

## Able Seaman Richard 'Dick' GRIST

Service number D/J 96929  
Royal Navy  
Died on 18 January 1945, aged 40

Dick was born in Wells in 1905. When he was 18 he joined the Royal Navy and served in it until he was invalided out in 1943. During the war he served on HMS Diomedé, first at Scapa Flow and then in the West Indies. Dick died in hospital after a long illness.



Dick's grave in Wells Cemetery  
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Dick was born in Wells on 8 January 1905, to Edward John and Florence Emma Grist, and was baptised on 9 April at St Cuthbert's Church. He was the third of their six children, and had four brothers and a sister. The family lived in Milton Hill Cottage where his father was a woodsman on the Tudway Estate, and a member of the old Wells Volunteer Company.

Dick went to the Wells Boys' Central School and in 1914 won a prize for good attendance. After leaving school he worked as a labourer until, on 8 January 1928, aged 18, he enlisted into the Royal Navy for twelve years. At the end of that time he re-enlisted. He served as a gunnery rating.

His father died in 1924, and in 1939, his mother was living at 23, South Street with his brother George.

On 31 July 1939, Dick joined HMS Diomedé in Portsmouth. Launched in 1919, she had just been brought out of the reserve fleet and made ready to serve in her first war. When the war started she was at Scapa Flow as part of the Home Fleet on Northern Patrol duties. In February 1940, she sailed to the

West Indies to join the 8<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron on shipping protection and patrolling duty. In September 1942, she returned to the UK with a defective port turbine, and was still being refitted when Dick was invalided out of the Navy on 6 February 1943.

On 26 January 1945, the *Wells Journal* reported his death:

[He] served for seven years in H.M. Submarines. He was invalided out on pension in 1943. He died at the County Sanatorium after a long illness which had been patiently borne.

The funeral took place at Wells Cemetery on Tuesday afternoon. A naval non-commissioned officer preceded the coffin, and six Naval Ratings acted as bearers, the coffin being covered with the Union Jack ... The interment took place in the Ex-Servicemen's Burial Ground.

The County Sanatorium was the Taunton and District Joint Isolation Hospital, Cheddar Road, Taunton, so he may have died of T.B. At the time of his death, Dick was engaged to Dorcas Stoodley.

He is buried in Wells Cemetery in Section H. Row e/ee. Grave 3. He is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery. His brother Ernest also served in the Royal Navy during the war.

We would like to thank Pete Jaggard for his help with this article.