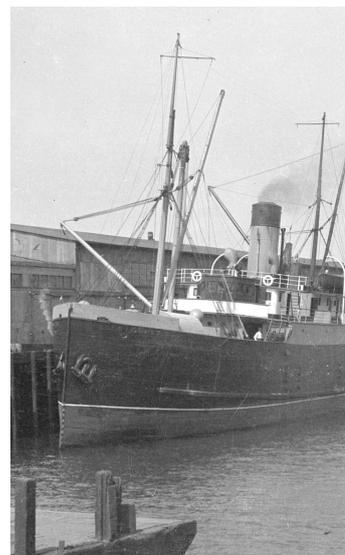


## George SKINNER

**Born:** 1897, St Wenn, Cornwall  
**Occupation:** Unknown  
**Enlisted:** After 1916  
**Unit:** SS Princess Ena  
**Rank/number:** Cook's assistant, Mercantile Marine Reserve  
**Death:** Died, 13th December 1918  
**Detail:** George died one month after the war aboard a RN Fleet Auxiliary vessel the *Princess Ena*. In December 1918, as the Spanish Flu was killing millions worldwide, the ship was working as a Fleet Messenger in the Mediterranean. Moving continually from port to port *Ena's* crew of 41 stood a high risk of catching the disease. George did so and did not survive.



**Age at death:** 21

**Military info:** George was 17 when the war started. He decided to serve at sea and joined the Maritime Marine Reserve. Prior to 1914 the Admiralty made important changes to ensure ships were manned in time of war. These included forming the Royal Naval Reserve from men of the Maritime Marine, today's Merchant Navy, the establishment of the Royal Fleet Reserve where retired naval men agreed to return to sea in wartime, and setting up an RNR trawler force using skippers and skilled crew from the fishing industry. Men from the Maritime Marine usually manned Mercantile Fleet Auxiliaries, merchant ships used in the war effort. These were operated either by the owners or the navy and both had different rates of pay and operating regulations. But this dual system hampered efficient crewing of MFAs and in August 1916 a pool of essential crewmen was set up called the Mercantile Marine Reserve on which the Navy could always draw. It was to the MMR that George belonged when in 1916 he arrived on board the *Princess Ena*, a one-time railway ferry which the navy commandeered. It had a brief career as a U-boat decoy ship, then it was sent for use at Gallipoli. In 1916 *Ena* became a Fleet Messenger operating between Salonika and Mudros. George's unremarkable war was fought with pots and pans amid the stifling steamy heat of a cramped ship's galley. Unheroic it may have been, but without George Skinner, and many thousands like him, the Great War could not have been fought and won.

**Grave/memorial:** George was probably buried at sea. He is commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, the Trevone War Memorial and the Padstow War Memorial.

**Family info:** Father: Charles Stanley Skinner, born Penryn, Cornwall in 1863. Farmer.  
Mother: Emily Jane Lobb, born St Wenn, Cornwall in 1867. In 1888 Charles and Emily married and in 1897 the couple had their only child, George.



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](mailto:smithpeter24@gmail.com)

+Lest we forget+