



William Edward RANGECROFT

Chief Stoker HMS Pathfinder

At KES:

Born in Camberwell, he was fatherless and came to KES in 1885. His occupation was the band but he was described as "troublesome". Not suitable for the army when he left in 1888 he joined the Royal Navy as a stoker.

Date of Death: 5th September 1914

Place: Drowned North Sea

Remembered on Chatham Naval Memorial

At the time of his death he had been promoted to Chief Stoker and received a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

At the beginning of September 1914 Otto Hersing of *U-21* ventured to the Firth of Forth, home to the major British naval base at Rosyth. Hersing is known to have penetrated as far as the Carlingnose Battery beneath the Forth Bridge. At one point the periscope was spotted and the battery opened fire but without success. Overnight Hersing withdrew from the Forth, patrolling the coast from the Isle of May southwards. From distance, on the morning of 5 September he observed the SSE course of HMS *Pathfinder* followed by elements of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla. The destroyers altered course back towards the Isle of May at midday while HMS *Pathfinder* continued her patrol. Hersing spotted *Pathfinder* on her return journey from periscope depth at 1530. This time he resolved to make an attack. At 15.43 Otto Hersing fired a single 50 cm (20 in) Type G torpedo.

5 September was a sunny afternoon. At 15.45 lookouts spotted a torpedo wake heading towards the starboard bow at a range of 2,000 yards. The officer of the watch, Lieutenant-Commander Favell gave orders for the starboard engine to be put astern and the port engine to be set at full ahead while the wheel was fully turned in an attempt to take avoiding action. At 15.50 the torpedo detonated beneath the bridge. The cordite charges may have then been ignited, leading to a flash causing a second, massive explosion within the fore section of the ship as the magazine blew up. The fore mast and No 1 funnel collapsed and then toppled over the side. The forensic evidence of the wreck is that everything before the first funnel disintegrated. The majority of the crew below decks in the forward section had neither the time nor the opportunity to escape