

Information sheet no 085

John Cornwell VC Chronology

8 January 1900	Born at Clyde Cottage, Clyde Place, Leyton, Essex
May 1905-July 1910	Attended Farmer Road (now George Mitchell) School
1910	Moved to Alverstone Road, Manor Park and attended Walton Road School (Renamed in 1929 after Cornwell)
1913? -1915 -	Left school to work - possibly as a van boy for Brooke Bond or dray boy for Whitbread Brewery, Ilford
	Scout in 11th East Ham Troop, gaining Tenderfoot badge plus 2nd class and Missions badge. Also won a Boy Scout Award for freeing a girl from a drain
August 1914	Tried to volunteer for the Navy but not accepted on the grounds of age.
27 July 1915	Joined Navy
29 July 1915	Began training as Boy 2nd Class (No: J/42563) at Keyham Naval Barracks, Devonport
19 February 1916	Boy 1st Class
1 May 1916	Completed training
2 May 1916	Joined the newly commissioned HMS <i>Chester</i>
15 May 1916	HMS <i>Chester</i> joined the battle fleet at Scapa Flow
23 May 1916	Cornwell wrote what was to be his final letter to his parents
31 May 1916	Battle of Jutland. HMS <i>Chester</i> was attached to 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron (commanded by Rear Admiral Hon. Horace Hood in HMS <i>Invincible</i> , who also lost his life in the battle). Acted as link ship between the armoured cruiser screen of the battle fleet and three ships of the 2BCS to pass signals visually.
	2.35pm Enemy ships sighted
	3.48pm Action commenced at 18,500 yard range
	5.30pm (approx) 3BCS steaming in North Sea 25 miles ahead of the battle fleet with HMS <i>Chester</i> 5 miles further forward
	5.40pm (approx.) 4 enemy light cruisers appeared in sight. HMS <i>Chester</i> turned to open fire but, being outnumbered, was hit by enemy shellfire 17 times in 3 minutes. 3 out of 10 guns were disabled and a fifth of the crew wounded or killed, including the entire crew of the forward 5.5" turret gun. This is where Cornwell was stationed as sight setter to take orders from Fire Control and apply any necessary range corrections to the gun. Mortally wounded and standing in an exposed position, he remained awaiting further orders until the end of the action. Other reports include him volunteering to go to the top of the turret to wipe the glass so that the rangefinder could line the target and another report says that he managed to ram home one last projectile, close the breech and press the firing button and that this projectile exploded on the German ship <i>Wiesbaden</i> causing damage which led to her sinking
1 June 1916	HMS <i>Chester</i> ordered to the Humber. On arrival, wounded were transferred to Grimsby Hospital, Cornwell amongst them
2 June 1916	Cornwell died from his wounds aged 16 years and 5 months. Later in the month, his body was interred in Manor Park Cemetery with wooden peg no. 323



Information sheet no 085

29 July 1916	Following on from the publication of Admiral Beatty's dispatches, mentioning the courage of Boy Cornwell, his mother was persuaded to have his body exhumed and re-interred following a state funeral.
15 September 1916	Cornwell awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously - the youngest person to receive this award. Published in <i>London Gazette</i>
16 November 1916	His mother was presented with the award from King George V at Buckingham Palace. Other awards include the Bronze Cross, the highest Boy Scout award. Lord Baden-Powell institutes the Cornwell Badge
July 1917	Lady Jellicoe unveils a commemorative plaque at Walton Road School