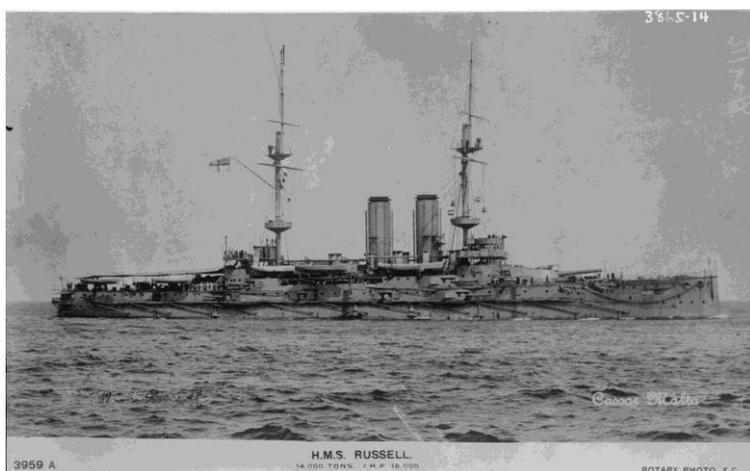# HENRY WILLIAM LAWRENCE JNR

Rank/Number: Ordinary Seaman   J/29598
Vessel: HMS Russell

Henry William Lawrence was born on 13th April 1989, the son of Alfred Edwin and Helen Lawrence of Linden Cottage, Whitfield. At this time his father was a bricklayer's labourer but he was later employed as a gardener. On leaving school Henry was employed as a jobbing gardener. On 24th February 1914 he joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Entrant, Second Class, thus following in the footsteps of his uncle, also called Henry William Lawrence who was at this time a Warrant Officer.

Henry was initially at HMS Ganges, a shore establishment in Shotley, Suffolk, where he received instruction on seamanship, signal training and wireless/telegraphy operation. In October 1914 he was regraded Boy Entrant Class1 and posted to HMS Pembroke at Chatham, before joining his first ship, HMS Russell, on 31st December 1914. HMS Russell was a Duncan Class battleship based at Sheerness to guard against a German invasion. Built in Jarrow in 1903, she was heavily armed, with a displacement of 14000 tons and a top speed of 19 knots.

After some time based at Rosyth, HMS Russell was refitted in Belfast before being assigned to reinforce the Dardanelles Squadron based at Mudros. In the first few weeks of January 1916, the ship was involved in the evacuation of Allied troops at Cape Helles on the Gallipoli Peninsula. On 13th April, his eighteenth birthday, Henry William Lawrence signed to serve twelve years in the Royal Navy.

On the morning of 27th April 1916 HMS Russell was steaming off the coast of Malta when she struck two mines laid by the German Submarine U-73. Fire broke out at the aft of the vessel and the order was given to abandon ship. Shortly after an explosion near the rear gun turret caused the ship to list. HMS Russell sank slowly, allowing the majority of crew members to escape, however 27 officers and 98 ratings, including Henry William Lawrence, were lost.

Henry's name is commemorated on the Royal Naval Memorial at Chatham. The obelisk overlooks the town and bears the names of 8517 Royal Navy personnel who died during the First World War and have no known graves.

*Detail of Panel 16,
Chatham Naval Memorial*