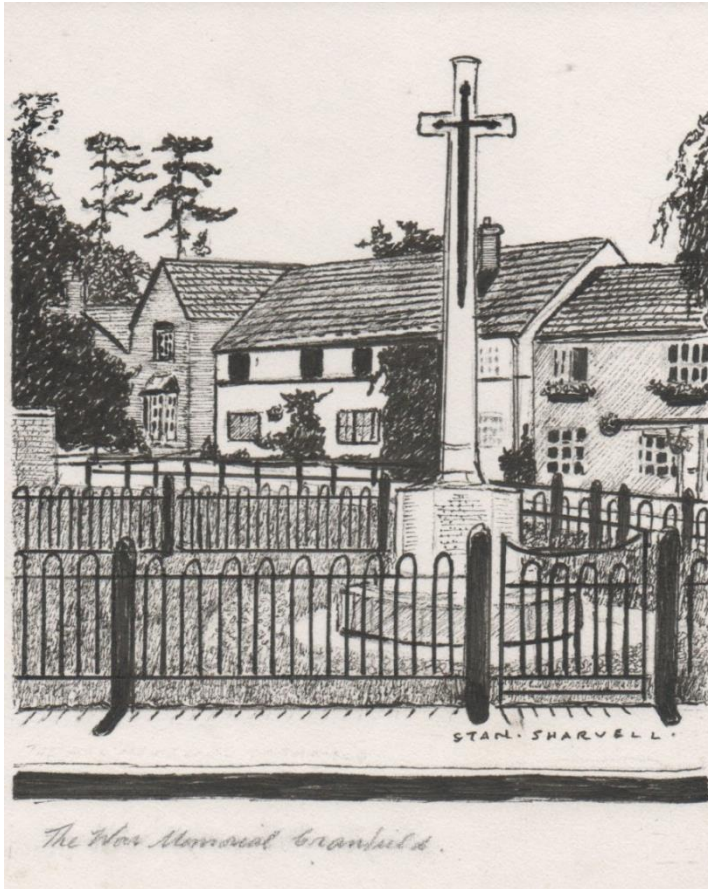


CRANFIELD REMEMBERS

THE FALLEN OF THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918



Compiled By:
Dr Marjorie Cotton

CRANFIELD REMEMBERS

The servicemen named on the Village War Memorial, who perished in the Great War 1914 –1919, should never be forgotten.



Compiled by Dr Marjorie Cotton with the tireless research and support of Lee Hall.

Cover image by the late Stan Sharvell of North Crawley

November 2017

e-book (pdf to download) Summer 2023

**IN HONOUR OF THOSE MEN AND
WOMEN OF CRANFIELD WHO GAVE
THEIR LIVES FOR JUSTICE AND
FREEDOM IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR.**

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

**WE REMEMBER ALL THOSE WHO HAVE
SERVED THIS COUNTRY ABROAD OR ON
THE HOME FRONT AND ALL WHO
HAVE LOST LOVED ONES.**

**WE REMEMBER THOSE BEARING THE
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SCARS OF WAR
TODAY.**

**WE THINK OF OUR WORLD, BATTERED
BY WARS, AND HOPE AND PRAY FOR
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
BETWEEN ALL PEOPLE**

WHEN WILL WE LEARN?



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book could not have been written without the research, painstakingly undertaken in 2014 by Roger Thompson, on the names on the village war memorial.

Lee Hall, another local ardent genealogist, has filled in any gaps and added more information about the families, occupations and war records of our brave men and boys. She has found lots of interesting newspaper cuttings. (I have transcribed these where they add to the stories, and edited some because of their length, but have not altered any grammatical nuances.)

Thanks to Cranfield residents: Clive Evans and Barrie Phillips (Philip Evans), Val Goodman (Cornelius Young), Ian Lord (Thomas Lancaster) and Jennifer Sinfield (the Lancaster Boys) who have provided information and photographs of their relatives.

Thanks to Peter Haddon, Head of Holywell School (until Summer 2017), for sharing memories of the Schools' visit to Ypres in September 2014, and the School's Memorial Garden which went "viral"!

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INTRODUCTION

Any who have visited the battlefields, war graves and memorials of World War One (WWI) will have lasting memories of the utter peace and tranquillity of the cemeteries, the impressive memorials with thousands upon thousands of the names of the missing, and the gently rolling countryside where once there was devastation and carnage. The lasting impression is one of the enormous scale of the losses on both sides of the conflict. The graves and memorials conceal tremendous personal suffering but also amazing courage. The war brought out the very best in our young men as they were prepared to give their lives for our freedom.

I had the unforgettable experience of visiting Belgium (Passchendaele, Ypres and Tyne Cot) and France (Arras, Vimy Ridge and Thiepval on the Somme) in April 2015. When I returned to Cranfield, I set about studying the guidebooks and literature we had accumulated, much of which had been specially written for the Centenary.

I was inspired to find out more about those commemorated on the Village War Memorial. Faced with only a list of initials and surnames I realised I needed some help. I was put in touch with Roger Thompson of Orchard Close. In 2014 he had researched the names and had an almost complete list. For each serviceman, he had: the full name, service number, rank, regiment, how they died and where,

date of death and age. He also was able to give the names of their parents and wives.

Around the same time, John Seamark, Chairman of the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion asked for confirmation of the location of all of the war graves in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. The British Legion arrange for poppy crosses to be placed on all of the war graves on Remembrance Day. The Rector, Hugh Symes-Thompson, kindly gave us all the information he had, including a map of the Churchyard with the graves marked. Armed with camera and notebook the graves were identified and recorded.

I was contacted by Lee Hall whose passion is research into family history and who is currently responsible for posting information about the Cranfield War Dead on a Cranfield Family History Page on Face-book. She subscribes to all sorts of websites such as www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk., census records and newspaper reports and spends a small fortune for the privilege! She has verified details by picking up the phone to speak to a relative if necessary. All I have done is to gather and edit all of her research.

She realised that Roger's list was incomplete and, in a few cases, inaccurate. She was able to find the details of every serviceman on the War Memorial from both World Wars. She was also able to find more information about the circumstances of their deaths and about family members. Lee was excited about the idea of a book so that this may be

shared with you as a legacy and permanent tribute to those who gave their lives serving their country. We should also remember those who returned home, physically and sometimes mentally wounded, and all the families and loved ones who suffered indescribable heartache.

Their stories, and the story of “The Great War”, are told in **Part One**.

In **Part Two** we think about Remembrance and Commemoration: Remembrance Day, the Cranfield War Memorial, the Remembrance Poppy, the Royal British Legion and the origin of the Exhortation. The story of the Unknown Warrior is told. How Cranfield Schools remembered the fallen is included. I have added accounts of two war veterans, Stephen Harter and Captain Swabey, who died before the war but whose graves are honoured on Remembrance Day. We conclude with Cranfield’s Waterloo!

An **Appendix** gives the names and details of servicemen commemorated, in alphabetical order.

The book ends with a **list of resources**, **list of illustrations** and an **index** of all the names.

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of any information but have shared it in good faith.

I felt it important to pay tribute to the magnificent work of **the Imperial War Graves Commission** and have put a short piece before we make our way through the war.

War diaries were written each day by the commanding officer of a particular unit. The army had forms for just about everything. Sadly, most individual First World War Army records were destroyed during an air raid during 1940. The majority that survived were damaged. Often the only record we have is that of a particular battalion or division rather than individual servicemen.

As we journey through “The Great War”, I have tried to put the various campaigns and battles into nutshells and weave them into the War Memorial account.

Because of the volume of material and the fact that this book needed to be published before the centenary of the end of the First World War, I have confined this book to WWI. I hope to be able to bring you a second volume covering WW2 and RAF Cranfield in the not too far distant future.

Tracing those named on our War Memorial has taken me on a journey of discovery. This is an invitation to share that journey.

Let us remember them.

Dr Marjorie Cotton 2017

e-book (pdf to download) Summer 2024

THE WAR MEMORIAL



**IN LOVING
AND GRATEFUL MEMORY
OF THOSE CRANFIELD MEN
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR
KING AND COUNTRY IN THE
GREAT WARS
1914-1919 AND 1939-1945**

THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE



There are forty three soldiers from WWI and nine from WWII commemorated on the War Memorial and Roll of Honour.

Four WWI soldiers are buried in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul.

Seven family graves in the Churchyard commemorate nine sons who are buried or commemorated elsewhere.

None of the WWII soldiers on the War Memorial are buried in the Churchyard. There are eleven WWII graves of airmen and two of soldiers buried at Cranfield.

This book covers the WWI burials and commemorations.

ROLL OF HONOUR

On the north wall, inside the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, there hangs a Roll of Honour, listing those named on the War Memorial.



*AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN
AND IN THE MORNING
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
ROLL OF HONOUR
1914-1918*

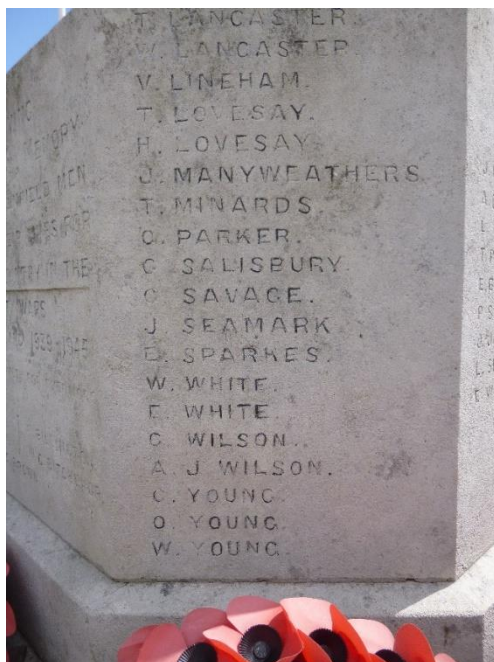
<i>R. Anstee</i>	<i>W.J. Green</i>	<i>J. Manyweathers</i>
<i>T. Billington</i>	<i>C. Hardy</i>	<i>T. Minards</i>
<i>F. Billington</i>	<i>L. Hardy</i>	<i>C. Parker</i>
<i>W. G. Bitchener</i>	<i>A. Harpur</i>	<i>G. Salisbury</i>
<i>E. Brown</i>	<i>C. Harpur</i>	<i>G. Savage</i>
<i>C. Cook</i>	<i>C. Hale</i>	<i>J. Seamark</i>
<i>F. Cook</i>	<i>H. Hewlett</i>	<i>E. Sparkes</i>
<i>W. Cook</i>	<i>F. Johnson</i>	<i>W. White</i>
<i>C. Cooper</i>	<i>A. Kinns</i>	<i>E. White</i>
<i>P. Evans</i>	<i>Thos. Lancaster</i>	<i>G.. Wilson</i>
<i>J.H. Evans</i>	<i>T. Lancaster</i>	<i>A.J. Wilson</i>
<i>C. Ford</i>	<i>W. Lancaster</i>	<i>C. Young</i>
<i>F. Foster</i>	<i>V. Lineham</i>	<i>O. Young</i>
<i>J. Foster</i>	<i>J. Lovesey</i>	<i>W. Young</i>
	<i>H. Lovesey</i>	

1939-1945

<i>J.H. Anstee</i>	<i>P.S. Eaton</i>
<i>A.C. Barcock</i>	<i>J. Jackson</i>
<i>L. Boon</i>	<i>L. Suker</i>
<i>J.P.J. Cave</i>	<i>E. Williams</i>

E.E. Clark

THE STORIES BEHIND THE NAMES



Our young men served in practically every theatre of war, not just in the trenches of the Western Front.

The first to be killed, Frank Cook, died at Gallipoli. William Young died in Egypt and Harry Lovesey in Palestine. Three of our men, William Bitchener, Fred Billington and Victor Lineham, died while serving in Salonica.

Ephraim Sparks served in the 1st Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, professional soldiers who were part of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. He would have fought at Mons, continued through the war, including serving on the Italian Front, and finally died during the German Spring Offensive of 1918.

Over half of the Cranfield men joined the Bedfordshire Regiment, joining the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th Battalions. Groups of young men would enlist together.

Five of our young men were killed at the Somme in 1916. None of their bodies were recovered.

Four died at Arras in 1917, three of the 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment trying to take the village of Gavrelle.

The Somme saw the loss of another six of our men in 1917 and 1918.

Eight of our young men died of illness. Three died during the flu pandemic of 1918 - Charles Cooper, a Prisoner of War (PoW), George Salisbury and Alfred Kinns. William Young died of malaria in Egypt. William Bitchener, Fred Billington and Victor Lineham died of infections in the hell hole that was Salonica. Thomas Billington died of meningitis in France.

Many died of wounds which today, or even in the Second World War, may have healed with the help of antibiotics.

The bodies of eighteen of our young men were never found or couldn't be identified.

Of those on our memorial there were six families who lost two sons: the Billingtons, Fosters, Hardys, Harpurs, Youngs and Wilsons (who were killed on the same day in October 1917).

Many of the families were related to each other. The three Lancaster boys are cousins. The two Lovesey boys are cousins and related to George Ford and Joseph Manyweathers. Cornelius Young is a cousin of the Young brothers.

Alfred Harpur, at 17, was the youngest on our memorial to volunteer.

Six of his brothers were in the army. Alfred and his older brother, Charles, fought alongside each other at Festubert in northern France in 1915. Albert was killed there after only serving for a few weeks. His body was never found. Charles was killed the following year at the Somme.

Charles and Fanny Hardy lost two sons. Cecil died of his wounds at Ypres in May 1915 and Leonard, who was only 21, at the Somme sixteen months later.

Joseph and Kate Young of North Crawley lost 21 year old Owen during October 1916 and then, two months later, their eldest son, William, on Christmas Eve 1916.

The oldest soldier on our memorial is Joseph Manyweathers who was a tunneller rather than a fighting soldier. He was 41 years old.

Another engineer was George Salisbury, also 41. He was a Railway Construction Engineer and landlord of The Fox and Hounds Public House, now demolished.

Ten of our young men were married and left young widows. Five of these had children. Tom Billington had two surviving children. The eldest sadly died in 1919. His daughter went on to university and was married. William Cook left four daughters of his first marriage and one son of his second. George Salisbury and George Wilson were each fathers of three. We are privileged to have an account of Cornelius Young's widow and daughter told by his granddaughter. Philip Evans left a fiancé and a son.

Behind every soldier there are family stories and a lot of heartache. There was high infant and child mortality and many maternal deaths as a result of childbirth and illness. Alfred and Charles Harpur had lost their mother when Alfred was 12 years old. Charles, who was ten years older, had married Clara, the younger sister of one of our other soldiers, John Harpur Evans, a distant cousin. They had an infant son but took Alfred, his father and two of the brothers to live with them. When Clara was widowed Charles' brother, John, married her and they went on to have four more children.

Another family with more than its share of heart aches was that of Thomas Minards. He was one of four children. His brother died at the age of two and his sister died later the

same year. His mother died shortly after Thomas was born. She was 34 years old. His father remarried his sister-in-law, a widow, later the same year. One remaining child, Fred, survived the war.

You will find lots of tragedies. Perhaps the most poignant is the story of Frederick Johnson. He was one of seven children. His mother died in 1905 followed by his father the following year due to an infected sore which led to septicaemia. One of his brothers survived the war as a prisoner of war (PoW).

What will strike you is the size of the families. Having more than ten children was not unusual. Many of the families lived in small cottages on the High Street and elsewhere and one wonders how they all squeezed in! Many may have been “farmed out” with grandparents or other relations.

It was an agricultural community with many men working on the land. Those brought up in Cranfield would have gone to the village school. They were brought up together and got into mischief together.

When the boys left school (12 was the minimum school leaving age) many of the boys became agricultural labourers. A lot of the girls went into service. We read that many left Cranfield to seek work elsewhere. Several went to Kilburn and Hampstead in London.

Three of our young men emigrated. Edgar White and Frank Foster went to Canada while Charles Parker left for Australia. They must have been full of hope for a bright new future. When war broke out they served their new countries

as part of the Empire forces which supported the British Army.

Another two of our young men, Ernest Brown and Harry Hewlett, were career soldiers, later transferring to the Navy where they were tragically killed.

We should pay tribute to the mothers who “kept the home fires burning”. They would have mended and handed down clothes and must have been experts at making food stretch. Their love must have been the glue which kept our community together through those dark years.

All of these families have left their mark on the history of our village and community. Let us remember them with gratitude and never forget the cost of war.

The names on the memorial are in alphabetical order.

I have arranged them chronologically so that we can follow them through the course of the war. I have put an index at the end of the book so that you can find any who may be of particular interest to you.

Lee has researched the family histories and I have included this information as there are those who may have a family connection and may find it especially interesting.

THE CHURCHYARD OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER & ST PAUL



All of the graves of soldiers who died during the First World War, and those commemorated on family gravestones, are in the old part of the Churchyard. The boundary of this is marked by two stone pillars.

The Churchyard was extended to the south side, after the war. This is where the airmen and two soldiers who died in WWII are buried.

No servicemen on the memorial died during 1914.

CRANFIELD IN 1914

In 1914 Cranfield was an agricultural village with most of the men working on farms. The school leaving age was 12, unless the family could afford higher education.

The population was 1199 in 1911 with 170 dwellings. It dropped after the First World War and, in 1921 was 1059. It reached 2160 in 1951, 4035 in 1971 and 4909 in 2001.

There was a high infant mortality and male life expectancy was only 50. There were no health and safety laws and many were injured or died from agricultural accidents. Wages were very poor. The pay for an ordinary worker was between 16 shillings and just over a pound a week. A shilling was 12d (old pence) - 5p today but worth relatively more. There was a bonus of a few pounds at harvest. For a man with a family, a quarter would go on rent. Families tended to be large and money was stretched to the limit. A “Universal Shop” in the High Street ran a “Clothing Club”. A contribution of 2 or 3d a week would add up at the end of the year to buy a little extra.

There were at least nine public houses in the village where good beer was 3d a pint and cigarettes were 3d for a packet of 20.

The Village Hall, given in memory of the Squire, James Hatfield Harter, had been open for a couple of years. Food and entertainment were largely home grown. There would have been a strong sense of community.



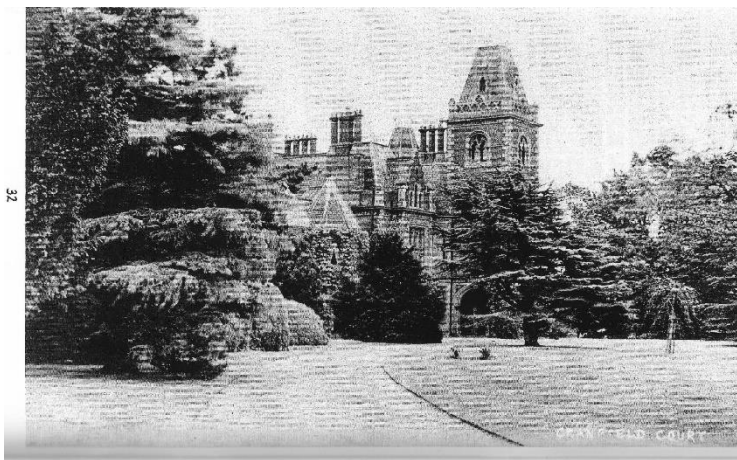
The Carpenters Arms & General Store



Court Road, The Swan and the School

Cranfield Court was built between 1851 and 1860 by the Rev. George Gardner Harter for his family. When his son, the Squire, James Francis Hatfeild Harter, died in 1910, he had no male heir as his only son, St John Hatfeild, had died in 1890, aged 2 years.

The Court was eventually sold in 1919 and demolished in the 1930's, the bricks being recycled to build Harter Avenue. Only the servants' quarters remain today.



The fathers of two of our soldiers were employed at the court. The father of **Reginald Anstey** (page 89) was the game keeper and that of **Victor John Lineham** (page 288), was the coachman. One of our soldiers, **Cornelius Young** (page 229), was employed there as a gardener.

Lace Making

For many of the mothers of our servicemen their occupation is given as “lace maker”. Lace making was a cottage industry and provided a source of extra income for families. The craft is thought to have come to Bedfordshire as early as 1568 when the Huguenots, persecuted protestant refugees from France, settled in Cardington and Bourne End, Cranfield, where a school was founded.

The lace was made by the womenfolk in their own homes. The lace pillows were familiar sight as most would sit in the doorways of their cottages in summer.



The second lady on the left is Mercy Harpur. She died in 1910 and was therefore spared the grief of losing two sons in the war – Alfred (page 52) and Charles (page 107).

Pillow lace is made by twisting and plaiting thread using a bobbin and following a pattern pinned onto the pillow. Bobbins, carved out of wood or bone, were highly prized and were passed down from one generation to the next. Many were decorated with beads or spangles. Girls were taught the craft from the age of five.

Lace was used to edge handkerchiefs, doylies, tray cloths and collars. In the early 1900's it was bought by dealers, notably Mr Braggins from Bedford, for as little as 4p a yard. Buyers would come to the village and deliver materials and patterns.



Bedfordshire Lace

Although no longer commercially viable, since the advent of factory lace made in Nottingham, this traditional craft is growing in popularity.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Before starting our journey, we need to stop and appreciate the amazing work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They commemorate 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two world wars.

Their beautifully kept cemeteries, burial plots and memorials are a lasting tribute to those, of many faiths and none, who died in some 154 countries across the world. We owe a debt of gratitude to all who manage and care for them.

Their register records details of all Commonwealth war dead so that graves or names on memorials can be located.

Soldiers who died in battle were often hastily buried where they lay. There were many makeshift cemeteries. Many bodies could not be identified and were reported as “missing”.

Sent to France in 1914, a British Red Cross unit, led by Fabian Ware, took the task of registering soldiers' graves, officially recognised in 1915 as the Graves Registration Unit. Thanks to the energies of Ware this unit was the foundation of the organisation entitled the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) established in May 1917 by Royal Charter.

Its first important decision was that there would be **no distinction between officers and men** – all graves would

be uniform but their inscriptions would be personal to each soldier with his regimental badge, name, rank and date of death. Later it was decided to allow families to add a brief, personal inscription.

The IWGC appointed the leading architects of the day, Edwin Lutyens, Herbert Baker and Reginald Blomfield, all to be knighted, and joined in 1920 by Charles Holden, to be responsible for the vast mission of creating worthy cemeteries and memorials.

It was renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960. The Commission has built, and efficiently maintained to this day, one of the most admirable international construction programmes in modern history, to commemorate in perpetuity the brave men and women who died for the cause of freedom and the protection of their homeland.

Details of soldiers who have died and the location of cemeteries can be found at www.cwgc.org.uk This website is free.

They have kindly given me their permission to use photographs of the memorials and cemeteries where our war dead are commemorated or buried.



PART ONE

WORLD WAR I “THE GREAT WAR” 1914 - 1918



“It would be wrong to dismiss it as four years of meaningless slaughter. There was folly and suffering, but also courage, humanity and high ideals. Most of those caught up in the maelstrom believed theirs was a just cause. They deserve their memorials and the respect of later generations who remember them and their Great War”

The First World War – The Pitkin Guide.

THE BUILD UP TO WAR

On 28th June 1914, in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, Crown Prince Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Bosnian Serb Nationalist Society.

This triggered a chain reaction across Europe. On 23rd July 1914 Austria sent an ultimatum to the Serbs demanding that they submit to outside suppression of “subversion”. On 25th July, Serbia’s offer was dismissed and, as Austria was assured of the support of Kaiser Wilhelm II (King George V’s cousin), **she declared war on Serbia** on 26th July. In 1879 a **treaty** had been signed between **Germany and Austro-Hungary** – referred to as the **Central Powers**.

On 30th July, **Russia mobilised to support the Serbs**. On 1st August **Germany declared war on Russia**.

On 3rd August **Germany declared war on France**. **France and Russia were bound by a Treaty signed in 1892** offering mutual support if one was invaded.

In 1839 Britain had signed a treaty, guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. The Belgian King appealed to Britain for diplomatic intervention when Germany demanded free passage of her troops through Belgium, promising to maintain the integrity and independence of the kingdom.

As German troops assembled on the Belgian border, our Home Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, made his famous statement, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime”.

The British government, under the leadership of Mr Herbert Henry Asquith, Liberal Prime Minister, received intelligence that Germany had invaded Belgium and that German troops were attacking towns rather than simply marching through. Britain presented an ultimatum to Germany to ensure Belgian neutrality by midnight (European time) on 4th August. No reply came **and Britain declared war at 11pm on 4th August 1914.**

The country waited with bated breath for the news. The tension must have been palpable. A record crowd assembled to cheer King George V and Queen Mary, when they appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace accompanied by Princess Mary and the Prince of Wales. The spirit of the Nation was kindled. We would not be defeated.

Britain had effectively declared war on **behalf of the British Empire. The Allies, Great Britain and France**, would fight alongside forces from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, British India, South Africa and Rhodesia and the British West Indies. The French Colonies were also called on to take part. It became a truly global conflict.

THE WAR IN 1914

Both Germany and France were prepared for, even anticipating, war. There was unfinished business after the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871. France wanted to retake Alsace-Lorraine. The Germans had imperial ambitions. Both countries could mobilise vast armies of conscripts and professional soldiers.

Germany invaded through Belgium and, despite the Belgians putting up strong resistance, **entered Brussels** on 14th August 1914.

France was heavily defeated in her attempt to retake Alsace-Lorraine in August. She lost over a quarter of her total casualties of the war, 300,000 men, in two weeks of fighting, with a significant loss of officers in the **Battle of the Frontiers** (4th-23rd August).

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) commanded by Field Marshal Sir John French (until December 1915) was a small army of professional soldiers. It consisted of one cavalry and four infantry divisions, comprising around 81,000 men. One of our soldiers, **Ephraim Sparks** (page 259) served in the 1st Battalion the Bedfordshire Regiment, part of the BEF.

In the early days of the war the BEF moved to intercept the German units approaching **Mons** on 23rd August. They delayed them but were outnumbered and forced to retreat. The retreat lasted two weeks. They crossed the River Aisne and Marne before halting within 20 miles of Paris.

The Germans had supply problems, advancing over the River Marne to the point of exhaustion. The French joined our forces and defeated the Germans in the **Battle of the Marne (6-9th September)**. The Germans retreated to the north bank of the Aisne where they dug in after a brief but bloody battle.

The opposing forces tried to outflank each other in the **“Race to the Sea”**.

In mid-October the BEF were taken by train to Ypres in Belgium where they confronted the Germans in **the 1st Battle of Ypres (19th Oct - 22nd Nov)** helped by reinforcements from the French, and Colonial soldiers from North Africa and India.

From late 1914 the BEF was joined by volunteers to form **“Kitchener’s Army”**. Field Marshall Lord Herbert Kitchener was Secretary of State for War. He persuaded the Cabinet that the war against Germany would not be quickly or easily won. His call to arms produced five New Armies, totalling 2,500,000 men. Those responding to the “call” could still largely choose their own regiment.

Recruits had to be taller than 5ft 3in and be between the ages of 18 and 38, although men who had previously served could be recruited up to the age of 45. A new form of “Short Service” was introduced for “three years or the duration of the war, whichever was the longer”. After a medical examination, they would swear allegiance to King and Country - Attestation. The recruit would be sent home to await call up. The basic pay was a shilling a day.

CALL TO THE MEN OF CRANFIELD

The following edited extract from the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* on 11th September 1914, gives an account of a rousing rally held on the village green.

“Monday evening saw a big gathering on the village green in response to a notice headed “Why are we fighting?” A gaily decked wagon stood on the green. The Vicar took the chair, being accompanied in the wagon by the Lord Lieutenant and Mrs Whitbread, Dr and Mrs Street, etc.

The Vicar said they expected every man in Cranfield to do his duty. Already they had twenty men on active service, and he believed the result of that meeting would be twenty more (applause).

The Lord Lieutenant contrasted the peaceful surroundings of this and other villages in this country with the state of things in Belgium - fields devastated, smouldering ruins, and people driven out homeless and starving, wedged in between Germany and France. Despite having been one of the nations to guarantee that little country's neutrality, Germany had marched through it, destroying and killing and breaking every obligation she had undertaken. Their object was to crush Belgium and France and then turn on England. To meet the great need, every man that could bear arms between 19 and 30 was called for, and it was with the object of rousing men in North Beds. to a sense of the need and their duty that they came before them that evening.

To the women he said: "Let them go; do not hold them back." and explained the system of pay, in connection with service, pointing out that some were better off under the war pay than before their husbands and sons went, while all received an allowance, regular and sure. Twenty had already gone from their midst; let them make it 40, and they would glory in the honour they had in days to come (applause).

Mr A W Black urged upon the gathering the need for volunteers. He believed with Gen. French (applause) that their volunteer army was better than any army forced to serve. Dr Street told him that the families of those who went would receive free medical attention while the husband was away, and it was in such ways that men were showing their willingness to do their little bit even if they couldn't go themselves. At Cranfield, he understood three had given in their names before the meeting (applause); they wanted more to go with them. Bedfordshire was rising to its opportunity, and Cranfield, he was sure, would not be left behind (applause).

Besides the three who had given in their names, 14 more went up to the Lord Lieutenant, and entered their names. The enthusiasm was great; a vote of thanks was passed to the speakers, and the National Anthem was sung at the conclusion. Besides the recruits we learn that there are over 30 Cranfield men engaged on active service."



Cranfield Football Team in 1914

BRITISH ARMY STRUCTURE

The Commander in Chief at the outbreak of the war was **Field Marshall Sir John French**. **Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig** took over on 19th December 1915.

It may help, when following the soldiers through the war, to have an understanding of how the fighting units of the British Army were made up

The army was divided into **five “Armies”** (First, Second etc.) under the command of a **General**. Each Army was divided into **four Corps of 50,000** which were numbered by Roman numerals (VII, XXII etc) under the command of a **Lieutenant General**. The title “Corps” is not to be confused with the names of units such as the Army Service Corps, Machine Gun Corps and Tunnel Company Corps of the Royal Engineers which are separate units.

Each Corps was split into **3 Divisions of between 16-18,000 men;** (including Headquarters and support staff) commanded by a **Major General** and each Division was divided into **3 Brigades of between 3-4,000 men,** under the command of a **Brigadier General**.

Each Brigade was split into **4 Battalions of 800-1,000 men** under the command of a **Lieutenant Colonel** while each Battalion was divided into **4 Companies** (signified by A,B,C or D) of between **160-200 men, commanded by a Major or Captain**.

Each Company was divided into **4 platoons of between 40-50 men, commanded by a Lieutenant or 2nd Lieutenant** and each Platoon was split into **4 Sections of between 10 -14 men, commanded by a Corporal.**

A length of the front was assigned to an army corps which would usually be made up of three divisions, two of which would man the front and one the reserve trenches. The dividing and rotating of groups between the front and reserves was mirrored all the way down to the platoon.

A **Regiment**, commanded by a **Colonel** was the largest permanent grouping of men within the British Army in peacetime, but in war the battalions of which they were made up did not necessarily fight alongside each other. Soldiers took great pride in their regiments.

A soldier would enlist into a particular Regiment and Battalion but, at any stage during the course of the war, may have been moved to a different Regiment and Battalion to “plug gaps”. We see this often as we follow our soldiers through the war. During some battles nearly whole battalions would be wiped out, such were the horrors of the war, the story into which we are about to step.

THE FALLEN OF 1915

- 15th Jan** **William Herbert White,** 10th Battalion
Bedfordshire Regiment. Died of illness in UK,
aged 29. Buried in Cranfield.
- 7th May** **Frank Cook,** Royal Marines.
Died of wounds at Gallipoli, aged 30.
Buried at sea. Commemorated on the Chatham
Naval Memorial
- 17th May** **Alfred Harpur,** 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire
Regiment. Killed in action in Artois, France,
aged 17. Commemorated on the Le Touret
Memorial, Pas de Calais.
- 30th May** **Cecil William Hardy,** 1st Battalion
Dorsetshire Regiment. Killed in action at Ypres,
aged 26. Commemorated on the Menin Gate.
- 9th Jun** **Ernest Brown,** Royal Navy. Killed when ship
torpedoed off Albanian Coast, aged 26.
Buried Bari War Cemetery, Italy.
- 5th Sep** **Joseph Manyweathers,** 175th Tunnellers,
Royal Engineers. Died of wounds near Ypres,
aged 48. Buried Lijssenthoek Cemetery,
Belgium.
- 8th Oct** **Thomas Lovesey,** 3rd Grenadier Guards.
Killed in action at Loos, France, aged 23.
Commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

1915

WILLIAM HERBERT WHITE (3946)

Private, 5th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died, 15th January 1915, aged 29, at Bury St Edmunds.

Buried in Cranfield Churchyard.

Born in Grafham, Huntingdon. Resident of Cranfield.

Son of William and Mary White, 1 Sunny Side Cottage, Cranfield.

William White was born in 1886, the eldest child of **William and Mary White** of Sunnyside Cottage, Cranfield.

Although born in Grafham, Huntingdon, which was the home town of his mother, William lived in Cranfield with his parents as a child. His father was a bricklayer from North Crawley.

There were six younger children. With their ages in 1915 they were: **Louisa** Emily (27) who married John Pulman (Pridmore in Army records) in May 1914, **Florence** Julia (died aged 4 weeks), **George** Isaac (24), **Harold** James (20) who married Mary Eva Pettit, **Florence** Emily (17) who married Douglas Walter Shayler and **Frederick** John (14) who married Margaret Dudley.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 31st Jan 1913.

“William White, Cranfield, did not appear to a charge of riding a bicycle on the footpath at Woburn Sands. The defendant wrote from Bedford Hospital regretting the offence and was fined 8s.6d including costs.”

His brother, George, is reported in the local press on 15th January 1915 as having enlisted in Kitchener’s Army and was recovering from a severe attack of pneumonia. What an anxious time for the whole family.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent 22nd Jan 1915

“We regret to announce the untimely death of Mr William White on Saturday at Bury St Edmunds, at the age of 29 years. Deceased was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs William White and for many years he had suffered keenly from chronic indigestion for which nothing did him any lasting good.

But in spite of physical sufferings, when the call came for men he threw up his work and joined Kitchener’s Army. Shortly after returning to Bury St Edmunds a few weeks ago, after being at home a few days on sick leave, he caught a cold, upon which afterwards pneumonia supervened.

From time to time his parents were notified by wire as to his condition, and when the telegram arrived conveying the sad news of his death, the whole village participated in their sorrow. Much sympathy is felt for the grief-stricken parents, to whom he was always a dutiful and loyal son, and they have every cause to be proud of their boy.

On Monday the remains were brought home and later removed to the chancel of the parish church, where they rested until Wednesday afternoon.

It was the first military funeral since Mr Stephen John Harter (page 320) was buried 32 years ago. The assembly was one of the largest on record.

Miss Bliss presided at the organ, while the choir rendered the 90th Psalm, and the hymns “Lead Kindly Light” and “Peace, Perfect Peace.” The obsequies were performed by Rev. John Farrington Downes. The coffin was draped with a Union Jack. The mourners present were Mr and Mrs William White, Mr George White, Miss Pridmore, Miss Florrie White, and others.”

The grave is near the wall by the path which leads from Court Road to Church Walk. It stands between two lime trees. It is to the right of the path from the lych gate to the Church in Court Road.

Perhaps the Family’s only consolation was that their son was spared the horrors of the war.





**IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
WILLIAM HERBERT
WHITE
THE BELOVED SON OF
WILLIAM AND MARY WHITE
WHO DIED JANUARY 15TH 1915
AGED 29 YEARS**

**“FOR EVER WITH THE LORD
YET WE WILL NOT FORGET”**

GALLIPOLI (FEB 1915 - JAN 1916)

The Western Front was the principal theatre of war for the British and French forces but there were other initiatives elsewhere, some failures and some successes, collectively known as “sideshows”.

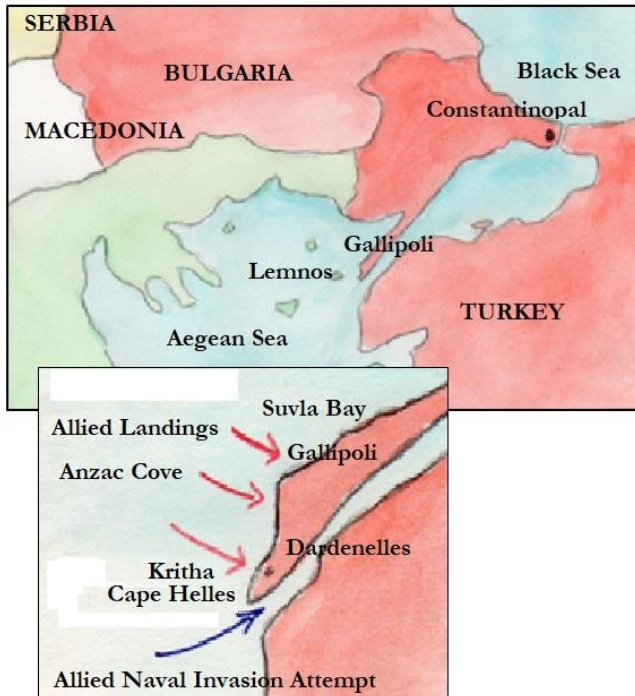
The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) joined the Central Powers (Germany/Austria-Hungary) on 29th October 1914. The German warships, stationed in the Mediterranean, were handed over to the Turks. Under German command they shelled Russian ports on the Black Sea, provoking Russia (on the side of the Allies) to declare war on Turkey.

The Turks closed the Dardanelle Strait linking the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. This was Russia’s only all year ice-free sea link to its allies.

In February 1915, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed a naval attack to re-open the Strait, threaten Constantinople and force Turkey out of the war.

The Dardanelles were heavily defended by Turkish forts on the Gallipoli peninsula, armed with German made guns. The Straits were also mined. The initial onslaught was a disaster. On Thursday 18th March, the Allies decided to try a final attack, bombarding the forts from the sea. This failed as they lost three ships, and severely damaged three others when they hit mines.

As well as clearing the mines, the Gallipoli peninsular needed to be captured by landing Allied troops on the beaches and coves to overcome the Turkish defenders.



On 25th April 1915 75,000 Allied troops (half of them Australians and New Zealanders) began landing at Cape Helles and at Gaba Tepe (later known as Anzac Cove). The date is remembered as Anzac Day. Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain, along with fierce Turkish resistance hampered the success of the invasion. In order to take the Gallipoli peninsular, the village of Krithia was crucial along with the neighbouring hill of Achi Baba.

In the **First Battle for Krithia**, launched on 28th April the British suffered heavy losses. The attack was called off due to a combination of the strength of the Ottoman forces, poor leadership and planning, lack of communications and exhaustion and demoralisation of the troops. The original British assumption of a swift victory was mistaken.

The Second Battle for Krithia took place on 6th May. 5,000 men including the Royal Naval Division, other British, Australian and New Zealand troops attacked. After three days a third of the men were dead or wounded and had only advanced 550 metres at their furthest point. The Battle was abandoned. **It was during this battle that the first serviceman from Cranfield, Frank Cook, was wounded and later died of his wounds.**

The Third Battle for Krithia and successive attempts to capture the Turkish forts were repelled and, as casualties were rising steadily, dysentery was rife, weapons inadequate, and winter was setting in, the order was given to withdraw. The last man was evacuated by January 1916. The cost of the Gallipoli campaign was heavy in both men and reputations. British dead numbered over 40,000, ANZAC over 10,000, French around 8,000. The Turks lost as many as 65,000 men. There were no winners. Winston Churchill resigned from the Admiralty and went to fight in France.

Gallipoli passed into legend: a military failure but a triumph of endurance and the ANZAC spirit.

FRANK COOK (Dea/959 (S) (Ch))
Sapper, Royal Marines, 2nd Field Company,
Divisional Engineers, Royal Navy Division.
Died of Wounds, 7th May 1915, aged 30, aboard
Hospital Ship "Franconia", Gallipoli. Buried at sea.
Commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.
Born in Cranfield. Resident of Hornsey, London.
Husband of Mrs A.E. Cook of 76 Turnpike Lane,
Hornsey, London.

Frank Cook was born in Cranfield on 3rd March 1886, the son of **William and Margaret Cook** (nee Cox). His father was a shoemaker and a devoted member of the Parish Church. Frank's father and grandfather had been Sexton and William had been ringing the church bells from the age of 10, and a member of the choir. His mother is listed in the 1891 census as "Lacemaker".

Frank's parents had fourteen children, but only eleven survived infancy. He had five older siblings (their ages in 1915): **Kate** Annabel (41), **Louisa** Florence (40), **Henry** (35), **Jesse** (33), **Sidney** (31), and five younger: **Rose** Margaret (26), **Ellen** Rebecca (23), **Charles** (21), **Benjamin** Thomas (19) and **Ernest** (17).

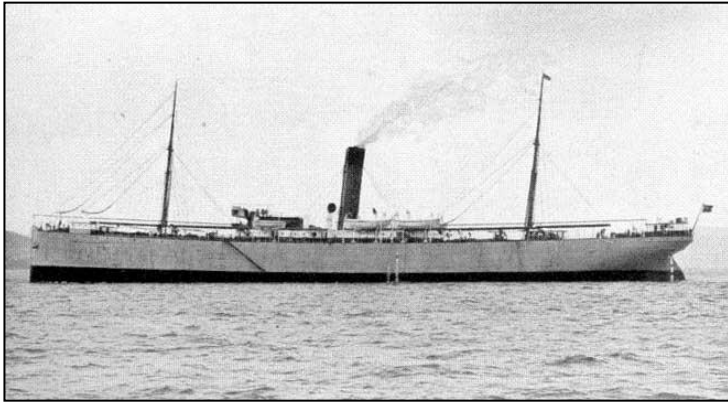
Ellen married Richard Henry Archer at Cranfield in 1914 but sadly died the following year, after a short illness, on 27th February 1915, three months before Frank was killed. She is buried at Cranfield.



Her grave is to the right of the path leading to the Church from the lych gate. The inscription: **IN LOVING MEMORY of ELLEN REBECCA - BELOVED WIFE OF RICHARD ARCHER - Died Feb 27 1915**

Frank married Annie from Battersea, London. They had three children: **Ivy** May (5), **Margaret** (4) and **Albert** (18 months). In 1911 he was living in Eccles in Lancashire and was working for the Water Works, laying pipes.

Frank enlisted on 21st January 1915 into the newly formed Royal Naval Division, Royal Marines, 2nd Field Company, Divisional Engineers, Deal Battalion. After a period of training at the base at Blandford, Dorset, the battalion set sail to the Greek Island of Lemnos, on 11th March on the “**Alnwick Castle**”. Royal Marines occupied the island and the harbour of Mudros became the Allied base.



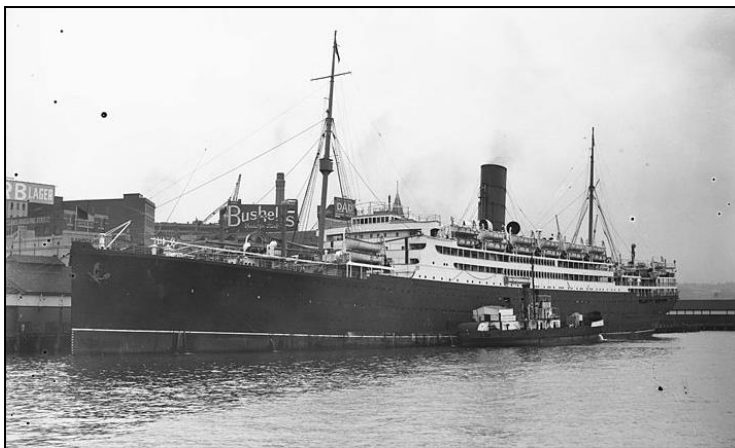
SS Alnwick Castle

Frank's battalion (Deal) were ordered to Port Said in Egypt, arriving on 26th March. Machine gun detachments were sent to the Suez Canal defences at Kantara. The Suez Canal was vital to the British and, in early 1915, had 30,000 troops keeping it open.

On 29th April the Deal and Nelson Battalions landed at Anzac, Gallipoli, and moved to the forward defences.

It was during **the second Battle of Krithia** that Frank was wounded. The two British naval brigades saw half of their number, some 1,600 soldiers, killed or wounded. The poor planning of the battle, in which there were 6,000 casualties, extended to the medical provisions for the wounded which were woeful. The few stretcher bearers available often had to carry the wounded all the way to the beach, as there was no intermediate collecting station with wagon transport.

He was taken to the Hospital Ship, **“Franconia”**, a converted Cunard Liner, where he died of his wounds on 7th May 1915. On the following evening at 6.30pm, he was buried at sea by the Chaplain attached to HMS Euralus, just off Cape Helles.



RMS Franconia

Frank's widow, Annie, was given his Star, Victory and British War Medals.

Frank Cook is commemorated on the Chatham Naval memorial, Chatham, Kent.

Chatham Naval Memorial



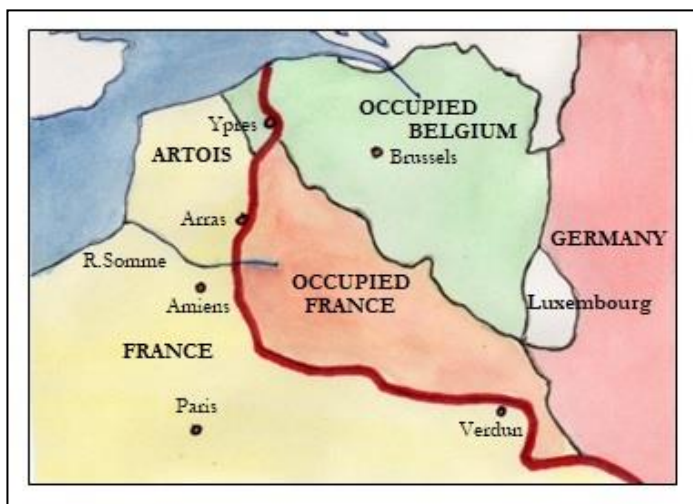
Chatham is one of three Naval Memorials with identical obelisks – the others being at Plymouth and Portsmouth.

The original obelisk commemorated 8,515 names. After WWII it was expanded and given a surround on which another 10,098 names were added.

THE WESTERN FRONT

By the end of 1914 the opposing forces had constructed a fortified system of trenches, stretching over 400 miles, from the North Sea to the Swiss border, and faced each other across “No Man’s Land”. The distance could be as little as 30 or 40 metres or as much as 270 metres. Linked to the trench systems were huge swathes of entanglements of barbed wire.

This was the Western Front. The Germans could select the highest and best positions, leaving the Allies to dig in where they could.



Until late summer, 1915, the French had held most of the Western Front, from the Swiss border to the city of Arras

and beyond. As more and more British battalions were shipped to France, they shouldered more of the “holding the line” burden. The chief responsibility of the British, supported by the forces of the British Empire, was the front in Belgian Flanders. **Flanders** was a medieval principality extending along the coast of the Low Countries. Its lands are now divided among France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In July 1915 British troops began arriving at the Somme. By late 1916 they took over the French lines down to the River Somme. However, the French kept overall command of the Western Front, Britain being the very junior partner.

The Trenches became synonymous with the grim reality of “The Great War”.

In Belgian Flanders the soil is clay, much like Cranfield, and the trenches soon became waterlogged, especially during periods of incessant rain. In order to keep the trenches dry, they had to be shallow with parapets built to raise the sides, using bags of clay. These were known as breastworks. They also used duckboards. The trenches were described as a “grim, muddy, hellhole”.

Soldiers would spend four to seven days on the front line. They would then man the reserve trenches and eventually return to their billets for rest, behind the firing line.

Hot food was not supplied until late 1915. They had a fairly monotonous diet of tinned food and dry biscuits. They would be supplied with a day's rations. Often any hot food or drink was cold by the time it reached the front line. As

water was often carried in recently used petrol cans the tea must have tasted ghastly. The troops were kept going by cigarettes and parcels and letters from home.

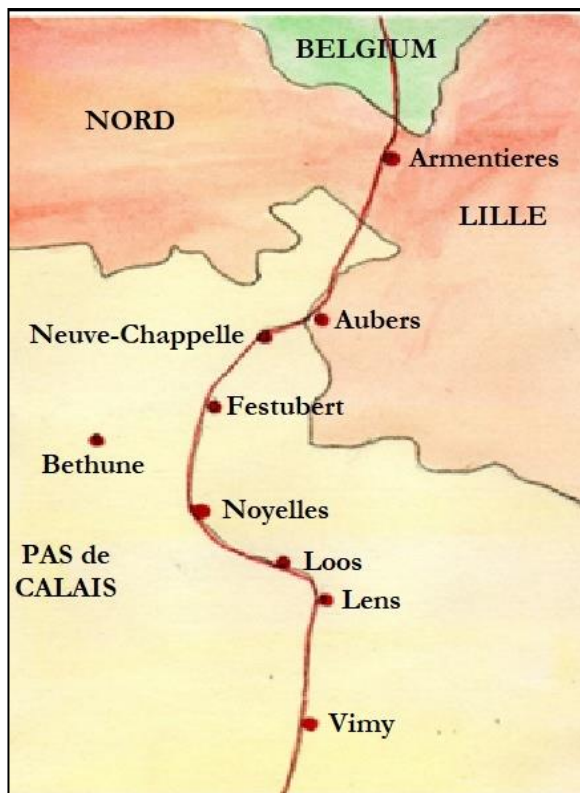
The **Germans and the weather** were not the only enemies in the trenches. **Rats** were a constant menace, stealing food and feeding on rotten corpses. Lice bites were described as being worse than the most dangerous bullet ever invented.

We have a first-hand account of the war, with a village connection. The late John Hughsden of Partridge Piece lent me a copy of the compelling autobiography, "Fire-Eater" by Captain A.O. Pollard, V.C., M.C., D.C.M. - Alf. John's father, Reggie, was Alf's "runner" during his most challenging times and the occasion which led to the award of the Victoria Cross. I would like to share his words, on life in the trenches, as they add humanity to stark facts.

"The trenches in 1914 were terrible. Sanitation was not yet perfected. Corpses, mostly French, were lying about unburied. Dug-outs were almost unknown. Yet despite of all drawbacks, men were drawn together in a bond of common sympathy. I have known men forgo the longed-for rum ration so that a comrade who was a bit under the weather might have a double dose. Everyone helped his neighbour without thought for himself. Death was opposite waiting for a carelessly exposed head. No one knew when their turn would come. War is said to bring out all the beastliest instincts in man. It also brings out the noblest."

THE FRONT IN THE ARTOIS

The old region of Artois is administered by the Department of Pas de Calais. To the north is the Department of Nord. These regions were previously referred to as French Flanders.



The French wanted to regain lost territory, especially the City of Lille, a major industrial and transport centre which the Germans had occupied early in the war. The Germans

also held a strong position on the **Aubers Ridge** which is a slight incline in an otherwise extremely flat landscape. From this vantage point the Germans were able to observe and bombard the British lines.

The French assault; **The First Battle of Artois** (17th December 1914 -13th January 1915) was the first offensive move in the region. As with successive attempts, they failed to break the stalemate.

Following the successful **British capture of Neuve Chapelle** (10th March), the Germans greatly strengthened their defences along the ridge, reinforcing their positions with thick barbed wire, concrete blockhouses and machine gun placements. These extra defences frustrated British attempts to break through enemy lines at Aubers Ridge (9th May) and Festubert (15th- 25th May). These were part of a series of attacks, combined with those of the French Tenth Army, known as the **Second Battle of Artois** (3rd May -10th June 1915).

The success of trench warfare depends largely on the role of the artillery; the heavy guns. They aimed to cut the wire and knock out the machine guns to clear the way for an infantry attack.

Before the **Battle of Festubert**, a three-day bombardment by 433 artillery pieces that fired about 100,000 shells failed to significantly damage the front line defences of the German 6th Army. The attack was renewed on 16th May but by 19th May the 2nd and 7th Division had to withdraw because of heavy losses. The British forces dug in at the new front line in heavy rain. The Germans reinforced their defences.

From 20th - 25th May the attack was resumed and Festubert was captured. The offensive had resulted in an advance of only 3 kilometres (1.9 miles). The British lost 16,648 casualties from 15th - 25th May. The Germans lost about 5,000 including 800 taken prisoner.



*British troops watching German prisoners being marched to captivity
at Festubert, May 1915*

Total casualties of Second Battle of Artois were: French 102,533 and German 73,072.

Many Cranfield men served at Festubert and it was during the battle that our next soldier, Alfred Harpur, was killed.

ALFRED HARPUR (3/7282)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
Killed in Action, Monday 17th May 1915, aged 17,
at Festubert in the Artois region of France.

Commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas
de Calais, France.

Born in, and a resident of, Cranfield.

Alfred Harpur was born in Cranfield on 12th March 1898. He was the **youngest child of William and Mercy Harpur** (nee Campion). William was an agricultural labourer and Mercy, a lace maker. All seven sons served during the war. Only five of them returned.

His brothers and sisters were (with their ages in 1915): **William** (35) his surname was Campion, (presumably a step brother), **George** (34), **James** (33), **John** (31), **Louisa** (29), **Charles** (26), **Philip** (23), **Violet** (21).

His mother died in 1910 when he was 12 years old. The 1911 census shows that **Alfred and his father with two other brothers, George and John, had moved in with Charles, and Charles' wife Clara, and their infant son William.**

Alfred followed his brothers, enlisting into the Bedfordshire Regiment, joining the 2nd Battalion. He was only two months into his 17th year. The official minimum age was 18. As long as he passed his medical and was over 5ft 3in tall, there were no checks on their age and many young men lied

about it so that they could be part of the great adventure and the sense of patriotism which was sweeping the country.

Alfred was in the Artois region of Northern France, on the Western Front, in early May. The Battalion War Diaries describe them arriving in Le Hamel, near Festubert on 11th May. In the trenches they were bombarded by enemy fire. The intensity of fighting increased on 16th and 17th May. On 17th May at 4.15pm Bedfords and Cameron Highlanders were ordered to attack but because of heavy shelling were unable to get into their positions until 7.35pm. Both Battalions simultaneously climbed over the breastwork and advanced. There was a certain amount of firing but, owing to the gathering darkness, it was difficult to see how the attack was progressing. At 8.30pm some of the Bedfords were returning, the attack having failed owing to deep ditches 6ft deep and 10-12 ft wide, some filled with water in which several men drowned.

It was on 17th May that Albert was killed in action. His body was never recovered. Charles, his brother, was killed in July 1916 at the Somme (Page 107).

The Beds Times and Independent of 28th May 1915

“News was received here on Tuesday that Pte. A. Harpur of the 2nd Beds. Regt. was killed at the front where he had only been a few weeks. He was the youngest son of Mr William Harpur, who has two other sons at the front from the first, one of whom has been severely wounded and the other in Kitchener’s Army.”

He is commemorated on **Le Touret Memorial**, Richebourg L’Avoüe, Pas de Calais.



The **Le Touret Memorial**, at the east end of Le Touret Military Cemetery, commemorates over 13,400 British soldiers killed in Artois from the beginning of October 1914 to the eve of the Battle of Loos in late September 1915. It takes the form of a loggia surrounding an open rectangular court.

The names are listed on panels set into the walls of the court and gallery.

Their remains were never found or could not be identified.

THE WESTERN FRONT – YPRES

In 1914, the lovely medieval, walled town of Ypres (now Ieper) was the only town in Belgium not to be occupied by the Germans. It lay in a strategic position guarding the roads to the English Channel.

In mid-October 1914, the British entered Ypres. They were met by the German army striking for the Channel ports. German cavalry had occupied Ypres in early October but were displaced by French and British mounted troops.

For six weeks the **1st Battle of Ypres (19th Oct -22nd Nov 1914)** was bravely fought and won by the Allies.

By this time winter was setting in. There was incessant rain. The opposing armies dug in, creating a salient around Ypres. A salient is a bulge into enemy lines. It left Ypres itself vulnerable to artillery fire on three sides.

Alf Pollard, writing in late 1914, describes the scene in his autobiography "Fire-eater":

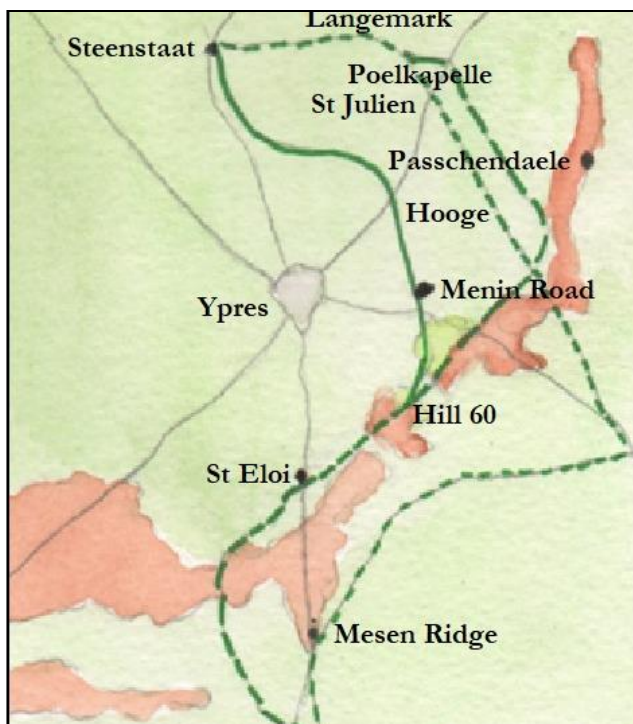
"At four o'clock in the afternoon came a noise like an express train and a shell from a big howitzer fell in the middle of the market place. Pandemonium! People scattered in all directions. They would have done well to have cleared out of the ill-fated town all together. Nobody knew it at the time but the destruction of Ypres had begun. Within a week the whole town was a mass of deserted ruins. Those houses which escaped demolition by the shells were gutted by the fire which raged incessantly day and night. Not one remained untouched."



Ypres in ruins



Ypres today



The shrinking Ypres Salient. Front lines: fine interrupted green line- Oct 1914. Longer dashes - 11th Nov after 1st Ypres. Solid green line 24th May 1915 after 2nd Ypres

In 1915, the Germans were attacking Russia in the east. On the Western Front they were mainly on the defensive, although they continued to mount local attacks. They launched an attack on 22nd April (**The Second Battle of Ypres**) releasing chlorine gas. This was the first time that gas had been used in the war. The Allies were ill prepared.

The French took the brunt of the first wave of gas and fled. The Canadians managed to extend their line and close the gap. The Allies were forced to withdraw to more secure positions closer to Ypres.

Hill 60

Although major battles were fought around Ypres, there was continuous fighting up and down the front throughout the conflict. The battles for Hill 60 were ceaseless. This was about 3 miles southeast of Ypres. The high ground was man-made in the 1850's having been created from the spoil from a nearby railway cutting. It provided an invaluable vantage point from which to view the wider battlefield and was much sought after by the Allied and German forces. The Germans captured the hill from the French on 10th December 1914. It was recaptured by the British on 17th April 1915 when four tunnels, packed with high explosives, were dug under the German positions. They were also heavily bombarded by allied artillery. The Germans used gas against Allied troops on 21st and 22nd April. The Hill was retaken by the Germans following a series of gas attacks from 1st – 5th May. Hill 60 is the final resting place for countless soldiers and is maintained as a memorial by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

It is where our next soldier, Cecil Hardy, was killed.

CECIL WILLIAM HARDY (317347)

Private, 1st Battalion the Dorsetshire Regiment.

Died of Wounds, 30th May 1915, aged 26, in Ypres Belgium.

Commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ieper, Belgium.

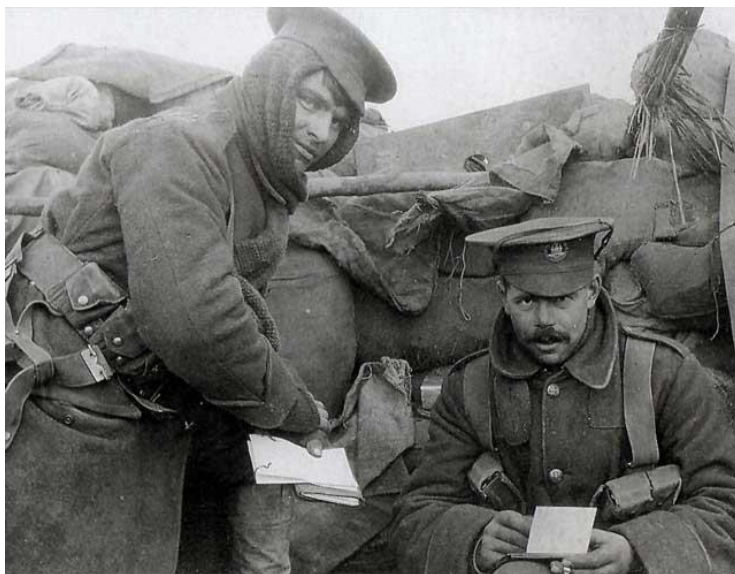
Born Tidworth, Wilts, and a resident of Waresley, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Son of Charles William Hardy and Fanny Rawlins Hardy formerly of Mill Field Cottage, Cranfield.

Cecil Hardy was the 2nd child and **eldest son of Charles and Fanny Hardy**. His father was a bricklayer and plasterer. His parents were both born in Wiltshire. They came to Cranfield between 1896 and 1901 when the 1901 census shows the family living in Mill Field Cottage, 71 High Street. By the time of the 1911 census the family had moved to Waresley, 5 miles South East of St. Neots.

Cecil was born in Tidworth, Wiltshire. He was a domestic gardener. He only had **one sister, Harriet** Edna, who was 28 in 1915 and in service. His **brothers** were: **Leonard Charles** (20 in 1915) – killed at the Somme the following year (page 115); **Walter** (died age 13 in 1910 in Waresley), and **Reginald** Ernest (10 in 1915) who was born in Cranfield.

Cecil joined the **1st Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment**, while he was in Poole Dorset, in late 1914. When he joined his Battalion, at the beginning of 1915, it was in the trenches of northern France at Bailleul, about 2 miles from the Belgian border. The Battalion's War Diary shows the Battalion moving into Belgium, closer to Ypres, to relieve other battalions, during the early months of 1915.



This is a photo of Cecil, taken by Capt. Partridge in the fire trench near the Wulverghem-Wytschaete Road, near Ypres, on 11th February 1915. Cecil is seated, writing a letter home.

It was published in the *Hunts and Beds News* on 30th April 1915 illustrating an article: “Wareley Soldier in the Trenches” and was presented to the Dorsetshire Regiment Museum in 1965.

On 29th March the Battalion was ordered to relieve the Cameron Highlanders at **Hill 60**. They stayed there for the whole of April, moving in and out of the area around Hill 60, deployed in trenches and dug-outs, suffering light casualties most days, but things were comparatively quiet.

Between 1st – 5th May, the Battalion was exposed to severe gas attacks. The situation is described as critical. **Cecil needed hospital care for 2 weeks after being gassed.**

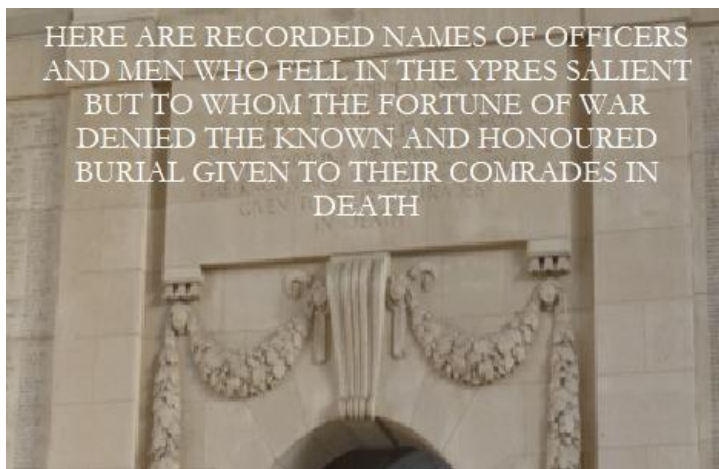
On 20th May they were back on Hill 60 where there was exchange of fire. The War Diaries of the next days simply list the numbers killed or wounded. On 30th May, one was killed and two wounded.

Cecil is recorded as having “died of wounds” on 30th May. However he has no known place of burial. His body may lie near or on Hill 60. As well as being on the Cranfield War Memorial, the two Hardy brothers are remembered on the War Memorial at Wareley, where their parents lived.

Cecil is commemorated on the Menin Gate, Ypres.

THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL

The road into Ypres from the east passes through the Menin Gate.



During the war, there was no formal gate. It was simply a gap in the ramparts, with a crossing point over the moat, through which the troops would march to the battlefields of the Ypres salient. Many would make their way along the road to the village of Menin (The French version of Menen). It soon became known to soldiers as “the Menin Road”. For the four years of the Great War soldiers from practically every British and Commonwealth regiment passed over this spot. There could be no more fitting site for a memorial.



The Memorial was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and was unveiled in 1927 by Field Marshall Plumer in the presence of the King of the Belgians.

The **54,389** names of the officers and men from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Forces (except New Zealand and Newfoundland) **who fell in the Ypres Salient before 16th August 1917 and who have no known grave**, are engraved in Portland stone panels fixed to the inner walls of the Central Hall of Memory. More panels bearing names line the stairways towards the ramparts above.



Every evening the road is closed to traffic. Buglers of the Last Post Association sound the Last Post at 8pm. This was started in 1927 and has been played every night, except for a period in the Second World War when Ypres was occupied by German Forces.



DIED OF WOUNDS & KILLED IN ACTION

Cecil Hardy was one of many of our soldiers who died of his wounds. The term “Died of Wounds” normally refers to those who perished as a direct result of war after being first received alive at a medical unit.

Care of the wounded

Let us consider what happened to a soldier wounded on the battlefield.

It was forbidden for a soldier advancing into battle to stop and assist a wounded comrade. Each had a first aid field dressing consisting of a gauze pad and bandage, sewn into his tunic.

The Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) was responsible for the care of the wounded. Each army Division had three field ambulances attached to it.



Wound infection

Antiseptics, such as iodine, were available, but there were no antibiotics. Penicillin, discovered in 1928 by Alexander Fleming, became commercially available by the time of the Second World War. Before this, once a major infection had set in, amputation was the only course of action. Few recovered from wounds to the trunk.

Pain relief such as **morphine** was available.

Blood transfusions

The science of refrigeration and storage of blood was in its infancy and blood group incompatibility was not fully understood. Transfusions were not possible on or near the battlefield where they would have had the most dramatic effect. Even at Base Hospitals blood transfusions were rare before 1917. A great many bled to death from often relatively simple wounds.

The first port of call for help was the **Regimental Aid Post - RAP**. This was usually an improvised shelter, close to the fighting zone, staffed by a medical officer (doctor) and several men of the RAMC as well as **stretcher bearers** attached to the RAMC. Casualties were stabilised and moved by **field ambulances** which were responsible for the transportation of casualties between various units. This may have been by horse-drawn or motor ambulance. They were taken to a **dressing station**. Those with no hope of recovery would be made comfortable in “moribund tents”.

Those with any prospect of recovery were transported to the **Casualty Clearing Station**. This was often tented and

set up around 10 miles behind the front. It was fully equipped with X Rays and operating facilities.

Surgical techniques to remove bullets, shell fragments and to repair injuries improved throughout the war.

Patients were rarely kept for more than a few days as there needed to be a through-put. Of necessity, Cemeteries sprang up alongside Dressing Stations and Casualty Clearing Stations.

Ambulance trains were used to transport the wounded to **Base Hospitals** which were often located near the big coastal towns of Boulogne, Calais and Etaples. Hospitals would specialise in certain injuries. Those fit enough to travel would be sent back home to “Blighty”. This term derives from the days of the army in India where “belati” was Hindi for “far away”. Those who recovered and were pronounced fit would be returned to the front at any point in the chain. In fact the greatest number of wounded returned to duty after treatment.

Those **KILLED IN ACTION** were those who “perished as a direct result of the war”. Some were unable to be identified because their official tags were missing. Some were blown into unidentifiable pieces. If found, dead bodies were buried as soon as possible where they fell. Families would be notified that a soldier was missing. It would be confirmed that they were presumed dead after about a year.

ERNEST BROWN (SS 104761)

(R.F.R. Ch B. 8543) (Ch)

Private 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. (5416)

Transferred to Royal Navy 30th March 1907.

Stoker 1st Class. Killed in Action, 9th June 1915,
aged 26, off the Albanian Coast on HMS Dublin.

Buried in Bari War Cemetery, Italy.

Born in Cranfield. Son of George and Elizabeth of
Church Road, Cranfield.

Husband of Sarah, 56 Hoy Street, Tidal Basin.E
Washington DC, USA

Ernest Brown was born in Cranfield on 15th March 1889. He was **the son of George and Elizabeth Brown** (nee Salisbury) of Church Road, Cranfield. He had **five brothers, William, Joseph, Fred, Wallace and Jim**. He had a **younger sister, Ada**. Some of their ages are uncertain. The younger ones may have been stepbrothers and sisters although William was older, 36, when Ernest was killed. (Ada was just 18 when he was killed. She later married Walter Odell).

When he was 14 years old, Ernest appeared in the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* in 1904.

He went to Bedford Fair and paid one penny (1d) for a piece of fried fish with a two shilling (2s) coin - a florin.

He walked off, turned, and came straight back and asked for his change, only to find the market trader saying that he never took his two shillings. Witnesses and crowds gathered and the stall holder was arrested. He couldn't pay the bail money and had to stay in jail until the petty sessions the following week. He was found guilty. The judge took into consideration that he had already served 12 days in prison so sentenced him to a month's hard labour. How times have changed – but stealing is stealing. Two shillings was equivalent to ten new pence! There were 12 old pence in a shilling. Decimal currency was introduced on 15th February 1951.

Ernest was a farm labourer before joining the **3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment** in 1905 at the age of 17. William was in the same Battalion from 1897. Fred and Ernest also joined the 3rd Battalion in the mid 1900's and William served a second term then.

Ernest made the army his career. However, on **30th March 1907**, he perhaps wanted to see the world and **transferred to the Royal Navy**.

His service record gives a list of the ships on which he served with dates. He started as a Stoker 2nd class and was promoted to Stoker 1st class while on board HMS Lancaster in 1910. He would have spent his working day below decks in the oppressively hot engine room, shovelling coal to power the steam turbines.

He transferred to Royal Fleet Reserve (RFR) Chatham in March 1912. His last service was on **HMS Dublin**, a Town-class light cruiser of Chatham subgroup, from 1st January 1915. In February the Dublin was sent to the Dardanelles where she assisted in the landings on **Gallipoli**. She was sent to Brindisi in May 1915. **While mine sweeping off the Albanian coast, escorted by French and Italian destroyers, Dublin was hit and damaged by a torpedo** from an Austrian submarine ***U-IV*** on 9th June.



It was during this attack that **Ernest was killed, along with 12 others, as the torpedo damaged the stoke hold.** Dublin was able to get underway at 17 knots (20 mph) and return to Brindisi but was out of action for several months and had to return to the UK for a refit. She served until 1926 when she was finally decommissioned and scrapped.

His brother, **Wallace** joined up but was badly gassed and sent home. He died of influenza in 1918 aged 25. His youngest brother, **Jim**, joined the Royal Navy on his 18th birthday.

Ernest Brown left a **wife, Sarah**, whose address is given in the records as 56, Hoy Street, Tidal Basin E, Washington DC, USA.

He was buried in the Brindisi Cimiterio, Italy. In 1981, 85 First World War burials, including that of Ernest, were reinterred at **Bari War Cemetery**, Carbonara, Puglia, Italy.

It contains 2,128 Commonwealth burials of WWII, 170 of them unidentified.



Bari War Cemetery

THE HARTER BROTHERS

There is a small plaque, on the north wall of the chancel of the Parish Church, which commemorates two soldiers who were killed in the First World War.



John George Harter, born 30th August 1888, was a Captain in the Durham Light Infantry. He died of wounds on 3rd April 1916, at St Eloi, aged 27.

Clement Jesse Harter, born 4th December 1889, was Captain 3rd Battalion Royal Fusiliers. He was killed in action on 16th June 1915 near Chateau Hooge, aged 25.

John George and Clement Jesse were the sons of Charles Harter and his wife, Violet. Charles was the fifth son of Rev. George Gardner Harter and the first to be born in Cranfield Court (page 18).

Records show that their father, Mr. C.B. Harter was living at 5 Onslow Houses, Kensington, London. He would have been 54. There is no record that their mother was still alive.

Rev. Harter died in 1872 and their uncle, James Hatfeild Harter, in whose memory the Village Hall was given, died in 1910. They were spared the grief of losing their young grandsons and nephews.

St Eloi and Hooge, where the boys were killed, were villages right on the front line of the Ypres salient.

The first of the brothers to be killed was **Clement Jesse** who died near Chateau Hooge. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the **Menin Gate**, along with **Cecil William Hardy** (page 59) and **Edgar Harold White** (page 92).

John George Harter died of his wounds received fighting at St Eloi. He is buried in **Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery**. Because Lijssenthoek was situated close to the front line but out of the range of most of the German artillery, it was chosen as the site of Allied Casualty Field Stations. The cemetery is the resting place of 10,755 casualties. It is the second largest British and Commonwealth cemetery in Belgium after Tyne Cot.



*Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery
(see additional photo on page 80)*

THE WAR UNDERGROUND

TUNNELLERS

The Germans were the first to dig tunnels under No Man's Land and explode mines under allied trenches in December 1914.

A British Army Major and Member of Parliament, John Norton-Griffiths, also had a civil engineering company working on sewerage contracts. The workers used a technique of **"clay-kicking"**. This involved the man doing the digging sitting with his back supported by a wooden frame with his feet towards the cutting face. With specially adapted spades they could remove the clay in a limited space, making little noise. Towards the end on 1914 Norton-Griffiths wrote to the War Office suggesting that the technique would be useful in the war effort.

It was not until February 1915 that tunnelling companies were formed. The backbone of this new force was clay-kickers. **Experienced miners were recruited** and offered financial incentives. Because they were not trained soldiers, but civilians, the upper age limit of 38 did not apply. **One of these is our next soldier, Joseph Manyweathers.** There were almost twice as many "attached infantry" working alongside trained miners acting as "beasts of burden".

The first nine Royal Engineer Tunnelling Companies - numbers 170-178 were formed and became operational by March 1915. Each was commanded by a regular RE officer. By the end of 1916 there were 30 companies. All these companies were occupied on other underground work such

as digging dugouts, saps (a narrow trench dug to approach enemy trenches), cable trenches and underground chambers for signals and medical services.

The underground war became a serious cat and mouse-like game with tunnelling and counter-tunnelling and counter tactics. Tunnels needed to be deeper and therefore more dangerous. **Listening posts** utilising sensitive geophones, devices for amplifying sound and movement underground, were introduced. **Mine rescue stations** containing primitive breathing apparatus were established to attempt to rescue men trapped or overcome by fumes underground.

There would be a team of a “Kicker” who worked the face, a “Bagger” who filled “sandbags” with lumps of clay spoil (used to fortify and repair the trenches), and, in more sophisticated tunnels a “Trammer” who transported bags out on a small rubber wheeled trolley on rails. The trolley would bring timber on the return journey. The team was responsible for its own safety and would erect wooden supports every 9 inches (0.23m).

Miners worked in cold, cramped conditions in rotating shifts. They were prone to illness creating a high mortality rate. Natural gases and gases given off by explosions could poison and asphyxiate. The major problem for tunnellers was carbon monoxide given off by shells and rifle bullets.

“Miners Friends”, mice and small birds such as canaries, were issued as an official item.

JOSEPH MANYWEATHERS (94278)

Sapper, 175th Tunnel Company, Corps of Royal Engineers.

Died of Wounds, Sunday 5th September 1915, aged 48, in Belgium.

Buried in the Lijssenthoek Military cemetery,
Poperinge, Belgium.

Born in Cranfield and a resident in Kilburn
London.

Joseph Manyweathers was born in Cranfield in 1867 the eldest son of **Joseph and Eliza** (nee Lovesey) who had seven children. His father was a farm labourer and his mother a lacemaker. His siblings with their ages in 1915 were: **Mary** (51), married Walter Seamark, whose job was an “excavator”, and settled in London. **Elizabeth**, (46) was in service in Hampstead. **William Joseph** (44) lived in Kilburn. Joseph lived with him and his wife, Agnes. **Annie** died aged 37 in 1911. **Alfred** (36) married Eliza Cox and stayed in Cranfield with their family. **Ellen** (34) married Caleb Stamford and was in Newport Pagnell in 1911.

The parents both died in 1912 and are buried in Cranfield Churchyard. Their grave is to the left, behind that of William Herbert White (page 34) by the wall at the western boundary of the Churchyard.

**IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
JOSEPH MANYWEATHERS
WHO DIED JANUARY 17TH 1912
AGED 76 YEARS**

**ALSO OF ELIZA
BELOVED WIFE
WHO DIED OCTOBER 16TH
1912
AGED 69 YEARS**

**GONE BUT NOT
FORGOTTEN**



We can only assume, because of his age, that Joseph was a civilian miner and not a trained soldier. His brother-in-law, Walter Seamark was an “Excavator” and Joseph may have followed him, working on excavations in London, either on the underground railway or sewerage.

His service records are not available but from the records of 175th Tunnelling Company we know they were involved in the underground fighting in the Ypres Salient at Hooze from 24th May 1915.

The 175th Company was responsible for the biggest explosion of the war so far, at Hooze, leaving a massive crater, 6 meters deep and 40 meters wide. They were also responsible for underground operations at Hill 60 (page 58) until they were relieved by the 3rd Canadian Tunnelling Company in April 1916.

Joseph died of wounds but we are left in the dark as to how he sustained these. It was an extremely dangerous occupation, the stuff of nightmares.

He is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, the same cemetery as John George Harter (page 75). He must have been taken, injured, to one of four Allied casualty clearing stations in the area, like most of those buried in this lovely cemetery.



Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery

BATTLE OF LOOS (25th Sept - 8th Oct 1915)

The Loos battlefield lies immediately north of the mining town of Lens, in the heart of the industrial area of north-east France. Field Marshals Sir John French and Haig (GOC First Army) regarded the area, which was overlooked by German-held slag heaps and colliery towers, as unsuitable for an attack. However, after much debate, they were overruled by Herbert Kitchener, Secretary of State for War. The French wanted to launch a joint offensive to try to break through the German lines and also to relieve the distressed Russians on the Eastern front by diverting German forces.

The battle was the British contribution to the **Third Battle of Artois**, the biggest British attack of 1915. There was a four day initial bombardment by artillery along a six and a half mile front. However a shortage of artillery ammunition hampered the initial stage.

Prior to the attack, the British released **chlorine gas**. In places the gas was blown back into their own trenches. The gas masks were inefficient and soldiers could barely breathe with them on. The gas failed to reach the enemy trenches.

On 25th September, the British advanced over open fields within range of German machine guns and artillery. British losses were devastating. The British captured the town of Loos-en-Gohelle. However, any initial advantage couldn't be pressed home as the reserves were not deployed soon enough because of poor communications with GHQ. The

next day the Germans had recovered and improved their defensive positions.

Rudyard Kipling's son John was killed there on 27th September.

A lull fell on 28th September with the British having retreated to their starting positions, having lost **20,000 casualties including three major-generals.**

The Germans recaptured the Hohenzollern Redoubt (a fortified stronghold) on 3rd October. On 8th October they tried to recapture much of the remaining lost ground. In foggy weather the British defenders were well prepared as the German artillery had failed to breach the wire. The Germans were held back, suffering heavy losses.

The British made a final attack on 13th October which failed due to lack of hand grenades. A further attack on 7th November was called off because of heavy rain and accurate German shelling.

Field Marshall Sir John French was criticised for the failure of the battle and the poor handling of reserves. He was replaced by General Sir Douglas Haig as Commander of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in December 1915.

There were a total of 59,247 losses of the 285,107 British casualties of the Western Front in 1915. British casualties at Loos were about twice German losses.

It was here that our next soldier, **Thomas Lovesey** died.

THOMAS MATHEW ODELL LOVESEY (21341)

Private, 3rd Grenadier Guards.

Killed in Action, 8th October 1915 aged 23, in the
Loos area of France.

Commemorated on the Loos Memorial, Pas de
Calais, France.

Born in Cranfield.

Son of Edward and Alice Lovesey of Cranfield.

Thomas Lovesey (Tom) was born in 1892, the youngest child of **Edward Lovesey and Alice** (nee Odell). Edward was a farm labourer and Alice a lacemaker. They had 12 children but only 9 survived. In 1901 only Tom, a farm labourer, was still living with his parents at 154 High St. Cranfield. He later moved to Wolverton and his parents were granted a James Goodman Alms House in 1914.

His surviving brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1915 were: **Herbert** (Bert) (46) married Fanny Mason in 1899. **Joseph** William (43) married Fanny Goldsmith in 1892. **Amy** (41) (married Arthur Herbert Ellingham in 1898. Harry (38) married Martha Jane Braysher. **Sarah** Martha (36) married Charles John Lancaster. (He was the son of William Lancaster and Susan Odell and the brother of **William Frederick Lancaster** who served with the Bedfordshire Yeomanry and died at Cambrai on 22nd November 1917 (page 210). **Walter** David (33) married Martha Rudston in 1925. Walter served as a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery until the end of the war. **Alice** Sophia (28) married Charles Alfred Bennet in 1923. **Sophia**

Mary (26) married Harold Salisbury in 1914. She was **nursemaid to Dr Street's children**. Dr Street founded Cranfield Surgery. He was succeeded by his son John, an ex Japanese prisoner of war and still a legend in Cranfield.

Herbert, Harry, Sarah and Walter all moved to different addresses in Loveridge Road, Kilburn, London.

Tom's father, Edward, was the brother of Eliza, Joseph Manyweathers' mother. Tom and Joseph were cousins. Joseph and his brother, William, also lived in Kilburn.

Tom was killed in the Battle of Loos on 8th October, 1915. We have some of the hand written War Dairies of the 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards which give a snapshot of his war experience.

At 4am on the 26th July, 1915, they paraded at Chelsea Barracks where messages from HM the King (Colonel in Chief) and HRH the Duke of Connaught (Colonel of the Regiment) were read out. With 24 officers they entrained (WWI speak for went by train) at Waterloo and arriving at Southampton, embarked at 5.30pm on the Clyde Steamboat "Queen Alexandra". They were escorted by destroyer to Le Havre after passing through the boom across the Solent. Transport and horses got off from another ship. They marched to No1 camp at St. Adresse.

During late July and August they spent time training in the handling of machine guns, grenades and route marching.

The September diaries are missing.

In early October they were in the front-line trenches near the Hohenzollern redoubt. Their “so-called” billets in the ruined village of Vermelles were obviously not up to much! There was “terrific noise from our own guns with occasional bursts from the enemy”.

4th Oct “Took over front line trenches from 5 KOLW Regt. Very wet dark night. Took 10 hours to get into our places. Very complicated plan of half-finished trenches: in some places within 30 yards of enemy: and on our left a long finger actually resting on the Hohenzollern redoubt. Dug day and night – but difficult to make position even reasonably secure.”

This is the diary for 8th October, the day Tom was killed. “In the afternoon were heavily attacked all along the line. The enemy Bombers rushed our left flank and came bombing down our line. They surprised and surrounded our own Bombers killing most of them including Anson.”

“The Bombers of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards who were on our right in the advanced line managed to stop the rush and our bombers coming back by various communication trenches assisted in clearing the enemy out and the trench was re-occupied.”

Tom was killed during this action. His body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Loos Memorial, Pas-de-Calais alongside the names of 20,000 officers and men who have no known grave.



Loos Memorial and Dud Corner Cemetery

Tom's grandparents, Samuel and Elizabeth Lovesey, lost three grandsons, Tom's cousins, commemorated on the village War Memorial. George Ford died of wounds on 14th May 1917 (page 168) and Harry Lovesey died on 30th November 1917 in Palestine (page 222).

THE FALLEN OF 1916

- 2nd Jun** **Reginald Anstey** 17th Battalion Nottingham & Derbyshire Regt. Killed in action in France, aged 28. Buried in Le Touret Military Cemetery.
- 3rd Jun** **Edgar Harold White** 10th Battalion Canadian Infantry. Killed in action in Belgium, aged 24. Commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres.
- 11th Jul** **Charles Harpur** 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regt. Killed in action at the Somme, aged 27. Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.
- 15th Aug** **Harry Hewlett** RN Submariner. Killed off Harwich, age 30. Buried in Shotley Churchyard
- 15th Sep** **Leonard Charles Hardy** 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regt. Killed in action at the Somme, aged 21. Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.
- 25th Oct** **Owen Young** 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regt. Killed in action at the Somme, aged 21. Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.
- 7th Nov** **Philip William Evans** 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regt. Died of wounds at the Somme, aged 25. Buried in Etaples Military Cemetery.

13th Nov George Savage 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regt. Killed in action at the Somme, aged 19. Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

24th Dec William Frederick Young 4th Battalion South Wales Borderers. Killed in action in Alexandria, Egypt, aged 25. Buried in Alexandria (Hadra) War Cemetery.

Of those killed in 1916, five died at the Somme. Four were killed in action, their bodies never recovered or identified. The fifth was wounded during the conflict but could be moved to Etaples Military Hospital where he later died of his wounds. Their stories are recorded together, as they take us through the course of the **First Battle of the Somme**.

They are preceded by the stories of Reginald Anstey and Edgar Harold White, who served elsewhere on the Western Front. The accounts of Harry Hewlett and William Young follow, taking us to the end of 1916 and reminding us that servicemen died off our own coasts as well as on other fronts.

Conscription was introduced in January 1916. All males between 19 and 41 years of age and were unmarried or a widower were conscripted. In May it was extended to include married men and the lower age dropped to 18. Exceptions were those in trades vital to the economy known as starred occupations.

REGINALD ANSTEY (27228)

Company Sergeant Major, 17th Battalion

Nottingham & Derbyshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Friday 2nd June 1916, aged 28,
in France.

Buried in Le Touret military cemetery, Richebourg
l'Avoue, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in Cranfield.

Son of George and Emma Anstey of High Street,
Cranfield.

Reginald Anstey was born in Cranfield in 1888. He was the **youngest** of the five living children of **George and Emma Anstey**, and the only one to be born in Cranfield. His father was from Dorset and his mother from Somerset. The other four children were born in Bala, Merionethshire, Wales. With their ages in 1916 they were: **Bessie** Amelia (38), **Herbert** Henry (37), **Sarah** Ethel (36) and **Charles** James (34).

In 1891 George was **head game keeper at Cranfield Court** and the family lived in the Keeper's Lodge (The Kennels) on Court Road.

He was held in high esteem by his employer, James Frances Hatfield Harter, the Squire. In May 1900, George and the Squire went to Shrewsbury for the National Pointer and Setter Field Trials where they won 1st Prize in the pointer puppy stakes with "Cranfield Druce" trained by G Anstey. They were also set to win another award but defaulted

“owing to an unfortunate accident with the puppy”.

Squire Harter died in 1910. The Village Hall was given to the Village in his memory in 1912. George and Emma Anstey moved to the High Street.

Herbert and Reginald followed their father's footsteps and were game keepers. Herbert gives his occupation as game keeper when he enlisted with the 2nd King Edwards Horse Regiment on 16th February 1916. He transferred to the 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment in October 1917.

In the 1911 census, Reginald was lodging with Mr and Mrs Perry near Newbury, Berkshire. His occupation was game keeper. He later became game keeper to the Duke of Portland at his Welbeck Estate at Worksop, Notts. Reginald enlisted into the Nottingham and Derbyshire Regiment, known as the Sherwood Foresters and joined the 17th Battalion, also known as the Welbeck Rangers.

The Battalion War Dairy showed them leaving Southampton for Le Havre on 6th March 1916. They were deployed in the trenches in northern France in the region of Bethune. They were fighting in trenches near Givenchy with heavy bombardment on both sides. It was here that Sergeant-Major Anstey was killed. His body was recovered and buried in Le Touret Military Cemetery.

There was a short piece in the *Derbyshire Courier* of 17th June 1916: “**A CRESWELL LOSS. Regimental Sergeant Major Killed.** Regt. Sergeant Major Reginald Anstey, Welbeck Rangers, who formerly lodged with Mrs Hardwick, Duke's Cottages, Creswell and was, prior to enlistment,

keeper in the employ of the Duke of Portland, has been killed in action in France. He was 28 years of age and of a fine appearance. He enlisted at the commencement of the war. His home was in Berkshire and a letter from his father and mother to Mrs Hardwick stated that they had received a letter from Colonel Ludlow, the commanding officer of the battalion, in which it stated he was an officer they could ill afford to lose. He was buried in France with seven comrades.”



Le Touret Military Cemetery

EDGAR HAROLD WHITE (21228)

Private, 10th Battalion Canadian Infantry, Alberta Regiment.

Killed in Action, 3rd June 1916, aged 24, in Belgium.

Commemorated on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial.

Born in Cranfield. Emigrated to Canada.

Son of George and Clara White of Cranfield

Edgar Harold White was born on 10th July 1891. He was the **first child of George and Clara White** (nee Chilman).

George was a joiner and Wesleyan Lay Preacher. Their other three children, with their ages in 1916, were: **Nellie** Elsie (24), **Edward** Charles(22) and **Amiee** Clara (19). George **had been married** previously to **Mary Hands** who died in **1884 aged 42**. They had **seven children**, Edgar's half-brothers. They were, with their ages in 1916: **William** George (49) was organist at the Wesleyan Chapel for 10 years. He married Alice Mary Chilman in 1893 at Zion Chapel. They lived at "The Yews" 125 High St. Also **Herbert** Francis (47), **George** Thomas, (45), **Alfred** Matthew (43), **Wesley** (41), **Arthur** Ernest (36) who joined the Royal Navy in 1914, and **Albert** Hands (33).

When Edgar was 18 his mother, Clara, died (1910) and the following year he **left England for Canada**, the same year that his half-brother, George Thomas, emigrated to New York. After war was declared, **Edgar enlisted in the**

Canadian Expeditionary Force in September 1914. His Attestation Paper gives his occupation as “Cowboy”.

The 10th (Alberta) Battalion was a Canadian Field Unit created during WWI, about 70% of the men in the first contingent to go overseas were said to have been born in Great Britain. The Battalion took part in the **2nd Battle of Ypres, 22nd April - 25th May 1915**. At the outset, Germans released their new weapon, chlorine gas, which formed a green/ yellow gas cloud several kilometres wide causing a breach in the Allied defences which the Canadians tried to stem over the next few days. Their action gained them a reputation as dependable troops but the cost was heavy. There were 6,000 casualties of whom 2,000 died. A Memorial, The Brooding Soldier, was erected at St Julien, near Ypres, in 1923, at the site of the battle which Edgar experienced and survived.



The Canadians fought with the British at the **Battle of Festubert** -15th-25th May 1915, in the Artois region of France, where an unsuccessful attempt to capture a small hill caused heavy casualties.

Seeing so much death and destruction had filled Edgar with a need to speak out. He wrote to his brother William in Cranfield. William sent the letter to the Editor of the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*. It was published on **5th Nov 1915**. Here is the letter in full: “**A CRANFIELD CANADIAN SPEAKS OUT** Private E.H. White of the 10th Battalion, 1st Canadian Expeditionary Force, writing to his brother Mr W.G. White, “The Yews”, Cranfield, says:- I am glad to say that up to this time I have for some reason or other been kept safe, although I cannot blow about coming through without a scratch. What I did get was nothing and scarce to draw blood, although it gave me some idea of what a serious wound would be like. The slaughter is awful out here now to what it was a few months ago, and I think I will be allowed to say that we are now meeting the Germans on more equal terms than we were formally and repay them with interest when they start any dirty work, even with gas, which you mention as detestable. We kept from that as long as possible, but now go all right after them with it whenever we get the chance. It is about time the young single men of England woke up as to what we are up against. We have now the whip hand of the Germans, but we’re losing heavily pushing them back, and every available man is needed to fill the places of them that fall. If they won’t come voluntarily they should be fetched. I would like for some of them to have been out here and seen one of the Navyy Battalions march to their camp that

lies close to our billets. They are mostly men of 40 to 60 years of age, all eager to do their bit. They told us they could dig trenches, while we did the fighting, and if we needed them they were all ready to shoulder a rifle and come with us to the firing line. I tell you we cheered them till we were hoarse, but at the same time we went mad to think of the slackers they had left behind. But there is a reckoning day coming to them when a few of us that are left come back and meet them. I don't know what makes me write like this, but I guess I have got worked up reading the account of the recruiting rally held in Bedford. Would it not work any man up when he looked back over the five months I have been in this country? Out of this platoon of 18 men, not including NCO's and an officer, that formed us when we arrived, there are now 12 of us left. The others are either lying somewhere in France or else in hospital suffering the agony of their wounds. That is only one, out of the vast number that are now holding some part of the British Line, and some have lost far more heavily than we have.

I remember one place, which was a town of considerable size, and when we went through it, there was nothing in sight with any life in it but a few half-starved cats but among the ruins were strewn piles of soldiers and civilians both men, women and children who were caught like rats in a trap, and just had to face the music. What if England were treated the same as Belgium and part of France? Would the young men still say they have no need to fight? I hope I have not made you lose patience reading this, but it seems I must tell somebody of my idea of what we are fighting for. I guess I value my life as much as anybody and look forward to years of strength and happiness after this is over, but would I be

happy if Nell, Amy, Doll, Madge and the rest fell into the hands of the Hun? I have nobody directly dependent on me, so what is my life compared to the lives and honour of those I love, for I have seen too much of the German culture to ever want anybody I care about to fall into their hands.”

Edgar died on 3rd June 1915 when his battalion mounted an unsuccessful assault on **Mount Sorrel**, a small hill in the Ypres Salient. There were 73 casualties: 28 either killed in action or dying from their wounds, 10 were reported missing and 25 were wounded.

Edgar’s body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the **Menin Gate** at Ypres. (Page 62)

He is also commemorated on a family grave in Cranfield Churchyard. The grave is situated near the old boundary pillars, to the right of a cross, looking west.





IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
GEORGE WHITE
WHO FELL ASLEEP AUGUST 17TH 1913
AGED 70 YEARS
ALSO
MARY WIFE OF THE ABOVE
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
FEB 9TH 1884 AGED 42 YEARS
AND CLARA WIFE OF THE ABOVE
WHO ALSO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
JULY 4TH 1910 AGED 62 YEARS

ASO EDGAR HAROLD SON OF
GEORGE AND CLARA
WHO FELL IN ACTION
SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE
BETWEEN 2ND AND 4TH JUNE 1916
AGED 24 YEARS
THEY SLEEP UNTIL THE TRUMPET
SHALL SOUND

BATTLE OF THE SOMME

July 1st 2016 was the centenary of the start of this battle which has become etched in our consciousness as symbolic of the horrendous slaughter, as men went “over the top” to be mown down by the German machine guns. It was the worst day for casualties in the history of the British Army. Around 40,000 were wounded (many dying later from their wounds) and 20,000 killed, most of whose bodies were never recovered or identified.

The centenary was commemorated at the War Memorial, by the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion, attended by residents and pupils from Cranfield Academy. A piper, Frank Menzies Hearn, heralded the ceremony. A wreath was laid which included cornflowers, the French symbol of remembrance. The last post sounded and the names of those who had lost their lives at the Somme were read out by the Chairman of the Cranfield Branch, John Seamark.





Over the ensuing four months of the conflict a million were killed, wounded or captured on both sides. We suffered a further 360,000 casualties. So, how did this catastrophic loss of life and limb - and sanity - come about?

The war on the Western Front had ground to a stalemate. We have seen how successive attempts to break through the German lines in the Artois region, in 1915, had achieved hardly anything in terms of territory regained. The Germans were determined to defend the borders of their newly extended empire.

Plans for a large Anglo-French summer offensive to finally break through the German lines, were made at General Joffre's headquarters at Chantilly in December 1915. **General Sir Douglas Haig**, Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) favoured Ypres but Haig received orders from Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, to carry out Joffre's wishes. Joffre, the French Commander favoured the Somme valley in Picardy, where British and French forces met.

As more troops were trained and arrived from Britain the British were gradually taking over the front line from the French, from Ypres, moving south, to the north of the River Somme. They had been at the Somme since the spring of 1915. It was then a peaceful rural backwater.

The Germans had also decided to try to break the deadlock. In February 1916 they attacked the fortified city of **Verdun**, 100 miles to the south. They wanted to "bleed the French white" and then deal with the British. French troops were therefore diverted from the Somme to defend the city. This

left the Somme offensive mainly in British hands although the French had responsibility for some sectors to the south of the river. There was then also the need to draw German troops from Verdun to relieve the pressure on the French.

General Sir Douglas Haig favoured a full frontal assault. General Rawlinson, commander of the 4th Army, favoured a “bite and retain” strategy, consolidating gains before advancing further. Haig won the day.

Improvements to roads and railways were needed to transport troops and supplies - both armaments and food.

Prior to the battle there was to be a 5 day **artillery bombardment**. When this started on 24th June the noise could be heard across the channel. However, we had underestimated the German defences. Although the wire was partially destroyed and the trenches flattened, the dugouts remained largely intact and could shield the machine guns which could be brought out when battle commenced. Also 30% of the shells were “duds”.

The British also dug **tunnels to explode mines** under the trenches at “zero hour” – 7.30am on 1st July. The timing was crucial. Unfortunately the mine under the Hawthorn Redoubt went off ten minutes early giving the Germans an early warning.

The Lochnagar Crater survives as a memorial to all those who suffered in the Great War. It was bought by Richard Dunning in 1978 and is dedicated to Peace, Fellowship and Reconciliation. A Remembrance Service is held here on 1st July at 7.30am and on Remembrance Day each year.



Although they must have been an impressive spectacle, the explosions achieved very little as the effect was too localised.

When the whistle was blown at 7.30am the men went “over the top”. So confident was Haig there would be no opposition remaining after the bombardment, they were ordered to walk towards the enemy lines in ranks preceded by a “creeping barrage” of artillery.

To the north of the road between Albert and Bapaume it was a complete disaster. It soon became obvious to all that the situation had been catastrophically misread. Also communication was poor between the generals and the front line troops.

One in five was killed going over the top. Whole battalions were almost wiped out.

After the first day, in the north, any British survivors returned to their trenches, having achieved nothing.

Further south the German defences were not as strong. The British and the French were more successful, forcing the German Second Army from their front line positions and taking large numbers of German prisoners.

The British dug new trenches or occupied the old German front line. In those first days of July they had advanced only about a mile but had captured Fricourt, Mametz and Montauban.

We had underestimated the German resolve and tactical advantage. They mainly **held the high ground**. They had impressive defences and had a **second line** where they could retreat if their line was breached. . They had specially **fortified “redoubts”**. Their **dugouts were made of concrete, with steel reinforced roofs**, and could withstand the bombardment of artillery. **They knew the terrain**. Their **intelligence** was second to none. They could intercept our telephone messages. They were **experienced** soldiers, whereas ours were mainly volunteers, many made up from the “Pals” Regiments.

The British had underestimated the number of casualties. Teams of stretcher bearers and field ambulances were overloaded. Many wounded, who perhaps could have been saved, were unable to be helped.

None of the Cranfield soldiers were killed on the first day. As the battle unfolded over the next four months we shall try to get a glimpse of what they went through and where they died.

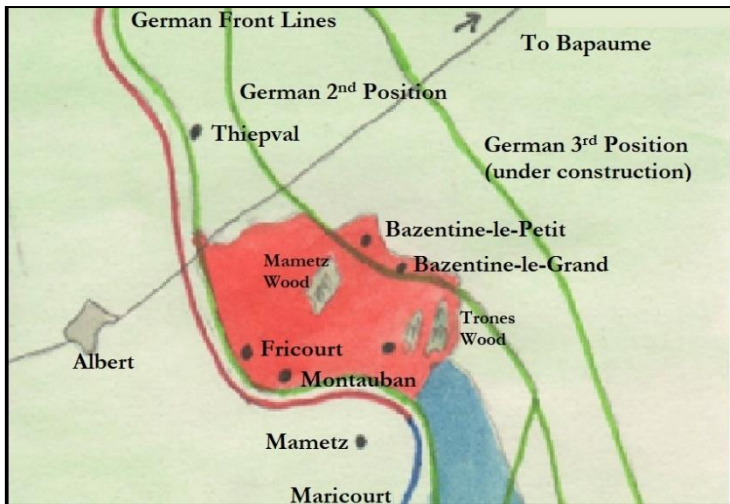


The Somme Battlefields today

BATTLE OF ALBERT (1st – 13th July)

Despite enormous losses, the Somme offensive had to continue. The French were still heavily engaged at Verdun and the Germans were determined to hold their ground and had instructions to fight to recapture ground they had lost.

The part of the campaign known as the **Battle of Albert** was a series of small, self-contained, offensives in preparation for the capture of the Bazentin Ridge on 14th July.



British Frontlines- Red

French Frontlines- Blue

British gains to 14th July – Red, French gains- Blue

Beforehand it was essential to seize the ground around Montauban, immediately in front of the ridge.

In this area were several woods including **Mametz Wood** and **Trones Wood**.

Fighting in the woods was very different to the trenches. The woods were well defended with well camouflaged machine gun posts. Attacking troops were vulnerable to snipers up trees and were subject to heavy barrages of incendiary shells. The battlefield became an inferno. There were very high casualty rates.

During the capture of **Mametz Wood** the 38th (Welsh) Division sustained some 4,000 casualties. When it was finally cleared it was held by 62nd Brigade at the cost of another 1,000 casualties.

Trones Wood changed hands many times during 6 days of harsh fighting. It had to be taken by 14th July. At midnight on 13th July a final desperate attempt was made to take the wood. It was secured after many hours of fighting with the loss of 450 casualties, one of whom was **Charles Harpur** from Cranfield.

CHARLES HARPUR (18065)
Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.
Killed in Action, Tuesday 11th July 1916, age 27,
at the Somme in France.
Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial,
Somme, France.
Born in, and a resident of, Cranfield.

Charles Harpur was born on 21st March 1889, the fourth son of **William and Mercy** (nee Campion) of Cranfield.

His brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1916, were: **William** (36), **George** (35), **James** (34), **John** (32), **Louisa** (30), **Philip** (24) and **Violet** (22). His youngest brother, Alfred (page 52) , **was killed in action at Festubert in May 1915, aged 17.**

Charles married his distant cousin Clarissa Annie Evans (known as Clara) on 27th March 1909, in Cranfield. Their son, William John, was born in June 1909 and their daughter, Doris May, was born in October 1912.

His father was widowed in 1910 and he and his sons - George, John and Alfred - went to live with Charles, Clara and their infant son in the High Street, Cranfield.

Charles was a bricklayer's labourer. Three of his brothers; George, James and John joined up in September 1914. Charles followed later in November, followed by his brothers William, Philip and Alfred. They all joined the 2nd

Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment (The Duke's Regiment).

The Battalion served at **Festubert** in May 1915, (page 50) where Charles must have fought alongside his youngest brother, Alfred, when he was killed in action.

They fought in the **Battle of Loos (25th Sept- 8th Oct 1915)** when the British first used poison gas (page 81).

The Battalion was in the Valley of the Somme during the severe winter of 1915.

During the first few days of the **Battle of the Somme**, from 1st - 3rd July they were in the trenches near **Maricourt**. The Battalion War Diary tells us that on 1st July it was hazy at 7.30am when the general advance started. Most of the casualties were from shell fire. During the day they captured four machine guns and took three hundred German prisoners. In the following days they consolidated gains around Maricourt. They were relieved by the 3rd South African Infantry and were able to take a few days rest before being given orders to attack **Trones Wood** on 11th July. They commenced the attack at 3.10am and, under cover of darkness, were able to advance until they were within 400 yards of the Wood before they were spotted and came under enemy machine gun fire. By about 3.45am the whole Battalion had gained the inside of the Wood. However, owing to the denseness of the undergrowth it wasn't possible to see more than four yards in front of them so the Companies had great difficulty keeping in touch. The Wood was strongly held and full of trenches and dug outs.

By 7pm on the evening of 11th July the Battalion had dug themselves in on the SE and SW side of the Wood. All Companies were much reduced by casualties. From 12th – 13th July the Battalion held part of the southern part of the Wood until they were relieved on 13th, when they withdrew from Trones Wood. The total the casualty list during the attack, between 11th and 13th July, was 244 men.

It was on 11th July that Charles was killed. His body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the **Thiepval Memorial**.



His widow, Clara later married Charles' brother, John and went on to have four more children.

He was entitled to the Victory Medal, British Medal and 1915 Star.

THIEPVAL MEMORIAL



The memorial commemorates over 70,000 British and 830 South African men who died in the area of the Somme between July 1915 and March 1918 “but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death”.

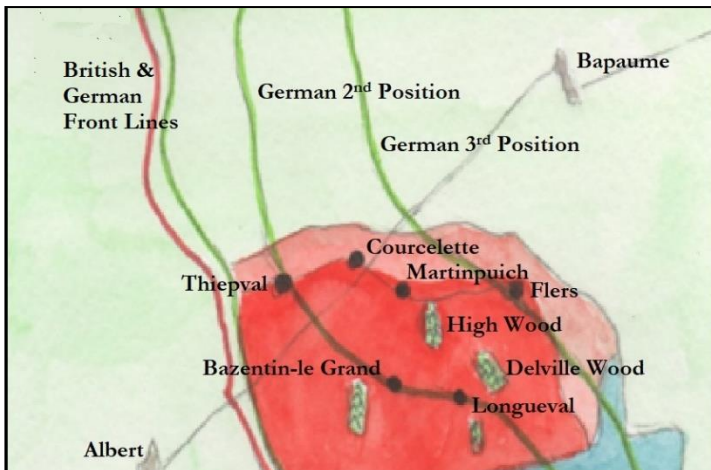
It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who also designed the Cenotaph in London. Construction began in 1928 and the memorial was officially inaugurated on 1st August 1932 at a ceremony attended by the Prince of Wales.

Battle of Bazentin Ridge (14th - 17th July)

On 14th July the British launched another large scale attack. A dawn assault was planned to secure the German positions on the Bazentin Ridge between Delville Wood (known to the troops as Devil's Wood) and Bazentin-le-Grand.

Lessons had been learnt from the unsuccessful 1st July assault. The preliminary artillery bombardment was more precise rather than simply blasting everything in sight.

The immediate result was an outstanding success. 6,000 yards of the German Second Line had been captured by mid-morning. The only village not taken was Longueval.



Although indicated by lines, the German positions were a maze of trenches and fortified “redoubts”.



Wounded German & British soldiers after the Battle

Despite the successful capture of the Bazentin Ridge, albeit at a cost of 9,000 British casualties, the expected breakthrough had now degenerated into a long drawn-out battle for the ground in front, most notably **High Wood** and **Delville Wood**.

Delville Wood was finally captured on 27th August after 6 weeks of heavy fighting. The South African Brigade fought heroically.

High Wood, located on the brow of a hill and up a long slope, was unoccupied on 14th July and an opportunity was missed. It would take another 2 months to capture.

From 15th July - 14th September the Fourth Army had advanced 1,000 yards on a 5 mile front incurring approximately **82,000 casualties**.

Battle of Flers-Courcelette (15th - 27th September)

This was the third main phase of the Battle of the Somme. It is best known as the **first tank battle in history**.

All 49 tanks moved slowly into position on 11th September. They were so unreliable that only 15 made it to the front line the next day.

They had a devastating effect on German morale. The Germans hadn't seen anything like them before. You can imagine the expletives from the German trenches!



Tanks were manned by crews of 8 in roasting heat, cramped conditions, poor visibility and almost complete darkness.

They were extremely unreliable, breaking down and being very slow. Advancing soldiers were quicker than the tanks.

Led by tanks, the villages of Martinpuich, Flers and Courcellette fell to the Allies. There was not much left after the tanks had rolled through!

An aerial reconnaissance report had reached HQ "Tank seen in main street Flers with large numbers of troops following it." To gain maximum propaganda the press reported "A tank is walking along the High Street of Flers with the British Army cheering behind it"!

The early success was not exploited. The Cavalry were waiting to charge but were released too late and faced increased German Resistance. This was the first use of Cavalry on the Western Front since 1914.

The advance on 15th September was limited to about 2,500 yards on a 3-mile front. The offensive stalled after the Fourth Army alone had suffered over 29,000 casualties.

Leonard Hardy from Cranfield was killed on 15th September during this battle.

On the same day **Lt. Raymond Asquith, the Prime Minister's eldest son**, was shot through the chest, leading his men in an attack on the German trenches north-east of Ginchy. He died of his wounds an hour later in a shell-hole being used as an improvised dressing station. He was 37.

LEONARD CHARLES HARDY (16896)

Private, 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Friday 15th September 1916 aged 21, at the Somme in France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born Durrington, Wiltshire. Son of Charles William Hardy and Fanny Rawlins Hardy of Cranfield.

Leonard was born on 4th December 1894. His parents, **Charles and Fanny Rawlins** (nee Cooper) had their eldest four children, including Leonard, while living in Durrington, Wiltshire. **Harriet** Edna was 29 in 1916 and in service. **Their eldest son, Cecil William (page 59), was killed in action in Belgium in May 1915, at the age of 26.** Their next son, **Walter**, died in 1910 at the age of 13.

The family moved to Cranfield sometime between 1896 and 1901. In the 1901 census they were living at Millfield Cottage, Cranfield, where the youngest, **Reginald** Ernest was born in 1905. He would have been 11 in 1916. They moved to Waresley, near St Neots between 1905 and 1910.

In 1904, when Leonard was 10, he received a Medal at Cranfield Village School for “being never absent and never late for a whole year”. He followed his father’s trade as a bricklayer and plasterer.

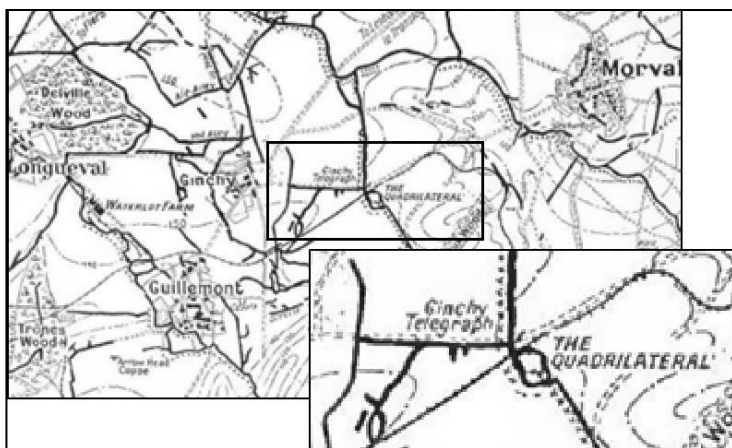
The family lived in Waresley during the war and it was at Waresley that Leonard enlisted. After the war the parents moved back to Cranfield, where they lived in Bedford Road with their unmarried daughter, Harriet. Charles died in Northampton General Hospital in 1940.

Fanny died in Cranfield on 29th December 1947, aged 81.

The 8th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment was a “service” battalion, brought into being in October 1914, raised in Bedford in answer to Lord Kitchener’s “Call to Arms” for another 100,000 men. The Battalion spent some months training in Surrey before leaving for France on 28th August 1915, landing in Boulogne on 30th August.

The Battalion saw action at the **Battle of Loos** (25th Sept-8th Oct 1915). Between the end of January and the end of July 1916, the Battalion was in the **Ypres** area of Belgium. By the end of August it was in the **Somme Valley**, close to Amiens.

This is the **Battalion Diary for 15th September, the first day of the Battle of Flers- Courcellette**. “Battalion was ordered to take the “Quadrilateral” (a heavily defended German position) assisted by the Heavy Section of the Machine Gun Corp with tanks, advance about 500 yards N.E. and dig in. Battalion was in position for attack about 4.30 am for Zero hour 6.20 am. Three waves were supplied by D and A Coys to attack the “Quadrilateral” which was on our left flank, whilst B Coy co-operated by bombing down the trench leading to it.



Our attacking companies pushed forward and, though supported by The Buffs and York and Lancashire Regt., failed to take the position. Tanks did not arrive to assist and the position was not heavily shelled prior to the attack. Brigade ordered original trenches to be held and await orders. As the Battalion had suffered very severely in casualties - 6 officers killed and 7 wounded, we were relieved at 6pm and put in reserve trenches S.E. of Guillemont.”

It was on 15th September 1916, during the first day of the **Battle of Flanders-Courcelette**, that Leonard was killed in action. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the **Thiepval Memorial (page 110)**.

The Battle planners moved their attention to the north of the Albert Bapaume Road - to the Ancre Valley, the village of Thiepval and a heavily defended position beyond - the **Schwaben Redoubt**.

There was a lot of heavy fighting with huge losses as eventually Thiepval and neighbouring farms and villages were taken during September.

A stumbling block was the **Regina Trench**, the longest trench on the German front. It ran along the north - facing slope of a ridge from the village of Sars, north of Courcellette, to the Schwaben Redoubt. Attempts to capture it were hampered by incessant rain. The conditions were “indescribable”. It was partially captured by the Canadians on 19th October. It was mostly taken on 21st October by the 4th Canadian Division and two British Divisions when 1000 Germans were taken prisoner. It finally fell during the second week of November.

It was here that our next soldier, **Owen Young**, was killed in action.

OWEN YOUNG (27355)

Private, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Wednesday 25th October 1916 aged 21, at the Somme France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in and a resident of North Crawley.

Son of Joseph and Kate Young, of Broadmead North Crawley

Owen Young was born in Cranfield in 1895, the son of **Joseph and Annie Keziah (Kate)**. He was a farm labourer.

His father was a bricklayer. The couple had seven children, all of them born in Cranfield. They were (with their ages in 1916): **James** (28) married Lizzie. He was an assistant butcher in Westcliffe, Essex. **Elizabeth Gertrude** (27) was a housemaid in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Also **Sarah Lucas** (26) and **William Frederick (Willie)** (25) who was a bricklayer. He died of malaria in Alexandria, Egypt on Christmas Eve 1916 (Page137). **Frank** (24)was a farm labourer. The youngest were **Owen** (21) and **Ada** (10).

The family (Joseph, Kate Willie, Frank, Owen and young Ada,) moved to Ivy Cottage, Broadmead, North Crawley about 1906.

Owen's grandfather, James, was a master bricklayer. When he died in 1902, the local newspaper reported that he had been blind for the last 13 years and had built the Carpenter's Arms and the Post Office. The original Post

Office was on the High Street. A later Post Office was next door in, what was then, a draper's shop. Since about 2002 it was located in the old Co-op at the junction of Mill Road and Bedford Road and, currently, in the new Co-op on the High Street.

He also built Pulley's Bakery, on the High Street where the "Home to Haven" shop stands. Villagers without an oven would take their Sunday roast to Pulley's. He also built Salford Schools and the "present" windmill.

Cranfield's last working windmill, in Broad Green, was demolished in 1966.



Willie and Owen were cousins of Cornelius Young who died of wounds on 13th February 1918 (page 229).

They all joined the 7th Battalion (The Shiny Seventh) enlisting at Amptill. They left England for Boulogne in July 1915. They were training in the Somme Valley during the harsh winter of 1915. They spent the first half of 1916 there, supplying raiding parties against the Germans and worked hard manning the trenches. They were called to take part in the Somme offensive and, along with the 11th Royal Fusiliers, were the first to go “over the top” at “Zero Hour”, 7am, on 1st July, against the German first line trenches.

On 26th September the Battalion move forward to dugouts in the vicinity of Thiepval, with the purpose of clearing and consolidating the North Face of Thiepval, a position the Germans boasted could never be taken. The Battalion Diary for 23rd - 25th October simply records “Holding front line trench - Regina”. On 26th October “Relieved from above trench to billet in Albert”.

The horrendous conditions of heavy fighting in incessant rain are not reflected by these short entries.

It was on 25th October that Owen was killed. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the **Thiepval Memorial (page 110)**.

PHILIP WILLIAM EVANS (22903)

Private, 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Wounded at the Somme on 23rd September 1916,

Died of wounds Tuesday 7th November 1916 aged
25 in Etaples Military Hospital

Buried in the Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de
Calais, France.

Born in, and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of George and Annie Evans, High Street
Cranfield.



Philip William Evans was born in Cranfield on 7th December 1890. His parents, William George and Annie Elizabeth (nee Ross) had thirteen children.

His father was a chimney sweep, according to the 1901 census, but turned his hand to many jobs including thatching and working as a farm labourer. Philip was their fourth child. His brothers and sisters with their ages in 1916 were: **Emily** (31) married Albert Wright in 1906 and then George D Parker in 1920. **Florence** Mary (29) married William Cooper in 1904. **Phyllis** Annie (28) married William George Homans. **Lizzie** Ross(24) married Frederick Shayler in 1915, and, as a widow, married Frank Charles Seamark in 1918. **Hugh** John (23) married Martha Burtin Salford in 1917. **Kenneth** George (21) married Ethel Emily Grayson in London in 1921. Kenneth served with the 6th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment and served in France, Flanders and Gallipoli. He suffered gunshot wounds to the leg and neck from which he recovered, then later to his left knee and back, after which he was invalided back to England. **William** Nathaniel (19) married Mabel Margaret Tysoe, of Stevington, in 1920. **Irene** (Rene) (15) divorced her first husband in the 1920's and married Thomas J Phillips in 1943. Irene's twin sister died at birth. Also **Leslie** Robert (13) and **Ronald** (11) married Susan Gladys Markham (of Milton Keynes) in August 1931. She sadly died in Cranfield in 1941 aged 34 years. **Mary** (9) married Ernest George Young in 1928. He was the younger brother of Cornelius Young (page 229) who died of wounds in France on 13th February 1918.

Philip worked as a farm labourer from an early age. At the age of 10 he was working on the farm of Mr Bosworth when he fell underneath a harvest cart with the cart wheel running over his foot and arm. He was alone and more than 3 miles from home when he struggled back to Cranfield on his injured foot. His arm was broken just below the shoulder.

Along with three other young men from the village, he enlisted in Bedford, joining the 8th Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment. This was a service battalion raised in Bedford in 1915 for the duration of the War.

The Battalion served near Ypres and were also heavily involved in the **Battle of Flers-Courcelette**. Philip was shot and wounded on 23rd September when the Battalion were manning the trenches near Guillemont (page 117). He was admitted into a field clearing station with a gun shot wound to his left hip and fractured left arm. He was transferred on 25th September to No.10 Ambulance Train and transferred to the **Military Hospital at Etaples**.

The ambulance trains were fitted out with comfortable stretchers and were fully equipped with medical equipment and nursing staff.

Philip died from his wounds on 7th November. There were no antibiotics available during the First World War and he may have died from septicaemia.

He is buried in the **Etaples Military Cemetery**,
Department Pas de Calais, France.



Etaples Military Cemetery

The *Bedford Times and Independent* of 17th November reports: “Pte. Evans of Cranfield has died in hospital of wounds. He was 25 years of age, well known and respected in the village. There was a Memorial Service in the church on Sunday, when the Dead March was played. He joined up about twelve months ago and was trained at Amptill Camp, being drafted to the Regiment some 6 months ago.”

Post Script. Being of such a large family it is not surprising that relatives still live in Cranfield. Among them is Clive Evans of Bedford Road who has given me some more information about Philip. When I asked him whether he was related to him, he replied “Ah. You must remember

that Philip was a young man when he left Cranfield when he went to war.” He went on to tell me that Philip was engaged to Martha, who was pregnant at the time. His parents got the news, in the November, that Philip had been killed. His younger brother, Hugh, then 23, married Martha in 1917. **Their eldest child, Ernest, was Philip’s son.** They went on to have 6 more children: Hugh, Nancy, Walter, Dennis, **Clive** and Alwyn.

Clive’s father, Hugh, was a master thatcher.



During the Second World War he was in charge of the Fire Station situated near 29 High Street Cranfield.



Hugh and Martha

It was an Auxiliary Fire Service, part of the National Fire Service. The station was manned by about 10 volunteers. One had to be on duty day and night to take incoming calls. They could be called away anywhere in the county where they were needed. Hugh found the role exhausting.

He sadly died when Clive was only 14, leaving Martha to bring up the family. Times were hard but, living in the country, they never went hungry.

Battle of the Ancre **(13th - 18th November)**

With winter approaching and the atrocious weather conditions, this was the last large British attack of the four month Battle of the Somme. The river Ancre flows to the north of Albert in the Somme valley and the battle took place between the villages of Beaumont Hamel and Thiepval. It was fought by the Fifth Army (the Reserve Army had been renamed on 30 October) under the command of Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough, against the German 1st Army. The attack was the largest in the British sector since the September and had a seven-day preliminary artillery bombardment, which was twice as heavy as that of 1 July. Beaumont Hamel, St. Pierre Divion and Beaucourt were captured. During the course of the battle Four German divisions had to be relieved due to the number of casualties they suffered and over 7,000 German troops were taken prisoner. The British also suffered huge losses.

The conditions were appalling. Captain Alfred Bundy's account is given in the Imperial War Museum book "The Somme - a Visual History" by Anthony Richards. "Liquid mud lies at the bottom, in some places two feet deep. Several times this filthy slime has been well above my field boots and my legs are, and have been for hours, completely wet and numbed with cold. In my own misery I feel intensely for the men who, with puttees only, are worse off than the officers. They are marvelous in their uncomplaining fortitude, but I think I understand the secret. Contrary to

what one might believe to be the case, I have found that the desire to live is strongest when the conditions of existence are most dangerous and depressing. It is hope for an escape to the normal and safe that keeps the spirits up. I do not, and will not, believe it is natural to long for death in conditions of the most abject misery – the more the misery the more the desire to live.”

It was during this battle that our next soldier, **George Savage** was killed.



Members of a working party during the Battle of Ancre

The increasingly muddy conditions were a major contributing factor in calling an end to the campaign.

On the 18th of November 1916 the First Battle of the Somme, the bloodiest battle of the war, was officially over. The eventual cost was over 420,000 casualties. However, the

army was far more experienced, far more capable and better equipped.

GEORGE SAVAGE (23595)

4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Monday 13 November 1916 aged 19 at the Somme France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Mary Bettle of West End Cranfield, & the late Joseph Savage.

George Savage was born in Cranfield in 1895, the fourth of five children of **Joseph Savage and Mary Anne Bettle** of Cranfield. Joseph was described as a general dealer and his wife a housekeeper and lacemaker. They never married.

The children, with their ages in 1916 and marriages are: **Joseph** Bettle Savage (31) married Violet May Barton in 1939 and was living in Woburn Sands. **Herbert** Joseph Bettle (28) married Laura Chantrell in 1939 using the surname of Savage. In 1939 they were living at 152 High Street. **Harriet** Bettle (25) married John Griffen in 1912. John served with the 6th Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers and was killed in September 1918, leaving Harriet with a young family, living next door to her brother Joseph. George's youngest sister, **Violet** was 18. She married Cecil Joseph Cooper in 1924 and, in 1939 was living in Cranfield at 125 High Street.

George's father died in 1909. In the 1911 census, Mary was living with three of her children, Herbert, George and Violet. The two boys were farm labourers and Violet was still at school.

George was always getting into trouble. He and his close friend, **Joseph Seamark**, (page 175) both 16 at the time, were caught by the gamekeeper of Cranfield Court looking for nuts on Mr Harter's land. George was caught with the "goods". They were both fined five shillings for the theft and damage to the hedge they had clambered through.

The *Luton Times and Advertiser* of 3rd December 1915 reported: "The Ampthill Bench on Thursday inquired into the loss of a hare, a labourer named George Savage being alleged to be concerned in the disappearance. It appeared that George Brawn, a farmer, shot a hare and hung it on a stake in a hedge near his farm. He went on shooting and returning to pick up the hare found it had gone. He identified the skin produced by the way in which it was shot. Two women deposed to seeing Savage coming from Mr Brawn's farm, and Ellen Wilson, licensee of the Plough, told the Bench that she bought a hare off defendant for 3s and a quart of beer in the afternoon in question. Defendant now said that no one saw him take the hare. Asked by the Clerk how he came by it, Savage replied, "that does not signify anything, how I came into possession of the hare." (Laughter) Supt. Underwood said when arrested defendant had £8 in money on him, and when asked by Mr Jekyll why he had not enlisted, Savage said, "They won't be plagued by me. I have been once and I am going again tomorrow." He was fined £1 or 14 days hard labour."

George joined the 4th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, known as the “Special Reserve”. The Battalion landed in France on 25th July 1916.

George was killed on the first day of the **Battle of the Ancre**.

On 13th November they attacked in the Beaucourt sector at 6.45a.m. In the darkness and thick fog the men went forward in very deep mud under heavy artillery bombardment. The Bedfords sustained heavy casualties in and near the enemy front line. At the end of the day 56 men from the Battalion lay dead. 16 were missing, 10 died from their wounds and 108 were listed as wounded.

George was one of those whose body was never found. He is **commemorated on the Thiepval memorial (page 110)**.

From a cheeky little rascal in Cranfield he was probably a terrified young soldier facing a barrage of shells in the grim reality of the muddy battlefields of the Ancre.



**Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

**Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows
flee:**

In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

HARRY HEWLETT (310896 (CH))
 Private 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.
 Attestation age 17 in 1903 (4620)
 Transferred to Royal Navy 12th October 1906
 Act.Ldg.Sto. RN. Served on HM Submarine E4.
 Killed on duty 15th August 1916, aged 30, when
 submarine sank off Harwich in a collision.
 Buried in Shotley Churchyard, Shotley, Suffolk.
 Born in Cranfield. Son of George and Eliza
 Hewlett.

Harry Hewlett was born in Cranfield on 7th May 1886, to George and his wife Eliza (nee Lancaster). George was born in Wootton but settled in Cranfield as a boot and shoe maker. Eliza was a lacemaker. In the 1911 census their children, with ages when Harry died in 1916 were: **Arthur** William (41) a fruiterer and greengrocer who settled in Croydon, **Anne** (39), **George** (35), **Florence** (34), **Charlotte** (32), **Harry** (30), **Sarah** (26) and **Mark** (26).

Harry was a career soldier, joining the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment (4620) as a private in 1903 at the age of 17 years and 8 months. On 12th October 1906 he transferred to the Royal Navy at Chatham, as a Stoker 310896 (Ch).

He worked his way up from Stoker, 2nd class, through Stoker 1st class, on HMS Acheron, Magnificent, Pembroke II,

Antrim, Bacchant, St George, Vivid II, Dolphin and Maidstone. His duties would be in the hot engine room.

He married Mildred Foukes in 1914.

He finally served as Acting Leading Stoker on the **submarine E4** from 1st May 1916 until his death on 15th August 1916.



HMS E4 was an E class submarine, built by Vickers in Barrow-in-Furness, costing a massive £101,900. She was launched on 5th February 1912 and commissioned on 28th January 1913. While carrying out anti-submarine exercises in the North Sea, HMS E41, acting as a target, had begun to surface when HMS E4's periscope appeared off her starboard bow, on a collision course. E41 stopped her engines but not before E4 collided forward of the bridge. HMS Firedrake, which was monitoring the exercise, took less than two minutes to reach the scene of the collision to pick up survivors. **There were no survivors of the 30 strong crew of E4.** Only 14 men were rescued from E14.

By the time the submarines were brought up to the surface it was impossible to identify most of the seamen. Harry, along with his colleagues, lies in unnamed graves in the Naval Graveyard of St Mary's Churchyard, Shotley, Suffolk and are commemorated on a Memorial there.

His widow is listed as living at 31, Princess St, Parkeston, Essex.



WILLIAM FREDERICK YOUNG (12149)
 Private, 4th Battalion South Wales Borderers.
 Died of malaria, Sunday 24th December 1916 aged 25
 in Alexandria Egypt.
 Buried in Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial
 Cemetery, Egypt.
 Born in Cranfield and a resident of North Crawley.
 Son of Joseph and Kate Young, of Broadmead,
 North Crawley

William Young was born in Cranfield, the fourth child of **Joseph Young and Ann Keziah**. His brothers and sisters, with ages in 1916 were: **James** (28), **Elizabeth** (27), **Sarah** (26), **Frank** (24), **Owen** (21), and **Ada** (10). His brother, **Owen** (page 119) died in action at the Somme on 25th October 1916.

William was a bricklayer. He and his brother, Owen, enlisted at Ampthill and were given consecutive numbers in the 7th Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment. He was later transferred to the 4th Battalion, South Wales Borderers.

This service Battalion was raised in Brecon in August 1914. They embarked for Gallipoli on 29th June, 1915. On 8th January 1916 they evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt due to severe casualties from combat, disease and harsh weather. At the end of January they were deployed in Egypt defending sections of the Suez Canal. In February they embarked for Mesopotamia (now most of Iraq, Kuwait, parts of Syria, Iran and Turkey).

It is not known where he became ill, but he was transferred to Alexandria in Egypt which was an important hospital Centre for Commonwealth and French troops. The port was much used by hospital ships and troop transports bringing reinforcements and carrying the sick and wounded. **William died of Malaria on Christmas Eve, 1916.**

He is buried in the **Alexandria (Hadra) War Cemetery** in Egypt where there are 1,700 First World War burials.



THE FALLEN OF 1917

- *15th Feb** **Herbert Garner**, Royal Suffolk Regiment. Died at home, aged 35. Buried in Cranfield Churchyard.
- *15th Apr** **Thomas Minards**, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action in Arras, aged 23. Commemorated on the Arras Memorial.
- 23rd Apr** **Fred Johnson**, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action in Arras aged 23. Commemorated on the Arras Memorial.
- 24th Apr** **Cyril Cook**, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in Arras, aged 21. Commemorated on the Arras Memorial.
- *3rd May** **Thomas Arthur Lancaster**, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action in Arras, aged 21. Commemorated on the Arras Memorial.
- 14th May** **George Ford**, 16th Battalion Cheshire Regiment. Died of wounds at The Somme, aged 23. Buried in Nesle Community Cemetery.
- 10th Jun** **Charles Parker**, 16th Battalion Australian Infantry. Died of wounds in France aged 25. Buried in Bailleul Cemetery, France.

- 18th Jun** **Joseph Seamark**, Royal Fusiliers. Died of wounds in France aged 20. Buried in Wimereux Community Cemetery, France.
- 17th Aug** **William George Bitchener**, Mounted Branch, Military Police. Died in Salonica, aged 21. Buried in Mika British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.
- *20th Sep** **Thomas Lancaster**, 10th Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment. Killed in action at Passchendaele, aged 23. Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium.
- *12th Oct** **Arthur James Wilson**, 197th Infantry Battalion Machine Gun Corps. Died of wounds in Belgium, aged 22. Buried at St Julien Dressing Station Cemetery.
- *12th Oct** **George Wilson**, 6th Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment. Killed in Belgium, aged 34 years. Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium.
- *5th Nov** **Frank Foster**, 10th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery. Killed in action in Belgium aged 21. Buried in Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium.

- *22nd Nov William Frederick Lancaster**, 10th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action at Cambrai, France, aged 24. Commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial to the Missing.
- *27th Nov Thomas Billington**, 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers City of London Regiment. Died of meningitis in France. Buried in Rocquigny-Equancourt British Cemetery, France.
- 30th Nov Harry Lovesey**, 486th East Anglian Field Engineers. Died of wounds in Jaffa, Israel, aged 42. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

* These servicemen are commemorated on family graves in the Churchyards of St Peter & St Paul, Cranfield or Cranfield Baptist Church. They are actually buried or commemorated elsewhere.

Herbert Garner is not named on the War Memorial as he was discharged as medically unfit to serve. He has a War Grave in the Churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield.

HERBERT GARNER (326955)

Private, Suffolk Regiment.

Died of illness at home on Thursday 15th February 1917, aged 35.

Born in Cranfield.

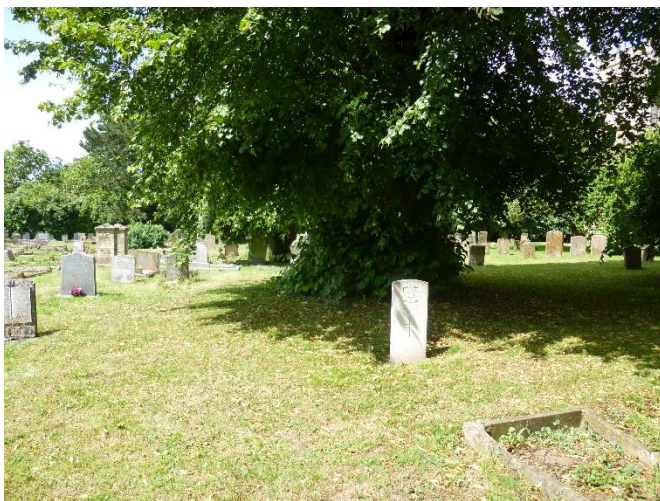
Son of James and Ann Garner, of Poplar Cottages Cranfield.

Buried in the Cranfield Churchyard.

Herbert Garner was born in Cranfield in 1882, the **second of five surviving sons of James Thomas and Ann Garner (nee Gillett)**.

They were, with their ages at the time of Herbert's death: **Frederick** John, "Fred" (43) married Lizzy Phasey Higgs in 1908. He served in the 3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment and survived the War. Also **Harry** (28) and **Albert** (25), who served with the 5th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment. He was shot through the back while serving in the Dardanelles in 1915. Also **Ernest** George (21) who married Lily Beard in 1921. He worked in the local brickworks.

The Garner family lived in Poplar Row Cottages. Herbert lived at home until he enlisted in the **Cambridge and Suffolk Reserves, Suffolk Regiment**. During training he became ill and **was discharged as medically unfit**. Not long after he came back home to Cranfield, he died and was buried in Cranfield Churchyard.



THE WESTERN FRONT IN 1917

The winter of 1916/17 was seen as one of the most severe of the war and, according to some, was the coldest witnessed in Northern France for a generation.

Harry Drinkwater writes in his diary on 13th January: “After we came out of the line, men collapsed right and left from various causes: trench fever, frost bitten feet, colds or temperatures all arising from the conditions that we have been experiencing, from exposure to mud and cold.”

It was even snowing heavily, into April.

Despite the sacrifices made on the Somme, there was still stalemate on the Western front. By the beginning of 1917 the British had taken over the whole Somme front from the French and, during the winter months, continued to make small but expensive gains.

The Hindenburg Line

The German army was retreating to a formidable line of defences, shorter than their old position and easier to defend. This was built between Arras, the capital of the Artois region of northern France, and the River Aisne to the south, to make retirement from the Somme front possible and to counter an anticipated increase in the power of Anglo-French attacks in 1917. This was known to the British as the Hindenburg Line. The Germans called it the Siegfried Line – there was a WW1 song “We’re gonna hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line”!

This withdrawal, from 14th March to 5th April, was accompanied by a controversial “scorched earth” policy leaving the area behind utterly devastated. Villages were destroyed, crossroads mined and wells poisoned. It would take a couple of months for the British and French armies to rebuild the roads and necessary infrastructure before they would be able to launch an attack.

The war was entering its third year. Morale was low. The French army was almost on the point of mutiny.

One of our own (Alf Pollard in his autobiography “Fire-eater”) records: “In June 1915 I was a mere boy looking on life with hopeful optimism, and on war as an interesting adventure. When I saw the Hun corpses killed by our shellfire I was full of pity for men so suddenly cut off in their prime. Now I was a man with no hope of the War ending for years. I looked at a trench full of corpses without any sensation whatever. Neither pity nor fear that I might soon be one myself, nor anger against their killers. Nothing stirred me. I was just a machine carrying out my appointed work to the best of my ability.”

Our battle-weary troops and the folk at home were looking for a breakthrough and an end to this bloody conflict.

THE BATTLE OF ARRAS **(9TH APRIL - 16TH MAY)**

From November 1916 a major spring offensive was being planned. The British and Empire forces attack at Arras, 25 miles north of the Somme, was part of the French Nivelle Offensive, the main part of which was to take place 50 miles to the south in the Champagne Region. The British were to divert German troops from the French front and to take the German held high ground to the north of Arras at Vimy Ridge. The front extended from Vimy in the north to Bullecourt in the south, a distance of about 11 miles.

The city of Arras itself had already been reduced to ruins early in the war. It had been occupied by the Germans in September 1914. The French had quickly cleared the city but had not driven them very far. By the time the lines of trenches had solidified in the winter of 1914/15, Arras found itself a salient - a bulge into the enemy lines. There were lots of similarities to Ypres. Surrounded on three sides, the Germans were never more than a mile or two from the city centre, which was quickly reduced to ruins by shell fire.

To move large numbers of men around the city in daylight was extremely hazardous, but Arras had a secret weapon. Underneath the city was a warren of medieval chalk quarries. The British used them when they took over from the French to defend the City in 1915.

Joined together, mainly by the efforts of the New Zealand tunnellers, they were known at the Wellington Caves. They were able to hold an army of 24,000 soldiers, many of them

Scottish Battalions, who were able to make a successful surprise attack on the morning of 9th April, Easter Monday.

The other resounding success of the first days was the capture of **Vimy Ridge** to the north of Arras, a strategic position occupied by the Germans.

There had been previous unsuccessful French and British attacks to take Vimy ridge.

After a preliminary bombardment, which started on 20 March, Zero hour was 9th April (Easter Monday) at 05:30.

It was snowing heavily; troops advancing across no man's land were hindered by large drifts. It was still dark and visibility on the battlefield was very poor.

15,000 Canadian troops finally captured the ridge on 12th April.

The victory at Vimy was a significant landmark for Allied fortunes in the First World War and, back home in Canada, it united Canadians and brought honour and pride to a young nation. Students from Canadian universities man the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada, taking a break from their studies.

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL VIMY MEMORIAL

The memorial commemorates 11,285 Canadian soldiers killed in France and whose final resting place was then unknown.

Designed by Canadian sculptor and architect, Walter Seymour Allward, it took eleven years to build. It contains 6,000 tonnes of limestone brought to the site from an abandoned Roman quarry on the Adriatic Sea (in present day Croatia). The figures were carved where they now stand from huge blocks of this stone.



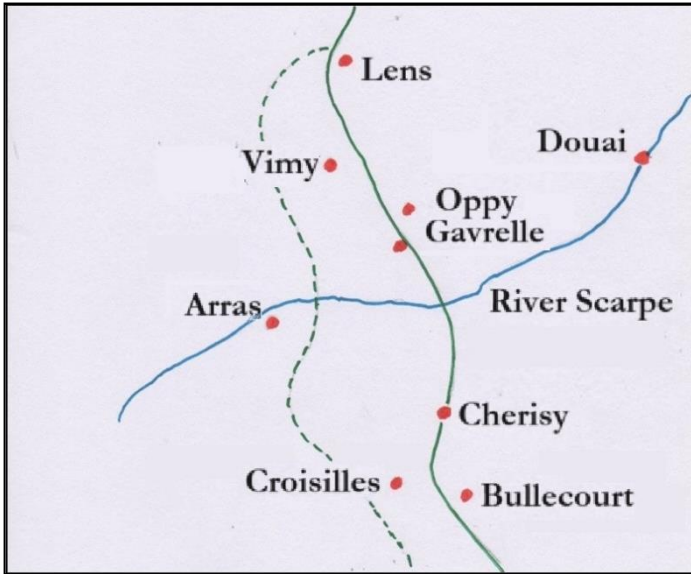
A cloaked figure stands overlooking the Douai Plain. It is the sorrowing figure of a woman and represents Canada - a young nation mourning her dead.



**“To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War
and in memory of their sixty thousand dead this
monument is raised by the people of Canada.”**

Inscription on monument:

The Battle of Arras



The broken line represents the British front line before the battle of Arras; the solid green line, the front afterwards.

First Battle of the Scarpe (9th - 14th April 1917)

The Third Army advanced along both sides of the Scarpe River. This attack was so successful initially that advances were made up to a depth of three and a half miles, the farthest advance achieved in the west since the advent of trench warfare in 1914.

Second Battle of the Scarpe (23–24th April 1917)

During the Second Phase, the Allies continued to press the attack east of Arras. However, from 16th April onwards, it was apparent that the Nivelle Offensive, to the south, was failing and Haig came under pressure to keep the Germans occupied in the Arras sector to minimise French losses.

At 04:45 on 23rd April, following two days of poor visibility and freezing weather, British troops of the Third Army (VI and VII corps), attacked to the east along an approximate 9-mile (14 kilometres) front from Croisilles to Gavrelle (Just south of Oppy). On the left of the main British attack the 63rd Division, made rapid progress against Gavrelle and secured the village

Several determined German counterattacks were made but by the morning of 24th April, the British held Guémappe, Gavrelle and the high ground overlooking Fontaine-les-Croisilles and Cherisy.

Three of our young men from Cranfield perished in the capture of **Gavrelle (Thomas Minards, Fred Johnson and Cyril Cook)** and one at **Cherisy (Thomas Arthur Lancaster)**. The battle of Arras officially ended on 16th May, with the Battle of Bullecourt, in which the Australians suffered enormous losses. One infantryman from Cranfield (**Charles Parker**) died there of his wounds.

There were big gains on the first day, followed by the stalemate that typified most of the war on the Western Front.

THOMAS JAMES MINARDS (20343)
 Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.
 Killed in Action, Sunday 15th April 1917, aged 23,
 in the Arras area of France.
 Born in and a resident of Cranfield.
 Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de
 Calais, France.
 Son of the late George Minards of Church
 Cottages Cranfield.

Thomas Minards was born in 1894, the fourth and youngest living child of **George** Minards and his wife, **Annie** Jane (nee Hillyard). The family lived in Church Cottages, Tartlett End, Cranfield. His father worked as a domestic gardener. His older siblings, with their ages in 1917, were: **Joseph** (Joe) George (39) who married Elizabeth Suick in Shoreditch in 1902. He was a railway porter in London but moved back to Bedfordshire after 1939, living at 13 Hill Rise, Kempston. **John** was born in 1897 but sadly died in early October 1881 aged 2 years. Another child **Martha** Fanny was born in the first half of 1897 and sadly died later the same year. **Maggie** Wynne (27) married Charles W Sanders in 1918 and by 1939 was living in Pinehurst Road, Swindon with her family.

Tom's mother, Annie died on 5th March 1894, soon after he was born, aged 34. It was quite common for widowers to remarry as quickly as possible. **George married Louisa Goodman** in the second quarter of 1894.

Louisa was a widow, her husband, Charles had died in 1891 aged only 24, and she brought with her a daughter from that marriage, **Edith** Mary, born 1891. Louisa was a Hillyard and George's sister-in-law. The couple went on to have five more children, three of whom survived: **Frederick** (22) joined the Bedfordshire Regiment as part of the Labour Corps and, although wounded, survived the war. He married Edith Brooks in 1915 and lived in Cranfield in Hillcrest. **Albert** (Bert) Edward (16) served in the Royal Horse Artillery as a driver. He married a widow, Minnie Garrett (nee Faulkner), with two children, in 1927. She was a nurse and they lived at 66 Foster Road, Kempston for many years. **Ronald** Charles (12) went on to marry Winifred Violet Garner in Cranfield in July 1931 and in 1939 was living at 27 Court Road.

Thomas joined the **4th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment** in November 1915. The Battalion, known as the Special Reserve, landed in France on 25th July 1916. Inexperienced battalions were placed alongside more seasoned soldiers. They formed 190th Brigade along with the 7th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, 1st Honourable Artillery Company, 1st and 28th Battalions, the London Regiment and the 10th Battalion, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The Brigade was attached to the 63rd Royal Naval Division. (See notes in the structure of the British Army - page 31)

The Battalion diary records on Sunday 11th March “The C.O. went for a four day course for Commanding Officers under Brigadier General R.E.S. Prentice DSO. The following communication was received from the Brigadier dated 10.3.17 “Please communicate the following telegram to all ranks. The Corps Commander desires to thank the 63rd RN Division for the soldierly spirit displayed by all ranks. The Division has been called on to do much hard work. Roads and railways have been constructed enabling guns and ammunition to be move forward. The 63rd Division has thereby materially contributed to the success of today’s operations which have resulted in the capture of Irls and the whole of our objectives and of 280 prisoners, 15 machine guns and 4 trench mortars with small casualties to ourselves.”

In 14th April 1917, the Battalion diary records “At 10.30am, the Battalion was conveyed by motor buses to Arras which was reached at 3pm.

The Battalion then marched to the Transport Field at St Catherine on the outskirts of Arras where the men dumped their packs and had tea. At 6pm the Battalion proceeded to the Black Line (*a line of captured trenches*) where dugout accommodation was found for the men.”

On 15th April (the day Tom was killed) the record states: “Wind W. Showery. The Battalion spent the forenoon clearing the battlefield and burying the dead. 4pm Moved forward to the Blue Line (*the front line*), all companies reported in at 7.15pm. 1.30pm Ordered to go forward to Bailleul and relieve 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment.”

The following appeared in the *Beds Times & Independent* of 8th June 1917: "Mr And Mrs Minards have received a very sympathetic letter with regard to the death of their son Tom who was in the Beds. Regt. and was killed in action recently. The Chaplain, the Rev. Davies wrote, "I deeply sympathise with you in the great loss which you have sustained through the death of your son. He was killed on April 15th. The Battalion was attacking the village of Gavrelle and it was necessary to advance across the open. The village was very strongly held and machine guns were discovered in various places. Your son was unfortunately hit and killed whilst the Battalion was very skilfully withdrawing to a place of shelter. On 23rd the village was again attacked and this time with success. The Bedfords had the honour and credit of capturing it. **Pte. F Johnson (page 157) was killed in this successful advance and Pte. Cook (page 163) also.** To lose a son in the full vigour of young manhood is a terrible blow to a father, but you have the satisfaction of knowing that he died nobly doing his duty and how can one do better. The C.O. wishes to add his condolences to mine." Mr and Mrs Minards only other eligible son, Pte. Fred Minards is serving with the B.E.F. in France."

Thomas Minards body was never recovered. He is commemorated on **the Arras Memorial**.

The Memorial commemorates 34,795 servicemen from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras Salient between the spring of 1916 and 7th August 1918 and who have no known grave. Both cemetery and memorial were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, with sculpture by Sir William Reid Dick. The memorial was unveiled by Lord Trenchard, Marshal of the Royal Air Force, on the 31st July 1932.

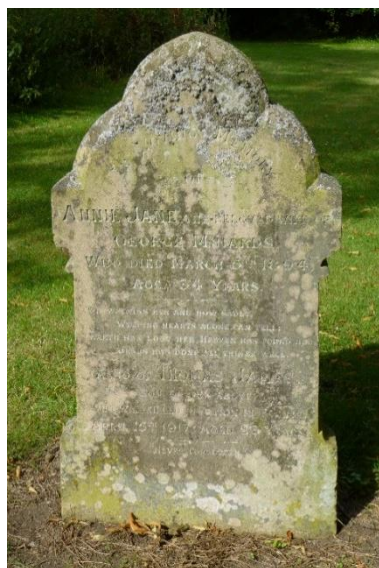


Thomas Minards is also commemorated on the grave of his mother, Annie, in the churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield. The grave is near the “plague pit” beyond the lime trees, near the south boundary of the “old” cemetery. This is the site of a mass burial of smallpox victims at the end of the 19th century. The area was railed off but the railings were removed during the last war.



IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
ANNIE JANE THE BELOVED WIFE OF
GEORGE MINARDS
WHO DIED MARCH 5TH 1894
AGED 34 YEARS
OH HOW WE MISS HER SADLY
WEEPING HEARTS ALONE CAN TELL
EARTH HAS LOST HER, HEAVEN HAS WON HER
JESUS HAS DONE ALL THINGS WELL

ALSO OF THOMAS JAMES
SON OF THE ABOVE
WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
ON APRIL 15TH 1917 AGED 23 YEARS
NEVER FORGOTTEN



FREDERICK JOHNSON (22836)

Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, 23rd April 1917, aged 23,
in Arras in France Commemorated on the Arras
Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Was born in, and resident of Cranfield.



Frederick Johnson was born in Cranfield in 1894. He was the **third of seven children born to Walter and Elizabeth** (nee Lancaster). His siblings with their ages in 1917, they were: **Sidney** Walter (28), **Albert** James (26), **Nelly** (21), **Harold** (18), **Frank** (16) and **Alec** (14).

The family had much heartache. **Frederick's mother, Elizabeth died in October 1905**, leaving Walter to care for the children, the youngest, Alec, being only 2 years old.

The *Bedford Mercury* of 22nd June, **the following year**, records the **sad death of Walter**. **"A SAD CASE-** Much sympathy is expressed on all sides for the family of Mr Walter Johnson, who died at the County Hospital, under such sad circumstances on Monday about mid-day, after only two days spent in the institution. He was at his work (under Mr Anstee, builder), on Monday 11th inst. as usual, although suffering much pain from what appeared to be a boil on his face; on the Thursday the thing began to assume such alarming conditions that arrangements were made for the patient's admission to the County Hospital, whither he was conveyed early on Saturday morning with the result above stated., the immediate cause of death being blood poisoning. The saddest feature of the case is that Mr Johnson lost his wife only last October and thus seven children are left in such a short time without either father or mother and totally unprovided for; only two are old enough to work, the youngest being about two years old. A public fund was started on behalf of the children, and Nurse Minns

very kindly undertook to solicit subscriptions, with such good result that about £7 was contributed in the first four hours, thus showing in a practical manner the sympathy that is felt for the bereaved family. The funeral took place yesterday in the parish churchyard; deceased was only 39 years of age."

In the 1911 census, Sidney was working as a porter in Whitechapel. **Both Albert and Frederick were living with their cousins James, a shepherd, and his wife Sarah,** at East End Cranfield. **Both brothers joined the Bedfordshire Regiment. Albert survived the war.** He married Clara Mayes in Bedford in 1919. After Clara died in 1936 he moved into his brother, Alec's, house in Cranfield with his son.

Albert died in Cranfield at the age of 58 years. His obituary appeared in the Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 15th October 1948. "LATE MR A. JOHNSON - A man who served in the 1914-18 war, and was captured by the Germans and sent to the salt mines in Russia as a punishment for refusing to give information to the enemy, died recently at his home. He was Mr Albert James Johnson, of Wood View. The funeral service was held at the Parish Church on Saturday, the vicar officiating. Mr Johnson, who leaves one son, was born at Cranfield 58 years ago. He has been an agricultural worker, but had been engaged recently on building work. Mourners were Mr and Mrs F.W. Johnson (son and daughter-in-law); Mr and Mrs Alec Johnson (brother and sister-in-law); Mr and Mrs C Garner and Mary (cousins). Several friends were also present."

Frederick's younger brother, Harold, was placed with his uncle **William Lancaster** when his parents died. He joined the **Royal Navy** in February 1917 for a twelve year commission. **Frank** was placed with his uncle, **William Johnson**. **Alec James**, the youngest went to live with **William and Sarah Hall**. He joined the **Notts. and Derby Regiment**. After the war, in 1924, he went with his brother **Frank** to try his hand at farming in **Canada**. Frank stayed but Alec returned and married Hilda Alice Holman in 1936. He was a Special Constable in WW2 living at 44 Court Road.

Frederick was with **Thomas Minards** in the 4th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment during the Battle of Arras. He survived the first attack on the **village of Gavrelle**. A second attack was ordered on **23rd April** at dawn, 4.45am. By 6.45am the War Diary confirms that they had lost twelve men, and by 9am had taken a lot of prisoners, partially cleared the village and captured two machine guns. It was on 23rd April that Frederick was killed. His body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial (page 156).

CYRIL COOK (25214)

Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Tuesday 24th April 1917, aged 21,
in the Arras area of France.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de
Calais, France.

Born in, and was a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Mrs Sarah Goodman, of West End, Cranfield.

Cyril Cook was born in 1886. His mother, **Sarah Cook**, was a single lady, one of seven children of **William and Eliza** (nee Johnson/Lansbury). She was in service in Luton but returned to her parents in Cranfield to have her baby. Cyril lived with Sarah's parents throughout his life. He gave his mother's name as his next of kin. She had another child, Alice Goodman, known as Nellie in 1898. Sarah married **William Goodman**, a farm labourer.

By the time of the 1911 census Sarah and William were living in the High Street, Cranfield with their **five children**. These were, with their ages in 1917 and subsequent marriages: **Ruth** Elizabeth May (16) later married Alec Horace Salisbury and lived at 28, Merchant Lane. **William** Robert (14) married Olive Smith in 1930 in Swindon where they settled. Also **Eveyline** Mary (11), and Clara Ada (8), who married Ronald Alfred Mapley in 1943 and in 1948 they

were living in a farm cottage in Sherrington. Lee was unsure of details of other children.

Her brother, William, died on the Somme in April 1918 (page 253).

The *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* on 18th September 1914 reported: “The following have enlisted in “Kitchener’s Army”: J. Cox, C. Cook, T. Lancaster (page 187), W. Fountain, W. Shayler, W. Young (page 137), F. Young, W. Parker, G. Harpur, J. Anstee, H. Anstee, J. Seamark, (page 175), H. White, W. White, (page 34) and E. Garner. Messrs. J. Read and H. Baker, ex-soldiers have volunteered to serve in their old regiments. Messrs. N. Read, H. Johnson, W. Wilson, W. Evans, James Harpur, John Harpur and William Painton with W. Emerson (Naval Reserve) are reservists and have been called out. Cranfield have contributed 50.”

Cyril, a farm labourer, enlisted in the 4th Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment, at Ampthill. The movements of the 4th Battalion have been covered by our previous two soldiers. Alongside Frederick Johnson, Cyril fought and was killed during the second assault on the village of Gavrelle on 23rd April. He was just 21 years old.

His body was never recovered and, like his other comrades, he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial for those with no known grave (page 156).

THOMAS ARTHUR LANCASTER (17503)

Lance Corporal, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire
Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 3rd May 1917, aged 21, in
the Arras area of France.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de
Calais, France.

Born in Cranfield.

Son of John and Sarah Lancaster, of West End Cranfield.

Thomas Arthur Lancaster was born in Cranfield in 1896, the son of **John Bennet and Sarah** (nee Read). They had eleven children. The eldest, **Walter** William was born in 1878 but sadly **died at the age of four**. The next, Kate Mary would have been 37 when Thomas was killed. **Albert** John, born in 1883, joined the Royal Artillery in 1902. After he served his time he set out to start a new life in Canada and sadly **died there of appendicitis at the age of 28 in 1912**. His sisters, **Agnes** Mary (32), **Annie** Elizabeth (31), **Harriet** Elizabeth (28), and two of his brothers; **William** (26) and **Walter** George (24) had all left home by the time Thomas went to war. William died in 1918. Walter worked as a grocer in London and joined the Royal Field Artillery as a driver. The youngest were **Alec** (19) and **Margery** (15). In the 1911 census, his father, John, a labourer and his wife Sarah, listed as a lacemaker, lived in Cranfield with three of their children, Thomas, Alec Charles and Margery Susie. Thomas was a

farm labourer, the others still being at school.

Thomas joined the **7th Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment** in 1915. (See also Owen Young (page 119) The Battalion served during the **Battle of the Somme** in 1916. The War Diaries tell that orders were given for every man to change his socks every 24 hours and to rub well with whale oil before leaving the trenches. The records show Thomas as a scout and sniper in C Company. Snipers were specially trained marksmen who either worked alone or in pairs. They would creep out into No-Man's Land during the night and remained there during the day to pick off the enemy. Out of a Company of 140 men only 6 were snipers.

The diary records that on 30th April, during the **Battle of Arras**, they took over the front line trenches near Neuville. **On 3rd May**, at 3.45a.m. they attacked the village of **Cherisy**. It was still too dark to see clearly and some of the men didn't stay on the right course. They found the German trenches strongly defended with wire. They came under heavy machine gun fire. It was during this attack that Thomas was killed. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the **Arras Memorial** alongside his fallen colleagues who have no known grave.

Thomas Arthur is one of three Lancaster cousins commemorated on the Village War Memorial. William Frederick died of wounds at Cambrai in November 1917 (page 210). Thomas was killed in action at Passchendaele in September 1917 (page 187). Their fathers were all sons of Thomas and Mary Lancaster. Thomas Arthur is also commemorated, alongside his brother, Albert John, on the grave of his brother, William, in Cranfield Churchyard. The

grave lies alongside the east wall towards the north end, next to the grave of Alfred Kinns.



“The dear ones we love, they are called away. It is the Father who calls and they may not stay. They pass from one light to another land but we know they are in the Father’s hand.”

GEORGE FORD (57844)

Private, 16th Battalion Cheshire regiment and
Sapper Royal Engineers.

Killed in Action, Monday 14th May 1917 aged 23,
at the Somme France.

Buried in the Nesle Communal Cemetery,
Somme, France.

Born in, and a resident of Cranfield.

The Son of William Ford.

The husband of Ada Winifred Ford, of West End,
Cranfield.

George Ford was born in 1894, the second youngest of **twelve children of William Ford and Louisa** (nee Lovesey) of West End, Cranfield. William was a butcher although he is also listed as a shoe maker, poultry dealer and latterly as postman.

George's brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1917, where known, were: **William, Caroline, Florence, Joseph, Caleb**(30), was a carpenter and joiner. He joined the Royal Navy in June 1916 and transferred to the RAF Reserve in March 1919. He survived the war and was discharged in April 1920. **Harry** (18) like his brother, Caleb, joined the Royal Navy in January 1918 and transferred to the RAF Reserve in April 1918. He was married to Selina. **Winifred** and **Samuel**. Samuel enlisted with the Army Cyclist Corps, 21st Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion but was discharged as unfit in March 1918.

George was a carpenter by trade. He married **Ada Winifred Lancaster** in Amptill Registry Office on 19th September 1913. They lived in West End Cranfield and had **two daughters, Ada Hilda Winifred (born 1913) and Mary Louise (born 1916).**

He enlisted on 15th June 1915 in Bedford with the **Territorials in the East Anglian Division Royal Engineers**, given the number 2562. With a wife and young family, his intention was to stay in this country. When he learned that his Company were going to France, he went absent without leave from midnight on 14th December 1916, returning fifteen hours later. He was fined three days pay. He sailed to Rouen from Southampton on 31st December 1916. He was posted to the 9th Cheshire Regiment and then posted and proceeded to join the **16th Battalion, Cheshire Regiment** in January 1917 with the service number 57844.

The War Diaries of the Battalion in early 1917 puts them in the front line trenches in the Somme region of northern France. They were also employed on railway work and road repairs, east of Nesle, 20 kilometres south of Peronne. There was no major fighting but the men were always exposed to enemy fire. George **suffered gunshot wounds on 2nd May**. He was taken to No 21 Casualty Clearing Station, Nesle, where he sadly died on 14th May 1917. He is buried in **Nesle Community Cemetery**.



Nesle Community Cemetery

The cemetery holds the bodies of 134 dead, mainly those who died in the Field hospital.

The Beds Times and Independent of 25th May 1917 records: “Pte. George Ford has made the great sacrifice after receiving serious wounds. He leaves a widow and two small children. His parents are living and two brothers are in the army.”

George’s widow, Ada, was granted an army pension of 22 shillings and 11 pence a week (about £1.20) to support herself and her two daughters.

CHARLES PARKER (6077)

Private, 16th Battalion Australian Infantry, AIF.

Died of Wounds, 10th June 1917, aged 25, in France.

Buried in the Bailleul Cemetery, Nord, France.

Born in Cranfield. Emigrated to Australia.

Son of George and Hannah Parker, Cranfield, Beds.

Husband of Nellie Parker of Greenfield, Ampthill.

Charles Parker was born in Cranfield in 1892, the seventh child of **George William Parker** and his wife **Hannah Elizabeth** (nee Newman). They lived in Holly Cottage, High Street, where RGR Garage now stands. His niece, **Lilian Gewitzke**, lives in the High Street and fondly remembers the family although Charles was killed before she was born. They were, with their ages in 1917: **George** (39) moved to Sheffield, **John** (37), **Annie** (35) moved to Greenfield, **Rachel** (34) moved to Wimbledon, (her husband, Fred was injured in an air raid during the war). **Joseph** (32) stayed in Cranfield, **Thomas** (30) moved to Salford, **Diana** (27) married Arthur Fountain in 1920. **William** (21) married Freda Tite in 1919 and lived in the High Street Cranfield. **Lucy** (19) lived with Granny Parker until Roy came along when they moved to Partridge Piece. **Jesse** (17) married Dorothy (Doll) Lovesey in 1928. Their children are Lil, David (Merchant Lane), Sheila and Eric.

In the 1911 census, Charles, a farm labourer, was living with his grandfather, John Newman. In 1913 he **emigrated to Australia** to work on the farms there. Charles enlisted in the **Australian Infantry Force** in March 1916 and was attached to the 16th Battalion. The Battalion embarked at Freemantle on 9th August, arriving in Plymouth on 25th September 1916.

Charles must have had leave to get **married to Nellie Vass** of Greenfield at Pulloxhill on 1st November 1916.

He sailed to France on 21st December in the SS Princess Clementine. The Battalion spent most of the early part of 1917 in Belgium but later took part in the Battle of Arras. Twice during the battle of Arras attacks were made by the Australians near the town of **Bullecourt**, on the southern flank of the main advance and 12 kilometers south-east of the city of Arras. Bullecourt was strongly defended, being part of the Hindenberg Line.

Charles survived the first, failed, attack on **Bullecourt** on 11th April when over 3000 men were lost. He also survived the successful attack on 7th May, when they were supported by artillery. The battle continued for two weeks. By 17 May the Germans admitted defeat by ceasing attempts to recover their lost ground. Of 150,000 men from both sides who fought at Second Bullecourt, some 18,000 British and Australians, and 11,000 Germans, were killed or wounded in battle.

It is not certain when or how Charles was wounded. In his last letter to his wife dated 6th June, he was “just going into action”. He was wounded and taken to the 53rd Casualty Clearing Station where he died of his wounds on 10th June 1917. He is buried in **the Bailleul Cemetery**. Bailleul is a large town in France, near the Belgian border. It became an important hospital centre with the 53rd 1st Canadian and 1st Australian Casualty Clearing stations quartered in it for considerable periods.



The Beds Times and Independent of 29th June 1917 reported; “News has been received that Charles, the son of Mr and Mrs W Parker of High Street, has died of his wounds. The deceased was attached to the Australians, having resided in Australia previous to joining up. Before leaving England he was employed by Mr M Bliss. He was married seven months ago and was much respected by all.”

THE FLANDERS OFFENSIVE

The British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, had long had ambitions of launching a major offensive in Flanders. It was his preferred choice in 1916, although, in the event, the Battle of the Somme took precedence that summer. At sea German U-boats, believed to be operating from Belgian ports, were taking a fearful toll on Allied shipping. A breakthrough in Flanders could enable the capture of the submarine bases. With the failure to achieve a breakthrough in France, three quarters of a million British and Empire troops were therefore deployed in the Ypres region of Belgium.

The **Messines Ridge**, a ridge of high ground to the south of Ypres, overlooking the British positions, had been occupied by the Germans since 1915. If a major Allied attack were to succeed, the ridge would first have to be taken. Extensive tunnelling that had started two years previously was exploited to lay 21 mines. The tunnels containing the mines ran 15 to 100 metres under the German lines, some up to 550 metres long. In the early hours of **7th June 1917** the British set off 19 mines under German lines. The shock of the explosion was felt in London. The attack following the explosions was one of the biggest British successes of the war. The Ridge fell by 14th June. Of the 216,000 British Empire troops who took part, 24,562 were casualties, most caused by German artillery fire.

Our next soldier, **Lance-Corporal Joseph Seamark**, was fatally wounded at the **Battle of Messines**.

JOSEPH SEAMARK (60991)

Lance Corporal, Royal Fusiliers. City of London Regiment.

Died of Wounds, Monday 18th June 1917, aged 20, in France.

Buried in the Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Joseph Seamark was born in 1897 in Cranfield, one of ten children of **George Seamark and his wife Eliza** (nee Fountain). In the 1911 census eight children were still living. **Joseph's brothers and sister**, with their ages in 1917 and marriages, were: **Albert** George (28) married to Hilda Greenham in 1913. **Frank** Charles (25) married in 1918 to Lizzie Ross Shayler - nee Evans. Frank is the grandfather of John Seamark, Chairman of the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion. **Wallace** John (23) enlisted in the Essex Regiment in 1911 but was discharged due to sickness in 1915. He married Edith Denton in 1918. **Thomas** (Tom) William (18) was with the 7th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment during the war. He returned to Cranfield in December 1918 after being held as a prisoner of war for some months. He went on to work for the Public Work Department as a Civil Servant in Lagos, Nigeria. **Alfred** (15), **Ernest** Edward (13) joined the Navy in 1917, making him the youngest person from Cranfield to have served in the war. He married Ethel Freeman in 1949. Joseph's only sister, **Violet** (9), married Alfred Scott in 1928.

Joseph, like his siblings, attended the village school and did well enough to be awarded a medal at a prize giving. He was a friend of **George Savage** (page 130). When they were both 16 they were caught by the gamekeeper of Cranfield Court looking for nuts. They were each fined five shillings for the theft and damage to the hedge they had clambered through.

Joseph was a **farm labourer** but also a **keen cricketer** being on the committee of Cranfield Cricket Club in April 1914. When war was declared he was one of the first to volunteer, in November 1914, when he was still only 17 years old.

He joined the **Bedfordshire Regiment** and served at **Gallipoli**. During the campaign (April 1915 - January 1916) he was wounded and returned to England to Halton Park Training Camp in Buckinghamshire..

The London Regiment was formed in 1908 to incorporate the 28 metropolitan boroughs of the newly formed county of London. It was a large regiment with 26 Battalions, the first 8 were City of London and the other 18 were County of London Battalions. During WW1 47 Battalions were raised, their names reflecting their identity. The **26th Battalion** was “The Bankers Battalion”. It raised men mainly working in the City of London’s banks and insurance offices but struggled to make the required 1000 men. Men, including Joseph Seamark, were transferred from other Battalions to make up the numbers in about November 1915. The 26th Battalion trained at Aldershot and became part of the 124th Brigade, 41st Division. They marched

through the streets of London on 15th April 1916 and, the following month, left for France.

They fought during **the Somme** campaign at the **Battle of Flers-Courcelette**, (page 113) (15th - 22nd September 1916) where tanks were used for the first time in battle. They suffered losses of 260 men killed, wounded or missing. In October 1916 they were involved in the final push at the Somme, fighting in the **Battle of Transloy**, in appalling weather conditions, as winter approached.

As the focus turned towards Ypres, the Battalion fought at the **Battle of Messines** between 1st and 12th June 1917.

Joseph was wounded and taken to **Wimereux Hospital**, 5 kilometres north of Boulogne in northern France. We have no records as to the circumstances or nature of his wound. He was probably transported from a local Casualty Clearing Station by ambulance train to this important hospital centre. He died there on **18th June 1917**.

In the ***Beds Times and Independent*** of 29th June 1917 we read: "Lance-corpl. Joseph Seamark has passed away in hospital in France. His burial took place at Wimereux Cemetery. Letters from the Chaplain (the Rev. D. Stewart) and the Matron of the Hospital said he was happy and brave in the hour of pain. Much sympathy is felt for the family. Corpl. Seamark served in the Dardanelles, and it is believed he was wounded there, though he himself never said so. He came home to Halton Park, from thence going to France, where he was soon promoted. The Chaplain speaks of him as "one of the very best".

He is buried at the **Wimereux Communal Cemetery**.
Because of the sandy nature of the soil the headstones are
laid flat.



Buried in the same cemetery is **Lieutenant John McCrae**, the Canadian surgeon and poet, most famous for his poem, **“In Flanders Fields”**, written in 1915. This was the inspiration for the use of the poppy as an emblem of Remembrance for the Royal British Legion.

In Flanders Fields

**In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the Dead, short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If you break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.**



WILLIAM GEORGE BITCHENER (P/975)

Lance Corporal, Mounted Branch, Corps of Military Police.

Died of malaria, Saturday 18th August 1917, aged 41, in Salonica.

Buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.

Born in Cranfield, resident of Wandsworth, London.

Husband of Amelia Bitchener, 1 Dafforne Rd, Upper Tooting, London.

William George Bitchener was born in Cranfield in 1876, one of eleven children of **George Bitchener** and his wife **Mary Ann** (nee Newman). In the 1911 census, nine were still living. William was the eldest. **His brothers and sisters**, with their ages in 1917 and subsequent marriages were: **Alfred** (38) married Sarah Elizabeth Hall in 1898 in Hampstead. In 1904 he was with a lot of Cranfield people in Loveridge Road, Kilburn. In 1911 he was a coal miner in Wales. Then came **Diana** Lucy (35). **John** (33) joined the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1901, serving in Gibraltar and Malta. **Joseph** (31) was the tallest of the Bitchener boys at 6 feet. He also joined the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1904. **Rachel** (29) married Herbert Huckle of Marston in 1910. Sadly Herbert, who had joined the 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, was killed in April 1917 in France. He was in the same Battalion as Thomas Minards, Fred

Johnson and Cyril Cook who were all killed in April 1917. **Martha** Lizzie married Francis Keech in April 1914 but was only married for 7 months when she died in the November aged 21 of appendicitis. The youngest, **Charles** would have been 21 years old in 1917.

William, like his father, was a **farm labourer**. When he was 17 he joined the **Royal Artillery** in September 1892. His attestation papers show “age physically equivalent to 18 years, 7 months”. He served for 5 years in Gibraltar. He left the army to join the **Metropolitan Police Force**. In the 1901 census he was living with his wife Annie and his son **William George**, who had been **born in 1897** in Cranfield. (William joined the Royal Field Artillery in January 1914. Although he was wounded, he was sent back to war and survived.) **His first wife Annie died in Tooting in 1902 in one of London’s fever hospitals. He married Amelia Watson in August 1903. His second son Raymond Richard William was born in London in 1908.** A year before he was due to retire from the Met he joined the **Military Mounted Police** in London in 1915. He was immediately given the rank of acting Lance Corporal. He was stationed in the region of the Greek port of **Salonica** in Macedonia. He was attached to the XII Corps of the Mounted Military Police and his Division would have consisted of 25 Mounted Police.

When Bulgaria joined the Central Powers (Germany and Austria/Hungary) in September 1915, the Allies, at the

invitation of the Greek government landed troops in Salonica with the idea of supporting Serbia. They arrived too late to aid the Serbs and were forced to retreat to a defensive position around the port of Salonica. The situation was complicated by the internal political crisis in Greece. The Macedonian Front remained quite stable, despite local actions, until the great Allied offensive in September 1918, which resulted in the capitulation of Bulgaria and the liberation of Serbia.

It was a hot marshy area. Illness was rife with most of the men suffering from malaria and/or dysentery. William was struck down with **malaria**. He was sent to the medical tent on 15th August, and then by ambulance train to General Hospital no 49 on 16th August. **He died the following day on 17th August.**

162,517 cases of malaria were reported in total for British Forces.

He is buried in the **Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria** in Greece. Mikra British Cemetery is situated in the Municipality of Kalamaria in the city of Thessaloniki. (then Salonica). The cemetery now contains 1,810 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, as well as 147 war graves of other nationalities. (See also Fred Billington (page 279)).



The Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 31st August 1917 reported: “It is with regret we have to announce the death from malaria of Lance-Corpl G Bitchener, son of Mr and Mrs Bitchener of Court Road. He leaves a wife and two sons to mourn his loss. The eldest boy has already been wounded and is back in France. Lance-Corpl Bitchener was attached to the Military Police and was serving with the Salonica Force. He had previously served six years in the army mainly in Gibraltar and had subsequently served most of his time to earn a pension in the Metropolitan Police Force having but one more year left to complete. His record of service won him the respect of all and much sympathy is felt for his widow and family who reside in Tooting, and his parents and friends in Cranfield.”

The same newspaper on 12th October reported: “Further news has been received from Salonica as to the death of

Corpl W Bitchener. Captain Cockerell has written to his wife a most kind and sympathetic letter. He says "Before his death the Provost Marshall wrote to me saying "Bitchener is a first class man, good at his job, and really intelligent, if you want a delicate job well done keep your eye on him for a mention". Major Rich was most deeply grieved saying "It is always the way; the best men go". Duty forced by the occasion of a terrible fix at Salonica alone kept me from attending the funeral of one who never failed in his duty but always carried it out with conviction, ability, devotion and tact."

William Bitchener is named in the Roll of Honour book in Westminster Abbey for members of the Metropolitan Police who died in 1917-18.



Armies in Salonica in WWI

THE BATTLE OF PASSCHENDAELE

31st July- 10th November 1917

The Allied advance known as Third Ypres was launched on 31 July 1917 following ten days of heavy artillery bombardment. Today referred to simply as 'Passchendaele', it came to epitomise the mindless waste of human life during the First World War.

When the attack was launched, the German Fourth Army held off the main British advance around the Menin Road, and restricted the Allies to fairly small gains to the left of the line around **Pilckem Ridge**.

British attempts to renew the offensive over the course of the next few days were severely hampered by the onset of **heavy rains**, the heaviest in 30 years, which churned the Flanders fields into a thick, muddy swamp. Ironically the very force of the preliminary bombardment had itself destroyed drainage systems, exacerbating the problem. In addition, the artillery shells that had rained down in the days prior to the attack's launch had peppered the very ground that needed to be crossed by the advancing Allied forces.

As a consequence no renewed major offensive could be contemplated until **16 August**, when the **Battle of Langemark** saw four days of fierce fighting which resulted in small gains for the British, but heavy casualties.

The attacks began afresh on **20 September** with the

Battle of the Menin Road Ridge 20th – 25th Sept.

On 20th September, the Allies attacked on a 14,500 yards (13,300 metres) front and captured most of their objectives, to a depth of about 1,500 yards (1,400 metres) by mid-morning. The Germans made many counterattacks, beginning around 3.00 p.m. until early evening, all of which failed to gain ground or made only a temporary penetration of the new British positions. German defences (concrete pillboxes and machine-gun nests) were captured and the British began a run of success which lasted into early October.

Our next soldier, **Thomas Lancaster** was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of Menin Road.



Australian wounded on the Menin Road

THOMAS LANCASTER (G/21828)

Private, 10th Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 20th September 1917, aged 23, near Ypres in Belgium.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of James and Caroline Lancaster of East End Cranfield.



Thomas Lancaster was the fourth child of **James Lancaster and Caroline** (nee Billington).

His father, **James** Lancaster married **Caroline Bryant** in 1871. They had a son, **Alfred**, born in 1873. Alfred married Annie Hewlett in Hampstead in 1901 and worked in Willesden as a scaffolder. **James married Caroline Billington** in 1880. They had **six children**. Tom's brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1917 and marriages were: **Florence** (35) married George Harris of Moulsoe in 1906 and settled there. **Harry** (32) served with the 5th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment and transferred to the Labour Corps. **Emily** (29) married Charles Cook of Cranfield in October 1915. **Edward** (21) married Mabel Warner of Steppingly in 1936. **Alice** (19) married Cyril Jones in 1920. In the 1901 census the family lived at Grove Farm, Cranfield. By the 1911 census they had moved to the High Street. James is listed as a labourer.

Tom received a medal for good attendance at school in 1904 for being "neither absent nor late".

The family attended the Wesleyan Chapel and Tom Lancaster was one of 4 older boys who took part in a special service and gave a "Dialogue" in June 1910.

He was first with the **Northamptonshire Regiment** with the service number 24370. He later transferred to the **10th Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)**. This was a service battalion named Battersea, formed on 3rd June 1915

by the mayor and borough of Battersea. It is not known when he transferred. Most new arrivals passed through a reception centre in Etaples and were drafted to plug gaps in battalions other than the one in which they had enlisted. The Battalion formed part of 124th Brigade within the 41st Division. They were engaged in action at the Somme at Flers-Courcelette (15th Sept - 22nd Sept 1916) and The Battle of Transloy Ridges (1st Oct - 20th Oct 1916). In 1917 they fought, during the Ypres offensive, at the Battle of Messines (7th - 14th June) and the Battle of Pilckem Ridge (31st July - 2nd August).

Thomas was killed on 20th September, during the first day of the **Battle of the Menin Road**.

The Battalion War Diary for the date reports that under cover of darkness they moved into position, losing a few casualties from shelling while doing so. At 5.40am several divisions of X Corps began their attack. The 124 Brigade was led by 10th Queen's. They advanced about 50 yards before they came under heavy fire from two machine guns "which did great havoc, noticeably among the officers. Major Andrews M.C. who was commanding the Battalion was killed. In spite of this Lts. Hare and Toombs with Sgt. Busby were able to keep some men together and succeeded in working round those machine gun positions and silencing them".

Tom's body was never recovered. He is commemorated on **the Tyne Cot Memorial**, Zonnebeke, near Passchendaele.

His cousins **Thomas Arthur**, died on 3rd May 1917 (page 165) and **William Frederick** on 22nd November 1917 (page 210).

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 2nd November 1917 reports: “Pte. Tom Lancaster is officially reported missing. Much sympathy is expressed for the parents and friends.”

Thomas Lancaster is also commemorated on the grave of his parents in the Parish Churchyard. The grave is almost in the same line as that of Herbert Garner, (page 142) to its right.



IN
LOVING MEMORY
JAMES LANCASTER
WHO DIED APRIL 15TH 1921
AGED 70 YEARS
“THY WILL BE DONE”

ALSO
THOMAS LANCASTER
SON OF THE ABOVE
REPORTED MISSING SEPT 20TH
1917
REPORTED KILLED JULY 20TH
1918
AGED 23 YEARS
“While the light lasts we shall
remember and in the darkness we
shall not forget

ALSO OF CAROLINE
BELOVED WIFE OF THE
ABOVE
WHO DIED OCT 11TH 1927
AGED 68 YEARS
In the midst of life we are in death

TYNE COT CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL

“Tyne Cot” or “Tyne Cottage” was the name given by the Northumberland Fusiliers to a barn which stood near a level crossing on the Passchendaele-Broodseinde road. It was captured by the 3rd Australian Division on 4th October 1917, in an advance on Passchendaele.



It is now the **largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world** in terms of burials. At the suggestion of King George V, who visited in 1922, the Cross of Sacrifice was placed on the original large pill box. **11,956** Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War are buried or commemorated in Tyne Cot Cemetery.

8,369 burials are unidentified. Most died in 1917 at Passchendaele.

The Tyne Cot Memorial forms the north-eastern boundary of the Cemetery. It commemorates nearly **35,000** servicemen from the United Kingdom and New Zealand who died in the Ypres Salient after 16th August 1917 who have no known grave; whose bodies could not be recovered; whose graves have been unrecorded, lost or destroyed or whose remains could not be identified and were buried beneath a headstone bearing the inscription “Known unto God”.



The cemetery and memorial were designed by Sir Herbert Baker. The memorial was created to supplement the Menin Gate which was found to have insufficient space to record all the missing of the Flanders battlefields. Of the 205,000 Commonwealth Servicemen commemorated in Belgium, more than 100,000 have no known grave.

ARTHUR JAMES WILSON (55472)

Private, 197th Infantry Battalion Machine Gun Corps

Died of Wounds, Friday 12th October 1917, aged 22, in Belgium.

Buried in the St. Julien Dressing Station Cemetery, Langemark-Poelkapelle, Belgium.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield. Son of David and Sarah Wilson, of Bourne End, Cranfield.



Arthur James (known as James) Wilson was born in Cranfield in 1895, **the tenth child of David and Sarah nee Churchill**. They lived and worked on the family farm, Horse Shoe Farm, Bourne End. Arthur's two youngest siblings, **George** and **Ann** Elizabeth, aged 5 and 3 respectively, both died in 1882. In the 1891 census the parents, with 6 children and their grandfather, Samuel, 73, were living together. The children with their ages in 1917 and marriages were: **Fred** (35) married Harriet Housden. They had 2 children. He was a Master Baker. **George** (34) married Elizabeth Mary Copperwheat in 1905. They had three children, Leslie, Violet and Constance. **George was killed on the same day as his brother. Annie** Elizabeth (32) married Frederick William Hill (from Staffordshire) in 1911. **Alice** (31) married Harry Branson Haxley (of Northampton) in 1927. They settled in Stratford-on-Avon. **Thomas** "Tom" (30) married Ethel Bennett in 1914. He was a baker's assistant. In 1891 they were all still at school.

In 1901 there were another 3 children. By this time the grandfather was no longer alive. They named their youngest child after him. They were, with their ages in 1917: **Ada** Mary (28) married Rudolf Urban (of Aspley Guise) in 1912. By 1937 they were living in St Albans. The youngest were **Agnes** "Aggie" (26), **Arthur** James (known as James) (22), and **Samuel** David (20).

Arthur worked on the family farm until the war, when he enlisted in Bedford. He was attached to the Essex Regiment

before moving to the **197th Company, Machine Gun Corps**. The Machine Gun Corps was formed in October 1915 with branches attached to Infantry, Cavalry and Motor (motor bikes and cars) Divisions.

He saw action during the **Battle of Arras**. He was fatally wounded at the **First battle of Passchendaele**, 4 miles south of where his brother was killed. He was taken to **St Julien Dressing Station** where he died. He is **buried in their Cemetery**.



GEORGE WILSON (202802)

Private 6th Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, 12th October 1917, aged 34,
in Belgium.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

Born in and resident of Cranfield.

Son of David and Sarah Wilson of Bourne End.

Husband of Elizabeth Mary (nee
Copperwheat).



This photograph of George in uniform, with his wife and two of their children, was given by Nigel Bichener, great grandson of George and grandson of Violet.

George Wilson was born in 1883, one of eleven children of **David Wilson and his wife, Sarah**. The family details can be found in the tribute to Arthur on page 194.

George married Elizabeth Mary Copperwheat from Marston Moretaine in **1905**. They moved to 46, Littledale Street, Kempston where George was employed as a general labourer. They had **five children** who were, with their ages when they lost their father in 1917: **Leslie** George (11), **Violet** Hilda (9), **Constance** Gladys (8), **Alfred** (6) and **Freda** (1).

George enlisted with the **5th Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment** in November 1914. He later was transferred to the **6th Battalion, the Dorsetshire Regiment**.

In 1916 the Dorsets fought at the **Battle of Albert** and the **Battle of Delville Wood** at the **Somme**. In 1917 they were involved in the **Battle of Arras**.

George died on the first day in the First Battle for Passchendaele on 12th October 1917. The attack was part of the Third Battle of Ypres. The 6th Battalion, Dorsets were positioned near Langemark when, on the first day, the Battalion HQ, in an old German Pillbox, had a direct hit from a German shell, wounding one officer and killing three from other ranks. Eleven were wounded plus several men

from other units. George must have been one of the three killed. His body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the **Tyne Cot Memorial**, Zonnebeke, Belgium (page 192).

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 14th December 1917 reports: Pte. A. J. Wilson MGC who died of wounds in France was wounded on the same day as his brother George was killed. The soldiers were sons of Mr and Mrs David Wilson of Bourne End, Cranfield. Pte. A. J. Wilson, previous to joining up was engaged in agriculture and had always lived at home. Pte. G. Wilson leaves a widow and several children. With his brother he passed through East End Baptist Sunday School.

Both brothers are commemorated **on the grave of their parents in the churchyard of the Baptist Church on Bedford Road, Cranfield.**





IN
 LOVING MEMORY OF
 DAVID WILSON
 WHO DIED SUDDENLY
 JUNE 12TH 1937
 AGED 80
 AND OF
 SARAH WILSON
 WHO DIED JUNE 5TH 1948
 AGED 86
 ALSO IN REMEMBRANCE
 OF
 PRIVATE G WILSON
 KILLED IN ACTION OCT 12TH
 AGED 34
 AND OF
 PRIVATE AJ WILSON
 DIED OF WOUNDS
 OCT 12TH 1917
 AGED 27

Leslie married Florence Johnson in 1931. He worked in the brickyards. **Violet** married Cecil William Bichener in 1930. **Cecil** also worked in the brickyards. **Constance** married Herbert Chessher in 1929. Herbert was a carpenter making coffins. Constance died of a long illness in 1942 at the age of 33. **Alfred** married Florence Russell in 1911. From the age of 16 he was a popular centre forward with the Kempston Rovers Football Club, where he stayed until he died of pneumonia at the age of 26, only 7 weeks after the birth of his only child, Marlene. **Freda** married Ronald Pope in 1933. All of George's children settled in Kempston.

George's widow, Elizabeth Mary Copperwheat remarried in 1920 to Harry Lancaster, the brother of Thomas Lancaster (page 187) who was killed on 20th September 1917. Harry was 34 and single when he left the army in 1919. Harry and "Lizzie" had one child, Eileen Lancaster.

FRANK FOSTER (301749)

Gunner, 10th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery.

Killed in Action 5th November 1917, aged 21, at
Passchendaele, Belgium.

Buried Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery,
Leper, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Born in Cranfield. Emigrated to Canada.

Son of Albert and Mary Ann Foster, of Bourne End,
Cranfield.



Frank Foster was born at Bourne End, Cranfield on 15th January 1896, the second living child of **Albert Foster and Mary Ann** (nee Taylor). His two surviving siblings with their ages in 1917 were: **James** (22) and **Rose** (17). **James** (page 265), the close friend of **Arthur Wilson** (page 194) **was killed in action on 25th April 1918**. Like his father and older brother, Frank was a farm labourer. It was, understandably, tempting to **emigrate to Canada** to start a new life and have one's own farm. He went with two friends; Charley White, a farm labourer born in Salford, and Percy Foster, a gardener, who may have been a relative. They set sail on the S.S. Andania on 26th March 1914.

After the outbreak of war, Frank joined **the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force**. His address was the Norwood Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was attached to **the 10th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery**.



They were mobile units used to support soldiers in the field of battle. They were either behind the front line troops, firing over them as they advanced towards the enemy, or used to take out German guns and defensive positions before our troops attacked.

The war diary shows that they were deployed during the Battle of the **Somme** (Flers-Courcelette, Thiepval and Ancre Heights) and at Arras (Vimy Ridge). By October 1917 they were fighting at Passchendaele.

The Canadians were responsible for the final push at Passchendaele, from 26th October. It was not until 6th November that the 6th Brigade finally entered what was left of the village of that name.

The diary of 10th Brigade for 5th November, the day Frank was killed: “The Batteries were bombarded this morning by a 30” Howitzer, but no damage was done. Fairly quiet day. Received from Division, attack No8 takes place tomorrow morning at 6am. The 1st and 2nd Divisions will take Passchendaele. Batteries heavily bombarded this afternoon, one gun of 40th knocked out. Casualties one killed and 6 wounded in 28th Battery and 2 slightly wounded in the 39th Battery.”

These war diary entries don't give a true impression of what it was really like for the men. Harry Drinkwater, in his diary of that time describes “The conditions were hellish. We seemed to be situated in a circle of gun flashes, the close proximity of which were blinding for the moment. The noise was terrific and the ground shook with the combined

firing of our guns and the explosion of shells as they came over from the Germans - it was hell made manifest.”

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 14th December reports: “Mr and Mrs Foster of Bourne End have heard from Lieut. Gilles as follows “Your son, Gunner F. Foster was instantly killed on Nov 5th, when a shell exploded near to where he and the rest of the gunners were standing waiting for their evening meal. He did not suffer for one second. His body was taken from the guns to the wagon lines and buried with full military honours. Your son had been with the Battery since its organisation and came to France with it. He had been under my command for over one year. I can proudly say that I never had a better man. He was always cheerful and willing, and carried out his work in a very satisfactory manner. The boys all like him and mourn his death. Mr and Mrs Foster’s son, Jim of the MG Corps is now on leave looking well.”

He is buried at **Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery**, near Ypres. On his headstone are the words “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” The Cemetery holds 1,813 Commonwealth Graves of which 154 are of Canadian Soldiers.



Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery

His brother James “Jim” died on 25th April 1918. Their father Albert died in 1921 aged 50. Rose’s mother, Mary Ann, walked her down the aisle and “gave her away” when she married Walter James Bettle in 1925. Mary Ann died May 6th, 1941, aged 77 years.

Both brothers are commemorated on the grave of their parents in the Churchyard of St Peter and St Paul. It is the first grave to the left of the path to the church in the row nearest to the east wall of the Churchyard. (See photo page 269) The inscription reads:

**IN
LOVING MEMORY OF
ALBERT
BELOVED HUSBAND OF
MARY ANN FOSTER
WHO DIED OCT 20TH 1921
AGED 50 YEARS**

**ALSO SONS OF THE ABOVE
KILLED IN ACTION
IN FRANCE
JAMES APRIL 25TH 1918
AGED 23 YEARS
FRANK NOV 5TH 1917
AGED 21 YEARS**

**“Weep with grief that those
so dear can no more share
our smile and tear that God has
given in heaven”**

**MARY ANN FOSTER
DIED MAY 6TH 1941
AGED 77 YEARS**

THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI (20th Nov - 3rd Dec 1917)

As 1917 was drawing to a close there had been no decisive breakthrough. The **Third Battle of Ypres** had turned into a tragic failure. **Lloyd George** (British Prime Minister 1916-1922) wrote, “Passchendaele was indeed one of the greatest disasters of the war”.

Sir Douglas Haig described the object of an assault at **Cambrai** as the gaining of a “local success by a sudden attack at a point where the enemy did not expect it”. The town, 15 miles to the southeast of Arras, and just beyond the Hindenburg Line, lay on a vast chalky plain which was the ideal terrain for tanks. The plan of attack was devised by **General Julian Byng, Commander of the British 3rd Army**. He proposed a massive assault by **476 tanks, without a preliminary artillery bombardment to maintain the element of surprise**. Once the German front was breached three divisions of Cavalry would charge in and surround and capture Cambrai.

At 6.20am on the morning of 20th November the tanks, preceded by a rain of explosive shells, led six infantry divisions into the field. The attack **succeeded in advancing around 5 miles and penetrated the Hindenburg Line**. The British took 8,000 German prisoners on the first day.

Rather prematurely, the attack was seen as a victory for the British and church bells rang out all over Britain. However, the British didn't capitalise on their initial success. A halt

was called, after two days, for rest and reorganisation, allowing the Germans to reinforce.

The British had reached a position on the crest of **Bourlon Ridge**. From 23rd to 28th November, the fighting was concentrated almost entirely around **Bourlon Wood** and by 29th November, it was clear that the Germans were ready for **a major counterattack**.

As well as a barrage of poison gas shells they deployed a new method of fighting which consisted of **infiltrating the enemy lines with small groups of highly skilled and heavily armed soldiers - “storm troops”**.

During the fierce fighting of the next five days, much of the ground gained in the initial days of the attack was lost. By the time the fighting came to a close on 4th December, the initial success had deteriorated into a total failure.

British casualties amounted to 44,000 killed, wounded or lost in action, including 6,000 prisoners. The Germans lost 45,000 (including 10,000 prisoners).

The more sophisticated tactical methods used by both sides were a precursor to the fighting of 1918.

It was in the first days of the battle that our next soldier, **William Frederick Lancaster** died of his wounds. The Battalion of the following soldier, **Thomas Billington**, served at Cambrai but Thomas tragically died of **cerebro-spinal meningitis** on 27th November.

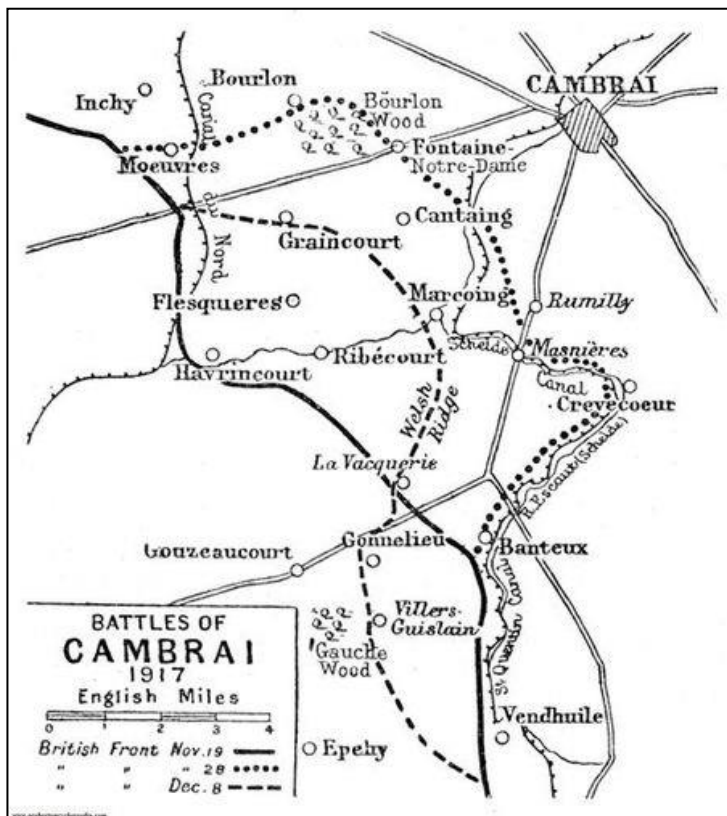
WILLIAM FREDERICK LANCASTER (30894)
Private, 1st Bedfordshire Yeomanry.
Died of Wounds, Thursday 22nd November 1917,
aged 24, in Cambrai France.
Commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial,
Louverval, Nord, France.
Born and resident of Cranfield.

William Frederick Lancaster was born in Cranfield in 1893, the youngest of 7 children of **William Lancaster and Susan** (nee Odell). His brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1917 were: **Charles** John (44), **Minnie** Laura (42), **Annie** Elizabeth (39), **Ellen** Mary (37), **Mary** (32) and **Frederick** (27).

By the time William went to war he had lost his mother in 1898, at the age of 50. His father died later, in 1919, at the age of 70.

William served with the **1st Bedfordshire Yeomanry** which was formed in August 1914. In 1915 they moved to France as part of the 9th Cavalry Brigade in the 1st Cavalry Division.

On 20th November, during the assault on Cambrai, the whole of the 1st Cavalry Division was fighting dismounted as infantry in an attack through Flesquieres towards Bourlon Wood.



William died of wounds on 22nd November but it is not known when he was wounded.

He is commemorated on the **Cambrai Memorial to the Missing** at Louveral, France. The Memorial commemorates more than 7,000 servicemen of the United Kingdom and South Africa who died in the Battle of Cambrai in November and December 1917 and whose graves are not known.



He is also commemorated on his parents' grave in Cranfield Churchyard. The grave lies near the west boundary.



IN LOVING MEMORY
 OF
 SUSAN LANCASTER
 BELOVED WIFE OF
 WILLIAM LANCASTER
 WHO DIED NOV 10TH 1898
 AGED 50 YEARS
 PEACE PERFECT PEACE WITH
 LOVED ONE IN JESUS'
 KEEPING WE ARE SAFE AND
 THEY
 ALSO OF WILLIAM
 THE BELOVED HUSBAND
 OF THE ABOVE
 WHO DIED JAN 29TH 1919
 AGED 70 YEARS
 ALSO THEIR SON
 WILLIAM FREDERICK
 KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
 NOV 22ND 1917 AGED 24 YEARS
 FATHER IN THY LOVING CARE

THOMAS BILLINGTON (G/81004)

Private 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers Regiment.

Died of meningitis, Tuesday 27th November 1917,
aged 38, in France.

Buried in the Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British
cemetery, Manancourt, France.

Born in Cranfield.

Son of James and Ann Billington, of Cranfield.

Husband of Edith Lillian Billington of The White
House, Aldershot.

Thomas (Tom) Billington was born in Cranfield in 1879, the second son of **James William Billington and his wife Sarah Ann** (nee Berry). They were married in Cranfield in 1876. James was born in Cranfield and was a farm labourer. Sarah was born in Cuddington, Buckinghamshire. They had 8 children and the family lived at 9 Red Lion Cottages.

Tom's brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1917 and marriages were: **Charles** (40), a carpenter, he married Fanny Elizabeth Watson and had no children. When he died of a heart attack on 22nd July 1919, he and his wife were running the **Leathern Bottle** pub (now Birch Close). **Edward** (35) was also a carpenter. He went to Brisbane, Australia in 1912. He returned to England in May 1921 and **married his brother's widow**. They had two daughters; Pamela Joyce who died in Bedford Hospital at the age of 12 in 1939, and Phyllis Frances who married an American, Miles M Kontich in 1945. He was a US serviceman stationed at Thurleigh. They sailed on the Queen Mary to America in April 1946.

Edward took over as landlord of the Leathern Bottle until he died in 1949 at the age of 67. **Fred** (29) joined the Army Service Corps as a driver. **He died in Salonica, of influenza, in November 1918.** He is also commemorated on the War Memorial (page 279). **Selina** Mary “Lena” (27) married Thomas Goodwin in 1926. They lived in Roxton Road, Bedford. **May** (24) married William Christopher Sullivan in 1945, living at Muir House, Cranfield, later moving to Stewartby. **Annie** (22) worked as a servant at Box Hedge Farm for Mr Frank Grimes. **James** “Jimmy” (20) married Ethel Francis in 1921. Her father had been landlord of The Swan. They lived in Ampthill Road, Bedford.

Tom worked as a farm labourer from the age of 12. By the time of the 1901 census, he had moved to **Hampstead**, London with 3 other men from Cranfield: Alfred Lord, William Ford and Charles Lancaster, to work as bricklayer’s labourers. He **married Edith Lilian Bartley on Christmas Day 1905.** She was a farmer’s daughter born in Uckfield, Sussex. Their eldest child, **Walter** Thomas was born in Hampstead. He would have been 10 when his father was killed. He sadly **died in 1919 at the age of 12.** Their second child, **Albert** died soon after birth in 1909. Their daughter **Phyllis** Christine was born in Hendon where the family had settled. She went on to university and gained a BA 1st Class

with Honours in history. She married Colin Graham Fisher in 1939.

Tom enlisted at Hendon with the East Surrey Regiment in October 1916. This was into a “Provisional Battalion”. Soldiers were given a service number but allocated to a “fixed battalion” and regiment soon after posting so never serving with the original Regiment. He was posted to the **2nd Battalion, Royal Fusiliers**. During 1916 they saw action during the **Battle of the Somme** at the **Battle of Albert** and the **Battle of Transloy Ridges**.

In 1917 they fought at the **Battle of Arras** before moving north to Belgium where they fought during the 3rd Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), at the **Battle of Poelcappelle** on 9th October 1917 . By 16th October the Battalion had moved, by train, to France.

From 20th November until 4th December they took part in the **Battle of Cambrai**.

Tom sadly became ill and **died of cerebro spinal meningitis on 27th November 1917**. He is buried in the **Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery, Manancourt**. The cemetery contains 1,838 Commonwealth burials and commemorations of the First World War.



Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery

The *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* of 7th December 1917 reports: “News has been received of the death in France, on Nov. 27th, from cerebro spinal meningitis, of Pte. Thomas Billington, Royal Fusiliers. He was the second son of Mr and Mrs James Billington of Red Lion Cottages and was aged 39. He leaves a widow and two children. He joined up in October 1916, and had been engaged in London since his boyhood, and both there and here was highly respected. He went to France in August 1917. Deep sympathy is felt for the family.”

Tom is also commemorated on his parents' grave, along with his brother, Fred, in Cranfield Churchyard. His name is also listed on the War Memorial in Hendon.

His widow, Edith never remarried. She died in 1953.

The Billington family grave is four rows from the east wall of the Churchyard, nearest to the house on Court Road.





SARAH ANN BILLINGTON
PASSED AWAY JANUARY 18TH 1924
AGED 88 YEARS
ALSO OF JAMES WILLIAM
BILLINGTON
WHO PASSED AWAY JULY 12TH 1925
AGED 68 YEARS
ALSO OF
TOM BILLINGTON
DIED IN FRANCE NOV 27TH 1917
AGED 38 YEARS
ALSO OF ALSO OF
FRED BILLINGTON
DIED AT SALONICA NOV 20TH 1918
AGED 30 YEARS
THY WILL BE DONE

THE SINAI AND PALESTINE CAMPAIGN

The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) had joined the Central Powers (Germany/Austria -Hungary) on 29th October 1914. (See page 38 - Gallipoli). With support from German troops, it fought against the British Empire in Sinai and Palestine, starting with an unsuccessful raid on the Suez Canal in 1915.

The Suez Canal was a vitally important supply route for the British Empire and had to be defended at all costs. During the war, troops and equipment from Australia, New Zealand and India, as well as oil and millions of tons of foodstuff, passed through enroute to the Western Front.

The Gaza Campaign

Gaza, on the Mediterranean coast, was key to controlling access to Sinai, Palestine and the wider Middle East. The Ottoman Empire held Gaza. **Two attempts to take the heavily fortified Turkish positions had narrowly failed in March and April 1917**, resulting in the **loss of 10,000 Allied troops**. A **change in command**, with **General Edmund Allenby** replacing General Archibald Murray, resulted in a change of tactics. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) was strengthened by a large Indian Army contingent as well as Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) mounted troops. The new commander linked up with the Arab insurgents who had conquered Aqaba (**Lawrence of Arabia**) and were harassing Ottoman troops in the Negev desert. Allenby planned a coordinated assault on Gaza and Beersheba. From 27th- 31st October, Gaza was pounded with artillery from battleships and planes.

Beersheba fell on 1st November and, a week later, the British Army forced its way into Gaza. The city had been destroyed by British bombing and for many years remained a depressing, ruined ghost city. **Allenby entered Gaza on 9th November**, the same day the British Foreign Office announced the **“Balfour Declaration”**: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people”. One battle for Gaza was over, another was about to begin.

Allenby entered **Jerusalem**, on foot, on 9th December 1917. A dismounted entry was suggested as a mark of respect for the Holy City.

The long-lasting effect of the Palestine campaign was the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire. While **France** took control over **Syria and Lebanon**, the **British Empire** won the mandate for **Mesopotamia and Palestine**. The **Republic of Turkey** came into existence in 1923 after the Turkish War of Independence. The European mandates ended with the formation of the **Kingdom of Iraq in 1932**, the **Lebanese Republic in 1943**, the **State of Israel in 1948**, and the **Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan** and the **Syrian Arab Republic in 1946**.

The Palestine campaign came to an end at the end of December 1917 but the carving up of the captured Ottoman Empire has repercussions today, having set the wheels of history in motion.

Our last soldier who died in 1917 was killed in Palestine.

HARRY LOVESEY (522485)

Lance Corporal, 486th East Anglian Field Engineers.

Died of Wounds, Friday 30th November 1917, aged 41, in Jaffa Israel.

Buried in Ramelah War Cemetery, Israel.

Born in Cranfield. Resident of Aspley Guise.

Son of William and Sarah. Husband of Elizabeth

Harry Lovesey was born in Cranfield in late 1875, the youngest son of **William Lovesey and his wife Sarah**, nee Harbin. William started his working life as a farm labourer, but by 1881 was working as a clerk in a coal yard and as foreman in 1891. **Harry was one of 8 children.** With their ages in 1917, they were: **Jesse** (60) a plasterer, married Elizabeth Cox in 1876. They settled in Watford. **Annie** died in 1883 at the age of 22. **Sophia** (55) married Frederick Albert Smith in 1884 and settled in Kempston. They separated in 1902. **Ellen** (53) married a local boy, Wallace Sanders in 1888. They moved to Cheshire and finally settled in Wolverton. Herbert William **“Billy”** (50) lived with his younger sister, Hagar, at 29 Broad Green until his death in 1947. **Ebenezer** (48) a shoemaker, married Gertrude Adelaide Atterbury in 1898, and then as a widower, to Alice E Norman in 1937. They lived in Bedford. **Hagar** (39) lived with her brother Billy until her death in 1952 at the age of 77.

Harry married **Elizabeth (known as Lily) Crute** in Aspley Guise on 5th August 1895. He was a **bricklayer**, living with his family of 7 children at 7 San Remo Road, Aspley Guise. The children, with their ages in 1917 and their later occupations and marriages, were: **Gladys** May Annie (20) married Henry Arnold Allsop in 1919 and settled in Sutton Coldfield. **Alec** (18), a plumber, married Dora Kate Walker in 1928 and settled in Aylesbury. **Frederick** William (12), a motor engineer, married Ada Elizabeth White in 1927. In 1939 they were living with Ada's parents, Allon and Ann White. **Kenneth** Harbin (9) a bricklayer married Jane Margaret Wilamina Caldwell in 1930. They lived at 3 San Remo Road, Aspley Guise. **Kathleen** Muriel (7) married John E Woods in 1934, settling in Woburn Sands. **Basil** (4) a sheet metal worker married Ruby Vera Jordan in 1935. They also lived in Woburn Sands. **Dorothy** (2) married Reginald Lawrence in 1937. They lived near Brogborough.

Harry enlisted on 4th October 1915 with the **Territorial Force, Royal Engineers**. His age was at the upper end for enlistment. His bricklaying skills would be valuable to the Engineers. He completed his training in England and was posted to the 486 Field Company, **part of the 54th East Anglian Division on 29th April 1916**. Harry was promoted to **acting Lance Corporal on 16th January 1917**. The Division occupied No1 section (the southern end) of the **Suez Canal defences** on 2nd April 1917. They moved **from Egypt into Palestine**.



The 54th East Anglian Division halted during the journey from Suez to Kantara

They were engaged in the **1st Battle of Gaza**. On 26th March, the 53rd (Welsh) Division supported by a Brigade from the 54th (East Anglian) Division attacked the strong entrenchments to the south of the town. In the afternoon, after being reinforced by the Anzac Mounted Division, the attack quickly began to succeed. With most objectives captured, night stopped the attack and the withdrawal was ordered before the commanders were fully aware of the gains. However they had yet to break the Ottoman defences.

The Division also fought at the **2nd Battle of Gaza**, three weeks later, and the **3rd Battle of Gaza** (27th October - 7th November 1917).

The next action was to take the port of **Jaffa**. It was occupied by the New Zealand mounted Rifle Brigade on 16th November but the Ottoman forces were only 3 miles away making the port unusable for shipping because it was in the range of their artillery. On 24th November there was a raid by 2 infantry battalions from the 54th Division, and the New Zealanders, 4 miles from Jaffa, which was unsuccessful. The Turkish forces drove back the Division and recaptured the bridgeheads. A successful assault started on the night of 20th December.

Although Harry was not in the front line, the Royal Engineers were constantly at risk from snipers as they carried out their vital support work. **Harry was wounded at Jaffa on 22nd November. He died of his wounds on 30th November.**

He is buried in **Ramelah War Cemetery, Israel**, which was started on 1st November 1917 by the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade as it was close to Casualty Clearing Stations. It contains 10 nationalities from WW1 including 1,705 men from the United Kingdom.

Harry's widow, Lily, never remarried and died on 5th February 1931 at the age of 54.



Ramelah War Cemetery

Bedfordshire Times and Independent 16th November 1917.

“On Friday a meeting under the auspices of the War Arms Committee was held in the schoolroom, under the presidency of the Rector Rev. JF Downes. The Rector said the village had given about 200 to the army of whom over 20 had given their lives, besides a great percentage who have also been wounded or were sick on service. The village had also shown creditable work in progressive giving. The War Savings Committee reported the splendid way in which this work has been progressively appreciated.”

THE FALLEN OF 1918

- 13th Feb** **Cornelius William Young** 7th Battalion
Bedfordshire Regiment. Died of wounds in
France, aged 25. Buried in Noyon New British
Cemetery.
- 28th Mar** **Charles Hale** 7th Battalion Queens Own Royal
West Kent Regiment. Killed in action in France
aged 19. Commemorated on the Pozieres
Memorial, Somme.
- 28th Mar** **William John Green** 2nd Battalion
Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action in
France aged 37. Commemorated on the
Pozieres Memorial, Somme.
- 9th Apr** **William Cook** 7th City of London Battalion
Killed in action in France, aged 40. Buried at
Adelaide Cemetery, Viller-Bretonneux, France.
- *25th Apr** **James Foster** 9th Company Machine
GunCorps. Killed in action in Belgium. Aged
23. Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial,
Zonnebeke, Belgium,
- 27th Apr** **Ephraim Sparkes** 1st Battalion Bedfordshire
Regiment. Killed in action in France. Buried in
the Merville Community Cemetery, France.

29th Oct **Charles Cooper** 12th/13th Battalion
Northumberland Fusiliers. Died in a Prisoner
of War Camp in Germany, aged 26. Buried in
Hamburg Ohisdorf Cemetery, Germany.

***20th Nov** **Fred Billington** Army Service Corps died of
influenza in Salonica, aged 30. Buried in Mikra
British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.

20th Nov **George Salisbury** 259th Railway Construction
Engineers. Died of influenza in France, aged 24.
Buried in the Terlincthun British Cemetery,
Wimille, France.

14th Dec **Victor John Lineham** 1st Surrey Regiment.
Died of influenza in Salonika, aged 24. Buried in
Salonica Military Cemetery.

*Soldiers commemorated on family graves in the
Churchyard of St Peter 7 St Paul

The first soldier to be killed in 1918 died when the Allies
were still trying to take the Hindenburg Line, before the
German Offensive.

The next five were killed during the German Offensive,
three on the Somme and two in Flanders.

The remaining four died of influenza.

CORNELIUS WILLIAM YOUNG (17518)

Private, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died of Wounds, Wednesday 13th February 1918,
aged 25, in France.

Buried in the Noyon New British Cemetery, Oise,
France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield. Son of Walter
and Susan Young, High Street, Cranfield.

Husband of Marjorie Young of Cranfield.

Cornelius William Young was born in Cranfield on 20th December 1892, the fourth son of **Walter Cornelius and Susan Young (nee Cook)** of the High Street, Cranfield. His father was a farm labourer. In the 1911 census the couple had been married for 27 years. They had 14 children in those years of whom 3 had died and 11 were still living. Cornelius' siblings, with their ages in 1918 and marriages were: **Joseph John** (34) married Mary Clarke in 1908. **John Cornelius** (32) married Ethel Mary Pepper in 1909. **Louisa** (31) married Thomas Richard Eats, a blacksmith, in 1911. **Harry** (28) was a stoker on the "Calgarian" when it was torpedoed on 1st March 1918. He survived the war and married Elsie E Cooney in 1919. **William Thomas** (22) married Elsie M Field in 1921. **Fred** (21) married Ethel M Saward in 1920. **Dennis George** was born in 1900 but sadly died the following year, shortly after his first birthday. **Ernest George** (17) married Mary Evans in 1928. He was

fatally injured at Brogborough cross roads on 24th May 1944 and was buried with a guard of honour from the Home Guard. **Mary** (13) died aged 25 after a long illness. **Edward** (11) married Winifred May Manyweathers in 1935. She was a niece of Joseph Manyweathers, who is commemorated on the war memorial (page 78). **Wallace George** (10) married Eva Elizabeth Greenhood of Salford in 1935. **May Elizabeth** (7) married Edward A Chandler in 1929.

On 10th October 1914 Cornelius **married Marjorie Newman**, the daughter of George Newman, at Ampthill Register Office. They were both 21. He was working as a gardener at Cranfield Court. She was a domestic servant.

He was called up at the end of October and may have enlisted in the **7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment**, before his marriage.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 30th October 1914 reported: "The following who volunteered some six weeks ago have been called up this week, Messers F. Young jun, T. Lancaster, Wm Fountain, H. Baker, W. Cox, J. Read, Cornelius Young, W. Young and W. Parker. Mr H. Baker and Joe Read will go to their old Regiments; Should Mr William Young stay with his brothers, Mr and Mrs Walter Young will have five sons fighting for their country. "The four brothers who served in, and survived, the war were **Joseph, John (Jack), Harry, and Fred**. William was discharged either due to sickness or injury.

Two of his cousins, **Owen and William Frederick Young** (pages 119 and 137) from North Crawley enlisted with Cornelius in the 7th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, known as the Shiny Seventh, at Ampthill. The Battalion left England for Boulogne in July 1915. They trained in the Somme Valley during the harsh winter of 1915. They were the first to go “over the top” on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916. They were involved in heavy fighting on the Somme. His cousin, Owen was killed near Thiepval. They fought in the Battle of Arras in 1917.

Cornelius was with the Battalion when it was given orders to go to Noyon, 70 miles from Paris, south of the River Somme, to take the village of Molenaarelsthook and the surrounding high ground, on 10th February 1918. The Allies were still trying to make inroads into the German front line. On 11th February there was a hostile bombing raid which killed nine and in which another nine were wounded. Three of the wounded, one officer and two of other ranks died from their injuries. Cornelius was one of those fatally wounded. He was taken to **46th Casualty Clearing Station** on Monday 11th February and sadly **died on 13th February**. He was initially buried in the Old British Cemetery, near to the Clearing Station. In 1944, after the Armistice, all British soldiers buried there were moved to the **Noyon New British Cemetery**.



Noyon New British Cemetery

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 22nd February 1918 reported: “We regret to report yet another death from wounds. Mrs Cornelius Young, who before her marriage was Miss Marjorie Newman, was looking forward to receiving her husband, Pte. C. Young. Beds. Regiment, home on leave. A telegram came stating he had been wounded by an aerial bomb and his condition was serious. On Feb. 14th the Rev. G.H. Peskett reported his passing peacefully away at 4.30pm. He sent a message to his wife: “Give her my love, and tell her not to worry about me, because I am in no pain and will soon be all right again.” Sister A. Duncan wrote that he had shrapnel wounds in the chest, arm and leg, the chest wound being the most serious. “He was so young and patient and wanted so much to live. He was brought in with several comrades wounded at the same time and will be laid with some of them in the little

cemetery beside the hospital.” Pte C. Young was one of the first to go from the village, joining up in October 1914. He had only been home once for eight days. He leaves a widow and one little girl. Both parents are living, and several sons are in the forces- Joe, Jack and Fred in France: Harry in the Navy: William discharged. Just previous to his joining he was employed at the Court. He was 25. Much sympathy is felt for the widow and friends.”

Val Goodman, Cornelius’ granddaughter, lives in Millards Close. She was more than happy to show me letters and original documents relating to Cornelius and photographs of her grandmother, Marjorie, and her mother, Rose, Cornelius’ daughter.

Val showed me his birth certificate with a hastily but neatly written letter in pencil on the reverse with the instructions *“Do not burn this. Take care of it.”*

“Dear Marje, I am sending my clothes. I don’t know when we shall get away. Have been on parade twice this morning and we go on again at 2 o’clock today that is Tuesday. Hope you are well. I am longing to see you again. We have got some of our clothes - navy blue suit and cap one of those narrow side caps – not time to write more as it is dinner time. Remember me to your mother and dad and grannie and topsie. Well. I must close with fondest love your loving husband Cornie.

She has the original telegram with the short message: *"Regret 17918 Pte C. W. Young 7th Beds Regt died of wounds 13.2.18 in 46 Casualty Clearing Station, France."* One wonders how many of these heart rending pieces of paper were received by parents and wives and the affect it must have had on the recipients. Their hopes of seeing their loved ones again were permanently dashed. The telegram was followed by a more formal notification with a message of sympathy from "Their Gracious Majesties the King and Queen".

The most moving document was the original letter written by Sister Duncan from the 46th Casualty Clearing Station on the day that Cornelius died. This has already been referred to in the newspaper report of 22nd Feb.

46 Casualty Clearing Station

B.E.Force

13th July 1918

Dear Mrs Young,

I have no doubt you have heard by this time that your husband was admitted to this hospital on Monday night seriously wounded.

He was brought to us on Monday about 9pm in a very collapsed condition having shrapnel wounds of chest, arm and leg, the chest wound being the most serious. Whenever the surgeon saw him he knew his condition was very grave and after having him warmed up he was taken to the operating theatre. All that night he was very ill, but during the day yesterday he seemed to improve a little but last night he again became rather worse and this morning his condition was very grave and

in spite of everything possible being done for him he just gradually became worse and passed away about 4.30pm.

I do feel so very sorry to have to write and tell you this for it seems so hard to think that just when you most wanted to be with him you were so far away.

He was so good and so patient and wanted so much to live. He was brought to us with several of his comrades, who were wounded at the same time, and will be laid with some of them in our little cemetery, beside the hospital.

Please accept my most heartfelt sympathy for you in your great sorrow and may you be given strength to bear this grief, which has been sent to you.

With my love

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

A. Duncan

(Sister-in-Charge)

The tenderness which comes through these words must have given some comfort. Nurses or doctors and chaplains would have written to every bereaved relative. This must have been a hard and heart breaking task for them.

Val has been so moved by his story that, with the help of Bill Wells, Standard Bearer and Welfare Officer of the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion, she has purchased his medals, which had not been claimed.



These were affectionately known as “Pip, Squeak and Wilfred”. **They are, from left to right, the 1914-15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal.**

She also obtained the **death plaque** made of bronze and measuring four and a half inches in diameter. These were issued to the next of kin of all those bereaved.



Val fondly remembers her grandmother, Marjorie, as “a brilliant lady”.



Marjorie with her father, George Newman

Marjorie was left to bring up her daughter, Rose, who was about 3 years old when her husband was killed.



Marjorie **married George William Boon** on 31st July 1920 in the Register Office, Bedford. He was a 50 year old widower. They had one daughter, Olive.

Marjorie was subsequently widowed for a second time but, on 30th November 1929 she married **Charles Chambers Hill** at the Register Office, Amptill. She was 35 and he, 34. He was the divorced husband of Gladys Margaret Hill. He later left Marjorie.

Marjorie lived alone in 186 High Street; the house previously lived in by her parents, after the marriage of Rose to Arthur Ronald (Ron) Bates in 1936.

She was much loved and well known in the village. Lilian Gewitzke (nee Parker) a dear lady in her 80's remembers Marjorie being friendly towards everybody. She would sit on a chair outside her front door and talked to everyone, "the kids an' all". She was Lil's Dad's cousin.

Marjorie became frail and moved, first to Portnall Place and finally to Ferndale Nursing Home in Ampthill where she died in 1985, aged 92.



Marjorie Hill

Marjorie is buried in the Churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Parish Church, Cranfield. Her grave lies alongside the eastern boundary hedge. She has no headstone so Val had a simple wooden cross erected.



M Hill
Died 3rd August 1985
aged 92 years RIP
M Hill Gran
1893-1985

Marjorie's daughter, Rose had four children, Neville, Val, David and Linda. Her first child, Neville, died aged two and a half of meningitis. Eighteen months after he was born she gave birth to Val. David was born eighteen months later. He is the only other child of Rose to be still alive today. David and his wife, Valerie, had two children Julie and Ian, who died aged 34 of leukaemia. They have no grandchildren. Linda was born eleven years later. Linda had four children, Sally, the eldest, twin boys and Sarah the youngest. She sadly died of renal failure.



Ron and Rose

Val married Dick Goodman on 11th January 1958. They lived in Salford before moving back to Cranfield, living opposite Marjorie at 169 High Street - now demolished. Val regrets that Marjorie never spoke about Cornelius.

Val and Dick have four sons, **Richard, Christopher, Paul and Ian**. Richard and Joanne have three children, Robert, Lesley and George. Christopher and Deborah have one daughter, Rebecca. Paul and Sharon have three children, Amy, Lisa and Richard. They have two grandchildren, Hope (Amy's daughter) and Archie (Lisa's son). Ian and Katie have two girls, Sophia and Hannah.

Rose's husband **Ron**, Val's father, died in 1976 at the age of 61. Rose lived in Bliss Avenue until, due to failing health she moved to a bungalow in Millards Close. She died in 1984 aged 68.



Rose Bates - Cornelius Young's daughter - in later years.

Her mother, Marjorie, outlived her. The family had the unenviable task of telling her that her daughter had died.



Rose and Ronald are also buried in Cranfield Churchyard. The grave is in the centre of the photograph.

The grave inscription reads:

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF RONALD BATES 17TH
JUNE 1976 AGED 61 YEARS ALSO HIS WIFE ROSE
26TH JAN 1984 AGED 68**

Cornelius leaves a legacy of **two living grandchildren, nine living great grandchildren, nine great-great grandchildren and two great-great-great grandchildren.**

Cornelius, the young soldier, lives on in them.

THE WESTERN FRONT 1918

THE GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVES

Germany, throughout the war, had been on the defensive and had largely succeeded in retaining occupied territory, albeit at huge cost. They had been fighting a war on at least two fronts. On the Eastern Front, in Russia, revolution had broken out in March 1917. After the Bolshevik's coup in November 1917 negotiations began and, on 3rd March 1918, peace was concluded at Brest-Litovsk. **The war on the Eastern Front was over.** The German Empire was able to direct all its forces to the Western Front.

Ludendorff and the German High Command had to act quickly before the **Americans**, who had declared war in 1917, were able to make their presence felt.

Operation Michael (the Kaiserschlacht) was launched on 21st March, in the region of the **Somme**. The aim was to drive a wedge between the British and French Armies.

A mass of artillery was assembled with the capacity to fire thousands of gas shells as well as high explosives. A number of specialist elite offensive troops were trained to support the depleted German divisions. Following a five hour bombardment, massed German infantry swarmed through the clouds of fog, smoke and gas to fall on the under strength and inexperienced British battalions holding the line west of St Quentin. The line broke and the British fell back. On the first day there were close to 40,000 British casualties, although German losses were slightly higher. The British continued to retreat, re-crossing the battleground of

the Somme won at such high cost eighteen months before. The Germans were in sight of Amiens. Fortunately for us, **by 5th April they had advanced beyond their artillery and their supplies and so abandoned the offensive.**



Operation Michael - March 1918 - German Reserves at the Somme

Within a week of the attack, the British changed the age for military service to provide badly needed reinforcements to the overstretched front line. The lower end was reduced from 19 to eighteen and a half, provided the soldier had received six months of basic training. At the upper end the age was extended from 50 to 56 if fitness and circumstances allowed. These new soldiers found themselves on the front lines, facing highly trained German units within days of being mobilised.

CHARLES HALE (G/30224)

Private, 7th Battalion Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 28th March 1918, aged 19, at the Somme France.

Commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in Kilburn London, and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of William and Sophia Hale, of Poplar Row, Cranfield.

Charles Hale was born in 1899 in Kilburn, London, one of eight living children of **William and Sophia Hale** (nee Smith). His father was from Luton. His mother had been born in Cranfield where they returned to live in Poplar Row sometime after 1911. Charles' siblings, with their ages in 1918 and some details of their lives and marriages were: **Ethel** Sarah (31) was born in Luton. She never married and died in Bedfordshire in 1966. **Arthur** (29), also born in Luton, was a regular soldier having joined the Northumberland Fusiliers in 1908. He was in the 1st and 2nd Battalions, serving in India when war was declared. He was in France by January 1915. He was wounded and suffered shell shock. He was highly regarded and, by the time he left the army in 1919 he had been made sergeant. He married Doris May Cox in Cranfield in 1919. By 1927

the family were living in Steppingly. While going to work on the morning of 27th October on the Woburn-Hockliffe Road, Arthur was killed by a 5 ton lorry loaded with 5 tons of stones which was trying to overtake him. **Florence** was born in 1892 and died in infancy. **Charlotte** Maria, known as Lottie, (19) was born in Kilburn. In the 1939 census her occupation was "Domestic Work". She never married and died in Ampthill in 1990. **Alfred** (18) was also born in Kilburn. In the 1939 census he was unmarried and living in Windmill Road, Ampthill, with his widowed mother and his three sisters. Hilda (17) married Leslie Pretoria Hedges in November 1917 when she was only 16. They settled in Aylesbury. Eva Mary (9) was also born in Kilburn. In 1929 she was employed as a Factory Works Inspector in Motor Engineering. She married Charles Light in 1945.



When Charles first enlisted he joined the **Yeomanry Cyclists**. He may have been stationed in the United Kingdom where they were used for coastal defences. Later they were used overseas as bicycles were lighter, quieter and logistically easier to manage than horses, making them ideal for reconnaissance and communications work.

He transferred to the **7th Battalion Queen's Own (West Kent) Regiment**. They were stationed at the Somme, facing the German Spring Offensive. On 21st March, on the first day of the **Second Battle of the Somme**, near Moy, the Battalion were surrounded by the enemy who had advanced and surrounded the HQ under cover of dense mist at 11am. Heavy casualties were inflicted. Twenty officers and five hundred and seventy seven men of other ranks were lost. The remnants of the Battalion, and all available reinforcements, gradually withdrew to Faillovel over the next few days. By 28th March they had fallen back to Mantebray where the Battalion diary notes that the day was spent resting and clearing up. Charles is listed as missing, presumed dead, between the first attack on 21st March and the 28th. It took some time for news to reach his parents back in Cranfield. *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent* on 31st May reported that "Mr and Mrs Hale of Poplar Row are still waiting news of their missing son."

Like so many others, his body was never found. His name is commemorated on the **Pozieres Memorial**, Somme, France.

Pozieres British Cemetery is the final resting place of nearly 2,800 Commonwealth soldiers, most of whom fell in 1916. Nearly half of those buried remain unidentified.

Behind the Cemetery stands the **Pozieres Memorial** which commemorates those who fought on the Somme in 1918. It bears the names of those fallen comrades who have no known grave, including more than 300 men of the forces of South Africa, and over 14,300 who served with British Regiments, most of whom fell in March and April 1918.



WILLIAM JOHN GREEN (18199)
Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
Killed in Action, Thursday 28th March 1918,
aged 37 at the Somme, France.
Commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial,
Somme, France.
Born in Bow Brickhill, but a resident of Cranfield.

William Green was born in Bow Brickhill, the son of **John Green and Sarah Collins**. Sarah was from Woburn and had a daughter, Minnie in 1872. She married John Green in Luton in 1872. They had three children, the youngest being William. His older siblings with their ages in 1918 were: **Elizabeth** (44) and **Edward** (42) who married Sarah Ann Cross. They were all born in the Woburn Sands area. By the time of the 1881 census John had died, leaving Sarah a widow with four children. She worked as a straw hat sewer and, as soon as the children were old enough, they went into service. In 1901 they were living in Bedford.

William was working as a general carter. He settled in Cranfield and **married** a Cranfield girl, **Amy Sarah Hall, in 1905**. Amy was in service living in Bedford. The 1911 census showed them living in Bourne End Road, Broad Green, Cranfield with **one daughter, Mary Jane born in February 1906**. William was listed as a farm labourer.

William enlisted in the **2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment**, in Bedford - the same battalion as Charles Harpur (page 107). This was a regular pre-war battalion and served entirely on the Western Front from their arrival in September 1914 until their return home in April 1919.

On **21st March 1918** began what was known as **the First Battles of the Somme in Operation Michael**. On 28th March the Battalion was on the Somme, between Arvillers and Folies, when they were heavily shelled causing a number of casualties. After the initial bombardment, the Germans attacked both flanks. The Battalion withdrew at 2.30 pm but not before machine gun fire and shelling had caused a number of casualties.

William's wife, Amy, was notified early in May 1918 that he was listed as missing in action as from 28th March. At the end of May she received an official notice saying that he was now **listed as killed in action on 28th March** or had died since that date.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 28th June reports "Information has been received from a soldier from a neighbouring village as to Pte W Green. He thinks Pte Green was wounded in the legs or the body, for he was going to help him when he himself received wounds in his legs and had to get away as well as possible." He wondered how he managed to escape, having to traverse 3 miles. The Huns were so near he thinks Pte Green could not avoid falling into their hands. "Much sympathy is felt for Mrs Green and her small daughter in their prolonged suspense".

His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the **Pozieres Memorial** along with Charles Hale (page 246) who was killed 17 miles from William.



WILLIAM COOK (353836)

Private, 7th (City of London) Battalion

Killed in Action on 9th April 1918, aged 40, in
France.

Buried at Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux,
France.

Born in Cranfield. Resident of Hampstead.

Son of William and Eliza Cook.

Husband of Ann.

William Cook was born in Cranfield in 1877, the second of seven children of **William and Eliza** (nee Johnson). His father was an agricultural labourer and his mother a lacemaker. They lived in the High Street. His siblings, with their ages in 1918 and marriages were: **Alfred** (46) married Annie and settled in Kilburn, London. By 1911 he was working as a general labourer on building sites. **Sarah** (44) went into service in Luton before coming back to Cranfield where she had a son, **Cyril**, out of wedlock. He was brought up by Sarah's mother, Eliza, who had been widowed at some time after the 1891 census. He joined the Bedfordshire Regiment and was killed at Arras in 1917 (page 163). Sarah went on to marry William Goodman of Cranfield and had 5 children: **Florence** (38) was working as a lace maker at the age of 11. She married Joseph White of Liddington in 1900. After spending some years in Hampstead, London she returned to this area to settle down. **Emily** (35) was in

service in 1905. She had a son, Herbert Cook, born out of wedlock in 1903. She then married to Frederick Job Randall (a chimney sweep) in Bedford. She moved to Stoke Newington, London, with all her family. **Walter** David (33) joined the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment in 1903. **Edward** Charles (28) lived in Cranfield with his mother and nephew, Cyril.

William was a full time labourer from the age of 13 until he joined the **3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment** at the age of 17 years 11 months. His employer was “His Grace the Duke of Bedford”. **He married Elizabeth Mary Kerslake** in 1898 in Hampstead, London. Their four daughters, all born in Hampstead, with their ages when their father was killed in 1918, were: **Winifred** (23), **Evelyn** Gladys (19), **Beatrice** Maud (16) and **Elsie** (15). Winifred married in London and her daughter, Maddy lives in Spain. Lee has been in touch with her confirming the information she had gathered. Very sadly their mother, **Elizabeth** died in childbirth on 4th December 1907 at the age of 29. **William married Ann Saunders** in St Michael’s Church in Bromley, London, in 1909. They had a **son, John** William in 1910. Other children were difficult to trace.

William joined the **7th Battalion, City of London Regiment** in Hampstead. The Battalion, nicknamed “the Working Men’s Shiny Seventh” was an Infantry Battalion. It began in 1908 and during the Great War formed two active

Battalions, the 1/7th and the 2/7th. In January 1918 they were reorganised within the brigades and amalgamated into the 7th London, 174th Brigade, 58th London Division.

At the time of William's death on 9th April, the Battalion was in the area of the Somme in a position astride the Longeau Villers-Bretonneux Road. They marched from Gentelles (towards Amiens) and were in position along that road from 4th until 11th April.

William was buried in the **Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux**, Department de la Somme, Picardie, France.

Villers-Bretonneux became famous in 1918, when the German advance on Amiens ended in the capture of the village by their tanks and infantry on 23rd April. On the following day, the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions, with units of the 8th and 18th Divisions, recaptured the whole of the village and on 8th August, the 2nd and 5th Australian Divisions advanced from its eastern outskirts in the Battle of Amiens.

Adelaide Cemetery was begun early in June 1918 and used by the 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions. It continued in use until the Allies began their advance in Mid August.

After the Armistice a large number of graves were brought into the cemetery from small graveyards and isolated positions on the north, west and south of Villers-

Bretonneux and they were, without exception, those of the men who died from March to September 1918.

There are now 960 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 266 of the burials are unidentified.



The Adelaide Cemetery, Villers- Bretonneux

THE OFFENSIVE IN FLANDERS (9th- 29th April 1918)

Following the cessation of operation Michael, the focus moved to the Flanders hills between Ypres and Bethune on the Armentieres front. This series of battles were collectively known as the **Battle of the Lys (Operation Georgette)**.

Within days the Allies were sent reeling as the Germans grasped the vital rail junction at Hazebrouck and, further north, the main British supply routes from the Channel ports of Boulogne and Calais.

In three days the Allies had lost all the ground that they had won during the 3rd Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The Germans almost reached Ypres city walls but the advance was finally halted by the French and Australian troops.

So serious had the situation become that, on 11th April, Sir Douglas Haig issued a Special Order of the Day to be circulated urgently to all ranks of the British Army. This “backs to the wall” order achieved lasting military fame. After praising the “splendid resistance” of his men, he went on to say that victory would belong to the side which held out the longest and his concluding paragraph was calculated to stir the blood: “There is no other course open to us but to fight it out; every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. **With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end.**”

On receiving the order, at least one unit, knowing it was the last line of defence with little behind it but the sea, asked “What f***** wall?”

On 17th July the French launched a successful counter-attack on the Marne, supported by two American divisions.

By 2nd August, Ludendorff was forced to abandon the offensive.



British soldiers of 55th West Lancashire Division blinded by tear gas 10th April 1918.

Our next two soldiers were killed during this offensive.

EPHRAIM SPARKES (23409)

Private, 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Saturday 27th April 1918, aged 26,
in France.

Buried in the Merville Communal Cemetery
extension, Nord, France.

Born in Marston, but a resident of Cranfield.

Ephraim Sparks was born in Marston in 1892, one of 7 surviving children of **Joseph and Fanny** (nee Reed). His father was a farm labourer and his mother, from Liddington, was a lace maker. The family moved to Cranfield between 1901 and 1911. His siblings, with their ages in 1918, were: **George** (40) moved to Willesden, London, about the same time the family moved to Cranfield. He married late in life and joined the Navy. **Emily** (38) married George Busby-Reed on Easter Monday 1901. They joined Emily's brother, George, in Willesden and had 4 daughters: Violet, Doris, Ethel and Florence. **Gabriel** (32) joined the army in 1903. He married Ruby May Pulley in 1910. When war was declared, in August 1914, he joined the 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. He was listed as missing or captured on 22nd October 1914 and confirmed as a Prisoner of War (PoW) on 25th January 1915. He was repatriated on 21st December 1918 after a total of more than 4 years in a PoW camp. In 1939 he was living with his wife in Bletchley

and working as a bricklayer. **Beatrice** (30) married William John Dudley in 1910. They had two children; Leonard Ralph and Vera. William served in the Northampton Regiment during the war. **Florence** (28) married George White on Boxing Day 1910. **Seth** (21) was the youngest daughter.

Ephraim was working as a farm labourer. His service records were unavailable so the date of his enlistment in the 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment is not known.

The 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment had a long and proud history dating back to 1688. When war was declared “The Old Contemptibles” were amongst the small professional British Army, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), which was called to assist Belgium against the invading German army. They found themselves heavily engaged in more intensive fighting during the first 3 months of the war than many of the “service” battalions would experience during their entire existence.



They were engaged in the Battle of Mons. (23 -24th August 1914) and the Battle of Le Cateau (26th August). During this latter battle 5 Victoria Crosses were awarded to members of the 5th division, but at high cost. By the time the French Cavalry arrived, supporting the withdrawal, the British Casualties numbered 7,812 with 2,600 men captured and taken prisoner out of the 40,000 British troops engaged in the battle.

They took part in the battles of **Marne** (12-15th September), **Aisne** (20th September) and the **1st Battle of Ypres** (19th October - 22nd November). These battles were fought in the open as opposed to the trench warfare which typified most of the war. They were at the **2nd Battle of Ypres** (22nd April - 25th May 1915) and at **the Somme** during the summer of 1916. 1917 saw them at **Arras** (9th April - 15th May) and during the long and bitter fight for **Passchendaele** (12th October - 10th November) of that year.

After this hard fought battle Ephraim went with the Battalion to Italy.

The Italian Front

In 1882 Italy had formed a Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria which offered mutual support in case of external aggression. However, the Alliance was already strained prior to the outbreak of war.

Italy first declared that she was “neutral” and then sided with the Allies in April 1915, finally withdrawing from the Triple Alliance in May 1915. On 23rd May she declared war on the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The mountainous terrain favoured the Italians but, in October 1917 the Central Powers (Germany, Austria and Hungary) won a crushing victory at the **Battle of Caporetto**. The Italian army lost about 300,000 men. Britain and France sent eleven infantry divisions to reinforce the shaky lines in north-east Italy.

The week long journey by train through the French countryside, the Riviera and the Alps must have felt like a holiday from the trenches. They arrived in December 1917. One of the problems was that there was no mail or comfort parcels for three weeks, which included Christmas.

They had a four month tour of duty in Italy, brought to an end by the news of the massive German Offensive in France at the beginning of March 1918.

On 2nd April they were near Vicenza, half way between Venice and Verona, for the final 2 days before the battalions were moved to France by train, a journey which took 3 days.

On returning to France, they fought at the **Battle of Hazebrouck** (12th - 15th April) and the **Battle of the Lys** (7th - 29th April).

The days before Ephraim was killed were spent in French Flanders, on the front line, digging trenches in a lull before a massive German counterattack.

On 26th April it was a quiet day but on 27th a German counterattack was launched. At 4am around 200 troops advanced towards Bedford Farm under the protective screen of a creeping barrage and the added aid of morning mist. Initially firing blind into a white curtain, the Bedfords could see shapes advancing towards them, at around 100 metres, and opened fire. The British defensive artillery barrage was adjusted and, coupled with the machine gun barrage, a Lewis gun and continuous rifle fire, the attack was broken up before the forward troops had come within 60 metres of the farm. 1 officer was wounded, 1 officer killed, 7 other ranks (OR) killed, 11 OR wounded. The Battalion was relieved and withdrew to camp in the woods.

One of those killed on that day was Ephraim Sparks. He was buried in the **Merville Communal Cemetery extension**, Nord, France.



Merville was a billeting and hospital centre from 1915 -1918. The Community Cemetery Extension was opened in August 1916 and used by the Commonwealth and Portuguese Hospitals until April 1918.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 10th March 1918 reported: "On Monday morning Mrs Sparks, of Bedford Road, received a letter reporting the death of her son, Ephraim, who was killed by a shell early on April 27th. Death was instantaneous. The shell burst within a yard of him. Two others were killed and another badly wounded by the same shell. He was buried later on the same day. The writer, Lance-corporal Baker had been in the same platoon for nearly 12 months and said "All of us knew and liked him, and we shall miss him very much indeed. I can only express for myself and the remainder of their section the deep sympathy we feel for you". The deceased soldier was the youngest son of Mr and Mrs Sparks and well known in the village and district. He had seen active service in Italy and had only recently returned to France. A further letter from the Chaplain said that Pte. Sparks lost his life whilst beating off an enemy counter attack. A card in sympathy was sent from the officers, NCO's and men of the 1st Battalion of the Bedfords to which the deceased was attached. Much sympathy is felt for his parents and friends."

JAMES FOSTER (55471)

Corporal, 9th Company Machine Gun Corps.

Killed in Action, Thursday 25th April 1918, aged 23,

in French Flanders.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial,
Zonnebeke, Belgium.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield. Son of Albert
and Mary Foster of Bourne End Cranfield.



James Foster was born in 1895, the eldest living child of **Albert and Mary** Ann Foster of Bourne End, Cranfield. Albert was a general labourer.

James' younger brother, **Frank**, had been killed at Passchendaele in November 1917 (page 202). The family details are in Frank's tribute. His sister, **Rose** would have been 18 when James was killed. His parents had lost 2 other children before the 1911 census.

James, a farm labourer, enlisted in Bedford, first serving in the Essex Regiment before transferring to the Machine Gun Corps.

The **Machine Gun Corps** was formed in October 1915, with Branches attached to the Infantry, Cavalry and Motor (motor bikes and cars) Divisions. The following year there was a Heavy Branch attached to tanks.

Using Vickers Machine Guns, James was placed in the 9th Machine Gun Company, Infantry Branch. The Branch joined the 3rd Division on 8th February 1916. On 6th March 1918 these were merged with the 8th Machine Gun Company and moved into 3rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps. James, as a Corporal, would have been in charge of a sub-section of 2 Vickers Machine Guns.

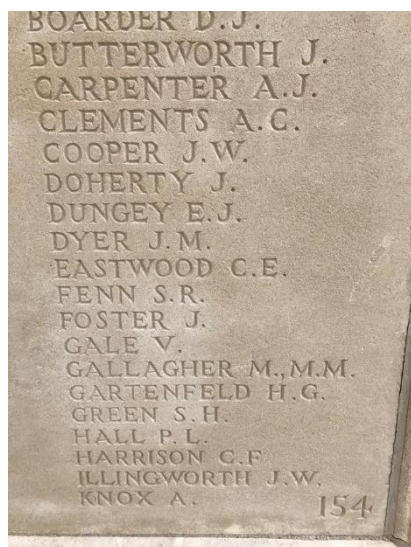


James would have fought in the German Offensive in the spring of 1918 at the 1st Battles of the Somme at St Quentin (21st -23rd March), the 1st Battle of Bapaume (24th - 25th March). The 1st Battle of Arras (26th March), the Battles of Estaires (9th - 11th April) and the Battle for the Lys (9th - 29th April).

The War Diaries don't make it clear how or where James was killed. They contain mainly "Operation Orders" about the positioning and manning of machine gun posts. They were obviously in the thick of the German offensive and would have been subjected to heavy shelling before any infantry attack. He was killed on 25th April 1918. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the **Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, Belgium (page 192).**



The Tynes Cot Memorial



A memorial Tribute from his father, mother and sister,
Bourne End, Cranfield.

“Sleep on beloved, and take thy rest
Thy Grave we may never see,
But as long as life and memory last.
We will remember Thee”

James is commemorated
on the grave of his parents,
alongside his brother, Frank, in
the Churchyard of the Parish
Church of St Peter & St Paul,
Cranfield.
(See inscription on page 207).



THE 1918 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

The 1918 flu pandemic (January 1918 - December 1920) was caused by an unusually virulent strain of the H1N1 virus. In contrast to most flu outbreaks which disproportionately kill the very young, elderly or already weakened patients, this pandemic predominantly killed previously healthy adults. It is thought that the virus triggered a “cytokine storm” which attacks the stronger immune system of young adults. It caused haemorrhage from mucus membranes, especially the nose, stomach and intestine. Most of the deaths were from bacterial pneumonia, but the virus also killed people directly, by causing massive haemorrhage and oedema in the lungs.

This unusually severe disease killed up to 20% of those affected as opposed to the usual flu epidemic with a 0.1% mortality rate. It killed 50-100 million people world-wide, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history.

The close quarters and massive troop movements of World War I may have hastened the spread of the virus. Some speculated that the soldiers' immune systems were weakened by malnourishment, as well as the stresses of combat and chemical attacks.

To maintain morale, wartime censors limited reports of illness and mortality in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The papers in neutral Spain were free to report the epidemic's effect. This created the false impression that Spain had been especially hard hit, giving rise to the nickname **“Spanish Flu”**.

CHARLES COOPER (235789)

Private, 12/13th Battalion Northumberland
Fusiliers.

PoW died on the 29 October 1918, aged 26.

Buried in the Hamburg Ohisdorf Cemetery,
Germany.

Husband of Alice Cooper, West End, Cranfield

Son of Joseph & Anna Cooper, North Crawley,
Bucks.

Charles Cooper was born in Emberton, Buckinghamshire, in 1892, the youngest of four children of **Joseph and Harriet Anna** (nee Jackson). His brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1918 and their marriages, were: **George** Henry (39) married Annie Ava Caves in 1911 in North Crawley. While living in Church Street Dunstable, he joined the Royal Engineers (Transport Branch) in 1915. **William** Charles (36) married a Cranfield girl, Florence Mary Evans, on 23rd May 1904. She was the daughter of William George Evans and Annie Elizabeth Ross. William joined the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment in August 1914 and saw service in France but caught influenza. This left him with muscular rheumatism and irregular heart action and he was discharged as medically unfit in 1916. **Lydia** Rose (32) married Thomas Paradine Hodgkins in 1909. In 1911 she was in the workhouse at Newport Pagnell. Thomas appeared in court

in January 1911 for non-payment of an order under the married woman's act and, as he couldn't pay the arrears, was jailed for a month. He joined the Bedfordshire Regiment during the war and the couple later had children.

In the 1901 census the family had moved to North Crawley, in the High Street, two dwellings down from Folly Lane. Charles joined the 5th **Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment** in November 1914. He was later transferred into the 24th/27th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers before transferring within the regiment to the 12th/13th Battalion "D" company.

In April 1918 the Battalion was in **Flanders** trying to hold back the German advance eight miles **south of Ypres at Wytschaete**. The diary for the 16th of April records that after heavy bombardment the enemy attacked and owing to mist, turned their right flank. A defensive flank was formed on high ground. Casualties on the day included eleven officers and 320 other ranks (OR). He is **listed as Missing in Action (MIA) on 16th April 1918 and later found to be a prisoner of war (PoW).**

At the beginning of the war killing prisoners was more commonplace than taking men alive. The Hague Convention covered Prisoners of War, saying they must be humanely treated, for example "all their personal belongings, except arms, horses and military papers, remain their property". Despite this, on surrendering, men were usually stripped for "souvenirs" and any useful pieces of kit,

sometimes losing their boots and greatcoats, having to hobble to the PoW train barefoot and cold.

There were many PoW camps in Germany. Charles was taken to **Parchim** in the north of Germany, a journey of about 435 miles, in cattle trucks. Food was scarce owing to the blockade, and food shortages were causing looting and riots. Nearly half a million German civilians starved to death. What food they had was being sent to the troops. The blockade greatly affected the 2,400,000 PoWs who relied on family and Red Cross parcels to survive. A typical daily ration for a PoW was about a quarter of a kilo (just over 8 ounces) of Black KK bread (from the German Kleie and Kartoffeln - bran and potatoes).

Parchim (in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) PoW camp was about 3 miles outside the town. Parchim, covering 3 miles across, housed 25,000 prisoners, all enlisted men rather than officers. It provided work parties. With the lack of food came ill health and the camps suffered outbreaks of cholera, typhus and many cases of pulmonary illness.

The Camp Commandant, Oberst Kothe, was said to have violated the Geneva Convention time after time, parading men with no clothes on in the winter, forcing hard labour with little or no food. There are stories of the kindness of one of the guards who was said to have helped many of the men.

Charles died at Parchim Camp on 29th October 1918.

He was buried at Parchim, but his body now lies in **Hamburg Ohisdorf Cemetery, Germany.** In 1923 all of the graves of Commonwealth servicemen in Germany were brought together into four permanent cemeteries. Hamburg had burials brought from 120 other burial grounds, one being Parchim.

Three plots were used by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) as burial sites for Commonwealth and Allied servicemen of both World Wars. There are more than 2473 identified casualties commemorated here by the CWGC.



Hamburg Ohisdorf Cemetery

THE FINAL HUNDRED DAYS (8th August - 11th November 1918)

The tide in Europe was turning. **The Allies' blockade** of the German ports had led to widespread malnutrition amongst the Germans at home and poorly supplied troops at the front.

Although the **American Expeditionary Force** (AEF - the "doughboys"), under General John Pershing, had their first taste of action in France in late May 1918, they did not play a major military role until the final stages of the war. However, the mere presence of the Americans was a powerful factor in determining the course of events in this final year. Unfortunately they suffered as heavily as their Allies before them.

The **British Expeditionary Force** (BEF) had also been reinforced by large numbers of troops returning from the Sinai and Palestine Campaign and the Italian Front as well as replacements held back by the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.

The British had sufficient artillery to be able to launch offensives along the whole front, with sufficient railway lines and ammunition supplies to feed the guns.

The French had already succeeded in pushing the Germans back in their counter-offensive which came to be known as the **Second Battle of the Marne**. (20th July - 2nd August)

The Allies counterattack along the **Somme**, known as the **Battle of Amiens** (8th – 11th August), was decisive.

The Allies took 17,000 prisoners. Total German losses were estimated at 30,000, while the Allies suffered about 6,500 killed.

The Germans were pushed back, sector by sector, first in France and then in Belgium, virtually to her frontiers.

Several attempts were made to break the **Hindenburg line** of defensive fortifications between the Aisne and Arras in France (**12th September – 9th October**). On **29th September** the British Fourth Army (with British, Australian and American forces) attacked at **St Quentin** where they crossed the canal.

On **8th October** the First and Third British Armies broke through the line at **Cambrai**.

Meanwhile, at **Ypres**, the first American troops to engage in combat around Ypres launched their assault on **31st August** and took the high ground to the south of the city.

On 28th September, Belgian, British, French and American troops combined their efforts in the final offensive known as the **Fourth Battle of Ypres**. On 14th October the last shell fell on Ypres. Casualties on both sides in the Ypres Salient had exceeded 1,700,000 fighting men as well as countless civilians.

Throughout October the demoralised German Armies were in exhausted retreat through the territory gained in 1914.

In Germany hunger, fuel shortages, street protests and the effects of a global influenza epidemic added to their misery.

On 9th November Kaiser Wilhelm II went into exile.

Fighting continued in Belgium until the very last minute. **Mons** was finally recaptured on 11th November.

The Armistice was signed at 11am on 11th November 1918 in a railway carriage in the forest of Compeigne in France. The carriage belonged to Ferdinand Foch, the French Commander in Chief.

The Kaiser abdicated on 28th November.

The fighting was over but the war didn't end officially until the signing of the **Treaty of Versailles on 28th June 1919.**

Germany was forced to give territory back in France (Alsace-Lorraine), Poland, Czechoslovakia and other states. She was "punished" by enormous financial sanctions which led to the collapse of the German economy.

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS



There were street celebrations in London and Paris

In Cranfield there are no records in the local press of any festivities. In the **CRANFIELD** section of the ***Bedfordshire Times and Independent*** the news of the Armistice was overshadowed by the flu epidemic - those who had died, who was being buried and the fact that they hoped it was slowing down.

As the war ended there must have been a sense of numb relief. The village families had suffered tragic losses. The austerity caused by the war must have been biting, although, living in the countryside, they would never go hungry. Many of those of our young men who returned were scarred, either physically, mentally or both. And now they were being hit by a ravaging flu epidemic.

There must have been a sense of despair, but, hopefully, they would have supported each other and grown closer together as a community.

FRED BILLINGTON (M2/O34528)
Corporal Army Service Corps, Mechanical
Transport.
Died of influenza, 20th November 1918 ,in
Salonica, aged 30.
Born in and resident of Cranfield.
Buried in Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria,
Greece.

Fred Billington was born in Cranfield in 1888, one of 8 children and the 4th son of **James William and Sarah Ann**. The family lived at 9 Red Lion Cottages on the High Street.

His brothers and sisters, with their ages in 1918 were: **Charles** (41), **Thomas**, died of meningitis on 27th November 1917, while on active service. **Edward** (36), **Fred** (30), **Selina “Lena”** (28), **May** (25) and **Annie** (23). Full details of all the family are in 'Thomas' tribute (page 214).

Fred enlisted at Bedford on 21st January 1915. His occupation was a motor driver. He had been employed for over three years as **chauffeur to Dr Street**. Dr Street lived in Hulcote Manor and was the founder of the surgery in Cranfield, succeeded by his son.

Fred joined the **Army Service Corps** and applied to join the **mechanical transport** branch. He trained at the Mechanical Transport Depot, Grove Park, Lee, London,

until 12th February 1915 when he was posted to France. On 8th July he was taken to No 3 Canadian Hospital and, on 16th July sailed to England on the “St Denis” where he was taken to Warncliffe War Hospital in Sheffield suffering from acute stomatitis (severe inflammation of the mouth).

He was deemed fit for service but stayed in England until 6th October 1916, when he embarked from Avonmouth on S.S. Queensland arriving in Salonica on 24th October 1916. (For more about Salonica see page182)

He was promoted to Corporal on 14th September 1917 while stationed in Greece. He suffered an injury while in Greece. He was with 782 MT Coy and he was section Corporal for that part of the convoy. He had to fill out an accident form. This is a transcript of the form in Fred’s own neat handwriting.

On the 28.3.18 I was detached to proceed with 5 lorries to Kilo 70. I had trouble to get along owing to the road being snowed up. I was running round the lorries putting sand under the rear wheels when I slipped and fell on my right side and twisted my left knee badly. I had trouble with my left knee 5 or 6 years ago through twisting it on a stone.

034528 Cpl F. Billington

The war ended on 11th November but, the very next day, Fred was taken by ambulance to the 632nd General Hospital suffering from influenza. His condition worsened and he died on 20th November. The cause of death was recorded as broncho-pneumonia supervening on influenza contracted on active service.

He is buried in the **Mikra British Cemetery**, Greece, along with George Bitchener (page 180).



The cemetery is situated in the Municipality of Kalamaria in the City of Thessaloniki (previously Salonica). It contains 1,810 Commonwealth burials of the First World War as well as 147 war graves of other nationalities.

The Bedfordshire Times and Citizen of 6th December 1918 reported: “Mr and Mrs James Billington of Red Lion Cottages, have heard that Corpl. Fred Billington has succumbed to bronchial pneumonia following influenza, at Salonica on Nov 20th. He was attached to the A.S.C.M.T. and previous to joining up was for three and a half years with Dr Street, after a course of motor instruction in London. He was the 4th son and 29 years old and had been in the army for 3 years. Corpl F. Billington was highly regarded and much sympathy is felt for the bereaved parents who lost an older son in Nov 27th last year in France.

Fred is commemorated with his brother, Tom, on his parents’ grave in Cranfield Churchyard - inscription page 219.



GEORGE SALISBURY (WR/262589)

Sapper, 259th Railway Construction Royal
Engineers.

Died of influenza, Wednesday 20th November
1918, aged 41, in France.

Buried in the Terlincthun British Cemetery,
Wimille, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in Marston. Resident of Cranfield.

Husband of Henrietta Salisbury of the Fox &
Hounds Public house Cranfield.

Sidney “George” Salisbury was born in Marston in 1877,
one of two children of **William and Ellen** (nee Simpkins).
His father was a farm labourer but became the **landlord of
the Fox and Hounds** public house in Broad Green.



The Fox and Hounds was built in 1863. It was closed in 1940 and demolished in the mid 1980's. Washingleys now stands on the site. You can just see the windmill to the left.

He stayed there until his death in 1929 when his widow, Ellen, took over the Licence. George had one sister, **Mabel**, aged 35 when he died. Mabel married Joseph "Charles" Cox of Cranfield in 1904. They were living with Mabel's parents at the Fox and hounds. Sadly Mabel died in 1926 at the age of 43.

The family had moved to Cranfield before George started school. He trained as a **carpenter** and, in the 1901 census, was living in Willesden, London, staying with his uncle, John Simpkins, who was working as a coach builder. **George married Henrietta Prior** in 1909. They were married at Holy Trinity Church, Barnes in Surrey. Around this time George started working for a new company, the London Electric Company, formed in 1910 to manage the company's subsidiary underground railways. **The couple had 3 children.** With their ages in 1918, and subsequent marriages, they were: **William** George (8) born in Willesden. He married Phyllis Simmons in Watford in 1938. He became a Police Officer based in St Albans in 1939. **Mabel** Helen (5) born in Edmonton. She married John Heath in Bishops Stortford in 1933 where they were living in 1939. In 1918 she was living at East End, Cranfield. **Bertha** (3) was also born in Edmonton. She married Philip Golding in Bishop Stortford in 1953.

They were living in Tottenham when George joined the Army Reserve in December 1915. He joined **the Railway Troops Depot, Royal Engineers**. About this time his wife and children moved to Cranfield to stay with his parents at the Fox and Hounds. He stayed in England from December 1915 until January 1917. He spent most of the time at the H.Q. in Longmoor Hampshire before being transferred to the 259th Railway Construction Company. His service number with the prefix WR stands for Waterways and Railways.

On 31st January 1917 he was sent to France. The R.E. Railway Companies were very busy all over the British sector laying temporary tracks, criss-crossing newly captured ground, to reduce the need for horses, transporting men, injured soldiers and ammunition.

George survived the war only to be struck down with **influenza**. He was feeling ill on 8th November 1918 and on 12th November he was admitted to "The Dublin" 83 General Hospital Boulogne. After initially improving he became very poorly and was in a very distressed state when he **died on 20th November**.

He is buried in the **Terlincthun British Cemetery** in the village of Wimille just north of Boulogne.



There are 4,378 Commonwealth burials from WW1. The cemetery was badly damaged during WW2 from shelling and during the German occupation.

On 17th May 1922 his widow, Henrietta, received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. George's death was considered "due to illness contracted in the army". His widow was therefore entitled to a pension for herself and three children.

The Bedfordshire Times and Citizen of 6th December 1916 reported: We have to report the passing away in France of Sapper G Salisbury, whose parents are Mr and Mrs Salisbury of the Fox and Hounds Inn. He leaves a widow and three children to mourn the loss of a good father. He was an only son, by trade a carpenter, and working on the railway in London previous to being released for work in France. He was in his 41st year of age. Developing pneumonia after influenza, he passed away on November 20th and was laid to rest in Terlincthun Cemetery, France. The chaplain has sent a beautiful letter of sympathy and description of the funeral to Mrs Salisbury. Sapper G Salisbury was well known and respected in Bedford, London and here, and was an old scholar of the Baptist Sunday School.

VICTOR JOHN LINEHAM (L/11298)

Private, 1st Surrey Yeomanry, Corps of Lancers.

Died of influenza on Saturday 14th December 1918,
age 24, at Salonica.

Buried in Sarigol Military Cemetery, Kriston,
Greece.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Henry and Charlotte Lineham.

Victor John Lineham was born in Cranfield in 1894, the 3rd of 5 children of **Henry James** (born 1863) and **Charlotte Catherine** (nee Millard, born 1867). They were married on 16th June 1890. Henry was a **coachman** and, by 1918, was working at **Cranfield Court**. Charlotte was the daughter of Jesse Millard, a licensed horse dealer.

Victor's siblings, with their ages in 1918, and subsequent stories, were: **Herbert Henry William** (28) married Ada Cartwright in Ridgmont in 1916 and was working as a groom at Woburn Abbey. He joined the 3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, was wounded twice, the second time, in June 1918 when he was shot in the thigh, left arm and face and was shipped back home to Newport Pagnell. **Their son, Warrant Officer Francis Victor Lineham was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1945** for gallantry and devotion to duty. *The Mercury & Herald* of 2nd November reported: "He was born in 1920 and attended the local Council School from which he won a

scholarship to Wolverton County Secondary School. A railway clerk, he joined the Royal Air Force in November 1940, and did his training in the United States where he qualified as a navigator.” Horace **Jesse**, known as Jesse was an apprentice blacksmith in 1911. He **died in 1916 at the age of 24.** **Catherine** Charlotte was an active member of the parish church and the Girls’ Friendly Society. She died and was buried on 22nd November 1918. Her mother was too ill to attend the funeral. Catherine died just a month before her brother, Victor. **Olive** Charlotte (16) never married and died in 1956 aged 56.

Victor is mentioned in the newspaper in August 1905 for coming 2nd in a boy’s obstacle race at the Cranfield Flower Show. In 1911 Victor was a gardener’s labourer.

The family home in the census returns was Red Lion Cottages in the High Street, 2 doors away from the Billington boys, Fred and Thomas (page 279 and 214). Fred died in Salonica just a few weeks before Victor.

In 1916, when he was 21 years old, he joined the **1/1st Surrey Yeomanry (Queen Mary’s Regiment)**. He had grown up with horses, his father being a coachman, his brother a groom and his grandfather a horse trader. The Yeomanry regiments were the cavalry although they were often used as infantry during the war as the need arose.

By the end of 1916 he was given a new service number. Until then each regiment had given out their own number which

meant that, throughout the army, more than one man had the same number, leading to massive confusion. Victor's new number, L/11298 signified that he was with the Lancers, a cavalry unit.

The Surrey Yeomanry were divided into 4 Squadrons. A and B Squadrons were both in Salonica by February 1916 and stayed there until 1921.



Surrey Yeomanry in Struma Valley, Salonica, summer 1916

The British Salonica Army was placed in that area of northern Greece to oppose Bulgarian and Turkish advances into the region. It formed, what was called, the **Macedonian Front**. To combat any threatened invasion of Greece, the hills and outlying villages were heavily fortified by barbed wire. This series of defences was known as “The Birdcage” by British troops. The region of the Struma Valley was infested with mosquitoes. The conditions were dreadful. Apart from lack of supplies, the men suffered from malaria, dysentery and other enteric diseases. Summers were extremely hot and winters so cold that a man’s hand could freeze to the cold metal on the rifles. By the end of the Balkans Campaign more than 10,600 men had died in Salonica, mostly from disease.

Victor died on 14th December 1918 at the age of 24, from influenza. He is buried in **Sarigol Military Cemetery, Salonica.**

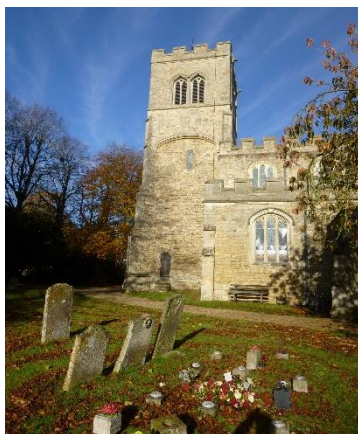


THE FALLEN OF 1919

- 8th Feb Alfred John Kinns, Royal Engineers
Died of influenza in Clipstone Camp
Hospital, aged 30.
- 19th Feb John Harpur Evans, 2nd Battalion
Bedfordshire Regiment. Died of wounds,
received in March 1918 at the Somme.
Died in Wolverhampton Hospital, aged 22.

The above two soldiers are buried in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield.

The only other two WWI soldiers buried here died earlier in the war. They are William Herbert White (page 34) who died while training and Herbert Garner (page 142) whose name does not appear on the War Memorial as he died after he was discharged from the army as medically unfit.



ALFRED JOHN KINNS (524394)

Driver, 69th Division Royal Engineers.

Died of illness, Saturday, 8th February 1919, aged 30,
at Clipstone Camp Hospital.

Buried in the Cranfield Churchyard.

Born in and resident of Cranfield.

Son of James and Emma Kinns of Cranfield.



Alfred John Kinns (seated second from the left) was born in Cranfield in 1888, one of 10 children of **James and Emma Elizabeth** (nee White) Kinns of the High Street, Cranfield. His father was landlord of the Old George Inn in Church Walk and by 1917 of the Plough Inn. By 1911 three of their children had died. His surviving siblings, with their ages in 1919 and marriages were: **Albert** James (40) married Kate Simpson in 1910 and settled in Wharley End. **Hilda** Annie (37) married Frederick William Wood, a chauffeur in

Leicester, in 1907. They settled in Leicester. **Annie** Elizabeth (36) went into service in London at the home of the director of a distillery. In 1911 she was a domestic cook for a vicar in Ross-on-Wye. She married Albert A Taylor in 1921 when she was 38. Herbert (31) married Elizabeth Mary Allen in 1911 in Northampton and settled there. The two youngest boys were **Arthur** Frederick and Hubert **Reginald**. Arthur never married and died in 1976. Hubert, known as Reginald, in 1911 had stayed on at school after the school leaving age of 12. He married Annie T Hedge in 1922 and settled in Northamptonshire.

In 1903 Alfred was given a prize at school for his diligence and good conduct and, the following year was attending evening lessons and was awarded a prize for never missing a lesson over the winter months.

He was working on farmland as a teamster when he was 13 years old. He became a butcher before joining the army. He never married.

He enlisted on 25th October 1915, in Bedford, in the Territorial Force for the duration of the war. He was attached to the Headquarters of the 69th Division, Royal engineers as a **driver**.

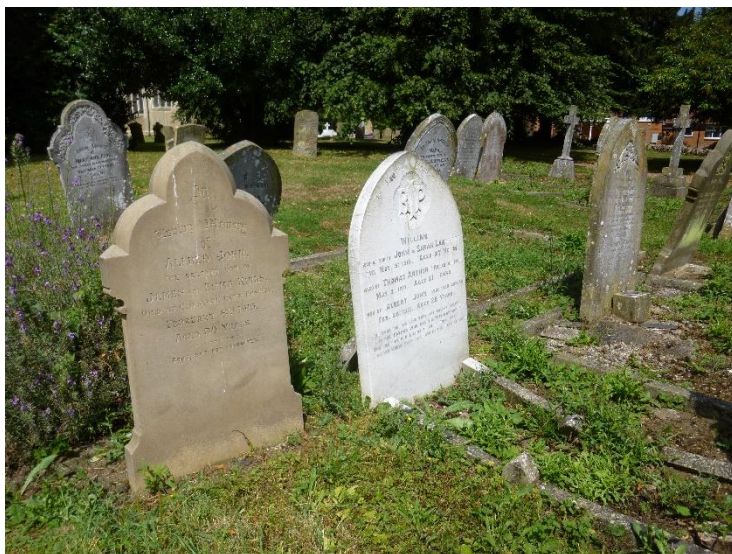
He was back in the village on Easter Monday 1916 when he was Best Man at the wedding of Sapper Ernest William White to Miss Eleanor Goff. It was noted that both men attended in Khaki.

We have no record of where Alfred was stationed but it may have been that he served as a driver in Clipstone Camp near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, which was believed to be the largest camp of wooden huts built to train the men of Kitchener's New Army. It housed upwards of 20-30,000 troops at any one time. In the final years of the war it was used as a demobilisation camp.



Alfred became ill after looking after an officer who was sick with influenza. His symptoms started on 31st January and on 1st February he was admitted to **Clipstone Camp Hospital** with a very high temperature. His condition became grave and he **died on 8th February 1919 from pneumonia and septicaemia.**

His body was brought back to Cranfield where he was buried in the Parish Churchyard.



The grave stands to the left in the first line of gravestones behind the east wall of the graveyard. It stands next to the grave of John and Sarah Lancaster which also commemorates Thomas Arthur, named on the War Memorial, and his brother, Albert John.



IN
 LOVING MEMORY
 of
 ALFRED JOHN
 THE BELOVED SON OF
 JAMES & EMMA KINNS

 DIED AT CLIPSTONE
 CAMP HOSPITAL
 FEBRUARY 8TH 1919
 AGED 30 YEARS

 GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

JOHN HARPUR EVANS (25179)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died on the 19 February 1919, aged 22, in
Wolverhampton Hospital.

Wounded at the Somme during 1918.

Buried in the Cranfield Churchyard.

Born in and resident of Cranfield.

Son of John and Martha Evans, of the High St,
Cranfield.

John Harpur Evans was born in Cranfield in 1897, one of five children of **John Harpur Evans and his wife Martha Sophia** (nee Goff). They were, with their ages in 1919 and marriages: **Wallace** John (35) married Mary Elizabeth Lovell in London in 1912 and settled in Spalding, Lincolnshire. In WWI Wallace joined the 4th Bedfords transferring to the Royal Fusiliers in July 1917. **Ellen Selina** (33) married Albert John Caves in 1906. He was a bricklayer. They lived in 63 Church Street, Liddington. **Ethel** Elizabeth (32) lived at Brook End North Crawley with her husband, Albert, also a bricklayer. **Clarissa** Annie known as **Clara**, married a distant cousin Charles Harpur in 1909. Charles was killed on the Somme (page 107). She married his brother John in 1921. In the 1939 census she was a widow living with her family at 25 Mill Road. **George** Philip (27) married Florence Ellen Loft in St Mary's Church Wootton on 21st August 1914. In 1939 they lived at 19 Mill Road. George worked as a cowman. **Daisy** (25) married William

John Cox on 29th June 1912 in Cranfield. In 1939 they were living at 85 High Street. Her father, then 73, lived with them. The youngest were **Louis** John Harpur (20) and **Joseph** Thomas (18). Joseph joined the Tank Regiment in July 1919. Within weeks of joining the army he married Gertrude H Cook. In 1939 they were living at 93 Bedford Road.

John (registered at birth as John Joseph) is listed in the 1911 census, at the age of 14, as living with his widowed father.

John volunteered for military service in 1915, with the **2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, “The Duke’s Regiment”** the same battalion as his cousin, Charles Harpur. The battalion was part of the 90th Brigade within the 30th Division. They saw heavy fighting at the **Somme** in 1916. In 1917 they were fighting in the **Arras area** in April and July. In August they were at the **Battle of Pilkem**, part of the Third Battle of Ypres known as **Passchendaele**.

In 1918 the Battalion were back on the **Somme** during the German Spring Offensive. He would have fought in the Battle of St Quentin (21st – 23rd March). On the second day of the offensive, British Troops were forced to retreat from the German advance, losing their last footholds on the original front line. Thick fog hampered the operations. Directly to the rear was the “Stevens Redoubt” to which the survivors of the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment retired. The Bedfords were ordered to retire just as their last ammunition ran out. They retreated through the lines of the 20th Division having lost half of their number. We don’t

know when or where John Harpur was severely wounded but it may have been during this bloody retreat. He was sent back to England where, eleven months later, he died in hospital in Wolverhampton.

He is buried in a War Grave in Cranfield Churchyard.





The grave of the last soldier to die lies alongside that of the first, William Herbert White, to the right of the path running from the lych gate in Court Road.



PART TWO

REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION



REMEMBRANCE DAY

Remembrance Day, sometimes known as Poppy Day, is a memorial day observed in the Commonwealth of Nations member states since the end of the First World War to remember the members of the armed forces who have died in the line of duty. It is observed on 11th November – **at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the anniversary of the day the Armistice was signed.** In the UK the main observance is the Sunday nearest to 11th November. The tradition was inaugurated by King George V in 1919. He called for a **two-minute silence** so that “the thoughts of everyone be concentrated on reverent remembrance.”

The national ceremony is held in Whitehall at the **Cenotaph** which initially was conceived by Sir Edwin Lutyens at Lloyd George’s request as a saluting point of the march past of Allied troops during the Victory Parade in July 1919.

The annual ceremony is attended by Her Majesty the Queen, members of the Royal Family and members of government of this and Commonwealth Nations. Wreaths are laid and a service is generally conducted by the Bishop of London, with a choir from the Chapels Royal, in the presence of representatives of all major faiths in the United Kingdom.

After the service there is a parade of veterans, who also lay wreaths at the foot of the Cenotaph as they pass, and a salute is taken by a member of the Royal Family at Horse Guards Parade.

In Cranfield, on Remembrance Sunday, a parade of members of the Royal British Legion, Army and Air Force Cadets and other uniformed organizations and any members of the armed forces who may be present, march from the Cross Keys to the War Memorial. The Last Post heralds a two-minute silence at 11am which is ended by the Reveille. The names of those on the memorial are read out, followed by the Exhortation.

Those attending then move to the Parish Church where a Remembrance Service is held. Poppy crosses which are placed on the War Graves are blessed by the Rector.

Along with other prayers and hymns we join in saying the Act of Commitment:

*Almighty God, heavenly Father,
We pledge ourselves to serve You and all mankind,
In the cause of peace,
For the relief of want and suffering
And for the praise of Your name.
Guide us by your Spirit;
Give us wisdom;
Give us courage,
Give us hope,
And keep us faithful to You
Now and always.*

Amen

Remembrance Day Parade 2016





CRANFIELD WAR MEMORIAL

Almost every town and village in the United Kingdom has its own War Memorial. Money was raised by public subscription.

The Bedfordshire Times and Citizen of 5th December 1919 printed the following letter from “A Disappointed Subscriber”: Dear Sir, May I be allowed a small space in your valuable columns to raise a protest before it is too late, against the proposed memorial to our fallen heroes of Cranfield being placed in the Churchyard. I feel this to be my duty when one hears from all sides an expression of dissatisfaction at the result of the last public meeting in connection with the same. In the first place the money was subscribed by the public for a public monument, and it was generally understood that it was to be placed in a public place, on public ground. I therefore cannot see how the meeting had the power to vote it to be erected where it was obvious to anyone that if it were placed in the Churchyard it would be in an out of the way place, whereas there are several prominent sites on the main thoroughfare of the village available and vacant. If public money is to be used to adorn the ground belonging to any particular set or party, then I, for one, as a Nonconformist and subscriber, much regret that when called upon for my contribution it was not made clear to me at the time. I feel that I am voicing the feeling of a majority of disappointed subscribers, and unpleasant feelings amongst at least the religious community. They can yet be amended if the memorial is placed on public ground, where all can take part in the much looked for unveiling of the same, with equal pleasure and satisfaction.”

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 6th February 1920 reported: "A large assembly gathered at the Memorial Hall on Monday to discuss the question of the War Memorial. Mr R Campbell presided. Mr CH Ball proposed and Mr A Linnell seconded that the Memorial be placed on the Village Green opposite the Post Office. Mr G Richardson proposed and Mr G Francis seconded that it be erected against the village pump." After various suggestions, eventually the site chosen was that on the Village Green near the pump. A further £30 was needed to be raised to complete the Memorial with a fence round it.

The Cranfield War Memorial was eventually unveiled.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 25th June 1920 gave the following account: "Cranfield like other villages has not been behind in perpetuating the memory of its heroes who fell while serving their King and Country in the Great War, and on Sunday afternoon a large company of parishioners and others attended the unveiling and dedication of the Memorial Cross which has been erected on the Village Green. The ex-servicemen of the village were in attendance. The cross is the workmanship of Messrs. Jarvis and Son, Stonemasons, of Midland Road, Bedford, and bears the names of 43 Cranfield men who made the Supreme sacrifice. At the base of the cross is the inscription "In loving and grateful memory of those Cranfield men who gave their lives for King and Country, in the Great War 1914-1919. Their names liveth for evermore." The reading and prayer were taken by the Rev. WJ Harris, Pastor of the Baptist Chapel, an address was given by Mr Townley and the names of the fallen were read by the Rev. F Downes. After the prayers Corporal Noble sounded "The Last Post"

and the hymn “For all the saints who from their labours rest” was sung with much feeling. At the close the Reveille was sounded. The memorial was covered with beautiful flowers among them being one from “The Ex-servicemen of Cranfield and District, in memory of our comrades who fell in the Great War 1914-1919 - Faithful unto death”. Such a service will live in the memories of all Cranfield people for many years.”





View west along the High Street



Cranfield War Memorial with wreaths

THE REMEMBRANCE POPPY

When the Canadian soldier and doctor, **Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae**, penned his poem “**In Flanders Fields**” little did he realise what a lasting impact this would make. As he witnessed the ravages of war, tending casualties from the Second Battle of Ypres at a field Hospital, he saw the Flanders Poppies growing obstinately in the desolate landscape of the battlefields. They thrive best where soil has been disturbed. The blood of war mingling with the bright red flowers gave some gleam of hope and of new life. The poem is printed in full on page 179 as McCrae lies in the same cemetery as one of our soldiers. He died of pneumonia on 28th January 1918.

The poem was translated into dozens of languages and achieved global distribution. The poem, then entitled “We shall not sleep” was read by **Moina Belle Michael** in New York just two days before the Armistice.

She was so moved by the last verse “To you from falling hands we throw the Torch; be yours to hold it high. If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders Fields.” She pledged to keep the faith and always to wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance, an emblem of “keeping the faith with all who died”. She hastily scribbled her pledge on the back of an envelope.

Oh! You who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet – to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith

With all who died.
We cherish too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valour led.

It seems to signal to the skies,
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honour of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll reach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields
In Flanders Fields we fought.

She began a campaign to make the poppy a national commemorative symbol. By September 1920 the **Memorial Poppy** was adopted as a country wide symbol to be worn by American Legion members on Armistice Day, 11th November.

A key person at the National American convention in 1920 was **Madame Anne E Guerin**, a member of the French YMCA. She saw possibilities of the proceeds of the sale of large numbers of artificial poppies going towards helping those suffering from the after-effects of war, particularly orphaned children. She travelled worldwide to promote the idea.

She travelled to Great Britain to meet **Field Marshall Douglas Haig**. Although he was criticised for being responsible for elevating the number of British and Empire casualties, he was appalled by the financial hardship experienced by many veterans and played a crucial role in supporting them. He was also president of the **British Legion**, founded in 1921.

The **first British Legion Poppy Day appeal** began in the autumn of 1921, with hundreds of thousands of poppies being sold.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

“Service not Self”

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is a British Charity providing financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependents. It was founded in 1921. One of the founders, Earl Haig was President until his death in 1928. A Royal Charter was granted in 1925 and again in 1971 to mark its 50th Anniversary. HM The Queen is Patron.

It is best known for the annual Poppy Appeal and the Festival of Remembrance in the Royal Albert Hall on the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday. The Poppy is the trademark of the RBL. The poppies are manufactured at the Poppy Factory in Richmond.



The Cranfield Branch welcomes new members of all ages. Membership is no longer restricted to members of the armed forces. They have a social programme of monthly meetings, currently held at the College Arms at Cranfield University on the 3rd Monday of each month at 8pm (20:00 hours). They organise special events and outings as well as fundraising and organising the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Parade. Their Welfare Officer, currently Bill Wells – also Standard Bearer - supports members and families.



Members of Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion leading the Parade to the War Memorial - November 1916

FOR THE FALLEN

Poem by Laurence Binyon

This poem was written in mid September 1914, a few weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. The British Expeditionary Force was already experiencing casualties. He was too old to enlist and was inspired to write the poem while sitting looking out to sea. on a cliff-top on the north Cornish coast.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted
They fell with faces to the foe.

**They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them or the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.**

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

The words of the fourth verse have been adopted by the
Royal British Legion as an Exhortation to commemorate
fallen Serviceman and Servicewomen.



THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

In 1916 the Reverend David Railton, a chaplain at the Front, noticed a grave with a rough cross bearing the words: "An unknown British Soldier". After the War, in 1920, he suggested that Britain honour its unknown war dead by bringing just one soldier back home.

Between four and six bodies were exhumed from four battle areas, the Aisne: Somme and Arras in France and Ypres in Belgium. The remains were covered with Union Flags and brought to the chapel at St Pol. Brigadier General LJ Wyatt, commander of British troops in France and Flanders, selected one. The officers placed the body in a plain coffin made of oak from Hampton Court, and it was transported to Dover on the destroyer HMS Verdun.

On the morning of 11th November 1920, the Unknown Warrior was drawn through crowd-lined streets of London, on a gun carriage, to the Cenotaph where King George V placed a wreath on the coffin. At 11am the nation observed the Two Minute Silence after which it was taken to Westminster Abbey where it was buried. The grave contains soil from France and is covered by a slab of black Belgian marble, inscribed with the words from The Bible: "They buried him among the Kings because he had done good toward God and toward his house." 2 Chronicles 24: 16.

Within the first week an estimated 1,250,000 people had filed past to pay their respects to all the unidentified war dead. It is the only part of the Abbey floor which is never walked on.

CRANFIELD SCHOOLS REMEMBER

The Head of Holywell School, Peter Haddon, wanted the children to experience and remember the Centenary of the start of the First World War. The first project was inspired by the art installation at the Tower of London between 5th August and 11th November 2014 - **“Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red”**; a display of 888,246 ceramic poppies.

The children at Holywell School ordered poppies and poppy crosses from The Royal British Legion. They wanted a range of religious symbols to represent those of all faiths who fought and died in the war. Photographs of their Poppy Exhibition “went viral” on Facebook..



The second project was to **visit the Battlefields and War Graves**. In his own words, he wanted to combine knowledge with spirituality. For the trip to be affordable it was planned as a day trip to Ypres in September 2014. Ten coaches took 500 pupils from all of the local schools. There was a coachful from Wootton Upper and 130 from Wootton Lower. There were pupils from Church End as well as Cranfield Academy and Holywell.

They set off at 6am. Different parties visited different sites but they all **met up at the Menin Gate in Ypres for the Last Post ceremony at dusk**. The pupils laid wreaths which they had brought with them. A tired but enriched party arrived back in Cranfield at 3am to be collected from Red Lion Close.



LIEUTENANT STEPHEN HARTER

Stephen John Hatfeild Harter was the fifth child and third son of the late Rev. George Gardner Harter. He was serving as a Lieutenant in the Royal Horse Guards. However he didn't die on active service. He was killed off the Adriatic coast on 10th February 1883 on a yachting expedition with some fellow officers. His body was returned to Cranfield for burial and he was interred in the Harter family vault with his parents. He was 25 years old.



**STEPHEN JOHN HATFEILD HARTER
LIEUTENANT ROYAL HORSE GUARDS
DIED X FEBRUARY MDCCCLXXXIII
AGED XXV**

The following is an edited newspaper report from the *Leighton Buzzard Observer* of 27th February 1883.

The funeral of the late Lieut. Stephen John Hatfeild Harter, who died in Naples, took place on 11th February. The remains were brought to the family mansion. All the shops in the village were closed, and long before the time fixed, people began to assemble near the church and at one o'clock perhaps the largest concourse ever seen in the village was assembled. Some 20 officers and men attended. The deceased's horse, bearing the uniform and accoutrements of his late master, was led behind the coffin which rested on a hand car, escorted by a detachment of the Royal Horse Guards. Upon reaching the lych-gate the body was carried by six soldiers into the church. The church was completely filled and, as the congregation were leaving, Miss Bliss, the organist played the Dead March. At the grave each of the relatives placed a wreath or cross of white flowers upon the coffin which was lowered to its final resting place in the family vault.

A beautiful stained glass window in the north aisle of the church, depicting Saints Gabriel, Maria and Stephen, was given in his memory, by his brothers.



Detail of the bottom right of the window

CAPTAIN WILLIAM SWABEY

Captain Swabey was a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo and Uncle of Rev. George Gardner Harter, hence the Cranfield connection.



His grave lies in the northern part of the Churchyard, near to the Harter family vault, opposite the Village Hall. The inlaid inscription on the marble tomb is brittle but still legible.

**“CAPT. WILLIAM SWABEY LATE ROYAL HORSE
ARTILLERY. VETERAN OF COPENHAGEN 1806,
TOULOUSE, VITTORIA, CU'DAD RODERIGO AND
WATERLOO. DEPUTY LIEUTENANT AND JUSTICE OF
THE PEACE OF THIS COUNTY. BORN JUNE 13TH 1789.
DIED FEB 6TH 1872.”**

**“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE THAT
BELIEVETH IN ME THOUGH HE WERE DEAD YET
SHALL HE LIVE”**

The inscription on the opposite side:

**IN MEMORY OF MARY ANN SWABEY BORN APRIL
16TH 1798 DIED OCTOBER 23RD 1869.**

**“IN HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE WHICH GOD THAT
CANNOT LIE PROMISED BEFORE THE WORLD
BEGAN”**

The following information is based on research by the late Patrick Healy and personal email correspondence with the late William Swabey, great, great, great grandson of the Captain. The family were visiting the grave and met Hugh Symes-Thompson, the Rector, who put him in touch with me.

William Swabey was born in Penge, Surrey, the third and youngest son of Dr Maurice Swabey and his wife, Catherine. Educated at Westminster School, he used to like writing Latin poetry. His talent for writing continued into his diaries which give a valuable first-hand account of the Napoleonic Wars.

He joined the army at the age of 15 years and finished his education at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. At the age of 16 years he received a commission in the Royal Regiment of Artillery as a Second Lieutenant. In 1807 his Regiment was active at the bombardment of Copenhagen. In July 1811 he served in the Peninsular War and later in Ciudad Roderigo and Salamanca with the Royal Horse Artillery.

In June 1813, at the Battle of Vittoria, he was wounded with a rifle ball which lodged in his right knee. Attempts to remove it failed and, after being invalided home, he returned to his troop fighting in the decisive battle against Napoleon at Waterloo in

June 1815. He had two horses shot from under him at Waterloo. He would have been 26 years old.

He married Mary Ann, the second daughter of Edward Hobson of Hope Hall Manchester. There are moving commemorative plaques to her two sisters in the Chancel of the Parish Church.

He was promoted to Captain in 1825 but retired from the army, settling down in Buckinghamshire where he became JP and Deputy Lieutenant of the County.

The Swabeys remained in the area for 15 years until 1840 when they emigrated to Prince Edward Island, now a Canadian Province. He intended to make himself at home as he chartered a ship to take his wife, their 10 children, 13 servants, several horses and a pack of hounds. He even took some foxes to make sure there would be sufficient sport!

He took an active part in the government, the Statute Book being full of measures which he either initiated or promoted. When the Prince of Wales visited the Colony in 1860 he received a portrait of himself in recognition of his services and was allowed to retain for life the prefix, "Honourable". In 1862, at the age of 72, he returned home to England. He moved to Wavendon House, transporting his whole family by road, a journey which took three days, as he disliked rail travel.



He continued hunting and developed a technique for mounting his horse with his wounded knee. At 81 he still took part in local cricket matches while someone ran for him.

Mary died at Wavendon in 1869 aged 71. William died in Kensington in 1872 at the age of 83.

His obituary reads: "He was a gentleman with clear ideas of responsibility, duty and justice. He was well read, an accomplished linguist and possessed of the dignity, courtesy and refined manner of a past generation. Finally he was a good, active and keen soldier - one of those who by zeal, energy and a high sense of duty and discipline have contributed so largely to the prestige of the army to which he belonged."

A member of the family in Bristol still has his sword from the Battle of Waterloo.

CRANFIELD'S WATERLOO

Early in 2015 the Rector was contacted by The Royal Artillery who wanted to commemorate Waterloo veterans on the 200th anniversary of the Battle.

The Parish Council kindly funded the refurbishment of the white marble grave.

A “Short Act of Remembrance” was held on 18th June 2015 at the Parish Church. The service was conducted by Rev. Hugh Symes-Thompson with soldiers parading from Toombs Troop, part of the 19th Regiment of the Royal Artillery, The Scottish Gunners, under Battery Commander, Major Dan Herberts.



On 18th June 1915, on the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, wreaths composed of laurel leaves, with cornflowers and red roses, were placed on the graves of officers and men of the Royal Regiment of Artillery who fought in the battle.

The wreath laid by Lance Bombardier Mitchell was composed of the same types of flowers. A two minute silence was followed by the Last Lament played by their piper, Pipe Major Gonsalves.



Stephen Swabey, a direct descendent of Captain Swabey, read out a message from the Canadian Province of Prince Edward Island where the Captain had played a prominent role in government. Members of the Troop read prayers.

Also attending were members of the Royal Artillery Veterans Association, members of the Royal British Legion, pupils from the Cranfield Academy “Parliament”, Parish and District Councillors and locals who joined the members of the troop for refreshments in the church and afterwards.



The Battery Commander wrote to the Rector afterwards, sending a Regimental Plaque and commenting on how impressed he was by the occasion and the interest and respect shown by the children, especially one small boy had stood to attention and saluted during the two minute silence.

It was an occasion for Cranfield to remember with pride.



A FINAL REFLECTION

World War I was to be the “war to end all wars”. Tragically there are still wars today. Soldiers are killed or suffer life changing injuries. Families are torn apart. Innocent civilians are killed. Ukraine, Iraq and Afghanistan are too fresh in our memories. Remembrance is as relevant and poignant today as it was 100 years ago.

We must be thankful for the advances in treatment and rehabilitation for the injured. We have seen how sport can give new hope to some of those affected by war injuries; both physical and mental. We can admire Prince Harry and his work in inaugurating the Invictus Games. His encouragement, and that of others, to give belief in themselves and hope for a future, is inspiring.

The work of the Royal British Legion and other charities supporting veterans and their families is needed and valued. The proceeds of this book will go to support their Poppy Appeal.

Both sides of any war suffer. The Germans suffered greater losses than any other nation. There are no winners.

The Syrian civil war is ravaging the country and causing an unprecedented refugee crisis.

Let us hope and pray that our young generation will grow up with love and peace in their hearts and lives, respecting all people in a common humanity.



A Scots Guardsman giving a wounded German prisoner a drink after an attack, August 1918

APPENDICES

CRANFIELD'S ROLL OF HONOUR WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)

REGINALD ANSTEY (27228)

Company Sergeant Major, 17th Battalion Nottingham & Derbyshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Friday 2nd June 1916, aged 28, in France.

Buried in Le Touret military cemetery, Richebourg l'Avoue, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in and was a resident of Cranfield.

Son of George and Emma Anstey, of the High Street, Cranfield.

FRED BILLINGTON (M2/034528)

Corporal Army Service Corps, Mechanical Transport.

Died of influenza, 20th November 1918 in Salonica, aged 30.

Buried in Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria, Greece.

Son of James and Ann Billington, of Cranfield

THOMAS BILLINGTON (G/81004)

Private, 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers Regiment.

Died of meningitis, Tuesday 27th November 1917, aged 38, in France. Buried in the Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British cemetery, Manancourt, France.

Son of James and Ann Billington, of Cranfield. Husband of Edith Lillian Billington of The White House, Aldershot.

WILLIAM GEORGE BITCHENER (P/975)

Lance Corporal, Mounted Branch, Corps of Military Police.
Died of malaria, Saturday 18th August 1917, aged 41, in
Salonica. Buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria,
Greece.

Born in Cranfield, resident of Wandsworth, London.
Husband of Amelia Bitchener, 1 Dafforne Rd, Upper
Tooting, London.

ERNEST BROWN (SS 104761 (RFR Ch B 8543) (Ch))

Royal Navy Stoker 1st Class.

Killed in Action, 9th June 1915, aged 26, off the Albanian
Coast on HMS Dublin.

Buried in Brindisi Cimenterio, Brindisi, Italy.

Born in Cranfield. Son of George and Elizabeth Brown of
Church Road, Cranfield. Husband of Sarah of 56, Hoy
Street, Tidal Basin E. Washington DC, USA.

CYRIL COOK (25214)

Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Tuesday 24th April 1917, aged 21,

In the Arras area of France.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais,
France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Mrs Sarah Goodman of West End, Cranfield.

FRANK COOK (Deal/959 (S) (Ch))

Sapper, Royal Marines, 2nd Field Company , Divisional Engineers, Royal Navy Division.

Died of Wounds, 7th May 1915, aged 30, aboard Hospital Ship "Franconia". Buried at sea. Commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.

Born in Cranfield. Resident of Hornsey, London.

Husband of Mrs A.E. Cook of 76 Turnpike Lane, Hornsey, London.

WILLIAM COOK (353836)

Private, 7th (City of London) Battalion

Killed in Action, 9th April 1918, aged 40, in France,

Buried at Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Born in Cranfield.

Son of William and Eliza Cook.

Husband of Ann.

CHARLES COOPER (235789)

Private, 12/13th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers.

P.o.W. Died of influenza, 29 October 1918, aged 26.

Buried in the Hamburg Ohisdorf Cemetery, Germany.

Husband of Alice Cooper, West End, Cranfield.

Son of Joseph & Anna Cooper, North Crawley, Bucks.

PHILIP WILLIAM EVANS (22903)

Private, 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died of Wounds, Tuesday 7th November 1916, aged 25.

Buried in the Etaples Military cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of George and Annie Evans, High Street Cranfield.

JOHN HARPUR EVANS (25179)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died on the 19 February 1919, aged 22, in Wolverhampton Hospital.

Wounded at the Somme, March 1918,

Buried in the Cranfield Churchyard.

Son of John and Martha Evans, of the High St, Cranfield.

GEORGE FORD (57844)

Private, 16th Battalion Cheshire Regiment and Sapper Royal Engineers.

Killed in Action, Monday 14th May 1917, aged 23, at the Somme France.

Buried in the Nesle Communal Cemetery, Somme, France.

Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.

The Son of William Ford.

The husband of Ada Winifred Ford, of West End, Bletchley, Bucks.

FRANK FOSTER (301749)

Gunner, 10th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery.

Killed in Action, 5th November 1917 aged 21, at Passchendaele, Belgium.

Buried in Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery, Leper, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Son of Albert and Mary Ann Foster, of Bourne End, Cranfield.

JAMES FOSTER (55471)

Corporal, 9th Company Machine Gun Corps.

Killed in Action, Thursday 25th April 1918, aged 23, in French Flanders.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Albert and Mary Foster of Bourne End, Cranfield.

HERBERT GARNER (326955)

Private, Suffolk Regiment.

Died of illness at home on Thursday 15th February 1917, aged 35.

Son of James and Ann Garner, of Poplar Cottages Cranfield.

Buried in Cranfield Churchyard. (Not named on War Memorial)

WILLIAM JOHN GREEN (18199)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 28th March 1918, aged 37, at the Somme, France.

Commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in Bow Brickhill but a resident of Cranfield.

CHARLES HALE (G/30224)

Private, 7th Battalion Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 28th March 1918 aged 19, at the Somme, France.

Commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in Kilburn, London, and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of William and Sophia Hale, of Poplar Row, Cranfield.

CECIL WILLIAM HARDY (317347)

Private, 1st Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment.

Died of Wounds, 30th May 1915 aged 26, in Ypres Belgium.

Commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ieper, Belgium.

Born Tidworth, Hants and a resident of Waresley, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Son of Charles William Hardy and Fanny Rawlins Hardy of Cranfield.

LEONARD CHARLES HARDY (16896)

Private, 8th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Friday 15th September 1916 aged 21, at the Somme, France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in Durrington, Wiltshire and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Charles William Hardy and Fanny Rawlins Hardy of Cranfield.

ALFRED HARPUR (3/7282)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Monday 17th May 1915, aged 17, at Festubert, France.

Commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in and resident of Cranfield.

CHARLES HARPUR (18065)

Private, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Tuesday 11th July 1916, aged 27, at the Somme, France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

HARRY HEWLETT (310896 (CH))

Private 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Attestation age 17 in 1903 (4620)

Transferred to Royal Navy 12th October 1906 Act.Ldg.Sto. RN.

Served on HM Submarine E4.

Killed in Action, 15th August 1916, aged 30, when submarine sank off Harwich in a collision.

Buried in Shotley Churchyard, Shotley, Suffolk.

Born in Cranfield. Son of George and Eliza Hewlett.

FREDERICK JOHNSON (22836)

Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in action, 23rd April 1917, aged 23,

In the Arras area of France.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

ALFRED JOHN KINNS (524394)

Driver, 69th Division Royal Engineers. Driver

Died of influenza, Saturday 8th February 1919, aged 30, at Clipstone Camp Hospital

Buried in the Cranfield Churchyard.

Son of James and Emma Kinns of Cranfield.

THOMAS ARTHUR LANCASTER (17503)

Lance Corporal, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 3rd May 1917, aged 21,
in the Arras area of France.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais,
France.

Son of John and Sarah Lancaster, of West End, Cranfield.

THOMAS LANCASTER (G/21828)

Private, 10th Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment.

Killed in Action, Thursday 20th September 1917, aged 23,
near Ypres, Belgium.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial, Zonnebeke,
Belgium.

Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of James and Caroline Lancaster of East End, Cranfield.

WILLIAM FREDERICK LANCASTER (30894)

Private, 1st Bedfordshire Yeomanry.

Killed in Action, Thursday 22nd November 1917, aged 24, in
Cambrai France.

Commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval,
Nord, France.

Born in and resident of Cranfield.

Son of William and Sarah Lancaster.

VICTOR JOHN LINEHAM (L/11298)

Private, 1st Surrey Yeomanry, Corps of Lancers.

Died of influenza, Saturday 14th December 1918, aged 24, at Salonica.

Buried in Sarigol Military Cemetery, Kriston, Greece.

Born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Henry and Charlotte Lineham.

HARRY LOVESEY (522485)

Lance Corporal, 486th East Anglian Field Engineers.

Died of Wounds, Friday 30th November 1917, aged 41, in Jaffa, Israel.

Buried in Ramelah War Cemetery, Israel.

Born in Cranfield. Resident of Aspley Guise.

Son of William and Sarah. Husband of Elizabeth Crute.

THOMAS MATTHEW ODELL LOVESEY (21341)

Private, 3rd Grenadier Guards.

Killed in Action, 8th October 1915, aged 23, in the Loos area of Calais France.

Commemorated on the Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Son of Edward Lovesey and Alice Odell.

JOSEPH MANYWEATHERS (94278)
Sapper, 175th Tunnel Company, Corps of Royal Engineers.
Died of Wounds, Sunday 5th September 1915, aged 48, in
Belgium.
Buried in the Lijssenthoek Military cemetery, Poperinge,
Belgium.
Born in Cranfield and a resident of Kilburn London.
Brother of William Manyweathers, 1 Palmerston Road,
Kilburn, London.

THOMAS JAMES MINARDS (20343)
Private, 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.
Killed in Action, Sunday 15th April 1917, aged 23, in the
Arras area of France.
Born in and a resident of Cranfield.
Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais,
France.
Son of the late George Minards of Church Cottages,
Cranfield

CHARLES PARKER (6077)
Private, 16th Battalion Australian Infantry, AIF.
Died of Wounds, 10th June 1917, aged 25, in France.
Buried in the Bailleul Cemetery, Nord, France.
Born in Cranfield.
Son of George and Hannah Parker of Cranfield.
Husband of Nellie Parker of Greenfield.

GEORGE SALISBURY (WR/262589)
Sapper, 259th Railway Construction Royal Engineers.
Died of influenza, Wednesday 20th November 1918, aged
41, in France.
Buried in the Terlincthun British cemetery, Wimille, Pas de
Calais, France.
Husband of Henrietta Salisbury of the Fox & Hounds
Public House, Cranfield.

GEORGE SAVAGE (23595)
4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.
Killed in Action, Monday 13 November 1916, aged 19, at
the Somme France.
Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme,
France.
Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.
Son of Mary Bittle of West End Cranfield, & the late Joseph
Savage.

JOSEPH SEAMARK (60991)
Lance Corporal, Royal Fusiliers, City of London Regiment.
Died of Wounds, Monday 18th June 1917, aged 20, in
France.
Buried in the Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas de
Calais, France.
Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.

EPHRAIM SPARKES (23409)

Private, 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action Saturday 27th April 1918, aged 26, in France.

Buried in the Merville Communal Cemetery extension,
Nord, France.

Born in Marston but a resident of Cranfield.

EDGAR HAROLD WHITE (21228)

Private, 10th Battalion Canadian Infantry, Alberta Regiment.

Killed in Action, 3rd June 1916, aged 24, in Belgium.

Commemorated on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial.

Son of George and Clara White of Cranfield

WILLIAM HERBERT WHITE (3946)

Private, 5th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died 15th January 1915, aged 29, at Bury St Edmunds,
during training.

Buried in Cranfield churchyard.

Was born Grafham, Huntingdon but a resident of Cranfield.

Son of William and Mary White, 1 Sunny Side Cottage,
Cranfield.

ARTHUR JAMES WILSON (55472)

Private, 197th Infantry Battalion Machine Gun Corps.

Died of Wounds, Friday 12th October 1917, aged 22, in Belgium.

Buried in the St. Julien Dressing Station cemetery, Langemark-Poelkapelle, Belgium.

Was born in and a resident of Cranfield. Son of David and Sarah Wilson of Bourne End, Cranfield.

GEORGE WILSON (202802)

Private 6th Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, 12th October 1917, aged 34, in Belgium.

Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

Son of David and Sarah Wilson of Bourne End, Cranfield.

Husband of Elizabeth Mary (nee Copperwheat)

CORNELIUS WILLIAM YOUNG (17518)

Private, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died of Wounds, Wednesday 13th February 1918, aged 25, in France.

Buried in the Noyon New British cemetery, Oise, France.

Was born in and a resident of Cranfield.

Son of Walter and Susan Young of High Street, Cranfield.

Husband of Marjorie Young of Cranfield.

OWEN YOUNG (27355)

Private, 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Killed in Action, Wednesday 25th October 1916, aged 21, at the Somme, France.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Born in and a resident of North Crawley.

Son of Joseph and Kate Young of Broadmead, North Crawley.

WILLIAM FREDERICK YOUNG (12149)

Private, 4th Battalion South Wales Borderers.

Died of malaria, Sunday 24th December 1916, aged 25, in Alexandria Egypt.

Buried in Alexandria (Hadra) War memorial cemetery, Egypt.

Born in and a resident of North Crawley.

Son of Joseph and Kate Young of Broadmead, North Crawley

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THE EXHORTATION

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.

We will remember them.



This book commemorates the men named on the Cranfield War memorial who died in the Great War of 1914-1918.

It tells the stories of them, their parts in the Great War itself and the families they left behind.



‘We will remember them’

**Proceeds to:
The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal**

Price - £10.00