

# Gunner William Joseph Barker

## Royal Marine Artillery



William Barker enlisted in the Royal Marine Artillery at Southampton on 6th April 1915 at the age of 19 and served throughout the Great War until November 1919.

Before joining up he was a sawyer (probably working at Mulford's Timber Yard) and lived at The Royal Oak, then a public house run by his parents Rhoda and Walter Barker.

After His initial training he was drafted to **HMS Superb** and embarked on board on 1st January 1916 as a Gunner 2nd Class.

**Superb** was one of the powerful *Bellerophon Class*

(Dreadnought) Battleships armed with 10 giant guns of 12inch calibre, mounted in turrets fore and aft. In The Navy at that time, the two rear gun turrets (X and Y turrets) on battleships were manned by Royal Marine Artillerymen.



In July 1914, the Grand Fleet was moved to its war base at Scapa Flow, including *HMS Superb*, commanded by Captain Edmund Hyde Parker, where Bill Barker would have joined her. The fleet remained there for most of the war, except on 31st May 1916 when they put to sea to engage the German High Seas Fleet at the Battle of Jutland. On that occasion, *Superb* was the Flagship of the Fourth Battle Squadron, flying the Flag of Rear-Admiral Alexander Ludovic Duff.

The following is an extract from the 'Report of Proceedings' of the Battle from Captain Hyde Parker, *HMS Superb*:

6.26-50. "*Superb*" opened fire, green 80, range about 10,400 yards. First two salvoes out for deflection (enemy apparently stopped or reduced to slow speed, not at first realised). Third and fourth salvoes straddled and hit. Ship seen flaming fiercely amidships and aft. She disappeared in a dense cloud of white smoke.

About 7.20. Observed certain enemy ships in line with some destroyers ahead, a large ship resembling the "*Derfflinger*" was clearly seen, but opinions differ as to how many were seen astern of her, some say two, some say three, of which one is described as resembling the "*Helgoland*" class. Personally I think they were Battle Cruisers. "*Superb*" opened fire on the supposed "*Derfflinger*" at 7.20, steaming apparently nearly parallel to us. We could not get a range, so opened fire at 11,000 yards without deflection

correct, but first salvo short. She was hit with the third and fourth salvoes, and then turned away heavily on fire aft.



Bill Barker's Service Record Sheet show that he remained aboard *Superb* until January 1918 when he was drafted for training on 'Siege Guns". The hand written entries are difficult to read, but it appears that between June and December 1918 he served in a Siege Gun Battery. The only place these guns were deployed was on the Western Front near Ypres and pictured below are 15inch guns of the RM Artillery in position near the Menin Road where they were used to support the infantry.



Bill Barker was married in Busbridge, Surrey on 27th October 1918 to Maude Bowman. He was discharged from the Royal Marines on 27th



November 1919 with a War Gratuity of £25 and returned to live in Greywell. Bill and Maude had a daughter Margaret, all photographed here during the 1920s.

Gunner William Joseph Barker RMA was awarded a Good Conduct Badge in April 1917. At the end of the war he was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

