

The going down of the sun

Men of Wylde Green who died in the Great War



So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.



Emmanuel, Wylde Green

Great War Commemoration

This collection of stories began as a memorial to those men of Wylde Green who died in the First World War, and who appear on the framed paper Emmanuel Church War Memorial, which was dedicated in 2016. It soon became clear that there are others who do not appear currently on that particular Roll of Honour, and the project grew to its current size. There are almost certainly other soldiers who died whose records have not been found.

All war memorials are to some extent incomplete. Time has eroded the memories of those who served. Only partial official records exist – nearly two thirds of British Army files from the Great War were destroyed by fire after enemy bombing during World War 2, and those that survived are badly damaged (they are known as the ‘burnt records’). It is not even known how many men fought during the Great War.

Wylde Green in 1914 would be unrecognisable to us today. Looking at the near-contemporary map, note that Station Road and Highbridge Road by Wylde Green station were built up, as were parts of Erdington and what is now Boldmere Village, but population was sparse or non-existent in several areas which today seem heavily populated. Residents of Boldmere gave their address as ‘Wylde Green’. Emmanuel Church was dedicated just five years before the start of the Great War.

This book attempts to give part of the story of those who died – the length of the written portrait depends very much on what information has been found. All researchers start with a basis of previous research and record keeping, and I am very grateful for the work of the Royal Sutton Coldfield Great War Project in 2014, led by Yvonne Moore, which confirmed much and provided further useful information.

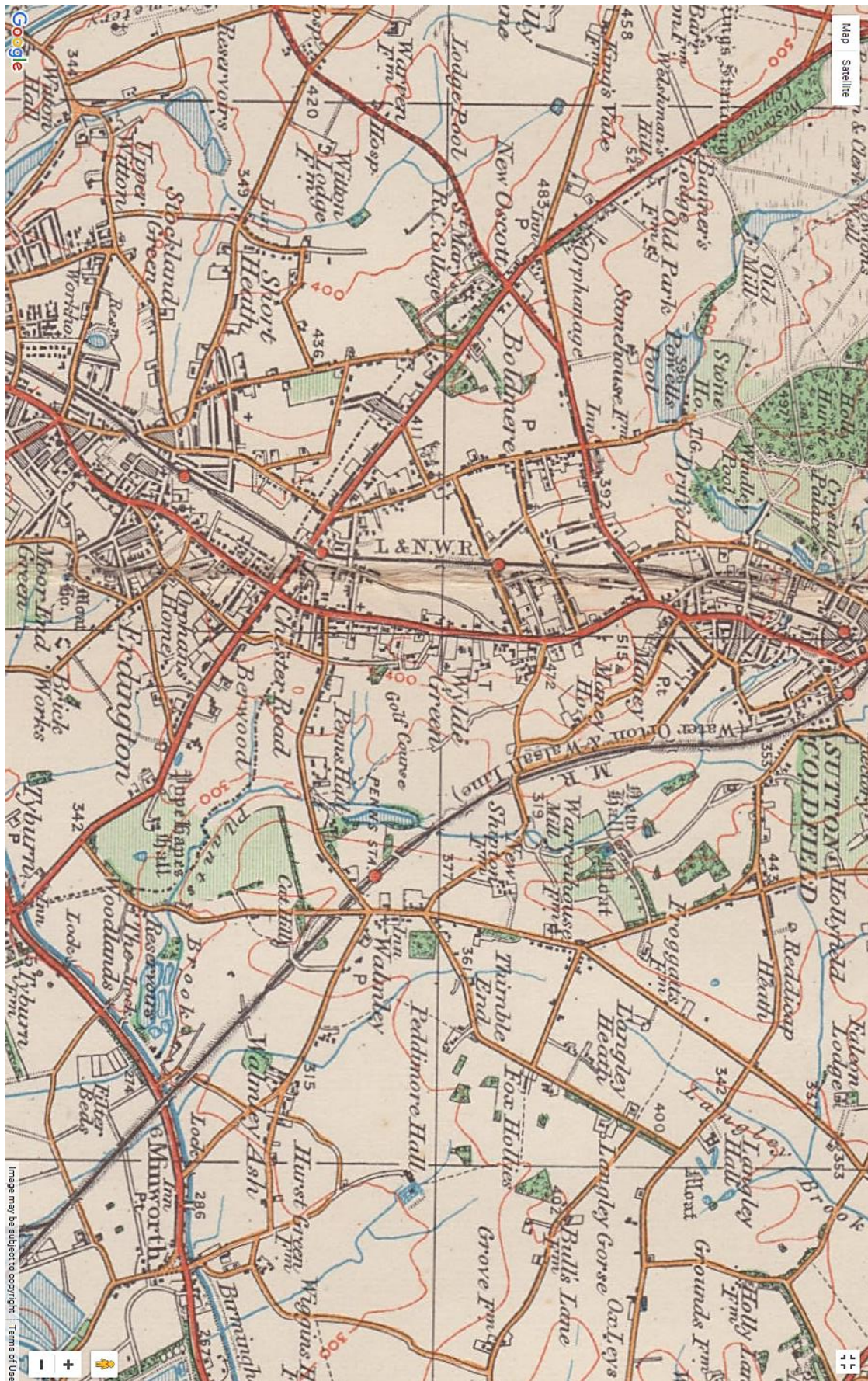
One hundred years after the end of the war to end all wars we continue to pray: for the fallen, for their families, for world peace.

*O God of truth and justice,
we hold before you those men and women
who have died in active service.
As we honour their courage and cherish their memory,
may we put our faith in your future;
for you are the source of life and hope,
now and for ever.
Amen.*

Researched and written by Rob Rolfe rob.rolfe42@gmail.com

Emmanuel Church, Little Green Lanes, B72 1DP June 2018

The poem on the front of this booklet is 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young' by 2nd Lieutenant Wilfred Owen M.C.



Wylde Green in 1921. Note how sparsely the area was populated.

Wylde Green Roll of Honour

Allender	Ivon Reynold	Rifleman	Rifle Brigade
Ansell	Harry Clements	2nd Lieutenant	ASC (MT)
Arbery	John Samuel	Private	Hampshire
Ash	George	Private	RMLI
Barratt	Harold	Lance Corporal	Royal Warwickshire
Bate	Arthur Charles	Private	Gloucester Regiment
Bate	William Henry	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Beach	Walter	Gunner	Royal Garrison Artillery
Bliss	Arthur James	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Brassington	Henry Wilfred	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Bratt	Raymond Douglas	Lance Corporal	Somerset Light Infantry
Britton	Philip Henry	Private	Wiltshire Regiment
Byrne	T E	2nd Lieutenant	Welsh Guards
Cashmore	Howard Parker	Private	Quebec
Cashmore	Howard Victor	Serjeant	Royal Warwickshire
Coleman	A V	Private	Royal Army Medical Corps
Collins	Arthur	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Couch	Harold Jerome	Serjeant	Royal Warwickshire
Cross	George William	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Crowther	Arthur	Private	Australian Imperial Force
De Latte	Reginald	Private	Royal Fusiliers
Deykin	Cecil John	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Edge	Phillip Reginald	Lance Sergeant	Royal Warwickshire
Edwards Wood	Thomas Lionel	Sergeant	Royal Warwickshire
Evans	Philip Marsh	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Evans	Richard Ralph	Lieutenant	Royal Air Force
Folland	Albert	Rifleman	London Regt.
French	G S	Lance Sergeant	Royal Warwickshire
Garner	Wilfred	Private	Worcestershire Regt.
Gibbons	Cecil Campbell	Private	Dorsetshire Regt.
Gibbs	Arthur Leek	Bombardier	Royal Field Artillery
Gidman	John	Private	Gloucestershire Regt.
Gilbert	Albert Edward	Able Seaman	HMS Indefatigable
Godfrey	William	Lance Corporal	Coldstream Guards
Goode	Percy Charles	Serjeant	Worcestershire Regt.
Green	Albert John	Lance Corporal	Royal Warwickshire
Hallewell	George Noble	2nd Lieutenant	Machine Gun Corps
Hands	Thomas Philip	Serjeant	Royal Warwickshire
Harrison	Sidney	Sapper	Royal Engineers
Harrop	Arthur Rex	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Hince	William Joseph	Private	Machine Gun Corps
Howell	Robert Rutter	Private	Wiltshire Regiment

Iliffe	Frederick	Corporal	East Lancashire Regiment
Jackson	Cyril Sidney	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Johnson	Arthur Edgar	Private	Royal Warwickshire
King	Alfred John	2nd Lieutenant	North Staffs
Larkins	John Colin	Lieutenant	Royal Warwickshire
Lee	Harold	Sergeant	Royal Warwickshire
Loveland	Charles	Air Mechanic 2	Royal Flying Corps
Lynch	Joseph	Sergeant	King's Shropshire L.I.
MacSwiney	Felix Desmond	Private	Alberta Regiment
Markwick	Edward Baguley	Corporal	Royal Engineers
Morgan	Vincent Harold	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Morris	Percy John	Lance Corporal	Royal Warwickshire
Parrott	George Ernest	Driver	Royal Horse Artillery
Parsons	Septimus Eric	Captain	Royal Warwickshire
Payne	John Nelson	Gunner	Royal Garrison Artillery
Perks	James Francis	Private	Royal Welch Fusiliers
Perry	Percy Henry	Lance Serjeant	Royal Warwickshire
Poolman	Arthur George	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Randall	Frederick Arthur	Ord. Seaman	RNVR
Renaud	A L	Private	Royal Army Medical Corps
Rice	Fred	2nd Lieutenant	South Wales Borderers
Robbins	Albert	Private	Gloucestershire Regt.
Rose	Charles Ernest	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Rose	Mark	Corporal	Royal Berkshire
Scott	Walter	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Seaton	Walter John	Private	Essex Regiment
Smith	Charles Cyril	Lieutenant	Shropshire Light Infantry
Smith	Gerald Sydney	Lieutenant	Machine Gun Corps
Smith	Benjamin	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Stonehouse	Thomas	Lance Corporal	Royal Welsh Fusiliers
Stonehouse	Thomas Harold	Private	Kings Royal Rifle Corps
Turner	Russell Sandon	Captain	Royal Warwickshire
Wagstaff	Eustace Bertram	Sapper	Royal Engineers
Watson	Oswald	Private	South Staffordshire Regt.
Webb	John	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Webster	James Gordon	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Wheeler	William Pierce	2nd Lieutenant	Royal Warwickshire
Wheeler	Wilfrid Henry	2nd Lieutenant	South Staffordshire Regt.
White	Ernest	Colour Sgt.	Royal Berkshire Regt.
White	Ernest Arthur	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Williams	William Alfred	Private	Royal Warwickshire
Woodward	Harry	Lance Corporal	Royal Warwickshire
Wright	James	Signaller	Royal Warwickshire
Wright	Frank	Gunner	Royal Garrison Artillery

Ivon Reynold Allender

Rifleman S/11369 Rifle Brigade

Ivon Reynold Allender was born in Wylde Green in 1878, in the region of what is now Station Road/Vesey Road. He was part of a family of brass founders - Ivon's father William at one point employed 35 men, but he died in 1887. Ivon's mother Alice Minshull kept the family, remarrying in 1901, but she died in 1905. Ivon moved around, his last known address being in Edgbaston as a boarder and worked as a clerk in the timber trade.

At some point Ivon, aged 35 and unmarried, joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. He transferred to the Rifle Brigade and was sent to France on 27th October 1915. Amidst intense trench warfare, involving raids on trenches and throwing of grenades, Ivon was wounded on 13th February 1916. He died of his wounds in the 60th Field Ambulance - a temporary hospital behind the lines.

Rifleman Allender is buried in Poperinghe New Military Cemetery in Belgium. The inscription on his grave reads: *"All that he had, he gave freely, willingly."*



A Field Ambulance unit at the Battle of the Somme

2nd Lieutenant Harry Clements Ansell

Mechanised Transport Army Service Corps



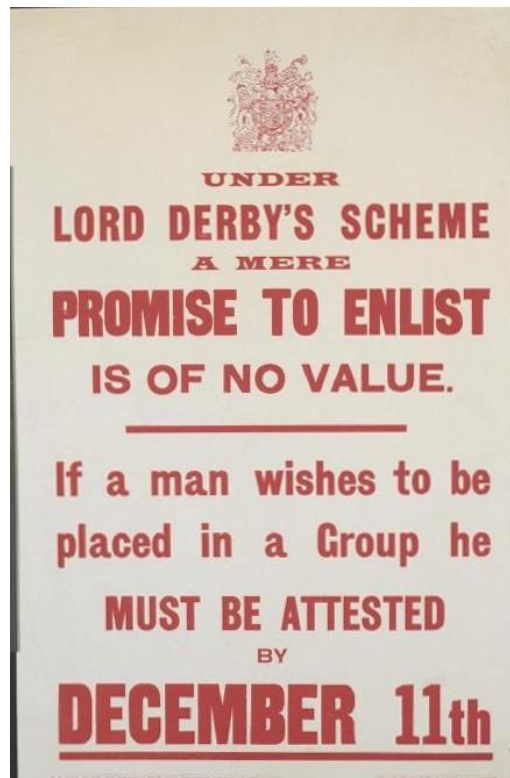
The Derby Scheme was introduced in Britain in the autumn of 1915 by Herbert Kitchener's new Director General of Recruiting, Edward Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby (1865–1948), after which this was named. It would demonstrate whether British manpower goals could be met by volunteers or if conscription was necessary.

Derby required each eligible man aged 18 to 41 who was not in a "starred" (essential) occupation to make a public declaration. When the scheme was announced many men went to the recruiting office without waiting to be "fetched". It was an enormous enterprise. Each eligible man's pink card from the recently completed National Register was copied onto a blue card, which was sent to his local constituency's Parliamentary Recruiting Committee.

The Committees appointed canvassers who were "tactful and influential men" not liable for service, many were experienced political agents. Discharged veterans and fathers of serving men proved most effective. A few canvassers threatened rather than cajoled. Women were not permitted to canvas but did track men who had moved. Each man was handed a letter from Derby explaining the programme, emphasising that they were in "a country fighting, as ours is, for its very existence".

Face to face with the canvasser each man announced whether or not he would attest to join the forces - no one was permitted to speak for him.

Those who attested promised to go to the recruiting office within 48 hours; many were accompanied there immediately. If found fit, they were sworn in and paid a signing bonus of 2s 9d. The following day they were transferred to Army Reserve B.



The survey was done in November and December 1915. It obtained 318,553 medically fit single men. However, 38 per cent of single men and 54 per cent of married men had publicly refused to enlist. This left the government short, and conscription was introduced.

Harry Ansell was a member of the Ansell Brewery family – his father was the Managing Director, and he and the family lived at Moor Hall. Born in 1879, Harry was married with children when he attested under the Derby scheme in November 1915, when he lived in Hollyfield Road.

Harry was called up in February 1917. His company appealed at his call-up, stating that he was a director of the company. However, he was admitted into the Army Service Corps as an officer cadet in March 1917. Harry served as a 2nd Lieutenant in Italy – no other details are known.

In 1920 Harry, having survived the war, succeeded his father as Managing Director of Ansell's. However, he died suddenly, possibly from heart problems, on 8th May 1920.



Harry Ansell's gravestone in St. James', Mere Green

[The Commonwealth War Graves' Commission commits itself to all those who served and, in the case of the First World War, those who died up to August 1921, hence Harry Ansell is included in the records.]

John Samuel Arbery

Private 12214 Hampshire Regiment

John was born in 1891, and baptised at St Peter and St Paul Aston on the 15th September 1893, when the family lived in Witton Lane in Aston. Many of his immediate family were employed in the armaments industry in Birmingham, as cartridge makers, turners and examiners.

John, having worked in the cycle industry, was a stoker when he joined up, enlisting in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 6984. He transferred to the Hampshire Regiment, joining the 11th (Service) Battalion as Private 12214.

The 11th were a Pioneer Battalion, soldiers employed in construction of fortifications and other engineering tasks, usually composed of men who had some transferable skills. The 11th fought on the Western Front in France.

John Arbery was wounded, and died of wounds on the 26th September 1916. He probably died in the military hospital at Etaples, a vast institution that could treat 22000 wounded men at one time. John was 25 years old.

John Arbery is buried at the Etaples military cemetery.



Étaples Military Cemetery is the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in France and contains the remains of soldiers from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and Germany. In total, the cemetery contains 10,792 Commonwealth burials, of which 73 are unidentified, and 658 German burials.



John's death in France left his mother alone. There was an added dimension to her suffering.

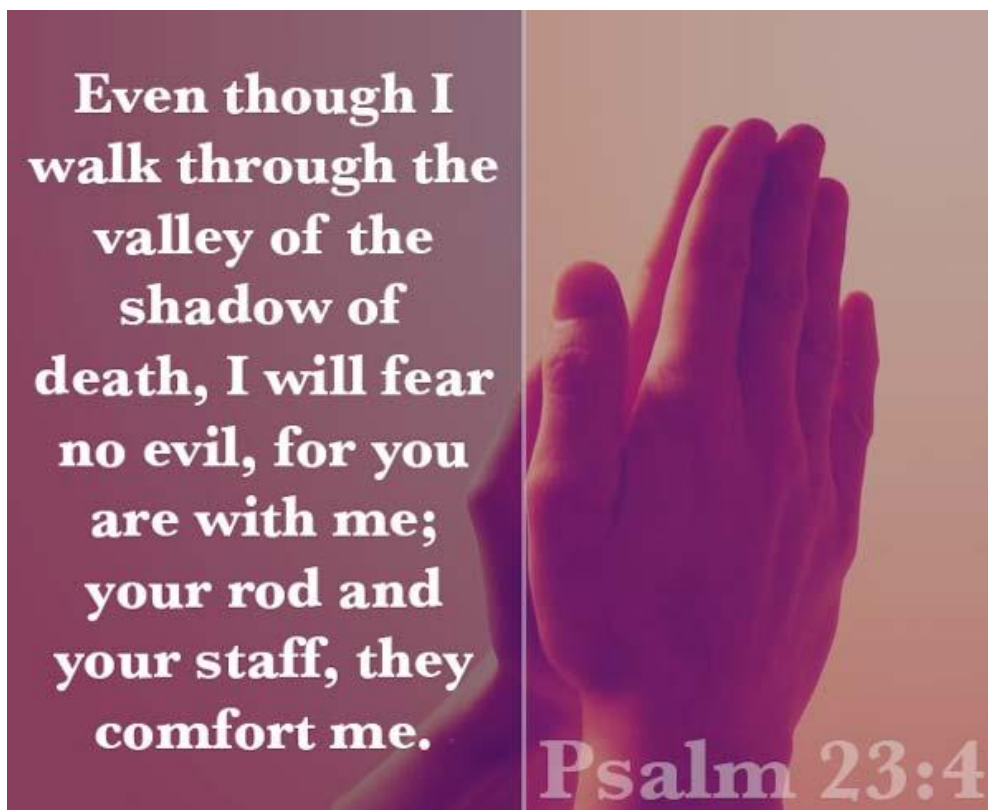
Emma Ann Hudson, John's mother, was the daughter of Samuel Hudson, a sawyer/labourer from Stratford in East London. Emma's mother, John's grandmother, was Rebecca Sarah Arbery, who had been born in Stepney. By 1871 Rebecca was a widow, taking in needlework and living in Finsbury in London, with Emma, aged about 15, being described as a machinist. By 31st March, 1881, the small family had moved to Birmingham, with Rebecca and her daughter Emma (John Samuel Arbery's mother) working as military cap makers. Also living with them was Rebecca's brother, unemployed labourer Joseph Arbery, born in Stepney in 1844.

On 9th April 1881, Joseph Arbery married Emma Hudson in Handsworth; that is, he married his niece. Joseph was 37, Emma 25. Rebecca Sarah Hudson, Joseph's sister and Emma's mother, was a witness at the wedding. Their first child, Joseph, was born in early 1882, Joseph's father also being his great-uncle.

Joseph Arbery Senior and Emma Ann Hudson had six children: Joseph William Arbery Junior was born in 1882 and died in 1906, aged 24; Emma Rebecca Arbery was born in 1883 and died in 1902, aged 18; May Alice Arbery was born in 1884 and died within a few weeks. It was not uncommon to name newborn children after siblings who had died, and the next child was also named May Alice Arbery. Born in 1886, May died aged 3. John Samuel Arbery was born in 1889 and died the following year. The second John Samuel Arbery, the last child, born 1891, is the subject of this piece. Joseph William Arbery Senior, John's father, died in 1901.

John Arbery and his widowed mother lived at 313 Highbridge Road in 1914; John was Emma's last surviving child.

Emma Arbery, née Hudson, died in 1928, the last of her family.



George Ash

Private 1732 Royal Marine Light Infantry

George Ash was married with two children when he was killed in action on 28th April 1917.

Born in 1884 in Wylde Green, George was one of many children of William Ash, a wheelwright and labourer, who died when George was six years old. (William was, in the language of the day, described as 'feeble-minded' in the 1901 census.)

George's mother was his aunt Hannah Nicholls. Her sister Caroline married William Ash in 1860, but seems to have left the house by 1871, after the birth of two daughters – Hannah moved in, with her daughter, and lived as the housekeeper, giving birth to at least five more children and keeping the family together. (It was illegal for a man to marry his dead wife's sister until 1907; in any case it is not known what happened to Caroline).

George Ash worked as a brickyard labourer, and in 1906 married Susan Baggott, daughter of a hawker from Ledbury, who had come to Erdington to work as a domestic servant to the family of the brickworks' manager. The couple had two children by 1911 and were living at 14 Little Green Lanes.

George joined the Royal Marines Light Infantry in October 1916 as Private 1732 and landed in France in February 1917.



The windmill at Gavrelle

The Royal Marine Light Infantry suffered massive losses in an attack on a village and on a windmill, a German strongpoint, at Gavrelle, during the Battle of Arras. In an attempt to capture the village of Gavrelle, the attacks involved fierce hand-to-hand fighting. The division lost a thousand men that day, nearly all from the 1st and 2nd Marine battalions.

George Ash is one of the 35 000 soldiers commemorated on the Arras Memorial, who have no known grave.



The memorial commemorates almost 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras sector between the spring of 1916 and 7 August 1918, the eve of the Advance to Victory, and have no known grave.

The most conspicuous events of this period were the Arras offensive of April-May 1917, and the German attack in the spring of 1918.

Harold Barratt

Lance Corporal 1542

Royal Warwickshire Regiment



Harold Barratt was one of eight children of William Barratt, a carpenter, and Emily Amphlett, who had worked as a housemaid. Born in Wylde Green in 1890, Harold went to Green Lanes School, and then the Municipal Technical School – leading to a job as a manual training teacher at Aston Lane School.

His grandparents, who brought up his eldest brother William, lived in Sutton Road, next door to George Ash and his family in 1891. Harold's family lived in Walmley Lane before moving to 60, Penns Lane.

Enlisting in 1915 as Private 1542 in the 2nd Battalion RWR, Harold went to the front in March 1916. He was wounded twice, in the nose and neck.

Lance Corporal Harold Barratt was killed in action on either 13th March or 13th May 1917 – records are contradictory. His family was informed of his death on the 18th October 1917. Harold's father William received £1 11s 3d from his outstanding pay and effects, and a later War Gratuity of £6 10s.

Harold Barratt has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras memorial.



Harold and comrades. This is a postcard sent to his sister Kitty - the message on the back reads: "To Kitty with hearties and Best Wishes from your loving brother Harold".

Arthur Charles Bate

Private 21621 Gloucester Regiment

Arthur Bate was one of ten children of George Bate and Caroline Petford, who were agricultural labourers from Inkberrow. The whole family worked on farms, George at one time being a farm bailiff. The family moved to Sutton Coldfield, and lived in Jockey Road at number 5, Prospect Villas.

Arthur joined the 14th (Service) Battalion of the Gloucester Regiment. He died on the Western Front on 23rd March 1918. He is buried in the Chauny Communal Cemetery, British Extension, under the name Arthur Charles Bates.

Walter Beach

Gunner 95406 Royal Garrison Artillery

Walter Beach was 17 when he married Gertrude Russell in 1902, although he claimed to be 20. Walter was a silversmith, Gertrude a press worker, the daughter of a currier (leather processor). After their marriage they had two children, but only Walter Junior survived.

Gertrude died in early 1915. In December 1915 Walter enlisted in the RGA at Handsworth. Posted as a Gunner in June 1916 to the 12th Heavy Battery of the RGA, Walter went to France on 20th November 1916. He was killed in action on the 12th July 1917.



Heavy artillery being transported. These were 5" guns, with 60 lb shells.

Walter's mother Emily was living in Jockey Road, and his sister Jane lived in Highbridge Road. Young Walter, then aged twelve, was awarded 7 shillings a week pension under the motherless child arrangements.

Arthur James Bliss

Private 305963 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Arthur Bliss was born in Edgbaston in 1895, the only son of James Bliss, a painter and decorator, and Minnie Emily Harper, daughter of a grass cutter. The family moved to Sutton Coldfield and lived in Garden View Cottages, Highbridge Road - and like his father, Arthur worked as a painter. Arthur enlisted in the 8th (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in early September 1914. The record notes that he was 5' 5½" tall, with a 33½" chest, and weighed 126 lbs (9 st).

Although found fit, Arthur was discharged after two weeks as 'unlikely to become an effective soldier' – no reason can be found for this. However, by December he was back in the army, in the 1st/8th Battalion of the RWR. His army record survives but is very badly damaged. Arthur was in Britain until 22nd March 1915, when he was sent to France. In September 1915 he received 7 days' Field Punishment #2 for failing to comply with an order. In June/July 1916 he was treated for tonsillitis, just as the Battle of the Somme began.



Delville Wood 1916

On 27th August 1916 the 1st/8th attacked German trenches in the High Wood/Delville Wood area. Running into their own artillery barrage, they were forced to move to the flanks and then to retreat. Private Bliss was posted as 'wounded and missing', and later was presumed to have died on that day.

Arthur James Bliss has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Henry Wilfrid Brassington

Private 15/255 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Henry Wilfrid Brassington, born 1896, was the son of Henry Brassington, an architect, and Louisa Jay, daughter of a victualler. The family lived at a house named *St. Wilfrid* in Station Road.

“He was educated at King Edwards School Birmingham, Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School, Sutton Coldfield and Ratcliffe College, Leicester.

He was a member of Boldmere Swimming Club. He was a member of Boldmere Church. He is commemorated on the memorials for the church and swimming club. He was employed by Messrs Lister Lea & Sons, Architects.

Two years before the war he had a bicycle accident resulting in a series of operations on his foot which left him more or less handicapped.

After initial army training his foot again gave him problems and he was put on a list awaiting discharge. He volunteered for work on a hospital ship but that fell through. Then he was suddenly drafted to the front in June 1916.”

(Sutton Coldfield News 10.3.1917)

At 9 a.m. on 3rd September 1916, the King’s Own Scottish Borderers attacked Falfemont farm near Guillemont. The attack failed due to heavy machine gun fire. The 15th Warwicks (2nd Birmingham Pals) received orders to repeat the attack at 1 p.m. The War Diary notes:

“Men went over splendidly, but machine-gun fire again held up the advance, and line came back. Casualties heavy. Officer casualties unfortunate, several fell before attack was actually launched. No question as to the courage of the men and not their fault that the attack did not succeed..... 1 officer killed, 7 wounded. 30 Other Ranks killed, 144 wounded, 49 missing.”

Private Brassington died in this attack. He is buried in the Delville Wood cemetery near to where he was killed.

Raymond Douglas Bratt

Lance Corporal 37911 Somerset Light Infantry

Raymond Bratt was born on 25th February 1893 in Handsworth, the eldest of nine children of Arthur John Bratt, who worked in supplying metal goods for furniture, and Amelia Harriett Latham. Raymond was baptised on 9th April at St. Silas in Lozells.



Arthur Bratt



Amelia Latham

The family moved to Sutton Coldfield in 1900 and lived in Western Road. Seven of the children had survived by 1911.

After working as a die puncher in the printing trade, Raymond enlisted in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps as TT02274. The primary job of the Corps was to care for the animals used by the army – horses, mules and pigeons.

At some point Raymond transferred to the 12th (West Somerset Yeomanry) Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. It is not known where or for how long Raymond served in the infantry. The Battalion had served in Egypt and in May 1918 landed in France, where they fought in the Second Battle of the Somme, the Battles of the Hindenburg Line, and the final advance in Artois and Flanders.

The War Diaries of the 12th Somersets during September 1918 make grim reading. On the 2nd September, for instance, the battalion suffered heavy artillery

bombardment by shrapnel and gas shells. 11 officers and more than 200 other ranks were killed or wounded on that day alone. The diary reports that “the line was easily held.”

Raymond was wounded at some point, and died of wounds on the 24th September 1918, seven weeks before the end of the war. Raymond is buried at the Doingt Communal Cemetery Extension. His family received £20 18s 3d from Raymond's back pay, and a War Gratuity of £14.



The cap badge of the Somerset Light Infantry. The word *Jellalabad* refers to a battle in the first Anglo-Afghan War in Victorian times. The army barracks in Taunton, the county town of Somerset, was named Jellalabad Barracks after the battle and that area of the town is still known as 'Jellalabad'.

Philip Henry William Britton

Private 33460 Wiltshire Regiment



1914 - HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO FELL IN YPRES SALIENT, BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH – 1918

This is the inscription on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium. On the memorial are carved the names of 35000 British soldiers who died around Ypres after August 1917 – that is, including the Third Battle of Ypres, known as Passchendaele – and have no known grave. One of the names is Philip Britton.

Philip Britton was born in Handsworth, and baptised at St. Matthias on the 17th May 1897. He was the eldest son of Henry Britton, a schoolmaster who became a headteacher, and Lizzie Watkins, a schoolmistress. The family lived in Handsworth, and later in Frederick Road.

Philip joined the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment as Private 33460. He died of wounds near Passchendaele on the 4th December 1917. The fact that he has no known grave may indicate that an original temporary grave was destroyed or lost in further fighting in the area.

Thomas Edward Byrne

2nd Lieutenant Welsh Guards

Thomas Byrne was the son of Thomas Charles Byrne, a successful India rubber manufacturer who retired at 35, and Lucy Annie Robinson, who lived at Hawthorn Lodge in Wylde Green. Thomas was born in Erdington in 1899, and was educated at Downside School, the Roman Catholic college. (His father had been educated at Weston Hall, a Catholic boarding school in Nuneaton).

Thomas had a successful school career, where he excelled at boxing, and played rugby and hockey for the school. At the age of 18, Thomas left school and joined the Artists' Rifles.

The Artists' Rifles was a popular unit for volunteers. Recruitment was eventually restricted to recommendation from existing members of the battalion. It particularly attracted recruits from public schools and universities. Early in 1915, selected Artists' officers and NCOs were transferred to run a separate Officers Training Corps (in which poet Wilfred Owen trained before posting to the Manchester Regiment); the remainder being retained as a fighting unit. Over fifteen thousand men passed through the battalion during the war, more than ten thousand of them becoming officers. The battalion eventually saw battle in France in 1917 and 1918. Casualties suffered by both members of this battalion and amongst officers who had trained with The Artists Rifles before being posted to other regiments were 2,003 killed, 3,250 wounded, 533 missing and 286 prisoners of war. Members of the Regiment won eight Victoria Crosses, fifty-six DSOs and over a thousand other awards for gallantry.

Thomas Byrne was commissioned in the Welsh Guards in January 1917. He went to France in May that year but was invalided home in September suffering from trench foot.

Thomas returned to the Western Front on 15th February 1918. He was killed in action on 9th March.

Second Lieutenant Thomas Byrne is buried in the Level Crossing Cemetery in Fampoux.

Howard Parker Cashmore

Sapper 472066 Quebec Regiment

Howard Cashmore, known as Bobbie, was born on 28th May 1885, and baptised on 18th June that year at St. Peter & St. Paul in Witton Lane. Bobbie was the second son of William Cashmore, a gun manufacturer, and Mary Hannah Ruth Yarwood, the eldest of ten children of a doctor.

The family lived in Station Road in Wylde Green, and Bobbie went to Bishop Vesey school. On leaving school, he served with the Staffordshire Yeomanry for three years. In about 1908, Bobbie emigrated to Canada and became a farmer. He was granted a homestead in Margo, Saskatchewan in 1911.

Bobbie visited England in 1911, perhaps to ask Beatrice Gibbs, who lived in Holland Road with her parents, to marry him. Beatrice travelled to Canada the next year, her occupation being noted as “to be married”. Bobbie and Beatrice’s son Jack was born on 27th November 1913.

Bobbie enlisted in the Canadian infantry on 14th June 1915, giving his trade as electrical engineer. He made the following attestation:

“I, Howard P Cashmore, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and officers set over me. So help me God.”

Bobbie’s medical record reveals that he was 5’ 7½” tall, with a 37½” chest, dark complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. Varicose veins in his right leg did not prevent Bobbie from being passed fit. Bobbie was given ‘harvest leave’, and then his regiment sailed from Montreal on the *Corsican* on the 25th September 1915, arriving in England on the 4th October.

Bobbie went to France on the 2nd April 1916. He was being paid \$1 a day (Canadian dollars), plus 10 cents a day ‘field allowance’. He had assigned \$15 per month to go

directly to Beatrice. On 16th April, he made a will leaving everything to his wife. Within six weeks Bobbie was admitted to hospital with shell shock

Sapper Cashmore returned to his unit. On 1st April 1917 he was transferred to the 42nd Battalion, the Canadian Black Watch, and took part in the attack on Vimy Ridge. Sapper Cashmore was killed on the 9th June 1917 – the official record is shown below.

Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914-1948				
Europe - First World War > Canadian - Caswell				
1. NO.	2. RANK OR RATING	3. SURNAME	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES	
472066	Private	CASHMORE	Howard Parker	
5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. H.Q. FILE NO.	8. RELIGION	
42nd Battalion.	9-6-17	649-C-12938	Church of England	
9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY		10. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN		
"Killed in Action" Killed by a shell, during a raid on enemy positions, on the early morning of June 9th 1917.				
11. LOCATION OF UNIT AT TIME OF CASUALTY		12. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN		
LA FOLIE SECTOR.				
NOTE:- Items 12, 13 and 14 are not to be completed until grave is permanently located.				
13. CEMETERY	14. LOCATION OF CEMETERY	15. GRAVE LOCATION	16. REGISTERED NO. OF GRAVE	
La Chaudière British Cemetery, <i>(Canadian Gen. No. 1.)</i>	3 miles South South West of Lens, France.	Grave 1. Plot 3 Row 7.		
17. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE TAKEN	18. EXPOSURE NO.	19. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE AND CEMETERY SUPPLIED TO		
	913 of 1002			



Sapper Cashmore's grave in La Chaudière Military Cemetery, Vimy

Bobbie's wife and son returned to England and went back to 25 Holland Road.
Beatrice worked as a certified midwife and died at the same address in 1953.

1917		
Pte.	Casswell, Charles Edward.	10 th Pn. Bn.
Sgt.	Carter, Alvan Eldon; M.M.	85 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Arthur James.	46 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Edwin Robert.	2 nd C.M.R.
Pte.	Carter, Ernest.	50 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Fred Nicholas.	26 th Bn.
Sgt.	Carter, Frederick Arthur.	15 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, George.	52 nd Bn.
Pte.	Carter, George Blake.	26 th Bn.
Lieut.	Carter, Harry.	7 th Bn.
Sgt.	Carter, Harry Lewis Walter.	47 th Bn.
Lieut.	Carter, Henry Alfred.	29 th Bn.
Cnr.	Carter, Henry James.	3 rd D.A.C.
Pte.	Carter, Herbert.	26 th Bn.
Cpl.	Carter, Herbert.	20 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Horace Clyde.	10 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, John Edward.	58 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, John Horace.	51 st Regt.
Pte.	Carter, Lancelot Edward.	43 rd Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Lawrence Henry.	42 nd Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Leonard Bert.	10 th Bn.
Lieut.	Carter, Ralph Barr.	R.F.C. (31 st Bn.)
Pte.	Carter, Richard.	24 th Bn.
Lieut.	Carter, Robert Ernest.	C.A.D.C.
Pte.	Carter, Robert Owen.	26 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Thomas.	44 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, Thomas.	28 th Bn.
Pte.	Carter, William Isaac.	27 th Bn.
Cnr.	Cartwright, Arthur Sydney.	
Spr.	Cartwright, Harry.	3 rd Bde. C.I.A.
Pte.	Cartwright, Joseph.	4 th C.R.T.
Pte.	Cartwright, Lionel.	3 rd Bn.
Pte.	Cartwright, Thomas.	12 th M.G. Coy.
Sgt.	Cartwright, Thomas.	75 th Bn.
Pte.	Carufel, Enile.	26 th Bn.
P.O.	Carver, William.	"Niobe"
Pte.	Carveth, John Bertram.	54 th Bn.
Pte.	Cary, Henry Thomas.	87 th Bn.
Pte.	Case, Edward Henry.	P.P.C.I.L.
Pte.	Case, William.	3 rd Bn.
L. Cpl.	Casewell, Albert Harold.	P.P.C.I.L.
Pte.	Casey, Cornelius.	15 th Bn.
Pte.	Casey, James.	2 nd C.M.R.
Pte.	Casey, Joseph.	5 th C.M.R.
Pte.	Casey, Robert.	5 th Bn.
Pte.	Casey, Robert.	10 th Bn.
Pte.	Casey, Thomas.	60 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassey, William James.	P.P.C.I.L.
Spr.	Cashman, Edward Michael.	5 th C.R.T.
Pte.	Cashman, William.	3 rd Bn.
Pte.	Cashmore, Howard Parker.	42 nd Bn.
Sgt.	Cashmore, Thomas Henry.	1 st Div Sig. Coy.
Pte.	Caskey, Maryon Seldon.	46 th Bn.
Major	Caskey, Thomas Edward.	29 th Bn.
Sgt.	Caspell, Thomas Arthur.	73 rd Bn.
Cpl.	Cass, Percy.	38 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassady, Thomas Edward.	78 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassel, Ernest Leroy.	43 rd Bn.
Pte.	Cassidy, Brian Alan.	72 nd Bn.
Pte.	Cassidy, George Washington.	72 nd Bn.
Pte.	Cassidy, Olynour.	5 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassidy, William.	54 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassie, Jerrie.	87 th Bn.
Pte.	Cassie, William.	28 th Bn.
Pte.	Castle, George John.	100 th Bn.
Sgt.	Castleman, Alfred Bruce.	46 th Bn.
Pte.	Castleton, John James.	28 th Bn.
Pte.	Castonquay, Napoleon Eugene.	42 nd Bn.
Pte.	Caswell, Charles Arthur.	7 th Bn.
Pte.	Caswell, Ernest Harold.	10 th Bn.
Cnr.	Catchpole, Gordon H.	6 th Bde. C.I.A.
Pte.	Cater, Benjamin Albert.	27 th Bn.
Pte.	Cathcart, Alexander.	40 th Bn.
Pte.	Cather, Robert.	3 rd Bn.
Sgt.	Cathro, Alexander.	50 th Bn.
Pte.	Catley, Edward.	2 nd Bn.
Lieut.	Cattell, Reginald Percy; M.C.	46 th Bn.
Sgt.	Catton, Alfred.	19 th Bn.
Pte.	Caulderwood, Arthur Davidson.	102 nd Bn.
L. Sgt.	Caulfield, Samuel James.	116 th Bn.
Pte.	Caunt, Bernard.	1 st C.M.R.
Pte.	Causey, George Francis.	27 th Bn.
Pte.	Carvalheiro, Alfred.	10 th Bn.
Pte.	Carvanagh, John P.	72 nd Bn.
Pte.	Carvanagh, Robert Ralston.	8 th Bn.
Pte.	Carvanagh, Thomas.	2 nd C.M.R.
Pte.	Carvanagh, Wilfred Ray.	49 th Bn.
Pte.	Cavelle, Charles Alexander.	58 th Bn.
Pte.	Caven, Walter John.	75 th Bn.
L. Cpl.	Caveney, Michael.	2 nd Jun. Coy.
Pte.	Cavens, James.	20 th Bn.
Pte.	Caverly, John Ellis.	43 rd Bn.
Sgt.	Cavill, Arthur Henry.	1 st Bn.
Pte.	Cavuetle, Ernest; M.M.	8 th Bn.
Pte.	Cawley, John.	5 th Bn.
Pte.	Cawston, George Beauchamp.	8 th M.G. Coy.
Pte.	Cayen, John.	75 th Bn.
Pte.	Cederholm, Enoch.	29 th Bn.
Pte.	Cederholm, Weaver.	29 th Bn.
Pte.	Cembrowski, Stanislaw.	20 th Bn.
Pte.	Chabot, Frank W.	6 th Bn.
Pte.	Chadwick, John Frederick.	31 st Bn.
L. Cpl.	Chadwick, Norman Francis; M.M.	
Pte.	Chafe, William Ambrose.	24 th Bn.
Pte.	Chaffey, Joseph Frederick.	73 rd Bn.
Pte.	Chaffin, Henry.	2 nd Bn.
Pte.	Chagnon, Joseph Alphonse.	22 nd Bn.
Pte.	Chajkovski, Serne.	52 nd Bn.
Cnr.	Chajney, Charles Edward.	R.C.H.A.
Pte.	Chaisson, William.	14 th Bn.
Sgt.	Chalk, John.	75 th Bn.
Lieut.	Chalk, William Joseph.	R.F.C. (100 th Bn.)
Pte.	Challenger, Reginald William.	87 th Bn.
Capt.	Chalmers, Adam Peden.	C.A.M.C.
Pte.	Chalmers, Alexander.	75 th Bn.
Pte.	Chalmers, Donald Barlett; R.F.C.	F. Dep.
Pte.	Chalmers, Edward Lindsay.	15 th Bn.
Pte.	Chalmers, James Robert.	54 th Bn.
Pte.	Chalmers, John Kay.	75 th Bn.
Sgt.	Chamberlain, Albert; M.M.	7 th Bn.
Pte.	Chamberlain, Charles Edgar.	78 th Bn.
Pte.	Chamberlain, Harry.	102 nd Bn.
Pte.	Chamberlain, William James.	58 th Bn.
Cnr.	Chamberlin, Arthur.	4 th Bde. C.I.A.
Pte.	Chamberlin, Frank.	8 th Bn.
Pte.	Chamberlin, Harold Ross.	5 th Bn.

A page from a Canadian Book of Remembrance

Howard Victor Cashmore

Sergeant 3157 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Howard Victor Cashmore does not appear on the Emmanuel Memorial, nor on the central Sutton Coldfield Memorial. He does appear on the memorials of both King Edward Aston School and St Michael's Boldmere.



Howard was one of eleven children of Herbert Henry Cashmore, a foreman joiner/carpenter, and his wife Ellen Eliza Morris, who lived at 'Braemore' in Little Green Lanes, and would have seen Emmanuel Church being built. This Howard is not related to Howard Parker Cashmore – Howard Victor's father took his surname from his mother and refused to name his father on his marriage certificate.

Born on 4th February 1896, Howard was baptised on 8th March 1896 at St Clements Nechells. In 1911 he was working as a house painter/paperhanger.

Howard enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1st/8th Battalion as Private 3157. The 1st/ 8th Battalion were based at Aston Cross. They had just left for summer camp in 1914 when war was declared, and they were recalled to Birmingham. The battalion were mobilised on 5 August 1914 and moved with the brigade to Chelmsford in Essex during the second week of August. On 22nd March 1915 the battalion disembarked at Le Havre.

Howard was promoted to Sergeant in June 1916. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, Howard Victor Cashmore was killed in action. He was aged 20.

Howard's father received £11 15s 3d, and a later War Gratuity of £10. Sergeant Cashmore has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.



The Thiepval Memorial commemorates 72, 396 British and South African servicemen who died on the Somme between 1916 and 1918, and have no known grave. It was designed by Edward Lutyens, who designed the Cenotaph in London.

“No known grave” means that either the soldier's body was never found; or his body was found but never identified; or was found and identified but destroyed in later battles; or buried and marked, but the grave could not be found after the war. The mission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is that each and every man lost is either named on an individual headstone or listed on one of the many memorials which are on the battlefields. Today, a hundred years later, soldiers' remains are still being found and identified.

Austin Vernon Coleman

Private 90806 Royal Army Medical Corps

Austin Coleman was born in 1897, the younger son of Frank Cobden Coleman, who had worked up through the clothing trade from draper's assistant to being a wholesale clothing employer, and Gertrude Wakefield, daughter of a merchant of Burton Ales. The family moved around a lot and were living in Four Oaks in 1911.

Austin attended Bishop Vesey school and then worked in the wholesale clothing trade for Wilkinson and Riddell.

On 26th May 1915, Austin enlisted at Handsworth in the Royal Army Medical Corps. The record notes that he was 5' 5" tall with a 34" chest, and weighed 130 lbs (9 st 4 lbs). He gave his occupation as 'salesman', and added a year to his age, stating it as 19 years and 1 month. Austin appears to have been in Britain for the next two years, and he was hospitalised twice in 1916 with influenza.

Private Coleman was declared fit for foreign service in September that year, but was not sent overseas until 1917, when he left Southampton for Le Havre on the 9th June. From there he went to Marseilles before being shipped to Salonika in Macedonia, disembarking on the 28th June.

Within a few weeks Austin Coleman fell ill with dysentery. A series of telegrams to the War Office from the hospital in Macedonia record that Austin was 'dangerously ill' on 25th August; 'slightly improved' on 2nd September; 'no change' on 8th September; 'rather worse' on 15th September; 'condition critical' on 22nd September; 'slightly improved' on 29th September; and 'no change' on 6th October. Private Austin Vernon Coleman died of dysentery on 17th October 1917. The record notes that he became 'non-effective due to his death....'

On 9 February 1918, Austin Coleman's personal effects were sent to his father at an address in Mosley. The personal effects included: a body belt, letters, 2 note books, diary, dictionary, safety razor with blade in a case, pocket knife, pair of folding scissors, pencil case, postcards, pair woollen socks, pair woollen gloves, clothes brush, identity disc, tobacco pouch, woollen scarf, 13 handkerchiefs – 2 with lace

edges, metal watch, leather pocket wallet, 3 pairs of spectacles in cases, brushes, prayer book and a chess set in a bag.

Austin's family were living in Station Road in 1922, when his British War Medal and Victory Medal were sent to his father.



Private Coleman is buried in the Kirechkoi-Hortakoi Military Cemetery in Greece.

Austin's elder brother Stanley also served, as a Rifleman in the London Regiment and then the Royal Irish Rifles. He became a solicitor and lived until 1971.



The All Saints', Four Oaks, plaque, which includes the name of Austin Coleman.

Arthur Collins

Private 16200 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Arthur Collins, born about 1895, was the son of William Henry Collins, a market gardener, and Susan Ballinger, daughter of a boatman. Arthur's father died soon after Arthur was born, and his mother married Walter Butler, a market gardener. The family lived at 37 Boldmere Road.

Arthur worked in a pork butchery and lived on the premises in 1911 in Broad Street. He later worked for Guest & Co., Pork Butchers, in The Parade in Sutton Coldfield.

Arthur enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment 15th Battalion (2nd Birmingham Pals') as Private 16200 and became a Lewis gunner. He died of wounds on the Western Front on 9th March 1917.

Arthur has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.



Troops moving to the front at Arras in the spring of 1917.

Harold Jerome Couch

Sergeant 599 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

At 6.10 p.m. on the 30th July 1916, the 14th Battalion RWR attacked the enemy's front line trench. The attack having failed, they took up their original positions. The War Diary records: "The Battalion advanced to the attack with 14 officers and 454 other ranks. They came out (with) 8 officers and 280 other ranks. The behaviour of all ranks was beyond praise."

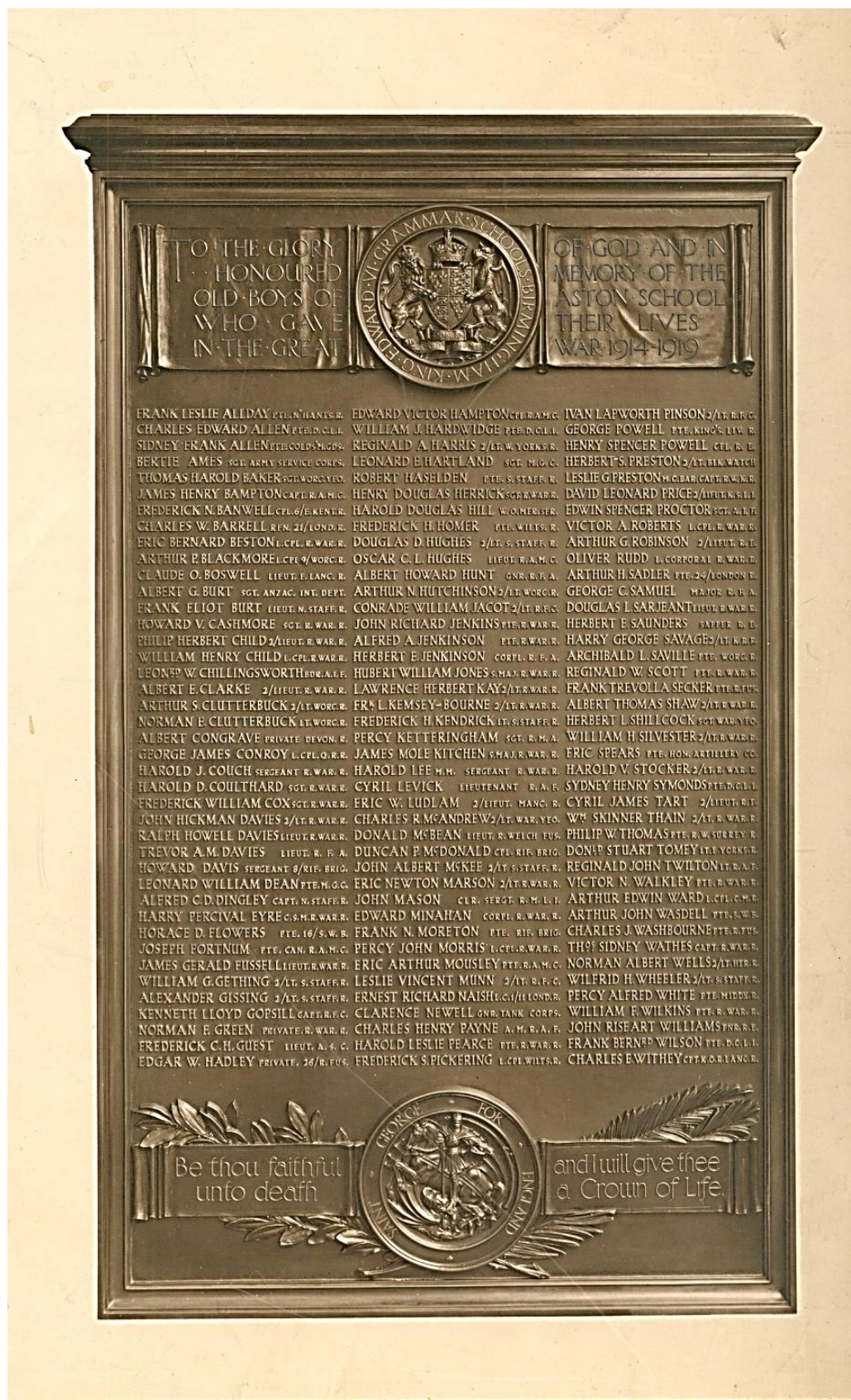
Harold Jerome Couch, who was killed on that day, was the son of George Couch, an assurance clerk, and Elizabeth Jones, who lived in Boldmere Road and later Mayfield Road.

"He was educated at Aston Grammar School having won a scholarship whilst attending Green Lanes School, Sutton Coldfield. He was an assistant scout master with the Boldmere Troop. He was a member of the Boldmere Swimming Club. At the time he enlisted he was serving his articles with Messrs Banwell and Wakeman, Quantity Surveyors of 3 Newhall Street, Birmingham. At the front, he was engaged on sniping and observation duties." (Sutton Coldfield News 19th October 1916)

Sergeant Couch has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission estimates that nowadays about 20 bodies of British servicemen in WW1 are found each year. They are all reburied with full military honours.





The King Edward Grammar School, Aston WW1 Memorial

George William Cross

Private 21345 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

George Cross was born in Boldmere in 1896, son of gardener George Cross and Ann Smith. The family lived in what is now Boldmere Village, then known as 'The Coldfield' and later at Rose Cottages in Boldmere Road.

George Senior and Ann had had six children by 1911, all of whom survived. George Junior was not at home in 1911- he was working as a chauffeur/gardener in Balsall Heath and boarding there.

In 1911 George married Edith Scott, and their first child Evelyn was born at the end of the year. Edith Junior was born in 1913, and James in 1914. The new family by now was living in 'Ovenorton' in Jockey Road.

George first joined the Royal Berkshire Regiment as Private 27090, and then transferred to the 14th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Private 21345, and later joined the 1st Battalion.

For much of the war, the opposing armies on the Western Front were at a stalemate, with a continuous line of trenches from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border.

The Battle of Arras (also known as the Second Battle of Arras) was a British offensive on the Western Front during World War I. From 9 April to 16 May 1917, British troops attacked German defences near the French city of Arras on the Western Front. The British achieved the longest advance since trench warfare had begun, surpassing the record set by the French Sixth Army on 1 July 1916. The British advance slowed in the next few days and the German defence recovered. The battle became a costly stalemate for both sides and by the end of the battle the British Third and First armies had suffered about 160,000 casualties and the German 6th Army 125,000 casualties.

One of the casualties was George William Cross. It was presumed that he was killed on the 11th April 1917. Nothing more is known – his remains were never found. His widow Edith, alone with three children, received £1 12s 4d and a later War Gratuity of £3.



The Arras Memorial at the entrance to the Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, Arras. The memorial contains the names of 34,785 soldiers from Britain, South Africa and New Zealand who died at Arras and have no known grave.

George is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, one of several such monuments in France and Flanders which honour those who died in battle during the Great War but have no known grave, their bodies having been destroyed or sunk in the mud and not found. The Arras memorial, designed by the famous Edward Lutyens, contains more than 34000 names.

George William Cross is also commemorated at St. Michael's Boldmere; at St. Peter's Maney; and on the Boldmere Swimming Club memorial.

Arthur Crowther

Private 732 Australian Imperial Force

Arthur Crowther was born in 1888 in Sutton Coldfield, one of eight children of Daniel Crowther, who was a gasworks manager and became a bricklayer, born in Cheltenham, and Katherine Goss, who had been a domestic servant, born in Devon.

Arthur was educated at Town School, Sutton Coldfield (the buildings are now occupied by the Baptist church). After school he went to work for Messrs Swain & Clayton, Jewellers and Enamellers, in Warstone Lane in Birmingham, and later worked for two years as a groom. Arthur emigrated to Australia at the age of 22, sailing on the P&O *Geelong* on the 2nd March 1911, from London to Melbourne. He intended becoming a farmer. In 1914 Arthur was living with Elizabeth Crowther, born in Victoria, presumably his Australian wife, but she is not on the electoral register for 1915.

Australia had become a self-governing commonwealth in 1900, remaining a dominion of the British Empire, and the Defence Act of 1903 prohibited it sending conscripts overseas. An all-volunteer force was therefore founded when the Great War began: this was the Australian Imperial Force.

Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914-1920
C > Cr > Cro

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY PERSON BEING ENLISTED.*

3, Arthur Crowther swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from date hereof until the end of the War, and a further period of four months thereafter unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed therefrom; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So HELP ME, God.

Arthur Crowther
Signature of Person Enlisted.

Taken and subscribed at Melbourne in the State of Victoria this 3rd day February 1915.

Reported at Start 3rd, before me—
Depot 34 Feb 1915
J. Lane M.O
M OC James Hocking
Signature of Attesting Officer.

* A person enlisting who objects to taking an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Act, and

Arthur's oath on joining the Australian Imperial Force

The 22nd Battalion AIF was formed on 26 March 1915 at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria. The battalion became part of the 6th Brigade of the 2nd Division. Most of the battalion embarked for Egypt on 8 May 1915. The battalion deployed to Gallipoli in the first week of September 1915 allowing some of the 2nd Brigade to be rested from their positions in the front line at ANZAC. Gallipoli was a disastrous campaign:

“In a military disaster more than 100 years ago, about 58,000 allied soldiers – including 29,000 British and Irish soldiers and 11,000 Australians and New Zealanders – lost their lives on the Gallipoli peninsula. A further 87,000 Ottoman Turkish troops died fighting the allies and at least 300,000 more on both sides were seriously wounded.

Conceived by Winston Churchill as the First Lord of the Admiralty, the plan was to knock Ottoman Turkey, Germany’s ally, out of the war. The goal of the naval and land operation was to open up the Dardanelles straits, heavily mined and defended on its western shore by Turkish coastal forts and gun batteries on the 50-mile Gallipoli peninsula, to allied ships; and to capture Constantinople – present-day Istanbul – and so link up with Russia. Churchill saw the campaign as a way of breaking the attritional deadlock on the western front.

The repeated British and French bombardments beginning in mid-February against Turkish positions proved ineffective. A final attempt to force a passage up the Dardanelles in March ended in three allied battleships being sunk and three badly damaged. The two landings – one by British troops at Cape Helles, at the base of the peninsula, and the other on the western Aegean coast, in the area later known as Anzac Cove, by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – were met by fierce and disciplined Turkish opposition. Well dug in and heavily fortified on higher ground, they had been reinforced six times over. The allies had badly underestimated the capacity of the Turkish forces.

Most did not advance more than a few hundred metres from the shore where they were pinned down. The allies endured suffocating heat and were surrounded by rotting corpses that drew thick swarms of flies. They lacked water and thousands died from dysentery as disease spread. The campaign did divert large Turkish forces away from the Russians, but did not produce the desired strategic success.”

(The Guardian, 2015)

Arthur Crowther was with the 22nd Battalion, 'C' Company. He had enlisted on the 26th January 1915 in Melbourne. The record shows that he was 5' 6½" tall, with a 32" chest, and weighed 9 st 13 lbs. He sailed from Melbourne in May on HMAT *Ulysses*.

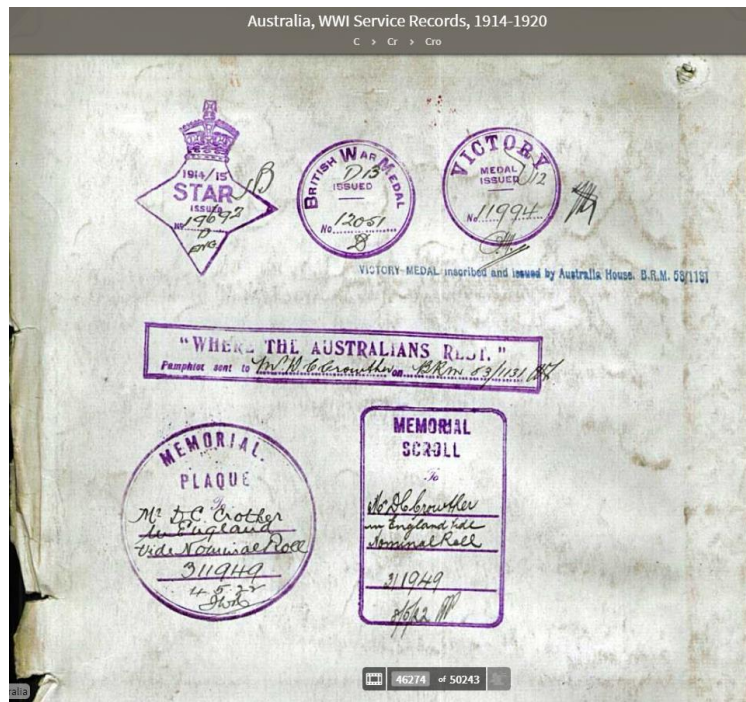
On 27th October 1915, Arthur was promoted to Lance-Corporal, but this was never to be officially confirmed. On 28th or 29th October he was shot in the head. Evacuated to Malta by hospital ship, Arthur died on the 2nd November, aged 27. He is buried in the Pieta Military Cemetery on Malta.

A letter from a chaplain to Arthur's brother stated that he never recovered consciousness after receiving his wound. Arthur's mother received a war pension of 15 shillings a month – by that time the family lived in Eastern Road, near Wylde Green Station.



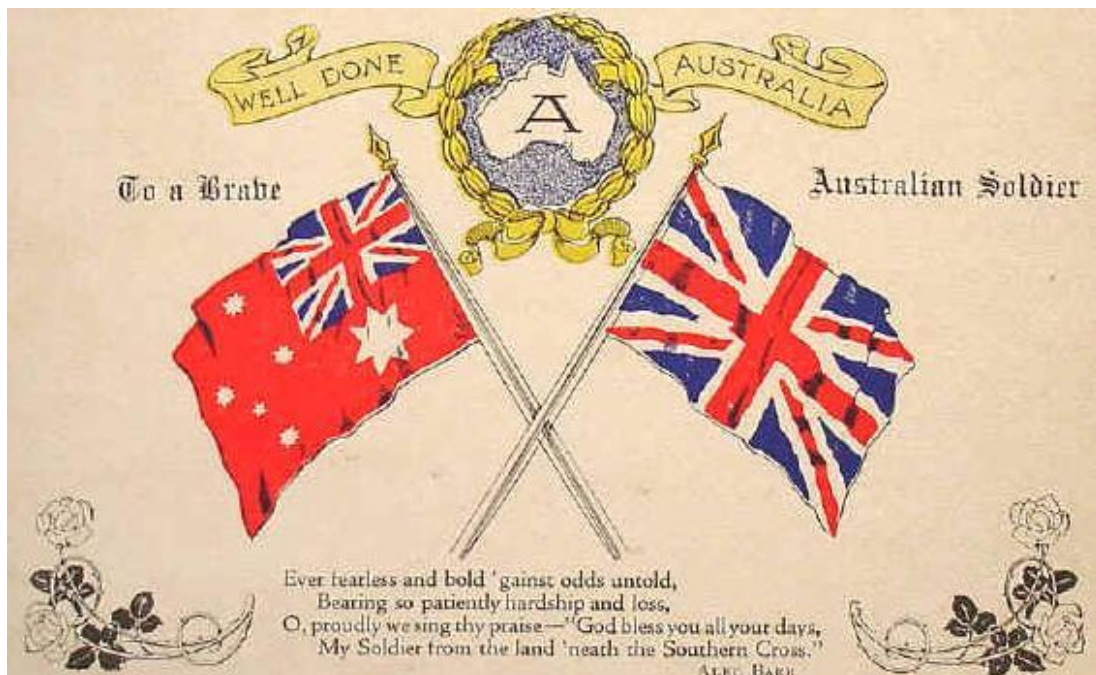
Arthur Crowther's grave in Malta.

He is buried along with two other British servicemen.



Record of the award of medals and memorial scroll and plaque to Arthur's family

For Australia, the First World War remains the costliest ever conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner.



Contemporary postcard showing the (then) Australian flag

Reginald De Latte

Private 19481 Royal Fusiliers (City of London)



Reginald (Rex) De Latte

DE LATTRE, REGINALD, Private, 26th (Service) Battn. The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regt.), s. of Frank Henry De Latte, Accountant, by his wife, Jane, dau. of (—) Croshaw; b. Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, 3 May, 1897; educ. Bishop Vesey's Grammar School there, and Lawrence's College, Birmingham; was a Bank Clerk; enlisted in Sept. 1915; served with the Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders, and was killed in action on the Somme 7 Oct. 1916. One of his officers wrote: "We all thought a good deal of your lad, who was one of the best, and his Commanding Officer had recommended him for a commission." *Unm.*

Rex De Latte lived at 72, Highbridge Road with his banking family before the war. He went to the front on 3rd May 1916, his nineteenth birthday. Rex was a soldier of the 26th (Bankers) Battalion. It was his employer Lloyd's Bank who published the above obituary. Rex has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial.

Rex's brother **Eric Frank De Latte** served with the RWR and was invalided out due to poor health.

Cecil John (Jack) Deykin

Private 14/328 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Cecil Deykin, known as Jack, died on the same day as Percy Henry Perry, they both being soldiers of the 14th Battalion, the 1st Birmingham Pals. Jack was presumed to have been killed on 23rd July 1916 at High Wood on the Somme, at the age of 28.

Jack was the youngest of ten children of James Deykin, a farmer and landowner, who when retired was described a gentleman, and Kate Muriel Pemberton, daughter of a coal master. After Jack's birth in 1888, his father and mother seem to have lived separately – one house was at 193, Station Road, Wylde Green. Jack became an accounts clerk at the motorcycle works.

Jack's body was later recovered, and he is buried in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery in Longueval.

Phillip Reginald Freegarde Edge

L / Sergeant 189 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Phillip Edge was born in Erdington on 12th October 1896, the son of George Edge, manager of a brass foundry, and Ellen Freegard, whose father had been a gas stoker. Phillip went to Bishop Vesey's School between 1907 and 1912, the family living at 'Lyndhurst', 65, Highbridge Road.

Enlisting in the 15th Battalion (2nd Birmingham Pals), the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, in September 1914, Phillip went to France on 21st November 1915. Phillip Edge was wounded by shellfire at Festubert on 22nd December 1916. He was taken to a Field Ambulance (temporary hospital) where he died. Lance Sergeant Edge is buried in the Brown's Road Cemetery at Festubert.

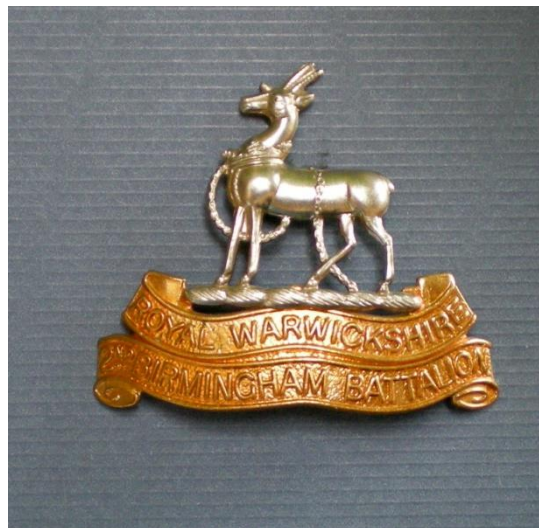
Thomas Lionel Edwards Wood

Sergeant 15/292 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

The *Sutton Coldfield News* reported on 22nd July 1916:

“Thomas Lionel Edwards Wood was the son of Cynric Budbrook Edwards Wood and Martha Haycock of ‘Clifton’, 432 Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield. Thomas Wood was an enthusiastic cricketer and played for the Chester Road Cricket Club. He worked in partnership with his father in Messrs C E Wood, Manufacturers Agents at 36 Cannon Street, Birmingham. He enlisted in September 1914 and was severely wounded on 4 June 1916.”

Thomas Wood was a Sergeant in the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, having been promoted through the ranks.



Born in Wylde Green in early 1890, Thomas was baptised on 5th October 1890 at Christchurch, Summerfield. His father was a travelling salesman (a ‘traveller’) in drapery and was also a military reservist – he served for the first years of the war until he was discharged due to sciatica and age. Thomas was one of nine children born to Martha, daughter of a coachman from the Shifnal area .

Thomas Wood died of his wounds in hospital on 8th July 1916. He is buried in the Abbeville Cemetery.

Philip Marsh Evans

Private 14/222 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Born 16th July 1892 in Wylde Green, Philip Evans was the younger son of John Arthur Evans, a successful corn merchant, and Fanny Benson Marsh, daughter of a stove and metal goods factory owner who employed 90 people. The family lived at Holte Lodge in Station Road, a few doors down from the Cashmore family, and employed their own servants. Philip (and his brother Robert, who served with the South Staffordshire Regiment as an officer) went to Bishop Vesey school. Philip joined his father's business in 1910. He was keen on shooting and fishing, motorcycling, golf and swimming.

In August 1914 Philip joined the 14th Warwicks (the 1st Birmingham Pals). Sent to France in November 1915, Philip served in the trenches in the area around La Bassée and Givenchy. While in the trenches he contracted an (unnamed) disease. Philip was more than six feet tall, and the illness made his weight fall from more than 13 stone to 8 stone. Philip was evacuated to England but died in the Epsom War Hospital on 25th November 1916. Philip is buried in Sutton Coldfield Cemetery.



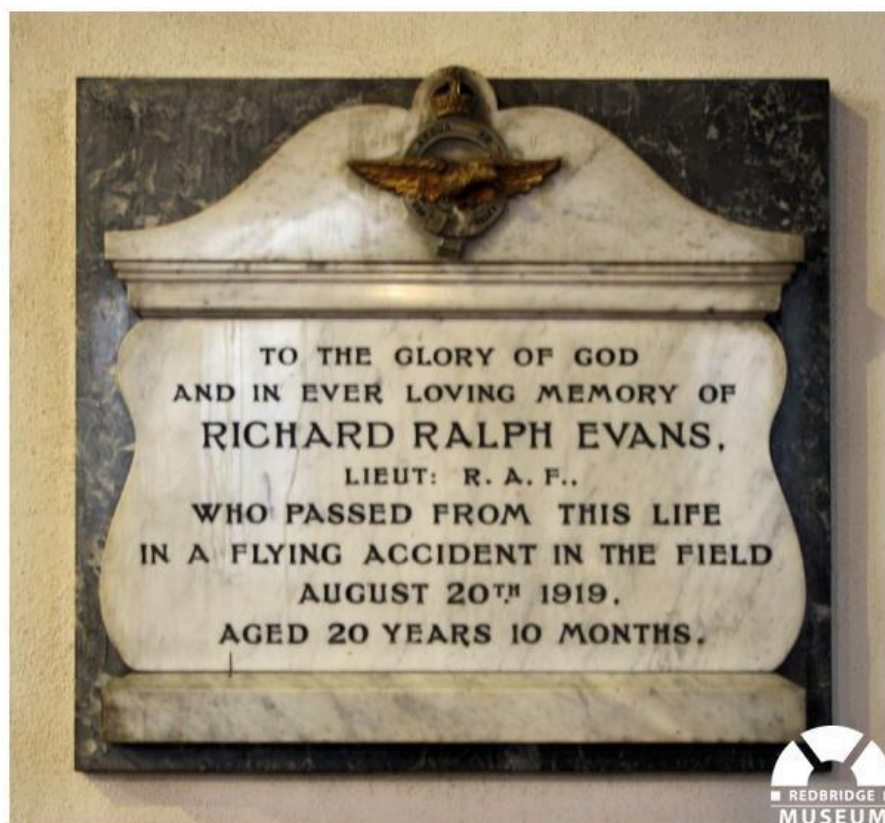
La Bassée

Richard Ralph Evans

Private 762748 28th London Regiment and Acting Lieutenant Royal Air Force

Richard Evans was born in Hanwell, Middlesex, in 1898, and lived in Wanstead in Essex. His father William Edward Evans was a successful import/export merchant, his mother Agnes Mercy Cox was the daughter of a farmer – they were both from Devon.

Richard served as a Private in the London Regiment, but no details are known. On 31st March 1918 he was transferred to the Royal Air Force, which came into being the next day. Flying Officer Evans became an Acting Lieutenant. After accruing 1083 flying hours he died in a Bonn hospital, following a flying accident, on 20th August 1919. His parents moved to Greenhill Road, Wylde Green.



Memorial to Richard Evans in St. Gabriel's Church, Wanstead

Albert Folland

Rifleman 557111 16th London Regiment

(Queen's Westminster Rifles)

Albert Folland was one of four children of Richard Folland, a labourer, and Mary Saunders, the daughter of a carpenter. Born in 1883, Albert married Mary Hulley (known as May), the daughter of a coal dealer, in 1909. Daughters Audrey, born 1910, and Joan, born 1914, made up the family, who lived at 52 Highbridge Road. Albert worked as a clerk and became a chief clerk in the gas department of Birmingham Corporation.

UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920

London Regiment > 56th Division > Piece 2963/2: 1/16 Battalion London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) (1916 Feb - 1919 May)

SAVE

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required.)

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Army Form C. 2118.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendixes
the Field	1918 May 16th		A German Albatross machine was driven down and crashed by 2 of our fighting machines near BOIS DE BOUEURS about 7 p.m. 3 parties of 26 men each dug our three posts in new trench. Remainder of Battalion did not work owing to gassing of previous night. Casualties, 2 other ranks killed, 8 other ranks Wounded, 15 other ranks Sick, 1 other rank Other causes, 39 other ranks Reinforcements.	
	17th		Usual quiet day. A 6" Mark VII shell fell near BLANGY SUPPORT and PELVES TRENCH at about 8.30 p.m. 3 Companies worked on new trench and one company for R.E. during night 17/18th Parties on new trench were not much troubled by the enemy. Casualties, 10 other ranks Sick.	
	18th		Commanding Officer visited TELEGRAPH HILL sector during morning to obtain all information available concerning enemies line preparatory to proposed raid. Work as for night 17/18th Casualties, 3 other ranks Sick, 3 other ranks Other causes.	
	19th		Day quiet. Enemy's guns slightly more active during evening. Work as on two previous nights Casualties, 1 other rank Wounded, 2 other ranks Sick, 1 other rank Reinforcement.	
	20th		Nothing unusual happened during day. Divisional General went round BLANGY SYSTEM during morning. Work as on previous nights. Casualties, 1 officer (2nd Lieut. W.T. GALBRAITH) sick, 1 other rank Reinforcement.	
	21st		Usual quiet day. Battalion was relieved during early night 21/22nd by 1st London Scottish and proceeded to billets in ARRAS where it became responsible for manning TELEGRAPH HILL SWITCH in case of attack. Relief was quiet and was complete before midnight. Casualties, 2 other ranks Reinforcements.	

Phyllis
Lieut-Colonel, Commanding
1st Battalion, QUEENS WESTMINSTER RIFLES.

196 of 284

2449 Wt. W14847/Moo 750,000 1/16 J.R.C. & A. Forms/C.2118/12

© 1997-2018 Ancestry.com

The War Diary for a week in May 1918 for the Queen's Westminster Rifles.

Albert joined the London Regiment as Rifleman 557111, further details unknown, and was sent to France on 13th March 1918. He was killed in action two months later, on the 16th May 1918, near Arras, and is buried in Dainville British Cemetery.

George Herbert French

Lance Serjeant Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Born in Smethwick and baptised on the 9th September 1896, George French was the only surviving child of George Swail French, a saddler, and Flora Stokes, daughter of a whitesmith.

Having worked as a stamper boy at the cycle works, George joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 305711, was promoted to Corporal and then Lance Serjeant. Serving with the 2nd/8th Battalion, George was killed in France in the Somme region on 30th March 1917, on a day when snipers were particularly active.

George's father died in 1926. His mother lived at 59 Boldmere Road until her death in 1941.

Lance Serjeant George French is buried in the Roisel Communal Cemetery Extension. There are 878 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, 120 are unidentified and special memorials are erected to 12 soldiers from the United Kingdom and one from Australia who are known or believed to be buried among them. Other special memorials record the names of two soldiers from the United Kingdom, buried in other cemeteries, whose graves could not be found on concentration. The graves of 88 soldiers of the United States Army buried here in October 1918, have been removed to another cemetery. There are 514 German soldiers commemorated in this site, 190 being unidentified.



Wilfred Garner

Private 25079 Worcestershire Regiment

On 14th June 1917, Private Wilfred Garner was tried by Field General Court Martial in France. He had been in military custody for six weeks. Wilfred was charged with *“when on active service... an act to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.”* There are no further details on the record. Found guilty as charged, Wilfred Garner was sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour.



Wilfred Garner was born on 26th August 1898, to Jane Freeman, daughter of a labourer from Wolverhampton, and James Garner, a labourer and sometime chandelier maker. Wilfred was the fourth living son, after Bernard, George and Harold. Sisters Gladys, 1905, and Lizzie, 1908 followed. There were other (untraced) children. By 1911 Jane had had nine children, of whom eight survived.

The family had split by 1911. There is no trace of James Garner, the father, and no record of Wilfred in the 1911 census (although he may have been in the Aston workhouse). Gladys Garner aged 6, was an inmate at the Marston Green Cottage Homes, run by the Birmingham workhouse. Bernard, George, Harold and Lizzie lived with their mother, who still described herself as married.

By the age of sixteen, the war having lasted eight months, Wilfred was working as a bullet maker. A newspaper cutting (below) reveals that he was one of a number of boys summoned before magistrates for absenting themselves from work and playing football, which led to delays in orders for the army.

findmypast® Family tree Search 1939 Register My records Blog Help

Birmingham Mail 30 March 1915

Page 4 of 6 Article: MISCELLANEOUS.

WOMEN AS TRAMWAY CONDUCTORS.

Glasgow is putting women tramway-car conductors to the test. Neat blue skirts and tunics, edged with gold braid, and smart caps have been served out to two women. Upon their efficiency depends the future of the women conductors in Glasgow.

For four hours the women tramway-car conductors will punch tickets between the university and Dumbreck, and at the end of the week the manager will report to the Tramways Committee.

The wages paid to men conductors are 25s. to 35s. a week, and the women's wages will not be lower. Among the 20,000 women who had registered at

PREFERRED FOOTBALL TO WORK.

ARMY ORDERS STOPPED BY BIRMINGHAM BOYS' NEGLECT.

At the Victoria Courts to-day, before the Stipendiary (Lord Ilkerton), five boys, named Alfred Harper, 31, Ingleby Street; Wilfred Garner, 4, back 59, Newhall Hill; Samuel Westwood, 1, back 82, Warstone Lane; Charles Henry Greenhill, 4 court, 23 house, Camden Grove; George Frederick Harris, 205, Vauxhall Road, were summoned at the instance of their employers, Messrs. A. Kemp and Son, bullion workers, Tesby Street North, for neglecting their work, the firm claiming nominal damages of 5s. in each case.

Mr. J. F. Richards (Messrs. Newry and Sons), who appeared for the prosecution, explained that the boys absented themselves from work on Monday afternoon, as a result of which three rolling machines were stopped. The firm were engaged on army and navy work and it was a very serious matter. It was presumed that the boys stopped away in order to play in a football match. A representative of the firm stated that on the afternoon mentioned practically the whole of the work was stopped, not because these particular boys were away, but because they had led other lads away with them: nearly all the boys in the works were absent, and the firm wanted to stop any further trouble of this kind.

The boys, who explained that "they thought they would have half a day and didn't think they would get summoned for it," were each ordered to pay 5s., the Stipendiary warning them that they could not take half-days in that way.

stress. The laxity of the football professionals and their following amounted to almost a public scandal. He pointed out that a Football Battalion was raised and public opinion died down under the belief that most, if not all, of the available professionals had joined the battalion. "This," the writer went on, "is not the case, as only 122 professionals have joined. . . . In many cases the directors and managers of clubs have not only given no assistance in getting those men to join, but have done their best by their actions to prevent it. . . . If men who are fit and capable of doing so will not join they and all those who try by their words and actions to prevent them will have to face the opinion of their fellow-men publicly. I will no longer be a party to shielding the want of patriotism of these men by allowing the public to think they have joined the Footballers' Battalion."

Mr. C. E. Sutcliffe said: "Management Committee earlier in the day had considered the letter, and strongly disapproved of the various statements it contained. He moved the following resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Morley (Llanelwyl), and strongly supported by Messrs. Rinder (Aston Villa), Clayton (Everton), Bellamy (Grimby), and others:—

This special general meeting of the clubs of the Football League heartily approves the declarations of the Management Committee with reference to the importance of all professional football players who can do so joining the colours. They fully recognise the serious call of national and patriotic duty, and pledge themselves to continue to do everything in their power to support the Management Committee and other football authorities in encouraging recruiting in all phases of national service.

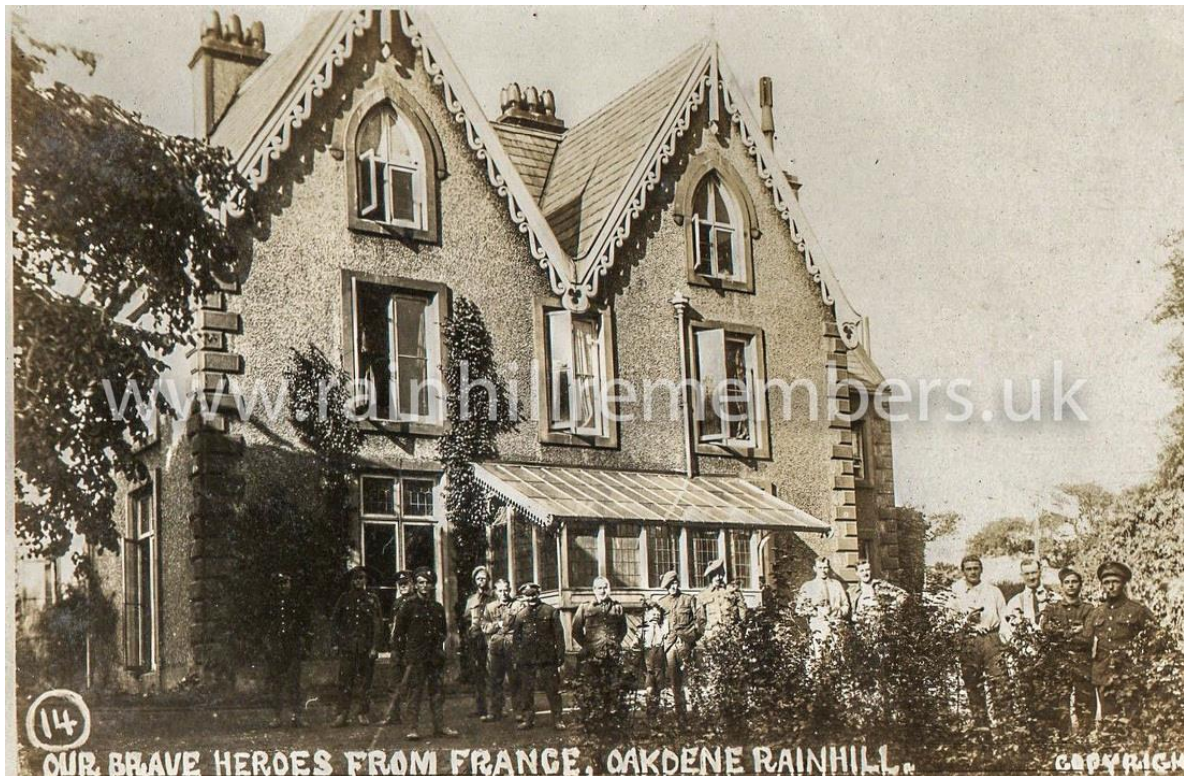
HEAVY-WEIGHT BOXING.

Seven months later, Wilfred joined the Machine Gun Corps. He gave his age as 19 (he was 17) and his address as 4 back 59 Newhall Street. His occupation he gave as labourer. Wilfred was 5' 7½" tall, with a 37" chest. He weighed 9 st 5 lbs.

Wilfred transferred to the Worcestershire Regiment in January 1916, and in November 1916 became a lance corporal, although it is not clear how long this lasted. Wilfred served just five weeks in prison after his court martial. His sentence was suspended on 17th July 1917, under the Suspension of Sentences Act 1915. The Act had reduced desertions and other offences in the army, because it meant that all sentences might be suspended – deserters and others found guilty of crimes would be sent back to the trenches, with the threat of a sentence still hanging over them, and the provision that sentences might be remitted altogether for good conduct in the field. Wilfred was admitted to hospital soon after his release, suffering from defective vision, diagnosed as anaemia. He was sent back to the front on 27th August.

On 30th November 1917, Wilfred was wounded in action, by a gunshot wound to his buttock. The wound ulcerated and Wilfred was evacuated to Britain, where he was treated at hospitals in Suffolk. He was transferred to the 6th Worcesters, based at Harwich. Wilfred's sentence of imprisonment was remitted entirely in January 1918 for Good Conduct in action. He became an unpaid lance corporal in February 1918.

Once again a private, Wilfred Garner was sent back to France on the 31st March 1918. Three months later he was shot again, near Soissons. A serious arm wound meant that he was sent to hospital in Paris, and again evacuated to Britain, where he spent two months at Oakdene VAD hospital in Lancashire – his record notes that he was hospitalised for a total of 200 days because of his wounds.



Wilfred was discharged from the army on 20th March 1919, having been awarded an army pension (20% disablement) of 5s 6d per week for one year. He moved back to the family home, now at 250, Highbridge Road. Wilfred worked as a baker's van man, but only for three months. Wilfred Garner died of pneumonia on the 28th June 1919. The death was attested by his brother Harold, who was still serving in the Royal Artillery.

Unlike others, Wilfred does not seem to have a record with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. His pension was cancelled on his death, but in 1922 the army tried unsuccessfully to track down his next of kin. A form asking for a list of blood relatives was eventually filled in by Wilfred's brother George, who did not know where his parents were. Both Gladys and Lizzie were in the children's home. George wrote: "I cannot complete the form because I do not know where half of them are. I have filled in as much as I....".

Cecil Campbell Gibbons

Private 27471 5th Dorsetshire Regiment

Cecil Campbell Gibbons was born in early 1898 in Chertsey Surrey, the son of Joseph Vincent Gibbons, a tailor, and Frances Agnes Campbell, both born in Aston, who had married in 1888. Joseph Gibbons perhaps travelled with his job but does not seem to have been at home very much. In 1901 the family lived in Highbridge Road – Mother Frances, and children Vincent, Constance, and Cecil, then aged 2. By 1911 the family were scattered, and Cecil, age 12, was in the St Paul's Home for Boys in Coleshill. This was a Catholic Home, run by nuns for Catholic children in the care of the Board of Guardians – that is, children from the workhouses. St Paul's had 150 boys and 15 nuns (who were mainly from Ireland) to look after them.

Cecil went to work for the fertiliser manufacturers Proctor and Ryland. In January 1917 Cecil enlisted in the 5th Dorsetshire Regiment as Private 27471 and joined 'A' Company. He named his mother as his sole legatee, and gave her address as 64, Boldmere Road.



Boldmere Road in 1906 – No 64 is now the Birmingham Settlement shop

Cecil Campbell Gibbons was killed in action on the Western Front on 10th March 1918. He was 19 years old.

The War Diary of the 5th Dorsets (written each day) has the following entries:

3rd March 1918. At 5.45 the battalion left Philosophe and moved up into the line to relieve the 8th Northumberland Fusiliers.

4th March 1918. In the field. Everything was very quiet in our sector.

5th March 1918. A quieter day than usual until the evening when the enemy fired a number of gas shells on the communication trench. Battalion HQ were forced to wear their helmets for a quarter of an hour owing to a gas shell exploding just outside one of the entrances to the dugout. Major-General Davis visited all our posts during the morning.

6th March 1918. At 2.30 this morning the division on our right carried out a raid.

7th March 1918. A very quiet day on our front. The following NCOs and men were awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the raid last month.....

8th March 1918. The enemy showed unusual activity in artillery and trench mortars. Chapel Alley and OB1 being especially badly shelled. Fortunately there were no casualties.

9th March 1918. The enemy's artillery and trench mortars were once again extremely active.....

10th March 1918. The enemy's artillery still continued to be very active particularly near Battalion HQ in the afternoon and OB1 in the evening. Two men, Ptes 25245 Barton and 27471 Gibbons were killed, 1 man 8996 Pte Franklin was wounded. These casualties were caused by a heavy trench mortar shell bursting in the trench near Exeter Castle

Private Cecil Campbell Gibbons is buried in the Philosophe British Military Cemetery at Marzingarbe in Pas-de-Calais. Cecil's mother Frances received a payment of £5 17s 11d after his death, and a later War Gratuity of £4 0s 0d. Frances lived in Boldmere with her two other children until her death in 1949, aged 84.

Arthur Leek Gibbs

Bombardier 87753 Royal Field Artillery

Arthur Gibbs was the eldest son of Thomas Gibbs, a labourer born in Wylde Green, and Ada Annie Leek, daughter of a farmer. Arthur was born in 1900, when the family lived in Erdington, and was baptised on 1st April 1900 at St. Barnabas.

Arthur enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery in 1915, when he was just fifteen years old, and became part of B Battery, 180th Brigade. He died of wounds on 2nd September 1918 and is buried in Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension.

John Gidman

Private 15885 Gloucestershire Regiment

While some WW1 War Diaries are very detailed, those of the Gloucesters are sparse, with no details of actions or casualties. Private John Gidman was killed in action on 7th September 1918 near Bethune.

Born in King's Norton in 1895, John was baptised on the 9th June 1895. His father Moses was an agricultural labourer, his mother Ada was a domestic servant. The family was living in Fern Road, Erdington in 1901, and then moved to 6, Florence Road.



John Gidman has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

Albert Edward Gilbert

Able Seaman J18068 HMS Indefatigable

Albert Gilbert was born on 12th October 1896, the illegitimate son of Emily Gilbert, a domestic servant. He was baptised in Castle Bromwich on 25th July 1897, his mother's occupation being given as 'single woman'.

Albert was brought up by his grandparents: George, a domestic gardener, and Ellen. (George was over 60 when Albert was born and went deaf). The family, consisting of George, Ellen, and their children (including Albert's aunt Lily and uncle George), plus Albert, lived at 5, Tintern Villas in Highbridge Road.

Albert Gilbert joined the navy as a boy, on 22nd June 1912, when aged fifteen. His record shows him to have been 5' 2³/₄" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion. Albert joined HMS *Indefatigable* on 15th June 1913. He was rated as an Ordinary Seaman on 16th April 1914. On his eighteenth birthday Albert signed on for a 12 year term of service. He was rated as an Able Seaman on the 19th November that year.



HMS Indefatigable in 1916, before the Battle of Jutland.

HMS *Indefatigable* was the lead ship of her class of three battlecruisers built for the Royal Navy during the first decade of the twentieth century. When the Great War began, *Indefatigable* was serving in the Mediterranean, where she unsuccessfully pursued the battlecruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau* of the German Imperial Navy as they fled towards the Ottoman Empire. The ship bombarded Ottoman fortifications defending the Dardanelles on 3 November 1914, then, following a refit in Malta, returned to home waters in February.

Albert Gilbert died when HMS *Indefatigable* was sunk on 31 May 1916, during the Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle of the war. She was hit several times in the first minutes of the opening phase of the battlecruiser action. Shells from the German battlecruiser *Von der Tann* caused an explosion ripping a hole in her hull, and a second explosion hurled large pieces of the ship 200 feet in the air. Only three of the crew of 1,019 survived.

Indefatigable, along with the other Jutland wrecks, was belatedly declared a protected place under the *Protection of Military Remains Act 1986*. It is the resting place of all 1,016 men who died.

On Albert's death his next-of-kin was informed. This was his aunt Lily at the Highbridge Road address, despite the fact that Albert's mother Emily was still alive (she became Emily Lightfoot and had three more children). Lily Gilbert had by then married and become Lily Howell.

Lily's husband was Robert Rutter Howell, who was killed in action in Salonika in 1917 (see later piece).

Albert's uncle, Lily's brother, George Gilbert, served as a driver in the Royal Field Artillery. He worked as an officer's groom in France and in Salonika. Notably George served seven days Field Punishment #2 for "making improper reply to a superior officer"; and was also confined to barracks for seven days for overstaying a pass from 1645 to 1705, when he was apprehended by the Military police.

After the war, George married Elizabeth Parrott née Nash, the widow of George Ernest Parrott (see later piece).

William Godfrey

Lance Corporal 18310 Coldstream Guards

William Godfrey was born in Wylde Green on 5th September 1883. He attended Green Lanes School (now Wylde Green Primary). William was in Witton Isolation Hospital at age 7 (cause unknown). By 1901 he was apprenticed to a basket maker in the centre of Sutton Coldfield. However, by 1911 William was a domestic gardener, the family now living in Four Oaks.

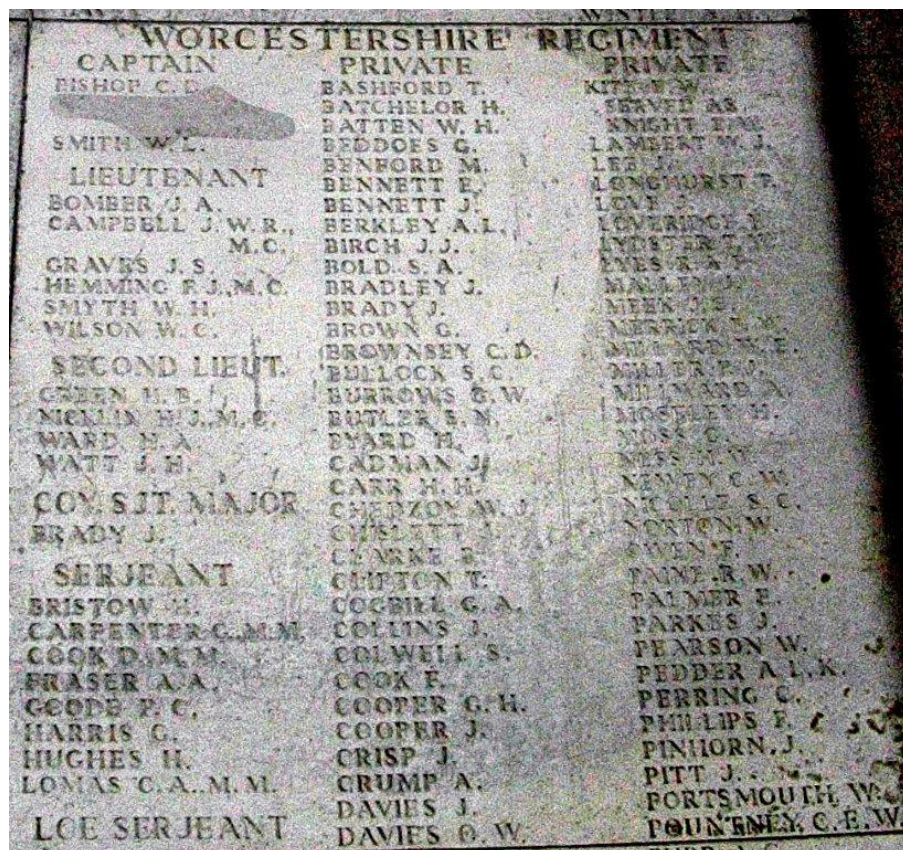
William married Fanny Ethel Maskell, a biscuit factory worker, in Reading in 1916. He was a soldier in the 4th Company, 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards. William was killed in action on the Western Front on 23rd August 1918. He is buried in Douchy-Les-Ayette cemetery.



Percy Charles Goode

Sergeant 41918 Worcestershire Regiment

The 2nd Worcesters were involved in intense trench fighting around Ploegsteert and Neuve Eglise in April 1918. Units frequently lost touch with each other. Trenches were taken and retaken. The bodies of those killed often disappeared. One such was Percy Charles Goode.



Panel 2 on the Ploegsteert Memorial

Percy Goode was born in 1894 in Kings Norton, the second son of William Goode, who worked as a manufacturer's clerk and became works manager, and Lucy Twigg, daughter of a basket maker from Cheltenham. The family lived in Ladywood and later in Sutton Coldfield, in Western Road and Frederick Road. Percy's mother died in 1899, and for a while the family was brought up by his aunt, who kept house for her father, brother and nephews. Percy worked as a clerk.

Percy enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 15915, and then transferred to the 2nd Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment with the number 21918. At some point he was promoted to sergeant.



A typical trench on the Western Front

Sergeant Percy Goode was killed on 13th April 1918. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

Percy's elder brother **Harold Bevington Goode** also served. He enlisted in the Royal Engineers on 23rd November 1914, when the family lived at 29, Frederick Road. Harold was sent to Egypt in August 1915. For nine months in 1916 he was ill with an enteric fever. Harold survived the war and lived until 1965.

Albert John Green

Lance Corporal 1667 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Albert Green was born in 1895, the second son and third child of Henry, a bricklayer, and Mary Jane (known as Jane). The family lived in several places, ending up at 22, Penns Lane in 1911. Albert worked as an errand boy in a chemist's. Albert's father died when Albert was a child, and his mother supported the family by working as a charwoman.

Albert enlisted in the 15th Battalion (2nd Birmingham Pals) of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Promoted to Lance Corporal, he was killed in action on 26th October 1917, during the second battle of Passchendaele. The 15th Warwicks were involved in continual attacks and retreats in and around Polderhoek Chateau, which was razed to the ground. On this day they advanced but had to return to their original positions by evening.

Albert Green has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial.



Polderhoek Chateau

2nd Lieutenant George Noble Hallewell

167th Coy. Machine Gun Corps

George Noble Hallewell the younger was born in Ripon, Yorkshire in 1888, the son of George Noble Hallewell the elder, a marine engineer, and Kate Maria Pepper, daughter of a railway agent. The family moved around a lot, living in Leeds and eventually Leicester. George Senior worked in as a ship's engineer on transatlantic ships. George Senior and Kate had nine children, of whom six survived infancies. Little is known of young George's early life. At the age of fifteen, he enlisted as a Boy in the Northumberland Fusiliers but was discharged after a few months as 'not likely to become an effective soldier'. As a young man, George worked as a motor mechanic, away from home.

George was gazetted as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Birmingham Pals) in April 1915. In September he married Edith Mary Baker, the daughter of a railway agent – her family, with seven children, was well-off, having five servants. The new family lived at Donington House in Birmingham Road, although George is unlikely to have been there much. At some point George transferred to the Machine Gun Corps. He was wounded on the Somme and died of his wounds on 10th October 1916. George and Edith's son Raymond was born a few weeks later. George Noble Hallewell is buried in Carnoy Military Cemetery



Lewis gunner on a trench step, on the Somme 1916.

Thomas Philip Hands

Sergeant 305439 Royal Warwickshire Regiment



Thomas Hands was born in 1893, the eldest son of Thomas Hands, a silversmith and trade union official, and Louisa Shaw. Thomas Jnr. worked as a clerk in the Education Department of Aston Borough Council.

Thomas married Agnes in the first half of 1916. On 1st July, 1916, serving as a Sergeant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Thomas was killed in action in France, at the beginning of what came to be known as the Battle of the Somme.

The first day of the Battle of the Somme was the worst day in the history of the British Army. At 7:30 am on Saturday, 1st July, 1916, thousands of British soldiers began an attack against a German trench line which was supposed to have been destroyed by artillery fire. The assault took place along a 25-mile front. Over the next 12 hours 29,000 people were killed and many more wounded. On that one day alone, the British suffered more casualties than in the Crimean War and the Boer War combined.

Thomas's death was only presumed to have happened on that day. His body was never recovered, and he has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Sidney Harrison

Sapper 398494 Royal Anglesey, Royal Engineers

Sidney Harrison served with the No. 2 Siege Company of the Royal Anglesey Royal Engineers. He was married to Charlotte Wooldridge, daughter of an ironworker. The family lived at 38, Boldmere Road, and had four children – Margaret (1911); Irene (1913); Alan (1914); Fred (1916).

Sapper Harrison died of pneumonia in France on 24th October 1918, and is buried in Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny.



Note: The influenza pandemics of 1918-1919 spread remarkably quickly. From September 1918 to November 1918, a second wave of flu spread through the Western Front.

Death, which occurred in about 2% of cases, was usually from pneumonia. More than 35000 soldiers died from this.

Arthur Rex Harrop

Private 22636 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

The 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment had spent a few days away from the front line, with firing practice and further training, in late September 1918. There had been a whole day free, with a voluntary church service. The entire battalion had had a bath on the 23rd September. Then they were ordered back to the trenches

At 5.20 a.m. on the 27th September 1918, three companies of the 15th Battalion attacked enemy trenches with the aim of taking them. The attack was successful, the trenches were taken. The British soldiers were then obliged to withdraw, that is, go back to their own trenches. The three companies, which if fully manned would consist of about 600 men, had lost 4 officers and 36 other ranks killed; there were nearly a hundred wounded; plus there were 29 soldiers missing. The war ended six weeks later.

UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920
Royal Warwickshire Regiment > 5th Division > Piece 1557: 13 Infantry Brigade (1915 - 1919)

WAR DIARY
or
~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~
(Erase heading not required.)

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Place Date Hour Summary of Events and Information

IT LINE 27th continued:-
15th R.War R. attack at Zero plus 152
Battalion attack & gain objective, but is obliged to retire.
Casualties:- Officers. Other Ranks.
Killed 3 (inc M.O.) Wounded 5. Killed 36. Wounded 90. Missing 29.
1 Wounded since died. 2 Wounded at duty.

Do. 28th 9.0
Patrol leaves our lines to reconnoitre with the object of ascertaining if enemy still hold SMUT TRENCH.
9.30
Patrol returns having confirmed enemy still hold SMUT TRENCH.

The War Diary of the 15th RWR for 27th September 1918

Among those killed in that attack was Arthur Harrop, a warehouseman who lived at 63, Frederick Road, Wylde Green. Arthur was a son of Frederick Harrop, who was a toolmaker making cycle accessories, and had his own business, and Elizabeth Croker, the daughter of a tallow chandler. After attending Anthony Road school in Aston, both Arthur and his older brother, also Frederick, worked in the family business. Their mother had died in 1900, and their father had remarried – there were up to nine children and young adults in the house at any one time. The house in Frederick Road was named ‘Alverstoke’ after the place in Hampshire where Arthur’s father had been born.

Arthur joined up and was sent to France in May 1917. His father received a War Gratuity of £8 10s after his death.

Arthur Rex Harrop is buried in the Gouzeaucourt New British Cemetery.

Frederick Thomas Harrop, born 1883, was the older brother of Arthur Harrop, above. On 4th December 1915, Frederick joined the 1/5th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was 32 years old, 5’ 4½” tall, with a 39½” chest.

Frederick went to France in December 1916, where he served for four months. He returned to the trenches in July 1917. In October Frederick was wounded in action. He was evacuated to Britain on the 1st November.

Five months later Frederick was discharged from the army as “no longer physically fit”. His skills were those of a warehouseman, but he had no idea at the time what occupation he would aim for.

Frederick was awarded a war pension, but no further details are known. In 1939 Frederick was described as a ‘war pensioner’ – he and four siblings were still living with their father and his second wife Nancy in Frederick Road.

William Joseph Hince

Private 36227 Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)



Machine gunners in action at the Battle of the Somme

William Hince was part of the newly formed Machine Gun Corps, to which he was transferred from the Royal Warwicks in May 1916. William had joined up in November 1915. He was a very tall man for the time (5'10½"). Sent to the Western Front in September 1916, Private Hince was killed in action on 4th May 1917.

William was a married man with two children. He and his wife Adeline Bartram, a housemaid, had married in 1910, living in Highbridge Road and then Jockey Road. William worked as an insurance agent before enlisting. Adeline was awarded a pension of £1 2s 11d a week for herself and her two children.

Private William Hince has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.

Robert Rutter Howell

Private 14085 Wiltshire Regiment

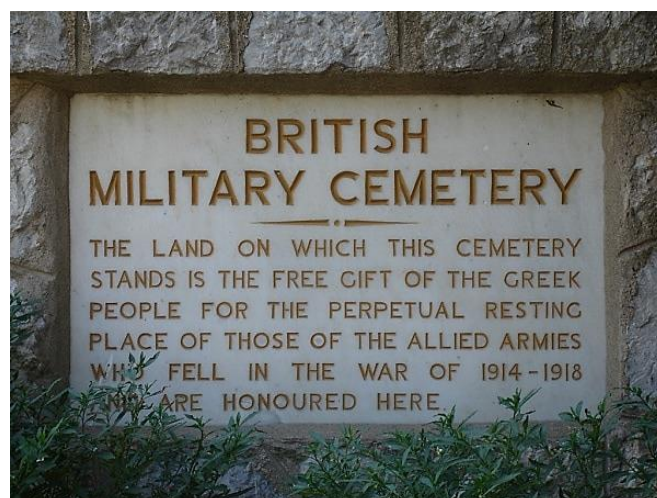
Robert Howell was born in Stanley Road, Nechells on 18th September 1886, and baptised at St James the Less on 20th October 1886. His father, also Robert Rutter Howell, was a railway clerk, and his mother was Susan Gardner, daughter of a fishmonger. Robert had a younger brother, Albert, who was partially deaf from the age of four.

Robert worked as a railway clerk before joining up in August 1914. He married Lily Gilbert in 1915, and in September that year he was sent to France. From there Robert went to Salonika in Macedonia.

Salonika is sometimes forgotten in the history of WW1 – but hundreds of thousands of British, French and Serbian troops fought against the enemy, in this case Bulgarians. During 1916 alone the British suffered 50 000 casualties in the fighting – and 80 000 men died or were evacuated due to sickness (malaria being particularly prevalent).

According to the Royal Sutton Coldfield Great War project, Private Howell was injured by a high explosive shell and had his leg amputated. He died of wounds on 19th February 1917, aged 30.

Lily Howell, widow, was living at Tintern Villas, Highbridge Road in 1939.



Robert Howell is buried in the Salonika Military Cemetery

Frederick Iliffe

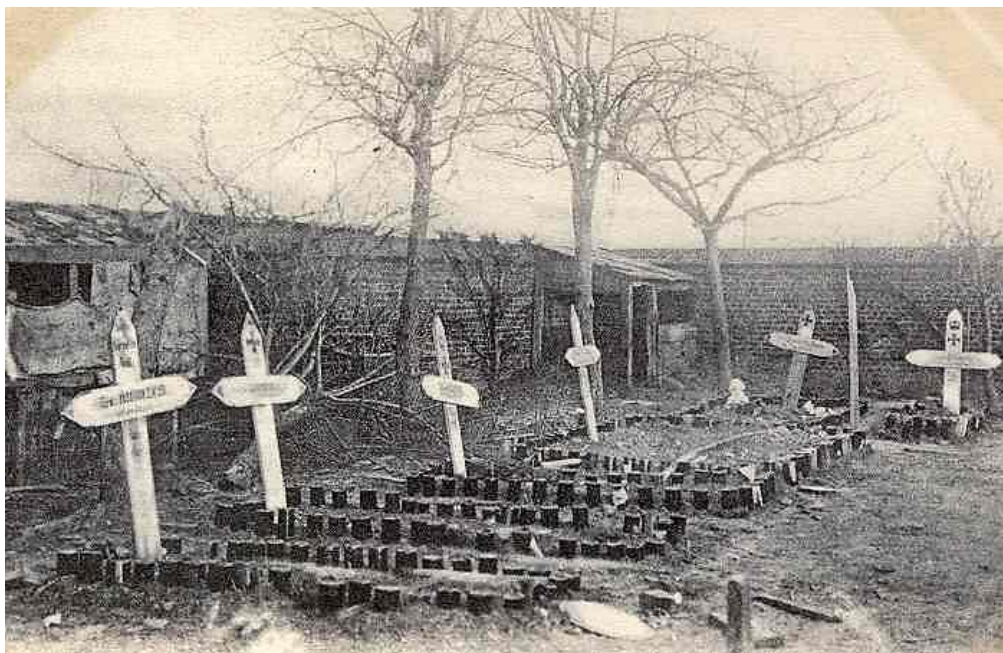
Corporal 10140 East Lancashire Regiment

“6th September 1916: A quieter night and fine. During the day much activity on the part of the artillery and trench mortars on both sides; some damage done to our trenches. Our snipers active. A fine sunny day. One killed.”

The War Diary entry for the 2nd East Lancs which shows the death of Frederick Iliffe

Frederick Iliffe was born in 1892, the son of John Edgar Iliffe, a clerk who became a commercial traveller in steel stampings, and Elizabeth Oakley. Frederick's mother died in 1901, and he and his siblings were living with their grandmother that year. Frederick's father remarried, and the family moved at some point to 'St. Elmo' at 182, Boldmere Road, where more children were born, making nine altogether, of whom seven survived infancies.

Frederick joined the East Lancashire Regiment sometime before 1911 – unfortunately no army record survives. He was with the 1st Battalion, based in Surrey in 1911. Frederick transferred to the 2nd Battalion and was promoted to Corporal. He was killed in the trenches in France, aged 24. Frederick is buried in Vermelles British Cemetery.



Contemporary photo of German graves in a garden in Vermelles

Cyril Sidney Jackson

Private 2482 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Cyril Jackson was a golf professional who worked at Walmley Golf Club. Born in Leicestershire on 18th August 1894, he was the fourth son among twelve children of Frederick John Jackson, a domestic gardener, and Emma Scattergood, who had worked as a domestic servant and was the daughter of a carpenter. The family, after moving around a lot, lived at 30, Penns Lane.

Cyril joined the 8th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (confusingly, he was known as Sidney in the army – the same name as his younger brother). On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916, the battalion suffered 588 casualties (a full-strength battalion would have had about 800 frontline troops). Among those killed was Cyril Jackson. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.



MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL WRITES IN NEXT ISSUE

SUNDAY·PICTORIAL

CIRCULATION MORE THAN ONE-MILLION-EIGHT-HUNDRED-THOUSAND COPIES.

No. 69. Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1916. The Paper with "The Daily Mirror" Behind It. One Penny.

THE BIG ADVANCE: "ALL GOES WELL FOR ENGLAND AND FRANCE"



An advance by the British in France after preparing the way with smoke bombs.



One of the great guns firing on the German trenches.



Our boys after the advance at St. Eloi.



The "Fighting Fifth" after taking the German positions.



A British big gun in action during a big bombardment.



A heavy British howitzer in action in the West.



British troops hurrying up to the firing-line in motor-cars.

The nation was thrilled yesterday to hear that the Great British offensive on the western front had begun at last. Sixteen miles of German front trenches have been captured by our gallant soldiers to the north of the River Somme. Many prisoners have been taken. The French are also attacking with great success, while the terrible bombardment of the German trenches by the British artillery continues unabated. Thus it may be said that the great British offensive, for which we have waited so long, has started well. The photographs above illustrate incidents in previous British advances against the German lines in France and Flanders.

The advance on the River Somme was a disaster. An intense artillery barrage lasting five days failed to drive the Germans back or destroy their barbed wire defences. There were more than 60 000 Allied casualties on the first day of the battle.

Arthur Edgar Johnson

Private 827 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Arthur Johnson, born 1885, and baptised on 11th November 1885 in Sparkbrook, was the son of Arthur Caleb Johnson, the manager of a leather works, and Fanny Edith Cowley, daughter of a grocer. The family of four moved to Wylde Green, living at 'Napier' Villa, which had ten rooms. Arthur went to King Edward Grammar School in New Street and then worked as a departmental head for J. B. Brooks, leather goods manufacturers, where his father was managing director.

Arthur joined the 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (1st Birmingham Pals) and was sent to France on 21st November 1915. The Battle of Delville Wood lasted from 15th July to 3rd September 1916. Nearly 6000 men, including 2500 South Africans, were killed. On 30th July 1916, British troops again attacked in Delville Wood and towards Longueval as part of a bigger attack from the south. A preliminary artillery bombardment began at 4.45 pm but failed to suppress the German artillery, which then cut the British communication lines. Two battalions advanced at 6.10 pm, but the 14th Warwicks were pinned down by machine gun fire. Arthur Edgar Johnson was killed in action. Like two-thirds of those who fell at Delville Wood, Private Johnson has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.



2nd Lieutenant Alfred John King

North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales) Regiment

Alfred King was born in 1893, the third child (of seven) of William John King, a house decorator and painter, and Ada Priscilla Bourne, who lived in Highbridge Road.

Alfred was working as a groom in 1911 and joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 200813. Alfred first went to France in May 1916, with the 2nd/5th Battalion of the Royal Warwicks.

In January 1918 Alfred was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and he transferred to the 6th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment – there is no record of him holding any intermediate rank. Attached to 'A' company 4th Battalion, Alfred was wounded.

Lieutenant King died of wounds on 17th June 1918, aged 22. He is buried in Etretat Churchyard Extension.



Lieutenant John Colin Larkins

15th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment



On 4th June 1916, near Arras, the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (2nd Birmingham Pals) were subjected to a very intense artillery bombardment in their frontline trenches. 'C' Company, on the left, suffered few casualties and minor damage. 'A' Company on the right suffered severely and their trenches were partially wrecked. 'B' Company in the centre were blown to pieces – all the officers were casualties, and the trenches were completely smashed. An officer from another Company, looking for 'B' Company, found that: *"The line had been completely obliterated, and deep forty-foot dugouts, where most of the officers and men were seeking shelter, had been blown in by eleven inch armour piercing shells and the occupants had been killed and buried."* Among those killed was the second-in-command of 'B' Company, Lieutenant John Larkins.

John Larkins was the eldest son of a large, prosperous family who lived in Penns Lane. His father Charles was managing director of the family firm dealing in wholesale drapery. John's mother Emily (née Rodway) was the eldest daughter of a butcher who employed six workers.

John attended Bishop Vesey's Grammar School between 1904 and 1905. He then joined Mr. Richard's House at King Edward's School, Birmingham in 1908 and was there until 1911, before joining his father's business. John was a member of Walmley Golf Club, winning the Pwllheli Town Cup in Pwllheli, North Wales in the autumn of 1913. John Larkins joined the 16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment on 30 September 1914, as Private 1062. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and joined the 15th Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Platoon Commander of 'VI' Platoon, 'B' Company on 12 October 1914. John was promoted to Lieutenant on 23 November 1915.

John's Colonel (Colonel Colin Harding) made a personal visit to his parents after his death saying that the Lieutenant was "one of his best officers and friends, and was extremely popular in the regiment, by which his loss would be greatly felt."

Lieutenant John Larkins is buried in the Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery. The inscription on his grave reads: "*Until the day dawns*".



John's brother **Lieutenant Dennis Frank Larkins** originally joined the 14th Royal Warwicks, before being commissioned into the 11th North Staffordshire's, where he joined the machine-gun section, which became part of the Machine Gun Corps.

Harold Lee

Sergeant 804 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Harold Lee was baptised in St Barnabas Church, Erdington on 11th September 1895. Harold was the son of William Lee, who kept “The Stores” in Birmingham Road, and Alice Jones. His older brother William died when Harold was six. Harold attended King Edward’s Aston, and later worked in a hardware store.

Harold joined the 1st Birmingham Pals on their formation in 1914. He first served in France, landing there on 21st November 1915. The battalion moved to Italy in late 1917 before returning to France in April 1918. Harold was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, a gallantry award for NCOs – he was promoted to Sergeant.



Meritorious Service Medal awarded to NCOs for gallantry

Sergeant Harold Lee was killed in action on 30th April 1918. He is buried in Tannay British Cemetery, Thiennes.

Charles Loveland

Air Mechanic 2 94536 Royal Flying Corps

Charles Loveland lived with his family at 18 Florence Road. Born 1896, he was the eldest son of Charles Loveland, a domestic gardener, and Prudence Randall, daughter of a labourer. Four children were born, of whom two survived infancies. An electrician by trade, Charles served in the army from 4th September 1914 (having added a year to his age) and enlisted in the 22nd Squadron Royal Flying Corps on 5th August 1917. His mother had died in 1915.



A Bristol F2 biplane

Charles Loveland was killed in action on 21st September 1917. He was flying as the observer in a Bristol F2B with 2nd Lieutenant A H Gilbert, who was also killed. They were on an offensive patrol when their plane was involved in an air collision with another Bristol F2B of their own squadron, over Ypres, at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Charles Loveland is buried at the Potijze Chateau Lawn Cemetery, Ypres. Charles's younger brother Harold joined the RAF on 4th October 1918. Also an electrician by trade, Harold became an Air Mechanic Class 3. He served for only a few months, being transferred to the Reserve in March 1919. Charles Loveland Senior died in 1923. Harold Loveland died at Florence Road on Christmas Day 1925.

Joseph Lynch

Sergeant 24933 King's Shropshire Light Infantry

Joseph Lynch was a career soldier who lived in Highbridge Road and then Sheffield Road. One of at least six children, he was born in 1878 in Aston, son of James Lynch, a button burnisher, and Sarah Cox, daughter of a cooper.

Joseph enlisted in the Royal Welch (Welsh) Fusiliers on 15th November 1898 as Private 5871, when he was 18 years and 11 months old, giving his occupation as fitter (presumably a gas fitter, as this appears on later records).

In the Royal Welch, Joseph served in South Africa, China and India. He received a medal for the Battle of Tugela Heights, which led finally to the Relief of Ladysmith.



An image from the Boer War battle of Tugela Heights, in which there were over 2000 casualties

In his long career, Joseph suffered numerous medical problems. Before 1901, he spent a week in hospital with bronchitis and 3 weeks with soft chancre (a bacterial STD). Joseph arrived in Pekin, as it was then called, on 25th March 1901. In May

1902 ,he was hospitalised for six weeks with acute gastritis. Following this, he had another army medical and was found fit. Joseph went to India on 10th November 1902 and served there for more than six years. He was treated for the ailment gonorrhoea, common among soldiers, and for soft chancre again (the record shows that his groin was 'deeply excavated' on admission to hospital). More seriously, his stomach problems re-emerged. He was hospitalised for two weeks in October 1906 and then suffered a bout of pneumonia. Joseph spent four weeks in hospital in 1909, and a total of eight weeks in 1910/11 – each time with acute gastritis, which the doctors blamed on abuse of alcohol and smoking.

Joseph left the Royal Welch after twelve years, and almost immediately joined the Special Reserve of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry as Private 6286, liable for immediate call-up. He worked as a gas fitter, living at 232, Highbridge Road, and was mobilised on 8th August 1914, as soon as war broke out. Hospitalised again in September at Pembroke Dock with inflammation of the stomach, Joseph was by now a Sergeant. He was renumbered 24933.

Joseph was sent to France on 5th February 1915. On 22nd April he was gassed, and suffered from nephritis from then on, as well as more severe stomach problems, which led to attacks of vomiting. Evacuated to Britain in May, Joseph returned to France in August 1915, having had an operation on his stomach. However, his gastric problem (diagnosed as stricture of pylorus), meant that he was sent back to Britain in January 1916. On 4th July 1916 he was discharged from the army as "no longer physically for war service".

Joseph Lynch went back to Sheffield Road with a 'very good' military character reference. He died on 11th June 1920.

Felix Desmond MacSwiney

Private 432981 Alberta Regiment

Felix MacSwiney was born in Wylde Green on 27th October 1893, son of Felix MacSwiney, a schoolteacher originally from Ireland, and Mary Randall, daughter of a domestic gardener, from Edgbaston. Felix Junior worked as a bank clerk, and in 1914 went to Canada – his elder brother Denis has emigrated to there in 1911.

Felix joined the 49th Battalion of the Alberta Regiment on 28th January 1915, as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (he had previously trained with the Officer Training Corps in England). On 3rd June 1916, while serving in the trenches, Felix was wounded in the left shoulder by a machine gun bullet.

Felix died of his wound three days later, and is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium, to the west of Ypres.



A Canadian recruiting poster of the time

Edward Baguley Markwick

Corporal 28798 Royal Engineers

Edward Markwick was a motorcycle despatch rider in the Royal Engineers, serving throughout the war until two days before the Armistice. Edward was born on 9th February 1896 in Aston Manor – his family moved to “Eastgrove”, Highbridge Road, within a short while. Edward’s father, also Edward, was the manager of a Range and Grate works; his mother, Elizabeth Annie Baguley, was from Liverpool, the daughter of a surveyor. Two brothers of Edward were born at the Highbridge Road address, before the family moved to Maney Hill Road.

Edward was educated at Bishop Vesey’s. He joined the 2nd Signal Company of the Royal Engineers as a despatch rider, and first went to France on 15th October 1914. In February 1917 he was sent home from France with rheumatic fever, and went to the Allerton Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Hospital where his mother (a member of Queen Mary’s Army Auxiliary Corps) was working.



Edward recovered and returned to France in March 1918. However, on 9th November 1918 Acting Sergeant Edward Markwick died of pneumonia. Writing to the family from the 45th Casualty Clearing Station, Medical Officer F. M. Carter wrote: *“I am very sorry to tell you your son, Corporal E. B. Markwick died in hospital at 4 p.m. today. He was admitted to hospital suffering with pneumonia. Everything was done that was possible, but nothing seemed to help, and he passed peacefully away. He sent his love when I told him I was writing and said he would write soon. With much sympathy.”*

Edward Markwick is buried in the Awoingt British Cemetery east of Cambrai.

Vincent Harold Morgan

Private 16/408 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Vincent Morgan was the only surviving son of George, who worked for Prudential Assurance, and Matilda Louise Morgan. The family lived in Frederick Road, then Tudor Road and then Green Lanes. Before the war Vincent was a clerk in the offices of Elsby Cable Co in Livery Street. According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* of 7th October 1916, he was one of the first to join the City Battalions. Vincent was a member of the YMCA and was associated with Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church.

Vincent was killed in action on the Somme on 3rd September 1916, on the same day and in the same stretch of trenches as Henry Brassington. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.



Recruiting Parade for the City Battalions (Birmingham Pals) in the Horsefair, 1914

Lance Corporal Percy John Morris

15/216 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

On the 4th June 1916 the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment were in the front line trenches at Arras. The War Diaries stated that the situation was 'normal' during the morning. At 4 p.m. the enemy commenced a very heavy bombardment of the trenches with the aim of cutting off a section (that occupied by 'B' Company). All telephone communication between the battalion and the HQ some hundreds of yards away was cut off. The bombardment ceased at about 7 p.m. Several officers and an unknown number of other ranks had been buried in a smashed dugout. Enemy shelling started again at 9 p.m., while attempts were being made to repair trenches and telephone lines. Then, after the shelling stopped, enemy soldiers successfully took the smashed trenches occupied by what was left of 'B' Company.



British troops leaving the trenches at Arras

By the time the battalion was relieved the next day, it was established that 3 officers and 46 other ranks had been killed; that 2 officers and 29 other ranks were wounded; that 8 other ranks were suffering from shell shock; and that 27 men were missing. Among the dead was Lance Corporal Percy Morris.

Percy Morris was one of six children of Vincent Henry Morris, a colliery agent, and Emily Gertrude Solomon (herself one of 13 children), who lived at The Oaks in Wylde Green. Percy went to school at King Edward's Aston, and then joined the export merchants Goodwin & Co. in Lionel Street in central Birmingham.

Percy first went to France on 21st November 1915. According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* of 1st July 1917, his superior officer said of him that "he was a most energetic N.C.O. especially at sniping. He was a wonderful shot."

Percy's father Vincent received £7 1s 2d, plus a War Gratuity of £7 10s. Percy was not being paid as a lance-corporal.



Percy is buried in the Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery near Arras.

George Ernest Parrott

Driver 38395 Royal Horse Artillery

George Parrott was the eldest son of Ernest Joseph Parrott, a successful painter and decorator, and Sarah Ann Parrott, who lived at the Erdington end of Boldmere Road. Born in 1888 in Harborne. George joined the Royal Horse Artillery as a Driver sometime before 1911. 'Driver' does not have the obvious meaning – a driver was a soldier who looked after the horses on which much of the army relied, for pulling guns, moving equipment etc. George married Elizabeth Nash in 1913, and their son Ernest was born in early 1914. George's war record has not survived. George died of bronchitis, on the 1st July 1918, at No. 5 Stationary Hospital, Dieppe, and is buried in Janval Cemetery, Dieppe.

Thomas Henry Parrott

Private 16802 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Thomas Parrott, George's brother, worked as a decorator before joining the Royal Warwickshire Regiment on 11th December 1915. Posted to the Indian Expeditionary Force, Thomas served in India and Mesopotamia from 1916 to 1919. Thomas had several periods of illness. He was treated for 'general ICT' – a term for suppurating skin diseases; for boils; for colitis; and for amoebic dysentery. George was invalided to the India Base Depot for seven months in 1917, having served for six months in Mesopotamia. He was sent back to Mesopotamia at the beginning of 1919, where he contracted malaria. (At any one time, malaria immobilised one quarter of the British troops in Mesopotamia). Despite all this, Thomas, on discharge from the army, was found to have zero degree of disablement, and lived until 1957, working as a master painter and decorator.

(Thomas's army record also shows that he was given extra parades for being 'improperly dressed', and two days 'confinement to barracks' for being late on parade. More seriously, he underwent 10 days' Field Punishment Number 1, after 'breaking ranks without permission'. This meant being tied at wrists and ankles to a fixed object, such as a field gun, for two hours a day.)

Septimus Eric Parsons

Captain, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Septimus Eric Parsons was the seventh son and tenth child of George Parsons, Chartered Accountant, and Jane Pattison. The family lived at various addresses in Sutton Coldfield, including 'Highfields' in Lichfield Road, 'Marchmount' in Wylde Green, and 'The Moorings' in Tudor Hill. George Parsons was very successful, having his own accountancy firm based at 120, Colmore Row, Birmingham. The family employed their own servants. In 1911, at Marchmount, there were three servants – the house had thirteen rooms.

Born in Sutton Coldfield on 1st May 1892, Septimus attended Newhall College, and then Bishop Vesey's School from 1902 to 1906. Septimus then went to Mill Hill School in London, where he was a Monitor and 'a prominent member of the XI'.



Septimus, Margaret and Bertram Parsons during WW1.

Septimus's cricket record is also recorded at the Sutton Coldfield Cricket Club, along with that of his brother James. Septimus was in the First XI in 1913, and about this time he was working on his accountancy examinations, which he passed, and joined his father's accountancy practice.

War intervened, and on 9th September 1914, Septimus joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 460. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on 21st September 1914.

2nd Lieutenant Parsons was wounded in the right foot on 5th July 1915 but was back at the Front by 24th August. Promoted to 1st Lieutenant and then Captain, Septimus was severely gassed in 1917 but again returned to the trenches at the beginning of 1918.

On, 14th April 1918, Captain Parsons was sitting in a farmhouse near Les Amusoires (just north of Robecq) when an enemy shell struck the house, killing him, and '2nd Lt. Winterbottom and 3 other ranks'.

Also on that day, among many casualties, Septimus's brother Second Lieutenant Bertram Kent Parsons of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment was posted as 'missing in action'. Bertram was later found to have been captured. He was repatriated on the 2nd December 1918. Bertram was 'exonerated' of any fault on his part for his capture – this was necessary before he could be awarded any medals.

Bertram Parsons went on to serve as a Squadron Leader in the Auxiliary Air Force Balloon Branch in WW2.

Captain Septimus Eric Parsons is buried in the St. Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery. He left effects of £123 18s 3d. Like all those who served, he was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Septimus is also commemorated on the Sutton Coldfield Congregational Church Roll of Honour.

John Nelson Payne

Gunner 322888 Royal Garrison Artillery

“In loving memory of my dear husband gunner Nelson Payne killed in action 15 August 1917. Gone home to rest where care and trouble cease and Christ’s beloved sleep in perfect peace.”

This poignant notice appeared in the *Sutton Coldfield News*, two years after the death of Gunner Nelson Payne. The notice was placed by his wife Lydia Jane Allsop, who was left with their eight-month-old daughter Marguerita.

Nelson Payne was born in Sutton Coldfield in 1885, the youngest son of Mark Payne, a shoe and boot maker/repairer, and Jane Brown. Nelson’s father was 55 when Nelson was born, and he died when Nelson was seventeen. The family of six lived in Holland Road. Nelson worked as a gardener and later as a millinery warehouse porter.

By 1911, Nelson was living with his widowed mother at 9, Highbridge Road, his siblings having left home. Later that year he married Lydia, who lived in Upper Holland Road. Lydia was the daughter of a ‘brown saddler’, that is, a maker of saddles for riding horses. She worked as a ‘bodice hand’ – she helped her landladies, two sisters, in dressmaking.

Nelson joined the 118th Siege Battery of the Duke of Cornwall’s Battalion, Royal Garrison Artillery as Gunner 322888. The battery went to France on the 27th June 1916. Siege Batteries RGA were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory, plunging fire. The usual armaments were 6 inch, 8 inch and 9.2 inch howitzers.

Gunner Payne died when an enemy aircraft dropped a bomb. He is buried in the Huts Cemetery, Dickebusch, Ypres.

James Francis Perks

Private 36884 Royal Welch Fusiliers

In September 1918 the army wrote to Lousia Perks, the unmarried wife of James Francis Perks, rejecting her claim to be treated as his next-of-kin and for a widow's pension. In a heart-wrenching, anguished reply, Louisa wrote:

"I wish to state that when he joined up, we were living as man and wife and I have one little girl by the soldier at home at the present time.

She will be 7 years of age on 4 October as you will already see by the birth certificate and when my husband joined up the officer came to my house and took full particulars of our lives which was perfectly satisfactory to the Army Authorities and of course I have been in receipt of my husband's pay ever since and as I do not quite know how I should get on with this matter perhaps you would be kind enough to inform me what to do in my dreadful trouble.

Mr Perks and I have been together about ten years or perhaps more. I cannot first say but I have always passed as his wife and everyone in Sutton respect me as Mrs Perks wife hoping to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

I am yours truly Mrs J Perks

P.S. As the officer that came when my husband joined up already knows, I have no marriage lines to show. If you would be so kind as to ask him.

P.S. Sir may I beg to inform you that I have two sons in the army at the present time one in action and one wounded three times and is on his way to France again this week – Francis W Oldfield and Frederick Oldfield one in the Seaforth Highlanders and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

I am only claiming pay off one of my sons Francis William. Mr Perks was due on leave the end of this month when matters would have been settled up between us, but he has got killed a few weeks in front of his leave."

James Francis Perks was born in Wylde Green in 1884, the son of Randle Perks, a domestic gardener, and Caroline Stanyard, who had worked as a servant to a farming family in Perry Lane. The family lived in Boldmere and then in Highbridge Road, at 1, Lilcar Villas. There were nine children altogether, but only four survived infancies.

James was a labourer. His mother died in 1908, and James went to board with a widow, Louisa Oldfield, and her three sons – Francis, Frederick and Joseph, in Riland Road. James worked as a carriage cleaner for LNWR, who ran the Aston to Lichfield section of what is now the cross-city line. Louisa, widowed in 1908, had been married to a quantity surveyor, who worked from home. After his death, she worked as a daily cleaner to keep her family.

Louisa was older than James – in 1911 she was 39, James 26, and the eldest boy Frederick, who worked as a golf caddy, was 15. James and Louisa lived together as man and wife. (Perhaps interestingly, there is no record of a first marriage by Louisa either). Lillian Lydia Perks, the daughter of James and Louisa, was born in 1911.

James Perks joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers at Wrexham on the 17th November 1915. He was by then aged 31, C of E, 5' 6½" tall with a 37½" chest, and weighed 128 lbs (9 st 2 lbs). He first went to France with the 3rd Battalion on 8th December 1916.

Private Perks was severely gassed at the beginning of August 1917. He was evacuated to England, and spent a total of 74 days in hospital, including at Ingress Abbey in Gravesend. After leaving hospital, he was granted nine days' leave. James was passed fit for service, and was in England until 30th January 1918, when he was sent back to France. Before then he had gone AWOL for 6 days, and forfeited six days' pay. He was transferred to the 19th Battalion on 4th February, and then to the 17th Battalion two days later.

Private 36884 James Perks was killed in action on 30th August 1918. In the language of the army, he became ineffective because of his death. He is buried in the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, Longueval.

It is not clear what happened about the pension. However, the army paid Louisa for James' outstanding pay and effects. The record notes that James' father Randle (by then a jobbing gardener) waived his claim in favour of the unmarried wife and child. Effects amounted to £18 16s 5d. A War Gratuity of £16 0s 4d was invested in government bonds on behalf of daughter Lillian, and Louisa received a further £13. The army also returned James' belongings on 21st April 1920, scrupulously listed:

- 1 pipe
- 1 leather purse
- 1 watch
- 1 disc
- 1 pouch
- 1 chain
- Letters
- Photos
- Cards
- Birth Certificate

A polite letter from Louisa acknowledging receipt of the items ends the army file.



James' stepson **Frederick Bertram Oldfield** served as Private 8174 in the Seaforth Highlanders, and had already been in France for several months before James was posted there. He survived the war and lived until 1948 in Sutton.

The other stepson who fought was **Francis William Oldfield**, who enlisted in the 10th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment on 13th December 1916 as Private 38687. As noted, he was wounded more than once. Francis survived the war, ending as a Sergeant, and was awarded the Silver War Badge for wounds. He lived until 1974.

Percy Henry Perry

Lance Sergeant 151401 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920
Royal Warwickshire Regiment > 5th Division > Piece 1556/1-2: 14 Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (1915 Nov - 1917 Nov)

14/R War Rgt
WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY July 1916
Army Form C. 2118

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.
(Brass heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
Do	22	7.15	5pm	Batt Operation Order issued to all concerned.	See Appo. No 2.
Do	"	"	10pm	At 9.50pm the attacking Cos A on the Right, B on the Left, advanced from their trenches, in two waves, under cover of the Artillery bombardment. At 9.55pm both waves were ordered to extend, from sections in file formation, into line preparatory to lying down until the artillery lifted at 10pm. As the extension was in progress, the enemy opened an overwhelming machine gun & sniping fire. Our Troops were cut to bits & although supports were thrown in they received the same treatment, & it soon became a question of organizing our original front line to meet a possible counter attack. This was successfully done. From all reports received from survivors & judging from the intensity of the enemy fire - opened before the bombardment had lifted - it would appear that our artillery had not ranged accurately on the enemy's trenches. A full report of the attack is contained in Appendix No 2. The 1st West Kent Regt fared no better & later on the same remark applies to the 2/Rifles B. The casualties sustained by the Battalion in this action are as follows: Officers killed: Lieut R.S. Payton (Lewis Gun) 2 Lieut Lythgoe, H.L. Greenwood, H.L. Hides; Wounded: 2 Lieut J. Glover, R. Macfarlane, F.R. Wilson, Lieut E.D. Jacob, Lieut A.L. Anderson (med Officer), Missing, believed killed, Capt H.S. Mathews, 2 Lieut S.H.R. Hewitt, R. Whitbread; Missing, believed wounded: 2 Lieut J. Macduboch, E. Braithwaite; Wounded: 2 Lieut A.E.S. Cluck, P.E. Litchford. Other ranks: Killed 36; Missing 195; Wounded 238: Total 469.	See Appo. No 2.
Do	23	7.15	am	Work on consolidation of original position. Patrol work to recover dead & wounded. Batt relieved by 1st Buffs Bedford Regt. Proceeds to bivouac at POM Miere Redoubt in 1st Buffs.	Indt Col

32 of 561

The 14th Battalion RWR War Diary for 22nd/23rd July 1916.

"Our Troops were cut to bits."

Officers: Killed 4 Missing believed killed 4 Missing believed wounded 2 Wounded 7

Other ranks: Killed 36 Missing 195 Wounded 238

This was one day for the 14th Battalion in the trenches at High Wood on the Somme. Among the missing, and later presumed dead, was Lance Sergeant Percy Perry, son of Henry Perry, a cycle works manager, and Gertrude, who lived at 41, Frederick Road.

Percy was born in 1898 and attended Bishop Vesey's school. He briefly worked as an articled pupil at an auctioneer's, before joining the RWR on 15th June 1915. He went to France on 19th March 1916. Percy was 18 years old when he died. His body was never found, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial.

In his memoir *Old Soldiers Never Die*, Frank Richards, who served as a Private soldier during the whole period of the war (and won both the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal) wrote about High Wood:

“Our trench ran from just inside the wood to the centre of it and we dumped our telephone on the fire-step in a bay by ourselves. Anyone leaving the centre of the wood would have to pass us to make their way to the communication trenches. Some parts of the parapet had been built up with dead men, and here and there arms and legs were protruding. In one bay only the heads of two men could be seen; their teeth were showing so that they seemed to be grinning horribly down on us. Some of our chaps that had survived the attack on 20th July told me that when they were digging themselves in, the ground being hardened by the sun and difficult to dig away quickly, if a man was killed near them, he was used as head cover and earth was thrown over him. No doubt this saved the lives of many men who were digging themselves in. The troops who relieved them would immediately begin to deepen the trench and since that time the rain and shells had exposed the bodies in their different ways.”



Arthur George Poolman

Private 5098 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Arthur Poolman was born in Surrey in 1896, one of twelve children of Frederick Poolman, a domestic gardener, and Bertha Bullen, daughter of a domestic gardener.

The family moved around, living in Kent and Surrey, then in Jockey Road and Chester Road.

Arthur joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Birmingham as Private 5098.

He died of heart failure in hospital in Bristol on 23rd April 1916.

He had less than six months service, so no War Gratuity was payable.

Frederick Arthur Randall

Ordinary Seaman Bristol / Z / 10168

Frederick Randall was a Royal Naval Reservist who served in the Mercantile Marine.

He was born on 30th March 1899 in Wylde Green , when his family lived in Jockey Road. Frederick's father, also Frederick, ran a letterpress; his mother, Annie Maria Corbett, was from Darlaston, the daughter of a gun maker. Frederick Junior was one of six children, and the eldest boy.

Frederick joined the Royal Naval Reserve in Bristol and sailed on the SS *Mereddio*, a cargo steamer of 3,069 tons, with a crew of 27, of whom two were naval reservists.

The steamer was en route from Bilbao to Glasgow with a cargo of iron ore, part of a convoy. She sailed into Quiberon and then left for Scotland.

The ship disappeared on 10th January 1918, presumed sunk with all hands. It later emerged that she was probably torpedoed by U84, then active in those waters.

The *Mereddio* is a war grave, although it has never been located. Ordinary Seaman Randall, who died aged 18, is commemorated on the Plymouth Memorial.

Arthur Lamb Renaud

Private 127988 Royal Army Medical Corps

Arthur Renaud was born into a prosperous family in 1888 - his father managed a printing works and was by profession a lithographer. The family lived in Highbridge Road and had their own servant. Arthur Junior also worked as a draughtsman. He did not have good health: a double hernia in infancy obliged him to wear a truss for most of his life. He wore a denture in his upper teeth, and in 1913 spent six months in Hatton Asylum. Arthur's army record notes that he was 5' 1½" tall, with a 32" chest. He weighed 6 st 12 lbs, and his speech was 'very halting'.

'Deemed to have enlisted' (conscripted) in 1916, Arthur was called to the colours and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps on 7th February 1918. At about this time his mother Annie died. Arthur trained in Huddersfield and joined 'A' Company at the RAMC Depot in Blackpool in October 1918. On 12th November 1918, the day after the Armistice, Arthur was admitted to hospital in Blackpool with pneumonia. After four days, on his thirtieth birthday, he died from heart failure.



Arthur is buried in Sutton Coldfield Cemetery

2nd Lieutenant Fred Rice

South Wales Borderers

Birmingham Daily Post 11 July 1916

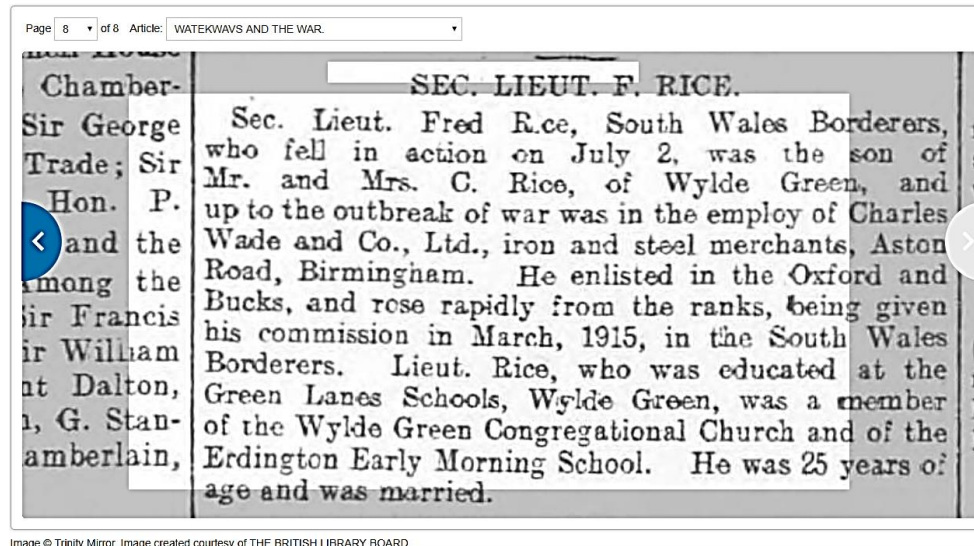


Image © Trinity Mirror. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

Fred Rice was born on 26th January 1891, the third son of Charles Rice, a blacksmith and wheelwright, and Annie Fairfax Godfrey. The family lived at 56 Princip Street. Fred was baptised on 15th February, along with his older brother Harry. As noted above, Fred went to Green Lanes School, the modern successor of which is Wylde Green Primary – the family having moved to Hope House in Highbridge Road. Fred's early military career as detailed above needs to be taken on trust, as no record before 1915 seems to remain. As an experienced soldier, Fred was commissioned into the 8th South Wales Borderers in March 1915. He was said to have married in May 1915, but no record can be found of this, and his next-of-kin, after his death, were recorded as his parents.

Fred was sent to Gallipoli on 30th August 1915, where his battalion fought against Bulgarian troops. He was injured, straining tendons, which required hospital treatment in Malta.

After this he was sent to France, attached to the 2nd Battalion of the South Wales Borderers. 2nd Lieutenant Fred Rice was killed in action on 1st or 2nd July 1916, right at the beginning of the Battle of the Somme.

He is buried in Y Ravine cemetery in Beaumont Hamel.

Bert Robbins

Private 38103 Gloucestershire Regiment

Bert Robbins worked as a porter at Wylde Green station before enlisting in February 1917 – he joined the 15th Royal Warwicks (2nd Birmingham Pals) as Private 24384. His family, including seven children, lived in Coleshill Road.

Bert transferred to the Gloucestershire Regiment, where he was part of a Pioneer battalion. The Pioneers were generally skilled men, trained as infantry, who could use their civilian skills in warfare. The main role of the Pioneers was to build and repair roads and trenches in the forward areas. Trench repairs were never ending - wear and tear, enemy bombardments and the weather all took their toll and after some bombardments they could be damaged out of all recognition. The Pioneers tidied up old battlefields, made tramways, dugouts, breastworks and shelters; they went on wiring parties, built huts and drained camps.

During trench raids and major attacks, the Pioneer Battalions, along with their colleagues in the Royal Engineers, were initially kept back in reserve, then at night they moved up and constructed strongpoints and communication trenches between the old British front line and the captured German lines.

Private Bert Robbins was killed in action on 31st July 1917 - the first day of the Battle of Passchendaele. He is buried in the Duhallo ADS cemetery, Ypres.

Bert's elder brother **George Robbins** served with the Warwickshire Yeomanry and then as Private 307585 with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed in action on 22nd March 1918. George has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial.

Charles Ernest Rose

Private 2526 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Charles Rose was born in 1889 in Erdington, and baptised at St. Barnabas on 7th April that year, when his family lived in Moor End Lane. Charles was the eldest son of George Rose, a painter and decorator, and Matilda Minnie Burton. By 1911 Minnie had given birth to twelve children, of whom ten survived. The family moved to 8, Penns Lane, with Charles as a young man also working as a house decorator.

Charles joined the 1/8th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 2526. He married Jenny Martin, who had worked as a servant to a doctor's family in Chester Road, in early 1915. Charles was sent to France on 22nd March 1915. His daughter Lilian M F Rose was born about this time.

Private Charles Rose was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916. On that day the battalion suffered 588 casualties, probably three-quarters of its strength.



Troops going “over the top” during the Battle of the Somme

It is not clear what the family situation was. Jenny in August 1916 was known as Jenny Bickerstaffe and living in Lozells. She married Frank Bickerstaffe in 1918.

Charles has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Mark Rose

Corporal 12390 Royal Berkshire Regiment

Mark Rose was a brother of Charles Rose (see previous piece). Born in late 1891, he was baptised on 3rd July 1892 at St. Barnabas. Mark worked for Dunlop in the rubber industry. In 1912 he married Alice Winifred Bird, daughter of a joiner, who was seventeen at the time. Alice had three children: Mark 1914; Beatrice 1916, died in infancy; and George 1917.

Mark enlisted in Birmingham and was sent to France on 25th July 1915. He became a Corporal in 'D' Company of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Berkshire (Princess Charlotte of Wales) Regiment. Mark Rose was killed in action sometime between 20th and 27th August 1918 – the records cannot be specific. His widow Alice received £6 5s 8d from his outstanding pay and effects, and a later War Gratuity of £10. Corporal Rose has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial.



Thomas Rose, brother of Charles and Mark, joined the 10th Battalion of the Royal Warwicks on 6th September 1914, when aged 22. His record shows that he was 5' 5½" tall, with a 34" chest. He weighed 119 lbs (8 st 7 lbs) and gave his occupation as 'painter'. Thomas was discharged from the army after one month, when a further medical found that he had a disordered heart action and was unfit for service. In the army's language, he was discharged under King's Regulation 392 (iii) c as "not likely to become an effective soldier".

Walter Scott

Private 448 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Walter Scott was born in 1893, the only child of Herbert Scott, a coachman and gardener, and Clara Insley – both his parents came from farming families. The family lived in Lichfield Road, including at Alderwin Place. Walter attended Green Lanes school and belonged to St. Michael's football club – he was also part of the St. Michael's Church Bible class. As a young man Walter worked as a piano tuner.

Walter enlisted in the 16th Royal Warwicks (3rd Birmingham Pals) and went to France on 21st November 1915. Part of the machine-gun section, Walter in July 1916 was in the area of Delville Wood (not what you might imagine, see photo).

Private Walter Scott was killed in action on 27th July 1916. According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* of 26th August 1916, he was killed instantaneously by shrapnel.



Delville Wood in September 1916

Walter Scott has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Walter John Seaton

Private 5118 Essex Regiment

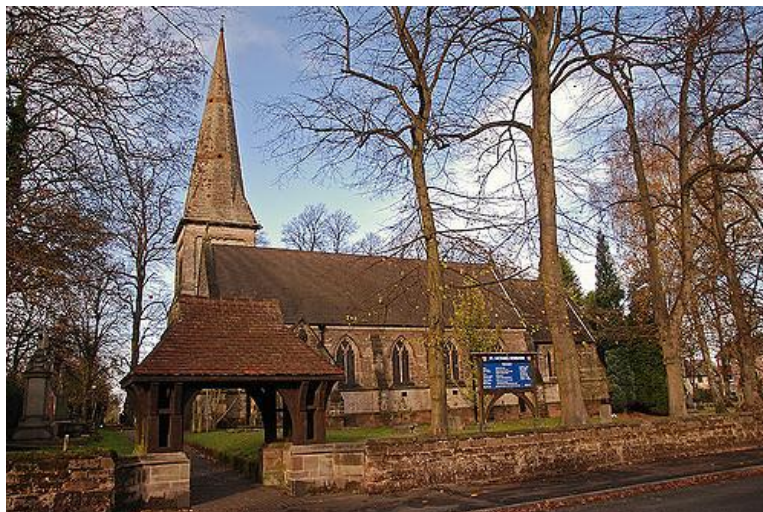
Walter Seaton was one of eight children of Harry Seaton, a tailor who eventually became a master tailor and employed ten men, and Maria Frances Scott. Walter was born in 1879 in King's Lynn, and the family moved around a lot, eventually settling in the Midlands.

Walter was employed as a button polisher at Buttons Ltd., in Portland St., Aston. In 1900 Walter married Eliza Janes, and they lived in Highbridge Road, a few doors away from Robert Howell. Daughter Eliza was born in 1901, and daughter Frances in 1907. Walter was a bellringer at St. Michael's, Boldmere.

Walter was called up on 13th June 1916 and joined the Essex Regiment as Private 5118. He was stationed at Dunwich. After being compulsorily vaccinated, he became ill, and was admitted to the Military Hospital in Ipswich, where he died from septicaemia on the 17th August, aged 37.

A civilian inquest was held into his death. The jury, after an adjournment, declared that Private Seaton had died of septicaemia. They did not give a cause but stated that it was not due to vaccination.

Walter had served for only a couple of months and had not served overseas. His widow Eliza was thus not entitled to a War Gratuity. Walter is buried in St. Michael's, and a muffled peal of bells was rung in his memory.



2nd Lieutenant Charles Cyril Smith

King's Shropshire Light Infantry

Charles Smith, born 1892, was the middle son of Frederick Thomas Smith, a merchant's clerk, and his second wife Ada Sophia Pearson, a housemaid from Amblecote. (Ada had worked at the grammar school looking after boarders, along with several of her relatives.) The new family lived at Westonville in Four Oaks.

UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920	
King's Shropshire Light Infantry > 14th Division > Piece 1902/1-5 Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry (1915 May - 1918 Feb)	
Date	Hour
24/9/15	
The Battalion proceeded to the Trenches in fighting order on the night 23rd/24th September. Strength 14 Officers, 780 O.R. The Battalion disposition as follows:- A & D Coy. H 13 to H 16, and supporting Trenches B. Coy. F. 13. C Coy. Ramparts YPRES. Battalion H.Q. H. 16. At 3.50 a.m. an intense Bombardment by our own Guns took place lasting till 4.20 a.m. This was immediately replied to by the Germans. A Heavy Bombardment continued throughout the day. Casualties CAPT. S. G. BEAUMONT killed 3 O.R. killed, wounded 8 O.R.	
25/9/15	
At 1 A.M. the Battalion was in position in the Trenches as follows:- A. Coy. H. 13 & 14. D. Coy. H. 15a. and H. 16a. B & S. 15. C Coy. Diagonal. At 3.50 a.m. intense Bombardment replied to by Germans immediately. At 4.5 a.m. Battalion in position for Assault A & D Coys. and 2 platoons of B with 2 Machine Guns and Signallers in Coy Column in front of our own lines. 2 platoons of B & C Coys in support in the Trenches. At 4.20 a.m. assault took place and we penetrated to Germans second line, but owing to the attack on the position on our right not getting home, and the Counter attack enveloping our left flank the position became untenable and the Battalion was forced to re-occupy our original line of trenches at about 8.15 a.m. The Germans bombarded heavily up till 1 P.M. and again from 9 P.M. till midnight. During the day the Battalion was reinforced by 2 platoons of the 16th Somerset L.I. and were relieved in the Trenches at 11.30 P.M. by the 6th D.C.L.I. Casualties:- Officers 3 killed, wounded 2. Missing 3. O.R. 41 killed, wounded 280. Missing 100. 7.	

The War Diary of the Shropshire Light Infantry for 24th/25th September 1915.

On 25th September the battalion had over 400 casualties.

Charles Smith worked as an audit clerk. By 1911, his now-widowed mother and her children had moved to 32 Harman Road.

Charles enlisted in the 11th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Private 988 and was then commissioned into the Shropshire Light Infantry.

He was one of the officers killed in action on 25th September 1915, as shown above.

Charles Smith has no known grave and is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

T/ Lieutenant Gerald Sydney Smith

Machine Gun Corps

Gerald Smith, born 1892, was the youngest son of Frederick Thomas Smith, a merchant's clerk, and his second wife Ada Sophia Pearson, a housemaid from Amblecote, and was the brother of Charles Cyril Smith, who is commemorated on the Emmanuel Church Memorial (see previous piece). Born on 16th December 1893, Gerald was baptised on 13th February 1894 at St. Peter, Little Aston. He lived with his brothers and widowed mother in Harman Street in 1911. Gerald worked as a metal merchant's clerk.

Gerald was sent to France on 14th May 1916. He was commissioned into the Machine Gun Corps, which had been formed in October 1915. Temporary Lieutenant Smith seems to have been attached to the 51st Highland Division.



Soldiers of the Machine Gun Corps

The final large British attack of the Battle of the Somme was the Battle of the Ancre, which took place 13th - 18th November 1916. The distance between the trenches of the armies ('no man's land') was about 250 yards. The British attack plan involved a preliminary artillery bombardment for seven days, for an hour each day at the same

time – the intention was to mislead the Germans into thinking that the bombardment on the actual day of the attack was routine.

The objective was to take the German strongpoints around Beaumont Hamel. On 12th November, the British fired gas shells into the village of Beaumont Hamel to wear out the respirators of the German garrison – followed by phosgene gas that evening to kill them.

The first infantry attack took place on 13th November. Artillery fire had destroyed much of the German barbed wire, but weather conditions were appalling – snow and thick fog caused further chaos on both sides.



Prisoners taken by the 51st Highlanders, 13th November 1916

The 51st Highland Division took the village of Beaumont Hamel. In the five days of the battle, the British sustained 22 000 casualties, the Germans twice as many. Among those killed on 13th November was Lieutenant Gerald Smith, aged 21. He is buried in the Hunter's Beaumont-Hamel, the cemetery of the 51st Highlanders at the Ancre. Gerald's gravestone has the inscription "*Thy will be done.*"

Benjamin Smith

Private 15/460 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Benjamin Smith was the eldest son of Benjamin Smith, a railway clerk, and Fanny Morris, who was also a railway clerk and was the daughter of George Morris, stationmaster at Wylde Green Station.

Benjamin was born in 1893, and baptised at St Barnabas on 29th November, when his parents lived at 4 Clarence Road. The family were living at Jubilee Villas in Green Lanes in 1901, and moved to 17, Holifast Road. The second son Joseph was born in 1903. Benjamin did not follow his parents into the railway industry but worked at a meat company.

Benjamin enlisted in the 15th Royal Warwicks (2nd Birmingham Pals) and was sent to France on 21st November 1915. He was killed in action at Arras on 4th June 1916. Benjamin was a member of 'B' Company, which suffered terrible losses on that day (see the piece on John Colin Larkin).

Private Benjamin Smith is buried in the Faubourg D'Amiens cemetery. His gravestone has the inscription:

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8)"



Thomas Stonehouse

Lance Corporal 4715 Royal Welch Fusiliers

On the 7th July 1916, General de Wignacourt, in command of the 33rd Division, wrote to the troops in the trenches at Givenchy:

"I have just received your communiqué of the 6th instant, and I am glad to see that the 33rd Division is continuing its brilliant success in vigorous raids on the enemy trenches. The Royal Welch Fusiliers have distinguished themselves once more. The "Bosches" opposite you have neither pleasure nor rest and I am exceedingly glad to shout "Bravo". Please accept my best congratulations and ever friendly compliments."

Thomas Stonehouse never received these congratulations – he had been killed the day before.



Trench in Givenchy, 1915

Thomas was born in Prescott, Lancashire in late 1894, one of at least seven children of William Stonehouse and Emily Bolton.

Thomas's father William, born in Sutton Coldfield, was orphaned at the age of six, and brought up in Sir Josiah Mason's Orphanage in Erdington. Aged 16, but giving his age as 18, William joined the Liverpool Regiment in 1886 and served overseas

for at least nine months. William married Emily, who was from Dublin, in 1889, probably when stationed at Aldershot.

After leaving the army, William became a silversmith, and the family settled in Birmingham by 1897, living in Ladywood and then in Coles Lane, and later in Shenstone Villas in Jockey Road.

Thomas Stonehouse, the third child, worked as an assistant land surveyor at age 16. He then worked as a railway porter at Wylde Green station for five months before being made redundant. In 1912, aged 17½, Thomas enlisted as a special reservist in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. The damaged army record notes that he was 5' 4⅜" tall, weighed 122 lbs (8 st 10 lbs), with a 33" chest. Thomas had grey eyes, brown hair, was C of E, and had a pulse rate of 72.

Thomas undertook several periods of training, and was mobilised for war, getting the immediate call-up for special reservists, on 8th August 1914.

Thomas served in France for a month in November 1914, then was back in England for a while, before being sent back to France. In August 1915, Thomas was awarded two days "confined to barracks" (extra duties and drills) for "being discontented on parade" but was promoted to Lance Corporal in October. Thomas was killed at Givenchy on the 6th July 1916, aged 21.

British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920
S > St > Sto

MEMORANDUM FOR
The Officer in charge of Infantry Records

WAR OFFICE,
PARK BUILDINGS,
ST JAMES'S PARK,
LONDON, S.W.

Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to:-
The Secretary,
War Office,
Park Buildings,
St James's Park,
London, S.W.

Find the following number:-
E/24629/1 (Accounts 4)

Will you please note that any articles of personal property now in your possession or subsequently received by you belonging to the late
no 4415 Lance Corporal Thomas
Stonehouse 2nd Bn Royal Welch
Fusiliers
should be despatched to:-
Mrs Emily Stonehouse
6 Shenstone Villas
Jockey Road
Wylde Green
Sutton Coldfield

Any moneys granted to the deceased, that have been in your possession or that may hereafter reach you should be forwarded to:-
the same person

Assistant Financial Secretary.

Letter from the army returning Thomas's personal possessions.

This is one of the least damaged papers in the file.

According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* in August 1919, Thomas's mother Emily was presented with Thomas's 1914 Star by the Mayor of Sutton Coldfield.

Thomas Harold Stonehouse

Rifleman A/1967 King's Royal Rifle Regiment

Thomas Harold Stonehouse was a cousin of Thomas Stonehouse (see previous piece). His family lived in Tamworth Road. Serving with the 9th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Regiment at the Battle of Ypres, Thomas was killed on 16th July 1915 during appalling rainy weather. Thomas was among a group of 'bombers', who threw early forms of grenade into enemy trenches, when they were hit by a 'whizzbang' explosion. Thomas has no known grave and is commemorated on the Menin Gate.



Jack Reginald Stonehouse

Private 1855 Royal Army Medical Corps

Jack Stonehouse, brother of Thomas Harold and cousin to Thomas, served with the Royal Army Medical Corps as Private 1855. Jack went to France on 27th May 1915 and was discharged from the army on 26 May 1919. Jack survived the war and married Florence Oakey in 1920 at Sutton Coldfield . They had five children – Kathleen, Douglas, Reginald, Irene and Dorothy. Jack experienced ill health after being gassed during the war and died on 13 March 1933, aged 39.

Russell Sandon Turner

Captain, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Russell Turner was born in 1882 in Wylde Green, the son of James Sandon Turner, a gunmaker, and Alice Cooper – both his parents were the children of farmers. Russell went to Bishop Vesey's school and was a member of Sutton Coldfield Hockey and Swimming Club. He married Madeline Dagmar Tucker, who died in 1909.

Russell enlisted in the 14th Royal Warwicks (1st Birmingham Pals) as Private 314. He joined A Company, along with Philip Marsh Evans and Percival Grove. He was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant into the 1/5th Royal Warwicks on 7th September 1915, and was sent to France on the 16th October that year. In July 1916 he was promoted to Captain.

On 28th June 1917, while on leave in England, Russell married Cicely May Grove at Holy Trinity in Sutton Coldfield. Cicely Turner née Grove was the sister of Percival Allen Grove, a fellow old boy of Bishop Vesey school and a member of the same original platoon as Russell. Percy Grove had also been commissioned into the 1/5th Royal Warwicks and died of wounds on 5th July 1916 after being wounded near Gommecourt. Captain Russell Turner, a machine gun officer, was killed in action during the third battle of Ypres on 4th October 1917, three months after marrying. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, and on a stone in Sutton Coldfield cemetery, which also commemorates his first wife.



Eustace Bertram Wagstaff

Sapper 42245 Royal Engineers

Eustace Wagstaff was born in Knowle in 1897, the second son of William Charles Wagstaff, a coachman, and Harriett Freeman, who had worked as a domestic servant and was the daughter of a labourer. The family lived at 2, Florence Avenue, before moving to 26, Penns Lane.

In 1914, Eustace enlisted at Rugby into the 69th Field Company of the Royal Engineers. Sent to France on 31st May 1915, when he was only 17, Eustace served as a sapper, before being killed in action on 6th April 1918.

Eustace is buried in the Senlis Communal Cemetery Extension, near Albert, in France. The inscription on his gravestone reads: *"The gates of heaven were opened and a gentle voice said: "Come"."*



Eustace's elder brother **William Charles Wagstaff** served as Pioneer 120189 in the Royal Engineers. He was in France from 1915. William was discharged from the army in August 1918, as "no longer physically fit for war service". He lived at 26, Penns Lane, until his death in 1962.

Oswald Watson

Private 12752 South Staffordshire Regiment

Oswald Watson was one of seven living children of Walter Watson, a lithographic designer, and Jane Smart, daughter of a cabinet maker. The family lived in Jockey Road. Oswald was 35 and single when he joined the South Staffordshire Regiment as Private 12572, having worked as a clerk in a brass foundry. The family had previously lived in Handsworth, which had only recently become part of Birmingham, having previously been part of Staffordshire.

Oswald was sent to the Dardanelles with the 7th Battalion of the South Staffs. The eight month campaign in Gallipoli was fought by Commonwealth and French forces in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock of the Western Front in France and Belgium, and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. The Allies landed on the peninsula on 25th/26th April 1915 - the 29th Division at Cape Helles in the south and the Australian and New Zealand Corps north of Gaba Tepe on the west coast, an area soon known as Anzac.

On 6 August, further landings were made at Suvla, just north of Anzac, and the climax of the campaign came in early August when simultaneous assaults were launched on all three fronts. The difficult terrain and stiff Turkish resistance soon led to the stalemate of trench warfare. Oswald Watson was killed in action, the official date being 22nd August 1915. He was paid until 21st October, when his death was presumed. From the end of August, no further serious action was fought, and the lines remained unchanged. The peninsula was successfully evacuated in December and early January 1916. Oswald Watson has no known grave and is commemorated on the Helles memorial.



The Helles Memorial serves the dual function of Commonwealth battle memorial for the whole Gallipoli campaign and place of commemoration for many of those Commonwealth servicemen who died there and have no known grave. The United Kingdom and Indian forces named on the memorial died in operations throughout the peninsula, the Australians at Helles. There are also panels for those who died or were buried at sea in Gallipoli waters. Over 20,000 names are commemorated on this memorial.

There are four other Memorials to the Missing at Gallipoli. The Lone Pine, Hill 60, and Chunuk Bair Memorials commemorate Australian and New Zealanders at Anzac. The Twelve Tree Copse Memorial commemorates the New Zealanders at Helles. Naval casualties of the United Kingdom lost or buried at sea are recorded on their respective Memorials at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham, in the United Kingdom.

John Webb

Private 20734 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

John Webb, born in 1881, lived all his life in Sutton Coldfield. His father John Webb was a carpenter, his mother was Alice Page, the daughter of an agricultural labourer. The family, with six children, lived in Court Lane and then Highbridge Road.

John made a living as a plumber, and in 1910 married Ellen Driscoll. They lived in Coles Lane and had two children. John joined the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, a Birmingham Pals battalion, and later transferred to the 14th Battalion. At the end of May 1917, the battalion had 6 days 'rest' – training and not fighting. The War Diary notes that there was the welcome experience of being able to bathe in a stream, which the battalion did by companies. Back in the front line trenches at Roclincourt, John Webb was killed by shellfire on 4th June 1917.

John's brother **Leonard William Webb** had joined the Army Service Corps in September 1914, working as a driver. He served in France from May 1915. After the death of his brother John, Leonard applied for and was granted a transfer to the 14th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Joining the RWR on 3rd October 1917, Leonard was posted as 'wounded and missing in action' on the 21st November that year. After what must have been an agonising wait for his family, Leonard was found to be a prisoner of war at the beginning of January 1918. Repatriated after the Armistice, Leonard married in 1921, had ten children, and lived to the age of 78.

John's brother **Walter Henry Webb** joined the Coldstream Guards Reserve on 1st December 1915. Mobilised on 27th January 1917, a week after the birth of his third child with his wife Susan Wadley, Walter went overseas in April 1918. He was wounded in action on the 9th October 1918, but survived the war, and lived to the age of 83.

James Gordon Webster

Private 4092 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

James Gordon Webster, born in 1888, was the son of John Webster, a labourer, and Ann Nash, daughter of an agricultural labourer. James was one of five children, one of whom died in infancy. The family lived first in Erdington - James's parents were married at St. Barnabas in 1887. By 1901 they were living in Beacon View, Jockey Road. James worked as a live-in potman at the Station Inn in Bordesley Green in 1911.

James enlisted in the 9th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment at Birmingham, and on 13th July 1915 was sent to Mesopotamia. James was killed in action on 19th April 1916. He is commemorated on the Basra memorial in Iraq. All headstones in the cemetery were removed in 1935 when they deteriorated. The Basra memorial itself was moved by Iraqi presidential decree in 1997, and it very difficult in the current political situation for the C.W.G.C to maintain its cemeteries in Iraq.



James's father John also served, although he was in his mid-fifties. Too old for army service, John served in the Royal Defence Corps in Britain as Private 34856 in the 11th Protection Company. Of the 27000 men in the RDC, nearly half guarded PoW camps.

2nd Lieutenant William Pierce Wheeler

Royal Warwickshire Regiment

William Wheeler served as a Private, as a Corporal and then as a 2nd Lieutenant. One of six sons of Edward Wheeler, a clerk/accountant, and Edith Jeans, daughter of a bus proprietor, William was born in 1896 in Kent. The family then moved to Yardley and later to Beechill Road.

William first went to France on 22nd March 1915. Promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on 6th May 1916, he was killed on the second day of the Battle of the Somme, aged 20.

William Pierce Wheeler has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Wilfrid Henry Wheeler

Driver 1993

L/Corporal 306163

2nd Lieutenant

Royal Army Medical Corps

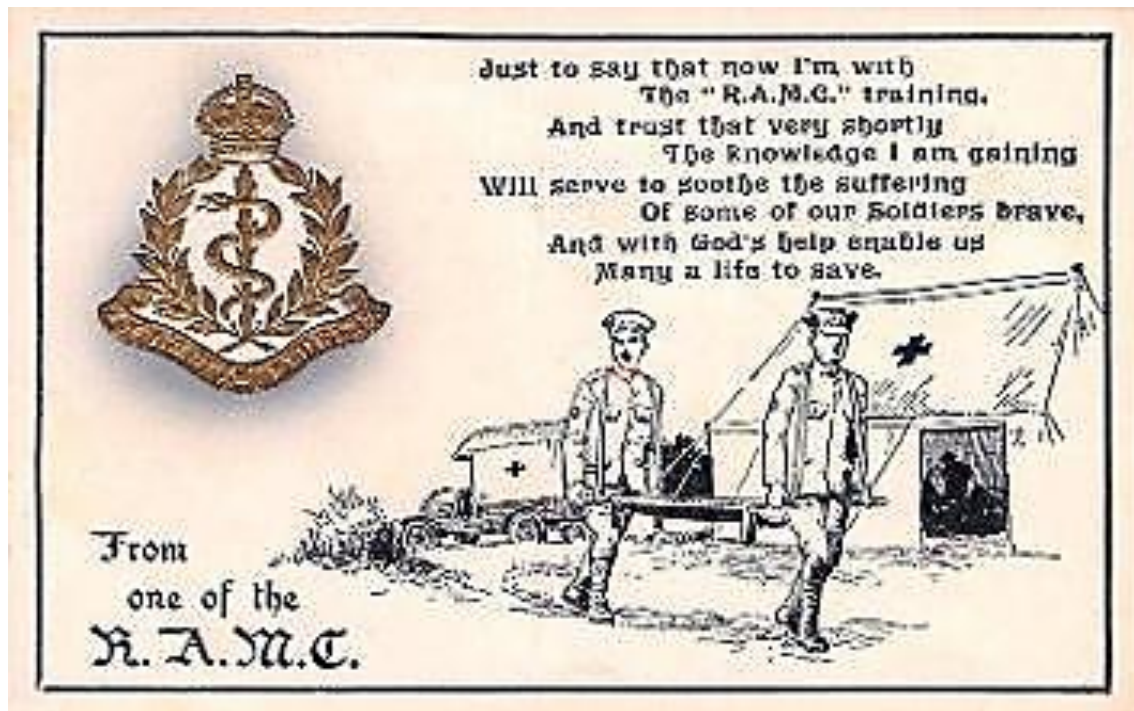
London Regiment

South Staffs Regiment

Wilfrid Wheeler was the eldest son of Alfred Henry Wheeler, who worked in Birmingham as an Inspector of Weights and Measures, and Jane Beck Edwards, the daughter of a gun maker. Born in 1894, Wilfrid was baptised at Christ Church, Sparkbrook on 25th June that year. The family moved to Wylde Green, living at a house called 'Penryn' in Western Road (subsequently number 47). Wilfrid went to Aston Grammar School and then became an articled clerk at an architect's practice. Wilfrid had been in the Territorial Army, and the day after war broke out, he enlisted with the Royal Army Medical Corps as a driver. A driver looked after the animals which were the main means of transport.



A RAMC Field Ambulance Unit drawn up in parade before leaving for France. Wilfrid's job would have been to care for the horses.



One of numerous postcards praising the Royal Army Medical Corps

Details of Wilfrid's service in the RAMC are not known. He first went to France on 24th March 1915. Wilfrid's khaki uniform would have been indistinguishable from those of combat troops, except for a RAMC cap badge and a circular red cross patch, sewn onto each upper arm. The medics carried no weapons.

A Field Ambulance consisted of ten officers and 224 other ranks including several Army Service Corps personnel. A field ambulance column comprised of ambulance wagons, water - carts and forage-carts for carrying medical stores, a cook's wagon, and wagons for stores and baggage, and 52 riding and draught horses. In addition, a soldier on a bicycle carried orders and messages within the unit.

A contemporary poem by a serving RAMC soldier shows what the medics did:

*"We carry no rifle, bayonet nor bomb,
But follow behind in rear
Of the steel fringed line that surges along
With a ringing British cheer.*

*Through the tangled wire of the blown-in trench,
Spite of shrapnel or bursting shell,
We make for the spots – Khaki-clad, helpless blots –
That mark where our front rank fell.*

*We are the men who carry them back,
The wounded, the dying and dead.*

*The “stretcher-bearers” doing their bit,
Of VCs not many they score,
Yet are earned every day in a quiet sort of way
By the “Royal Army Medical Corps”.*

Wilfrid Wheeler was invalided back to Britain in October 1916. After a period of convalescence, he joined the 5th (City of London) Battalion of the London Regiment of the Rifle Brigade. Promoted to Lance Corporal with the Rifle Brigade, Wilfrid then joined the Tank Corps, where he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 4th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment.

Tanks – a completely new development in warfare – had first been used on the Somme in 1916. The early tanks could achieve a top speed of 4 miles per hour. On the battlefield this was rarely realised and, in many cases, infantry moved far faster.

The machines were crewed by a Subaltern (junior officer), three drivers and four gunners, of which one was an NCO. Interior conditions were truly appalling, being a combination of intense heat, noise and exhaust from the engine, violent movement as the tank crossed the ground and molten metal splash as bullets struck the plating.

Men would often be violently sick or badly incapacitated by the conditions and were often in no fit state to continue after quite short journeys. It was difficult to communicate within the tank and with men and other tanks outside. The tank officer often had to get out and walk, to reconnoitre his path or to work with the infantry. The tanks also proved to be mechanically unreliable and vulnerable to shellfire.



In March 1918, the town of Walsall held a 'Tank week' in support of the war.

More than £800,000 was raised during the week.

Wilfrid Wheeler was killed on the 26th April 1918. The previous two days had seen the first time that German tanks faced the British armour. Wilfrid has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial.

Ernest White

Colour Sergeant 20655 Royal Berkshire Regiment

Ernest White was born in Birmingham in 1869, one of twelve children of Edward White, a surgeon and general practitioner, and Jane Birkmyre Bell, from a family of pawnbrokers.

Ernest went abroad, working in Burma for T D Findlay's, a teak company. Teak logs were transported by elephant and river. Findlay's created the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, a fleet of over 600 shallow draught ships, built in Dumbarton by T D Findlay's co-founder. The ships were specifically designed to navigate the Irrawaddy, and they became an important part of the nation's prosperity, ensuring trade up and down the great rivers. Ernest worked for the Flotilla Company.

In November 1895, Ernest married Maria Jane Banfield in Rangoon. Maria was from Birmingham, and the daughter of the organ builder J.C. Banfield. At least four children were born: Ernest, 1898; Constance 1901; Frank 1903 – all born in Burma; the family went back to England and lived in Handsworth for a while, Edward being born in 1905.

Ernest White's records are very sketchy after this. He is not found on the 1911 census, so may have been abroad again. It is noted later that he served with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Sergeant 1020. Ernest transferred to the 5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment, where he was a Colour Sergeant and Company Sergeant Major. The family lived in Sheffield Road, by Chester Road station. Ernest would ordinarily have been too old for military service during the war, but experienced NCOs were able to serve for longer.

Ernest White died in the military hospital in Parkhurst, Isle of Wight on 21st May 1916, aged 47. His will shows that he left just £1 12s 7d, which went to his widow Maria and youngest brother David. Ernest is commemorated in Parkhurst Military Cemetery.

Ernest Arthur Gordon White

Private 1171 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Ernest Arthur Gordon White was the eldest son of Ernest White and Maria Banfield (see previous piece about his father). Born in Rangoon on 6th April 1898, Ernest returned to England with his family in about 1904. He joined the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (2nd Birmingham Pals) as Private 1171 and was sent to France on 21st November 1915. Ernest served also with the 16th Battalion, and then the 1/7th Battalion. He was killed in action at St Julien on 11th August 1917, the day a heavy German counterattack east of Ypres was repulsed. Ernest has no known grave and is commemorated on the Menin Gate.



The Commonwealth War Graves Commission reported in April 2018:

“Multiple sets of remains were found west of the village of St Julien during April 2016. Despite extensive research it has only proved possible to identify one of them, through personal engraved items, as Captain Henry John Innes Walker, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Captain Walker was killed in action on 25 April 1915.

Of the other six sets of remains, military insignia found with one of them confirms that he was a soldier of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, although the regiment lost too many men at the time for individual identification to be attempted. He will be buried as an unknown soldier of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. There were no military or personal effects found with any of the others; they will be buried as unknown soldiers of unknown regiments. They will all be buried with full military honours at 10.30 am on Wednesday 18th April, 2018.”

There are over 45,000 undiscovered British and Commonwealth soldiers still in Flanders Fields.



William Alfred Williams

Private 17814 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

William Alfred Williams (known as Alfred) was born in Perry Barr in 1896. (Perry Barr was then in Staffordshire). He was one of nine children of Richard Williams, a farmer who became a groom, and Elizabeth. Alfred's mother gave birth to nine children, but only five survived infancies. Alfred's father at one point farmed 50 acres in Stony Stretton, employing two men and a boy. By 1901, the family were living at Princess Alice Orphanage in New Oscott, where Alfred's father was the groom. By 1911, they lived at "Park View" in Jockey Road.

Alfred joined the 11th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed in action on 13th August 1916, following an unsuccessful trench raid. Alfred Williams has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.



The Thiepval Memorial commemorates more than 72 000 soldiers who died in the Battle of the Somme and have no known grave

Henry Ivins Woodward

Lance Corporal 14/723 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Harry Woodward was born in 1893, son of Samuel Woodward, a coachman, and Eliza Ivins, the daughter of a shepherd. The family settled in Highbridge Road - where Harry was a member of St Michael's Boldmere Football Club and Boldmere Swimming Club. He was employed by Mr. Elson, Boot Repairer, Station Street, Sutton Coldfield.

Harry Woodward joined the 14th (1st Birmingham Pals) Battalion as soon as it was formed in September 1914. On his last period of leave, in mid-1915, he married Gladys Dawson. Harry was sent to France in November 1915.

According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* of 16th June 1917, Harry was sent home after twenty months of service on the front as he was suffering from a nervous breakdown. He died suddenly at the military hospital in Warrington. Harry Woodward was given a full military funeral and is buried in the churchyard at St. Michael's, Boldmere.



Design of the cap badge of the 1st Birmingham Pals Battalion

Frank Wright

Gunner 135785 Royal Garrison Artillery

Frank Wright was born in 1890, in the area then known as 'The Coldfield', now Boldmere Road in Boldmere. Frank was the son of William Wright, a groom and coachman from Coleshill, and Emma Jakeman, daughter of an agricultural labourer. They lived at what later became "Mayfield", 68 Boldmere Road – two doors down from the Gibbons family.

Frank went to Green Lanes School. He attended St Michael's Church, Boldmere and was secretary of the St Michael's Boldmere Football Club. Frank was employed as a clerk in the office of the Midland Vinegar Brewery, Tower Road, Aston.

Emma Wright, Frank's mother, had given birth to six children by 1911, but only three – Frank, his sister Maud, and his brother James - survived infancy. Emma Wright died in 1913.

According to the *Sutton Coldfield News* of 15th September 1917, Frank tried to enlist in November 1915 - "but was rejected due to poor eyesight. He was later called up for re-examination and passed for garrison duty and was then then re- assigned for general service." Frank joined the 237th Siege Battery of the RGA, and was sent to France on the 23rd January 1917. The battery consisted of four 6" Howitzers, which by 1917 were towed by 3-ton 'FWD' lorries.

The battery disembarked at Le Havre, and then had a very difficult winter journey, the roads being covered in ice and snow. For a few weeks they were positioned in the convent at Ypres. Enemy shelling was so heavy that three of the four guns were destroyed, before the remaining gun was sent to a new position at a nearby farm. The battery was made part of a larger group.

Frank Wright was killed in action at Ypres on the 19th August 1917. His father William received £4 1s 10d, plus a later War Gratuity of £3 0s 0d.



Battery firing WW1

Frank is buried in the Divisional Collecting Post Cemetery and Extension. This cemetery close to the northern ring road in Leper was started during the Third Battle of Leper in 1917. It is close to the much larger New Irish Farm Cemetery. Soldiers who died at a nearby medical aid post were buried here.

The original cemetery contained just 87 burials, including 1 German grave. Between 1924 and 1926 the cemetery was extended by the addition of a further 678 casualties from the surrounding battlefields and smaller cemeteries in the area.

Like all those who served, Frank received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

James Wright

Signaller 267992 Royal Warwickshire Regiment

James Wright was born in 1893, the younger brother of Frank Wright (see previous piece), and the younger son of William Wright and Emma Jakeman.

James became an apprentice in the jewellery trade. Shortly after the outbreak of war, James enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 3rd Birmingham Battalion. On joining the regiment at Moseley on 22nd September 1914, James's medical record noted that he was 5' 7¼" tall, weighed 123 lbs (8 st.11 lbs), and had a 33½" chest.

Perhaps oddly, no mention was made at that time of a medical condition known as 'varicocele', which involves enlarged veins in the scrotum. This affects 10-15% of boys, and is often harmless, but in James's case meant that an operation was necessary. After eight months in England, in May 1915 James refused to have the operation. He was discharged from the army on medical grounds as "not likely to become an effective soldier".

On 19th March 1916, then aged 23, James re-enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 2nd/7th Battalion. Giving his occupation as 'engraver', he was passed fit for general service. A suspensory bandage was supplied.

James was sent to join the British Expeditionary Force in France on the 7th October, 1916. He was hospitalised with influenza for eight days in January 1917.

The 2nd / 7th Warwicks were in France throughout 1917 and 1918, fighting in the operations on the River Ancre, the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, the Battle of Langemarck, and numerous German counter attacks.



Men of the 2nd/7th Warwickshire Battalion moving an elderly civilian, anticipating a renewed German attack, April 1918.

On 22nd March 1918 Signaller James Wright was listed as 'missing in action'. It was not until nine months later that his father and sister were informed that James had died of wounds at St. Quentin on the 5th April that year.

This awful experience for the family is, with hindsight, not surprising. The regiment was during the March/April 1918 period suffering huge losses. On 24/25th March, 7 officers and 98 other ranks were casualties – killed, wounded or captured. On 28/30th March, 2 officers and 80 other ranks were lost. A full strength battalion would have at most eight hundred men in the front line.

Signaller James Wright is buried in the St. Souplet British Cemetery. His gravestone carries the inscription "Reunion our abiding hope".



James's father William Wright received £10 8s 0d for James's outstanding pay, after deductions. He also received the British War Medal and Victory Medal awarded to James, and a later War Gratuity of £8 10s 0d. William also received James's surviving personal effects – 'one disc'.

William Wright had fathered six children with his wife Emma. Emma died in 1913. Of the three children who survived infancy, sons Frank and James both died in the war. William died in 1934. His daughter Emma died at the same Boldmere address in 1945, having never married.

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.”

Laurence Binyon ‘For the Fallen’