

# HENRY WILLIAM LAWRENCE

Rank/ No.: Chief Gunner  
Vessel: HMS Dido

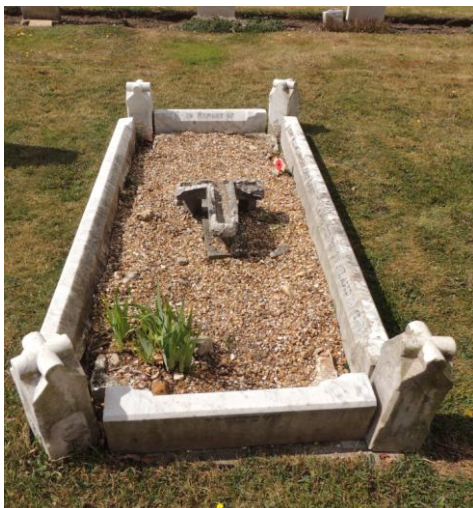
Henry William Lawrence was born on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1864, to William and Elizabeth Lawrence of Northbourne, Kent. His father was an agricultural labourer. The children went to school in Eastry. At the time of the 1881 Census, the Lawrence family had moved to Whitfield and Henry was serving in the Royal Navy.

Henry had joined the Navy as a Boy Entrant 2<sup>nd</sup> Class on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1881. He trained at HMS St Vincent and then joined HMS Hercules, the flagship of the Fleet Reserve. On his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he signed for 10 years service and was rated as Ordinary Seaman. He served on several vessels, including HMS Emerald, the last wooden cruiser built for the Royal Navy and served at the Royal Naval Gunnery School and HMS Vernon, home of the Royal Navy Torpedo Branch and earned regular promotion. He extended his service and in 1894 married Amelia Elizabeth Bridger at Portsea Island, Hampshire. In 1896 he was appointed Torpedo instructor at HMS Vernon.

In the spring of 1899, now Acting Gunner, Henry was posted to the Royal Navy's China Station where he served during the Boxer Rebellion. In 1908 there was a major earthquake in the Sicily and Calabria region of Italy and a number of Royal Navy Vessels were sent to Sicily to offer assistance. Henry was, at this time, serving on HMS Exmouth which landed men on the island to dig for survivors and help evacuate the injured and homeless. The Italian Royal Family commissioned a commemorative medal to be awarded to those who helped the Italian people; 598 members of the ships company, including Gunner Henry William Lawrence, received the medal.



*Messina Earthquake Medal 1908*



Returning to home waters in 1911 Henry had several postings before joining HMS Dido in 1913 as a torpedo specialist. He was promoted to Chief Gunner in 1914. HMS Dido, a cruiser, was used as a Royal Naval Depot Ship during the First World War, for various destroyer flotillas in home waters. On 25<sup>th</sup> January Henry was relocated to the battleship HMS Centurion but became ill before he could take up the posting. Henry was admitted to the Haslar Royal Naval Hospital in Gosport on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1917 and died from pneumonia two days later, aged 53. He is buried in the adjacent Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery.

He had served in the Royal Navy for 37 years.