



## **Able Seaman John Francis Allen alias Smith**

John Francis Allen was born on 1st June 1893 his birth registered in the June Quarter of 1893 in the Wesbury Registration District. His baptism is recorded in the Dilton parish registers on 7th July 1893 his mother being recorded as a single woman residing in the Union Workhouse. A duplicate entry of baptism appears to be recorded in the Westbury Parish Registers.

In the September Quarter of 1894 Martha Allen married John Smith. It is not known whether John Smith was the natural father of John Francis Allen.

The 1901 census for Yarnbrook, North Bradley has the family listed as follows:-  
John Smith, Head, 40, self employed hawker of oil born in North Bradley; Martha, Wife, 29, Charwoman, born in Westbury; John, Son, 7; Annie, Daughter, 5; Winnifred, Daughter, 4; David G., Son, 3. (all 4 children recorded as being born in North Bradley). Also listed is Frank Hamstead, Nephew, 6, born in Bristol and a boarder, Henry Harding aged 59 and a batchelor, recorded as a retired coach fireman?

It would appear that he joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Second Class J9650 on 20th September 1910 based aboard HMS Ganges II an onshore training establishment. He is described as 5' 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " tall with a 34 inch chest measurement, his hair colour brown with grey eyes, of fresh complexion with a small scar on the nape of his neck. By the time he had reached age 18 he was 5' 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " tall.

On 7th January 1911 he was transferred to HMS Hannibal, a majestic class battleship. On the 16th January 1911 he gained the ranking of Boy 1st Class and on the 19th May of that year transferred to HMS Jupiter another majestic class battleship. A short time later on 1st June 1911 he made the rank of Ordinary Seaman and signed on for 12 years Royal Naval Service. On the 6th June 1911 he transferred to HMS Dreadnought a technically advanced battleship.

The 1911 Census taken aboard HMS Mars at midnight on Sunday, 2nd April 1911 lists John F Allen, age 17, single, Boy 1st class born Westbury, Wiltshire amongst its number.

The 1911 Census for Yarnbrook, North Bradley records:-

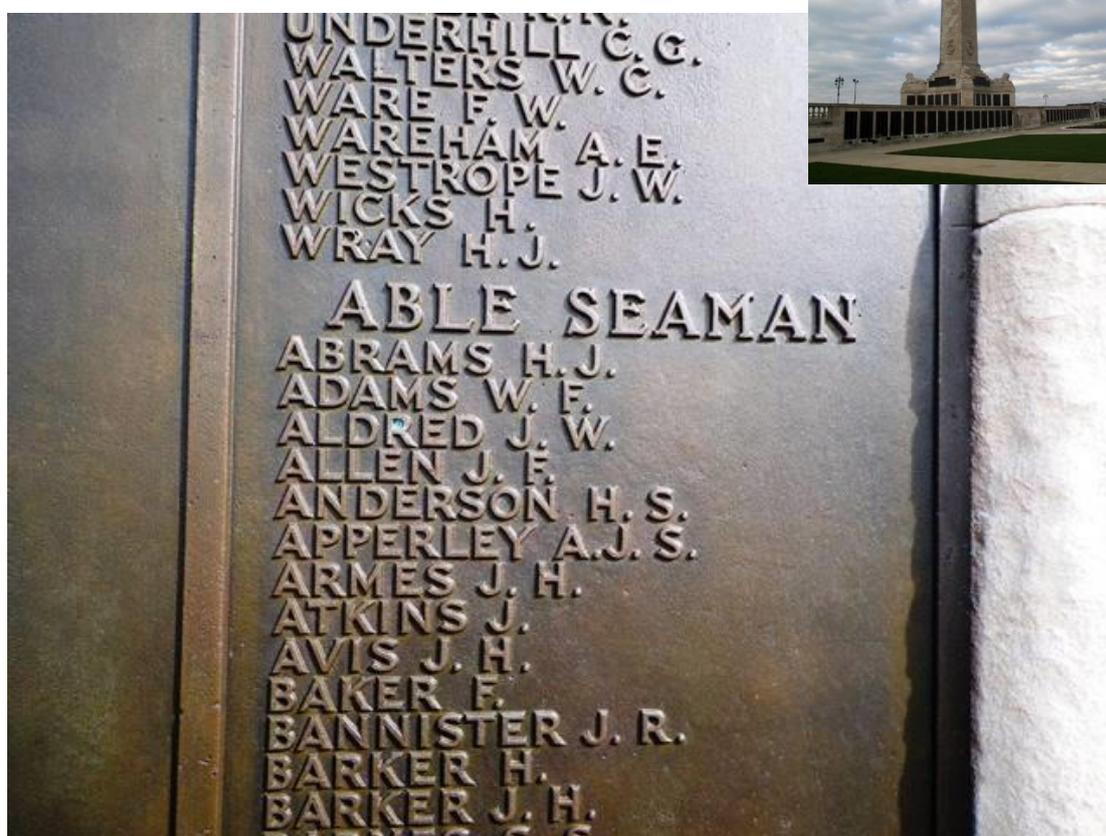
John Smith, Head, 50, Farm Labourer, born in North Bradley; Martha, Wife, 39, Charwoman, born in Westbury; George David, Son, 13, Errand boy, born North Bradley. Henry Harding is still listed as a lodger living off private means.

John Francis gained the rank of Able Seaman on 3rd January 1913 and was transferred to HMS Victory I, a naval shore training establishment, on 1st July 1913. On 19th October 1913 he transferred to HMS Excellent a shore based gunnery school in Portsmouth.

He is recorded as having died aboard HMS Angler on 2nd December 1914 whilst serving as part of the Portsmouth Local Defence Flotilla based at HMS Excellent. It is known that John and two other shipmates were washed overboard during inclement weather.

At a court of inquiry on 10th December 1914 it is recorded thus:- Loss due to the heavy weather experienced at the time and no blame is attributable to anyone on board.

Since John was lost at sea and his body unrecovered he is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on the Esplanade at Southsea. His name is recorded on Panel 1.



At the time of his death his next of kin is recorded as Mrs. Martha Smith of Yarnbrook Road, North Bradley on John's Naval Record. His record of commemoration on the CWG list John Smith as his father and his mother as the late Martha Smith of Yarnbrook, Wiltshire

Although his parents were resident of Yarnbrook, North Bradley at the time of his death he is not named on the war memorials that record North Bradley servicemen and women.