



Trinity Historical Society

Newsletter, Issue 1

March 2021

K. Coope, J. Morris, Eds.

The Trinity Historical Society is in the process of repairing the War Monument located in St. Paul's churchyard in Trinity. The monument was originally erected by the Loyal Orange Lodge in 1921 near St. Paul's School, and later moved to its present location. We have received a grant from Veterans Affairs Canada that will cover half the cost and we hope to complete the work in 2021.

There are many stories of tragedy from the two World Wars and 21 belong to the men whose names are engraved on the Trinity War Monument. We have done extensive research on these men and would like to share their stories as a way to honour their memory. The first of these stories is presented in this first issue of our newsletter.

If you have more information about these men, or would like to do more research, please contact the Trinity Historical Society at tci@nf.sympatico.ca or call 709-464-3599 or mail us at PO Box 8, Trinity, NL AOC 2S0. You can also visit our website at www.trinityhistoricalsociety.com



Walter John Spurrell



Walter, the son of John Spurrell and Diana Piercie, was born in Trouty on May 28, 1890. He joined the Newfoundland Division of the Royal Naval Reserves in WWI. He died in the sinking of the SS Torrington on April 8, 1917. He was 26.

Walter's family tree is shown in the figure right. He married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ann Clifford in Cuckhold's Cove on December 18, 1912





On April 8, 1917 Walter Spurrell was serving as a seaman onboard the defensively armed British steamer Torrington enroute from Italy to Cardiff in ballast to pick up a cargo of coal. The SS Torrington was 390 feet long, was registered at 5597 tons, and carried a crew of 34 in addition to the master, Captain Anthony Starkey.

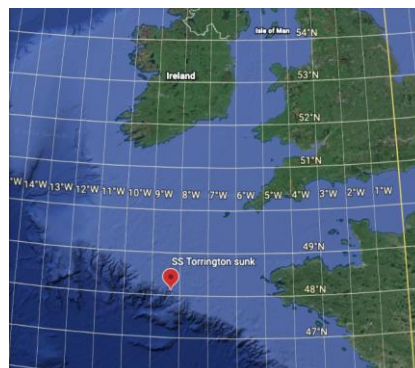


SS Torrington & Captain Starkey

Shortly after 11:30 am on April 8, 150 miles SW of the Isle of Scilly, the lookout on the Torrington spotted a lifeboat. She altered course toward the lifeboat and was struck just forward of the bridge by a torpedo launched by the submarine U55 under the command of Wilhelm Werner. Captain Starkey ordered the crew into the port and starboard lifeboats. The submarine then surfaced and came along side.



The captain and the crew in the starboard lifeboat were taken onto the deck of U55, and Captain Starkey was taken below as a prisoner. German sailors from the sub took the lifeboat back to the Torrington and looted her of supplies. The sub closed her hatches and submerged with the Torrington crewmembers on deck, leaving them to drown. Twenty minutes later the sub resurfaced and picked up the members of the German crew from the starboard lifeboat and the looted provisions. Captain Starkey later noted supplies aboard the sub that had come from the port lifeboat, however the fate of the crew in the port lifeboat is unknown. None of the 34 crewmembers were ever seen again. Walter John Spurrell was one of those missing crew members and his name is listed on the Beaumont-Hamel Memorial in France, among the 820 Newfoundlanders missing in action in WWI



Position when sunk