

William Johnson Townsend

Chief Steward, MV Scottish Minstrel (London), Merchant Navy

Died July 16th 1940, aged 48

Commemorated on Tower Hill Memorial, London

Son of Septimus and Isabella Townsend;

husband of Kate May Townsend, of Port Isaac, Cornwall



William Townsend was not a Port Isaac man, but the husband of Kate May Remick, the younger sister of Dorothy and Tom. Born in 1892, the son of Septimus and Isabella, he has left few records of his life to us, but he had previously served in the Army, and perhaps the 'Black and Tans' who were disastrously deployed in Ireland between 1920 and 1922.

After his brother-in-law Tom was killed he tried to rejoin the Army, but was judged to be too old, so he entered the Merchant Navy instead, as a chief steward. In January 1940 he shipped from Falmouth aboard the SS *Scottish Minstrel*, a 6,998 tons tanker bound for Louisiana.



MV Scottish Minstrel: The T on the funnel is the mark of Tankers Limited, the owners



William Johnson Townsend, 1930

The *Scottish Minstrel* was built in 1922 at Vickers Ltd at Barrow-in-Furness and owned by Tankers Limited of London. She was 6,998 tons and was capable of carrying a cargo of 9,200 tons of fuel oil at a speed of 10 knots. On July 16th 1940 she was returning across the Atlantic as part of convoy HX-55, when she was hit by one torpedo from German U-boat U-861 (*captained by one of the top U-boat aces, Jurgen Oesten*) at 56.10N, 10.20W, 130 miles off the north west coast of Ireland, sinking the next day. The Master, Peter Dunn, and 31 crew were picked up by HMS *Gardenia* and eventually landed at Folkstone, but 9 crew members were lost including William Johnson Townsend. He is commemorated on panel 93 of the Tower Hill Memorial, in Trinity Square Gardens by the Tower of London.

These are the details of the 9 crew lost that day –

Walter Musker Robert **Aspin**, First Radio Officer, aged 40

Frank Watkin **Charles**, Chief Officer, aged 52

Jack **Cruz**, Bosun, aged 57

William George **Demellweek**, Able Seaman, aged 37

Jack **Dunne**, Able Seaman, aged 33

John William **Hedley**, Carpenter, aged 30

John Anderson **Hunter**, Second Officer, aged 30

Richard James **Jones**, Pumpman, aged 50

William Johnson **Townsend**, Chief Steward, aged 48

Sources:

Scottish Minstrel: <http://www.uboa.net/allies/merchants/426.html>


Family Information: Courtesy of Janet Townsend, Jonathan Richards and Elizabeth Broughton.


In Memory of
Chief Steward
William Johnson Townsend

M.V. *Scottish Minstrel* (London), Merchant Navy who died on 16 July 1940 Age 48

Son of Septimus and Isabella Townsend; husband of Kate May Townsend, of Port Isaac, Cornwall.

Remembered with Honour
Tower Hill Memorial




Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission