



Reginald Seth Wood

50 & 55 Statham Street

Reginald's military record has survived giving us an interesting insight into the variety of jobs that conscripts had to perform. Reg enlisted in May 1917 when he was 18 years. He was assigned to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. His record gives details about his appearance : he was 5 feet 11 inches tall; his chest measured 33 inches and he had medium hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion. His occupation is given as Estate Agents Clerk with the Midland Railway.

From his record we know that after training he was sent to serve as a Signaller at the Rhossili Coastguard Station on the Gower peninsula in South Wales. He remained there from 10 September 1917 until he was demobilised in 1919. Until 1923, when control passed to Board of Trade, the Coast Guard was run by the Admiralty (the Navy's command centre) and was responsible for monitoring both merchant and naval shipping.

At the beginning of the war most of the existing coastguards were mobilised to serve aboard Royal Navy ships. In September 1914 three cruisers patrolling the North Sea were sunk by German submarines inflicting heavy loss of life – it is estimated of the nearly 1,400 men killed the majority were Coastguards. This mobilisation of the Coastguards left gaps in the coastal defences and it was decided

that the surviving coastguards should be returned to their stations and more men recruited to fulfil the coastguards' additional role to repel enemy invasion. These duties included looking out for enemy spies and saboteurs and giving early warning of attacks by warships on coastal towns. Coastguards became responsible for disposing of mines washed up on the shore.

Wireless signal stations were manned by the Royal Navy and the effective use of communications became an essential part of warfare. Coastguard stations were equipped at an early date with the newly developed telephone and wireless telegraphy.



The former Coastguard lookout at Worm's Head (2009). Reginald would be based here while on duty, overlooking Rhossili Bay and Worm's Head. This is now operated by National Coastwatch, a voluntary organisation.

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Reginald Seth Wood continued



The view from Worm's Head overlooking Rhossili Bay (2006). Reginald had a similar view while on duty monitoring shipping movements in all weathers. He was probably accommodated in a cottage in the nearby village of Rhossili.

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Reg's family lived at 55 Statham Street in the 1911 census. His father, Seth, was a housepainter and had been married to Sarah for 20 years. They had four surviving children – Gladys, Reginald, Ella and Sydney. Another child had died in infancy. At the time of the census Reg was still at school, aged twelve. His older sister, Gladys, was 16 and working as a machinist of elasticated bandages. It would be interesting to know if she continued this work during the war.

At some time during the war the family moved to 50 Statham Street and it was to this address Reginald returned to after he was demobilised on 23 March 1919. The Wood family remained in Statham Street until 1923. After that we know Reginald

married Norah Rebecca Lamin in Belper, in 1928 and they had one son and one daughter. He died 11 September 1960 and on the probate record his address is given as 24 South Avenue, Littleover, Derby. Probate was granted to his widow Norah Rebecca Wood.

More information about Worm's Head and the Coastguard in World War One:

<http://nciwormshead.org.uk/miscellany/articles/288-rhossili-coastguard-1960s>

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Coastguard_History#The_First_World_War



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