

**Scarborough Mercury** 23/08/1918:- U-BOAT VICTIMS. - SEVEN OUT OF TWENTY ONE. - At an inquest on three seamen, held at a North Eastern port on Tuesday, the Coroner said they were the victims of a German submarine, which torpedoed their vessel. The vessel was laden with coal, voyaging from a British port to a foreign one. It was torpedoed and sunk about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

The crew consisted of twenty-one men, and four of them, including the captain, were killed outright by the discharge of the torpedo. The three on whom the inquest was held died in hospital after being landed. There were five injured men still in hospital. The remaining nine members of the crew had gone to their respective homes. The Coroner added that he deprecated very much the absurd reticence shown by the authorities with respect to military operations on land in France and Belgium. A great many regiments and individuals had performed heroic acts, and should have the reward of their great deeds by being named, which was the custom among the Australians, Canadians, and Americans. Why not with us, he did not know. At the same time he strongly approved of reticence being observed with reference to the sinking of our merchant vessels by German submarines.

The names of the three deceased were Albert Kennedy (30), ships steward, 20 South Pine-street, Gateshead; Lancelot Burn Marshall (35), chief marine engineer, 106, Fort-street, South Shields; and Joseph Crispin, a coloured man, about 21, mess-room steward, 26, Clive-street, North Shields. A youth of sixteen, a member of the crew, stated he was asleep in his bunk when the vessel was torpedoed. He rushed up and jumped overboard and commenced to swim to a jolly boat, but the suction by the sinking of the vessel drew the boat down and he made for a raft, which he got on along with others. They were in the water about ten minutes when they were picked up by a patrol boat. The vessel was hit amidships and was practically cut in two.

She sank in a couple of minutes. The patrol boat picked up all the survivors, who had scrambled on to the rafts, one of which was fore and one aft. Corroborative evidence was given and a verdict was returned that the death resulted from the act of an enemy submarine.

08:10

Friday 31 August 2012

# Seaport town a cosmopolitan microcosm of imperial nation

IT is often considered the country today is a diverse one with a rapidly changing society reflecting cultures from afar.

Yet the town of North Shields in the years before the First World War was already a mixed community.

People from across the globe residing in squalid and cramped accommodation offered in numerous 'licensed lodging houses' sitting 'cheek by jowl' with the pubs and shops offering wares along what was known as the 'Low street'.

This collection of five blocks of buildings ran the length of the north side of the harbour town's riverside, from the New Quay with the ferry landing for South Shields along Liddell Street, Clive Street, Bell Street through to Union Quay and the Fish Quay.

Wards Directory for 1915-16 (a cross between an electoral register and a phone directory) includes names resonant of Scandinavia, eastern Europe, Greece and the Levant.

Included is Joseph Crispin, a man from much further away.

Born in Sierra Leone, his name does not betray his west African origins.

The merchant vessel on which he served as a mess room steward – SS Eros (London) – was lost on August 19, 1918, off the east coast near Scarborough.

A report of an inquest as reported in the *Scarborough Mercury* of August 23 tells of his being brought ashore alive but subsequent death in hospital. "The vessel was laden with coal ... It was torpedoed and sunk about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The crew consisted of 21 men."

The three on whom the inquest was held died in hospital after being landed.

The names of the three deceased were Albert Kennedy, 30, ship steward, of 20 South Pine Street, Gateshead; Lancelot Burn Marshall, 35, chief marine engineer, of 106 Fort Street, South Shields; and Joseph Crispin, about 21, mess room steward, of 26, Clive Street, North Shields.

Crispin's name is included on the Tower Hill Memorial alongside those of his six shipmates lost to enemy action, including Joseph Brown, of Argyle Street, Tynemouth – the first mate.

However, the Tynemouth World War One Project' research has failed to find any record of Joseph Crispin's burial locally in Scarborough or elsewhere.

It can only be speculated if his family in Sierra Leone ever learned of his fate and resting place, thousands of miles from his home.