

Story behind the Padstow War Grave

PRIVATE William Moore, a gunner in the Royal Marines Light Infantry, was the only casualty when the U55 sank the 2,500-ton merchantman *Anna Sofie* four miles West of Trevoze Head on 23rd July 1918. The steamer was torpedoed without warning and William, who worked the ship's deck armament, died of abdominal wounds in Padstow's Royal National Mission for Deep Sea Fishermen two days later. His married sister, Mrs Mary Brennan, was at his side.

The *Anna Sofie*, a large cargo ship, was returning in ballast from Rouen in Northern France to Barry Roads in South Wales when she was struck. Four days earlier Kapitanleutnant Wilhelm Werner, commander of U55, had sunk the *Carpathia*, the liner that rescued survivors from the Titanic disaster in 1912. Private Moore, a 43-year-old veteran from Birkenhead, had been in the service since 1893 and over the course of 25 years he had served in a variety of ships and shore establishments. His record was exemplary. Though he had probably started to feel his age by the time the Great War started, William still managed to be present at the greatest naval battle of the conflict - Jutland. He was serving aboard the battleship *Revenge*, one of the newest and most powerful vessels in the Royal Navy, and worked one of the main gun turrets with a crew of other Royal Marines. The *Revenge* pounded the German High Seas Fleet for over an hour and a half. Though she did not suffer any major damage or a fatality during the engagement William was slightly wounded.

Kapitanleutnant Werner's career was considerably less glorious. He took command of U55 in June 1916 when he was 29 and went on to sink 63 ships. The hard-faced German officer also committed one of the worst atrocities of the war. On 8th April 1917 Werner sank the *Torrington*, an armed merchant steamer. Before sending her to the bottom he took off the 34 crew, lined them up on the submarine's deck and submerged, drowning them all. The only survivor was the ship's captain who Werner took back to Germany as his prisoner. Four days later Werner repeated his atrocity with the crew of *Toro*. The following year the U-boat commander continued his sadistic spree - but luck was on the side of his victims. On 4th January Werner torpedoed the hospital ship *Rewa*, but the ship was virtually empty and only four lives were lost. On 10th March he fired two torpedoes at another hospital ship, the *Guilford Castle*. One torpedo was a dud and the other missed.

After the war Werner faced war crimes charges, but he cheated justice. Scheduled to appear for trial at Leipzig he fled Germany and went to Brazil where he worked on a coffee plantation. He returned to the Fatherland a few years later where, unsurprisingly, he joined the Nazi Party. Werner eventually died, aged 57, on 14th May 1945, a week after Germany surrendered for the second time in 30 years.



PEACE: William's grave



NAZI: Wilhelm Werner