

ABLE SEAMAN WILLIAM HALLING

221206, *HMS Monmouth*, Royal Navy

Died aged 27 on 1 November 1914

Remembered with honour on the *Plymouth Naval Memorial*
Commemorated in Tewkesbury in the Abbey and in Ashchurch



*Plymouth Naval
Memorial*



A.B. William Halling
[Graphic 21/11/1914]



HMS Monmouth
[www.rushenhistory.com]

WILLIAM HALLING may have been pre-ordained to join the Navy. He was born on 15 October 1886 at Tirley to Thomas Halling and Jane (formerly Biggs), married in 1880. In 1891 the family was living at Newmans Cottage in Deerhurst, and Thomas was Captain of a Severn Trow. By 1901 the family was living at 'Severn-side' in Deerhurst; Thomas was now a boat-owner and William most probably worked with him. In about 1908 the family moved to 'Severn Dale', Ashchurch Road, then newly-built houses (in 2015 opposite P.J. Nicholls' garage). They were still living in Ashchurch Road in 1911, when Thomas was a Master Mariner.

William had already joined the Royal Navy, in June 1902, serving initially as a 'Boy 2nd Class' on the training ship, *HMS Impregnable*, at Devonport. His service record shows that, in April 1903, he was made 'Boy 1st Class' with his character described as 'Very Good'. He then served on several ships until, on reaching the age of 18 on 15 October 1904, he signed up as an Ordinary Seaman for 12 years. He was posted initially to *HMS Vivid I*, the training depot, before being transferred to sea on two pre-dreadnought class battleships, *HMS Empress of India* and then, in March 1907, *HMS Queen*. In April 1907 William was promoted to Able Seaman. Although he spent 7 days in the cells at one time, his character continued to be described as 'Very Good' at the end of each year.

Until August 1914 William served on several ships: *HMS Aboukir* (on 1911 Census), *HMS Egmont* (depot ship, based in Grand Harbour, Malta), *HMS Lancaster*, *HMS Indus* (training ship at Devonport), *HMS Donegal*, returning to

HMS Vivid I before joining *HMS Highflyer*.

In August 1914 William was transferred to *HMS Monmouth* and sailed fatefully for the south-east coast of the Americas. On 1 November, off the coast of Coronel in Chile, *HMS Monmouth*, *HMS Good Hope* and *HMS Glasgow* engaged Admiral Von Spee's more powerful German squadron. In the *Battle of Coronel*, both *HMS Monmouth* and *HMS Good Hope* were sunk with all hands. It was the worst British naval defeat of the First World War and the first British defeat at sea since the War of 1812.

Able Seaman William Halling was one of the crew of 735 on *HMS Monmouth* who were lost. His obituary appeared in the *Register* on 14 November 1914: '*Tewkesbury man lost with HMS Monmouth ... it is feared that ... he must be regarded as having lost his life. This communication was accompanied by a memorandum from the King and Queen, expressing their deep regret and an expression of sympathy. Seaman Halling joined the Navy when he was a lad, and at the time of his death was 27½ years of age. He was at home on leave in July last, when he was attached to HMS Highflyer, on which ship he was serving when she ... sunk the German armed cruiser, the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, off West Coast Africa on the 27th August. Mrs. Halling was unaware that her son had been transferred to HMS Monmouth until she received the intelligence that his life had been lost in the service of his King and country.*'

William Halling's name is commemorated on the Ashchurch Memorial, Tewkesbury Volunteer Memorial and Plymouth Naval Memorial. He was awarded the '1914 Star' medal.