

Manningtree, Mistley & Lawford memorials: September 1914 the war at sea.

Frederick F Buck, 5th September 1914

Whilst most were lost serving with the army, we know of at least six local men who died in the Royal Navy and two as Merchant seaman. Five of these were lost in and around the North Sea. Frederick Buck was born in 1884 and whilst brought up in the Chelmsford area, by 1911 the family had moved to Stour Villa, Harwich Road, Mistley. This included his father a retired Police Inspector and former Royal Mariner, mother Charlotte, sisters Charlotte (a dressmaker) and Ellen 15 yrs.



Stour Villa, Harwich Rd, Mistley

Frederick first joined the Royal Navy as a 'Boy' 2nd Class in about 1900, just 16 years of age. Like hundreds of others he received his training at HMS Ganges in Shotley, just down the Stour. After his time with the Navy he went to work as a 'Steel Grinder' in Chelmsford, living as a single man in digs. This was probably Hoffmann Manufacturing, the first ball bearing factory in the country which was rapidly expanding on the site now occupied by Anglia Ruskin University.

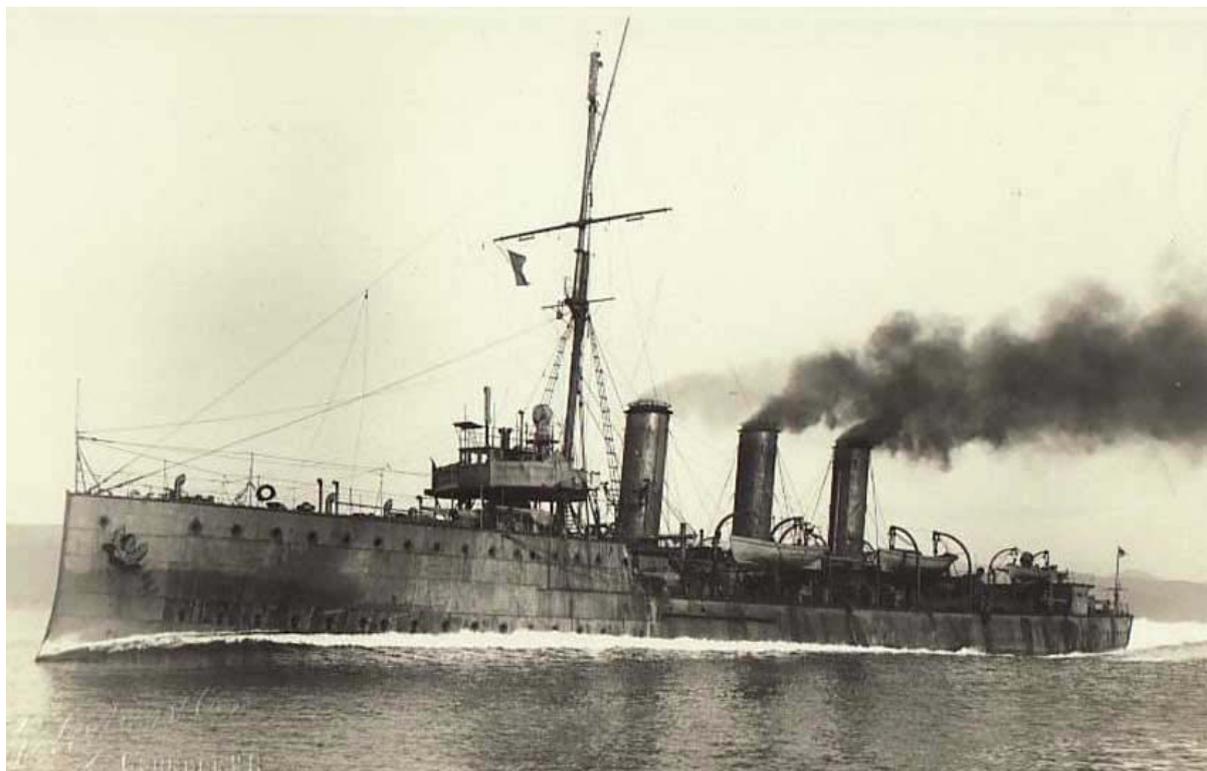
By the outbreak of war he was 30 years of age and as a reservist quickly called up from Harwich Road. In a few short weeks as Petty Officer 210184 he set sail aboard the HMS Pathfinder. She was lead ship in a class of scout cruisers, built in 1904 at Birkenhead, then re-armed with nine 4 inch guns in 1911.

Based in Rosyth on the Firth of Forth she was spotted on the sunny afternoon of the 5th September 1914 by submarine U-21, returning to port. Hit by torpedo under the bridge, the ships magazine exploded and she went down by the bow only a few minutes later, taking Frederick Buck and most of the crew, nearly 270 in all, with her. Only twenty miles off St Abbs Head in Scotland, the explosion was seen from shore. The lifeboat and local fisherman were soon on the spot but found very few survivors as many were killed in the blast or caught below decks. Some died later and one unknown sailor was buried at Dunbar, in sight of the sinking.

It was a dramatic event and the first time a ship had ever been sunk by a self propelled torpedo, fired from a submarine, which was clearly operating close to the British shore. At first the authorities tried to cover up this alarming development by

saying the ship was struck by a mine. The Navy had quickly to come to terms with the fact that large capital ships were now vulnerable to attack by submarines able to range at will around the North Sea. Three more were sunk on the 22nd September off the Dutch Coast (see research by Don Kindell).

Frederick has no known grave and is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. HMS Pathfinder in her watery grave gets the occasional visits from scuba divers surveying the wreck.



HMS Pathfinder

Graham John Scotney: 14th September 1914

Graham John Scotney was born in Great Bentley in 1894, a few years later his family moved to California Road, Mistley, where he was raised and brought up. At some stage his mother Mary Ann Scotney married Alfred Brooke, adding over time to her first three children (William, Ivy & Graham) a son, Bryan Brooke and daughter Ivy. By 1901 the children are being looked after by their mother whilst her husband Alfred is away serving in the army in South Africa, during the time of the second Boer War. Fortunately their father returned and started work as a Labourer at the local maltings whilst moving the family to 'Albert Villa', still in the middle of Mistley.

Graham also started work at one of the many local maltings.

Enlisting in Colchester it's not clear if Graham John Scotney had already trained or served in the Army but it is likely as by the 6th September 1914 he landed in France, which would have left little time for even basic training. The 1st Battalion of Lincolnshire regiment he was assigned to had already disembarked some weeks earlier, taking part in the major engagements at Mons and Le Cateau, suffering considerable losses in the process and in desperate need of replacements. By the time Graham caught up with them they were trying to turn the tables, counter-attacking the German army over the River Aisne near the village of Vailly. This was made difficult by the river being too deep to ford and the enemy having destroyed all

the bridges. Having crossed the river by a single plank over a demolished railway bridge, a foothold was made on the 13th September, with a large counter attack coming the next day. Unable to get artillery and further support over the broken bridges, losses were heavy and the regiment had in the end to retreat back over the river. By the end of the 14th September 188 men of the Lincolnshire regiment had been killed, Graham, aged 19, being one of them. He was posthumously awarded the British Star and Victory Medal. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Memorial at La Ferter-Sous-Jouarre. At the time of Graham's death it would appear his stepfather Alfred and mother Mary had moved to Lower Road, Mistley. Mary lost her other son, Bryan Brooke, three years later in the war. He is also commemorated on the Mistley Memorial.