

## Make Way for Lord Kitchener! The Loss of His Majesty's Ship Hampshire on 5 June 1916. Part One – *The Times* Account



Above. Lord Kitchener, a version of the famous recruiting poster.

From the Imperial War Museums Photo Collection

Below. HMS Hampshire. From *I Was There*, Part 15 Photo Imperial War Museum

## West Sussex and the Great War Project

Make Way for Lord Kitchener!  
The Loss of His Majesty's Ship Hampshire on 5 June 1916.  
Part One – *The Times* AccountSummary

With the sinking of HMS Hampshire came a grievous blow to the Allied war effort. The British Empire lost Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, whose organisational ability ensured that Britain had an army, of sufficient size, to be able to stand alongside her Allies in a major European conflict. Kitchener was a personality who was instantly familiar to all British people, both young and old, whose death was mourned as if he had been a close relative. Then, there were the families who lost fathers and sons. In addition to the crew, who numbered around 650, was Kitchener's delegation, consisting of military officers, politicians and their staffs, who also went down with the Hampshire. Only 12 men, all from the Ship's company, survived the disaster.

Introduction

The study was born when the Author discovered one of the survivors, Walter Farnden, was a West Sussex man. Research then followed that revealed the Sussex connections of over 50 other members of the crew who perished. This is an appropriate place, in a Project commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the War, to retell the story of HMS Hampshire, and her links to Sussex; as well as providing a biographical memorial to the fallen. The latter will be of interest to those seeking a greater understanding of the generation of men and boys who served in the Royal Navy during the Great War. For the sinking of the Hampshire events are described in the order they were reported in *The Times* newspaper; this is a good contemporary source and follows almost every aspect of the tragedy spread over 7 days of articles and notices. The Author has tried to provide a commentary regarding the events and personalities that adds to the contemporary reports and corrects any errors or omissions. Descriptions of the many aspects of the Memorial Service for Kitchener were also covered extensively in *The Times*, but in order to concentrate on the story of the Hampshire they have been, mostly, omitted from this account.

Day ONE – *The Times*, Wednesday 7 June 1916

The first news of the sinking of HMS Hampshire is a report from the newspaper's Special Correspondent from Edinburgh, dated 6 June, the day after the tragedy. Lord Kitchener is acknowledged as having passed through Edinburgh on his train journey from King's Cross on 4 June. He, and his party, would have reached Thurso, at the end of the line, and transferred to a vessel to cross the Pentland Firth and join the Fleet in Scapa Flow, the Navy's anchorage in the Orkney Islands. The place where the Hampshire went down was not known exactly at this time, but was

indicated as being to the West of the Island of Hoy. Descriptions of the wild and rugged nature of the location are combined with doubts about the ability of the crew to survive in the seas around the island prepared the Public for especially bad news.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Kitchener's principal companions, on his mission to Russia, were Sir Hay Frederick Donaldson, an Australian who was Chief Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Munitions; Lieutenant-Colonel Wilfrid Ellershaw (a Temporary Brigadier-General), an Artillery officer who had been an instructor at the Royal Military Academy; Mr Hugh James O'Beirne, an Irish career Diplomat and Government Minister; Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald Arthur Gerald FitzGerald, an Indian Army officer and Kitchener's Military Secretary; and, Mr L.S. Robertson, Assistant to the Director of Production at the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>2</sup> The nature of the mission to Russia is often explained as giving support and advice to the failing Imperial Russian war effort and for coordinating military offensives on the Eastern and Western Fronts.<sup>3</sup> This is a logical, but rather simplistic view. Britain appeared to be sending a team of munition production specialists, perhaps with a view to creating an efficient system for the arms factories of Russia? Kitchener is involved because he was blamed for the supply shortage of high explosive shells to the British Army on the Western Front in 1915, whilst he was in charge of the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>4</sup> His political masters could not alter Kitchener's unassailable standing with the British Public, but by applying, what we would now recognise as the Peter Principle, they could hand him a similar task to try again far away from the scene of his previous errors.<sup>5</sup> He could not, without admitting failure, decline to lead the mission.

A short piece follows quoting the Archbishop of Canterbury who alludes to Kitchener's preparation of the Army and laying down his life for his desired cause.<sup>6</sup> Both points are important to understanding Kitchener and his role, before and during the Great War. They will be dealt with later.

Finally, *The Times* coverage of 7 June is completed by a brief technical description of HMS Hampshire,<sup>7</sup> saying that the ship, "was launched at Elswick in 1903 and was commissioned two years later by the late Sir Robert Arbuthnot for service in the First Cruiser Squadron. She had a displacement of 10,850 tons, and her principal measurements were: - Length, 450 ft.; beam, 68 ½ ft.; draught, 25 ft. Her indicated horse-power was 21,508, giving her a speed of 23.47 knots, and she carried four 7.5 in., six 6 in., and 20 three-pounder guns and two torpedo tubes." There was also the rather poignant news that the Hampshire was the seventh Portsmouth based warship to be sunk, with great losses, in the past six days.<sup>8</sup>

### Day TWO – *The Times*, Thursday 8 June 1916

The second day's coverage concentrates on giving personal details of the dead and a possible survivor. Also an important Sussex connection is revealed. Amongst the announcements on the first page are two notices, located at the end of the Killed in Action section and set apart from the

rest, for Lieutenant-Colonel FitzGerald and Leslie S. Robertson.<sup>9</sup> The funeral of Colonel FitzGerald was to take place at Eastbourne on the following Saturday (10 June), no arrangements are published for the burial of Leslie Robertson.<sup>10</sup> Some details about Mr Robertson are given informing readers that he, “was the son of the late Sir William Robinson, formerly Governor of Madras, and was born in India in 1863; the original family name of Robertson was resumed in 1898. Mr Robertson had been Assistant Director of Production at the Ministry of Munitions since last July.”<sup>11</sup>

On page nine more detail is given about the imminent funeral in Sussex, and confirmation of the recovery of the Colonel’s body is advised to his sister, a Mrs May of Eastbourne, by the War Office.<sup>12</sup> Colonel FitzGerald, was not as well-known as Kitchener, therefore *The Times* deemed it necessary to introduce him as a heroic figure in the following anecdote; “Colonel FitzGerald saved the life of Lord Kitchener in Egypt in 1912 in circumstances which were fully recorded at the time. A plot to assassinate Lord Kitchener had been formed, and Colonel FitzGerald having received information about it and having a photograph of the man who was to carry it out, was on the lookout for him, and detected him near the carriage in which Lord Kitchener was riding. Colonel FitzGerald fixed the would-be assassin with his eye and at the same time covered Lord Kitchener, so that had the man fired Colonel FitzGerald’s body would have received the bullet. Fortunately the man hesitated and was arrested.”<sup>13</sup> This is of interest because it reflects FitzGerald’s personal relationship with Kitchener and the dilemma for the Authorities, who did not have the latter’s body for a State funeral. Mrs May was probably told by the War Office that they would respect the wishes of the family, for her brother to be buried alongside his father at Ocklynge Public Cemetery, but that arrangements were in hand for a full Military funeral.<sup>14</sup> The Country would witness, at Eastbourne, the burial of one brave soldier; but the mourning would also be for Kitchener, the hero they were unable to bury.

There were plans for the proposed Memorial Service at St. Paul’s Cathedral, with advice to apply for tickets early. Messages of sympathy were also published, on page nine, from Sir Douglas Haig, representing the British Army, and General Cadorna, the Italian Commander in Chief. The latter’s telegram was significant because Italy had recently (in May 1915) come over to the Allied Powers after withdrawing from an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

A ray of light shone out of the gloomy news surrounding the loss of the Hampshire, there may be a survivor! Under the headline “Supposed Survivor of the Hampshire”, the following story was printed; “News was received at Blyth yesterday which seemed to show that an able seaman named Richard Simpson had been saved from the Hampshire. Simpson’s home is at Tynemouth, but he had worked as a butcher at Blyth before joining the Navy. His mother, who lives in Tynemouth, received the following telegram from her son on Tuesday morning; - “All right. Don’t worry.” At that time no news of the disaster to the Hampshire had been published. The same morning Mrs Simpson had received a letter from her son, which had been posted on Sunday and apparently addressed from



the Hampshire. Up to last night it was not known whether he was in the ship when she was sunk.”<sup>16</sup> The arrival of Richard Simpson’s telegram and subsequent letter to his mother were probably both coincidental to the run of events, as they must have been sent prior to the sinking. Simpson was obviously a dutiful son who followed up his sparsely worded telegram with a fuller letter. What was not known then was that Able Seaman Richard Simpson, of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, was one of the survivors.<sup>17</sup>

Concluding the coverage on 8 June is a career resume for Herbert J. Savill, the Captain of HMS Hampshire. He was born in 1870 and entered the Navy as a cadet in 1883. Following an adventurous career as a junior officer he was promoted to Captain in 1907 and held a number of senior appointments before he went to HMS Hampshire in May 1915. He came to the Hampshire from commanding the HMS Powerful Training Establishment at Devonport. Also printed in the Paper is a list of the Ship’s Officers lost on 5 June.<sup>18</sup> (See Appendix One Officers lost in HMS Hampshire) Lieutenant Benjamin P. K. Greenhill, and Midshipman Alfred G. Larking, both on this list, have connections with Sussex.

### Day THREE – *The Times*, Friday 9 June 1916

Page one of *The Times* of 9 June carries four notices of officers lost on the Hampshire; Commander Manuel Dasent, the second-in-command, Fleet-Surgeon Penry Garnons-Williams, the senior medical officer, Captain Cyril Hazeon, commander of the marine detachment, and a name not mentioned before, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Robert Macpherson, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, aged 19. Young Macpherson was the Russian language interpreter of Kitchener’s party.<sup>19</sup>

More biographical detail is given about Dasent, Garnons-Williams and Hazeon, together with brief career biographies of Temporary Surgeon Hugh McNally and Sub-Lieutenant Humphrey Vernon, on page four. Commander Dasent was the grandson of the late Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry John Codrington, K.C.B. Fleet-Surgeon Garnons-Williams had been first appointed as a Naval Surgeon in 1899, both he and Captain Hazeon, of the Royal Marine Light Infantry, left widows ashore. McNally and Vernon were Irishmen. Temporary Surgeon Hugh McNally was originally apprenticed to a chemist but later graduated from Queen’s University, Belfast, with a medical degree, in 1915. His politics probably veered towards Home Rule because he held a command in the Belfast Regiment of the Irish National Volunteers, before he joined the Navy. Sub-Lieutenant Humphrey Vernon was a career Navy officer whose father Mr Fane Vernon, of Belturbet, County Cavan, was chairman of the Great Northern Railway Company of Ireland. He had two brothers serving in the Army.<sup>20</sup>

At last some good news, on page nine an official Admiralty press release lists the names of the 12 survivors. (See Appendix Two Survivors of the Hampshire) Apart from the earlier story of Richard Simpson, this is the first time other ranks of the Navy connected with HMS Hampshire have been named. There was some optimism, in the press, about Kitchener’s

body being found.<sup>21</sup> However, from the aforementioned arrangements for the funeral of Colonel FitzGerald it seems the Authorities did not share this view.<sup>22</sup>

The next connection with Sussex comes with the fifth name on the list of survivors, Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class Walter Charles Farndon (sic) K18337 (Po.). Walter Farnden's surname was subject to being continuously misspelled as Farndon, when it appeared in print. The error seemingly emanating from this list.<sup>23</sup> Biographical information is given about Walter Farnden in Part Two. (See *Walter Charles Farnden – A Survivor's Story*; this did not appear in *The Times*.)

Continuing the coverage on page nine, the location of the sinking is given as two miles off shore and to the north-west of the mainland of Orkney. The information emerges that Kitchener's party were put into a boat that was subsequently swamped by the sea. We are told that the weather was stormy during Monday, 5 June, with a gale blowing from the north-west, when the ship went down. Two hours later, a trawler passed the spot but found no trace of the sinking. By then the bad weather had abated and there were no signs of wreckage or bodies in the water.<sup>24</sup> Colonel FitzGerald's coffin was to be brought from the scene and laid to rest in a London chapel overnight before the journey to Eastbourne.<sup>25</sup> A rather terse comment is made in a letter to *The Times*;<sup>26</sup>

"Sir, Is no explanation to be given to us why the most valuable life the nation possessed was risked in an old ship like HMS Hampshire, unattended by any escort?  
Yours truly, C.H. Hamilton, St. George's Vicarage, Portsmouth, June 8." <sup>27</sup>

Arrangements for Lord Kitchener's Memorial Service are found on Page 11. The King did not want troops to line the route to St. Paul's Cathedral, presumably because they would be better employed at the Front. Again it is stated that Kitchener's body may yet be recovered.<sup>28</sup> The King's telegram of condolence to Kitchener's sister, Mrs. Parker,<sup>29</sup> read as follows;

"While the whole nation mourns the death of a great soldier, I have personally lost in Lord Kitchener an old and valued friend, upon whose devotion I ever relied with utmost confidence. To you and the members of your family I desire to express my heartfelt sympathy in the loss which has befallen you under such sudden and tragic circumstances.

GEORGE R.I."

Messages of sympathy, from individuals and organisations follow, firstly from the present Sirdar, or Commander in Chief, of the Egyptian Army. This position was originally held by Sir Henry Evelyn Wood, who reorganised the Egyptian Forces on European lines. They were subsequently used to secure the Country's borders in the conquest of the Sudan. Kitchener became Sirdar in 1892 and set about reforming what had become a rather ineffective and demoralised force in time for its success against the Sudanese rebels in 1898.<sup>30</sup> A message from the Italian

Navy (Britain's newest ally) is followed by one representing the New Army units in France.<sup>31</sup>

Creating the New Army was perhaps Kitchener's greatest achievement, and the one that is still remembered today through the famous "Your Country Needs You" recruiting posters. The reform of the Egyptian Army and the raising of the New Army had certain parallels. Both were achieved in the face of a national emergency to provide forces to quickly meet strategic objectives. In Egypt Kitchener was able to put his plans directly into operation because he was in charge. On 3 August 1914 he was made Secretary of State for War, a political appointment that gave him total control over the organisation of the British Army. Kitchener did not like what he found when he took over. A small British Expeditionary Force, consisting of Regular Army units, brought up to strength with reservists, had been despatched to stand alongside the Belgian and French forces. The Territorial Army, of part-time officers and men, was mobilised for home defence. When the BEF retreated some TA units were sent in support and the whole situation became dangerously stretched. Under the existing system the government of the day would have enlarged the TA. However, Kitchener was not endeared to the Territorials. He respected the other ranks who gave their spare time over to military training, but the officers were a different matter. There had been a number of cases reported in the press where TA officers voiced the opinion that they should have the right to decline to serve abroad. For individuals, who were accorded the privilege of holding commissioned rank, to act in this way, was an abomination to Kitchener. As a result he viewed most TA officers with suspicion. The Army needed to be expanded quickly and at a minimal cost to the tax-payer. Volunteers were called for, and found, under Kitchener's stern gaze and pointing finger. The campaign was also aimed at those individuals and bodies that would contribute their wealth to the task of expanding the Army. In Sussex, Claude Lowther paid for the raising of a number of battalions formed from Kitchener's volunteers. When these were trained to a serviceable standard the men were handed over to the control of the War Office. Lowther had provided the initial recruitment costs and been rewarded with command of these battalions. Multiplied over all the counties and cities of Britain these acts of individual and corporate financial assistance provided the means to enlarge the Army, speedily and economically, when they were desperately needed.<sup>32</sup>

The downside to the raising of the New Army units was witnessed shortly after the death of Kitchener. Originally nicknamed "Pals Battalions", because they encouraged men from the same villages, towns and cities to join up and serve together. When committed to the bloody and wasteful fighting of the Western Front offensives, some New Army units were decimated. This resulted in many localities losing men of military age in far greater numbers than if the units had been more widely recruited. Besides the men listed as dead and wounded in the casualty returns many came home from the front badly maimed or mentally scarred. The social and economic effects on the Pal's families and communities explain why the Public began to rail against the War, but also, for the first time, criticised Kitchener as the face of the recruiting campaign.

Concluding the coverage on page 11 are three more messages of sympathy from South Africa, India and Egypt. All places in which Kitchener had served and left his mark.<sup>33</sup> There are also some responses from the enemy regarding the loss of Kitchener to Britain's war effort. The question is asked, "Who will be his successor?"<sup>34</sup> This propaganda point would not be lost on the ordinary people of Britain and the Empire who had a complete confidence in all that Kitchener said and did. The Mayor of Chichester (Councillor S.A. Garland, JP), at a recruiting meeting, was quoted as saying "...there was no doubt if Kitchener did not get them one way he would another." This was not an original quotation by the Mayor, he had probably read it somewhere, but it did express the national faith in Kitchener as a competent and steady hand at the helm.<sup>35</sup> Finally a short piece tells the sad news that Brigadier-General Ellershaw, lost on the Hampshire, left four children.<sup>36</sup>

#### Day FOUR – *The Times*, Saturday 10 June 1916

The first page, of this issue of *The Times*, contains four killed in action notices connected with the sinking of HMS Hampshire. They are for Leslie Robertson, additional information about him says that he was the Secretary of the Engineering Standards Committee; Captain Herbert Savill, describing him as the third surviving son of the late Lt.-Col. S. G. Savill, of Boleyns, Bocking, Essex; Acting Sub-Lieutenant T.H.W. Sharples, aged 21 years, eldest son of the Rev. H. M. and Mrs Sharples, of Finghall Rectory; and Sub-Lieutenant Humphrey Vernon, described as the youngest son of Fane Vernon, of 1, Wilton-place, Dublin.<sup>37</sup>

An attempt is made to re-construct the events that led up to the tragedy of 5 June in an article entitled "The Loss of The Hampshire", on page eight.<sup>38</sup> According to the report the Hampshire, with Kitchener and his Staff, started from Scapa Flow at about 7 pm and sailed in a north-westerly direction along the western coast of the Orkney Mainland. All the time a stiff gale was blowing from the north-west, directly into the ship's path. Between Marwick Head and Brough of Birsay the Hampshire went down. A patrol vessel reported at 8.35 or 8.45 pm that a warship was on fire in the vicinity. It was speculated that the ship blew up, but no discernable explosion was heard. The report goes on to say that within 20 minutes HMS Hampshire had sunk. When compared to the later accounts of the survivors the timings of events are remarkably accurate. The patrol vessel that sent the report of a warship on fire was presumably further out to sea and to the west of the Hampshire otherwise she would have been too close to the rocky coast of Orkney in the teeth of the gale. We know from later accounts that the Hampshire struck a mine at around eight o'clock that evening and an explosion followed as the ship sank, taking about 15 minutes to disappear under the waves. If she witnessed the fire then the patrol vessel must have sent her message at approximately 8.20 pm and repeated it again 10 minutes later.<sup>39</sup> Observers on the shore saw four boats launched that were subsequently battered to pieces on the rocks. These may have included the Captain's gig, a light row-boat, also reported dashed on the rocks. The 12 survivors came ashore clinging to a Cayley [normally spelt Carley] Raft, well described as, "an inflated ring like a monstrous lifebelt." They were flung



onto the rocks at the base of the cliffs and were observed by a group of Islanders and policemen searching the cliff tops.<sup>40</sup>

The enemy propaganda continued when *The Times* reported, on page eight, that the Germans had foreknowledge of Kitchener's mission to Russia.<sup>41</sup> Their evidence was that a German newspaper had published a detailed account of Kitchener's life that they claimed was prepared to accompany the announcement that he was going to Russia. Spies in Petrograd were blamed for the information leaking out.<sup>42</sup>

Colonel FitzGerald's coffin was rested in St. Matthew's Church, Westminster, where it was strewn with floral tributes from personal friends and other mourners, before being taken to Victoria Station for the journey to Eastbourne. The Military funeral was to start at 1.15 in the afternoon.<sup>43</sup>

Wreckage of one of the Hampshire's boats was reported washed up on the Scottish mainland at Thurso Bay. Identification came from the ship's badge, a Tudor Rose, attached to the hull. There were also three seaman's caps, one of which bore the ship's name on its ribbon, along with an officer's peaked cap, all found on the beach. The realisation that Kitchener's body may never be found is expressed for the first time in the Newspaper.<sup>44</sup>

#### Day FIVE – *The Times*, Monday 12 June 1916

There are two relevant articles printed in this edition. The first is an official notice from the Admiralty confirming what is known, so far, of the sinking of HMS Hampshire;<sup>45</sup> the second a description of Colonel FitzGerald's funeral at Eastbourne, held on Saturday.<sup>46</sup>

Confirmation is given that the Hampshire struck a mine at about 8 pm on Monday, 5 June. She was accompanied by an escort of two destroyers as she left Scapa Flow, but the Captain ordered the escort back at about 7 pm, on account of the heavy seas. The survivors say that there was an explosion just before 8 pm and the ship sank in 10 minutes. Four of the ship's boats were launched but they all failed to reach the shore before they were dashed on the rocks. The only survivors were the 12 men clinging to a raft. All hope for further lives saved must be abandoned. Vessels were despatched to search along the coast and motor cars took search parties along the landward side of the area where the ship went down.<sup>47</sup>

An interesting description of the Eastbourne funeral is also given on page eight. The coffin, containing the body of Colonel FitzGerald, arrived at Eastbourne Station and was transferred onto a gun-carriage drawn by six horses, and driven by officers from the Army Service Corps. A wounded soldier in a bath-chair was seen to support himself against a wall as he stood to attention. Passing along the seafront the procession was watched by crowds who lined the route to All Saints' Church where the service began. The Bishop of Chichester officiated and the gathering included representatives from the family, foreign delegations and military officers

from many regiments and corps. Those accompanying the coffin to the grave formed up outside the church and processed to Ocklynge Cemetery, where the coffin was interred and several volleys fired over the grave.<sup>48</sup>

It is possible to watch the actual funeral, albeit on a grainy black and white newsreel film that lasts for 1 minute and 8 seconds.<sup>49</sup> This film shows three snatches of the event, firstly the coffin leaving Eastbourne Station, secondly the procession to the graveside at Ocklynge Cemetery, and lastly, the volleys fired over the grave. In the first sequence the ASC officers can be seen riding the three drive horses and sitting on the limber pulling the gun carriage. The coffin is draped with a union flag and soldiers in hospital uniforms are marching in front, presumably the contingent from Summerdown Convalescent Hospital that were mentioned in the *Times* report? Officers from the foreign delegations can be seen following the coffin. The second sequence at Ocklynge shows, in close up, most of the military mourners. Capitaine Jean de Vigurie, of the French Army, and Colonel Count Greppi, of Italy, are both resplendent in their exotic, well pressed, uniforms, standing out against the rather shabby khaki dress of the British Army officers. Count Greppi a tall man, with a waxed moustache, appears like a giant in his high crowned conical cap. One, rather gaunt looking, Naval officer follows the coffin. This is Commander Kitchener, RN, the Great Man's brother. There are many soldiers, with arms reversed and heads bowed, along the path to the grave. The final sequence shows long lines of soldiers, possibly from the Eastbourne College Officer Training Corps, firing over the grave. At the end of the closing shot two horses, frightened by the rifle fire, gallop across a field behind the cemetery. Sentimentalists, who witnessed the spectacle, may have thought they were the spirits of Kitchener and his friend FitzGerald making their departure from this world to the next.

### Day SIX – *The Times*, Tuesday 13 June 1916

A personal notice, on page one, at the end of the killed in action section, for Lieutenant Eric Verner Grey, of the Hampshire, aged 28. He is described as the elder son of the late Colonel Henry Grey and brother of Mrs J.A.C. Kreyer.<sup>50</sup> On page eight is a fascinating piece of writing by Engineer-Commander Arthur Cossey,<sup>51</sup> who describes the part played by HMS Hampshire at the Battle of Jutland in a letter to his sister. (See Appendix Three, HMS Hampshire at Jutland) This was written the day before the Hampshire sank and he lost his life. The brotherly tone of the letter and his lapses into vernacular language suggest that Arthur Cossey was a fairly down-to-earth character, although he held a senior appointment, being in charge of the boilers and engines of the Hampshire. His mention of visiting the stoke holds and congratulating the men on their efforts would have brought him into contact with Walter Farnden and the other Sussex stokers. Arther Cossey is not mentioned in the killed in action notices in *The Times*, therefore, it is surprising that his letter appeared in that Paper. Perhaps Mrs Woods offered her brother's story to the local press, who then passed it on to *The Times*?

At the foot of page eight a Late War News item gives some details of the recovery of the body of Lieutenant Humphrey Matthews, of the

Hampshire, washed ashore at Thurso.<sup>52</sup> His life saving collar was partially inflated and his wrist watch had stopped at 2 minutes past eight. A late 20<sup>th</sup> Century writer has made the observation that, "...numbers of bodies washed ashore had broken necks. It may be that in jumping from the stricken Hampshire, and hitting the water, the life support belt had actually snapped up under the chin of the wearer and thus men were killed outright."<sup>53</sup> The last relevant piece in this issue is on page 10, where a short biographical account of Lieutenant Eric Grey is given. This account states that he was born in 1887, educated at Twyford School, Hants., and Clifton College, joining HMS Britannia [the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth] in 1902 and became a midshipman in 1903.<sup>54</sup>

### Day SEVEN – *The Times*, Friday 16 June 1916

The Admiralty released the findings of the enquiry, held at Portsmouth, into the sinking of the Hampshire and some of these were printed on page nine. To achieve a balanced coverage part of the evidence given by two of the survivors followed the official findings and conclusions.<sup>55</sup> The report is preceded by a few words from Admiral Jellicoe, apologising for the loss of Lord Kitchener, whilst he was in the care of the Fleet. Taking into account that the official report was based upon the testimony of the survivors, but written up by the investigators, the following quotation was probably formulated as a result of much collaboration. "As the men were moving up one of the hatchways to their stations, Lord Kitchener, accompanied by a Naval Officer, appeared; the latter called out, "Make way for Lord Kitchener," and they both went up on the Quarter Deck, and subsequently four Military Officers were seen on the Quarter Deck walking aft on the port side." However, it does lend an air of normality to what would have been a confused and terrifying situation for all who were involved.

In his own evidence Leading Seaman Rogerson claims to be the last person aboard to see Kitchener, and refutes the idea that he was lost when a boat was swamped. Rogerson's evidence, that Kitchener went down with the ship, is in the heroic tradition and what the British Public would expect to hear. This seaman's narrative begins by discussing what he has read in the newspapers and it is rather surprising that this was acceptable to an official enquiry! He attributes the explosion to the ship hitting a mine that caused the ammunition to blow up in one of the forward magazines. This must have produced the fire as the ship went down. Also he confirms that none of the ship's boats could be launched and that the boats that were seen from the shore were rafts. Clinging on to one of these rafts, Rogerson began his ordeal in the water. After being buffeted for five hours in a rough and freezing cold sea, during which time men were being tossed about and slipping under as they died of exposure, his raft was thrown onto the rocks. Rogerson cannot recollect how he reached dry land, but completes his narrative by remembering the Hampshire in action at the Horn Reef (Jutland) the week before, and the kindness shown to him by the Islanders.

Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Wilfred Wesson's evidence is also given. This is less sensational than that of Leading Seaman Rogerson. Wesson is a skilled observer and mentions many details that validate his account. He starts

by saying that the crew were unaware of the Hampshire's destination and confirms the two destroyers of the escort were sent back due to bad weather. Following the explosion he found most of the hatches leading below the decks had been battened down and went along to the only open hatch to get up on deck. The cry of, "Make room for Lord Kitchener", which Wesson quotes, was very similar to the official enquiry's "Make way...." indicating that Kitchener's safety was Captain Savill's prime consideration. Wesson was diverted from witnessing the fate of his Captain and Lord Kitchener when he helped to open the hatches to allow the crew to come up from the holds. He says that the crew were at their stations, meaning the boats were filled and ready to be launched to abandon ship, as the Hampshire began to sink. Wesson went to the number 1 raft and climbed on just as it was floated off. There were about 43 men, some wounded by the explosion, on the raft. The boats could not be launched properly using the derricks because the electrical power had been lost following the explosion, forcing the boat crews to wait until they were lowered into the sea as the ship sank. Paddling away from the ship Wesson and his companions saw the Hampshire turn right over taking the men in the boats down in the vortex. Two other rafts had been launched that made it to the shore. He told the enquiry that among the 43 men on his raft were the following officers, an Assistant Paymaster, a Gunner and a Carpenter. Each of them was presumably dead or dying when the raft reached the rocks at the base of the cliffs. (See Appendix One for the names of the Assistant Paymaster and the Carpenter, the Gunner was one of two carried on the Hampshire)



**Wilfred Wesson, with pipe, and William Cashman, another survivor.**  
From *The Great War, I Was There*, Part 15, p607.  
Photo Cribb

It is not clear if Rogerson and Wesson were on the same raft, the official enquiry states all the survivors were on one raft, but in a final calamity it was dashed onto the rocky beach. The remaining men must have been thrown off and perished in the water or on the rocks. After five hours in a



storm tossed sea the other 2 rafts were also beached. The 12 survivors found enough fresh strength to distance themselves from the water by scaling the cliffs. Wesson says he scrambled to the top of the cliff and raised the alarm at a farmhouse; he was too overcome with exhaustion to be able to explain to the Islanders what had happened.<sup>56</sup>

The coverage of the loss of HMS Hampshire ends in *The Times* on 16 June, the War, however, carried on.

## Appendix One

### List of the officers lost in HMS Hampshire, 5 June 1916

(taken from *The Times* Thursday 08 Jun 1916, p10, Issue 41188)

Captain Herbert J. Savill  
Commander Manuel Dasent  
Lieutenant-Commander Francis G. Stewart  
Lieutenant Humphrey Matthews  
Lieutenant Eric V. Grey  
Lieutenant William W. Skynner  
Lieutenant Vincent G. Snow  
Lieutenant, R.N.R., Adolph C. Charlton  
Lieutenant, R.N.R., Evan H. Williams  
Lieutenant, R.N.V.R., Benjamin P. K. Greenhill  
Engineer Commander Arthur E. Cossey  
Engineer Lieutenant-Commander George H. Hirtzel  
Captain, R.M., Cyril S. Hazeon  
Chaplain, Rev. Philip G. Alexander, B.A.  
Fleet Surgeon Penry G. Williams  
Staff Paymaster Percy Cruse  
Temporary Surgeon Hugh F. McNally, M.B., B.A.  
Temporary Surgeon Harold G. Chaplin  
Sub-Lieutenant Humphrey F. Vernon  
Sub-Lieutenant Thomas H. W. Sharples  
Mate (T), Frederick Cook  
Assistant Paymaster, R.N.R., Mark L. O'R. Nugent  
Gunner Herbert J. Jennings  
Gunner Arthur L. Sutton  
Boatswain Arthur L. Lilley  
Signal Boatswain Arthur J. Mortieau  
Carpenter George T. Stallard  
Artificer Engineer Matthew B. Hobson  
Artificer Engineer Cuthbert A. T. Fincken  
Warrant Engineer, R.N.R., George M. Hunter  
Warrant Engineer, R.N.R., Peter Fisken  
Midshipman, R.N.R., William R. Sowden  
Midshipman, R.N.R., Charles A.E. Tucker  
Midshipman, R.N.R., Alfred G. Larking  
Midshipman, R.N.R., Clement S.B. Mallett  
Midshipman, R.N.R., Edmund E. Fellowes  
Midshipman, R.N.R., John A. G. Kanaar  
Clerk, Ralph T. Butler

## Appendix Two

### Survivors of the Hampshire

(Based on information in *The Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p04, Issue 41189)

“With regard to the loss of HMS Hampshire a further report has been received from the Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, that one warrant officer and 11 men have survived, being washed ashore on a raft. Their names are as follows: -

William BENNETT, Warrant Mechanician

John Robert BOWMAN, A.B., J.15316 (Po.)

Horace Llewellyn BUERDSELL, A.B., J.15527 (Po.)

William CASHMAN, Leading Seaman, 228580 (Po.)

Walter Charles FARNDON, Stoker, 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., K.18337 (Po.)

William Charles PHILLIPS, Shipwright, 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., 343500 (Po.)

Alfred Ernest READ, Stoker, 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., K.15762 (Po.)

Charles Walter ROGERSON, Leading Seaman, 236059 (Po.)

Richard SIMPSON, A.B., R.N.V.R., Tyne Z./5589

Frederick Lot SIMS, Stoker, 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., S.S.113075 (Po.)

Samuel Edward SWEENEY, Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., 153874 (Po.)

Wilfred WESSON, Petty Officer, 201136 (Po.)”

## Appendix Three

### HMS Hampshire at Jutland 30-31 May 1916 – Engineer Commander Cossey's letter

The following personal account of the role of the Hampshire at Jutland, the last deployment of the ship before the ill-fated voyage to Russia, was printed in *The Times* (Tuesday 13 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41192)

#### "THE HAMPSHIRE IN ACTION. ENGINEER-COMMANDER'S ACCOUNT.

Engineer-Commander Arthur E. Cossey, of HMS Hampshire, sent the following graphic account of his experiences in the naval battle to his sister, Mrs V.S. Woods, Maryfield, Retford, on the day before his ship, in which he lost his life, was sunk: -

I think I'll have time to send a short description of last Wednesday and Thursday. I see that the Admiralty have made public the fact that there was a scrap, so I'm not transgressing the censorship regulations. Like a bad penny, I've turned up in due course, and am none the worse for the experience. Wouldn't have missed the show for anything, for it was great and thrilling while it lasted. The good old Hampshire did all that was required of her, and had the satisfaction of loosing off her guns at the Huns, and was in a position to see a good deal of the whole action.

Don't be downhearted at the losses our Navy suffered, or place too much faith in the Hun account of what happened, as this will probably gloss over their own disaster and exaggerate ours. Of course, there is no getting away from the fact that our losses were heavy, but, beyond the three capital ships, do not affect the power of the Grand Fleet, and under the circumstances in which the fight took place were almost inevitable.

It was a matter of luck that those cruisers had to encounter ships far and away superior to them in all respects, for, like this ship, they are not intended to be in the fighting line, but only to form a screen and act as scouts. It just happened that the enemy turned that line instead of ours, and were able to dispose of them before the battleships closed up, just as they would have finished this ship in the other event.

#### CONDITIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE ENEMY.

At first all the conditions were in favour of the Huns, and to give the blighters their due they fought well and took advantage of the circumstances. But don't imagine they had it all their own way, for whatever the papers may say, you can take it from me that they were seriously crippled and only too glad to avoid conclusions with our Battle Fleet, which was practically untouched by gun-fire and would almost



certainly have wiped them out had the light held, or the Germans not cleared with all speed when our battleships started in. Even as it was our ships damaged them considerably in the short time they had within range of the enemy ships.

This ship was in action before our main fleet closed up, and had great luck in not being hit. The sea in our vicinity was stiff with submarines, and we rammed one and probably sank another by gun fire. We also let rip at a German light cruiser, which eventually was reported in flames. Up to this our battleships were not engaged except in dealing with submarines and mines; but when they came on the scene it was a grand sight, though all too short, since darkness was setting in and the Huns were already steaming away as fast as possible.

#### HAPPY TO BE IN IT.

To see the flashes of the big guns' salvos and hear the shells booming towards the enemy were worth a good deal, and I wouldn't be a bit happy if the Hampshire had missed it. Considering the number of submarines the Huns had, I think we were lucky not to lose even more capital ships than we did, and though there is a certain amount of disappointment that the action was not fought to a finish, there is not the slightest feeling of discouragement throughout the Fleet, and everyone is only too anxious for another chance right now, as the Americans say; and this, I fancy, is more than the Germans are.

This ship was steaming at full speed for a long time, and the men were splendid and worked like Trojans. When I visited the stokeholds to buck them up and tell them how well they were doing, they were as cheerful as crickets. Poor wretches they were dog-tired afterwards, but put up with all the hardships and lack of rest without a murmur.

There were Zepps out too, but I only saw one which came sailing over our Fleet after the action, and was a source of great interest, as few had seen a Zepp before. When seen it was fired at and made off without dropping any bombs.

I expect you'll be a bit bored over so much fighting talk, but you see we've been waiting so long for a shot at an enemy ship that the realization of it rather inclines one to dwell on the fact. This ship stayed out longer than the main portion of the Fleet, looking for lame ducks, and another ship with us managed to bag a submarine by gun-fire on Friday night.

Though we did lose a great number, you needn't be downhearted or think the Navy is in a bad way. It isn't, and I expect, when all the facts are published, it will be agreed that, comparatively speaking, our Grand Fleet is in a stronger position towards the Huns than before the action. So cheer up and don't put your faith in any pessimistic statements you may read or hear."

## Endnotes to Part One

1. *The Times* Wednesday 07 Jun 1916, p10, Issue 41187
2. Ibid.
3. Davis and Weaver, Eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921* (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 313
4. Davis and Weaver, *DNB 1912-1921*, p. 312
5. This states that an employee is promoted in an organisation to their level of incompetence, from Peter and Hull, *The Peter Principle*, 1969.
6. *Times* Wednesday 07 Jun 1916, p10, Issue 41187
7. Ibid.
8. Although not named, the other six ships referred to are probably the cruisers, *Black Prince*, *Invincible*, and *Queen Mary*; and torpedo boat destroyers, *Ardent*, *Fortune*, and *Shark*. All sunk by the enemy in the action off Jutland, on 31 May 1916.
9. The caution displayed by *The Times* reflects the fact that no cause had yet been attributed to the sinking of HMS *Hampshire*. These men may have been the victims of a maritime accident, so were listed after the casualties of Jutland and the land campaigns.
10. *Times* Thursday 08 Jun 1916, p09, Issue 41188
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Colonel FitzGerald's father, Charles John Oswald FitzGerald died in 1912.
15. *Times* Thursday 08 Jun 1916, p09, Issue 41188
16. Ibid.
17. Richard Simpson died one year later serving on the armed-merchantman SS *Thames* torpedoed off the East Coast. See Richard Simpson, *HMS Hampshire and Lord Kitchener*. Viewed 13 Dec 2013 at <http://1914remembering.wordpress.com/2012/05/18/richard-simpson>
18. *Times* Thursday 08 Jun 1916, p10, Issue 41188
19. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p01, Issue 41189
20. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p04, Issue 41189
21. Ibid.
22. The task of the Admiralty in discovering which members of the *Hampshire's* crew had perished was a horrendous one. Usually telegrams were sent to the next of kin when muster rolls had been matched to dead bodies. Up to 9 June only some 75 bodies had been recovered, thus holding up the despatch of telegrams, or the publication of complete casualty lists. For three different lists of the officers and men who went down with the ship, including that printed in *The Times*, see the [www.hampshire](http://www.hampshire) web link in note 23.
23. Frederick Sims, another of the survivors and a friend of Walter Farnden, was still using the wrong spelling when he wrote of his own experience during the sinking of the *Hampshire* in 1960! See

- Part 2 of the article in the *London Country Buses'* company magazine. Viewed 14 Dec 2013 at <http://www.hmshampshire.co.uk/>
24. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p09, Issue 41189
  25. Ibid.
  26. Ibid.
  27. Kelly's *Portsmouth Directory 1911-12*, reveals that the correspondent was the Reverend Clarence Haselwood Hamilton, MA, the vicar of St. George's, Portsea. He was misinformed about the lack of an escort, but was expressing a commonly held belief following the sinking of the cruisers Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue, by one German submarine in September 1914, that the Royal Navy contained some out of date ships. The naval arms race, before the Great War, resulted in Germany possessing mainly modern ships built over a short period. Britain built technologically advanced modern warships, but also kept in service older ones in order to maintain a numerical superiority over other navies.
  28. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p11, Issue 41189
  29. Ibid.
  30. Davis and Weaver, *DNB 1912-1921*, p. 308. Egyptian Army units were commanded by a mixture of British and Egyptian officers. Kitchener obtained, by transfer and promotion, a better type of British officer who would encourage and lead by example, raising the standard of the whole Force.
  31. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p11, Issue 41189
  32. The term New Army was applied to the battalions raised in this way. Many towns and cities used corporate funds to form units. Each unit was affiliated to a regiment of the Regular Army. For example, Lowther's battalions were named the Southdown Battalions for recruiting purposes, and when trained formed Service battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment, carrying the additional title Southdown.
  33. Davis and Weaver, *DNB 1912-1921*, pp309-311 Kitchener was appointed Chief of Staff to Lord Roberts in South Africa in 1899. He was Commander in Chief in India in 1902 and returned to Egypt as Consul-General in 1911.
  34. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p11, Issue 41189
  35. *The Littlehampton Observer and West Sussex Recorder* 09 Dec 1914 p05. West Sussex County Council and Record Office
  36. *Times* Friday 09 Jun 1916, p11, Issue 41189
  37. *Times* Saturday 10 Jun 1916, p01, Issue 41190
  38. *Times* Saturday 10 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41190
  39. The reports of the messages being sent at 8.35 and 8.45 pm probably reflected the time taken for decoding them.
  40. The search parties, being at the cliff top, must have found the survivors after they had climbed up the cliffs. This would explain why the sailors fell asleep being completely exhausted from their exertions.
  41. *Times* Saturday 10 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41190
  42. *The Times* seems to have been hoodwinked into publishing the theory of German prior knowledge, unless they wished to comment openly on the failure of Britain's ally Russia to prevent

secret information reaching the enemy. Most newspaper editors, around the world, kept written accounts of the lives of famous people continuously updated, to be used as obituaries when they died.

43. *Times* Saturday 10 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41190
44. Ibid.
45. *Times* Monday 12 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41191
46. Ibid.
47. Since the disaster some conspiracy theories have been based upon a story that the authorities did not encourage the Orkney Islanders to search for survivors. One theory was that there were secret papers, or even gold, that must not fall into the wrong hands. Another reason was that certain politicians did not want Kitchener to survive the sinking. (See Heathcote, T.A. *The British Field Marshals 1736-1997, a biographical dictionary* (Leo Cooper, 1999), p197.) From the accounts of the survivors it is apparent they encountered the Islanders, who were out searching for them, before any policemen or soldiers.
48. *Times* Monday 12 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41191
49. See Burial service for Col. O.A. Fitzgerald; friend of Lord Kitchener; who died with him when their ship; the 'Hampshire'; hit a German mine. Viewed 19 Dec 2013 at <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/burial-of-lt-col-o-a-fitzgerald-aka->
50. *Times* Tuesday 13 Jun 1916, p01, Issue 41192
51. Cossey was promoted to this rank on 1 June 1912. *The Navy List* August 1914.
52. *Times* Tuesday 13 Jun 1916, p08, Issue 41192
53. Liddle, Peter H. *The Sailor's War 1914-18* (Blandford, 1985), p.103. Lieutenant Matthews may have jumped from the ship, wearing his inflated life-saving collar, and died as he hit the water, when his watch stopped.
54. *Times* Tuesday 13 Jun 1916, p10, Issue 41192
55. *Times* Friday 16 Jun 1916, p09, Issue 41195
56. Ibid.