

PULVERTAFT PAPERS

A Newsletter on the Pulvertofts & Pulvertafts

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EDITORIAL

My last editorial reflected the uncertainty which is associated with leaving the armed forces after what feels like a lifetime of service. The experts suggest that the process should be treated like a bereavement but, as I certainly didn't intend to include a black edged entry in "Notes & Queries", Mary Rose and I celebrated the event by spending a month in Australia and a few days in her home territory - Hong Kong. We naturally included all the resident Pulvertafts in our tour: Michael and Ann in Sunshine Beach, "Allie" (Evans) in Toowoomba and "Caz" (Giardini) and "Bin" in Sydney.

Once back in this country, I was lucky enough to land an appointment in Whitehall where I work in the middle ground between several Government departments and the media. Fascinating work, and the London base should allow me to continue my delving in the archives to keep these pages filled. Please don't read that as a signal to stop sending Pulvertaft and Pulvertoft information as every scrap is welcome. A happy Christmas - D.M.P.

NICHOLAS PULVERTOFT OF KIRTON

Several years ago the historian who introduced me to the Pulvertofts - Michael Tunnard - told me of some research which he had done in about 1984 at Magdalen College, Oxford on the court rolls and books of the manor of Molton Hall in Frampton.

Apparently the President and Scholars of the College have been "Lords of the Manor" there from the mid-15th century, at which time they took over a fine collection of deeds that go back to within 100 years of the Conquest. The Court Rolls go back to Elizabeth I and, though he found no Pulvertofts in the deeds, he found one in the Court Books; and so he wrote:

"On 10 April 1570 the Kirton Register records the burial of one William Grave (whose name also appears in these court records as Greyf and Greve). He left a widow Margaret who, only two months later (6th June) was snapped up by Nicholas Pulvertoft. It has often been my experience that young widows with land in the 16th and earlier 17th centuries were seldom left long in their widowhood - which is scarcely surprising since so many of the farms in "Holland" were not large enough to support two families, and while their fathers were able-bodied quite a lot of younger sons had to gain experience by working as labourers on other men's holdings - even going as far afield as Norfolk, as happened in my own family."

"In the court of that year (1570 - there was only one court a year in this manor, always held in October) the jury presented that before his death William Greyf had "surrendered" the lands to his wife for life, and she acknowledged herself to hold them at a rent of 2s. 6d. - a figure that must have been fixed scores, perhaps even hundreds of years earlier - court suit and homage, and held by a 67th part of one knight's fee - to such an absurdity had these things reached. Nicholas Pulvertoft

thereupon acknowledged himself to hold them in right of his wife, was admitted and made his fealty."

"Thereafter Nicholas Pulvertoft served on a number of occasions on the court jury. He seems to have been a man of some parts, and his progress in the estimation of the village is interesting. On his first appearance as a juror (1572) he was 16th in the list; in 1573 he was 11th and in 1574 he was elected foreman, a job usually only given to a man of some special standing in the community. In 1575 he was demoted to second place, giving way to Anthony Coney as foreman, whose family were armigerous, who in nearly all references is styled "gentleman", and who (significantly) was buried in Kirton church, where his tomb can still be seen and his M.I. read. In 1576 and 1577 Nicholas Pulvertoft was again foreman, but in 1578 he took second place once more, this time giving way to Thomas Pury, "gentleman", also of an armigerous family. And so it went on; every time he appeared on the jury he was either himself foreman or played second fiddle to a man of higher rank in the parish."

Michael Tunnard went on to ask if Nicholas's burial was recorded at Kirton and, although his marriage can be seen on Vol 2, p 18 of these papers, there is no trace of his death there. (He is however given a mention in Vol 1, pp 11 & 12 and 66 & 67.)

Despite the absence of a burial record, an Administration Bond detailing the goods and chattles of Nicholas Pulvertoft, granted in C.C.Lincs in 1612, would seem to relate to him rather than anyone else. It describes him as Nicholas of Algarkirk, yeoman and includes a long list of belongings valued at £34 13s 8d but, as it also includes a long list of debts, including one of £40 "Upon a judgement that Mr Sandill doth lay against the goods", his widow (in whose house some of the belongings are said to be) may not have been well provided for.

ROBERT JOHN PULVERTAFT

Robert John Pulvertaft - or "Bob" as he was known to his friends - seems to have been the first member of the Pulvertaft family to join the Royal Navy. Born in Cork on 8th January 1873, he was the second of five children of John Pulvertaft and Annie Victoria Waugh. (See Vol 1, p 27)

His "Certificate of Service in the Royal Navy" shows that he volunteered on 9th October 1888 and entered as a "Boy", he being only 15 years old and 5ft 5½ins tall. He entered the Gunnery Branch, qualifying first as "Gun Captain" and then "Turret Captain" in 1894. He became a Petty Officer in 1894 and a Chief Petty Officer in 1903.

The years around the turn of the century saw great changes in the Royal Navy as both Great Britain and Germany built up the strength of their armed forces in preparation for war. Bob Pulvertaft saw service in many ships, including HMS Colossus (1894-96), HMS Devastation (1896-8), HMS Canopus (1899-1902), HMS Commonwealth (1905-07), HMS Hannibal (1909-10) and HMS Ramillies (1910-11). By 1913 he had completed his 22 years of pensionable service and left the Navy - but not for long as he rejoined in August 1914 for war service in HMS Jupiter (1914-15) and HMS Valiant (1916-19).

On 18th March 1896 he was married at St Nicholas Church, Cork to Louisa Ellen Collings, daughter of Frederick Henry Collings - a coachsmith from Exeter - who had moved to Ireland with his family when Louisa was only nine years old and where they had become neighbours with the Pulvertafts. Robert and Louisa had three daughters; Eileen Florence, Phyllis Louise and Marjorie Roberta; all of whom now live in the south of England.

The photograph opposite shows Robert and Louisa Pulvertaft with their eldest daughter, Eileen, taken in Plymouth on her fifth birthday.

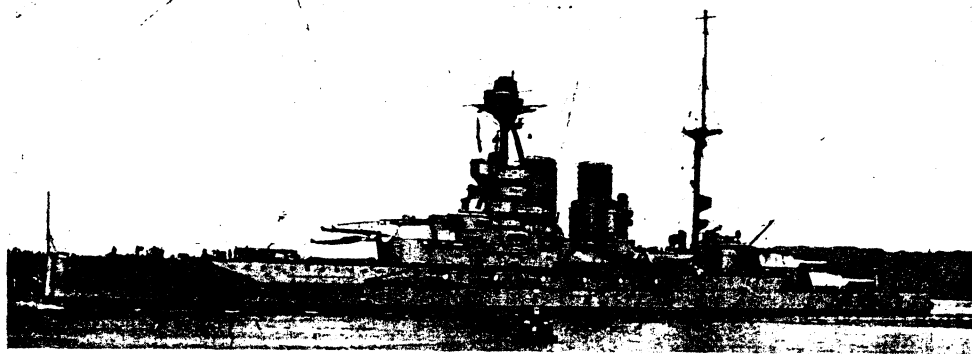


ROBERT, EILEEN AND LOUISA PULVERTAFT

As we have already seen, Robert Pulvertaft's service during the the First World War consisted of drafts to HMS Jupiter, employed on ice-breaking duties near Archangel, and HMS Valiant - including her action in the Battle of Jutland. We do not have any personal accounts of his experiences, but it does not require too much imagination to visualise the conditions in the arctic in a warship of that period and his service in HMS Jupiter was recognised when, in 1916, he was awarded the Russian Medal (1915) "For Zeal".

We do of course know something of HMS Valiant's part in the Battle of Jutland as she was one of the Navy's newest and fastest battleships which, with the rest of the 5th Battle Squadron, had been moved from Scapa Flow - where the Grand Fleet was assembled under Admiral Sir John Jellicoe - to become part of Vice Admiral Sir David Beatty's Battle-cruiser Fleet at Rosyth.

Having intercepted signals from Admiral Scheer to the German High Seas Fleet on 30th May 1916, the Grand Fleet put to sea from Scapa Flow, Invergordon and Rosyth and headed for the North Sea. The next day the two fleets took part in the only great sea battle of the war. Countless books have been written about the action, the decisions by its commanders, and whether either side



VALIANT.

could claim to have won. Suffice to say from Bob Pulvertaft's viewpoint in HMS Valiant, they engaged the enemy only minutes after the battle commenced and no doubt as a Gunnery rating he was in the thick of it. In the words of the Chaplain to HMS Valiant writing in 1918:

"We had been engaged for over three-and-a-half hours, and for part of that time with a very much superior force. But alone of all our squadron we came through it absolutely untouched. I think that that was very largely due to the skill with which the ship was handled.

By Friday, June 2nd, we were back in the anchorage from which we started, and set to work at once to replenish our stocks of fuel and ammunition.

As Valiant had no need to go into dock for repairs we got no leave."

But, compared with the rest of the fleet, Valiant was extremely lucky as six major warships and 6,000 British lives were lost that day. The part that they played was recognised and in 1918 Robert Pulvertaft was awarded the Russian Medal of St George, 4th Class "For services rendered in the Battle of Jutland".

In 1921 he received the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He had already been awarded his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in February 1906.

He left the Royal Navy in 1919 and was employed at Bull Point Ammunition Depot but ill health forced him to retire, first to Horrbridge, then to Crownhill and finally to Lipson Vale where, in February 1940, he died. He was buried at Efford cemetery, Plymouth.

His widow, Louisa Pulvertaft, survived him for a further thirty five years as she lived to the wonderful age of 105. She was cremated, also at Efford.

