



**Arthur Somerton, D.S.M.**

**World War I**

**Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve**

**Able Seaman**

**Service No. 1642X**

Arthur was born in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1893 to parents Reuben and Martha Somerton.

Like many young men of the day, Arthur enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1915. He was single at the time, 5' 10 ¼ " tall, had dark brown hair, blue eyes and was a fisherman by occupation. He was 21 at the time and signed up for a one-year period.

The one year of service turned into about four and a half years, spanning the time from 5 February 1915 to 18 June 1919.

During war service, Arthur served on thirteen ships and /or naval bases. His complete service record is provided below.

In this time, it is of interest to note one ship he served on. Namely the HMS (White) Oak (14 April 1915 – 4 June 1914)



HMS *Oak* showing her white hull and flying the Royal Standard of King George V, 20 November 1918

**HMS *Oak*** was a modified *Acheron*-class destroyer of the Royal Navy. Launched in 1912, she saw extensive service during World War I as a tender to the flagship of the Grand Fleet, and for this purpose she was painted white, instead of the usual warship grey.

*Oak* was tender to the flagship of the Grand Fleet throughout the war, including the Battle of Jutland, and had the distinction of having the same commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Douglas Faviell MVO, all her career. Her hull was painted white to distinguish her, and in the course of her duties she often carried the most important visitors. Of note, King George V travelled to Scapa Flow in 1915 for a two-day review of the Grand Fleet, crossing from Thurso. *Oak* also carried Lord Kitchener from Scrabster to Scapa Flow on 5 June 1916 before transferring him to the cruiser *Hampshire*, which struck a mine shortly before 19:30 the same day, with the loss of all but 12 crew, including Field Marshal Kitchener.

## Surrender of the German High Sea Fleet (1918)

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Distinctive in her white paint, *Oak* carried the German Rear-Admiral Hugo Meurer from the cruiser *Königsberg* to surrender on 15 November 1918, to Admiral Sir David Beatty on board his flagship, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, in the Firth of Forth.

Under the terms of the Armistice, the German High Seas Fleet went into internment at the Royal Navy's base at Scapa Flow - in Operation ZZ, 60 Allied battleships escorted 11 battleships, 5 battlecruisers, 8 cruisers and 48 destroyers of the High Seas Fleet into captivity. At 11:00 on 20 November 1918 King George V, Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales embarked in *Oak* and, preceded by the destroyer *Verdun*, steamed through the fleet, the Royal Standard at *Oak's* mainmast, cheered by every ship.

Arthur was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (D.S.M.) The announcement of the award is found in the London Gazette of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1918, Fourth Supplement 30687 page 5885. This item has reproduced below as a matter of record.

Following his demobilization from active service, Arthur returned to civilian life. The 1921 census of Bell Island Mines, centre has Arthur now married to a lady, Minnie from Bay Roberts and they have one child.

The 1935 census, now living in Bay Roberts paints a different picture. There are three children now and Arthur is a widow, having lost his wife in 1930.

1945, finds Arthur still a widow and with grandchildren. Arthur passed away in 1970 and is buried Coley's Point in St. John the Evangelist Cemetery next to his wife Minnie



FOURTH SUPPLEMENT  
TO  
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FRIDAY, 17 MAY, 1918.

*Admiralty, 17th May, 1918.*

**HONOURS FOR SERVICES IN ACTION WITH  
ENEMY SUBMARINES.**

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the following honour, decoration, and medals to the undermentioned Officers and Men:—

*To be a Companion of the Distinguished  
Service Order.*

Flt. Cdr. Robert Leckie, D.S.C., R.N.A.S.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross.*  
Lieut. John Stockton Rogers, R.N.R.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal.*  
Sea. Arthur Somerton, R.N.R. (Newfound-  
land), O.N. 1642X.  
Sea. William Vass, R.N.R., O.N. 2243D.

The following Officer and Men have been mentioned in Despatches:—

Asst. Payr. George William Turner, R.N.R.  
(killed).

Act. Ldg. Sea. Andrew Couper, R.N.R., O.N.  
3604C.

Act. Ldg. Sea. Frederick William Fairweather,  
O.N. 206795 (R.F.R., Po./B.6370).

Act. Ldg. Sea. Percy Griffiths, R.N.V.R.,  
O.N. (Tyneside), Z.9343.

Ldg. Sea. Francis Kelly, R.N.R., O.N.  
1700C. (drowned).

Act. Ldg. Sea. John McKenzie, R.N.R.,  
O.N. 3628C.

Sea. Philip Pigg, R.N.R., O.N. 7369A.

A.B. Charles Swansborough, O.N. 192215  
(R.F.R., Ch./B.6355).

A.B. George Taylor, R.N.V.R., O.N.  
(Mersey) Z.1218.

Act. Ldg. Sea. Thomas Willis, O.N. 207021  
(R.F.R., Po./B.6522).

**HONOURS FOR SERVICES IN THE AUXILIARY  
PATROL.**

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the following decorations and medals to the undermentioned Officers and Men in recognition of their services in vessels of the Auxiliary Patrol abroad

1542 X

Name as full

Arthur Somerton

Date of Birth 7th August 1873  
Place of Birth Portugal Cove, Ld  
Occupation Stevedore

Special Case AVE

Date and Period of U. S. Engagements.	Age	Height Ft. in.	Hair	Eyes	Complexion	Wounds, Scars, Marks, &c.
23-2 October 1915 - Recaptured for period of hostilities	✓	5-10 1/2 39	Dark Brn	Blue	Real	Welder on lower left forearm & flap retained. Left hand & wrist & scars on left forearm.

Ships, &c., served in.	List and No.	Rating.	Sub-ratings.			Badges.	Period of Service.		Character.	If Discharged, Whether, and for what Cause.
			Rating.	From	To		From	To		
Calypso	Rank No. 8009	Immlect				9.6.20	5 Feb 15	13 Feb 15	14/3/15-16	
Excellent	Rank No. 1721	Imm					11 Feb 15	13 Apr 15	14/3/15-16	
White Oak	Rank No. 12	"					11 Apr 15	14 June 15	14/3/15-17	
Danish (Mersey)	Rank No. 1725	"					5 June 15	20 Dec 15		
Danish (Mersey)	Rank No. 2697	"					24 Dec 16	7 Mar 17		
Victory I	Rank No. 153	"					8 Feb 17	14 Apr 17		
Excelsior	Rank No. 14	"					15 Apr 17	10 June 17		Demobilized
President's	Rank No. 5	"					11 June 17	30 Dec 17		Demobilized
President	Rank No. 14	"					9 Jan 18	24 Apr 18		
Victory III	Rank No. 15	"					25 Apr 18	25 June 18		
President III	Rank No. 5	"					06 June 18	26 Mar 19		
President III	Rank No. 5	"					27 Mar 19	20 Oct 19		
Victory III	Rank No. 15	"					21 Apr 19	15 June 19		1000 hrs Shore Detail

PAID WAR GRATUITY.  
Rept to Britan  
12/1/19

Class for Conduct. ✓

Clothing and Bedding Gratiation

REMARKS

\* Vide March 17 Ledger Drill Centre  
 @ Gen 3 nos 1-2-15  
 \* Reverts to Naval rates 3/12/18  
 Awarded D.M. while London-fog 17-5-18  
 Luskhoff (Lt 2276/351)  
 Some request in regard to  
 count for increase of pay  
 pension, etc, vide C.O. Service