



Thame Remembers



Chief Steward Albert Isaac Cumming

Fortunately Thame records only one Merchant Navy seaman who lost his life in wartime, though it is a particularly poignant story.

Albert Isaac Cumming was born in Newton Abbott, Devon, in 1869, the second youngest of eight children. The family moved to London in the 1880's and Albert married in Chelsea in 1899 and went on to father two girls. The family relocated to Thame sometime after 1911, though Albert was often away at sea. He was serving as Chief Steward on the hospital ship HMHS Glenart Castle when, at 4.00am on 26 February 1918, it was torpedoed by the German submarine UC-56, ten miles west of Lundy in the Bristol Channel. The ship had just departed from Newport, South Wales on route to Brest in France to collect wounded from the Western Front, and had all her lights burning to identify herself as a hospital ship.

She sank in just seven minutes and more than 150 were killed, including Albert and eight female nurses on board. There were just 33 survivors. The incident caused widespread outrage as a war crime, and there were reports that the U-Boat surfaced and turned its guns on those in the water in an effort to cover up its mistake. The submarine Captain, Wilhelm Kaiserwetter, was arrested after the war and interned in the Tower of London but had to be released under the terms of the Armistice.

Albert Isaac Cumming is commemorated in Thame on the war memorial and on the memorial boards for St Mary's and All Saints church, and also appears on the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill, London.



**The
Thame Remembers Cross
was delivered to
Tower Hill Memorial on
26 September 2017
by
Steve Lambell
Thame Players**

