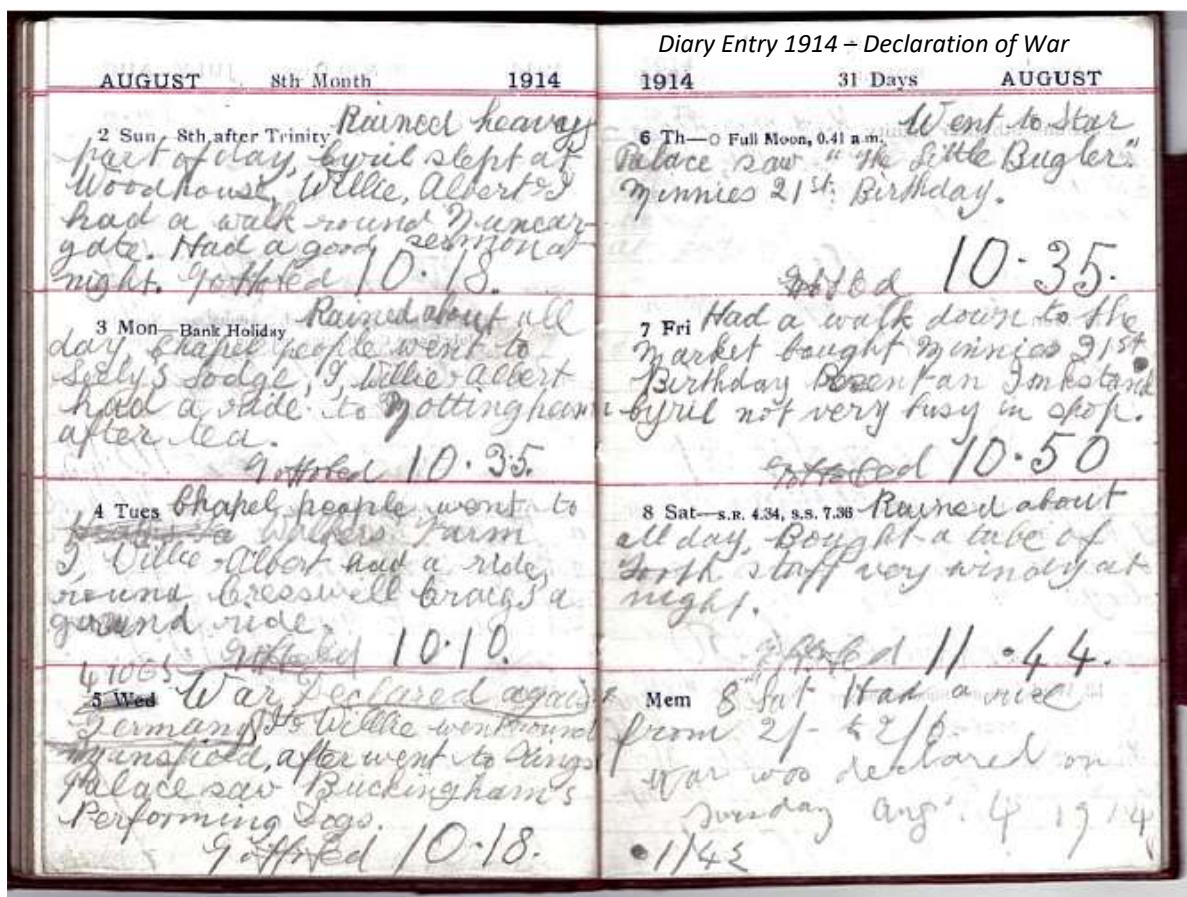


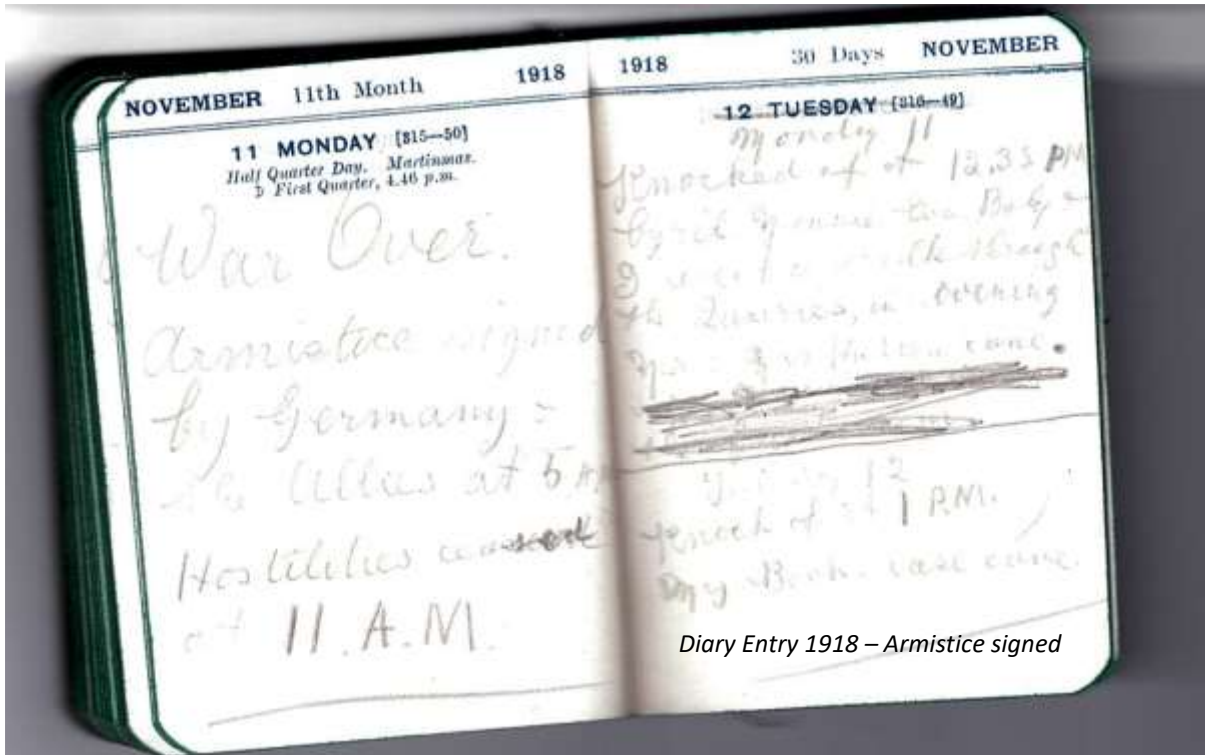
Chapter 6: Global and National Events

Of course, I am particularly interested in what grandad did during the war and how the war affected him and his family. This is not a topic about which I ever recall him speaking although I think I was aware of some of the basic facts outlined later. At first glance, the diaries don't seem to add much as they do not appear to speak directly at great length about the war. Part of the problem is that there is no diary for 1916. It is not clear if this is because he did not keep a diary that year or if he did but, over time, it has been lost. Whatever, the reason, it is not known whether anything significant happened to him in that year. The 1915 diary does taper off to some extent so it may be that he did not keep a diary the next year. But, it is the only missing year between 1914 and 1975. So, it seems likely that he did keep a diary for 1916 but that this has now been lost.

He did note some of the main events of the war including the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914 and the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918.¹ On 18 August 1914, he noted that the British Army had landed in France and that, on 29 August 1914, the British won a victory in the North Sea. He also recorded that by 4 September 1914 there had been 10,345 British casualties.



¹ The signing of the armistice was also noted by Edith Searson in her book(let) "I Remember" (p35).



Diary Entry 1918 – Armistice signed

In December 1914, grandad noted that the Germans had bombed Scarborough. Earlier, on 26 November 1914, he recorded that a warship exploded at Southampton and only 12 out of a crew of 800 had been saved. From [elsewhere](#)², it appears that this was HMS Bulwark and that this occurred on the River Medway in Kent.

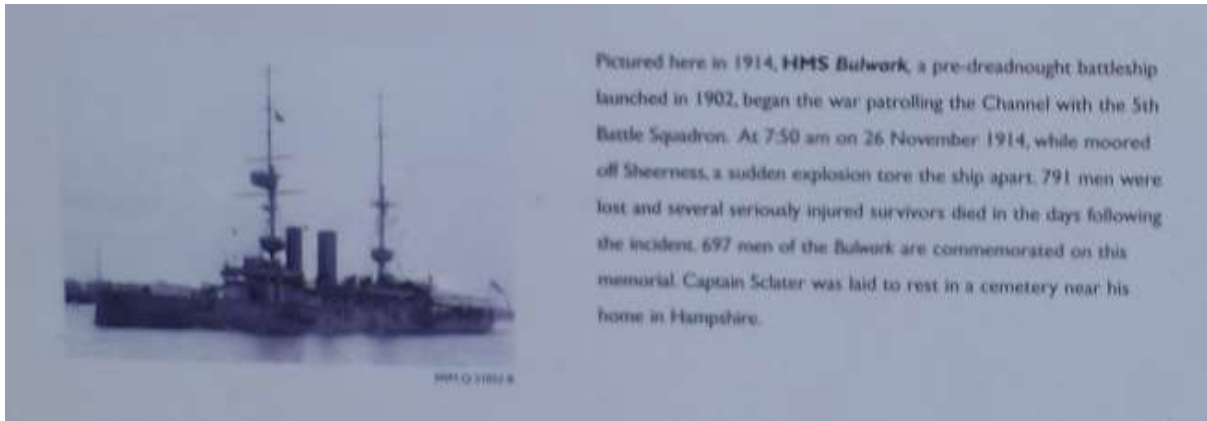
On 26 November 1914, **HMS Bulwark**, a 15,000 ton battleship was moored at Kethole Reach on the River Medway. She was taking on coal from the airship base at Kingsnorth. Just before 8am, an explosion ripped the ship apart. The explosion was heard as far away as Southend. The explosion killed 796 officers and men. Of the 14 who initially survived, five subsequently died of their wounds. While sabotage was initially suspected, the subsequent court of naval enquiry concluded that an accident had occurred which had caused the ammunition for the ship, stored in corridors, to explode.

HMS Bulwark at anchor

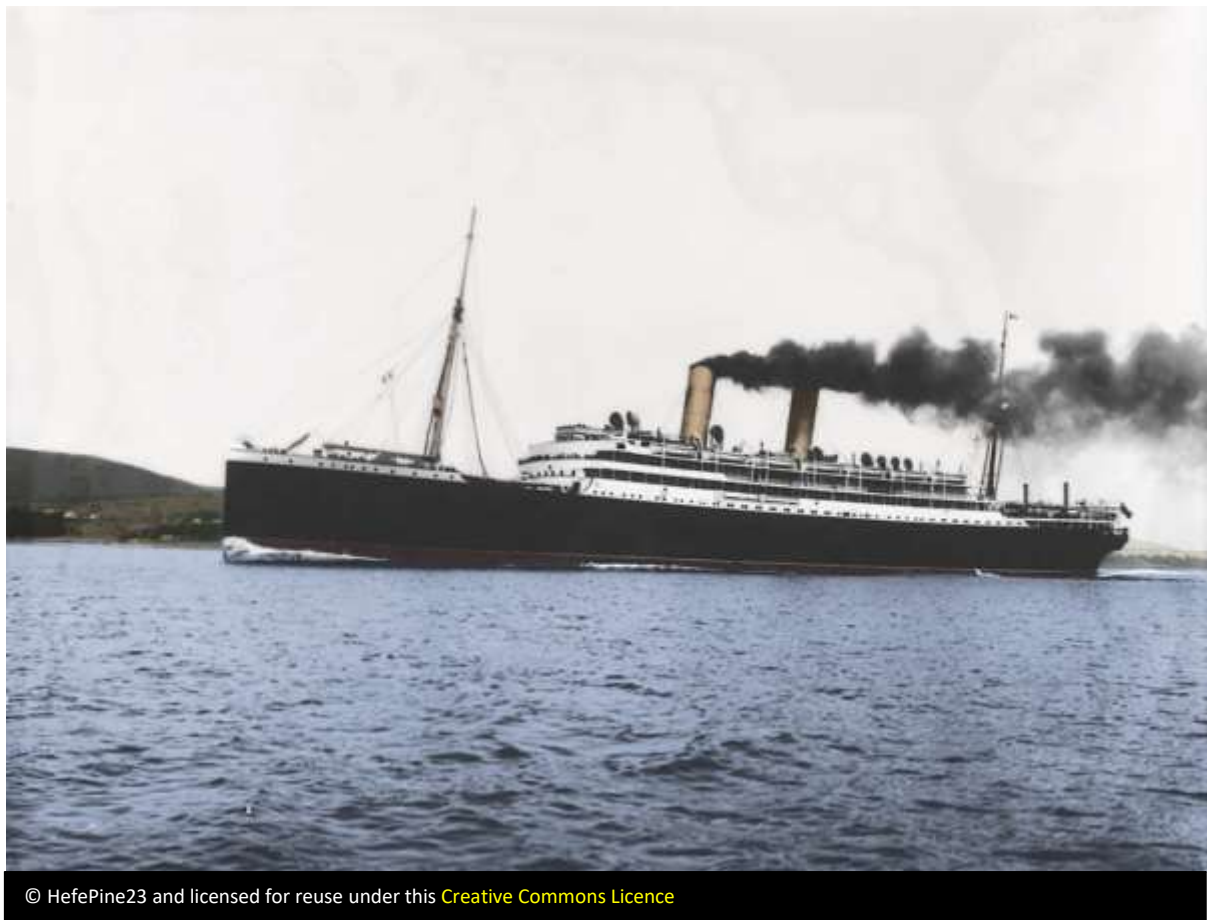


Public domain photograph obtained from [Wikipedia](#)

² According to [Wikipedia](#), the death toll was 741 but this may be excluding officers. Other [sources](#) give a death toll of 738.



It is not clear if grandad was particularly interested in naval events. In May 1914³, before the onset of war, he noted that “*Empress of Ireland* went down in the River St Laurence almost 1,000 perished”. It appears that the liner sank after colliding with a Norwegian collier, the SS *Storstad*. She sank in less than 14 minutes. Of the 1,477 people on board, 1012 died.



Top – this photograph was taken by Nick Wooster at Portsmouth Naval Memorial in 2017 and is used with permission. It shows HMS *Bulwark* and seems to be the same photograph as the one available through Wikipedia

Above – colourised photo of the *Empress of Ireland*

³ He appears to have got the dates wrong for this. He recorded it for the 22nd May but it is [recorded](#) as having happened on 29th May.

On 7 May 1915, the Cunard ocean liner, [RMS Lusitania](#) was hit and [sunk](#) by torpedoes fired by the German U-boat U-20 as part of Germany's naval blockade of the United Kingdom. The Lusitania sank in 18 minutes around 11 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland. A total of 1,198 people were killed with 761 survivors. This event was a key factor in the American entry into World War 1 and featured heavily in military recruiting campaigns. Grandad noted in his diary "*L sunk by German submarine*".



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Painting of sinking of the Lusitania