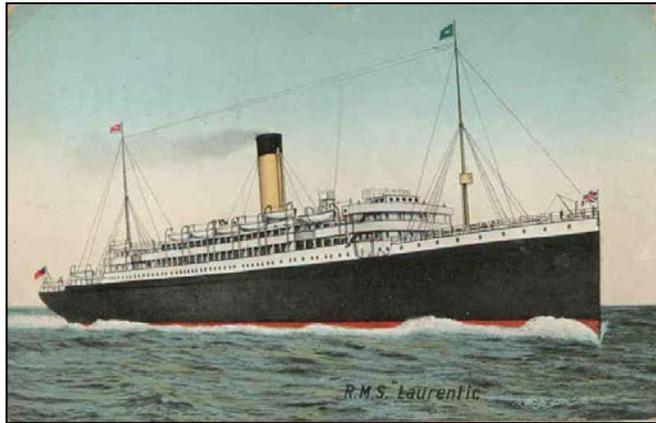
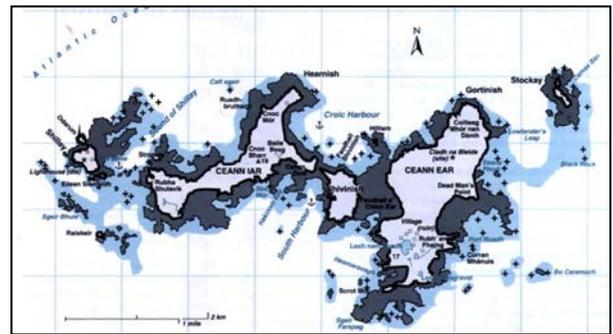


Lieutenant W A McNeill, Royal Naval Reserve, died on Thursday 25th January 1917 when HMS *Laurentic* was sunk off the Donegal coast, after hitting a mine.



The White Star liner RMS *Laurentic* had been requisitioned by the Admiralty as an armed merchant cruiser. On 25th January 1917 she struck a mine off Lough Swilly on the northern coast of County Donegal, Ireland and sank with the loss of 350 persons. HMS *Laurentic* was travelling to New York and her cargo included a substantial amount of gold bullion, most of which was later recovered in a series of daring diving operations.

Lieutenant McNeill is buried on Heisker, a five island group (also known as the Monach Islands) that lies six miles west of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. The islands are now an uninhabited National Nature Reserve, but during World War I there was a lighthouse on Shillay, the most westerly island. The lighthouse (built in 1864) was in use until 1942, at which time the last members of the population (which had reached over 100 in the early 19th century) left the small island group.



Lieutenant William A. McNeill's family home was in Orkney, the West United Free Church Manse in the parish of Holm. William and his brother, Patrick K. McNeill, are both commemorated on the Holm War Memorial, which looks out over Scapa Flow.

The two brothers joined up early in the war, William into the Royal Navy Reserve and Patrick with the Territorials. Patrick served on the Western Front, but was a Sergeant in the Glasgow Yeomanry, training as a Royal

Artillery cadet officer at Exeter, when he died of pneumonia on 31st January 1917 – less than a week after William's death.

The loss of two sons in the same month of the war must have come as a great shock to the parents, the Rev. Daniel McNeill, MD and wife Jessie Jane Dewar. William's body was presumably recovered from the sea on the lonely Hebridean Island some time after the sinking of HMS *Laurentic*, possibly after Patrick's death. William is remembered there on a metal plaque attached to a rock, while a German machinist, Otto Schatt from U-110 lost on 15th March 1918, is remembered on a nearby standing plaque.