



POST CODE: B63 2UL

ADDRESS: Churchyard, St Peter's Church, Church Road, Cradley

GPS Location: N. 52.46388699 W.-2.08845509

Memorial Location: Section F, Row B2, Grave No 1

RUDGE, Thomas William

Able Seaman Royal Navy, Number D/JX570020,
HMS Arbiter. Died, 30/09/1944 aged 19 years



Son of Thomas and Beatrice Rudge (nee Cartwright) of Cradley

Thomas was born on June 26th, 1925 and baptised at St Peter's Church on July 20th, 1925. His parents were living at 59 High Street, Cradley and his father was a general worker at British Thomson-Houston, Blackheath [electrical engineering].

The *Arbiter* crossed the Atlantic from the US in July 1944, ferrying Nos.863 and 1820 Squadrons to the UK. No.1820 was one of the few British squadrons to receive the Helldiver. This aircraft was not accepted by the Fleet Air Arm and the squadron disbanded.

Renamed **HMS Arbiter (D31)** (while being carried on the United States' Naval Vessel Register with the classification BCVE-51), the escort carrier served in the Royal Navy for the duration of World War II. She earned "battle honors" in the Atlantic during 1944, serving on the western approaches to the British Isles, and in 1945 served as one of seven similar ships engaged in operating as an aircraft ferry supporting the British Pacific Fleet's train, bringing up replacement aircraft or providing combat air patrol for replenishment ships.

Having been taken ill Thomas died at home and his mother was later buried in the same grave

