ways to amuse themselves:

> "Every kind of game and puzzle would be produced…torpedo experts…the most finished products of *HMS Vernon* would…pore for an hour over the problem of a missing piece of a horse's nose."

Charles may we have been their instructor, but not in completing jigsaws.

The sea war continues

Top

The Battle of Dogger Bank

On 24 January 1915, a German scouting group of 26 ships was at sea intending to destroy all British vessels in the Dogger Bank area. They included the four battlecruisers which had bombarded Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool a few weeks before, and the cruisers which had laid mines off the Yorkshire coast and Great Yarmouth.

In response, the Royal Navy mustered 47 ships. Most were destroyers of the Harwich Force including 14 from 1st Destroyer Flotilla, although not *HMS Beaver*. They were supporting cruisers including *HMS Arethusa* commanded by Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt and *HMS Aurora* commanded by Captain Wilmot Nicholson. Five battlecruisers took part including *HMS Lion* and *HMS Tiger,* and also *HMS New Zealand* which had visited Grimsby the previous August just before the Battle of Heligoland Bight. Others were the old battleships *HMS Hindustan* and *HMS Britannia* which had visited Grimsby in 1907.

The German ships quickly withdrew and the chasing British ships engaged them at a speed never before experienced in naval combat. *Tiger* was hit by six German shells and ten men were killed. A shell from *Lion* destroyed both of *Seydlitz*'s rear main turrets killing 159. *Lion* was badly damaged by *Derfflinger* and *Moltke*. *Blücher*, one of the Hartlepool raiders, disabled the destroyer *HMS Meteor* and scored a hit on *Lion*. Due to poor British signalling, all of the German ships except *Blücher* escaped.

In the confusion, the British battlecruisers wastefully fired hundreds of heavy-calibre shells at *Blücher*, hitting her with more than 70. She was finished off by two torpedoes from *Arethusa* and she capsized. Of *Blücher*'s crew of over 1,000, British destroyers were only able to rescue 200, while being attacked ineffectively by a German seaplane and a Zeppelin. *HMS Meteor* was towed into the Humber with four dead crew members onboard.

Unrestricted submarine warfare

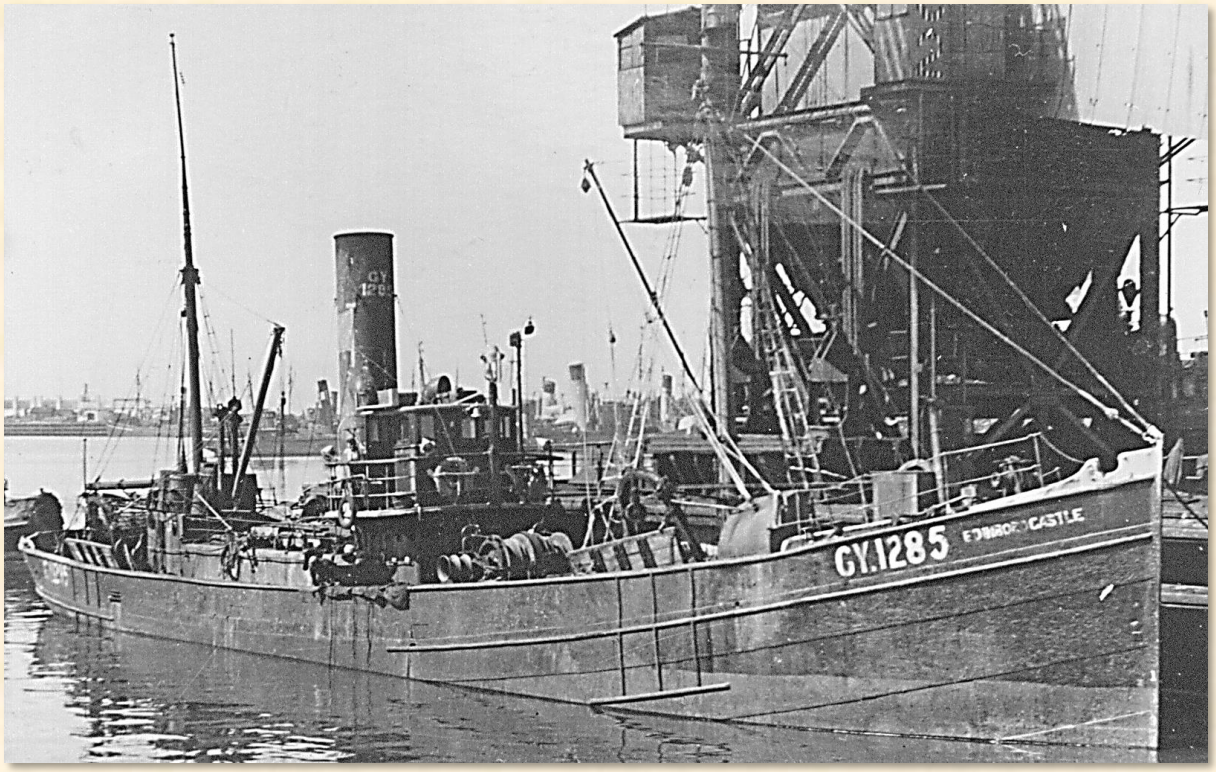
James and his fellow fishermen faced a new level of threat from February 1915. Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare on British commercial shipping. This meant that they would sink any civilian passenger or merchant ship or fishing vessel without warning. The U-boats would no longer be obliged to put themselves at risk by surfacing to offer their victims the traditional opportunity, known as 'cruiser rules', to escape from or surrender their vessel.

The Humber minesweeping force was now comprised of six paddle steamers and 30 trawlers. From this point until the end of the war, losses among their counterparts which were still fishing would mostly be due to U-boat attack. Depriving the British population of fish and the fishing vessels that supplied them were important objectives for the Germans, not to mention reducing the number of vessels that could be converted to naval uses.

An additional concern at this time was the possibility that German minelaying vessels were enabling spies to come ashore, and British patrol vessels were instructed to concentrate on intercepting them.

Charles and *HMS Beaver* left Harwich with 1st Destroyer Flotilla in February 1915 and returned to Rosyth. Charles and James's father Thomas, my great-great grandfather, died in Derby on 30 March aged 65. He was buried with his first two wives in Nottingham Road Cemetery.

Charles and James may have had opportunities to meet again after they left home in Derby as teenagers in the 1890s, but I have no evidence that they did. Even if James was able to get to Thomas' funeral, Charles would almost certainly not have been granted sufficient compassionate leave. Unless *HMS Beaver* was undergoing maintenance, operational readiness meant that ships had to be ready to sail with a few hours' notice at most. Where leave was granted, travel may have been restricted to a certain distance. Twenty-four hours may not have been considered enough for him to travel the 280 miles (450 km) by train from Edinburgh to Derby and back. Timetables at average train speeds of the period meant that the journey would have taken around seven hours in each direction. So it is highly unlikely that Charles was able to stand with James and their two sisters at their father's graveside.



The steam trawler Edinboro Castle*, built in Dundee in 1899 and registered at Grimsby as GY1285. She was requisitioned by the Admiralty in June 1915 and transferred to Milford in south-west Wales, until being returned to her Grimsby owner in 1919. (With thanks to The Bosun's Watch, Fleetwood-Trawlers.info)*

Back In Birmingham, their sister Annie gave birth to her second child, William Ewart, on 1 May. His middle name came partly from his uncle Ewart Gladstone Graham. The family were clearly Liberal voters, remembering William Ewart Gladstone who had been Prime Minister for four terms in the latter third of the nineteenth century.

The passenger liner *Lusitania* was torpedoed by submarine U-20 off the south coast

of Ireland on 7 May, nearly 1,200 people including children lost their lives. A fishing vessel from the Isle of Mann pulled 160 survivors from the water and towed two full lifeboats to land. American citizens accounted for 128 of the *Lusitania*'s dead, causing American opinion to shift away from a position of neutrality. Other neutral countries were similarly angered by unrestricted submarine warfare. May 1915 was also the worst month of the entire war for working fishing vessels with 60 lost.

Despite their policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, the gallantry of some German officers meant that many fishing crews were either allowed to escape in open dinghies or were taken prisoner. There was limited space on submarines for prisoners. U-boat commander Kapitänleutnant Ernst Hashagan explained later that they could hardly order a civilian crew or passengers to abandon a ship if there were not enough lifeboats, or if they were too far from land to row, especially if the sea was rough. One of the Flanders Flotilla commanders, Kapitänleutnant Otto Steinbrinck, said that he allowed forty civilian ships to pass him by in the English Channel. The Germans would suspend the policy after seven months. Nonetheless, 192 working British fishing vessels would be captured or sunk by the end of the year.

From May 1915, as James came in and out of the Humber estuary, he would have noticed two new structures starting to take shape on sand banks between Spurn Point and Cleethorpes. These were forts on Bull Sand and Haile Sand, positioned to protect the mouth of the Humber. They would take more than four years to build.

The Dardanelles, Gallipoli and the Adriatic

First Sea Lord Jacky Fisher wanted to attack the Germans in the Baltic but his idea was rejected. Fisher was unhappy with a plan in early 1915, supported by Winston Churchill, to weaken Turkey, an ally of Germany. Turkey was preventing supplies for Russia, an ally of Britain and France, from reaching the Black Sea from the Mediterranean through the narrow Dardanelles Strait. This is also known as the Strait of Gallipoli.

A joint British and French force would be sent to the Dardanelles. This would include submarines, minesweepers to clear channels in the Strait, and ageing battleships which, although obsolete against the German High Seas Fleet, were not expected to face such opposition from the Turks.

The minesweepers would be commanded by Commodore Roger Keyes, recently of the Harwich Force. Grimsby fishermen that James Clifford probably knew were among the crews of 21 minesweeping trawlers which arrived via Malta. Some of them would not come back. Turkish strength was underestimated and the trawlers were fired on mercilessly from the shore. They were also ordered to work at night, which they had never done before and would rarely do again.

HMT Okino (GY4) had been built in Grimsby in January 1914 and was requisitioned in the August. On the night of 8 March 1915, she was sweeping a channel in the Gulf of Smyrna. The battleship *HMS Swiftsure*, another of Grimsby's visitors in 1907, was contributing to covering fire against the Turkish gun batteries and searchlights on the shore when *Okino* struck a mine. Four of her crew were saved but ten were lost. Both Churchill and Commodore Keyes were willing to accept high casualties among the minesweeping crews.

French and British trawlers minesweeping in March 1915 during the Allied naval campaign in Turkey's Dardanelles Strait. They are seen using a technique developed with trawlers from Grimsby in 1908. Some of the British trawlers in the Dardanelles were also from Grimsby. Turkey had closed the Strait to starve Russia of supplies from the Mediterranean via the Black Sea. The trawlers cleared channels to enable British and French warships to force their way through to Gallipoli. (Illustration by Paul Carrey; published on 4 April 1915 in edition 71 of Le Miroir*, the Sunday supplement to the French daily newspaper* Le Petit Parisien*;* [*Commons.Wikimedia.org*](Commons.Wikimedia.org)*)*

HMT Manx Hero (GY585) had been requisitioned in August 1914. On the night of 10-11 March 1915, she was sunk by a mine which exploded nearby. Her crew was picked up by *HMT Koorah* (M120) from Milford. *Koorah* would join the Grimsby fishing fleet three years later.

HMT Fentonian (GY804) had been newly requisitioned for the Dardanelles Campaign. While being fired on during the night of 13 March, she collided with *HMT Star of the Empire* (A509) from Aberdeen. Two of *Fentonian*'s crew were killed. Both trawlers survived and *Fentonian* would be requisitioned again in the next World War.

The Dardanelles Campaign was a disaster and 700 Allied lives were lost in exchange for 78 on the Turkish side. Fisher resigned on 15 May followed by Churchill ten days later. The Second Battle of Ypres in Belgium had also begun in late April and would claim tens of thousands of casualties over four weeks.

To support Turkey, the Germans sent a number of U-boats to join those of their other ally, Austria-Hungary. The U-boats were based on the Croatian coast on the eastern side of the Adriatic sea. Charles Clifford would never face Austro-Hungarian forces. However, from his knowledge of the Whitehead torpedo, he was probably aware that the main centre for Austro-Hungarian torpedo production was at Fiume, where U-boats were also built by a company founded by Robert Whitehead. One of the Austrian submarine commanders was the famous Captain Georg Ritter von Trapp.

Italy, on the western side of the Adriatic, had become an ally of Britain, France and Russia in the May. Sixty patrol drifters and their crews, mostly from Lowestoft and Scottish ports, were sent in the September to create the Otranto Barrage of steel nets. These were laid across the 45 mile (72 km) wide Strait of Otranto between Italy and Albania. The nets were intended to frustrate German and Austro-Hungarian U-boat operations into the Ionian Sea and the Mediterranean. The Kingdom of Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in the October.

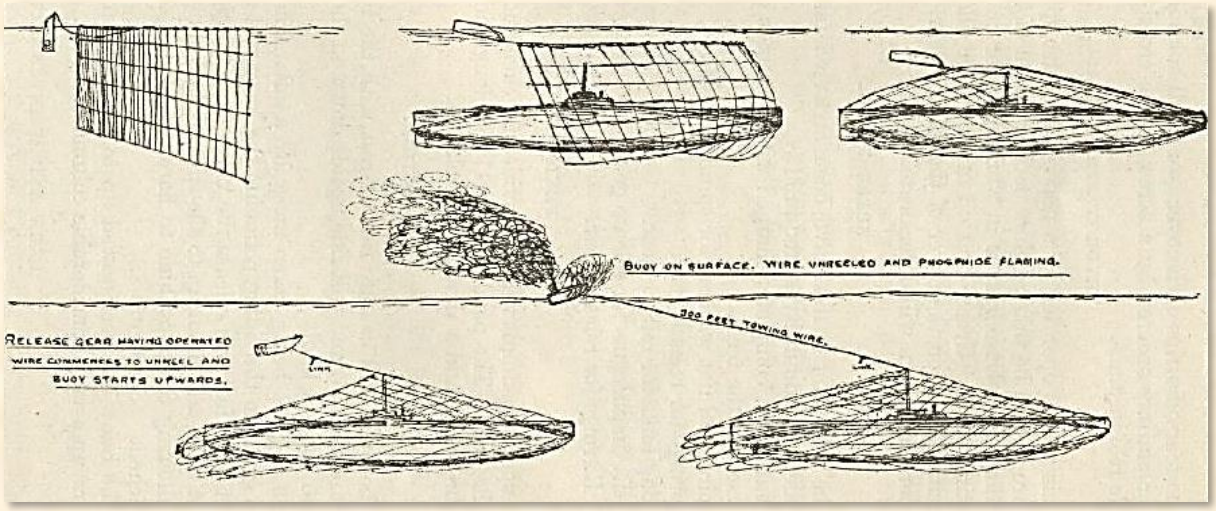


Diagram of an 'indicator' net laid by a drifter, attached to a buoy with a flare that would ignite to reveal the position of an entangled submarine. Surface vessels could then track and destroy the submarine with depth charges. From late 1915, a large number of British drifters used indicator nets to create the rather ineffective Otranto Barrage in the deep and wide Strait between Italy and Albania. (US Office of Naval Intelligence, 1917; Commons.Wikimedia.org)

The Otranto Barrage was comprised of 'indicator' nets, which would wrap around unsuspecting submarines. Attached to the nets were buoys carrying torches which lit automatically when the buoys' cables strained. A submarine could then be tracked and attacked using depth charges. A U-boat had been destroyed off Dover after being caught in an indicator net on 4 March, but the width and depth of the Strait of Otranto meant that the barrage was rather ineffective.

The drifters were vulnerable to attack, including from Austro-Hungarian surface ships and aircraft, so they were armed from the November. Several drifters and crew members would be lost to enemy action over the following months, although they would have some success against U-boats. Some of the drifters helped the Sebian Army by transporting supplies to them on the Adriatic's Montenegro coast, rescuing them from the Albanian coast. They also supported landings there by the Italians and performed rescues from ships which had struck mines. The drifters' wooden hulls deteriorated in these unfamiliar waters and they would eventually be sent home, replaced by steel-hulled examples.

British anti-submarine trawlers also patrolled shipping lanes between Crete and Egypt and along the Egyptian coast where they also ferried troops, and countered U-boat minelayers around Malta and the Italian coast.

An amphibious landing on the Gallipoli peninsula was supported by the trawlers. This too was a disaster. After ten months, Allied casualties reached 300,000 including many Australians and New Zealanders. Turkish casualties exceeded 250,000.

Last major German minefields

Charles Clifford's part in trying to prevent the German High Seas Fleet and minelaying cruisers from emerging into the North Sea ended on 15 September 1915. He left *HMS Beaver* and 1st Destroyer Flotilla at Rosyth and travelled the 427 miles (635 km) south to Portsmouth to spend another period at *HMS Vernon*. This also meant that he could re-join Amelia and little Harold, my grandfather.

In Grimsby in November 1915, one of the Government's National Shell Factories was opened on Victoria Street. Nearly half of the workers were women.

British patrols missed the cruiser *SMS Möwe* slipping out of Wilhelmshaven on 29 December. On New Year's Day 1916, she laid a minefield off Cape Wrath on the north-western tip of Scotland. This was the last of the large minefields laid by a German ship in British waters during the war.

On 6 January, the old battleship *HMS King Edward VII*, which had visited Grimsby in 1907, left Scapa Flow for Belfast. She hit one of over 100 mines laid by *Möwe* and sank nine hours later. All but one of her ship's company of nearly 800 men were rescued by British destroyers.

The *King Stephen* incident

On 31 January 1916, Zeppelin L-19 set off from the airship sheds at Tønder on the Danish-German border. She proceeded as one of nine intending to bomb Liverpool. Due to a navigational error, she bombed Burton upon Trent in Staffordshire and towns on the outskirts of Birmingham that night. A total of 61 people were killed and 101 were injured.

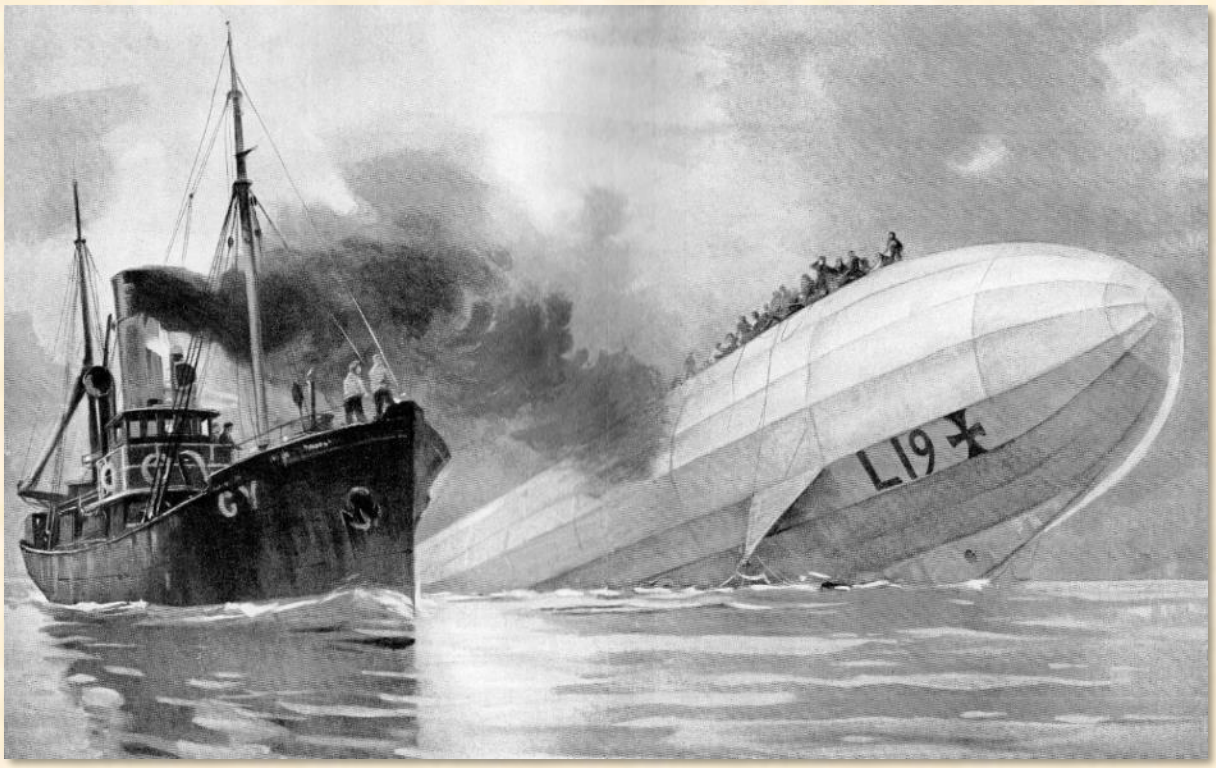
RNR uniformed crew of HMT Rosy Morn*. She was built in Aberdeen in 1914, registered at Scarborough as SH59 and requisitioned in May 1915 with Admiralty number 2770.* Rosy Morn *sank west of Dogger Bank on 13 January 1916 after hitting a mine. She was sweeping a minefield laid by the German cruisers* SMS Stralsund *and* SMS Straßburg*. (FishingNews.co.uk)*

On her way home, L-19 suffered engine troubles and, the following afternoon, she was damaged by gunfire from ground defences on the Dutch island of Ameland. The Netherlands was neutral and did not tolerate over-flights by foreign aircraft. L-19 lost height and had to land on the sea. The crew sent up distress flares and climbed up onto the top of L-19's superstructure to wait for rescue.

The flares were seen by the unarmed Grimsby trawler *King Stephen* (*GY1174)*, which was in an area where the British authorities prohibited fishing. She approached to investigate but her skipper refused to rescue the German crew as he did not want to risk his own crew being overpowered. They intended to report their sighting to a Royal Navy ship which might have been able to investigate, but they did not meet any before they got back to Grimsby. They gave a false location for their discovery to avoid prosecution. This meant that the British ships sent out to search for L-19 never found her, and she disappeared with her crew beneath the waves.

James and Flo Clifford may have had mixed feelings and British public opinion was divided. Aerial bombardment of civilians was still a very new concept and many viewed German airship crews as 'baby killers'. The Paris daily newspaper *Le Petit Journal* published a drawing of the *King Stephen* abandoning L-19 on the front page of the edition for 27 February with the title, "Le Chatiment du Pirate", the punishment

of a pirate. The Germans used the incident as propaganda and declared the crew of the *King Stephen* to be war criminals.



The crew of Zeppelin L-19, being abandoned in the North Sea by the King Stephen *on 31 January 1916. The trawler had been built in Grimsby in 1900 and registered there as GY1174. The Zeppelin had been bombing the English Midlands and was hit by Dutch gunfire on her way home. Once back in Grimsby, the skipper claimed to have been protecting his own crew. He gave a false location for the sighting of L-19 which had come down in an area where the British authorities had prohibited fishing. This prevented rescue of the airship's crew. British opinion was mixed. German opinion was not. (Contemporary British illustration; Commons.Wikimedia.org)*

A few days later, *King Stephen* was requisitioned and equipped as a Q-ship (Q778). She was given a new crew and renamed as *HMT Ledger*. The Battle of Verdun in France, which would cause 350,000 to 400,000 casualties on each side, had just begun and would last for the rest of the year.

A Zeppelin bombs Cleethorpes

A few weeks later, just after midnight on 1 April, Zeppelin L-22 arrived over Cleethorpes. Due to engine troubles, it had parted company with four other Zeppelins from Nordholz which were intent on bombing London and East Anglian targets. L-22 headed instead for Grimsby docks, but did not reach them. It dropped several 25 kg (55 lbs) bombs around Cleethorpes. Some landed in a field behind Hey Street before the airship was caught in the beam of the Taylors Avenue searchlight, and was fired on by the Waltham Wireless Station's anti-aircraft gun. James, Florence and the children lived just two miles (3 km) to the north-west. They may have felt the explosions and heard the gunfire.

L-22 turned to attack once more, scoring a direct hit on the Baptist church hall on Alexandra Road. 84 young men of the 3rd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment were staying in the hall overnight. The casualties included 27 dead and 53 injured, of which five died later. Another bomb damaged shops in Sea View Street, and one more destroyed the Cambridge Street council office.

Rumours started circulating that German spies had guided the Zeppelin using torches. Attention focused on a café owner and the local postmaster who had German connections. Both had to leave town. People lined the streets to watch the funeral cortege of the dead soldiers. Annual memorial services would be held for decades to come.

Bombardment of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth

On 25 April, *HMT Ledger* was sunk by the German destroyer G41. The crew of *Ledger* were taken prisoner and interrogated about the failure of their predecessors to rescue the crew of Zeppelin L-19. G41 was busy that day as one of a number of destroyers supporting a bombardment of the fishing ports of Lowestoft and, once again, Great Yarmouth, both on the Norfolk coast. As a prelude to the attack, Zeppelins had bombed Harwich, Ipswich, Norwich and Lincoln.

On shore, four people were killed and 19 were wounded. The bombardment was conducted by the battlecruisers *SMS Lützow*, *SMS Derfflinger*, *SMS Moltke* and *SMS Von der Tann*, the latter pair having also bombarded Great Yarmouth, Scarborough and Whitby in late 1914. The German ships were attempting to lure the Royal Navy out to sea, and ships of the Harwich Force did indeed give chase, but they turned back upon sighting more of the German High Seas Fleet waiting to ambush them. British public opinion was infuriated at the ‘baby killers’ once again, but the ineffectiveness of the raid damaged German prestige.

The Battle of Jutland

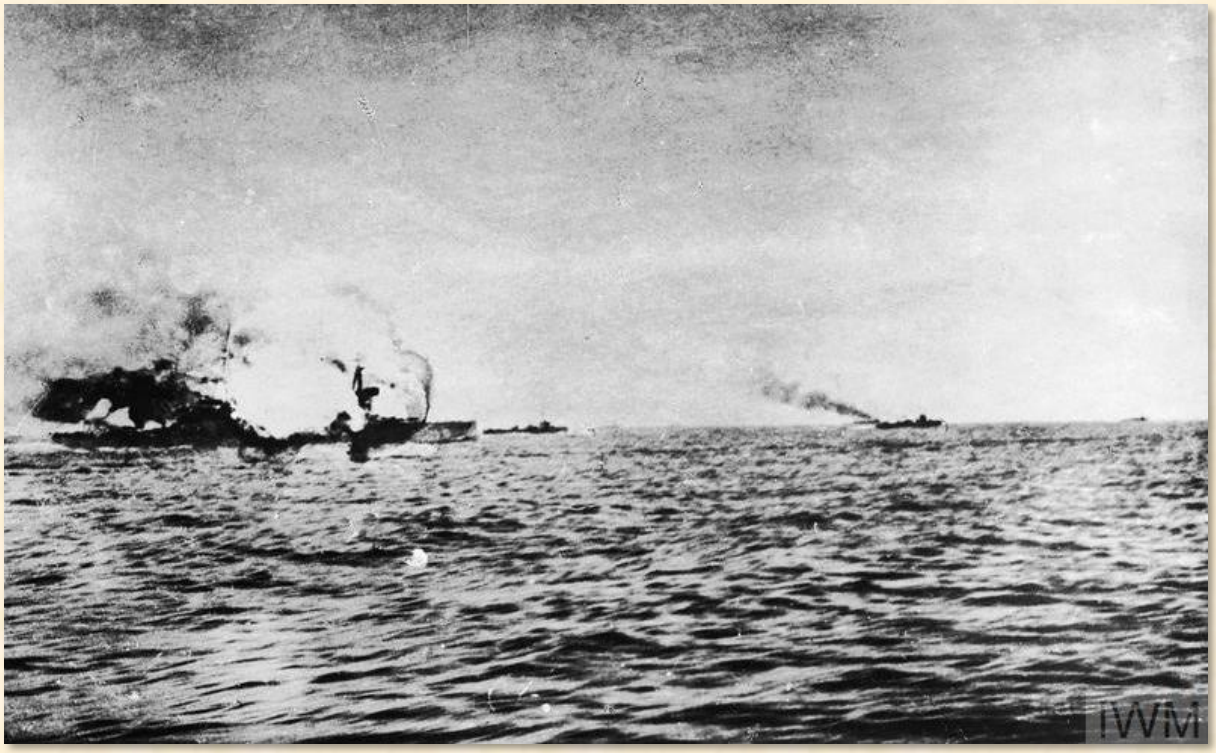
On 31 May 1916, Charles Clifford began his seventh and final main period at *HMS Vernon* and was promoted to Chief Petty Officer.

That day, 99 German ships including their High Seas Fleet headed out into the North Sea to surprise the British and force a decisive battle rather than remain passive in their ports. They included 16 *Dreadnought*-standard battleships, the five previously mentioned battlecruisers, 17 older capital ships and 61 destroyers including G41. Among 151 British ships which went out to meet them were 28 Dreadnoughts and nine battlecruisers including *HMS Invincible*, *HMS New Zealand*, *HMS Queen Mary* and *HMS Indefatigable*. They were supported by 34 older cruisers and 78 destroyers.

This resulted in the greatest sea battle of the war. Various parts of each fleet engaged each other in running battles across the area between the Fisher Banks and Denmark’s Jutland peninsular. The Germans played cat and mouse to lure the British and prevent them from concentrating their forces.

Firing hundreds of heavy-calibre shells each, the British capital ships hit the Germans ones 101 times, while receiving 74 hits themselves. But gunnery performance was very mixed. The British Super Dreadnoughts were far more

successful that the German battleships. Among the battlecruisers, *Invincible*'s gunners were among the most accurate. Whereas *New Zealand* fired 420 12-inch shells, more than any other ship on either side, but only scored a handful of hits. These fell mainly on *SMS Seydlitz* which had bombarded Hartlepool in December 1914. Between them, the British battlecruisers landed 11 shells on their German counterparts, and the Super Dreadnought *HMS Barham* hit them with six 15-inch (380 mm) shells. But with expert marksmanship, the German battlecruisers landed 42 shells on their British rivals and two on *Barham*.



The battlecruiser HMS Invincible*, seen here at the terrible moment when she exploded during the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916. Her ammunition magazines had just been hit by shells from the German battlecruisers* SMS Lützow *and* SMS Derfflinger*.* Invincible *was blown in half and sank in 90 seconds. Six members of the ship's company survived and 1,026 were lost. The people of Grimsby would have been very sorry, having greeted many of these brave men when* Invincible *took on supplies in late August 1914 before going into action at the Battle of Heligoland Bight. (Surgeon Parkes Collection, Imperial War Museum, IWM SP2468)*

This contributed to the loss of 14 British ships, the largest being three battlecruisers which were ripped apart when shells hit their ammunition magazines. *Von der Tann* sank *Indefatigable* with the loss of 1,019 men. Only two of the ship's company survived. *Derfflinger* and possibly *Seydlitz* sank the Jarrow-built *Queen Mary*. Only twenty of her company survived and 1,266 were lost. *Lützow* and *Derfflinger* sank *Invincible* which was blown in half and sank in 90 seconds. Of her company, 1,026 were lost, many of whom would have among those who visited Grimsby in August 1914. Only six survivors were picked up by *HMS Beaver*'s sister destroyer *HMS Badger*. *New Zealand* survived, being hit by only one shell, fired by *Von der Tann*.

In total, 6,094 British sailors lost their lives in the battle. Poor planning and communications were contributory factors once again. Germans losses were 2,551 killed and 11 ships, only one of which was a capital ship, the *Lützow*. She had been hit by 24 shells, killing 115 of her crew. After a desperate attempt to keep her moving on a homeward course, she had to be abandoned and around 1,000 men were saved before she sank. *Derfflinger* had been hit by 23 shells and managed to limp home with 157 dead men onboard.

The Germans withdrew and the Royal Navy claimed victory. But British newspapers conceded that the Germans had a counter-claim on the basis of far higher British losses. James and Flo would not have known what to make of it.

In Portsmouth, Amelia would have witnessed Charles's utter dismay. His feeling was no doubt shared by his former comrades of the Harwich Force, which did not take an active part in the Battle. The controversy raged on for another ten years and is still being debated today.

Submarine minelaying and attacks

While James was fishing, he would have been increasingly aware of the danger of not just mines in the water but increasing numbers of U-boats. Instead of using large ships for laying mines, the Germans used U-boats instead.

The UB-type of minelaying submarine was relatively small and could not carry many mines. The UC-type, introduced in 1915, was larger. It could carry 12 mines and had a longer range. These U-boats could slip undetected into the War Channels that the minesweepers were trying to keep clear. Those of the Flanders Flotilla could then slip back to their bases in the occupied Belgian ports of Ostende and Zeebrugge.

According to later German claims, U-boats laid 648 mines in the War Channel between Grimsby and Dover by the end of 1915. In the second half of the year, the mines they laid sank 104 British ships including 15 minesweepers and nine fishing vessels that were conducting patrols.

The British responded with an innovation which enabled a wire to be trailed from a single minesweeper rather than vessels having to work in pairs. At fatal risk to themselves, British minesweepers would clear over 1,800 German mines during 1916. Requisitioned fishing vessels were now being fitted with large guns so that they could defend themselves and protect merchant ships.

Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, whose face had been so iconic on recruitment posters in 1914 to which young men across Britain such as the Grimsby Pals had responded, met his death due to a mine. He was being conveyed with a delegation to Russia by the cruiser *HMS Hampshire* for negotiations with Tsar Nicholas II. The ship was 1.5 miles (2.4 km) west of Orkney on 5 June 1916 when she struck a mine laid a week earlier by submarine U-75. Kitchener was one of the 737 men who were killed. Only 12 survived.

Illustrating perfectly why it was so dangerous for fishermen like James Clifford to go to sea, North Sea trawlers accounted for 27 out of 45 Allied naval and civilian vessels sunk by U-boats over a period of just three days in September 1916. More than half of the North Sea trawlers lost were from Grimsby. Submarine UC-16 of the Flanders Flotilla, commanded by Oberleutnant Egon Von Werner, sank 11 of the

trawlers on 23 September. One was the *Weelsby*, pictured on page 13. They were mostly around 45 miles (74 km) east-south-east of the Spurn Point light vessel.

Watercolour painting by Frank H Mason named Armed trawlers from Hull and Grimsby: The Ameer, Resono, *and* Lord Roberts in action 1915*. They are pictured while minesweeping. From left to right are* HMT Ameer *(GY397),* HMT Lord Roberts *(H955) and* HMT Resono *(GY508).* Lord Roberts*' deck gun is visible, as are more trawlers in the distance.. The aircraft at top-right trying to bomb them is a German* Taube *monoplane. (Maritime Museum Collection, Hull; with thanks to Hull Museums)*

All three of these trawlers were lost to mines laid by UC-type submarines. Resono (GY508) had been requisitioned in January 1915. She struck a mine in the Thames Estuary on 26 December and sank with the loss of all 13 of her crew. She was sweeping a minefield laid ten days before by submarine UC-5. Ameer (GY397) had been requisitioned in August 1914. She struck a mine laid by submarine UC-7 off the Suffolk coast on 18 March 1916 and sank with the loss of eight men. Lord Roberts (H955) had been requisitioned in November 1914. She sank on 26 October 1916 after hitting a mine laid off the Suffolk coast by submarine UC-11. Nine members of her crew were lost.

Over the next two days, at least 16 trawlers, some from Grimsby but mostly from Scarborough, were sunk by submarine U-57, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Ritter Carl-Siegfried von Georg. He ‘sent them to the bottom’ around 23 miles (37 km) off the stretch of Yorkshire coast between Scarborough and Flamborough Head. According to the restrictions placed upon them, the U-boats dutifully spared the fishermen before sinking their trawlers. Mostly were sunk by gunfire but some with explosive charges or by scuttling.

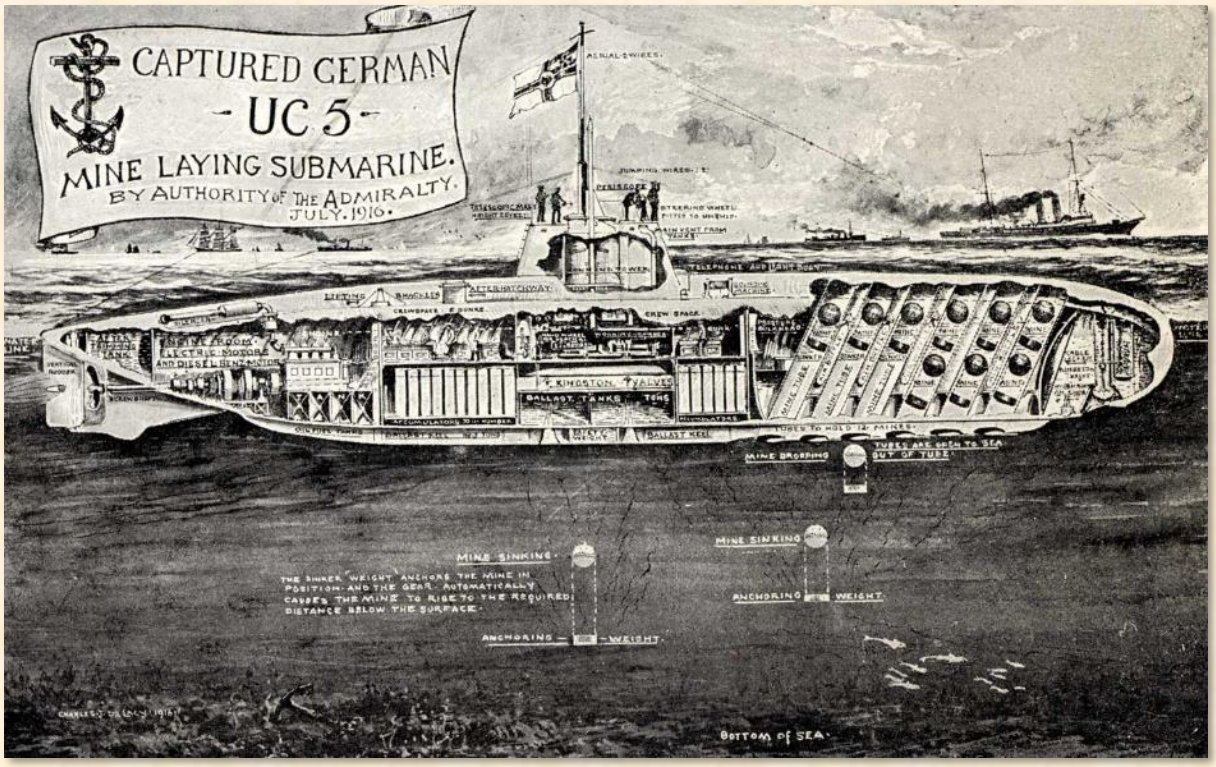


Diagram of the captured submarine UC-5 which ran aground on 27 April 1916, showing how the U-boat carried and laid its mines. This drawing by a Government-approved artist was published in British newspapers. The Grimsby trawler Resono *had been lost in the Thames Estuary with all 13 members of her crew on 26 December after striking a mine laid by UC-5. (Commons.Wikimedia.org)*

Kapitänleutnant von Georg later explained his actions:

> "I always regarded the business of sinking merchant ships as disagreeable, but duty was duty and I went about it as efficiently as I could. That night…I found myself in the middle of a fleet of ships. They were fishing trawlers…an important adjunct to British sea power. The King's Navy relied extensively on Britain's huge fleet of fishing boats…
>
> When they were not fishing they laid mines and swept mines and laid nets to catch U-boats. They acted as anti-submarine craft, often heavily armed with guns and depth bombs. Sometimes they took the part of Q-ships, trusting to their innocent looks to decoy the unwary submarine commander. And so, a trawler destroyed was an appreciable deduction from Great Britain's defence against the U-boats…I couldn't sink a one unless they chose to let me".
>
> "I called the captain of the Norwegian ship I had sunk…I bade him take the small boat with a couple of his men, go over to the nearest trawler and inform the captain …that he is to abandon ship…as I am going to sink his ship…The mere word 'submarine' had brought cold chills of apprehension and evoked perfect obedience…for several hours the splashing of oars resounded on all sides in the darkness…without endangering a single life we had polished off a neat batch of potential mine layers and sweepers and anti-submarine craft."

Scarborough fishermen taken prisoner and held at gunpoint aboard submarine UB-39. They are seen on 13 July 1916 watching their vessel being sunk. (From the memoir of UB-39's commander at the time, Oberleutnant Werner 'Fips' Fürbringer; entitled Alarm! Tauchen!! U-Boot in Kampf und Sturm*; published in 1933 by Ullstein, Berlin; with thanks to Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre)*

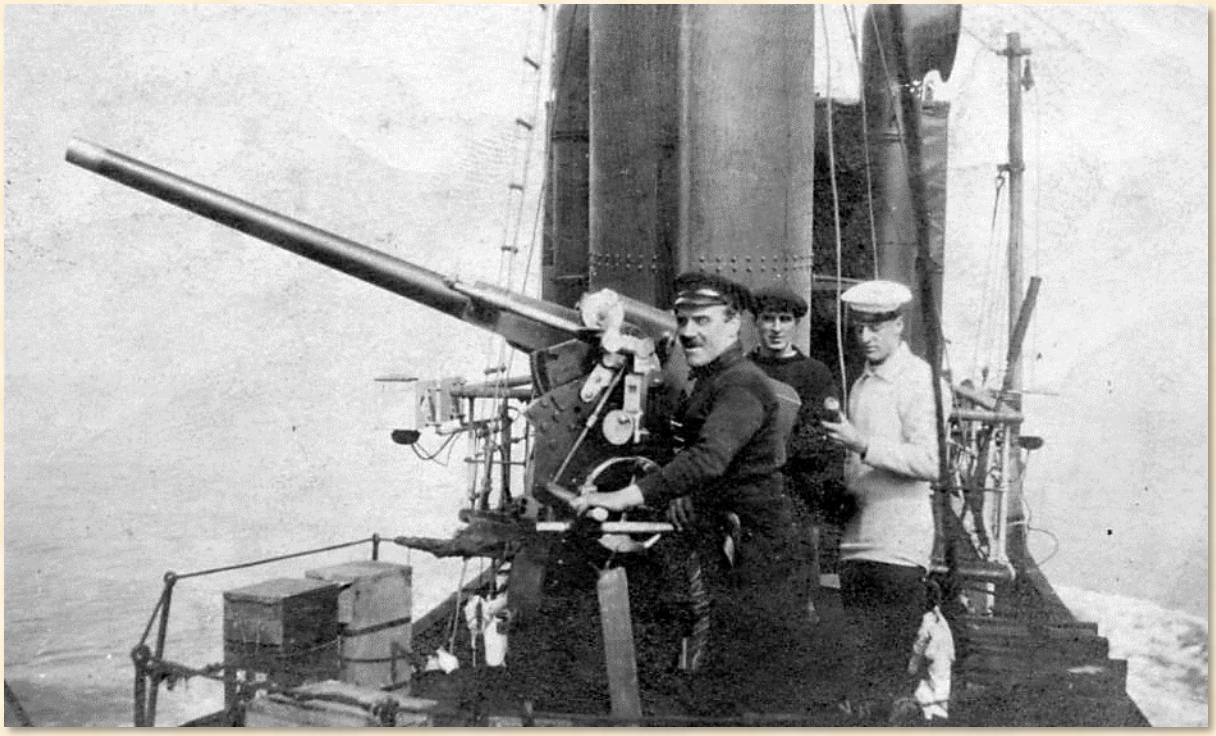
A mine is destroyed by gunfire after being swept to the surface by a pair of trawlers. In the distance are two more trawlers sweeping the minefield. (Illustration by Frédéric de Haenen; published in French weekly newspaper L´Illustration*, edition 3829 dated 22 July 1916; with thanks to Guillaume Roman, Librairie Blue Peninsula Bookshop)*

U-57 took 126 fishermen prisoner and put them aboard a Belgian steam ship which took them to South Shields on the River Tyne. They returned home by train with quite a story to tell! No doubt James and Flo heard all about it.

Meanwhile, the First Battle of the Somme had been grinding on in France since 1 July. In attempting to attack German trenches, the Grimsby Chums suffered over 500 casualties that day, leaving the remaining 100 to fight on. By the time the battle ended in November, the Allies would suffer around 620,000 casualties to the German's 440,000.

As one of the dwindling number of fisherman still trying to keep the country fed, James would have been acutely aware that the supply of fish was severely reduced. The Government had introduced military conscription at the beginning of the 1916. Agreement was eventually reached that fishermen should not join the Army as their skills were more suited to the Navy, so fishermen were generally allowed to continue fishing until or unless the Navy needed them.

By September, around 1,300 trawlers had been requisitioned and only about 500 were still fishing. In the October, the Admiralty ordered 250 new trawlers to be built to standard designs, known as Admiralty trawlers. Throughout 1916, 132 British working fishing vessels were sunk.



A six-pounder anti-aircraft gun firing shells of that weight (2.7 kg), mounted on the deck of HMT Windsor*. She was built in Selby in 1916, registered at Grimsby as GY998 and requisitioned in the December as a minesweeper with Admiralty number 2988. She was renamed as* Windsor II *in February 1918.* Windsor II *was lost during the Second World War while heading for fishing grounds. On 25 October 1940, she struck a mine and broke in two off Spurn Point at the mouth of the Humber. One man was lost but ten survived. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL01812).*

A large number of fishermen remained interned at the Ruhleben camp near Berlin. Many of them had been among the first trawler crews to be captured in August 1914. Some of the detainees would die at the camp, and many would stay there until the end of the war. Reports on living conditions were passed to the British Government by the American ambassador. He arranged for several fishermen over 55 and under 17 to be exchanged for German prisoners of war in late 1916.

The frozen north

Meanwhile, German minelayers had also been creating a menace for Allied ships that were supplying Russia. They were using the Arctic port of Murmansk on the Barents Sea, the Kola inlet and the port of Arkhangelsk on the White Sea coast.

Over the summer of 1915, a flotilla of British minesweeping trawlers arrived via the Shetlands and joined the British North Russia Squadron. Grimsby trawler *HMT Holyrood* (GY90) was one of them. She had been built in 1914 and requisitioned in the August. She would also serve in the Second World War. The Hull-based *HMT T R Ferens* (H1027) was damaged by a mine. By October 1915, the flotilla had cleared 150 mines.

Some ships were lost but the minesweepers helped to ensure that 700,000 tons of coal and 500,000 tons of other cargo reached Russia that year. Through 1916, 2.5 million tons of cargo got through.

The North Russia Squadron had few onshore facilities for support. In April 1917, the old cruiser *HMS Intrepid* arrived to serve as a depot ship. Charles Clifford had served on her in the late 1890s with the North America & West Indies Squadron. *Intrepid* was now thoroughly obsolete, but she had been converted as a minelayer in 1910 and had served in the Dover Strait during the first half of the war.

Turning the tide

In 1917, minelaying U-boats were delivering more mines than ever. There were just 20 of them at the beginning of the war but they now numbered 140, and they had destroyed nearly a third of merchant ships world-wide.

Germany reintroduced unrestricted submarine warfare in the February, gambling that they could defeat the Allies before the United States might decide to enter the war. As the Communist Revolution took hold in Russia, this greatly reduced the country's fighting effectiveness. So it was a great relief to the Western Allies when, following the sinking of more American merchant ships, the United States declared war on Germany.

Fewer vessels were being sunk by mines because British minesweeping efficiency was improving. They destroyed a record 515 mines in the first three months of 1917. The new Admiralty trawlers were entering service and another 250 would be ordered that year. On average, German submarines laid cargoes of mines every 30 hours throughout the year. Fortunately for James Clifford, the approach to the Humber was the one area not targeted as much. By year's end, more than double the number would be swept compared with the previous year, mainly due to the performance of the Trawler Reserve.

In Portsmouth, Charles and Amelia's fourth child, Ivy, was born in March 1917. In

France, the Battle of Arras started in April. By the time it concluded in May, casualties of nearly 160,000 had been suffered by the Allies and around 125,000 by the Germans.

Normal life continued as well as it could during the war, including bureaucracy. James's old apprentice master, Frederick Moss, was the Mayor of Grimsby for 1917, and would be so the following year as well. His brother, Thomas Campbell Moss, had been the Mayor in 1915. James was probably the James Clifford reported in the *Grimsby News* on 25 May 1917 as being prosecuted under the Dog Licences Act of 1867, which raised revenue for local authorities. He said, "he did not know he had to have a licence because he kept the dog on board a ship." James was fined 10s, worth about £28.50 today. If only he had paid the 7s 6d rate set by the Customs and Inland Revenue Act of 1878. Apart from being later decimalised as 37 ½ pence, this rate would not be changed for 110 years, at which point the dog licence was be abolished.

May 1917 was also the worst month of the entire war for loss of British fishing vessels on Admiralty service. On the 15th, 47 drifters were working on the anti-submarine nets across the Strait of Otranto between Italy and Albania. They were attacked by Austro-Hungarian cruisers which sunk 14 of the drifters. The cruisers were then engaged by British cruisers and Italian destroyers in the Battle of the Strait of Otranto. The Austro-Hungarians and their supporting destroyers and submarines escaped, but not before they had sunk two of the Italian destroyers.

A German U-boat of the Flanders Flotilla taking mines onboard at Zeebrugge in 1917. (Brusselle Arthur Collection, Imperial War Museum, IWM Q20345)

Vessels that were still fishing were ordered by the Admiralty to work in groups which would include armed trawlers. When possible, wireless equipment would be fitted to one trawler in each group. They would be told when they could fish and which fishing grounds they could visit. These included Iceland and the Faroe Islands. While this new arrangement was being established, 185 fishing vessels were lost to U-boat attack during the first half of the year.

Crews onboard 300 armed trawlers were soon formed into a new Fishery Reserve. These included *Andes* and *Algoma* which had been the first two trawlers used in Admiralty minesweeping trials in 1908. Deck guns

on Fishery Reserve trawlers were upgraded to 12-pounders as the year wore on. The Humber-based fishing groups in the North Sea were particularly successful at fending off attack. Only 35 fishing vessels were lost to U-boat attacks in the second half of the year.

In the August, British patrol trawlers were allocated six depth charges each. A mechanism was introduced for throwing them a distance of 40 ft (12 m), and heavier charges could also be used. However, around 100 vessels were lost to mines every month during 1917.

More bad news arrived from the Mediterranean. British anti-submarine trawlers had been unable to protect the world's largest cargo ship, the Italian steamer *SS Milazzo*, which was little over a year old. On her way to Malta on 29 August, she was torpedoed and sunk by U-14 of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. U-14's commander was Georg Ritter von Trapp, now a Lieutenant-Commander.

Aircraft carrier world firsts

In the June, Charles Clifford had left his family once again and travelled 325 miles (525 km) north to Armstrong Whitworth's shipyard on the River Tyne at High Walker, Newcastle. He was there with 796 men to form the first ship's company of the cruiser *HMS Furious*. Capital ships were growing ever larger. With a hull of 786 ft (240 m), *Furious* was the length of two and a half football pitches. With a speed of 31.5 knots (36 mph, 58 km/h), she was as fast as a destroyer.

Furious' first commanding officer was Captain Wilmot Nicholson. As we have seen, he had commanded *HMS Dreadnought* before the war, and survived the sinking of the cruiser *HMS Hogue* in September 1914. As commander of the cruiser *HMS Aurora*, Nicolson had participated in the Cuxhaven Raid at Christmas 1914, as had Charles aboard *HMS Beaver.* Nicholson had been with *Aurora* in the Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915. In the April, he had brought *Aurora* into the Harwich Force, with which Charles served on *Beaver* until the September.

From December 1916, Nicholson had commanded the Dreadnought battleship *HMS Collingwood* until March 1917. He now joined *Furious* while she was still under construction*. Furious* was one of three large cruisers ordered to serve Admiral Jacky Fisher's cancelled plan to invade Germany via the Baltic. The other two were *HMS Glorious* and *HMS Courageous.*

During construction, *Furious* had been converted to become the world's first operational aircraft carrier. The main turret forward of her bridge was removed and a 228 ft (70 m) flight deck was added in its place. The sailors were joined by 84 members of the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) who brough a squadron of aircraft onboard. *Furious*' retained one main turret, mounted aft of the bridge, incorporating a huge single gun firing 18-inch (457 mm) shells.

As they passed Jarrow on their way out to sea, Charles was in close proximity to Palmers shipyard and his cousin Susan. They were probably unaware of each other's lives. On 2 August, unless he was below deck at the time, Charles would have witnessed the world's first deck landing by an aircraft on a moving ship. The pilot of the Sopwith Pup was killed in a subsequent attempt.

In Belgium, the third Battle of Ypres had been under way since the end of July and

would end with an Allied victory at the village of Passchendaele in the November. Casualties were so high that they are disputed, ranging from 240,000 to 450,000 on the Allied side and from 220,000 to 400,000 on the German side. The First Battle of Cambrai in France began in late November. It would rage for 17 days, adding 76,000 Allied casualties and 55,000 German casualties.

Meanwhile further work started on *Furious*, removing her aft turret and adding a rear flight deck. In January 1918, while waiting for the conversion to be completed, Charles was awarded 'prize bounty' for his part in the Battle of Heligoland Bight nearly four years earlier. Captain Wilmot Nicholson added his authorising signature to the note on Charles' service papers. They returned to sea on 15 March.

Sadly, little Ivy died around this time, possibly approaching her first birthday. This meant that my grandfather Harold would be Charles and Amelia's only surviving child.

HMS Furious *as originally completed in June 1917 by Armstrong Whitworth at their High Walker shipyard, just upstream from Jarrow. Note the flight deck forward of her bridge. Charles Clifford was a member of her first ship's company. (Surgeon Parkes Collection, Imperial War Museum, SP89)*

In April 1918, the RNAS was merged with the Army's aviation branch, the Royal Flying Corp (RFC), to form the Royal Air Force. The new RAF was independent from and of equal standing with both the Army and the Navy. The aircraft and associated personal aboard *Furious* were therefore now part of the RAF, hosted by the Navy.

Final year of the Great War

Top

Decline in German strength

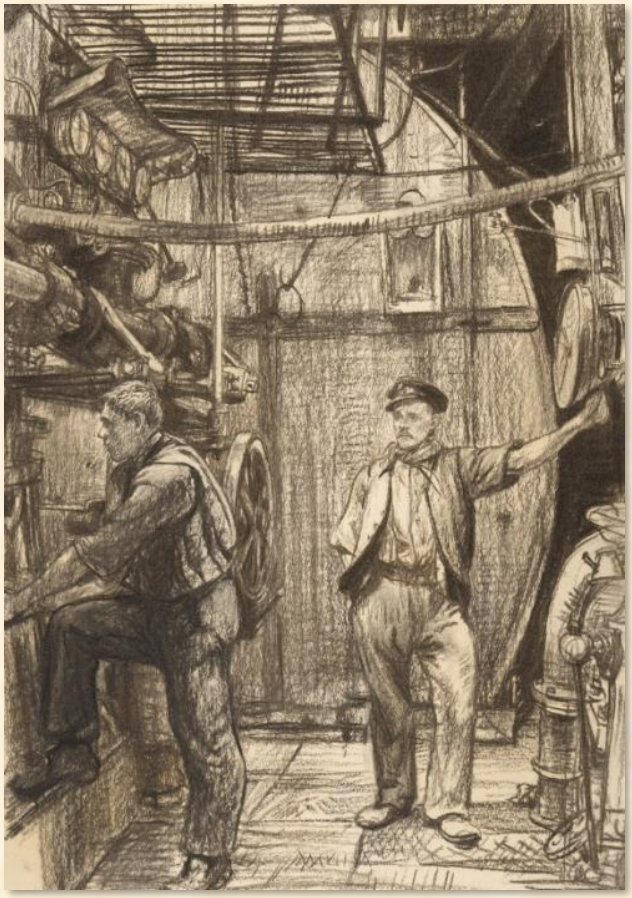
German minelaying had peaked by January 1918, partly because the British were making it more difficult for them and partly because the war had reduced German manufacturing capacity. The approaches to Dutch ports and some British ports such as Harwich were still being mined extensively, but losses to mines during 1918 would be half that of 1917. The Grimsby minesweepers would not discover any new minefields in their area in 1918.

Nonetheless, mines laid by U-boats, particularly those of the Flanders Flotilla, were still sinking large numbers of civilian vessels. Mainly due to attack rather than mines, February and March 1918 were bad months for loss of requisitioned fishing vessels. Patrol trawlers, many of which now had 12-pounder guns, started working in partnership with aircraft on anti-submarine operations.

Many drifters now had 6-pounder guns. Hydrophones were also now in widespread use. These vessels would account for a fifth of all U-boat sinkings during 1918.

In the wheelhouse of the minesweeper HMT Mackenzie *in 1918. She was built at Beverley in 1911, registered at Hull as H349, and requisitioned as a minesweeper from August 1914 with Admiralty number 336. (Drawing by Francis Dodd; Imperial War Museum, IWM ART 933)*

An environment which James Clifford would have been very familiar with. A trawler crew plays cards in their fo'c'sle living quarters, in this case onboard the minesweeper HMT Mackenzie *in 1918. (Drawing by Francis Dodd; Imperial War Museum, IWM ART 931)*



Engine room of the minesweeper HMT Mackenzie *in 1918. (Drawing by Francis Dodd; Imperial War Museum, IWM ART 897)*

Germany and the other Central Powers were relieved of pressure in the east when they signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia on 3 March, ending Russia's participation in the war. Most of the Royal Navy's North Russia Squadron returned home now that they had no Russian ally to support.

In France and Belgium, the Germans launched their Spring Offensive in late March, and a fresh series of battles was fought. Their locations included the Somme, Arras, Ypres and the Marne, depressingly familiar from battles fought earlier in the war. By late July, total casualties for the Offensive climbed to nearly 700,000 on the German side and over 860,000 on the Allied side. But this was the beginning of the end. Germany was no longer able to recover from such losses, whereas the Americans were reinforcing the Allies.

Rear Admiral Roger Keyes, formerly of the Harwich Force, devised a plan to deliberately sink obsolete cruisers in the entrances to the Belgian ports and prevent the U-boats of the Flanders Flotilla from emerging. The cruisers would be stripped of their equipment and filled with cement. One of the 'block ships' was *HMS Intrepid*. As previously noted, Charles Clifford had served on her in the late 1890s, and she had recently been supporting the North Russia Squadron and its minesweeping trawlers.

The Ostende and Zeebrugge Raids took place on 23 April. Also taking part was Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt, formerly of the Harwich Force. Unfortunately, the block ships were not well positioned when they were sunk. The Germans soon re-opened the ports and the danger from U-boats and the mines they laid persisted.

At the entrance to the Adriatic, beginning in April, British drifters worked on strengthening and deepening the Otranto Barrage with mined nets. In June, one of two Austro-Hungarian battleships was sunk by Italian torpedo boats when they tried to disrupt the work and threaten the patrol vessels. The Germans soon ceased operations in the Adriatic.

Final battles

On 19 July, if he was on deck, Charles Clifford would have witnessed seven Sopwith Camels taking off from *HMS Furious* to make the first ever airborne attack launched from the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. They bombed the airship sheds at Tønder, destroying two Zeppelins and a tethered balloon. The British lost several of the aircraft but only one aircrew member was killed.

On 8 August, the Allies launched what became known as the Hundred Days Offensive. This was the final series of battles and familiar places would feature yet again including Amiens, the Somme, Cambrai and Mons. The Offensive would cost the allies nearly 1.1 million casualties. The Germans suffered nearly 1.2 million casualties and they began to collapse.

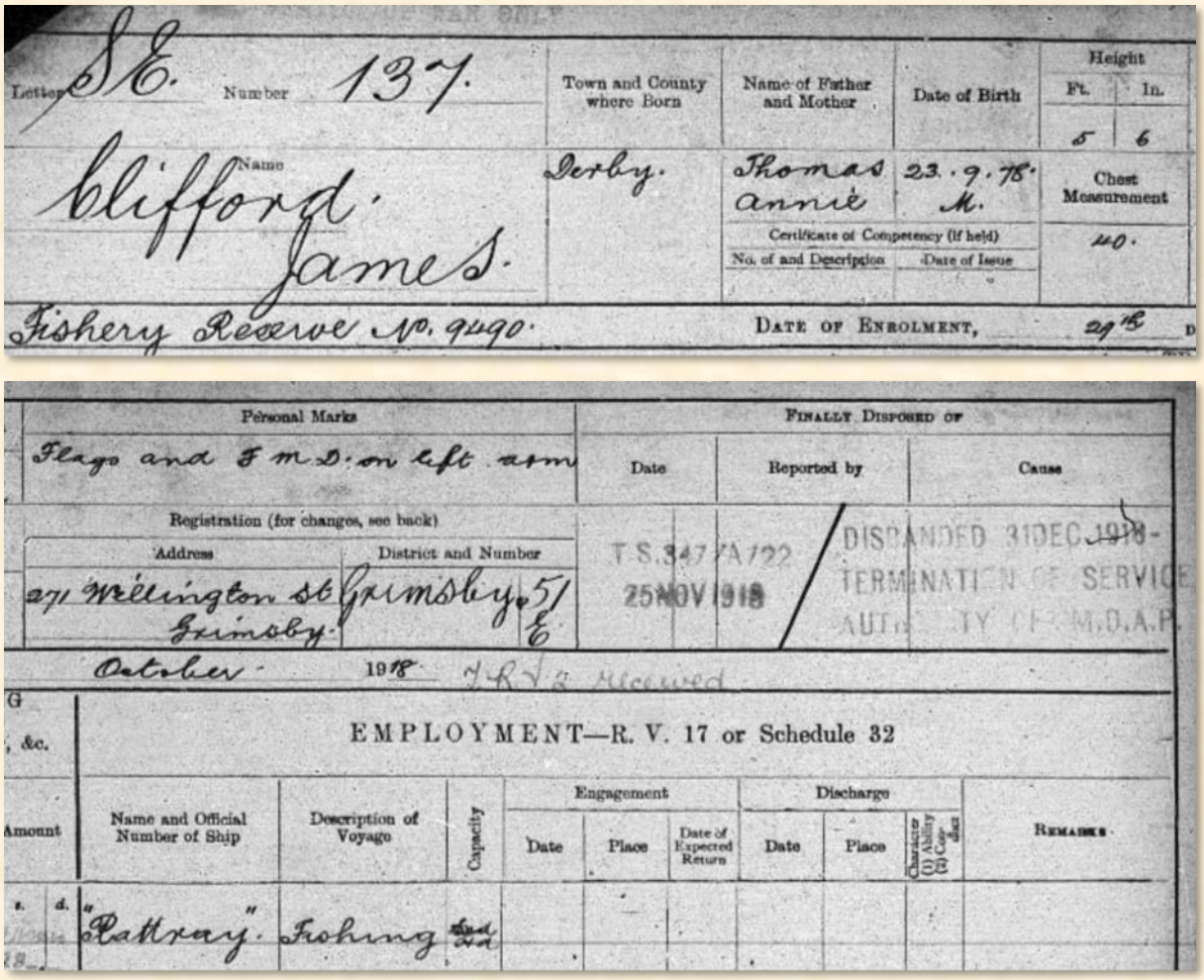
Towards the end of the Battle of Courtrai in Belgium, minesweepers from ports along the British East Coast cleared mines off the Belgian coast under heavy fire from shore batteries. They were assisting the advancing Allied forces which took Ostende on 17 October and Zeebrugge on the 19th. The threat to shipping from the Flanders Flotilla was over.

The German government began requesting an armistice. On the 21st, their U-boats were ordered to cease attacks on Allied merchant shipping. Some German commanders wanted to launch a final 'death or glory' attack on the British fleet. This was prevented by a mutiny among their sailors which started in Wilhelmshaven on 29 October and spread to Kiel.

James Clifford joins the Fishery Reserve

James had turned 40 years of age on 29 September. He finally got his chance to serve in a naval capacity when he joined the Fishery Reserve on the day that the German naval mutiny began.

James was given the service number SE137 and his tattoos, which included flags, were noted on his service papers. His height was recorded as 5 ft 6 in (1.68 m). He was a little shorter than his brother Charles, whose naval service papers recorded his height as 5 ft 8 ½ in (1.74 m). Their father Thomas, according to a note made in 1880 in Derbyshire police records, was 5 ft 8 in (1.73 m).



Letter SE. Number 137.

Name Clifford. James.

Town and County where Born: Derby.

Name of Father and Mother: Thomas / Annie

Date of Birth: 23.9.78. M.

Height: Ft. 5 In. 6

Chest Measurement: 40.

Certificate of Competency (If held) — No. and Description / Date of Issue

Fishery Reserve No. 9490.

Date of Enrolment, 29/10

Personal Marks: Flags and S.M.D. on left arm

Finally Disposed of — Date / Reported by / Cause

Registration (for changes, see back) — Address: 271 Wellington St Grimsby. District and Number: Grimsby 57/E

T.S. 347 7A/122 25 NOV 1918

DISBANDED 31 DEC 1918 - TERMINATION OF SERVICE AUTHORITY C.-in-C. M.D.A.P.

October 1918 H.R.V.2 Received

EMPLOYMENT—R. V. 17 or Schedule 32

Amount £ s. d.	Name and Official Number of Ship	Description of Voyage	Capacity	Engagement: Date	Engagement: Place	Engagement: Date of Expected Return	Discharge: Date	Discharge: Place	Character (1) Ability (2) Conduct	Remarks
	"Rattray"	Fishing	Deck Hd							

Extracts from the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) service record for James Clifford. On 29 October 1918, he joined the Fishery Reserve of armed trawlers which worked in groups and were armed to defend themselves. James, was assigned to HMT Rattray*, built in Aberdeen in 1900 and registered at Grimsby as GY720. She had originally been requisitioned in August 1914 with Admiralty number 357, returned to civilian use in 1915 and requisitioned once more in May 1917. Note the names of James's parents, Thomas and Annie Clifford, his birth in Derby on 23 September 1878, his height of 5 ft 6 in, and his address of 271 Wellington Street, Grimsby. James's naval service was short as the Fishery Reserve was disbanded on 31 December 1918. (The National Archives, BT 377-7-98066)*

James, Flo and their children were now living at 271 Wellington Street. Catherine Annie had just turned 16. Jim was nearly 13 and Joseph was seven, both attending Weelsby Street school. Flo was almost full term with her fifth and last pregnancy, and she soon gave birth to their son Leonard Charles. He and his brother Joseph Thomas presumably received their middle names from their grandfather and uncle.

James was assigned to the Fishery Reserve's armed trawler *HMT Rattray* (GY720). She had been built in 1900 in Aberdeen and, from 1909, was based at North Shields. *Rattray* was requisitioned as a mine sweeper in 1914, given Admiralty number 357 and relocated to Lowestoft. She was returned to her owner in 1915 and was then sold to a Grimsby-based owner. She was sold again in 1916 to Henry Rachkind and others of Cleethorpes, trading as the Rattray Steam Trawling Company. She was requisitioned once more for the Fishery Reserve in May 1917.

The minesweeping force based at Grimsby in late 1918 included eight of the latest purpose-built naval vessels of the 7th Fleet Sweeping Flotilla. These were supported by 22 trawlers, six drifters and four paddle steamers.

Armistice

Bulgaria signed an armistice with the Allies on 29 September, as did the Turkish Ottoman Empire the next day. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated on 9 November. The new German Republican government signed an armistice to suspend hostilities with the Allies on 11 November. The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed on 12 November due to ethnic disintegration.

In Malta, William Oliver from Hull was skipper of the Grimsby trawler *HMT Kymric* (GY421). He wrote an entry in his log that merely said, "11am. Received news re armistice. No orders, gave leave 2pm." In British waters, floating carbide lamps were positioned along the war channels so that vessels could proceed without wandering into the minefields.

Germany agreed to disarm. This included the surrender of large numbers of ships of their High Seas Fleet. Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt's Harwich Force would receive the German submarines, and the first U-boats arrived on 20 November. Seventy ships steamed out of German naval bases and proceeded across the North Sea. On the 21st, they were met by over 370 Allied ships, mainly of the British Grand Fleet but also including French and American vessels. It was the greatest concentration of naval power in history.

The Allied capital ships formed lines on the north and south sides of a line of 21 German capital ships. Many of them had met each other in the sea battles and lesser engagements of the previous four years. The cruiser *HMS Cardiff* headed the German ships.

In 'line astern' of *Cardiff* were *SMS Seydlitz*, *SMS Moltke*, *SMS Von der Tann* and *SMS Derfflinger*. Between them, these battlecruisers had terrorised the East Coast fishing communities of Hartlepool, Scarborough, Whitby, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Their victims had included *HMS Invincible* and *HMS Queen Mary* at the Battle of Jutland. Next were the German battleships. Behind them were four parallel lines of destroyers, flanked by four British destroyer flotillas on either side.

The Allied southern line was comprised of 33 ships. Sixth from the front was the

battlecruiser *HMS New Zealand*. The Super Dreadnought *HMS Resolution* was in 10th position and the Dreadnought *HMS Hercules* was 18th. As previously mentioned, both had been built at Jarrow by the Palmers shipyard workforce which included Augustine Ashman, husband of Charles and James's cousin Susan.

HMS Furious was in 23rd position in the southern line, from which Charles Clifford, his shipmates and the airmen of the ship's RAF squadron would have had a 'grandstand' view. Opposite *Furious* in the northern line of 39 ships were her sisters *HMS Courageous* and *HMS Glorious*. In 9th and 10th positions. Both would be converted into modern aircraft carriers in the 1920s. Also previously mentioned were the Super Dreadnought *HMS Barham* in 14th position and the battlecruisers *HMS Tiger* and *HMS Lion* in 31st and 33rd.

Between 25 and 27 November, the convoy proceeded via Rosyth to Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, where most of the German ships were anchored in internment.

High achievement at high cost

Around 1,500 British trawlers and a similar number of drifters were requisitioned at different times during the war. 900 of them were from the Humber. Around 9,000 Humber fishermen were among the 39,000 who crewed the requisitioned vessels.

Nearly 250,000 mines had been laid in various seas, of which 190,000 were in the North Sea. Most of them were actually British, supplemented by the Americans. The Germans had placed nearly 26,000 mines around the British coast and nearly 18,000 elsewhere. Every year during the war, British minesweepers covered 2,000 square miles (5,200 km^2) of sea, and destroyed more than 30,000 mines.

Of Britain's 100,000 fishermen who were active when the war began, only 14,000 were still fishing at the end of 1918. The Trawler Reserve still commanded over 700 fishing vessels. The industry had nonetheless managed to bring in an average of 240,000 tons of fish during each year of the War. This was nearly a third of pre-war levels, and fish was never rationed in Britain.

The British naval blockade had been a grim success. German fish catches were reduced to than less than a tenth of pre-war levels. This had contributed to the deaths of over half a million German civilians who died from starvation and disease. Among naval personnel of all kinds, British losses totalled nearly 45,000 compared with nearly 35,000 on the German side.

Nearly 700 Humber-based fishing vessels had been lost. Over 300 of them were from Grimsby. Around 3,800 Humber fishermen had lost their lives, well over 1,000 of them being Grimsby men. In most cases, as the moving saying goes, 'they have no grave but the sea'. Of all British trawlers and drifters lost during the war, nearly 700 were fishing when they were sunk. As we have seen, many of their crews were spared, but over 400 were killed while trying to feed the nation. Fortunately, James Clifford was not one of them.

On land, over 800 of the Grimsby Pals had been killed in action. Of around 14,000 Grimsby men who had gone to war, most returned. But homes up and down streets across Grimsby and Cleethorpes had lost fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. James and Flo would have witnessed the sorrow of many bereaved families among their neighbours.

Conclusion of hostilities

Fishermen were among thousands of prisoners of war who started arriving at Hull, Grimsby and other ports in November and December. In Malta on 12 December, skipper William Oliver transferred from *HMT Kymric* (GY421) to *HMT Moravia* (GY1018). He left Malta among a flotilla of trawlers led by *HMT Lemberg* (GY372). They were given "a wonderful send off" from Valetta harbour. They proceeded via Gibraltar, Lisbon and Portland, where they unloaded their hydrophones and other naval equipment. *Moravia* finally berthed at Grimsby's Fish Dock on 9 January 1919.

While they were en route, James Clifford's RNR service concluded after just a few weeks with the disbanding of the Fishery Reserve on 31 December. On 3 February, James was paid 27s 10d for his service, equivalent to £68 today. Two days later, his brother Charles was demobilised from the Navy in Portsmouth. On 19 March, five days before his 43rd birthday, Charles joined the Royal Fleet Reserve (RFR).

James's Clifford's brother Charles, my great grandfather, seen here as a Chief Petty Officer around the time that he was demobilised from the Royal Navy in February 1919. Note the crossed torpedoes on his lapels. (Family collection)

Requisitioned vessels started being returned to their owners. Ports were crowded with fishing vessels that needed to be reconditioned and refitted for their original purpose. Recently built Admiralty trawlers which had never been used for fishing were sold to fishing enterprises and fitted with the necessary equipment. *HMT Rattray,* the trawler which James had served on in the Fishery Reserve, was returned to Henry Rachkind in Cleethorpes. She would be sold again three years later and return to Aberdeen.

To end the state of war between the Allies and Germany, the Treaty of Versailles was prepared for signing in June 1919. The German naval crews at Scapa Flow expected that the terms would be unacceptable. In an act of defiance, they scuttled their ships on 21 June and were successful in sinking 52 of them. Some of the remaining 22 were beached by British sailors in a desperate attempt to render them salvageable. The German crews were rescued but, during some very tense hours, nine were shot dead.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June. It included the Covenant of the League of Nations, intended to prevent war by establishing collective security, encouraging disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation.

Mementos of the war were delivered to British towns for the public to view. James and Flo would have been able to take the children to Grimsby town hall to see an exhibition including captured German equipment. A British tank was placed in People's Park that month, and was named Edna. Little Leonard had just passed his first birthday. The children would have seen it for the next 11 years until it was eventually cut up for scrap.

Also in December 1919, the new features at the mouth of the Humber, Bull Sand Fort and Haile Sand Fort, were completed. Rising 59 feet (18 m) above the water, they had four stories and accommodated 200 soldiers each. They were protected by 12-inch (305 mm) armour plating and were armed with four 6-inch guns. They became redundant with no sea-borne enemy to repel, but they are still there.

Haile Sand fort on the southern side of the mouth of the Humber Estuary, looking north to Bull Sand fort beyond. They were built between May 1915 and December 1919 and are seen here in 2020. (With thanks to Jon Holland)

James and Flo would have had an opportunity to contribute to fund-raising for a Grimsby war memorial. The public subscription collected £600, equivalent to £25,000 today. Made of marble, the memorial listed the names of 1,043 "HMT minesweepers and fishermen who lost their lives in the Great War". This was originally installed at the Bethel Mission chapel in Tiverton Street, Cleethorpes. One of the inscriptions reads: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13). Another says, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me" (Jeremiah 49.11). The memorial was later moved and can be seen at the Fisherman and Seaman Memorial Chapel within the Central Hall on Duncombe Street, Grimsby.

Lingering danger

James and Charles knew that thousands more mines still needed to be swept to make the sea safe again. The British Admiralty established an international Mine Clearing Committee which was joined by many other countries. A large proportion of the work was taken on by the British, for which a Mine Clearance Service was created. Their areas of operation ranged from the coast of the Netherlands to the Black Sea.

Minesweeping crews continued to die when their vessels struck the mines they were searching for. Fishermen could earn far more by going back to fishing. A special rate of pay was offered to seafarers who, after all they had endured, were still willing to volunteer to complete this daunting task. They also received a badge to wear with the King's approval.

The Reuters archive includes film of British trawlers minesweeping in 1919 with crews destroying mines by rifle fire. Most minefields were declared cleared by the end of the year, although some individual mines were inevitably missed. The Trawler Section of the Royal Naval Reserve would be disbanded two years later, although many fishermen continued to be naval reservists.

Along with members of their families, many fishermen who had survived the war died in the great influenza epidemic which had begun in 1918. A quarter of a million people in Britain and tens of millions world-wide died by the time the outbreak subsided in April 1920.

Rebuilding normal life

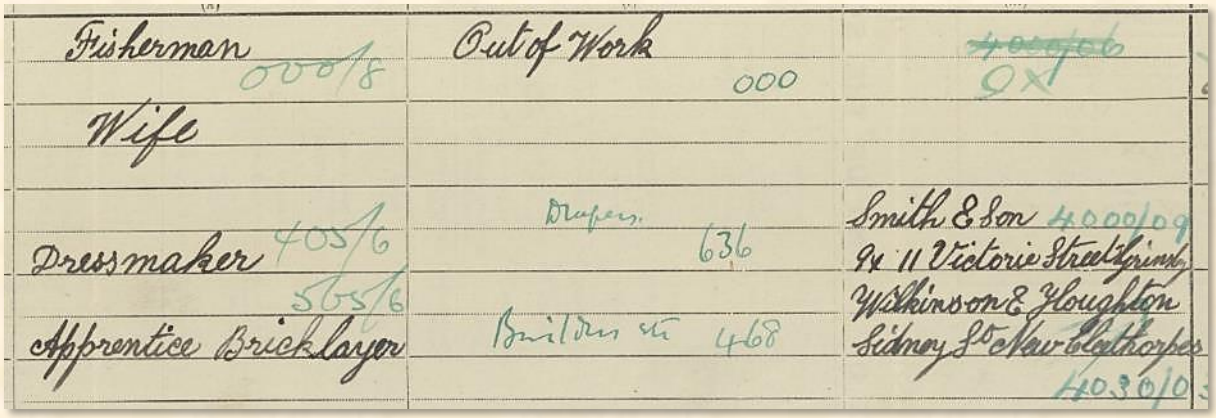
Top

Post-war Grimsby

Trawler fishing bounced back strongly. Catches in 1919 were double those of the war years. In 1920, they were 14% above the previous high point of 1913, but this would not last. Prices were falling, as was investment in a trawler fleet that was ageing, and the number of fishermen also started to decline. This was exacerbated by labour disputes at ports and strikes in the railway and coal industries. James's employment prospects were worsening and, in the national census conducted on 19 June 1921, he stated that he was out of work.

At least James was safe on dry land, whereas anxiety and sorrow remained as undiscovered mines continued to claim fishing and other vessels and their crews. Mines were getting caught in fishing nets, and those that drifted ashore also presented a great risk to life. When the fate of those who failed to return to port could not be confirmed, mines were suspected as the cause.

James and Flo remained at 271 Wellington Street. Catherine Annie would soon be 19. She was now a dressmaker at Smith & Son, a draper at 9/11 Victoria Street on the west side of Grimsby, a mile (1.6 km) from the family home. Jim was 15 and was an apprentice bricklayer with Wilkinson & Houghton at Sidney Street in New Cleethorpes. Joseph was a 10-year-old schoolboy, still attending Weelsby Street school.



Fisherman	Out of Work	
Wife		
Dressmaker	Draper.	Smith & Son
Apprentice Bricklayer	Brick Layer	Wilkinson & Houghton, Sidney St New Cleethorpes

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature James Clifford

(Head of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.)

Extracts from the 1921 census return for 271 Wellington Street, Grimsby, completed by James Clifford. He was out of work at the time, while his daughter, Catherine Annie, was a dressmaker and his son Jim was an apprentice bricklayer. (FindMyPast.co.uk)

Victoria Street, Grimsby, from the Riverhead end. Note the electric trams introduced in 1901. In 1921, James and Flo's daughter Catherine Annie, now in her late teens, was working as a dressmaker at Smith & Son, a draper on Victoria Street. She died seven years later aged 25. (Original postcard dated 25 November 1921; with thanks to Kath and David Tappin, Tappin-Family.org.uk)

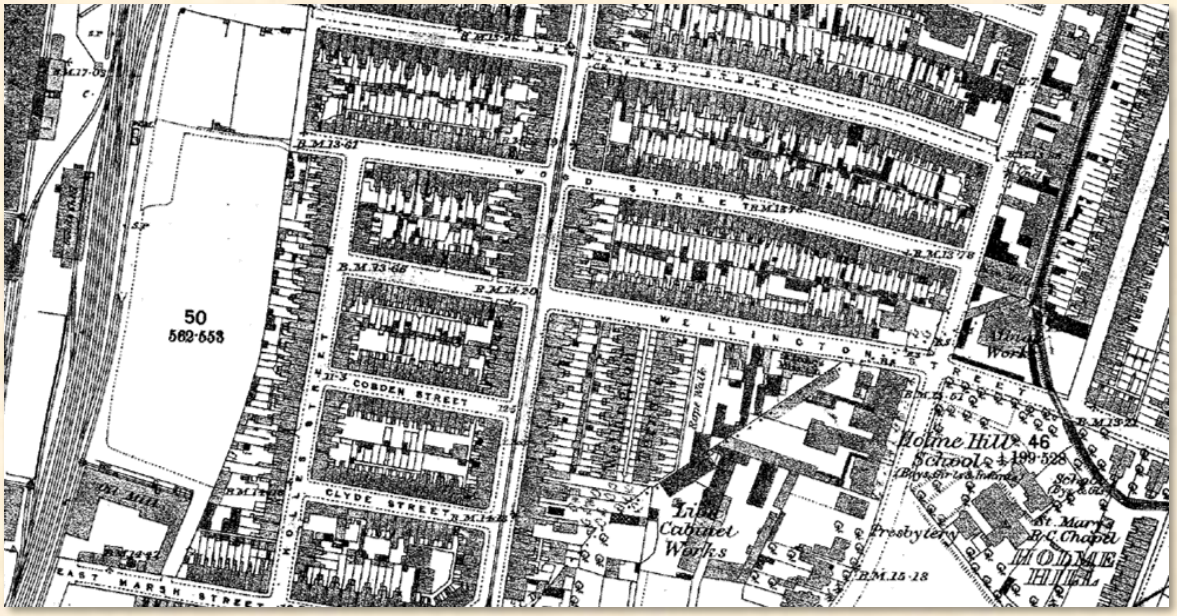
Jim had been the subject on an article in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* on 20 January 1920 entitled "Grimsby Boy's good record". He received a silver medal from Grimsby Town Hall's Education Committee "for diligence in school work and attendance" at Weelsby Street school over a period of seven years and three months. He had been at the school since he was three, and had only been absent on one occasion when James took him to visit friends.

> "The Chairman…congratulated the boy, his parents and his teachers, while the headmaster…stated that he was a good worker, and has held a good position in the upper class of the school. For the past two years he had done excellent work on the school allotments, he was a good swimmer, and he played in the football team."

The headline in local news that James and Flo would have seen in late August 1921 was also national news after the world's largest airship at the time crashed into the Humber. This was the British *R.38*, which was surplus to requirements after the Treaty of Versailles and had been sold to the US Navy. During pre-delivery testing on the 24th, she suffered a structural failure over Hull. Of the 49 crew onboard, a third of which were American, 44 were killed.

The Transport and General Workers Union was founded in 1922. James would join their Grimsby branch. James and Charles's second stepmother, Matilda Clifford, died in Derby that year.

Governments in post-war Europe provided investments, subsidies and protections to build up their industries, including fishing. The Soviet Union, formed in 1922, broke off trading relationships with western Europe. These markets had made the British herring trade the most successful in the world. The new political conditions, compounded by the withdrawal of British government support by 1924, sent British herring profits into terminal decline over the next several years.



Wellington Street, Grimsby, running through centre-right. James and Flo Clifford were living on the street by 1918 and remained there for rest of their lives. (Ordnance Survey, 1889; with thanks to North East Lincolnshire Archives)

However, Hull and Grimsby bucked the national trend and continued to expand with investment. Larger modern trawlers were introduced and a new Fish Dock was built at Grimsby. Distant fishing grounds were developed including new ones in the Arctic. The popularity of fish and chips was still growing and this provided a strong home market. Bringing those tasty suppers inland was the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). This was an amalgamation in 1923 of several companies in eastern England, including the Great Central Railway' (GCR) line from Grimsby.

When Joseph reached 14, he emulated his brother Jim in being awarded a medal by the town's Education Committee, reported in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* on 28 October 1925. His award was "for diligence in school work, and for having made every attendance in a period of seven years and eight months" at Weelsby Street school. The headmaster told the Committee that Joseph had measles one year but this was during the summer holiday, so his record was unaffected. He added that Joseph "was a good scholar, and a good swimmer." The Committee chairman said that he hoped Joseph "would retain his perseverance and good conduct throughout his career", and that "His record reflected great credit on all concerned."

Joseph followed his father to sea. Jim would later talk about James having been given his own command as the skipper of a trawler. From November 1927, as they passed in and out of the Humber, they would have become familiar with a new light vessel anchored near Spurn Point.

Memorial at Scartho Road Cemetery, Grimsby, to three of James and Flo Clifford's children – Mark, Catherine Annie and Leonard. The cost of this relatively elaborate monument suggests that James had earned well from fishing. (With thanks to Gravestone Photographic Resource, 374650)

Memories of the Great War were still raw. The Imperial War Graves Commission appointed architect Sir Edwin Lutyens to design a national memorial in London for around 12,000 seafarers of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who had been lost

at sea during the conflict. This was built on Tower Hill and was unveiled by Queen Mary on 12 December 1928. Cast bronze panels carry the names of those lost.

Life in peacetime was hard enough. Sorrow had returned to the Grimsby Cliffords on 24 May 1928 when Catherine Annie died at the age of 25. Her epitaph of “Rest after weariness, peace after pain” suggests a very difficult and sad time towards the end of her life. Her brother Leonard died on 1 October 1929 aged only 10. They were both buried at Scartho Road Cemetery in the same plot that had received their brother Mark in 1911.

The Great Depression that had begun in 1929 necessitated a restructuring of the fishing industry and unemployment rose sharply.

Post-war Portsmouth

To supplement his Navy pension, Charles had an off-licence beer shop at 36 Harley Street, Portsmouth, owned and supplied by Courage & Co Ltd. He described himself as a “Shopkeeper General Dealer”, and was assisted by Amelia. Her family had a similar business in the town. As a reservist in the RFR, Charles reported to the *HMS Vernon* torpedo and mining establishment once a year.

Vernon’s old hulks were sold for scrap and, in 1923, the school moved into new buildings on the site of the old Gunwharf. The hulk of the old *HMS Warrior* escaped the cutting torch. Decades after being repurposed as an oil refuelling jetty at Pembroke Dock in south-west Wales, she would be restored to her original glory in Hartlepool, and returned to Portsmouth where she can be seen today.

In 1923 or 1924, Charles became the landlord or ‘licenced victualler’ of the King Alfred beer house at 124 Church Road, at the junction with King Albert Street. On the other side of the junction was a competitor, the Jameson Arms, which is still trading. The King Alfred was owned by Brickwood & Co Ltd, which supplied Charles from The Portsmouth Brewery on Admiralty Road. Being a licensee meant that the beer he sold could be consumed on the premises. No doubt former comrades visited for some liquid refreshment. Unlike public houses, Charles did not have a licence to sell spirits.

As a schoolboy, my grandfather Harold Clifford became a naval cadet at *HMS Vernon*, an opportunity no doubt arranged by his father. Charles’s retired from the RFR on his 50th birthday, 24 March 1926.

James’s nephew Harold Clifford, my grandfather. He is seen here aged 12 in an official photograph of the Cadet Corps at the HMS Vernon *Torpedo & Mining establishment in 1926. (Family collection)*

In Portsmouth, Harold decided not to continue as a naval cadet and joined the Royal Air Force in January 1930 aged 18. He may have been enthused by Charles’s stories of seeing aircraft flying off and

onto the deck of *HMS Furious*. Harold trained as an accounts clerk and became an Aircraftsman 1st Class (AC1) in January 1932. His service papers noted his height as 5 ft 6 in (1.68 m), the same as his uncle James.

Harold may have been further enthused by the success of the RAF High Speed Flight and its pilots. In September 1931, they had achieved international success with the Supermarine S.6B over the water of the Solent to the west of Portsmouth. They won the Schneider Trophy competition for sea planes and flying boats, and set a new world air speed record of 407.5 mph (655.8 km/h).

Harold volunteered to become a pilot, although it is not clear that he commenced training. What is clear is that his interest in aviation was still naval, and he wanted to be posted to a Fleet Air Arm (FAA) station near Portsmouth. The FAA was the naval branch of the RAF at the time.

His preferred locations were Gosport, Lee-on-Solent and Tangmere, all in Hampshire. His sweetheart, 16-year-old Olive Allen, lived in Gosport. In February 1932, Harold was granted his second choice and he joined the School of Naval Cooperation at RAF Lee-on-Solent, five miles (8 km) west of Gosport. This was one of the FAA's primary onshore administrative and training establishments.

Charles and Amelia's tragic deaths

On New Year's Day 1932, the *Daily Mirror* offered a free accident insurance scheme to its registered subscribers. This was announced as the "Daily Mirror's gift to you" and described as "the greatest insurance offer ever made by a newspaper". The newspaper criticised levels of taxation in the economic depression and said that, "In this year of heavy financial burdens for all classes, the extension and increase of benefits will be especially welcome…the individual is forced to economise".

Cover was up to £20,000, worth £1.16m today, underwritten by The Eagle Star & British Dominions Insurance Co Ltd. This must have caught Charles's eye as a regular reader. He filled in the registration form and followed the instruction to either "Hand this to newsagent" or send it by post. Little did he realise how timely his action was.

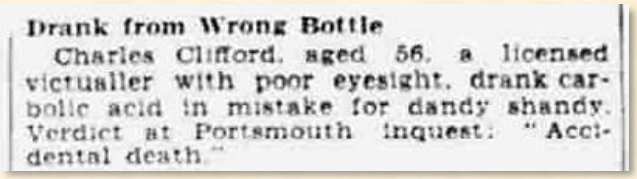
Charles died aged 56 at Portsmouth's Royal Hospital on 2 December 1932. The coroner's verdict at an inquest held in the town on 7 December was "misadventure". The case was of sufficient interest for brief details to be published in various national and regional newspapers, reporting the case as an "accidental death". The day after the inquest, the *Daily Herald* took details from the coroner's report and, in a piece entitled "Drank from wrong bottle", stated that Charles, having "poor eyesight, drank carbolic acid in mistake for dandy shandy."

Charles had drunk from a bottle of the widely available, sweet-smelling disinfectant on 30 November. He had confused it for a non-alcoholic drink made from sarsaparilla, nettle and dandelion, which he probably sold in the King Alfred. Children were known to have made the same tragic mistake. According to the *Nottingham Journal* on 8 December, Charles also "had no sense of smell or taste". The *West Sussex Gazette* provided the same details on 15 December. This was a sad and cruel end for a man who had given his country nearly 35 years of naval service.

Death claims listed in the *Mirror*'s edition for 27 December included a payment of

£100 for Charles to his wife Ameila, my great grandmother. This was made under their scheme's fatal accident provisions and was worth around £5,800 today. In previous decades, there had been several cases of suicide by carbolic acid poisoning, but the coroner, and therefore the insurer, had obviously been satisfied that this did not apply to Charles.

Through probate in London on 11 January 1933, Amelia received Charles's effects of £370, worth around £21,500 today. It was noted in the *Portsmouth Evening News* on 8 February that licence for the King Alfred had been transferred to Amelia. Harold was discharged from the RAF on 10 February on compassionate grounds, presumably so that he could help his mother.



Drank from Wrong Bottle

Charles Clifford, aged 56, a licensed victualler with poor eyesight, drank carbolic acid in mistake for dandy shandy. Verdict at Portsmouth inquest: "Accidental death."

Report in the Daily Herald *for 8 December 1932 on the death of James's brother Charles Clifford, my great grandfather. (British Library Newspaper Archive)*

A year later, the *Portsmouth Evening News* of 7 February 1934 listed the King Alfred among 'redundant' sites. The newspaper published a larger article on 21 February covering a meeting earlier that day of the General Annual Licensing Meeting at Portsmouth Guildhall, "the main business being to consider objections to [licence] renewals on grounds of redundancy." One of the licensees said that "trade had dropped because there was no money about." An advocate for Amelia stated that the King Alfred "was her only means of livelihood" as a widow. "She took over on the death of her husband…He had previously held the licence for ten years…of these two houses belonging to [Brickwood & Co Ltd]…they would prefer to retain this one if one of the two had to close down." Amelia's appeal was successful.

Amelia died at home on 3 March 1935, also aged 56. It was Harold's understanding that she took her own life by placing her head in her oven after turning on the gas supply. She was found by one of her sisters. The cause of death was given as Bronchopneumonia. This may have been a decision by the certifying doctor to provide only a vague 'respiratory' description, avoiding the futility of a coroner's inquest. Amelia was also suffering from Chronic Nephritis, now known as Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

The *Portsmouth Evening News* noted on 8 May that Harold had inherited the licence for the King Alfred. However, perhaps due to a lack of desire on his part to continue the business himself, the report also noted that the licence had been immediately transferred to a new licensee.

Grimsby's population peaks

But James and Flo had something to celebrate when Jim married Annie May Albeck in 1930. He was 24 and she was 41, born in Grimsby in 1889. Annie May's father John Albeck was the caretaker of a school in Grimsby. Jim and Annie May lived at 47 Suggitt's Lane, Cleethorpes, a recently built street about a mile from James and Flo on Wellington Street in Grimsby. Jim had continued in the building trade and became a Master Builder.

Jim was also a corporal and local collection committee member of the St John's

Ambulance Brigade. Jim was a witness in a fraud case held at the Lindsey Quarter Sessions in Lincoln. A Cleethorpes ice house worker was acquitted of keeping money that he claimed to be collecting for the Brigade. The case was reported on in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* for 25 August and 7 October 1933.

Jim's brother Joseph married Margaret Brownley from the Republic of Ireland in early 1934. The population of Grimsby had now risen to well over 90,000, partly through continued migration. Margaret had been born in Tipperary in 1910 to Arthur and Mary Brownley. By 1916, the family had moved to Grimsby from Ireland with relatives of the Moulson family. Two of Margaret's sisters were born in Grimsby, swelling the population a little bit more.

The Brownleys and Moulsons lived together at no.281 on Convamore Road, a few hundred yards south from its junction with Wellington Street. Arthur Brownley worked as a collier at the docks, but he died in 1920 aged 36. Mary took in a lodger named Leonard Wiseman, a construction 'navvy' at the new Fish Dock.

At some point, Leonard's own family replaced the Brownleys and Moulsons at no.281. It seems that Margaret Brownley was still living there with the Wisemans when she married Joseph Clifford, and that he moved in with them too.

Almost saved

The Grimsby trawler *Wigmore* (GY469) was built in Beverley in 1928. She was originally known as *Embassy* and was renamed in 1933. James may have given up his own trawler around this time. In early 1936, he was employed by Clan Steam Fishing Company as the *Wigmore*'s quayside watchman. Many skippers took jobs as watchmen once they were no longer fit enough to go to sea. This enabled them to continue using at least some of their skills and experience in the only life they had ever known.

James would have kept the fo'c'sle stove lit for when the crew returned, taken deliveries onboard such as food and equipment, and tended the mooring lines as the tide rose and fell. He would also have kept an eye out for fire or flooding taking hold in the vessel, and prevented intruders and thieves getting aboard.

At Grimsby Fish Dock on 22 February 1936, 19-year-old Albert Jones whistled to James while trying to pull the *Wigmore* closer to the quay. A railway policeman, Constable Watson of the LNER, was passing and told Albert to wait as it was not safe. James and another man pulled the boat in using the headrope. They helped Albert aboard with a bundle of clothes belonging to Tommy Hammond, which James told him to stow. Albert then tried to get off the boat and slipped.

James called to him to hang on but he said he could not. Giving evidence at the coroner's inquest two days later, James said, "I reached through the rails and touched his hand, but he let go before I could get a grip of him." The incident was reported in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* on the 25th. James "went for a line, and threw it to a man on the quayside, telling him that there was a man in the water." The man was 17-year-old Joseph Brown who was cycling past at the time. James then went for a boat hook while Joseph "made a bowline knot…and dropped it over the head of the man…who was still floating, with his face submerged."

Cyril Keightly, watchman on the *Orvicto* (GY897), heard James shouting. He left his

vessel, ran over and climbed down the quayside beams. Cyril put the rope around Albert's body and, together with Joseph, dragged him out of the freezing winter water. PC Watson tried to revive Albert by artificial respiration until he was relieved by an ambulance crew. Their efforts of an hour were in vain.

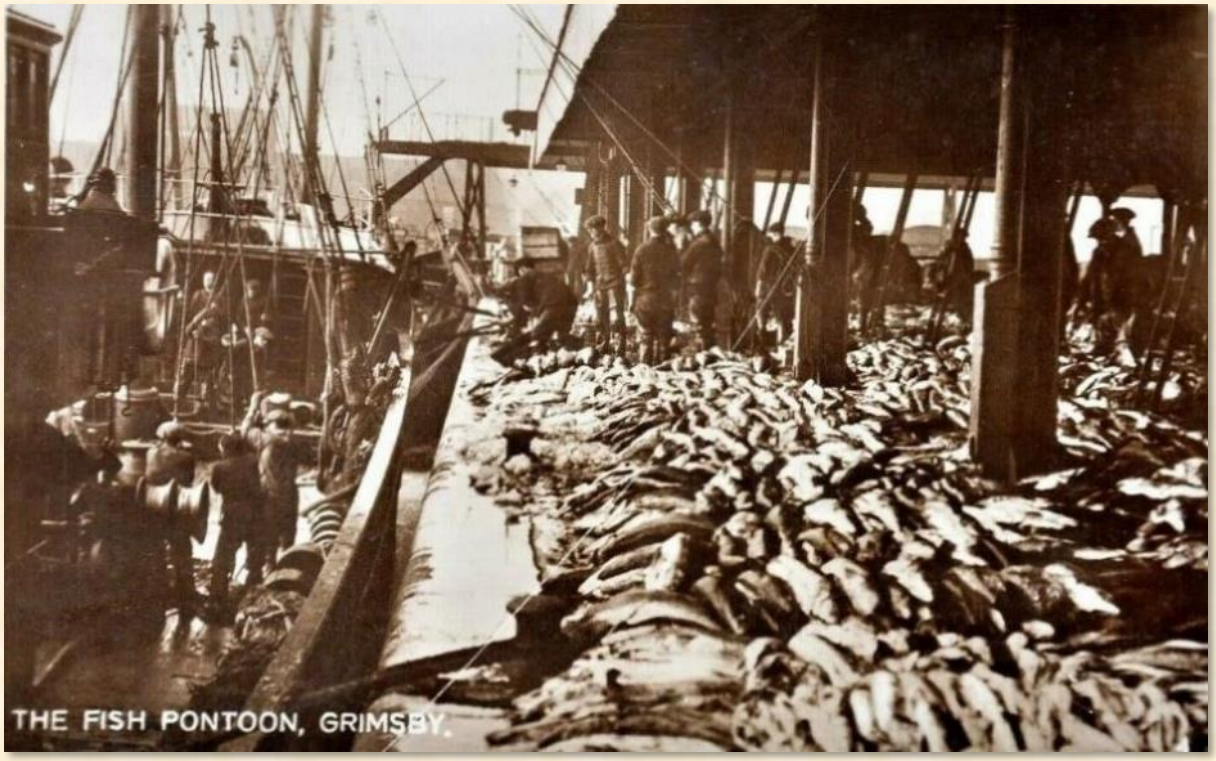
The coroner praised everyone involved for their prompt action. Albert had not been in the water long but the post-mortem concluded that shock had been a fatal factor in his drowning. His father Frederick Jones had the sad task of identifying him.

Painting by Steve Farrow of the Wigmore*, built in Beverley in 1928. James Clifford was her quayside watchman in 1936.* Wigmore *was sunk by submarine U-18 in November 1939 with the loss of all 15 of her crew. (With great thanks to Steve Farrow; DeepSeaTrawlers.co.uk)*

At the other end of the scale, local news in August 1935 celebrated Cleethorpes dentist Haydn Taylor who swam across the English Channel on the 22nd. He set off from Cap Gris-Nez near Calais and arrived just west of Dover after 14 hours and 48 minutes, the eighth fastest crossing at the time. He had previously swum across the Humber estuary in 1932.

By 1937, James Clifford was working as a 'fish lumper', unloading the incoming boats. He had an accident of his own on 3 December 1937. He was taken to hospital after being hit on the head by a falling trawl bobbin. The incident was reported in the *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* the next day. He turned 60 in September 1938. Joseph and Margaret Clifford's fellow tenant on Convamore Road, Leonard Wiseman, also became a fish lumper around this time.

In Birmingham, James's nephew Thomas, son of Annie and Lawrence Graham, became a senior testing clerk in the Water Department of Birmingham Corporation. The Department managed water brought from mid-Wales to the Frankley and Bartley Reservoirs via the Elan aqueduct. Thomas' brother William was a warehouse charge hand and despatch clerk for a Birmingham company making scientific instruments. Both Thomas and William were married but it seems that neither of them ever had children. Lawrence had still been working at the Kalamazoo printing works in 1921, but he was now a machine manager at an amusements arcade.



Towards the end of his working life, James Clifford was a 'Fish Lumper' unloading the incoming boats. He probably knew some of the men seen here. (Original postcard mailed from Grimsby on 18 August 1939; author's collection)

International tensions

Harold married Olive, my grandmother, in Portsmouth on 7 January 1936. This was the 'year of three kings'. George V died on the 20th and was succeeded by Edward VIII. Harold was a vacuum cleaner salesman at the time. He and Olive moved to Littlehampton, West Sussex. Their first child, my aunt Sylvia, was born there in the July. The new King abdicated on 11 December to be able to marry American divorcée Wallis Simpson. He was succeeded by George VI.

Fifteen larger, German-built trawlers with better crew accommodation aroused mixed feelings when they joined the Grimsby fishing fleet that year. Hitler's Germany was becoming increasingly threatening and it seemed that the League of Nations was not going to be able to prevent a new major conflict. James, Flo and their neighbours would have been anxious that they might have to endure another war. Jim, Joseph, Harold and their Graham cousins were old enough to remember the last one.

The Emergency Powers (Defence Act) of August 1938 gave the Government the ability to organise defence and maintain public order. Military reservists could be called up and Air Raid Precautions (ARP) volunteers could be mobilised. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's declaration of "Peace for our time" under the Munich Agreement with Hitler of 30 September might not hold.

It was announced in the December that, in the event of a new war, a census would create a National Register. This would enable the introduction of identity cards, ration books, mass evacuations, military conscription and exemptions for Reserved Occupations.

The famous 'Anderson' air raid shelter accommodated six people. It was named after Sir John Anderson who was tasked with preparing air-raid precautions in the late 1930s. 1.5 million shelter kits were distributed to the population in the seven months before September 1939. Another 2.1 million would follow.

James Clifford's cousin Arthur Clifford with the 'Anderson' air raid shelter he had just completed at 8 Roe Street, Derby, in 1939. (With thanks to Arthur's granddaughter, Pat Carroll)

The kits contained 14 panels and a drainage sump to collect rainwater under the floor. James, Jim and Joseph may have installed them in their back gardens. James's cousin Arthur certainly did at his home in Derby. They needed to dig a pit 4 ft (1.2m) deep, 4 ft 6 in (1.4 m) wide, and 6 ft 6 in (2.0 m) long. The shelter was 6 ft high, and the top was to be covered with 2 ft of the excavated soil. Internal comfort was a matter of personal choice!

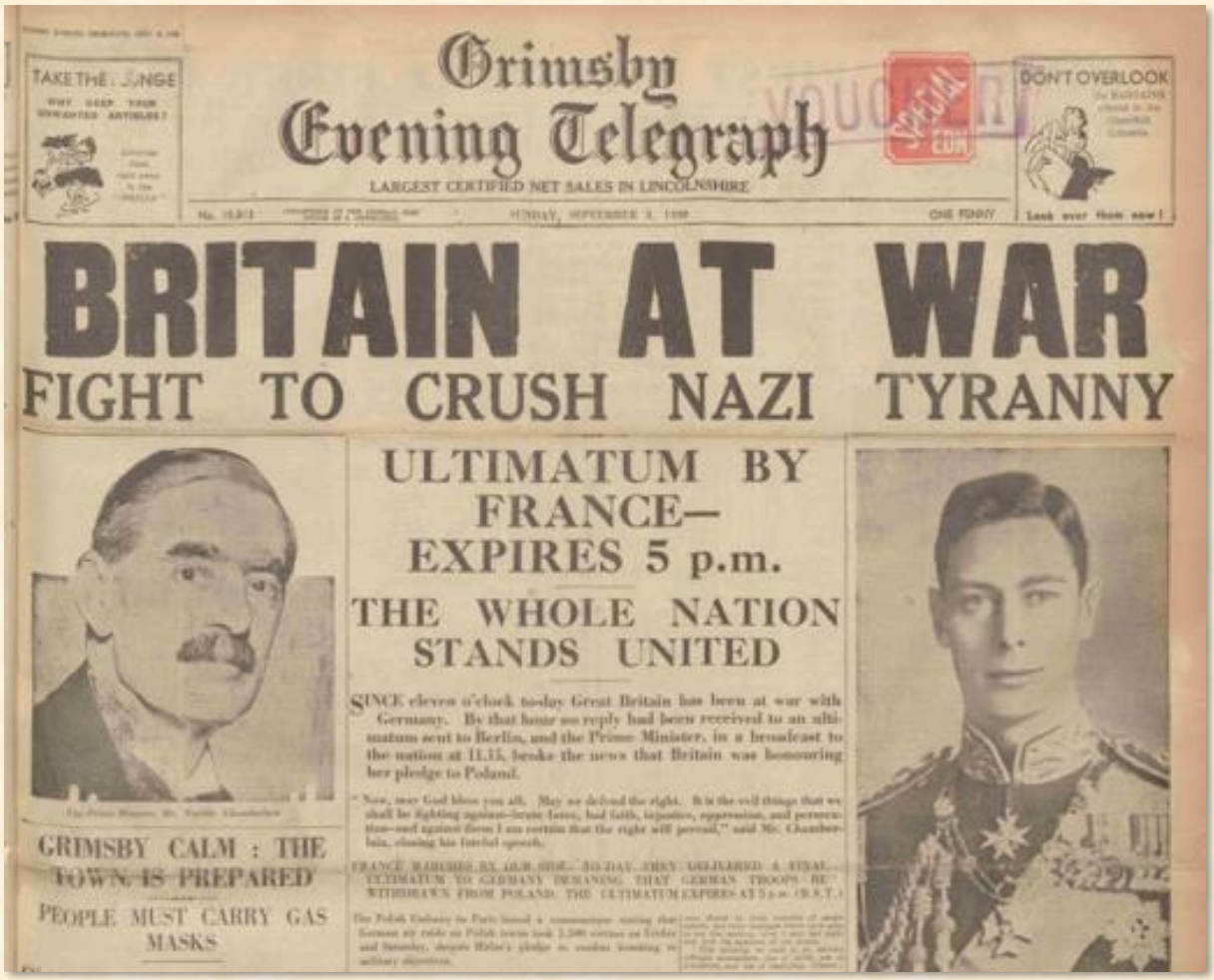
In July 1939, an envelope dropped onto the door mat of Harold and Olive's home in Littlehampton. He was an RAF reservist and the envelope contained his re-call papers. The Admiralty had started regaining control of the Fleet Air Arm in 1937 and its transfer from the RAF was completed in May 1939. This meant that Harold was unable to return to naval aviation.

Harold was posted to RAF Farnborough in Hampshire. He would become a Leading Aircraftsman (LAC) in the November and a Temporary Corporal (T/Cpl) from New Year's Eve. He resumed his role as an accounts clerk and would remain in accounts at RAF Farnborough for the next six years.

In anticipation of war, my grandfather Harold Clifford, an RAF reservist, received this envelope containing his re-call papers in July 1939. More than 1.5 million men would receive these by the end of the year. (Family collection)

The next generation at war

Top



Grimsby Evening Telegraph

LARGEST CERTIFIED NET SALES IN LINCOLNSHIRE

BRITAIN AT WAR

FIGHT TO CRUSH NAZI TYRANNY

ULTIMATUM BY FRANCE— EXPIRES 5 p.m.

THE WHOLE NATION STANDS UNITED

GRIMSBY CALM : THE TOWN IS PREPARED

PEOPLE MUST CARRY GAS MASKS

Front page of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph *for Sunday, 3 September 1939. (British Library Newspaper Archive)*

National mobilisation

Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany on the 3rd. The National Service (Armed Forces) Act was passed that day. This applied to all men aged between 18 and 41. The National Registration Act became law on 5 September and the census was conducted on 29 September. By the end of the year, more than 1.5 million men had been ‘called up’ to the British armed forces.

Grimsby was again an important target because of its importance in keeping the country fed. I cannot tell the whole story here of the experience of Grimsby and Cleethorpes during the Second World War. James was in the twilight of his working life and was past fighting age, but this was not the case for his sons. Some information follows about events and circumstances that had direct significance for the Clifford family and their neighbours.

Jim was not called up because members of the building trade were needed in their

Reserved Occupations. He also continued as a member of a first aid party with the St John's Ambulance. In Birmingham, Jim's cousin Thomas Graham also joined a first aid party under the ARP provisions.

The Grimsby ARP organisation was mobilised and well trained. They had units across the area including a fleet of ambulances. Gas masks were distributed on the assumption that British streets would suffer poison gas attacks like those on battlefields during the Great War. Fortunately, this would not materialise.

Grimsby and Cleethorpes children and their teachers gathered in their school yards to be evacuated away to non-industrial Lincolnshire towns. The tramlines on Cleethorpe Road were dug up and added to the collection of metal for re-manufacture as military hardware.

Food started to be rationed. Morale-building popular entertainment was not. Theatres and cinemas had been closed when war was declared but they re-opened within a few weeks. The Cliffords were able to enjoy shows in Grimsby at the Tivoli Theatre and at cinemas including the Regal, Savoy, Palace, Plaza, Queen's Hall and Strand. The Savoy and Regal had been built by Wilkinson & Houghton, the firm that Jim Clifford trained with as a bricklayer. Their choices in Cleethorpes included the Pier Pavilion and the Royal and Empire cinemas. The Empire would be requisitioned by the Ministry of Works for the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) to run as a canteen for armed forces personnel.

Trawlers back in action

In October 1939, the Spurn light vessel was repositioned level with Grimsby to mark the position of the river defence boom.

Grimsby's Royal Dock became Britain's largest base for minesweepers working in the North Sea. At the mouth of the Humber, Bull Sand Fort and Haile Sand Fort were brought back into use and updated. They would be attacked by enemy aircraft regularly. Anti-submarine nets were also installed to protect Grimsby and Hull.

The Trawler Reserve was revived as the Royal Naval Patrol Service (RNPS), and trawlers were requisitioned once again. The more modern examples at Hull and Grimsby were particularly favoured by the Admiralty. Some fishermen who had been naval reservists since the end of the Great War were called up once again. Due to the amateur status of fishermen in military terms, the RNPS was nicknamed 'Harry Tate's Navy', a reference to a music hall entertainer whose comic act involved fumbling with machines.

On the 28 October, *Lynx II* (GY401) became the first Grimsby trawler lost to enemy action. She had just taken aboard the crew of Hull trawler *St Nidan* (H412) from their lifeboat after it was sunk by submarine U-59, 90 miles (145 km) off the Scottish coast. U-59 then obliged both crews to return to their lifeboats before *Lynx II* was sunk. The fishermen were then picked up by another Hull trawler, *Lady Hogarth* (H479), which delivered them safely to the Scottish coast.

On 18 November, the trawler of which James had been the watchman in the mid-1930s, *Wigmore* (GY469), was sunk by U-18, 25 miles (40 km) off Rattay Head on the Aberdeenshire coast of north-eastern Scotland. All 15 members of the crew died.

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940. He visited coastal

defences near Grimsby on 7 August. Another nickname that the RNPS would adopt was ‘Churchill’s Pirates’.

Barrage balloons

We saw back in 1896 that a cousin of James was living with his father Thomas in Derby. This was 10-year-old Arthur Clifford, who would grow up to have three daughters and a son. They were second cousins to James’s children and to my grandfather Harold. Arthur’s eldest, Ethel Violet, married painter and decorator Sidney Robinson in 1929.

On 30 July 1940, Sidney was called up to RAF Balloon Command, which used motorised cable winches to control barrage balloons for deterring German bombers. From the October, Sidney was posted to No.17 Balloon Centre (17 BC) based at Sutton-on-the-Hill, to the north-east of Hull.

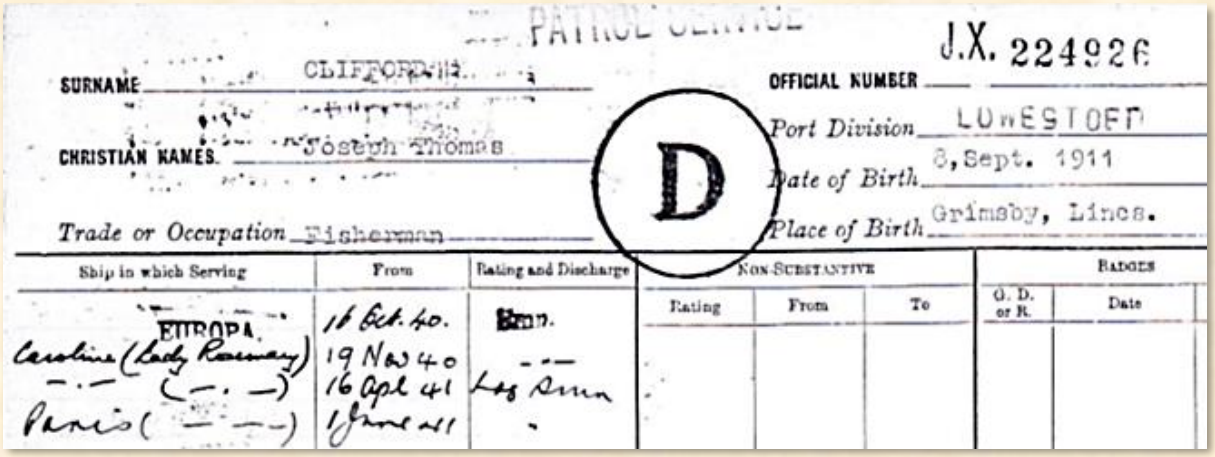
A ‘kite’ type barrage balloon of RAF No. 17 Balloon Centre (17 BC). It is seen here in January 1943, tethered to the barge Norman Wade *on the River Humber at RAF Sutton-on-the-Hill, Yorkshire. A daughter of James’s cousin Arthur Clifford was married to balloon operator Sidney Robinson. He was based at 17 BC from October 1940 until April 1944. (Pilot Officer B Bridge, official RAF photographer; Imperial War Museum, IWM CH8663)*

To some extent, 17 BC was able to protect Hull, the RAF oil depot and docks along the Humber. According to family memory, Sidney was posted to Grimsby where the balloons were tethered by cables to barges and buoys beyond the Fish Dock. James and Flo would have been able to see them above the roofs of Wellington Street. Sidney Robinson was a balloon operator on the Humber for over three years before being posted to RAF Longbenton, north of Newcastle.

Down at RAF Farnborough, Harold had become a Temporary Corporal (T/Cpl) on 1 July 1940. It was his understanding that among the RAF pilots killed in the Battle of Britain that summer and autumn were the young men he had originally trained with ten years before.

Joseph Clifford joins the Royal Naval Patrol Service

James and Flo's son Joseph was still a fisherman when the war started. He and his wife Margaret were living with the Wiseman family at 281 Convamore Road. Joseph was called up in October 1940 and was given the service number JX.224926. On the 16th of the month, he reported to *HMS Europa*, the RNPS central onshore depot at Lowestoft known as the 'Sparrow's Nest'. Joseph was a much bigger man than his male relatives, his height being recorded as 6 ft 1 in.


PATROL SERVICE

SURNAME CLIFFORD

CHRISTIAN NAMES Joseph Thomas

Trade or Occupation Fisherman

D

OFFICIAL NUMBER J.X. 224926

Port Division LOWESTOFT

Date of Birth 8, Sept. 1911

Place of Birth Grimsby, Lincs.

Ship in which Serving	From	Rating and Discharge	NON-SUBSTANTIVE Rating	From	To	BADGES G. D. or R.	Date
EUROPA	16 Oct. 40.	Rtn.					
Caroline (Lady Rosemary)	19 Nov 40	--					
-- (--)	16 Apl 41	Lds Rmn					
Paris (--)	1 June 41						

Top of the first page of the naval service papers of James's son Joseph Clifford. Visible are Joseph's service number JX.224926 and his arrival on 16 October 1940 at HMS Europa*, the Royal Naval Patrol Service (RNPS) depot at Lowestoft. Also visible are his date and place of birth of 8 September 1911 in Grimsby, and his occupation of fisherman. The first armed trawler to which he was assigned is listed as the* Lady Rosemary*. (Ministry of Defence)*

In the November, Joseph joined the crew of the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) trawler *HMT Lady Rosemary*. She was one of the newer trawlers favoured by the Admiralty, built in 1936 at Beverley and registered in Hull as H477. She was now attached to the Belfast depot ship, *HMS Caroline*, formerly a light cruiser built in 1914 which had participated at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. From 1917 to 1918, she had carried a flying-off platform for the launching of aircraft to intercept German airships over the North Sea. *Caroline* was the last British light cruiser of the First World War to remain in service. She is now open to the public at Belfast's Alexandra Dock and is one of only three surviving Royal Navy warships of the First World War.

Joseph was recommended for promotion to the rating of Leading Seaman and this would take effect in April 1941. He would specialise as a signalman.

Several owners later and now based at Milford with registration M246, the old *Rattray* was fishing with the *Charmouth* (M242) off the south-west coast of Ireland on 27 November. They were attacked by a twin-tailed German bomber aircraft, possibly a Dornier. The trawlers were armed with Lewis anti-aircraft guns and shot the bomber down. The aircrew were rescued from an island. *Charmouth* would be lost with nine crew members in the same area when she picked up a mine in her trawl net in November 1946.

Margaret was around seven months' pregnant when Joseph was called up. In January 1941, she provided him with a son who they named Robert Joseph Leonard James Clifford, known in the family as 'Joey'. It seems that he was James and Flo's only grandchild.

From June 1941, *Lady Rosemary* was based in Plymouth, attached to the depot ship *HMS Paris*. The *Paris* was a French battleship completed in 1914. She had served in the Mediterranean during the Great War and had protected the Otranto Barrage. She was impounded when seeking sanctuary in Plymouth in 1940.

James's nephew, Flight Sergeant Harold Clifford, my grandfather. He is seen here in an official photograph of accounts staff at RAF Farnborough in 1941. (Family collection)

While Joseph was in danger at sea, his cousin Harold was safely in an office at RAF Farnborough. He was promoted to Temporary Sergeant (T/Sgt) on 15 June 1941.

My dad, Alan Charles Clifford, was born that December in neighbouring Aldershot. Dad has no knowledge of his father being aware that that he had any aunts, uncles or cousins at all on the Clifford side, in Grimsby or Birmingham. I have discovered them only in the last two years.

In February 1942, Joseph and his crewmates set off across the Atlantic as *Lady Rosemary* was now attached to the Royal Navy office in New York, known as *HMS Saker II*. They began a six-month assignment with the United States Navy to help with patrolling the US East Coast in case of U-boat attack. Each man would be awarded the Atlantic Star medal for this part of his service.

In October 1942, *Lady Rosemary* proceeded to the south Atlantic to be attached to two shore bases in South Africa, *HMS Gnu* in Cape Town and then *HMS Kongoni* in Durban. Joseph remained with *Lady Rosemary until* October 1943 before transferring to the *HMS Assegai* training and transit camp at Wentworth, Durban.

Air raids and butterfly bombs

With Grimsby still being a vital fishing port, around 30 air raids were inflicted on the area, including Cleethorpes, between June 1940 and July 1943. James and Flo's nearest communal air raid shelter was a third of a mile (540 m) along Wellington Street, adjacent to Durban Road at the Fiveways junction. Just behind the terrace that included 281 Convamore Road, Joseph's wife Margaret had a choice of smaller air raid shelters to hurry into with their baby son. The bombs were far more destructive than those that they may have remembered being dropped on Cleethorpes by a Zeppelin in 1916.

On 27 February 1941, a single Dornier bombed and machine-gunned Cleethorpe Road, killing eleven and injuring 27, and then fired at traffic on Scartho Road and Louth Road. The ARP wardens, emergency services and first aiders with voluntary organisations like Jim would not be able to save 295 people who died as a result of the raids. Hull was hit much harder with more than 1,200 killed, 3,000 injured and over 152,000 made temporarily homeless.

While Joseph was in South Africa, James and Flo endured a particularly devastating air raid on the Grimsby and Cleethorpes area. Early on the morning of 14 June 1943, the Luftwaffe dropped several 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs) bombs and 6,000 incendiary bombs, They also littered the area with over 3,000 small SD2 'butterfly' bombs weighing just two kilograms (4 lbs 6 oz).

The fuses in many of the butterfly bombs were delayed to detonate during rescue efforts or when disturbed. This was the first time that anti-personnel 'cluster' bombs had been dropped anywhere in the world, designed specifically to kill and maim. The casing incorporated wings on a rotating shaft that made them fall slowly like sycamore seeds. When they settled on pavements, in trees, on roofs and in gardens, they were surrounded by sandbags until they could be destroyed safely.

A 'thick-walled explosive bomb' or *Sprengbombe Dickwandig (SD2) weighing just 2 kg (4 lbs 6 oz) each, known to the Allies as a 'butterfly bomb'. They were designed to settle in civilian areas where they would explode when disturbed or on a timer. (*Booby Traps*, published by the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington DC, 1944; LoneSentry.com)*

The Government kept the details secret to avoid loss of morale, but this meant that the deaths mounted. Grimsby and Cleethorpes became paralysed as people started to move with anxious care. The search for bodies and unexploded bombs involved 10,000 personnel and lasted a month. Butterfly

bombs were still being discovered a long time afterwards and the death toll reached 114. Curious children were among the victims. More could yet be found and they may still be dangerous.

On 13 July 1943, butterfly bombs were not among the 30 tons of bombs dropped on the Fish Dock and streets of Grimsby and Cleethorpes.

Bomb damage on Guildford Street, Grimsby, being cleared after being bombed on 13 July 1943. A few hundred yards away on Wellington Street, James and Flo would have heard and felt a great tremor from the explosion. They had lived on Guildford Street at no.44 in 1905-6, and at no.17 from 1910 until some point during the First World War. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL05115)

At RAF Farnborough, Harold was promoted to Acting Flight Sergeant (A/F/Sgt) in August 1943 and remained so until the end of the war.

Back in British waters

In early 1944, Joseph travelled back to Britain via the Royal Naval Aircraft Repair Yard at Fayid in Egypt, known as *HMS Phoenix*. He passed through *HMS Europa* at Lowestoft and the *HMS Ambrose* submarine base at Dundee before reaching the shore base at Aberdeen, *HMS Bacchante*. There in the March, he joined the crew of a minesweeper based there, *HMT Lord Ashfield*. She had been built at Selby in 1929, registered in Hull as H53 and requisitioned in September 1939.

Back in Grimsby, Joseph's maternal grandmother Isabella Duell died on 18 November 1944 aged 92. Her address was still 54 Duke Street, when she had lived since the 1890s.

From 27 July 1944 to January 1945, Joseph served aboard the ASW trawler *HMT Cape Mariato*. She too had been built in Selby in 1936 and was registered in Hull as H364. *Cape Mariato* was requisitioned in June 1940 and, in late 1942, she was one of the trawlers escorting the Allied convoys that supplied Russia via Iceland and Arctic waters. When Joseph joined her, she was attached to the depot ship *HMS Irwell* at Birkenhead, across the River Mersey from Liverpool.

On 2 August 1944, Joseph and his crewmates assisted Atlantic convoy HX300 from Halifax, Nova Scotia, as it entered British waters. Comprised of 166 ships, this was the largest convoy of the war. Together with a whaler requisitioned from the Falkland Islands, *HMT Southern Spray, Cape Mariato* escorted the convoy through the Western Approaches as they headed for Liverpool and other ports.

Painting by David C Bell named Hull Trawler Cape Mariato H364 in open waters*.* HMT Cape Mariato *had been built in Selby in 1936, registered at Hull and was requisitioned in June 1940 with Admiralty number 4.172. She was the last ship that Joseph Clifford served on with the Royal Naval Patrol Service. He was a member of her crew of from July 1944 until January 1945. (With great thanks to David C Bell; Hull Maritime Museum; MutualArt.com)*

On 12 January 1945, Joseph was granted sick leave at the Royal Naval Auxiliary Hospital (RNAH) in Southport, just north of Liverpool. He was invalided on 8 February and transferred back to HMS Europa. On 28 March, he was discharged from the RNPS as Physically Unfit for Naval Service (PUNS).

The Second World War in Europe ended on 8 May. Two weeks later, the Spurn light vessel was returned to her original position off Spurn Point. Joseph may have been too ill to see it in the course of returning to fishing, as he would be diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis (phthisis). The light vessel can be seen today in a

restored condition at Hull Marina.

In Farnborough, My aunt Helen Victoria was born on 15 August 1945, known as ‘VJ Day’ due to ‘Victory over Japan’ bringing an end to the war. Her father Harold was demobilised from the RAF in March 1946.

The hazardous work of the RNPS meant that they suffered disproportionately compared to every other branch of the Royal Navy. They lost 250 vessels and 2,385 men. Joseph would have received a silver badge, introduced by Winston Churchill for those who served at least six months. He commended them for their service at the end of the war with this message:

> “Now that Nazi Germany has been defeated I wish to send you all on behalf of His Majesty's Government a message of thanks and gratitude.
>
> The work you do is hard and dangerous. You rarely get and never seek publicity; your only concern is to do your job, and you have done it nobly. You have sailed in many seas and all weathers... This work could not be done without loss, and we mourn all who have died and over 250 ships lost on duty.
>
> No work has been more vital than yours; no work has been better done. The Ports were kept open and Britain breathed. The Nation is once again proud of you.”

An RNPS memorial can be found at the Queens Steps, Lock Head at Grimsby’s Royal Docks. This names RNPS trawlers sunk in the Grimsby area and 128 men from Grimsby and Cleethorpes who have no grave but the sea. The memorial also acknowledges the organisation’s WWI predecessor, the Trawler Section of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR).

During the six years of war, 119 Grimsby fishing vessels were lost. The national memorial of 1928 to the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets at Tower Hill in London would be extended in 1955. Nearly 24,000 names were added, twice as many as those from the Great War.

Royal Naval Patrol Service (RNPS) memorial at the Queens Steps, Lock Head at Grimsby’s Royal Docks, unveiled in 2001. The memorial commemorates 128 men of the RNPS from Grimsby and Cleethorpes who were killed during WWII and have no grave but the sea. It also names RNPS trawlers sunk in the Grimsby area, and incorporates a pair of mines. (With thanks to Dave Smith)

Last ports of call

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A cruel disease

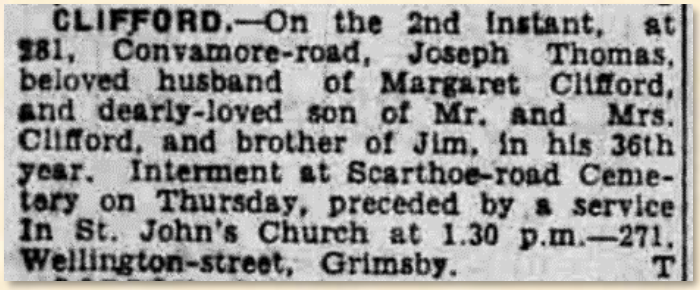
Joseph died from tuberculosis on 2 March 1947 aged 35. He died at home, 281 Convamore Road. His son Joey was only six.

Tuberculosis was endemic and no vaccination nor any other effective treatment was available at the time. Joseph could have been exposed to the disease for much of his life. It travels very efficiently, especially in crowded conditions such as onboard ships, in barracks and in communities with large families living in poor quality housing.

Joseph's funeral service was held in the church where he had been baptised in 1911, St John the Evangelist, New Clee. James and Flo supported his widow Margaret by hosting the wake at 271 Wellington Street.

Joseph was buried near his siblings in Scartho Road Cemetery. His military gravestone is inscribed with his naval rating of Leading Signalman.

Naval headstone for James's son Joseph Clifford at Scartho Road Cemetery. (With thanks to Paul Fenwick)



CLIFFORD.—On the 2nd instant, at 281, Convamore-road, Joseph Thomas, beloved husband of Margaret Clifford, and dearly-loved son of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, and brother of Jim, in his 36th year. Interment at Scarthoe-road Cemetery on Thursday, preceded by a service in St. John's Church at 1.30 p.m.—271, Wellington-street, Grimsby. T

*Notice of Joseph Clifford's death on 2 March 1947, published on 4 March. A second notice was published on 8 March in which his widow Margaret and the family thanked "all relatives, friends and neighbours for their expressions of sympathy, help and beautiful floral tributes". (*Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, 4 March 1947; © Reach Plc; British Library Newspaper Archive)*

On 16 November 1949, Margaret received Joseph's naval service 'prize money' of £5 5s 0d, worth about £147 today. She would receive his medals in 1951.

Convamore Road, Grimsby, seen here in the 1960s. Joseph Clifford and his wife Margaret lived at no.281 from the 1930s onwards. (Grimsby Central Library and Lincs Inspire Ltd, NEL03075)

James and Flo had now outlived four of their five children. James was 71 when he died at Grimsby Infirmary on Scartho Road on 29 June 1950. The funeral was held on Monday 3 July at St John the Evangelist, New Clee. This was the church where he and Flo had got married 48 years before, at the end of the street where they had first met.

*Notice of James Clifford's death on 29 June 1950. (*Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, 30 June 1950; Newspapers.com)*

CLIFFORD.—On June 29, 1950, at the Infirmary, James, the beloved husband of Florence May Clifford, of 271, Wellington-st., Grimsby, and father of Jim. Interment at Scarthoe-rd. Cemetery, Monday, at 3.35, preceded by a service at St. John's Church, at 3 p.m. 2592

James was buried near his children in Scartho Road Cemetery. A notice was published on 4 July in the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* acknowledging 21 floral tributes that had been provided for the funeral. These were from individuals including Flo and their grandson Robert 'Joey' Clifford, and families no doubt of fellow fishermen. He was clearly a much-loved man in the community. An additional floral tribute was provided by the branch of the Transport & General Workers Union, founded in 1922, of which James was a member.

Probate at Lincoln Registry granted his effects of £1,395 9s 1d to Flo and Jim, worth around £43,500 today.

Headstone for James and Flo Clifford at Scartho Road Cemetery. (With thanks to Gravestone Photographic Resource, 374509)

Grimsby was still celebrated as the world's premier fishing port. Diesel engines had started to replace steam engines in the latest trawler designs, which benefitted crews with central heating, flushing toilets, baths and showers. An example, *Ross Tiger* (GY398), built in Selby in 1956, is the star attraction of Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre, and can be visited at Alexandra Dock.

But the British fishing industry was entering a further decline which and James and Joseph Clifford did not live to see. This was exacerbated by disputes with Iceland over North Atlantic fishing rights known as the 'Cod Wars'. Iceland expanded its territorial waters in 1952 and, from 1958, banned foreign vessels from fishing in them. Britain did not accept this and confrontations between fishing vessels posed a risk to life.

A move to Kent

Jim Clifford spent some time away from his wife Annie May during the war. He began a relationship with Florence Mary Ives (née Gaidi) in the London borough of Hackey, 160 miles (260 km) south of Grimsby.

Jim was just two miles (3 km) from the borough of Poplar where he also had relatives on the Clifford side. Around 1920, his father's cousin Susan and her family had moved there from Jarrow in County Durham. Susan had died in Poplar in 1938 but her daughter Enid, Jim's second cousin, was still living there with her own family

in the 1940s. Enid's brother, John Clifford, was living with his family ten miles (16 km) to the east in Dagenham. They were probably unaware of Jim and he of them. John may not have been around in any case as he served in the Army during the war, as did Enid's husband Albert Brewer.

Like Jim's mother, Florence Ives was known as 'Flo'. She was of Italian descent and was already married. Being a Roman Catholic, she was not able to get divorced. Flo had a son William who had been evacuated from London. He returned to find that Jim was his 'new father'. William joined the Navy after the war while in his mid-teens.

If Jim returned to Grimsby, it was not for long. Some time after 1947, he and Flo moved to Walderslade in Kent, between Chatham and Maidstone. They bought Tunbury Farm, a small holding of several acres, on which their initial home was Tunbury Lodge. One of the floral tributes at James's funeral was from Jim and Flo.

Jim's wife Annie May died in Grimsby on 16 January 1953 aged 63. Probate at Lincoln Registry granted her effects to a friend. Following the death of King George VI a year before, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on 2 June.

Jim's mother, Flo senior, was visiting Tunbury Farm when she died on 20 June 1954 aged 73. Her funeral service was held locally but she was buried back in Grimsby with James at Scartho Road Cemetery. Probate in Lincoln granted her effects of £2,240 17s 2d to Jim, worth around £53,500 today.

At some point, Flo Ives started using Jim's Clifford surname. Her son William Ives married Barbara French in 1952. They gave Flo two grandchildren, Andy born in 1955 and Bernice in 1959. That year, William bought from Jim some land on which the two men built a bungalow for William and Barbara's young family. I am grateful to Andy for many of these details about Jim and his life in Walderslade.

Former neighbours in Walderslade also have memories of Jim and Flo. They regularly hosted big Guy Fawkes Night bonfires at Tunbury Farm. Jim allowed friends to keep animals there including rabbits. He used to talk about his father being the 'captain' of a trawler and about Grimsby kippers! William and Barbara met Jim's relatives on one occasion when they took him Grimsby.

In Birmingham, Jim's aunt Annie died in 1968 aged 88. Her husband Lawrence Graham had died ten years earlier. Their elder son, Jim's cousin Thomas, died in 1966 aged 59. Jim's cousin Harold, my grandfather, died in September 1973 while visiting my aunt Sylvia and her family in South Wales. He was 59. My grandmother Olive had died from cancer in 1960 aged 44.

With help from a neighbour, Jim built and moved into a second bungalow. This was next door to the first one. Through a compulsory purchase order by the council in 1976, Jim sold Tunbury Lodge and five acres of land for development. This became the Tunbury Avenue housing estate, where Jim built some of the houses.

End of the line

The Cod Wars continued between 1972 and 1976. Escalation in confrontations included ramming attacks and Icelandic Coast Guard vessels cutting foreign fishing nets. The Royal Navy had to escort British trawlers into Icelandic waters. An agreement was brokered in 1976 by NATO in favour of Icelandic claims meant the loss of thousands of jobs in British fishing communities.

National fishing quotas agreed under the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy were a final blow for British fishing ports. Many businesses based in Grimsby closed their trawling operations there. Sudden high levels of redundancy caused serious problems in the community. The town would never be the same again. However, a significant fish market continues to operate.

In Kent, Flo Ives died in November 1977 aged 70. Her ashes were scattered at Medway Crematorium, Chatham. Jim died on 1 June 1982 aged 76.

Jim left his money to relatives in Grimsby, probably his brother Joseph's son, Joey, and members of the Duell family. In his will, he left the bungalow built in 1959, 128 Tunbury Avenue, to Andy and Bernice. William and Barbara bought the second bungalow, no.126, from Jim’s estate.

In Grimsby, Jim’s sister-in-law Margaret, Joseph’s widow, also died in 1982. She was 72. Joseph and Margaret’s son Joey remained in Grimsby all his life. In 1989, He married a local lady, Jean Muriel Upcraft. She had been born in Cleethorpes in 1941. Joey and Jean were the last surviving members of my family in Grimsby. They lived at 35 Clee Road, Cleethorpes. Sadly, they had been married for just two years when he died on 1 February 1991 aged 50. He too was buried at Scartho Road Cemetery. Jean died in Grimsby on 23 March 2018 aged 77.

The last remaining cousin to Jim and my grandfather on the Clifford side, William Graham, died in Birmingham in 1997 aged 83.

All of the old Grimsby and Cleethorpes streets and houses in which the Cliffords lived are still there. Around 125 years after James began our family’s connection with the area, it is good to have discovered them, and now to remember them.

Terraced houses on Rutland Street, Grimsby, built in the early 1890s and seen here in July 2023. The green house is no.141 where James Clifford was living until he married Florence Duell in 1902. To its right is no.143 where Flo had been working as a domestic servant to fisherman James Roach, his wife Jane and their little son John. Of the natural brick-fronted pair of houses along the street, the right-hand side is no.151 where James and Flo were living in 1908. (With thanks to Dave Smith)

Beyond the RNPS memorial, the old water tower at the entrance to the Royal Dock. This has been a constant presence for Grimsby residents since it was built in 1852. (With thanks to Dave Smith)

Below: Haile Sand fort on the southern side of the mouth of the Humber Estuary, looking north to Bull Sand fort beyond. They would have been a familiar sight to James and Joseph Clifford as they passed into and returned from the North Sea on trawlers in the 1920s and 1930s. They are now in private ownership and are seen here in 2006. (With thanks to Steve Butler)

Appendix: Fishing vessels mentioned

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Name	Built	Register	Requisition	Admiralty no.	Lost
Young Albert	1876, Grimsby	GY574	–	–	–
Hibernia	1877, Boston	GY169	–	–	Jul 1895
Patterdale	1883, Grimsby	GY895	–	–	–
Primrose	1883, Grimsby	GY901	–	–	–
Bonnie Belle	1888, Grimsby	GY162	–	–	–
Weelsby	1891, Hull	GY299	–	–	Sep 1916
Kymric	1891, Hull	GY421	Feb 1915	970	
Andes	1899, N Shields	GY5	1908, 1917		
Algoma	1899, N Shields	GY6	1908, 1917		
Edinboro Castle	1899, Dundee	GY1285	Jun 1915		
Rattray	1900, Aberdeen	GY720 M246	Aug 1914 May 1917	357	
King Stephen / Ledger	1900, Grimsby	GY1174	Feb 1916	Q778	Apr 1916
Tubal Cain	1905, N Shields	GY88	–	–	Aug 1914
Manx Queen	1906, Selby	GY174	–	–	Dec 1914
Lynx II	1906, Selby	GY401	Sep 1939	FY31	Oct 1939
Lord Roberts	1907, Hull	H955	Nov 1914	545	Oct 1916
Ameer	1908, N Shields	GY397	Aug 1914	38	Mar 1916
Charmouth	1910, Aberdeen	M242	Aug 1914	366	Nov 1946
Resono	1910, Beverley	GY508	Jan 1915	1042	Dec 1915
Manx Hero	1910, Selby	GY585	Aug 1914	339	Mar 1915
Night Hawk	1911, Beverley	GY643	Aug 1914	57	Dec 1914
Mackenzie	1911, Beverley	H349	Aug 1914	336	
Koorah	1912, Aberdeen	M120 GY122	Aug 1914	324	
Star of the Empire	1913, Aberdeen	A509	Aug 1914	318	
Fentonian	1913, Selby	GY804	Mar 1915	448	
T R Ferens	1913, Selby	H1027	May 1915	1518	
Okino	1914, Selby	GY4	Aug 1914	285	Mar 1915
Holyrood	1914, Selby	GY90	Aug 1914	1438	
Lemberg	1914, Selby	GY372	Jul 1915	1547	
Rosy Morn	1914, Aberdeen	SH59	May 1915	2770	Jan 1916
Windsor II	1916, Selby	GY998	Dec 1916	2988	Oct 1940
Orvicto	1916, Beverley	GY897	Sep 1916 1940	2962 / FY909	
Moravia	1916, Beverley	GY1018	Jun 1917	1272	
Southern Spray	1925, South Bank-on-Tees	Falklands	Mar 1940	FY323	
Wigmore	1928, Beverley	GY469	–	–	Nov 1939
Lord Ashfield	1929, Selby	H53	Sep 1939	FY694	
Cape Mariato	1936, Selby	H364	Jun 1940	4.172	
St Nidan	1937, Beverley	H412	1939	–	Oct 1939
Lady Rosemary	1937, Beverley	H477	Jun 1940	FY253	
Lady Hogarth	1937, Beverley	H479	1939	FY489	
Ross Tiger	1956, Selby	GY398	–	–	–

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James Clifford's wider family

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