

## Charles Lavis Age 30

Charles Walter Lavis was the older brother of Arthur, killed in 1916. Charles was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1888, in Iowa, U.S.A. After a brief stay in America, his parents returned home in 1891 and lived in Knole. They emigrated again in 1912, this time to Canada.

In April 1906 at the age of 18, Charles signed on for the Royal Navy. He is described on his service papers as being 5'5¼" in height with brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion.

He signed on for 12 years and started his service as a Stoker 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. He was promoted to Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class in May 1907, Leading Stoker in March 1912 and to Petty Officer in May 1915.

Charles was serving with H.M.S. Britannia in June 1914 when he married Bessie Patten at Martock Church. A full report of their wedding appeared in **The Western Gazette**. The bride was given away by her father and wore a cream dress with bridal veil and wreath of orange blossom and heather. There were three bridesmaids, the bride's sisters, Amy and Lilian Patten, and Lilian Pipe. The bridegroom supplied bouquets for the bride and three bridesmaids and gold brooches for the bridesmaids. Charles' younger brother George was best man. There were a large number of useful presents, including a silver teapot from the principals and employees of Mr.T.Taylor's glove works, and a clock from the Gospel Hall School to the bride

A daughter Eileen was born in 1915.

The service record shows that when the war started Charles was transferred to H.M.S. Victory at Portsmouth where he stayed until after his promotion to Petty Officer. In June 1915 he transferred to H.M.S. Honeysuckle, a brand new sloop, built under the Emergency War Programme. It was a purpose built minesweeper, steel hulled and coal powered. Its primary task was to clear paths for a following fleet. Charles was with the ship when it served in the Gallipoli campaign. It played a key role in the evacuation at Anzac with the Senior Naval Officer in charge of the whole operation on board.

In 1917 Charles was at H.M.S. Europa at Lowestoft for two months, possibly while the Honeysuckle was being refitted to take depth charges so that the ship could be redeployed on convoy escort duty. He returned to the Honeysuckle, but after four months transferred to Lowestoft and then to the Victory at Portsmouth on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1918.

The record suggests that Charles had become ill whilst on the Honeysuckle and spent time in hospital when his ship was in Malta. He died in the Royal Naval Hospital in Portsmouth on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1918 age 30, after undergoing surgery for tubercular disease of the neck. A report in **The Western Gazette** states that his wife Bessie was with him in Portsmouth at the time, having not seen him for three years.

Charles Lavis is buried in Martock churchyard. The newspaper reported that blinds were drawn at many residences en route to the church and flags floated at half-mast for his funeral. The mourners included his widow and her family as well as his brother George, by then Lieut. Lavis, and his father James Lavis, returned from Canada.

**DEATH IN HOSPITAL.**—The death took place in Portsmouth Naval Hospital recently, while under an anaesthetic, of Petty-officer Charles Walter Lavis, son-in-law of Mr. John Patten, North-street. Deceased had previously undergone four operations for gland trouble, and it was while the surgeons were making preparations for the fifth attempt that he succumbed to shock. His wife and baby daughter, who had not seen him for three years owing to his being at sea, had been spending a few days at Portsmouth with him, and with them and the other members of the family considerable sympathy is felt. The body was brought to Martock by rail on Monday, and interred in the Parish Churchyard on Tuesday afternoon. Blinds were drawn at many residences en route to the church, and flags floated at half-mast. The coffin, which was covered with a Union Jack, was conveyed in a glass hearse, and bore the inscription:—"Charles Walter Lavis, died May 2nd, 1918, aged 29." The mourners were—Mrs. Bessie Lavis (widow), Mr. Jas. Lavis (father), Lieut. Geo. Lavis, R.G.A. (brother), Mr. John Patten (father-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. G. Burt (uncle and aunt), Mrs. A. Lavis (aunt), Mr. Walter Lavis (uncle), Mrs. H. Follett (aunt), Messrs. Walter Patten and F. Gundry (uncles), Mr. F. Bryant (brother-in-law), Miss Amy Patten and Miss Lily Patten (sisters-in-law), Miss Ethel Lavis and Miss Alice Lavis (cousins), and Mr. A. Geard. Two local members of the Navy, Steward Geo. Cox and Arthur Gibbs, also attended. The officiating clergyman was the Rev. G. W. Saunders, vicar of Martock. Amongst the numerous beautiful floral tributes was a wreath from the employees of Mr. T. Vaughan.—Mrs. Lavis and Lieut. Lavis wish to thank the many friends who have sympathised with them in their bereavement.

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