

Horace T. Cragg d. 3 June 1939 on HM Submarine Thetis



In Remembrance of
HORACE T. CRAGG
WHO LOST HIS LIFE
ON THE SUBMARINE THETIS, JUNE 3RD 1939,
AGED 46 YEARS.
ALSO OF **FLORENCE**, HIS WIFE,
WHO DIED JULY 20TH 1966
AGED 73 YEARS.

When I found the grave, in October 2021, it had been completely overgrown with matted grass. This had the advantage of preserving it.

SUBMARINE MISHAP

COMMANDER'S WIFE A FURNESS LADY

THREE LOCAL MEN ON SUBMERGED VESSEL

WHILE the greatest anxiety was felt by everybody as to the fate of the British submarine Thetis, and all on board, when she failed to reappear after her submersion trials in Liverpool Bay, there were several families in Barrow and district to whom the period of waiting must have been very trying indeed, as they had relatives on board.

COMMANDER BOLUS, the commander of the ship, is the son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Poole, of Bankfield House, Urswick.

He married Sybil, their second daughter nine years ago. That lady has herself been in the news for her gallantry during the period when the fate of the submarine was in doubt. She did all she could to comfort other women who had their menfolk on board, while all the time she must herself have been feeling the awful strain, knowing that her husband was one of those imprisoned for the time being in the submerged vessel.

Commander Bolus spent last week-end with his wife and child at Bankfield House, Urswick. He was one of the officers of the Osiris, built at Barrow, and for two years was in command of a submarine flotilla at Malta.

Three employees of Vickers-Armstrongs were also on board. They were:

James Young, foreman fitter, residing at 8, Falmouth-street,

Thos. Ankers, foreman in the Submarine Dept., of 19, Derby-street, and

Horace T. Cragg, submarine



Left: Two pieces from the North Western Daily Mail 2 June 1939.

The loss of the submarine Thetis was a tragedy that gripped the nation for weeks. A fuller account of the events can be found on the entry for Thomas Ankers at Rampside Churchyard.

<https://furnessstoriesbehindthestones.co.uk/stories/ankers-thomas/>

A third local man, James Young, who died in the accident, is buried in Barrow Cemetery.

On Thursday 1st June 1939 the brand new submarine HMS Thetis (Lieutenant Commander Guy H Bolus) sailed from the Birkenhead Yard of Cammell Laird into Liverpool Bay to carry out

diving trials. In addition to the normal crew of fifty five Officers and Ratings there were a large number of passengers, both uniformed personnel and civilians, on board for Trials purposes. This took the total number of personnel on-board the submarine up to one hundred and one. During the dive difficulties were encountered with the trim of the submarine.

During the investigations into why the submarine could not dive properly it was decided to examine the condition of the tanks and torpedo Tubes. In this process the rear doors of all tubes including No. 5 Tube were opened. Unknown to the crew the Bow Cap of No. 5 Tube was already open and the tube was full of water.

As the rear door was opened water rushed in and the forward compartments of the submarine were flooded. The submarine inevitably ended up on the bottom and was unable to resurface. Eventually four of the trapped personnel were able to make an escape but, despite all the desperate efforts of both those remaining in the submarine and all those on the surface in ships, aircraft and rescue vessels, the remaining ninety nine of the crew and passengers died in the accident.

Horace Cragg was a Submarine Draughtsman at the Barrow in Furness Shipyard of Vickers-Armstrong Ltd. He married Sarah Cragg of Broadgate, Victoria Road, Ulverston. From <http://rnsubs.co.uk/articles/lost-found/thetis-loss.html> - the website of the Barrow Submariners Association. The page has a link to an excellent documentary on the loss of Thetis made in 2000.

Horace Thompson Cragg's birth was registered in Barrow-in-Furness in the second quarter of 1893.

In the **1901 Census** Horace Cragg was living in his grandfather's house at 23 Oubas Hill, Ulverston. The household was John R. Cragg (70) Head, Widower, Living on Own Means, born Ulverston; Margaret Cragg (31) Widow, Daughter-in-law, born Heysham, Lancs.; John R. Cragg (9), Grandson, born Walney, Lancs.; and Horace T. Cragg (7), Grandson, born Barrow.

In the **1911 Census** he was living at "The Cottage" or Caird's Cottage, Abbey Road, Barrow. The household was Alfred W. Thompson (38) Head, Grocer, born Heysham, Lancs.; Elizabeth Thompson (38) born Barrow; Alfred Henry Thompson (7) Son, born Barrow; Horace T. Cragg (17) Nephew, Apprentice Marine Fitter, born Barrow; Gladys Thompson (17) niece, At Home, born Barrow; and the splendidly named Tom Barrow Cowherd (25) Single, Boarder, Electrical Wireman (Shipbuilding), born Kendal, Westmorland.

Mother Margaret and brother John R. Cragg, Apprentice Marine Engineer, were still living at 23 Oubas Hill in the **1911 Census**.

He married Florence Macklin in Ulverston in the third quarter of 1918. She was the daughter of Henry Macklin, Blast Furnace Engineer (**1891 Census**), Ironworks [overwritten – Pig Iron] Manager (**1901 Census**), or Blast Furnace Manager (**1911 Census**), born Banbury, Oxfordshire. The 1911 entry names her Flossie Macklin. She died at North Lonsdale Hospital, Barrow, on 19th July 1966 according to the **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1966**.

In the **1934-5 Electoral Register** for Broadgate, Victoria Road, Ulverston, there are three Craggs: Margaret; Horace T. and Florence.

The **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1939** has:

CRAGG Horace Thompson of Broadgate Victoria-road Ulverston Lancashire died 3 June 1939 on board H.M.S. Thetis at sea Probate Manchester 3 August to Sarah Florence Cragg widow.
Effects £1413 13s 5d.

The **1939 Register** for Broadgate, Victoria Road, Ulverston, has Florence Cragg (DoB 8 Dec 1890) and Margaret Cragg (DoB 9 Feb 1870), both widows and on Unpaid Domestic Duties. Ancestry has mistranscribed the name as 'Crogg'.

Margaret Thompson was born in Heysham, but by the **1891 Census** was living at North End, Walney, with her father Thomas Thompson (62) Widower, Farmer, born Overton, Lancs, and 5 siblings and 3 servants. She was an Assistant Housekeeper.

Margaret Thompson married Fred. Herbert Cragg 11 June 1891 in the Parish Church, Ulverston. In the **1891 Census** he was a Druggist's Assistant, born Walney, living with his uncle and family at 14 Roper Street, Barrow.

The Craggs had been landowners on Walney. For example, in the **1891 Census**, John Richardson Cragg (27) was living at Biggar with his wife Alice (23) and son George Tattersall Cragg (1). He was a Farm Assistant to John Woodburn. See also this entry for a Walney grave: <https://furnessstoriesbehindthestones.co.uk/stories/cragg-monument/>