



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 7th 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 5th 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)

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 14th, 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
The London Gazette.

Of TUESDAY, the 14th of MAY, 1918.

Published by Authority.

The Gazette is registered at the General Post Office for transmission by Inland Post as a newspaper. The postage rate to places within the United Kingdom, for each copy, is one halfpenny for the first 6 ozs., and an additional halfpenny for each subsequent 6 ozs. or part thereof. For places abroad the rate is a halfpenny for every 3 ounces, except in the case of Canada, to which the Canadian Magazine Postage rate applies.

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. (Newfoundland), 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
in full

Arthur Somerton
Special Trade AVE

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

| 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 & bones 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 | Immect | | | | 9.6.20 | 5 Feb 15 | 13 Feb 15 | 14.3.15-16 | Demobilized, Mobilized |
| 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 | |
| Dominion (Merich) | Rank No. 1725 | " | | | | | 5 June 15 | 20 Dec 15 | | |
| Dreadnaught | Rank No. 2697 | " | | | | | 20 Dec 15 | 7 Mar 17 | 14.3.15-17 | |
| Victory I | Rank No. 153 | " | | | | | 8 Mar 17 | 14 Apr 17 | | |
| Excelsior | Rank No. 14 | " | | | | | 15 Apr 17 | 10 June 17 | | |
| President's | Rank No. 5 | " | | | | | 11 June 17 | 30 Dec 17 | | |
| Boston | Rank No. 14 | " | | | | | 9 Jan 18 | 20 Apr 18 | | |
| Verd III | Rank No. 15 | " | | | | | 25 Apr 18 | 25 June 18 | | |
| President III | Rank No. 5 | " | | | | | 06 June 18 | 26 Mar 19 | | |
| Verd III | Rank No. 15 | " | | | | | 27 Mar 19 | 20 Oct 19 | | |
| Boston | Rank No. 14 | " | | | | | 21 Apr 19 | 15 June 19 | 10 Jul Shore Detach | |

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

Class for Conduct. ✓

Clothing and Bedding Gratiation.

REMARKS

* Hide Book 17 Ledger Dreadnaught
 @ Gen 3 pgs 1-2-15
 * Revert to Naval rates 3/12/18
 Awarded D.M. while London - Aug 17-5-18
 Luskhoff (Ch 2276/30)

Some suggestion should be made to Court for increase of pay pension, etc, vide Ch. 2276/30

Clipping from The Daily News dated 13 August 1968 of a birthday celebration held at Branch 32 of The Royal Canadian Legion in Bay Roberts for two Comrades – Arthur Somerton DSM and Lorenzo Roberts who both celebrated their birthdays on 07 Aug and are both Veterans of World War I.

Celebrate birthdays

A birthday party was held in the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 32, Bay Roberts, in honor of Mr. Lorenzo Roberts and Mr. Arthur Somerton D.S.M. They celebrated their birthdays on August 7th. Both are veterans of World War I.

They were presented with gifts of Legion membership links by Past President Arch Bad-

William Bursley, President, praised them for the work and interest they have always shown in the Branch.



Mr. Arthur Somerton D.S.M. and Mr. Lorenzo Roberts shown cutting their birthday cake.