

## *Ierissos, Greece*

### *Earthquake 26 September 1932*

The Greek town of Ierissos was devastated by an earthquake at 19:20 hours on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1932 in which many people lost their lives. The Royal Navy assisted in the rescue mission and Able Seaman E A Baker recorded notes of the aftermath on the back of photographs of the ruins. More than 80 years later these notes and photographs have been reproduced for posterity.

**Able Seaman Ernest Alfred Baker**, my father, was born on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1900 in Yarmouth, Isle of Wight where he lived until he joined the Royal Navy as a boy rating in 1916 and served for 29 years until the end of World War II. He died on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1952.

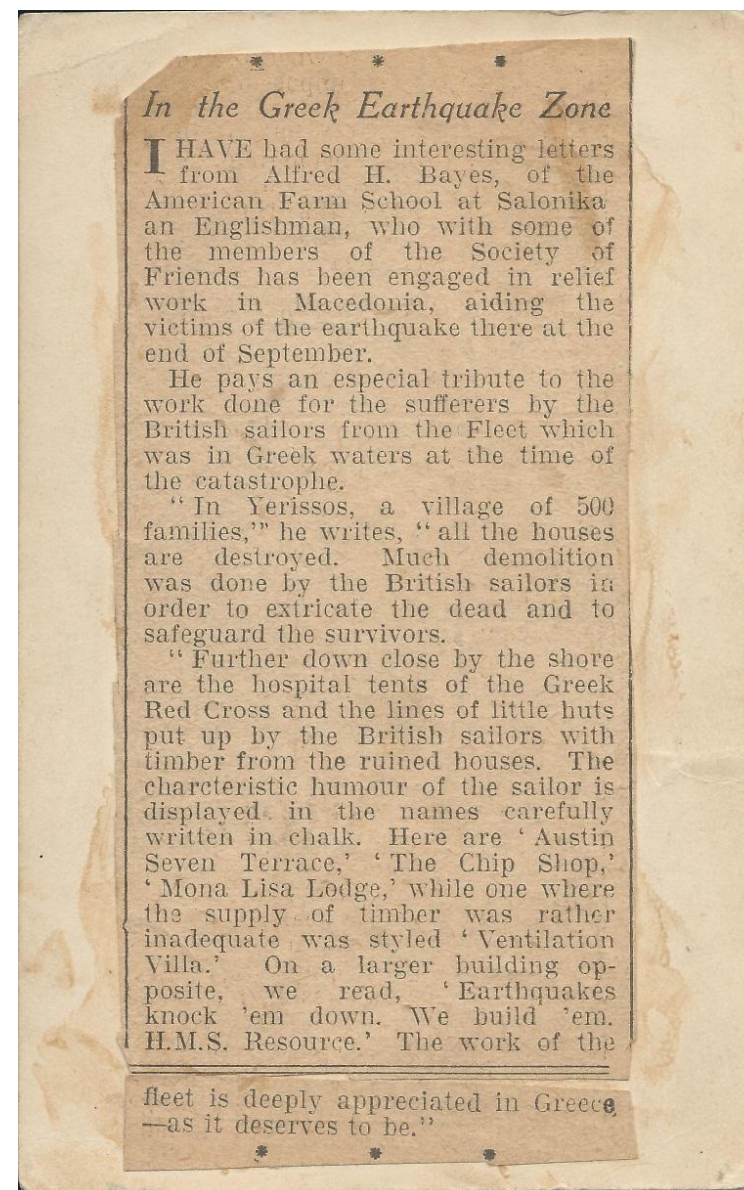
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The British Fleet was in Greek waters at the time of the earthquake which centred on Ierissos. Many people perished – some reports say close on 500, although my father noted over 300; probably the true number was unknown. My father was serving aboard HMS Resource (a repair ship) and the ship's company assisted the relief mission. Other ships and crew were involved, and I will briefly return to this at the end. For now, this is one man's account of the devastation.

Following the newspaper cutting on the right are the photographs and transcriptions of the notes hand-written by my father on the reverse. Although these are simple jottings they create a graphic image of the consequences for the survivors.

*Marion Pointer (née Baker)*

February 2014



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*Earthquake Scenes Ierissos Bay (left)*

This is the general view of the damage done, not one single house was fit to live in. At this town some of the houses in this photo were still standing but were very dangerous. If you look closely under the X you will see men from the Resource pulling them down to prevent further casualties. Two British destroyers can be seen in the background.

*Large House Ierissos Bay (right)*

This was a big house completely knocked down. You can realise the difficulty and danger of searching these ruins for the dead and dying. In some cases we found people still alive after being pinned under the wreckage for 4 days. Parts of big buildings that were left standing were blown down with explosives by men from the Resolution. Over 300 were killed in the town where these photos were taken. We could not get the correct number of injured, there were so many of them.





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*Family in Tent (left)*

This is a family who were lucky to get away alive but they lost their home. This is the only shelter they have until they build something for themselves. There are hundreds of others like them, hardly a family escaped without losing someone. In many cases most of the family were lost.

*Group of Children (right)*

Here is a group of children being fed with the food we landed. Most of them are left without mothers or fathers, and no home. I expect they will be taken to some other part of the country to orphan homes.



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***Bread Oven (left)***

During our stay we landed 40,000 lbs of bread and built the oven in the ground that you see in this photo so that they can bake their bread until a bakery is built. We baked one lot of bread there before we left to show the people how to use it. It was very successful. We also landed 14 tons of drinking water each day until their own supply was tested, in case it had been poisoned.

***Row of Huts (right)***

These are huts built by our Ships Company as a temporary shelter for the people. We built 63 of them out of the wreckage of their homes. They are only rough but they will shelter them 'til they get their homes built again. The writing in Greek on the notice board is Resource Street – they named it after our ship in memory of the work we did there. Six men and two officers from Resource can be seen by the first hut.

~~~ End ~~~



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Finally, in the photograph right, are sailors of HMS Resource reading copies of the Isle of Wight County Press (IWCP) and Jolly Jack's Weekly. My father is in the front row, extreme right.

I am not aware of any link between this photograph and the earthquake other than HMS Resource, however, I was curious about why the men were dressed in best white uniform and wearing medals (clearly seen on my father and the sailor behind him). I therefore sent this photograph to the IWCP on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012 with an appeal for information. I still do not know the reason for the photograph but I did have two very interesting responses; the first identified the sailor front row, second left, as Frederick William Humber, who was also aboard HMS Resource during the earthquake rescue mission. His son-in-law sent me information showing that many men in the fleet had been issued with the Cross of Valour by the Greek Government, and medals and diplomas by the Greek Red Cross, including Stoker Humber. The other respondent was a naval historian, who told me that HMS Resource was a repair ship, effectively a huge floating workshop, for servicing the fleet, hence the men aboard were well equipped and their skills must have been invaluable in the rescue mission.



**To Roy Woodley:** my grateful thanks for information and illustrations about Stoker Frederick W Humber, the Greek earthquake and HMS Resource.

**To David Webb:** my grateful thanks for information about HMS Resource and many things I did not know about the Royal Navy and other ships that my father served on during his 29 years in the Royal Navy.



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*Able Seaman Ernest Alfred Baker RN*  
1900 – 1952



*HMS Resource*  
Fleet Repair Ship

