

Ralph Ernest CORNOCK



- Born:** 24th June 1871, Wotton under Edge, Gloucs
- Occupation:** Coastguard (Padstow)
- Enlisted:** Plymouth: 1st August 1914 (Royal Fleet Reserve)
- Unit:** HMS Monmouth
- Award:** Long Service/Good Conduct Medal
- Rank/number:** Able Seaman: No.142188
- Death:** Killed in action, 1st November 1914
- Detail:** Albert died when *Monmouth* and *Good Hope* were sunk by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* off Coronel in Chile. The old out-gunned British cruisers, crewed largely by raw reservists, were no match for the modern German ships and their well-trained crews. Heavy seas stopped *Monmouth* and *Good Hope* using their casement guns and, silhouetted against a dying sun, were easy prey. All 1,600 British sailors died.
- Age at death:** 44
- Naval info:** Ralph, a labourer, joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Seaman at Devonport on 8th July 1887. He was 15. Three years later he signed on as an Ordinary Seaman and spent 9 years serving on ships and shore establishments. In 1898 Ralph left the navy and became a Coastguard. He also joined the Royal Fleet Reserve, which required him to report for naval duty in time of war. That year he married Mary Ferriss, a girl born in Upper Kilcot near his home town in Gloucs. She was 23, he 26. Ralph served in Coastguard stations all around the West country and was promoted to Petty Officer. In October 1913, he was posted to Padstow where his wife and 4 daughters moved into a Coastguard cottage at Hawker's Cove. On the outbreak of war in 1914 reservists were called up and on 3rd August Ralph and two other Coastguard reserves, were cheered off by crowds at Padstow station. At Plymouth they joined *Monmouth*, an obsolete cruiser. Also aboard were two serving seaman from Padstow. Soon all sailed south to help the 4th Cruiser Squadron hunt *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, two German raiders. On 1st November these marauders sunk both *Monmouth* and *Good Hope* with all hands off Coronel in Chile, Britain's first naval defeat in a century. A month later both enemy ships were destroyed by the British. All 2,200 Germans, including Admiral Von Spee and his two sons, died.
- Grave/memorial:** Ralph is commemorated on Plymouth Naval Memorial, at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial. He is also on the WW1 memorial at Wotton under Edge, Gloucs along with 4 other Cornocks - 2 brothers and 2 cousins.
- Family info:** Father: Charles Cornock, born Wotton under Edge, Gloucs in 1850. Gardener. Mother: Ruth Heaven, born Kingswood, Gloucs in 1852. They married in 1870.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com