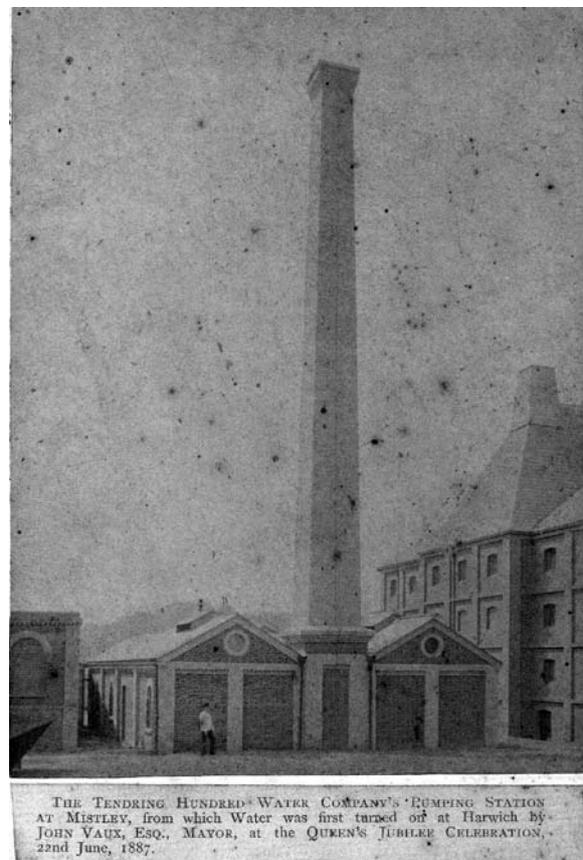


Battle of Jutland 31st May 1916 – John Henry Brunning, HMS Queen Mary.



John came from a family of steam engineers, his father Henry and uncle James both worked at Mumford's in Colchester. His father was sent to maintain the engines installed by the firm at the new pumping station at Mistley, formally opened in 1887 by the Tendring Hundred Waterworks Company. John was born a couple of years after they arrived. The family lived in Waterworks House which still stands on Mistley Hill. Behind was a set of large twin buildings and 82 foot chimney that dominated the

landscape. It was designed by Peter Bruff to draw from the chalk aquifers the increasing amounts of water needed at the EDME maltings next door and for piping 12 miles to Harwich via Wix, where it was desperately needed by the expanding town.



There were nine children in the family and the boys had to help their father de-clinker in turn the two steam boilers, which meant climbing inside the fire box with just a hammer and chisel to remove the residue that had built up. With such an upbringing it is a small wonder they in turn also became engineers. The two eldest, Charles and Arthur joined Lever brothers working on engines in Liverpool, George went to work in Nottinghamshire as an engine maker, married and settled there.

After his schooling in Mistley, John trained as an engine fitter and later found work in the shipbuilding industry in Lowestoft, where he was living in lodgings in 1911.

He joined the Royal Navy in September 1914 and was assigned to HMS Vernon, a static training ship stationed in Portchester, at the north end of Portsmouth Harbour. There he received training on top of his experience as a turner and fitter, which included ship's electrics and he was passed out as an Electrical Artificer, 4th class. This specialist trade was usually required on large cruisers to either deal with the high power installations or torpedoes. On the 10th June 1915 he was transferred to operations aboard the HMS Queen Mary. At 26 years of age he was still single and described as five foot six inches with grey eyes and brown hair. Later in the year he sent home a special Christmas card from aboard ship.



**The meteor flag of England, shall still terrific burn,
Till danger's troubled night depart, and the star of peace return.**
—*Campbell.*

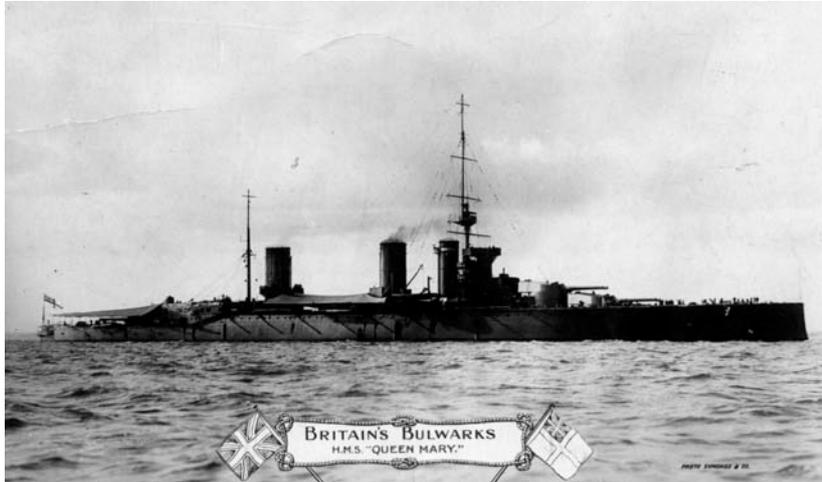
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*With hearty Christmas Greetings and
every Good Wish
for your health & happiness in the New Year.
From J. H. Brunning, E.C.*

**H.M.S. "Queen Mary,"
1st Battle Cruiser Squadron.**

The Queen Mary was a battlecruiser, the last to be built before the war started, armed with eight 13 inch guns. She was assigned to the fleet based in the North Sea to protect the British coast against raids by surface ships and maintain the blockade of German ports. She had a large crew of nearly 1300, captained by Cecil Prowse. Following information

gained from intercepted German messages, she was one of the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron under acting Vice Admiral Beatty, sent out to intercept a raid, staged on the 31st May 1916 to lure out and destroy part of the larger British fleet. Beatty's scouts found the leading German group, acting under Admiral Franz Hipper, at around 2.30 in the afternoon off the west coast of Jutland, Denmark. After small scale actions the two leading groups came together an hour later. The first salvos were fired as the two groups started what became known as the "Run to the South", as Admiral Franz Hipper lured Beatty towards the main battle fleet coming up from Germany.

The exchanges increased in intensity and the first British battle cruiser, the Indefatigable was hit and exploded just after 4.00 pm.



At 4.25 pm the Queen Mary, the second ship in the line, was hit by a combined salvo, causing one or both of her forward magazines to explode, showering other nearby ships with debris. She quickly rolled over and sunk, taking John Henry Brunning and 1,265 other crew with her. Only a handful of survivors were picked out of the water by following British ships and two by German boats.

After sighting the main German battle group coming up from the south, Admiral Beatty turned his squadron around and in turn led them towards the main British battle group coming up from behind under Admiral John Jellicoe. The main battle then took place between the two fleets and lasted throughout the night, involving 250 ships in all. Over 6,000 British and 2,500 German seamen were lost in just a few short hours.

John's older brother Louis Frederick Brunning started at the Tendring Hundred Water works in 1900, aged just 14 years, working as a clerk at the new Manningtree Office. He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Bombardier, fought and survived the war, before going back to work in the accounts department. He was also secretary of the Manningtree British Legion for 25 years. Their sister Lillian taught at Mistle Norman School before going into nursing in Sussex, whilst Minnie Brunning looked after her parents at Waterworks House. John is commemorated on the Portsmouth memorial and on his parents' grave stone in Mistle churchyard.



Also at the battle of Jutland was the H.M.S. Abdiel, a mine layer commanded by Captain Berwick Curtis who lived for a while at Abbot's Manor, Church Hill, Lawford. Mentioned in dispatches for his conduct, Admiral Jellicoe, wrote "Abdiel, ably commanded by Commander Berwick Curtis, carried out her duties with the success which has always characterised her work." Captain Curtis brought back the ship's white ensign, flown at the battle and presented it to Lawford church where it was put on display along with a plaque.

Information & photos supplied by Liz Herrett (Louis Brunning's grand daughter).

Philip Cunningham.
Manningtree Museum & Local History Group.
6th May 2016.