

Martyn Henry LANGFORD



Born: 1884, Padstow, Cornwall
Occupation: Serving naval surgeon
Enlisted: Commissioned: 5th November 1909
Unit: HMS Challenger (Also HMS Inflexible)
Rank: Lieut-Commander Surgeon
Awards: DSO
Death: Died, 15th December 1918
Detail: The 1918-19 Spanish Flu pandemic killed more people than any other medical event in history - an estimated 100m worldwide. It hit East Africa in October 1918 and *Challenger* at Dar es Salaam on 3rd December, where the sicklist trebled overnight. The virus put 56 in the sick-bay, 46 in hospital and 8 in a grave.

As a doctor, Martyn was right in the firing line, and on 15th December he died.
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Age at death:

Military info:

The sang-froid Martyn Langford exhibited in the sick-bay on *Challenger* was not the first time he had proved his mettle. In 1915 he was awarded the DSO for his actions when *Inflexible* struck a mine in the Dardenelles on 18th March that year. Besides killing 27 men, the blast had caused the battlecruiser to list dangerously, flooding the fore torpedo flat and filling it with poisonous fumes. Despite this Martyn continued to work coolly in the semi-darkness to bring up the wounded. On 8th December 1914 Martyn was also involved in the Battle of the Falklands, when *Inflexible*, along with other British ships, sank the German cruisers *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig* and *Nurnberg* in revenge for their sinking of the *Monmouth* and *Good Hope* off Chile one month earlier in which 5 Padstow sailors died. On 28th March 1916 Martyn took a shore posting at the Royal Naval Hospital, Chatham. He was promoted to staff surgeon on 5th November 1917, but on 23rd of December he headed back to sea on the old cruiser *Challenger*. Just over a year later he was dead.

Grave/memorial:

Martyn is buried at Dar Es Salaam (Upanga Road) Cemetery, East Africa, and commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and Padstow War Memorial.

Family info:

Father: Henry Johnson Langford, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1853. Timber merchant. Mother: Mary Emma James, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1855.

Additional info:

Martyn was educated at Miss Tubbs's School, North Hill, Plymouth and later at Plymouth College. He was related to Capt. William Martyn, a notable local figure in the 1880s. Martyn is the cousin of Edgar Spear Martyn and related by marriage to both George Wood and Arthur Cross. All died in the Great War and all are listed on the Padstow War Memorial.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com

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