



**COLLINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR**

**Fleet Articles  
2014 - 2018**



# Preface

Between September 2014 and December 2018 *Fleet* magazine published a series of articles written by Helena Pielichaty to commemorate the centenary of the Great War. This publication is a compilation of the complete series, made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Where new information has come to light since the original articles were published, footnotes and additional material have been added.

# Abbreviations

*CDLHS*: Collingham and District Local History Society Archives

*NL*: Newark Library Local Studies section (especially the *Newark Advertiser* microfiche catalogue)

*TNA*: The Newark Advertiser

*NA*: Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham

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**COLLINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR**

**1914 - 1915**

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## **Fleet Vol 51 No 7 (September 2014)**

### **Part 1: The War Begins**

*'When the August number of this Magazine was being prepared for the Press there appeared not a cloud to cast the smallest shadow on the peace of the world, so far as the ordinary observer could see...'*

So began the September 1914 newsletter from South Collingham's Rector, the Rev. A. J. Maxwell. It is an extraordinary statement, given the horror to come. Yet the previous bulletin in August testifies to the tranquillity of both parishes in the month that preceded the outbreak of World War One, with only a clash of dates between the Boy Scout Camp and an excursion of the Choir and Bell ringers' trip to Cleethorpes as the most vexing thing to report. Sadly, from the September issue on, the rector would need to draw on all his reserves to compose his monthly bulletins as he addressed: *'the most bloody war the world has ever seen.'* Nevertheless, he rose to the challenge and through the newsletters, all of which we have preserved in the Collingham and District Local History Society archives (CDLHS), we discover much about what was happening in Collingham. We are told of the Red Cross Working Parties and the massive fundraising drives and how villagers came to the aid of families fleeing from Belgium. In addition, inevitably, we are informed of those parishioners killed in action or who died from wounds received in battle. Reverend Maxwell's tributes, surely the most difficult of things to write, invariably make the most heartrending reading. Some were brief, some expansive; all were kind and compassionate.

Without a doubt, equally compassionate and insightful bulletins were being written by other clergymen attached to the other churches in the village, such as Canon R F Gould, the Vicar of All Saints, but, alas, we do not have any copies of them in the archives. What we do have, in addition to Reverend Maxwell's newsletters, is a box full of precious ephemera containing photographs and post-cards, newspaper clippings, ration books and discharge papers collected and donated at various times over the years. It's not a huge collection but it's a fair starting point. There is also the Nottinghamshire Country Council's new online Roll of

Honour: [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour) and the Newark Advertiser archive in Newark Library to reference.

During the course of the next four years, I am delighted that The Fleet will be publishing articles to commemorate Collingham in the Great War. The articles will cover as many aspects of the war as possible but will principally focus on the biographical details of the forty-three men and one woman from Collingham who died during the 1914-1918 conflict. Where feasible, the individual's details will appear in the corresponding year in which they died a century ago. The first Collingham casualty, Lieutenant Ronald Andrew Colquhoun Aitchison of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King's Own regiment, Lancashire, will appear all too soon. He died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1914, of wounds received at Armentières, France. He was 19.

As well as a snapshot of the lives of the Fallen and those who enlisted and returned, the series will look at life on the Home Front and anything else which helps paint a picture of this tumultuous time in our small corner of England. Next month's article will focus on Collingham Life in 1914.

**SOUTH COLLINGHAM,**  
 With Brough and Danethorpe  
**PARISH MAGAZINE.**  
 SEPTEMBER 1914.

**The War.**

When the August number of this Magazine was being prepared for the Press there appeared not a cloud to cast the smallest shadow on the peace of the world, so far as the ordinary observer could see. When the September number appears five of the world's great Empires and several smaller States are engaged in the greatest, gravest, and probably the most bloody war the world has ever seen. No chapter in the history of Europe has ever developed with such sudden and startling rapidity, and certainly no person now living has ever known this country face to face with so serious a danger. It behoves us all to do our best, first to realise the gravity of the situation, and then to face it with Christian courage and self denial. This page is not the place to appeal for those recruits for the British Army which our country so sorely needs. But it does furnish a further opportunity of appealing to all the inhabitants of this Parish to pray for God's blessing upon that army, and the even more important navy, and particularly for our own people who are serving their country under arms. At all services at the Parish Church and Brough, S. Stephen's, prayers and intercessions are made to Almighty God for this purpose. Surely at such a time as this, the urgency of the case will appeal to those who are usually deaf to the sound of the church bells, and that they will imitate the brave Belgians and fill the places where prayer is wont to be made, and seek the blessings of victory and peace from the great God who alone can give them.

The two following notices are inserted by request and are warmly commended to the kind attention of all who can render help in these directions:—

**Red Cross Society.**

It is proposed to hold a course of "First Aid" Lectures for Women in connection with the Red Cross Society, towards the middle of September. Will all intending to join give in their names to Miss Browne, South Collingham, or Mrs. W. N. Brooks, North Collingham, without delay. There will be a small fee, amount to be made known later.

**Society of the Sacred Mission.**

Miss Wigram is now Secretary for the Newark Branch of the Guild of S. Gabriel, Members of which undertake to give two garments or two pieces of house-linen annually to the Society at Kelham. She will be glad to give further information to anyone who is interested.

**Parish Church Services.**

- HOLY COMMUNION.**  
 Sept. 6. 13th Sunday after Trinity. 8 a.m. and after Mattins.  
 „ 13. 14th Sunday after Trinity. 8 a.m.  
 „ 20. 15th Sunday after Trinity. After Mattins.  
 „ 21. S. Matthew. 10.30 a.m.  
 „ 24. Harvest Festival. 8 a.m.  
 „ 27. 16th Sunday after Trinity. 8 a.m.  
 „ 29. S. Michael and All Angels.

**OTHER SERVICES.**

Other Services each Sunday 10.30 a.m.  
 Evensong 6.30 p.m.  
 Children's Service on Sept 27th, at 2.45 p.m. Harvest Festival on Sept. 24th at 7 p.m. Preacher, the Rev. C. S. Wallis, Vice-Principal of S. John's Hall, Durham.

**Altar Flowers.**

- Sept. 6. Mrs. Maxwell,  
 „ 13. Mrs. H. J. Wigram.  
 „ 20. Mrs. Aitchison.  
 „ 27. Miss Holmes.  
 Oct. 4. Mrs. Palmer.

**Sidesmen on Duty.**

- Sept. 6. Mr. Hatcliffe and Mr. Crocker.  
 „ 13. Mr. Clarkson and Mr. Hoe.  
 „ 20. Mr. Hoe and Mr. Smith.  
 „ 27. Mr. Smith and Mr. Hatcliffe.

**St. Stephen's, Brough.**

**SERVICES.**

- Sept. 6. 13th Sunday after Trinity. Evensong 3 o.  
 „ 13. 14th Sunday after Trinity. Holy Communion 9 o. Evensong 6 o.  
 „ 20. 15th Sunday after Trinity. Eve of S. Matthew. Evensong 3 o.  
 „ 27. 16th Sunday after Trinity. Harvest Festival. Holy Communion 9 o. Evensong 6 o.  
 „ 28. Eve of St. Michael and All Angels. Harvest Festival. Evensong 7.30.

## **Fleet Vol 51 No 8 (Oct. 2014)**

### **Part 2: The Village in 1914**

In 1914 – in fact, up until 1974<sup>1</sup> - Collingham was divided in to two separate villages; South Collingham and North Collingham, with the boundary at the scutchell on Bell Lane. The two villages had their own parish churches and parish councils as well as their own shops and small businesses. A quick glance at the trade directory entries for 1912 shows there was little need to leave the area for anything. There were butchers and grocers, confectioners and bakers, a chemist's, drapers, cycle agents, undertakers, joiners, painters, a photographer, a monumental mason, a Co-op, brush and boot makers, an ironmonger, hairdressers, tobacconists, tailors, plumbers, coal merchants and chimney sweeps - to name



*Above: Collingham Post Office was at Chatwood House (69 High Street) during the Great War.*

*Photo c/o CDLHS Archives*

but a few. Services included two schools<sup>2</sup>, one for girls and infants and one for boys, a rural library, police, a bank (Bank House - 94 High Street) a post office (at Chatwood House) the railway station, a Public Hall and several public houses: The King's Head, The Royal Oak, The White Hart (now 119 High St), The Crown Inn (now 158 High St), The Grey Horse and, down by

Collingham Wharf, The Jolly Bargeman<sup>3</sup>. It was the Royal Oak, however, where many of the

<sup>1</sup> Correction: The village was unified in 1970, prior to the Local Government Act 1972 that reformed parish boundaries and came into effect in 1974. Source: Rosie Scott, Collingham Parish Councillor 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Girls' School and Infants was behind 15 High St, now a private dwelling. The Boys' School was in the Wesley Room behind the Methodist Church. Both schools closed in 1962, to make way for John Blow Primary.

<sup>3</sup> The Jolly Bargeman, (previously the Wharf Inn) closed about 1920. It is now Wharf House on Carlton Ferry Lane. It served the barges passing along the Trent.



important meetings and social events took place. For those who wanted to socialise but not drink, there was a Coffee Room behind what is now 2a Station Road.

The village also had a crier and a lamplighter (electricity wasn't installed in most houses until well after the war ended). Miss Isabel Gould (1903 - 1998), the daughter of Canon Gould, vicar at All Saints Church from 1906 - 1932, paints a clear picture of these last two roles:



*Above: Miss Gould as a child in the doorway of the Vicarage (now Copper Beeches Care Home) with her father, Canon Reginald Freestone Gould (1861- 1939) and older sister Margaret (1897-1975). This post-card c/o CDLHS Archives dates from c. 1908.*

*'The first crier I remember was a wonderful man with a stentorian voice; he was the village sweep and had been a chimney boy when young. He was also the cricket club groundsman<sup>4</sup> and used his voice in no uncertain manner to keep the boys in order and to call them between the innings to push the old horse roller over the pitch. The other crier I remember had not a very good voice and the best way to find out his news was to go out and ask him when one heard the sound of the big brass handbell. This man was also the lamplighter (gas came to the village in 1856) and turned up the lights with a long pole, which reached to the top of the nice old iron gas lamps as he walked round the village at dusk.'*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Possibly Mr Jack Sharp who was made Honorary Groundsman in 1921 after '25 years' service' Source: Jack Aitken's *History of Collingham Cricket Club* (copies in Collingham Library)

<sup>5</sup> Source: *The Old Order Changeth* series, Fleet 1970 (copies available in CDLHS)



Left: High Street shops opposite Swinderby Road included a barber's, Arthur Holland's draper's & furniture dealer's, Wm. Bailey's grocer's and confectioner's shop and The White Hart pub.  
Photo c/o CDLHS Archives

## Societies

There was no shortage of clubs and activities. The Cricket Club was well established (1850) as was the Angling Club (1900) and Football Club (1900). There were also Gymnasium and Swimming Clubs.



Edward Bacock Market Gardener	William Bailey Baker	George Staley Grocer	White Saddler	A. Wilson School Master	W. Bell Wheelwright
W. Thompson Farmer	H. Liley Farm Worker	R. Harrison Small Holder	Frederick Hae Office Clerk		
J. Cracker Farmer	B. Revill Small Holder	E. Davies Cycle Agent	F. Bacock Farmer	S. Revill Small Holder	

Above: Collingham Football Club c. 1900. Source: Newark Museum Archives via Jeremy Lodge

The Church was, of course, a large part of many villagers' lives. As well as church or chapel attendance there were many bodies associated with the churches such the Methodist Guild in 1900. All the churches (All Saints, St John the Baptist, the Baptist Church

and Wesleyan Church) provided Sunday Schools for children that included outings and picnics by the Trent. There was a Mutual Improvement Society<sup>6</sup>, chaired by Rev. Gould, and the Choral Society would give concerts in the Public Hall. For those wishing to uphold Conservative Party values, and get a pretty enamel badge at the same time, there was the Primrose League. The 1<sup>st</sup> Collingham Boy Scouts company was already seven years old but new from September 1914 were the 1<sup>st</sup> Collingham Girls Guides.

## Transport

Inhabitants who wanted to venture further afield could be taken by carrier (horse and cart) to Newark on Wednesdays and Saturdays or Lincoln on a Friday. Carriers listed in 1912 were George Cree (1868-1930) and William Hickman (1861-1923). In 1916 Arthur Ernest Williams<sup>7</sup> had taken over from Cree.

The Midland Railway Lincoln to Nottingham line operated a service through Collingham but there was no bus service until the 1920s. However, thanks to the mass manufacture of the 'safety bicycle' and the dominance of Raleigh in nearby Nottingham, cycling was a popular and affordable form of transport for all. Cycle agents in Collingham included Alfred Broadberry in the single storey extension off Aberdeen House and Walter Davies, next to the original sight of the Cross<sup>8</sup>. For those wishing to commute to villages West of the Trent by river, Carlton Ferry was in operation until 1961.<sup>9</sup>

## Agriculture

That Collingham was such a vibrant well-served place was largely down to its agricultural roots. Twenty-four farmers are listed altogether in Kelly's 1912 trade directory. There were also market gardeners, corn merchants and cowkeepers. Collingham was especially renowned for its carrots, which would be taken by cart to the railways station to be washed in huge tubs, before being loaded onto trains bound for Manchester and other markets.

Other occupations linked to farming, such as saddlers, plough makers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights could be found at various points on the High Street and surrounding roads off.

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<sup>6</sup> Mutual Improvement Societies were popular in the mid to late C19<sup>th</sup> People would give talks on topics of interest. Prizes would sometimes be awarded for the best 'speaker.'

<sup>7</sup> Arthur E Williams died 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1917

<sup>8</sup> c. 150 High Street

<sup>9</sup> P 75 'The Besthorpe and Meering Story' by Bill and Connie Wilson 2001 (Collingham Library)





Above: Farmer Henry Liley (second left) loading carrots at the station. Mr Arthur Kind, the station master, is shown in the foreground. Photo donated to CDLHS archives by the Liley family

The pinnacle of the farming year was the Ploughing Match and Root Show held on the last Thursday of October in 'Bailey's Paddock'<sup>10</sup>, North Collingham. It was a grand occasion and the whole village



Above: The inscription on the post-card reads: 'Ploughing Match, Collingham' & is dated 1904 c/o CDLHS Archives

<sup>10</sup> Bailey's Paddock was so called because it was the paddock where cattle and sheep were assembled ready for driving to Newark Market to Edward Bailey's auction. The paddock was on the corner of Swinderby Road, opposite the White Hart. The show moved to Dale Field in c 1920 after W S Bailey's death.



would turn out. Henry J Crocker (1904-1982) describes the event: *'The Ploughing Match was then one of the most important parts of the Show, the work, of course, all done by the horses. I remember the thrill of seeing the 'away' ploughmen come in to the village the evening before with their ploughs loaded on to carts. Many of the ploughs would be Bealby's<sup>11</sup> who were noted for making good ploughs. There was one class for 'swing' ploughs – that is, without wheels. Two names I remember who always did well were Mr Herbert Drury from Valley Farm, Swinderby and Mr 'Strolly' Jackson who worked for Mr Nicholson<sup>12</sup>.*' Further down the High Street<sup>13</sup> would be a fun fair with roundabouts, swings, side-shows and *'all that goes on at a pleasure fair.'*

It would be wrong to paint too cosy a picture of village life at the outbreak of World War One. British agriculture had been going through a difficult time. Stiff competition from overseas and newer technology meant arable farmers couldn't compete with cheaper imports from countries with warmer climates, especially with regard to wheat crops. The amount of land under cereals had fallen by around 725,000 acres<sup>14</sup> in the past two decades. Dairy farming proved more robust, as milk couldn't be as readily imported, and pig breeding was on the increase, but many farmers still struggled to make a decent living. Agricultural wages had never been generous and in 1911 averaged 15/1 a week<sup>15</sup> (75p) in the East Midlands. By comparison, a general labour would earn 26/11 (£1.34)<sup>16</sup> and a bricklayer in a large town 40s (£2.00). There was little surprise Collingham's population had been dwindling since 1861<sup>17</sup> as the workforce sought better wages in towns. However, the outbreak of war brought fresh demands on those who lived in the countryside.

The government, faced with the urgent need to feed an army decreed that British farmers must 'grow as much wheat as possible.'<sup>18</sup> Land which had been allowed to subside into 'twitch' (poor grass) suddenly needed to be ploughed and properly cultivated. However, the same government appeared to think that fields somehow ploughed themselves. Over the next four years, the Newark Rural District Tribunals would be awash with Collingham farmers summonsed to hearings to explain why they or their employees hadn't enlisted for the forces.

It wasn't only farmers who were summonsed but just about every tradesman and retailer in the two villages. Butcher George Thompson, whose shop was in North Collingham where the

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<sup>11</sup> 12, Besthorpe Road 'Brook House' Bealby's were established c 1840 and the Bealby family remains in the village to this day.

<sup>12</sup> David Nicholson's farm was on Swinderby Road

<sup>13</sup> The paddock was the land where the car park and Medical Centre is now situated.

<sup>14</sup> 6,214,882 acres in 1891, 5,488,684 in 1911 Source: 'Straight Furrows' p72

<sup>15</sup> Appendix given in 'Straight Furrows' p 96

<sup>16</sup> Hansard Written Answers to the Commons Average Weekly Wages HC Vol 187

<sup>17</sup> Pop'n in Coll 1911: 627 (South) 784 (North) Population in 1901: 813 (North) 670 (South) Population in 1861: 1010 (North) 863 (South) Source: Trade directories

<sup>18</sup> Newark MP Mr Starkey's speech, Collingham Farmers' Dinner, 1916 p 69 'Straight Furrows'

Chinese Take-Away<sup>19</sup> is now, was told in 1916 he had until May 1<sup>st</sup> to find someone to replace his son, Albert, as the slaughterhouseman and delivery man. When he asked with who, seeing as both his assistants had already enlisted, George was told his daughter would do.<sup>20</sup>

### Women's Roles

This was not said in jest. As we know, women were to become the principal workforce on the Home Front. Even Emily Pankhurst postponed agitating for women's suffrage and called for all women to help the war effort in any way they could. Collingham's women were already on the case. When Herbert Hopkinson, a farmer from South Muskham sneered that he'd be lucky to find three out of the thirty women in his village prepared to get '*sludged up*' Joseph Gibson, a member of the Collingham Farmer's Club Committee, countered that Collingham women were already playing a huge part in the carrot-growing industry<sup>21</sup>. Collingham also had a female doctor, Dr Catherine L Smith, who was Dr Frank Broadbent's partner at the practice (then in the Old Hall on Low Street). Mrs Fanny Crossland ran the King's Head and Miss Annie Gibson the post office.

### The Class System

Despite this, it would be a while before the old order broke down altogether. While the role of women was changing, the class system was still as much in evidence in Collingham as it was in the rest of Edwardian England. Before the war it was still common practice for the gentry to give 'Gentleman' or 'Lady' as their occupation on marriage certificates. Henry J Crocker, in his piece on the Collingham Show<sup>22</sup>, refers to one of the Feast Week nights being 'graced by the 'aristocracy' of the time.' Collingham's 'aristocracy' in 1914 were principally the Curtis Family and the Smith-Woolleys.

**Charles Constable Curtis** (1852 -1936) lived at Langford Hall and owned areas of land in and around Collingham and district. The Curtis name crops up time and time again in the archives. Curtis and his son, Colonel Thomas Lancelot Constable Curtis (1888 - 1956), were generous benefactors, donating time, land and money to many village causes. A stained-glass window dedicated to Col. Thomas Lancelot Curtis can be found in All Saints Church. Mrs Joan Baston of the Oaklands remembers always addressing Col. Curtis as 'Squire Curtis'.

The 1912 trade directory also names William Wright (1827 – 1913) of Vine Farm and Mrs Michael Colton of South Scarle as principal landowners for North Collingham and Mrs Jane Longman Rice

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<sup>19</sup> 160 High Street

<sup>20</sup> See Trevor Frecknall 'Collingham during the Great War'

<sup>21</sup> Trevor Frecknall's research notes

<sup>22</sup> '*The Old Order Changeth*' – Fleet series 1970 (in CDLHS archives)

(1849-1918) of 'The Gables' on the High Street as South's. This is in addition to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who had held lands in the district since before Domesday.

## The Smith-Woolleys

Also hugely influential in all aspects of Collingham life up to the war were the Smith-Woolleys. Founded by Thomas Smith-Woolley Snr in 1810 this firm of respected land agents based on the Green exerted a huge influence on the village and beyond, bringing with it employment, wealth and prestige. To work at Smith-Woolley was to be held in high esteem. By the turn of the century it was Thomas Smith-Woolley Junior's two sons, Reginald and Thomas Cedric<sup>23</sup> who were the senior partners, with their brother-in-law Mr (later Lt-Col) Gowrie Colquhoun Aitchison (also working for the firm in a senior capacity from about 1911. Many of the large houses in South Collingham were Smith-Woolley owned or occupied, including South Collingham House, the Burnt House, The Cottage (now Westfield House) and the Small House. In addition, Mr John Wigram had joined the firm in 1870 and became a senior partner in 1875. He bought the Manor from the Smith-Woolleys around 1892. In 1912, Wigram's son, Henry, occupied The Lodge on the corner of Dykes End and High Street. During this period the firm was known as Smith-Woolley and Wigram.



*Thomas Cecil Smith-Woolley 1853 – 1913 Source: 'A Collingham Scrapbook'*

The Smith-Woolleys were, like the Curtis family, generous benefactors. Thomas Cedric Smith-Woolley in particular, seems to have taken his civic duties seriously. A devout Christian, he built St Stephen's Church and school in Brough, helped raise finances for the Public Hall (now the Memorial Hall) and served on many committees and charity boards. Unfortunately, he was killed in a cycling accident on his way home from a church service at Brough, in 1913, and the village mourned the loss of a great patron. His brother, Reginald (1858-1929), didn't live in the village, preferring to commute from his house at 12 Minster Yard, Lincoln.

So there we have it; a snapshot of village life in 1914. Next month will look at how Collingham fared as it became clear the war would not be 'over by Christmas.' I examine the lives of those who would be tasked with turning saddlers into soldiers, such as Lt-Col. William Coape Oates of Besthorpe, commander of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters and also how Mr Arthur Hoe, the butcher

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<sup>23</sup> 1854 – 1913 Thomas Cedric Smith-Woolley lived in The Small House on the corner of the Green and Church Street

on the Green, and his wife Annie, ended up adopting 9-year old Elodie Tanghe, a refugee from Belgium.

## **Fleet Vol 51 No 9 (Nov 2014)**

### **Part 3: Lieutenant Colonel William Coape Oates of Besthorpe**

Captain William Coape Oates could have been forgiven for declining to come out of retirement in 1914. A man of fifty-two, he had served his time as a soldier, having fought in the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885- 7) and the Second Boer War (1899-1902), during which a severe injury resulted in his retirement from the Royal Muser Fusiliers and his return to his birthplace of Besthorpe. Here he spent his time carrying out his duties as a JP, writing the incongruously titled *Wild Ducks – How to Rear Them and How to Shoot Them* (published in 1905 and now a collector's item) and following his beloved cricket. But Oates was a soldier through and through. When the request came for him to take command of the 2/8<sup>th</sup>



Battalion Sherwood Foresters, raised in Newark with the purpose of 'feeding the first line', naturally he accepted.

*Above: Lieutenant Colonel William Coape Oates 1862 – 1942 JP, DSO commanding officer of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters (part of the 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade) Source: Nottinghamshire History website*

Newly promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Oates immediately set about training his men. Described as 'stocky and powerfully built' and sporting the bristling moustache of the day, his formidable presence must have reassured his officers and recruits. It must have reassured, too, the families of the locals, knowing that their brothers, sons and husbands were being looked after by 'the squire.' It isn't known how many of the men in the 2/8<sup>th</sup> were from Collingham and surrounding villages but at least three of the officers – Major G.

C. Aitchison, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Montague Browne and Captain Thomas H. C. Woolley - were known to him socially.

Training the men was no easy task. Unlike Germany, Britain didn't have conscription until 1916 and the regular army had always depended on volunteers to bolster numbers in times of need. Many villages, including Collingham, had its own Volunteer Corps. Land Agent Thomas Smith-Woolley (Thomas H C Woolley's grandfather) founded the 6<sup>th</sup> Notts Rifles here in 1860 and there already existed a shooting range down 'Butts Lane' in a field off the bottom of Station Road. However, the amenity<sup>24</sup> had certainly not been used by all the farmers and postmen, grocers and gardeners, bakers and butchers, now being urged to enlist. Many of the recruits were unfit and initially unequal to the rigorous drills set out in the Infantry Drill Book.

One of the more 'relaxing' exercises, on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1914, involved a six-mile march from Newark to Collingham. Lunch was in one of the fields 'adjoining the main road' and afterwards the battalion was given an hour's leave and put on their honour not to enter a public house. 'The privilege,' we are informed, 'was not abused.'



*Above: It is possible this postcard in the Collingham and District Local History Society collection was taken on the march to Collingham. [Later clarification: the cap badges are from various regiments. The photo is probably one from later in the war.]*

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<sup>24</sup> Clarification: The original Collingham's 'F' Co (6<sup>th</sup> Notts Rifles) Volunteer Corps had been amalgamated with Newark B Coy in 1908 as part of the Territorial Forces Act. It was reformed with a unit in Collingham in Aug 1917 following the Volunteer Act (1916) as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Notts Volunteers (Sherwood Foresters) Regiment.

As a result of the colonel's thoroughness, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters battalion was soon being highly praised during inspections. In his history of the battalion, published in 1920 and available to read in Newark Library's Local Studies section, Lieutenant Colonel Oates recalls one general demanding angrily why he had disobeyed orders and brought fully trained men on parade and not recruits. *'For some time the General would not believe the C.O.'s statement that, barring Instructors, Recruits only were on parade.'* Frustratingly, no sooner had some semblance of fitness and camaraderie been achieved, large numbers of Oates' men were drafted to serve in France and Flanders as Lord Kitchener's demand for more manpower increased. In June 1915 *'three hundred and sixty of the very best'* were taken (a battalion at full strength is around 1000). *'Even officers' servants had to go.'* This resulted in forever regrouping with fresh volunteers who were unfit and unprepared. *'The promise that no more men would be taken from second line units was believed by nobody,'* Oates lamented.

It would be several more months before the 2/8<sup>th</sup> was mobilised. When it was called upon, on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1916, its destination was not France or Flanders but Ireland. It was on Dublin streets every shred of Oates' experience would be needed as his men were ambushed by Irish Rebels. Casualties over the two-day uprising were unexpectedly high, with 31 Sherwood Foresters (from all brigades) killed and 145 wounded. Afterwards the Irish Times reported that: *'The citizens of Dublin owe a big debt to these gallant regiments. The English Territorials – mere lads most of them – who saw their first active service under the trying conditions of street fighting were notably brave and self-restrained.'*

The 2/8<sup>th</sup> lost three men, including 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Browne (more of whom in a future edition of the Fleet). This makes it highly probable that Montague Browne's mother, Mrs Mary Browne of South Collingham House, was one of the first to receive a letter of commiseration from Colonel Oates. While such letters must have been distressing to receive, they must also have been distressing for officers to write. The following is an extract from a letter Colonel Oates wrote to Mary Asling, mother of his servant, Private Edward Asling, a library assistant at Gilstrap Library in Newark, killed in May 1918. The letter is published in Trevor Frecknall's book *Newark in the Great War* (Pen and Sword Publications 2014):

*'Your brave boy was killed quite close to me this morning but never felt anything. A better man nor more devoted friend ever lived. What I shall do without him I do not know. He was always so unselfish and thoughtful and our one consolation is no one was more fit to go than he. He did not have to come out but his sense of duty triumphed overall... I have lost a devoted friend I can never replace. Believe me, I sympathise very deeply with you. I shall see him reverently buried tonight.'*

Oates' sincerity shines through and such a personal message must have brought some comfort to Mrs. Asling.

The colonel commanded the 2/8<sup>th</sup> throughout the war and rose to the temporary rank of Brigadier by the time it was disbanded in January 1918. His battalion was involved in some



of the heaviest fighting, beginning with the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin and ending in the withdrawal from Bourlon Wood on the Western Front in December 1917.

*Above: The colours of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters on display in St Mary Magdalene Parish Church, Newark. Photograph courtesy of Jeremy Lodge*

Incredibly, Lieutenant Colonel Oates wasn't the only member of his family to secure a place of honour in the annals of the Sherwood Foresters. In 1915, Oates' twenty-one-year-old son, Captain John Sherbrooke Oates, joined the 2/8<sup>th</sup> on his return to active duty after being injured while serving with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Unlike his father, John had not sought a career in the army; his intention had been to concentrate on farming after graduating from Trinity College. However, the war intervened and he enlisted in 1914. As might have been expected with his lineage, young Oates soon rose in the ranks and showed extreme courage under fire on many occasions. It is a remarkable achievement that father and son would both be



twice mentioned in dispatches and both awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) at Buckingham Palace on the same day.



After the war, Lieutenant Colonel William Oates returned to Chaise House in Besthorpe, where he lived for the rest of his life. He died in 1942 in his eightieth year. Captain Oates also returned to civilian life; he farmed in Besthorpe and Radcliffe-on-Trent, married and went on to be a JP. He played an active role in Collingham Farmers' Club and was President in 1951. He fought in the Second World War during which, like his father, he rose in rank to Lieutenant-Colonel for the Royal Artillery Corps in Burma. Lieutenant Colonel and Captain Oates are buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard, Besthorpe.

*Above: Captain John Sherbrooke Coape Oates (1894-1978) JP, MC, DSO fought alongside his father during the war*



*Above: The 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters 'at Shipley.' Source: (online) The Great War Archive University of Oxford*

NB: This photograph did not appear in the original Fleet piece. The only soldier identified here is Hull man T E Borrill, bottom left, KIA 1917. Date of photograph unknown. Shipley (nr Leeds) isn't mentioned in Oates' diary.

## Our Belgian Guests

Meanwhile, as Collingham men left their families to fight in Belgium, Belgian families came to Collingham and district for refuge. In October 1914 at least three Belgian families, the Pateets, the De Vos and the Tanghes, their homes 'smashed up and razed to the ground' were given shelter by the two parishes. On arrival, the Newark Advertiser reports, '...they (the Pateet family) found the tea-table spread and soon the family were enjoying a good meal.' Mr Hadfield Bocock of Lime Tree Farm was named as one of the residents providing accommodation for the families and Mr Henry Wigram of The Lodge another. A Belgian Fund was soon organised by Rev Maxwell to provide funds until the families became self-supporting. Mr George Willis, the baker, donated three loaves a week and farmer Joseph Gibson promised a pint of milk a day. Many other kindnesses followed.

Mrs Ann Broad-Davies<sup>25</sup>, daughter of one of the youngest refugees, Elodie Tanghe, has recently been in touch with Collingham and District Local History Society. Mrs Broad-Davies described aspects of her mother's interesting life. Elodie, one of six children living with their mother in a cramped cottage in South Collingham, apparently befriended Annie Lois Hoe, wife of Arthur Hoe, a butcher on the Green (at what is now Rusper House). Annie was Hadfield and Harriet Bocock's daughter.

The Hoes didn't have any children and nine-year-old Elodie asked if she could live with them. The arrangement seemed to suit them very well, for when the rest of the Tanghes were re-housed in Lincoln, Elodie remained with Arthur and Annie. Although she always stayed in touch with her natural family, who eventually returned to Belgium, Elodie grew up in Collingham, trained as a nurse in Newark and eventually settled in Cheshire.

Mrs Broad-Davies has fond memories of visiting Collingham as a child and remembers 'Granny Wright' (by then, Annie Hoe was widowed and remarried, to William Wright of Berwick-on-Tweed) very well. The Wrights lived in a bungalow on Station Road. Elodie died in 1954, aged forty-nine.

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<sup>25</sup> Mrs Broad-Davies of Chester died in 2015. She was 80.



*Above: Elodie on a soldier's horse in Station Road. The soldier is the same one as featured outside the post office (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) so it was possible this photograph was taken on October 29th 1914 Photograph c/o Mrs Ann Broad-Davies*



*Above: An older Elodie (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) collecting for the Primrose League at Collingham Show c 1919 photograph c/o Mrs A Broad-Davies*





*Elodie (left) with her adopted mother, Annie Lois Hoe (right) and Mr and Mrs Hadfield Boccock in the late 1920s/early 30s Photograph c/o Mrs A Broad-Davies*

It would be interesting to know what happened to the other Belgian families who came to Collingham. If anyone has any information, do get in touch with the Collingham and District Local History Society.

# Fleet Vol 51 No10 (Dec 2014/Jan 2015)

## Part 4: December 1914 - March 1915

### December 1914

By now it had become clear that, far from being over by Christmas, the war was escalating at an alarming pace. In Eastern Europe, Russia, despite its vast army, had been repulsed by Germany at Tannenberg and the Battle of the Masurian Lakes. In Western Europe, Belgium

free of cost on each weekday during the same period, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., at the Offices of the Council, at the Town Clerk's Office, Cartersgate, and at the Office of the Board at Whitehall.  
 Dated 5th December, 1914.  
 (Signed) GODFREY TALLENTS,  
 8347 Town Clerk.

**NEWARK PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION.**

**RECRUITING CAMPAIGN**  
 IN THE NEWARK DIVISION  
 WILL BE HELD  
 FROM WEDNESDAY, 9th TO 23rd INSTANT.

**SPEAKERS:**  
**Mr. J. R. Starkey, M.P.,**  
**Mr R. Burley Watiss, J.P.,**  
**Mr. H. A. Colefax, K.C.,**  
 AND OTHERS.

The following Meetings have been arranged:—  
 Wednesday Dec. 9th—Harby and Clifton.  
 Thursday, Dec. 10th—Sutton-on-Trent and Normanton.  
 Friday, Dec. 11th—Radcliffe-on-Trent and Calverton.  
 Monday, Dec. 14th—Cropwell Bishop and Cropwell Butler.  
 Tuesday, Dec. 15th—Collingham and Farnsfield.  
 Wednesday Dec 16th—Barnston and Granby.  
 Thursday, Dec. 17th—Lowdham.  
 Friday, Dec. 18th—Southwell.  
 Monday, Dec. 21st—East Bridgford and Bingham.  
 Tuesday, Dec. 22nd—Hickling and Upper Broughton.

Meetings are also being arranged for other Villages in the Division. 8330

**16 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS.**

**X**MAS is the time to make your appreciation best known by a present.  
 It is the oldest time-honoured custom.  
 Our choice and varied Christmas Stock is now complete.  
 Spend your money in the best market.  
 Make your purchases carefully.  
 To make sure of this visit our establishment.  
 You will be immediately convinced that for keen prices and quality in all classes of

**Jewellery, Silver, AND Silver-Plate, etc.,**  
 We cannot be beaten.

**WEDDING RINGS A SPECIALITY.**

**J. T. WILKINSON & SON,**  
**THE JEWELLERS,**  
**CHURCH ST., NEWARK.**  
 8338

**PRIVATE**

and northern France was now occupied by Germany and previously neutral countries such as Italy, Turkey, Romania and Greece were caught up in the fighting. The British had suffered a heavy defeat at Mons and September had seen the first Battle of the Marne with British and French losses put at over 81,000 and Germany's an estimated 220,000. The sheer number of casualties was unprecedented and a new type of war – Trench Warfare – came in to play.

Reinforcements were urgently

A recruitment notice in the Newark Advertiser December 9<sup>th</sup> 1914. Newspaper donation in CDLHS (WCD/FF1) c/o Mrs Marion Johnson

needed. In Britain, the Secretary of State for War, Field Marshall Earl Kitchener, launched a public appeal for civilians to enlist. Volunteers had to be 18 or over but many lied about their age to join up and take the 'king's shilling' – their first day's pay. Recruitment campaigns were held in every city, town and village beseeching men to enrol.

This appeal, from the Newark Advertiser dated 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1914, gave notice of a meeting on Tuesday Dec 15<sup>th</sup> for Collingham. It is likely to have been held in the Public Hall (now Memorial Hall).

The campaign worked, both nationally and locally. The following list of volunteers from Collingham, kindly supplied by journalist and writer Trevor Frecknall, joined 'Kitchener's Army' in 1915. Several other Collingham men would follow:

### 1915 Volunteers from the Collingham & Brough area:

Aitchison,	Gowrie Colquhoun		
Bacon	John William	Fosberry	GW
Bacon	Thomas Henry	Hammond	G
Bates	Walter Wood	Hancliffe	JE
Berry	Thomas Letts	Harrison	WH
Blundy	George E	Hickman	F
Brierley	W	Holland	Arthur
Broadberry	C	Johnson	J
Broadberry	G	Lucas	JO
Broadberry	GW		
Broadberry	H	Lumbers	W
Brompton	Herbert	Macauley	AB
Brompton	John	Pearson	C
Brooks	William Nathaniel	Pennington	BC
Browne	Montague B	Pilgrim	H
Bunn	Charles Alfred	Portal	GW
Clarke	AH	Powell	A
Clayton	AH	Priestley	Herbert
Clayton	Alfred	Priestley	Leonard
		Pykett	B
Clayton	George Harry	Shaw	E
Clayton	John Henry	Sheldon	Harry
Creasey	A	Sims	JL
Crocker	AE	Smith	WH
Curtis	Thomas Lancelot Constable	Sutton-Nelthorpe	O
Dean	A	Talbot	G
Dean	F	Taylor	Joseph
Ellis	GW	Walker	Albert
		Warwick	A
Fillingham	Arthur Joseph	Wilkinson	Vincent
Fillingham	O	Wilson	A

Wilson	AW
Woodcock	James
Wright	F
Wright	Harry

### **'A Call to Collingham Men'**

Those men too old to sign up were not willing to stand idly by. In the same Newark Advertiser edition as the recruitment notice, a letter was published entitled: *'A Call to Collingham Men'* in which several local men, many of whom had been Volunteers with the home-grown 6<sup>th</sup> Notts Rifles, implored others to join them to form a 'British Legion of Volunteers' as:

*'...there must be many men like ourselves in Collingham and district who are past military age, yet are not only desirous but also capable of rendering service to our country in case of invasion or similar emergency... There are many ways in which civilians not eligible for active military duties can help their country, and without running the risk of being shot on sight as a civilian carrying arms, can carry out important duties, which, if properly done, would assist the military. One way, I imagine, would be to learn how to make trenches and bomb-proof shelters for soldiers; to learn the best, quickest and least exposed roads in the district, along with the military, could be directed to the front, and the other roads by which women and children and other non-combatants could be directed to a place in the opposite direction. –*

*Yours,* Geo. Hind, J E Norman, W. Bailey, A W Broadberry, J Sempers,  
A Robinson, W Hunt, F Hunt, J Clifton, H Healey.





*Left: George Hind, a tailor on Woodhill Road and one of the signatories of the letter to the Newark Advertiser. Photograph c/o Mr George Longland*

One way some of the signatories found of 'rendering service' at home was to become a special constable. Wheelwright James Sempers and joiner Arthur W Broadberry (known as 'Whiskers' Broadberry) were sworn in for North Collingham for the duration of the war, alongside miller and baker Arthur Willis, baker William Bailey, jobbing gardener William Wiseman, farmer John Hunt, builder Tom Millns, chimney sweep J T Sharpe, licensed victualler of the Jolly Bargeman, Ezra Waddington and road man J R Antcliff. In South Collingham farmers Joseph Gibson, William Crocker, Alfred Edward Noton and George H

Bagguley, alongside gamekeeper Thomas Butler and William A Palmer, described as a 'gentleman,' were also sworn-in at a special sitting of Newark Police Court, Later farmer W Taylor, gardener M Clarke and carters R Cook and William Thompson would also help police the two villages.

### **Working Parties**

The women, too, played their part. After the British Red Cross joined forces with the Order of the St John's Ambulance to form a Joint War Committee, Collingham formed Working Parties to support their call for help. At South Collingham House, fundraising, knitting and sewing for the sick and injured began in earnest under the leadership of Mrs Mary Browne (1850-1932) and her daughter Dorothy Browne (1881-1954).

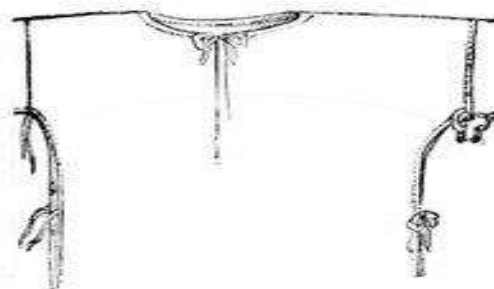


The following formidable list of items sent to the Red Cross Depot in Bridlesmithgate, Nottingham, appeared in Rev Maxwell's newsletter of December 1916. It reflects how conscientious the Working Party was. Included were:

- 123 shirts
- 18 suits of pyjamas
- 19 pairs of day socks
- 17 'helpless case' shirts\*
- 69 bed jackets
- 12 'helpless case' bed jackets\*
- 11 nightingales
- 29 pairs operating stockings
- 41 pairs bed socks
- 30 face washers
- 5 hot water bottle covers
- 28 bags
- 2 pairs mittens
- 7 helmets
- 1 scarf
- 2 pairs slippers
- 16 nightshirts

In addition friends have contributed:

- 6 pillow cases
- 4 pairs socks
- 10 bags
- 6 pairs mittens
- 1 scarf
- 2 pairs slippers
- 4 roller bandages
- 1 pair knee caps
- 1 undershirt
- 1 parcel linen
- 1 pillow



01AQVK9K \* © Mary Evans |  
www.diomedia.com \* The Gunthorpe  
Helpless shirt, WWI \* 07 Sep 2014

\*'Helpless Case' shirts (as shown in the diagram above) were invented by Mrs. Gunthorpe, a surgical nurse at the Middlesex Hospital. The shirt was sewn in one piece, with both the sides and the sleeves tied by tapes. The garment was laid out flat and allowed the wounded patient to be placed, his neck in the curve, 'without disturbing a limb or muscle.' The tapes were then quickly and deftly tied.

**December 1914 South Collingham's First Casualty: Lieutenant Ronald Andrew Colquhoun Aitchison**

December 14<sup>th</sup> saw South Collingham's first casualty, 19-year-old Lieutenant Ronald Andrew Colquhoun Aitchison. Ronald was the only son of Gowrie C. Aitchison (1863-1928), land agent and previously General Manager and Secretary of the Snowdon Mountain Railway, and Rose Smith-Woolley (1865-1926), youngest daughter of Thomas Smith-Woolley Jr (see Part 2/October 2014 Fleet). The family lived at the Burnt House, South Collingham, although in the 1911 census they were registered as residing in a 12-roomed property in Langford with three servants.



Ronald had been privately educated at Godalming and Charterhouse and joined the King's Own Royal Lancasters straight from Sandhurst in September, 1913. He had already seen action, including the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne, and had twice been recommended for gallantry, when the regiment was sent to Ypres.

*Left: South Collingham's first casualty, 19-year-old Lieutenant Ronald Andrew Colquhoun Aitchison*

Ypres, an ancient city in Belgium, became one of the most notorious battlegrounds of the First World War. It endured three major assaults and had to be entirely rebuilt after the Armistice. The First Ypres Salient Offensive was waged in 1914 from 19<sup>th</sup> October to November 22<sup>nd</sup> and the second began the following April. However, skirmishes continued in between and on December 14<sup>th</sup>, ten days before his twentieth birthday, Ronald was wounded near Armentieres and died a few hours later.

A tribute to Aitchison from Rev. Maxwell appeared in the January 1915 South Collingham Parish Newsletter:

*'Our deepest sympathy goes out at this time to Major and Mrs Aitchison in their terrible bereavement caused by the death of their only son on the field of battle in Western Flanders. We all felt so proud of Lieutenant Aitchison when he came home for a few days on furlough in the middle of December, looking so well and strong; knowing as we did that he had been in the fighting line from almost the beginning of the campaign. He worshipped with us in our church, and received the Blessed Sacrament on what proved to be his last Sunday on earth. His clean courageous life and noble death will always be a source of inspiration to those who knew him. May the consolation of our Divine Redeemer help his sorrowing parents to sustain their irreparable loss.'*

**Lieutenant Aitchison is buried in the Strand Cemetery, Hainaut. He is remembered on the St John the Baptist Roll of Honour and Parishioners' Plaque. There is also a family plaque to him in St John the Baptist's Church (below) and he is remembered on the Llanberis War Memorial and Roll of Honour in Caernarvonshire.**



His father went on to command the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters from 14<sup>th</sup> July 1915 until the end of the war<sup>26</sup>. Meanwhile Ronald's mother and his sister, Annie, helped the war effort by holding various fundraising events in Collingham.

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<sup>26</sup> Correction: Lt/Col G. Aitchison was only in charge of 2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters until 1917.

**1915**

**Sunday January 31<sup>st</sup>: The Tragic Death of Dr Broadbent**

At the end of January, news of the unexpected death of the village doctor, 54-year-old Dr Frank Broadbent, sent shockwaves through both villages. An inquest into events leading to this tragedy at the Old Hall was held on Tuesday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, and reported in the Newark Advertiser the following Saturday (February 6<sup>th</sup>). The inquest heard that Ruth Cooper, the house-maid who discovered the pyjama-clad doctor in the dining room at 6.30am, initially thought he was sleeping and carried on with her work. An insomniac, the doctor often ‘snatched sleep anywhere.’ However, when after three hours her employer still hadn’t moved, the house-maid called for Dr Catherine Smith, the doctor’s partner, who lived-in at the practice with the Broadbent family. Dr Smith pronounced Dr Broadbent dead at the scene.

It seems that Dr Broadbent had been prescribed a mixture of bromides for sleeplessness and influenza. Unfortunately, the bromides were on the same shelf as other medicines (which ones are not revealed) and in his befuddled state it is thought the doctor drank from the wrong medicine bottle sometime during the night. Dr Catherine Smith, giving evidence, stated that the ‘practice of late had been very extensive and they had both been very much overworked.’ The Coroner, Mr F B Footitt, recorded a verdict of ‘death by misadventure.’

The impact of this tragedy on the two Collinghams should not be underestimated. Upon hearing the news, the Rev Gould, for one, was so shocked he was unable to preach his sermon that morning and asked the congregation to forgive him for his ‘lack of words.’

It is evident that Dr Broadbent, who had taken over his father, surgeon John Broadbent’s practice on the latter’s retirement in 1894, was well regarded by all. Not only was he the local doctor, he was Chairman of the Collingham Gas and Light Company, on the executive of the Collingham Farmers’ Club, vice-president of the Musical Society, Chairman of the



**FRANK BROADBENT.**  
(Photograph by Allison, Belfast.)

*Above: Dr Frank Broadbent. Please note this image does not appear in the original Fleet piece as it was found at a later date. Source: (online) British Medical Journal pub Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 1915 photo citation by ‘Allison’, Belfast*

Managers of the Elementary Schools and a member of Collingham Cricket Club, to name but a few. In medical matters he was ahead of his time. In 1889, as Medical Officer to the Collingham and Newark Union, he advocated that a fresh water supply was essential, even though such radical thinking put him at odds with 'some of his own patients and life-long friends.' He was also compassionate and generous. At a time when doctors charged for their services, he often overlooked the fee for more impoverished patients and *'helped many who were too poor to pay'* (as recalled by Mrs Olive Wilkinson, Fleet 1970).

Dr Broadbent left a wife, Harriet (1859-1949), and two daughters, Christine (1896-1975) and Ruth (1889-1983).

### **Dr Catherine Love Smith MBChB University of Glasgow**

Although Dr Catherine Smith (1872-1919) had been at the Collingham practice for sixteen years, she does not appear to have taken over from Dr Broadbent. She continued instead as the Deputy Medical Officer for Newark and Lincoln Union and as a lecturer 'on ambulance' to Kesteven and Notts County Council. It was Dr Alexander Dell, Medical Officer for Newark, who took over the role of 'surgeon' for Collingham but he died in August 1918, aged 73. It wasn't until 1919, when Dr William Deane arrived at the Old Hall, that Collingham enjoyed the security of another long-serving GP. Dr Deane ran the practice until his retirement in 1951.

oooOooo

**Added information (not in Fleet piece):** Researcher Janice Leam of Huddersfield, in correspondence with Helena Pielichaty in 2018, revealed that in January 1916, Dr Smith resigned her position as District Medical Officer. It is probable she left the area soon afterwards. In May 1917, Smith was appointed Medical Inspector of Schools and Medical Officer of School Clinic at Ashford, Kent. She died in 1919 at her sister's home, in Stratford-upon-Avon. She was 47. It was unusual to have a female GP in those days. Scottish-born Smith, who graduated from Queen Margaret College, Glasgow, in 1899, was certainly a trailblazer.

**March 1915**

**'A Collingham Casualty' Thomas Letts Berry**



*Left: Thomas Letts Berry's picture from his tribute in the Newark Advertiser dated April 21<sup>st</sup> 1915*

March 12<sup>th</sup> saw the death of 34-year-old married man and father-of-one Thomas Letts Berry. Letts Berry was the sixth son of the Lord of the Manor<sup>27</sup> of Ashley in Northamptonshire and a barley merchant by trade. He had married North Collingham-born Mary Alissimon Kirk, daughter of maltster David Kirk of Crescent House, Low Street, at All Saints Church in 1905. From the Newark

*Advertiser we know that Thomas Letts Berry: '...lent the grounds adjoining his residence for the annual Collingham Horticultural Society Show, was an active supporter of the Conservative and Unionist Association and a prominent member of the Collingham Habitation of the Primrose League.'*

Letts Berry enlisted with the Nottingham City Battalion in 1914 before being transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sherwood Foresters. By the end of his training in Plymouth he had been promoted to corporal. His battalion had only been in France for five days when he was shot 'above the heart' at the Battle of Neuve Chappelle and died of his wounds the day after. A comrade added that, *'Thomas had the satisfaction of knowing he had bowled over six Germans before being hit himself; and he was 'very cheerful''*.

As well as his wife, Mary (1876-1949), Thomas left behind a two-year-old son, Thomas Hugh Kirk Berry, who had been baptised at All Saints in August 1912. In 1918 Mary had a stained glass window in All Saints dedicated to the memory of her husband. She never remarried and lived the rest of her life on Swinderby Road (the house now known as Swinderby

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<sup>27</sup> Correction: According to information from Ashby History Society in 2017, Thomas Letts Berry's father was not Lord of the Manor (Source: T. Frecknall 2015) but simply lived at The Manor.



Lodge). Thomas Letts Berry was buried in Estaires Communal Cemetery, Neuve Chapelle. He died the day before his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.



*Left: Stained glass window dedicated to Thomas Letts Berry in All Saints Church, Collingham  
photograph c/o Jeremy Lodge*

The dedication below the window reads:

*'To the glory of God and in the loving memory of Thomas Letts Berry of this parish. Born March 14<sup>th</sup> 1880. Died March 13<sup>th</sup> 1915 of wounds received in action at Neuve Chappelle. Laid to rest Estaires Cemetery France.'*

The window was created by the Bromsgrove Guild (1898 -1966) and commissioned by Berry's widow, Mary

Alissimon Berry (1877 -1949). It was dedicated by Rev. Gould on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 1918.



**1915**

**(April – December)**

**Fleet Vol 52 No 1**

**Part 5**





## **Fleet Vol 52 No 1 Feb. 2015**

### **Part 5: April – December 1915**

By spring of 1915, the Collinghams (North and South) were coming to terms with being at war. Outwardly, the two villages didn't appear to have altered much; babies were still being born, weddings held, children continued to attend school, trains ran and crops grew. However, there were small but telling changes.

For a start, people began to congregate round the post office more, waiting for the daily news bulletins the postmistress, Miss Gibson, posted in her window. There were different faces serving in many of the shops, too, replacing the men who'd enlisted. Grocer Walter Holland, for example, was tasked with finding new staff after two of his sons, Arthur and Albert, joined the Notts Yeomanry and young William Smith (aged 17), one of his assistants, joined the South Notts Hussars.



*Left: 1 High Street, South Collingham - one of three shop premises owned by Walter Holland & family. Photo c/o Collingham & District Local History Society (CDLHS)*

Meanwhile in the larger houses, Working Parties hosted by the wives and daughters of the gentry planned concerts, whist drives and rummage sales to raise money for the Belgian Relief Fund and Soldiers' Benevolent Fund. This was in

addition to the diligent shirt-making and endless knitting of socks, scarves and balaclavas destined for the Red Cross Depot in Nottingham. For the truly conscientious, lectures in first aid and home nursing were arranged by the indefatigable Girl Guide Leader, Miss Dorothy Browne. These took place in the Infants' School (now the Youth and Community Centre) at a cost of 6d.

It helped to keep busy. It took the mind off the harrowing news (or as harrowing as the censors allowed) from France and Flanders everyone read about in the *Newark Advertiser* and *Newark Herald*. Because despite everything, neither the 'Butcher of Berlin' as Keiser Wilhelm II was nicknamed, nor his cohorts, showed any signs of withdrawal and the death toll was rising to inconceivable levels. The Collinghams could count themselves lucky only two men from the villages had been killed so far<sup>28</sup>.

### **The Dardanelles**

Trench warfare defined the Western Front; miles and miles of ditches dug deep into the earth and lined with planks for support and sandbags for protection. Different trenches had different functions with those nearest the enemy being the 'front-line.' Sometimes the distance between the German and Allied front-line trenches was so short the soldiers could call out to each other across no-man's land. Each side was intent on capturing the other's trench, in many instances only to lose it again weeks, days or even hours, later. It was a method of fighting as futile as it was deadly, more often than not ending in stalemate.

The new front in the Dardanelles, opened in February with the aim of slipping through the 'back door' of the Mediterranean, hadn't had much success, either. Several battleships had been lost, torpedoed or stuck by mines. The French and Royal Navy turned to the infantry for reinforcements and on April 25<sup>th</sup> the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces, led by General Sir Ian Hamilton, landed on five beaches in Gallipoli.

It was a catastrophe. Some blamed stormy weather for forcing landings further from the intended beaches, others a failure of the powers-that-be to heed intelligence warnings. Whatever the reason, far from landing safely and being given chance to muster, the exposed troops were, in Hamilton's own words: '*...slaughtered like rats in a trap.*' The War

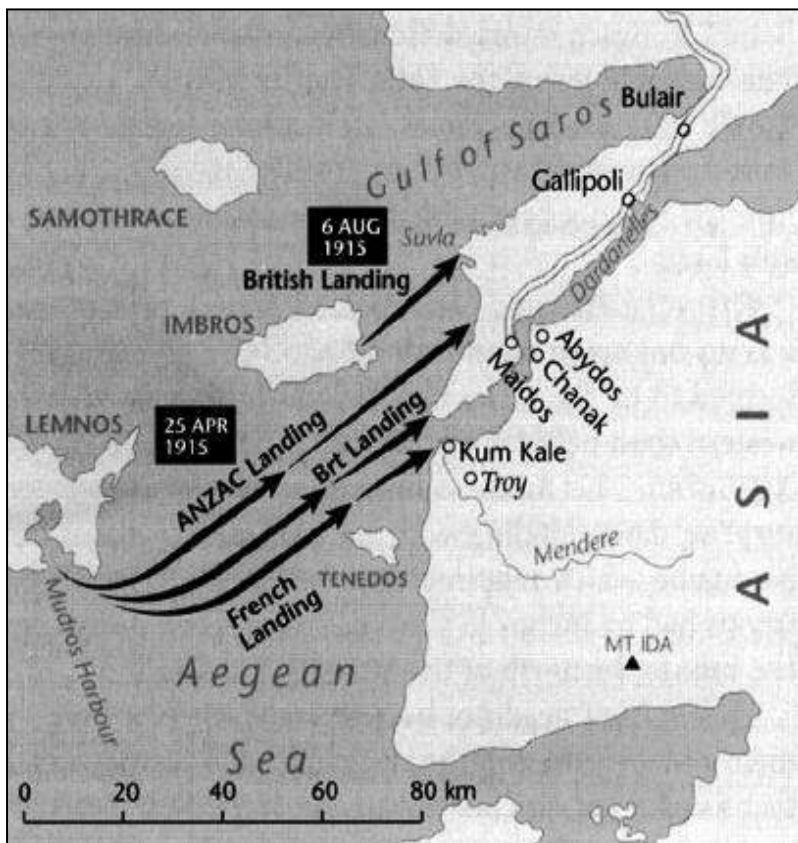
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<sup>28</sup> Lt Ronald A Colquhoun Aitchison Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 1914 and Thomas Letts Berry March 12<sup>th</sup> 1915 see Fleet Nov/Dec 2014

Cabinet had seriously underestimated the Ottoman army and its leaders such as Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938). Kemal, who went on to become the first President of Turkey in 1923, is said to have told his men as they prepared to meet the invaders: *'I do not order you to fight, I order you to die. In the time which passes until we die, other troops and commanders can come forward and take our places.'* Die they did – along with thousands of British, French, ANZACs (Australian & New Zealand Army Corps) and Gurkhas.

The debacle was a sign of things to come and the Gallipoli Campaign became another long drawn out and bitter offensive with little to show for it. Then, less than a month later, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, came further appalling news. A passenger ship, *RMS Lusitania*, en route from New York to Liverpool, had been torpedoed off the coast of Ireland. It sank within eighteen

minutes, taking with it 1,200 civilian passengers.



Rather than acting as a deterrent, such incidents stirred the bulldog spirit. As spring turned to summer, dozens of men from Collingham and district stepped forward to enlist, fired by a patriotic zeal never seen before. By now, it was perceived that the British way of life was under threat and those left behind vowed to do their utmost to

preserve it and carry on as normal.

### Wedding Bells

In June housemaid Miss Gertrude Priestley, whose family could trace its Collingham roots back to at least the 1700s, donned *'a charming dress of white durona silk'* and married

Bertie Thomas Smith of Netherfield in St John the Baptist Church. She was given away by her father, Edward, a baker, and attended by her sisters, Winnie and Ivy. Her employer, Mrs. Jane Longman Rice of The Gables<sup>29</sup>, generously offered the use of her home for the reception as well as providing the bouquets of white sweet peas, roses and carnations.

## Garden Party

On Low Street, Mr. and Mrs. John Wigram opened up The Manor's grounds for the Missionary Garden Party.



*The Manor, South Collingham*

Elsewhere, planning for the Annual Ploughing Match in November went ahead. The event, held by the Collingham Farmers' Club since 1841, had been cancelled in 1914 but the officials, presided over by William Roe of Besthorpe, were damned if the war was going to stop the highlight of the farmers' calendar for two years in a row.

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<sup>29</sup> See Part 22 July 1918



## Sunday School Treat

In South Collingham House, Dorothy Browne's widowed mother, Mrs Mary Browne, prepared to host the Sunday School Treat in Dale Field, praying for fine weather. Praying also, for good news of her son, Percy. His battalion, the 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) 2<sup>nd</sup> of the Lincolnshire Regiment, part of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, was among the 20,000 fresh troops that had been sent to break the deadlock in the Dardanelles.

*Two views of South Collingham House on the Green, South Collingham. The image on the right shows the property looking towards the High Street around 1910 c/o Mrs Pat Pennington.*

*The property, bought and vastly extended by Thomas Smith-Woolley Jr. around 1847, was being let to tenants such as Mrs Browne by the 1900s. However, Smith-Woolley & Wigram still operated its land agency business from offices nearby.*



Photo: 2005

Mrs Browne must have felt quietly confident Percy would survive. After all, he was a seasoned campaigner, as Montague, Mary's other son, now training with the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, constantly reminded her. In turn, Mrs Browne reassured Joan, Percy's wife of just over a year, the signs



were in his favour. Percy had been in the army since 1902, joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment at nineteen, promoted to lieutenant at twenty-one and made a captain in 1913. What's more, the Turkish heat everyone was always complaining about wouldn't faze Percy either; he'd spent years stationed in India and Barbados. There were so many positives from which they could all take heart.

### The Coltons

At 71 Harcourt Street, Newark, another mother, Mrs Minnie Jane Colton, tried to remain equally as positive as she waited for news of her son, Michael, who had also sailed to the Dardanelles as part of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.

Whether they were aware of it or not is unknown, but Minnie Jane Colton and Mary Browne had much in common. Both were widowed, albeit Minnie Jane much more recently – her husband, the prominent Newark solicitor Michael Herbert Colton, had only died, aged 49, in December, whereas Mary Jane's husband, the Rev. Samuel Browne of Plumtree, had passed away almost a decade earlier. Both were from similarly comfortable backgrounds (Minnie would go on to inherit South Scarle Hall) both had two sons serving in the Dardanelles and



*Above: Brooklands c 1895. The house has since been converted to flats and the land to the rear of the property now (previously an orchard) forms Brooklands Close, Low Street. Photo c/o Mrs Pat Pennington*

both had daughters called Dorothy who played active roles in the war effort.

They had Collingham connections, too. Before moving to Newark, the Coltons had resided at 'Brooklands' on Low Street in North Collingham. This was where their four children were born; Michael Herbert Edmonds Colton in 1894, Dorothy in 1895, Stanley in 1898 and Harold in 1904.

*Right: The Coltons around 1900 with Michael Jr aged 6 to the right and Stanley aged 2 on his mother's lap.*

*Photographs c/o Mrs Pat Pennington*





### *Private M H E Colton*

Michael Colton (left) was educated at the Magnus School in Newark. Although not particularly academic, he was well-regarded by his head teacher, the formidable Rev. Gorse, and excelled as a Scout Leader. He left school around 1910, began working for Edward Bailey's Auctioneer's in Newark and joined the elite Sherwood Foresters Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers).

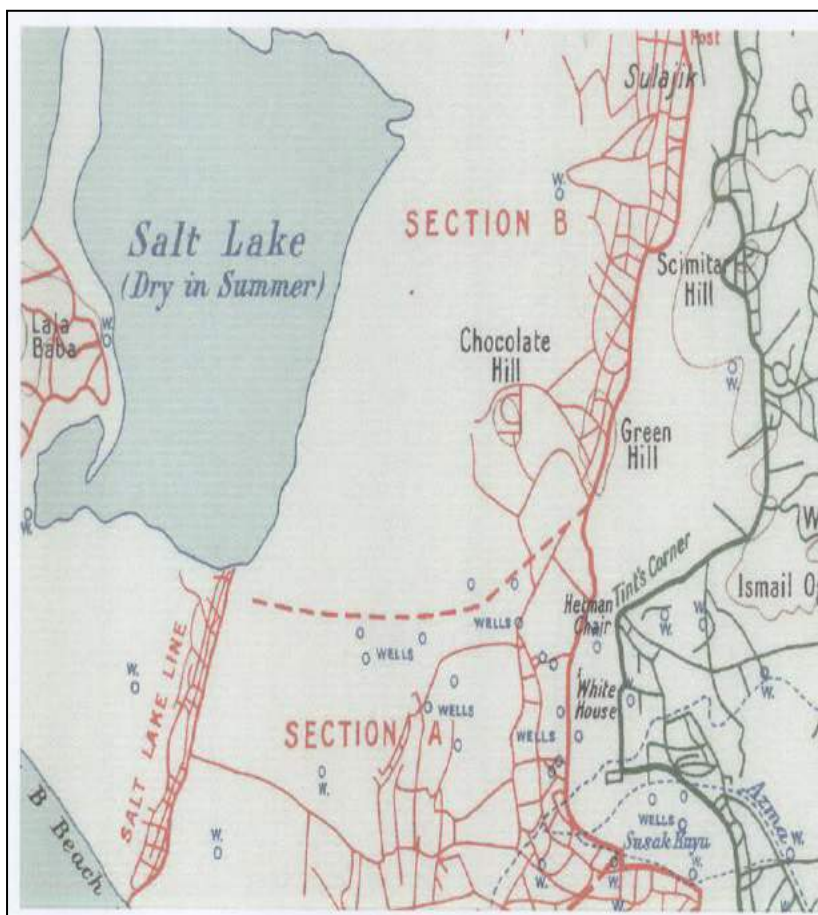
Although he lacked the years of army experience of Captain Browne, Private Colton's time as a territorial, and the first-aid he learned in the Scouts, would be

put to good use. He was assigned as one of the stretcher-bearers for 'A' Squadron. So both mothers had reasons to be optimistic about their sons' chances of survival. Alas, such optimism proved ill-founded and by the end of August, the women would receive terrible news.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, a mere three days after landing on Suvla Bay, Captain Percival Leatherly Browne (right) was dead; shot in the head and killed instantly while trying to capture 'Chocolate Hill', so named after its rich, dark soil. He was thirty-two. Less than two weeks later, on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, twenty-one-year-old Private Michael Herbert Edmonds Colton lost his life on that same rich, dark soil.







Map of Section 8 – Chocolate Hill, nr Gallipoli

Soon afterwards, Mrs Colton received the following letter from her son's commanding officer, Major Harold Thorpe of Coddington (research via Trevor Frecknall): *'Your brave son ... brought no less than 14 men out of one patch of burning gorse and personally dressed the wounds of 10 of them. Unfortunately, he was struck by a shrapnel bullet in the head and fell mortally wounded. I cannot express my*

*admiration of the work done by the stretcher bearers ... He has always been in my Squadron and has always been the pattern of what a soldier should be.'*

**Private Colton's body was never recovered. He is remembered on the Hellas Memorial, Gallipoli, on The Magnus School Roll of Honour and in St Helena's Church, South Scarle.**

At the end of August, a service was held in St John the Baptist's Church for Captain Browne, conducted by Canon Blakeney, vicar of Melton Mowbray, who had known him from childhood. The following tribute from Rev. Maxwell appeared in the South Church Parish Magazine in September 1915:

*'The ghastly tragedy of this terrible war has again been brought home to our minds here in Collingham by the news of the death of Captain Percival Leatherly Browne, which happened on the field of battle on or about August 7<sup>th</sup> in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles. Our deepest sympathy and sorrow are with all the members of his family in the cruel bereavement which has befallen them. They will derive comfort from the fact that their dear one died a brave and noble death while*

*defending the honour and safety of his country, and still greater comfort from the knowledge that in Christ Jesus our Divine Redeemer death is but the gate of life Eternal and that in him all who love Him will meet again never more to experience the horrors of war, or misery, or parting, or death. This is the unspeakable comfort of all believers. RIP.'*

**Captain Browne is buried in Green Hill Cemetery in Turkey and remembered on St John the Baptist War Memorial tablet and Roll of Honour and Sobraon Barracks Clock Tower Memorial, Burton Road, Lincoln.**

*Between April 1915 and January 1916, an estimated 115,000 British and dominion troops were killed or wounded during the Gallipoli Campaign, 27,000 French and 250,000 Turkish and Arabs. One of the lucky ones who survived was Walter Holland's shop assistant, William Smith, who saw the entire war out before disembarkation in 1919.*

### **Private Arthur Starr**

In September, there came a further blow for the Collinghams when Private Arthur Starr (born in 1889) joined the list of fatalities. Like Private Colton, Arthur was born and bred in North Collingham, although he came from humbler stock. He was the third of at least nine children born to John Starr, a maltster's labourer, and his second wife, Mary Ann Coleby. The Starrs lived on Low Street, although the exact house is unknown.



We do not have a known photograph of Arthur but two of his sisters appear on this postcard of Collingham Girls' and Infants' School, taken sometime around 1904:

Arthur's sister, Dora (baptised 1894), is listed as being 2<sup>nd</sup> on the right on the middle row and Jenny (baptised 1896) is second from the right on the front row.

Postcard c/o CDLHS.



By 1911, Arthur was working as a 'gardening domestic' in Old Lenton, Nottingham. It was



Rifleman Starr's grave, Ypres

here he met Mary Askew, a tucking machinist in a blouse factory; the relationship blossomed and they married in the spring of 1914. Soon afterwards, Arthur volunteered and became a rifleman in the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps as did his younger brother, Ernest (born N Collingham 1891).

Arthur's death was as mercifully quick as Captain Browne's and Private Colton's. He was killed by a shell lobbed into his trench during the Battle of Loos at Ypres, on September 27<sup>th</sup>. This battle was noted for being the first time in which the British, adopting the tactics of the German army, used chemical warfare. The hideous chlorine gas killed six hundred of the enemy but also blinded and poisoned many British troops in its wake.

Added (not in Fleet): **Rifleman R/8011 Starr is buried in the Bedford House Cemetery, Ypres. Enclosure no. 2 V1 6 A**

Arthur Starr's Burial Return form shows he was initially buried in Ecole de Bienfaisance Cemetery before being re-buried at Bedford House Cemetery, Ypres.

**Rifleman Starr is also remembered on the Lenton War Memorial, Nottingham and North Collingham War Memorial and Roll of Honour in All Saints Church.**

Photo of grave c/o Murray Biddle, Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour website

## **King George V Addresses the Nation**



*Above: King George V (1865-1936)*

On Wednesday 27 October 1915 the *Newark Advertiser* reproduced 'The King's Message to the Nation – a moving personal appeal' in which he implored more of his subjects to volunteer for the forces as: '*...the end is not in sight.*'

It is telling when the king himself has to make such a grave plea. For he was right; the end was not in sight and as Christmas loomed, the Collinghams braced themselves for more hardship. There was worse to come, even for those who had suffered enough.



# 1916

**Fleet: Vol 53 Nos. 1-4 2016**

**Part 6 - 9**



## Fleet: Vol 53 No. 1 February 2016

### Part 6: January - July 1916



The names of North Collingham's fallen from both World Wars are remembered on a bronze plaque inside All Saints' Church and on the imposing stone cross in the churchyard. Those from South Collingham are commemorated inside St John the Baptist's Church (pictured left).

These memorials are in alphabetical order, which is sensible, as it makes individual names easy to find and gives a comforting predictability to the sombre roll call every Remembrance Sunday.

It occurred to me when writing this that had the names been arranged in chronological order instead, with each

year as a separate column, the memorials would have tracked the 'progress' of the Great War as starkly as the temperature chart of a fever patient. The 1914 column (presuming north and south were combined) would herald the onset of the fever, with only one inscription; that of nineteen-year-old Lt. Ronald A C Aitchison. The 1915 plaque would show an increase to three losses as the fever takes hold (**Corp. Thomas Letts Berry, Capt. Percy Browne and Pte. Arthur Starr**). Then, in 1916, a sudden spike, with fourteen men killed or died of wounds. That's fourteen men from Collingham; the





toll does not include those from Besthorpe, South Scarle, Harby and other outlying villages.

**Pte. George William Blundy 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Alexander, Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment**

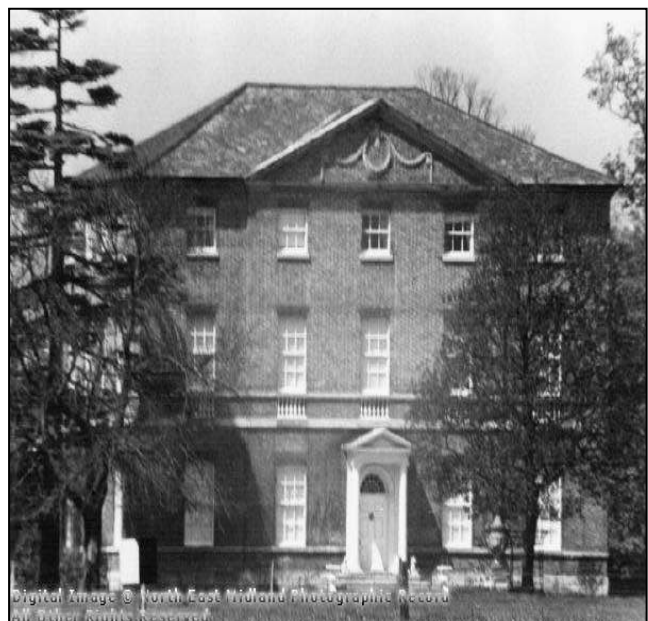
Heavy snow was covering the village in February when news was received of the first casualty of the year; that of twenty-eight-year old George William Blundy (pictured). The



Blundys had moved from Harby to Collingham around 1890. George's father, George, was a tailor and his mother, Eliza, a seamstress. In 1900, George Snr. died, aged 48, leaving Eliza with four children to rear. Soon afterwards, George William, then thirteen, left school to work as a stable boy for the Curtis family at Langford Hall (pictured below). However, he was employed as a groom at Skelton Castle in Cleveland by the time he enlisted in 1915. According to the 1911 Census, Eliza and her family were living in Queen Street and it was to this address we can presume Eliza received the

news of George's death.

Private Blundy was one of nineteen men from his battalion, the 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Alexander, Princess of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regiment, killed in Ypres on February 14<sup>th</sup> when their trenches were shelled. He is buried in the Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, Vlaaderen, Belgium, and remembered on the North Collingham, Skelton and the Regimental (Richmond) memorials. His brothers, Percy and Ronald, both volunteered and returned safely.



*Langford Hall*



## Lieut. Montague Bernard Browne 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters

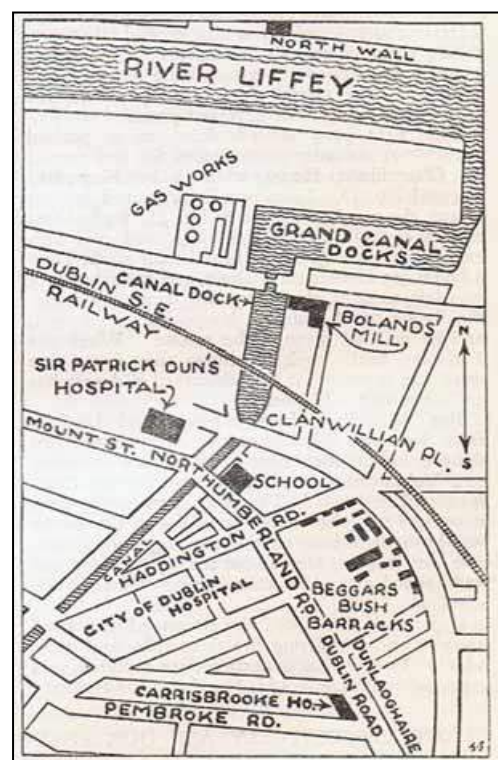
Less 'fortunate' was the mother of the second casualty, Mrs Mary Browne of South Collingham House, The Green. The widow had already lost one son, Percy, in the Gallipoli Campaign the previous August (see February 2015 Fleet). Now, in late April, came the devastating news that her firstborn, Montague Bernard Browne, of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, had also perished. The news must have seemed incomprehensible to Mrs Browne when she discovered that her son's death was caused, not by a German mortar shell but a hail of bullets in a quiet street in Dublin, fired by Irish rebels (the Irish Volunteers), fighting for independence.



The nature and ferocity of the attack caught all the regiments deployed to Dublin that Easter weekend off-guard. According to Besthorpe's Lieut. Colonel Coape Oates, commander of 'B' Company in which Browne was serving, his men were 'sitting ducks': *'...subjected to cruel and accurate fire from front, rear and flanks with no cover or supporting fire from Artillery or Machine Guns to help them.'* 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Browne was one of the 2/8<sup>th</sup>s first

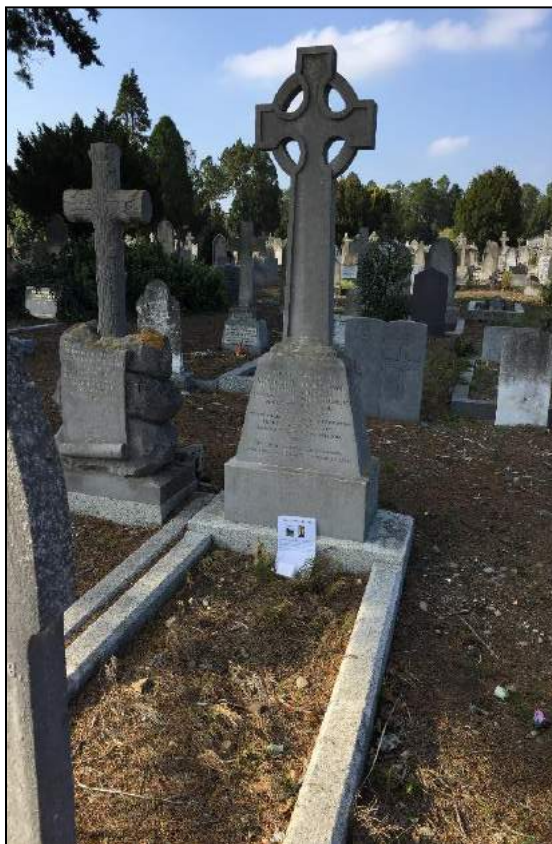
casualties, dying of wounds on April 28<sup>th</sup>, two days after attempting to capture Clanwilliam House, one of the rebels' strongholds, on Mount Street Bridge. In all, 485 people were killed in the six days of insurrection that became known as the Easter Uprising. Most of those killed were innocent civilians. British Forces lost 107 men altogether, with 31 being from the Sherwood Foresters.

Browne, a bachelor, educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, had been a master



brewer with James Hole's of Newark. His address is given on Harrow School's Roll of Honour as Rutland House, Collingham<sup>30</sup>. When he volunteered in 1915 he was almost forty years of age and had no previous military service. He could have remained a civilian but in Oates' words he: '*...patriotically obeyed his country's call and set a fine example to the younger men.*'

In the immediate aftermath of the uprising, General Sir John Maxwell was sent by the government to restore order and quash any further dissent. He set about this in what many saw as a heavy-handed and over-zealous manner, imposing strict Martial Law. During early May he ordered the execution by firing squad of fifteen of the rebel leaders, including poet



*Photo: Montague Browne's grave. Photo taken by Helena Pielichaty in 2018 (replaces the original one in Fleet) Photo shows the 'To Honour Our Heroes' information compiled by Jerome Wright of Collingham to mark the centenary (See Appendix).*

and scholar Joseph Plunkett, after the briefest of court hearings. Others were sentenced to life imprisonment. Up until then, there had been little sympathy in Dublin for the rebels, whose tactics of using civilians as human shields was deplored, but the speed at which the executions were carried out caused a huge shift in popular opinion and actually increased support for Sinn Fein.

If the Irish were left feeling betrayed by their treatment after the Uprising, so were the Sherwood Foresters. Many of those soldiers killed were hastily buried in a mass grave, interred without coffins. Permission to exhume the bodies and give the soldiers a proper burial was refused on health grounds.

Browne was one of the lucky ones. He shares his grave<sup>31</sup> in Dean's Grange Cemetery, Dublin, with only one other comrade; twenty-three-year old Private John Blissett of Nottingham. Further degrading of the regiment's contribution came when those killed were listed as having died on the 'home-front' and no

<sup>30</sup> Mary and Dorothy Browne moved to Rutland House, Low Street, Collingham c. 1922

<sup>31</sup> Pte Blissett's internment costs were paid for by Mary Browne (Source: Dean's Gate employee 2018)

service medals were awarded. The bitterness at this insensitive treatment comes across clearly on the homepage of the Crich Museum website which states: *'Scattered across Dublin cemeteries lie the forgotten remains of the young men of the Sherwood Foresters Regiment who were slaughtered on Dublin's streets during the 1916 Easter Rising. Their story, like the scruffy neglected graves, remains largely forgotten in the long and embarrassed history of the English in Ireland.'* Let us hope the Sherwood Foresters are given the respect and acknowledgement they deserve during the forthcoming centenary commemorations.

### Military Service Acts



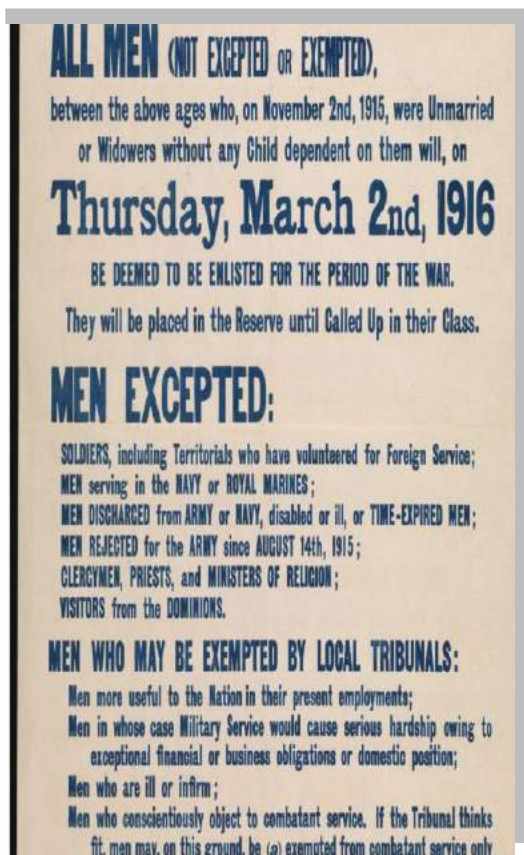
*Alderman John Kew (1868-1929)  
coal merchant, proprietor of the  
Newark Advertiser and Mayor of  
Newark.*

As Mary Browne mourned the loss of a second son, the government, urgently in need of more troops, passed the first of three Military Service Acts, conscripting single men aged between 18 and 41 to enlist. Anyone in the Newark area wishing to be exempted had to appear before a weekly tribunal, held in the Ossington Palace Coffee House (now Zizzi's). Chairing proceedings was the Mayor of Newark, Councillor John Charles Kew, a coal merchant and publisher of the Newark Advertiser. The military representative was Charles Constable Curtis, JP (1852 -1936), aforementioned landowner residing at Langford Hall. Anyone seeking exemption from military service had to face these two fervent patriots. The majority of people coming before these tribunals were farmers, shopkeepers and tradesmen, desperate to keep their workforce. Most of their pleas failed dismally.

Collingham farmer Joseph Gibson, 31, for example, was ordered to go and fight despite having five brothers already serving, one having been killed. The tribunal pointed out he had other brothers who could look after their mother. If a case such as Gibson's was given short shrift, eighteen-year old Bertie Parker Walton of Woodhill Road, stood no chance.



## Collingham's only known conscientious objector: Bertie Parker Walton



Bertie, the son of a painter and decorator, was a Christadelphian. Members of this religious group were pacifists and exempt from military service, provided they were engaged in 'work of national importance'. Initially, Bertie worked as a clerk for Wakes and Lamb, an engineering company in Newark engaged in making munitions. This should have exempted him but the tribunal refused to accept this. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, his first time before the panel, Bertie Walton was ordered to enlist. He refused. A month later he appeared before the tribunal again. Once more he was ordered to enlist and again he refused.

This pattern continued for well over a year, with Kew and Curtis (and later Colonel Nicholson who replaced Curtis on the board) growing more and more outraged at every appeal. Kew even demanded that the MP for Newark, Captain Starkey, bring the matter up with the War Office. When Bertie changed jobs in 1917 and went to work part-time at Ellis's flour mill, the tribunal pounced. 'Part-time' was not acceptable and Bertie was directed to full time work in munitions or on the land. However, an army medical passed him only 'C1' and he was judged unfit for farm work. Mr Ellis saved Bertie from further appearances before the Tribunal by employing him full-time.



Above: 1 Woodhill Road. The Waltons lived further down, close to 'Dawnsmere' (no 20).

In his excellent and thoroughly researched book, *'Collingham and district in The Great War'*, Trevor Frecknall expresses dismay at the tribunal's treatment of Walton. 'Ye Gods!' the author exclaims, '...he was three years below voting age. How on earth could he be fit to decide whether to fight for his country?' Perhaps so, but given the way Bertie refused to buckle under pressure at eighteen, it seems unlikely he would have been any less trenchant at twenty-one.

Meanwhile, the rest of Collingham and district redoubled its war effort. Special constables were sworn in to replace the police constables who had enlisted. One of their



Above: Empire Day certificate 1916 – original donated to Collingham and District Local History Society archives by Mr David Liley of Tuxford.

duties was to ensure the night time black-outs were strictly kept. No lights were allowed from any property in case they alerted German aircraft and culprits were summonsed if they violated

this rule. Trevor Frecknall discovered that Alice Crossland, the manageress of Collingham Co-op (now 71 High Street) was the first person from Collingham to be summonsed for a lighting offence in Newark County Magistrates Court. Special Constable Henry J Wigram (of The Lodge) reported he could see a light through a two-inch gap in the blinds. *'Miss Crossland explained she had only turned the light up to write a letter; the blinds fitted properly, really.'* She was fined 5s (25p – worth around £15.00 today).



Children continued to attend school – the girls and infants on the High Street in South Collingham (behind what is now Fine Aline), under the headship of the long-serving Miss Mary Jane Wilson, and the boys in their school in the Wesley Room under the headship of Mr Sam Coging. In May, both schools celebrated Empire Day. Certificates, such as this one (below) presented to seven- year-old George Liley, were given out to those who contributed to fundraising for the troops.

Only two days after Empire Day, on May 25<sup>th</sup>, Sam Coging was called away to Lincoln Barracks. He survived the war, albeit wounded, but didn't return to his teaching duties at Collingham. Mr Joseph Beard took over as head in 1919.

And so, until July at least, Collingham was not faring too badly compared to some and the 'fever gauge' remained steady. The annual feast went ahead on the Rectory lawn and all credit to Mary Browne, still grieving, who nevertheless permitted use of Dale Field, '*...where games and sports were enjoyed until eight o'clock, when buns were distributed to the children, and Mr Hickman's van, loaded to its utmost capacity, conveyed its passengers to Brough,*' according to Rev. Maxwell's August newsletter. He goes on to add: '*We missed our Sunday School Superintendant, Mr Coging, but were proud to know that he is serving his country.*'

Sadly, both Rev Maxwell and Canon Gould at All Saints', would go on to miss many more of their parishioners in the coming months as one of the bloodiest battles in history was fought. In Part 7 (March 2016 issue) I will cover The Somme, and the lives of the men from Collingham who died there.

NB: Further information about Bertie Walton is available to download as a pdf from the Collingham in the Great War website (see Appendix for details)

**Part 7: The Somme (1)**

The Somme, a Celtic word for ‘tranquility’, is a river in the region of Picardy in northern France. It is 245 km (152 miles) long and characterised by a ‘gentle gradient and steady flow’. In early 1916, the French and British planned a joint offensive against the Germans along a twelve-mile stretch of the river. This grand ‘push’ was planned for July but in February the Germans seized the initiative and attacked Verdun, further east. Many of the French divisions were diverted



Jack Peet Bee	July 20 <sup>th</sup>
Frank Golland	July 28 <sup>th</sup>
John Wm Bacon	Sept 13 <sup>th</sup>
V Wilkinson	Sept 15 <sup>th</sup>
James Liley	Sept 26 <sup>th</sup>
George Ashworth	Oct 2 <sup>nd</sup>
W H Hammond	Oct 7 <sup>th</sup>
Fred East	Oct 8 <sup>th</sup>
Arthur Tonn	Oct 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Robert S. Hunt	Oct 26 <sup>th</sup>
Charles A Bunn	Nov 17 <sup>th</sup>
Harold Millns	Dec 14 <sup>th</sup>

there, leaving the BEF (British Expedition Forces) to go it alone. What ensued over the next six months was one of the bloodiest battles in history with the loss of a million lives. A staggering 19,240 men were killed in the first day alone, many of them from Lord Kitchener’s ‘Pals Battalions.’

*Left: List of Collingham men killed or who died from wounds on the Somme between July and December 1916. This includes those from Brough.*

This article will cover the lives of Jack Peet Bee, Frank Golland, John William Bacon, Vincent Wilkinson and James Liley.

## Private Jack Peet Bee

**Born: Thorne c. 1897**

**Enlisted: 10<sup>th</sup> January 1915 Sherwood Foresters  
(Notts & Derbys Regt.) Service no. 21918**

**Transferred to: 1<sup>st</sup> Btn Northamptonshire Regt.  
Service no. 19359**

**Died of Wounds: 20 July 1916, aged 22yrs**

**Buried: Albert Communal Cemetery Extension,  
Somme.**



Jack Peet Bee was the son of a farm labourer, Thomas, and his wife, Alice. Thomas was born in Waddington and Alice (née Peet) was from South Collingham. The various places the Bees' children were born indicate Thomas may have been typical of many farm labourers at the time – moving from farm to farm to find work. Harriet, their eldest, and another daughter, Mary Ann, were baptised in South Collingham. A year after Mary Ann came Fred, born in Hawton c 1889 and then after quite a gap came Jack, the youngest, born in Thorne in 1897. By 1911 they were all living in Brough.

Jack, a farm labourer like his father, enlisted in 1915 with his brother Fred. Jack died of wounds received during in the Battle of Albert, fought between 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 1916, the first two weeks of the Battle of the Somme. There are few details of the circumstances of his death. Private Peet Bee is remembered on the South Collingham St John the Baptist Church Parishioners War Memorial and Roll of Honour.

*NB: Since publication, much more information about the Bees has been supplied by Mr Steve Allen, a descendent of Minnie Bee, Jack's sister. This includes a newspaper cutting of his death (see end page 224 in the Appendix) and several photographs. The cutting indicates the Bees had moved to Lincoln by 1916. For further details see Jack Peet Bee's profile on Collingham in the Great War microsite.*



*Then and now: the property rented by the Bees on Brough Lane, Brough. Photo above c/o Mr Steve Allen*





## Private Frank Golland

**Born: North Collingham 1897**

**Enlisted: 1915 5<sup>th</sup> Btn. Duke of Wellington's**

**(West Riding Regiment)**

**Service no. 5893**

**Died of Wounds: 28 July 1916, aged 20 yrs  
(possibly after the Battle of Pozières Ridge)**



Frank Golland<sup>32</sup> was one of six children born to William Bellamy Golland, an iron moulder, and his wife, Ann. The Gollands appear to have had a more settled life than the Bees. All the children were born in North Collingham. On the 1911 Census they were living on Fleet (Low) Street. Frank, then 15, was listed as a farm labourer. However, his war record indicates he was living in Bradford in 1915/16<sup>33</sup>, which could explain why he was with the Duke of Wellington's. This report of his death in The Newark Advertiser (researched by Trevor Frecknall) makes for sombre reading:

*'William and Ann Golland of Fleet Street, North Collingham, learned that their second son Frank, only 20, was killed barely a month after arriving in France. One letter told them he was wounded on 3 July and died on 28 July; another missive reported he was wounded on 25 July. It gave an inkling of the chaos prevalent in the battleground known as the Somme. The only thing they were sure of was that he did not go to France until 20 June. Private 5893 Golland was finally officially listed as having died on 28 July. He is remembered in the British Cemetery at Puchevillers, a village about 19km from Amiens.'*

Private Golland is also remembered on the North Collingham War memorial cross and Pensioners' Plaque.

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<sup>32</sup> It has since been established that the Gollands lived on a cottage, since demolished, behind 30 Low Street (Fleet Cottage)

<sup>33</sup> Golland's occupation was given as fellmonger (one who works with hides/tanning)



## The Tank

Between July and September there were no major battles on the Somme but in September, intense fighting broke out again. This time, the British introduced a new weapon to the field – the tank.

Designed by engineer William Tritton and draughtsman William Rigby for W. Foster's and Co. of Lincoln, these machines initially

terrified soldiers on all sides. One eye-witness described them as 'lumbering monsters.'

Unfortunately, the tanks proved to have limited success in stemming losses and the death toll continued to rise. One of the early tanks can be seen at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life on Burton Road, Lincoln.



## Lance Corporal John William Bacon

**Born:** Newark 30<sup>th</sup> June 1894

**Enlisted:** 8th Sept 1914

**Battalion:** 11<sup>th</sup> Kings Royal Rifle Corps

**KIA:** September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1916 aged 22

*Right: 'Jack' Bacon's commemorative plaque found in an outhouse in Cleave Cottage and since returned to members of the Bacon family.*



John William Bacon was born in Newark and brought up in Ordsall, near Retford. It appears that the family moved back to his parents' native North Collingham, shortly before or after his father, George Henry Bacon, died, aged 43, in 1904. George is buried in All Saints' churchyard. George's widow, Mary Ann, a mother of five, was possibly carrying their sixth child at the time. John William's youngest sibling, Arthur, was baptised in July 1905.

Initially John trained as a baker alongside his older brother, Thomas, but by 1914 was employed on the Midland Railway as a porter before enlisting as soon as war broke out. His war record shows he was made a 1<sup>st</sup> class signaller on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916. His battalion, part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Division, were involved in the Battles of Delville Wood and Guillemont between July and October 1916.

Lance Corporal Bacon's tribute in the Newark Advertiser reads:

*'Tuesday 19 September 1916: Widow Mary Ann Bacon in North Collingham discovered that her son John, 22, was killed in action on 3 September. A letter from one of his mates in the King's Royal Rifles told her: "He was a good lad and did his bit without complaint. I wish there were more like him." John, a choirboy in the village church (All Saints) for six years, worked on the Midland Railway as a porter before enlisting as soon as War broke out. He had been in France 14 months and, in his frequent letters home to Mum, there was never one word of complaint against the hardships he had to undergo. Rifleman 3802 Bacon is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.'*

It is sometimes difficult to locate the exact property where the soldiers lived in Collingham but in John William Bacon's case we are fortunate. Last year, Mr Chris Allen of Cleave Cottage, 55 Low Street, discovered a bronze memorial plaque, commonly known as '*the dead man's penny*,' in an old outbuilding on his property. The inscription on the plaque (seen pictured next to John Bacon's details, above) is to John William Bacon. Further evidence suggests part of Cleave Cottage is where the Bacons lived at the time. Collingham resident Mrs Alice Bellamy remembers visiting her 'Uncle Arthur' there when she was little (this would have been in the 1940s).

Digging further, a post-card in the village archives of Cleave Cottage in 1907, shows a group of children close by. Could these be the Bacon children? It's hard to imagine a child sitting on someone else's fence so boldly in those days unless they lived there.



*Above: Postcard of Cleave Cottage (on the right) 1907 Source: CDLHS*

The inscription on the back of the postcard reads 'Love from May, Christmas 1907.' The boy with the wheelbarrow full of logs could possibly be either John William, who would have been twelve or thirteen, or Thomas, who would have been sixteen. The two girls in white smocks might be Florrie (ten) and Sarah (eight) and the boy sitting on the fence George (six). Arthur would only be a baby. This is pure speculation but wouldn't it be wonderful if true?

**John William Bacon is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial, Grave location: Pier and Face 13A/13B and on the North Collingham War Memorials.**

## Guardsman Vincent Wilkinson

**Born: c. 1890, Radford, Nottingham**

**Enlisted: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards**

**Service no. 14387**

**Killed in action: 15<sup>th</sup> September 1916 aged 27**



Vincent Wilkinson was a policeman stationed in Collingham. Trade directories of the time do not indicate his role. William Cooper was listed in Kelly's Directories of 1912 and 1916 as 'sergeant in charge' for North Collingham and Thomas Simons 'constable' for South. No doubt the 5' 9" Grade 1 'bobby' made a welcome addition to the beat. Police records describe him as single and having 'blue eyes, light brown hair with a fresh complexion.'

Being in a reserved occupation, Vincent could have remained in the Nottinghamshire County Police. However, the former soldier re-joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Grenadier Guards on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914. 1916 saw the Guards, like so many battalions, in action on the Somme, including the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. Co-incidentally, the 15<sup>th</sup> of September - the day Vincent died - was the first occasion that tanks were used in battle.

Guardsman Wilkinson is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial, which suggests that his body was not found. He is also remembered in Nottinghamshire on several memorials: Nottinghamshire County Council Employees War Memorial as 'V Wilkinson', Nottinghamshire Police Memorial, Radford - St Peters War Memorial as 'V. Wilkinson', South Collingham - St John the Baptist Church - Parishioners War Memorial as 'V WILKINSON Private 2nd Btn. Grenadier Guards' South Collingham - St John the Baptist Church - Roll of Honour War Memorial as 'Vincent WILKINSON'.

## James Liley

**Battalion: Private 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters**

**No: 12602**

**Born: 6<sup>th</sup> July 1890**

**Killed: 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 1916 aged: 26 yrs**

We are fortunate in having a great deal of material about the Liley family in the archives; records show they can trace their South Collingham roots back several generations. Many of the photographs we have from the early part of the twentieth century show the industrious Lileys either labouring on the land or down in the station yard washing carrots ready to send to market.



James was the fifth of six children born to Henry Liley (1849 – 1935), a cottager, and his second wife Sarah (1858 – 1943). Henry also had four children from his first marriage. The Lileys lived in Ivy Cottage on Cottage Lane. In 1911, James, aged 20 and single, was working as a horseman on a farm in Halam for Mr and Mrs William Hazard. By 1914 he'd moved to the Duke of Portland's Welbeck Estate, from where he enlisted. James appears to have been close to his family, sending affectionate post-cards to his brothers and sisters from the Front throughout the war. This one, sent on July 27<sup>th</sup> 1916 was to his younger sister, Ethel:

*'Dear Sister, Just a line to thank you for the fags and letter which I received today and was glad to hear you was well as it leaves me very well. I have not seen Bill (James' brother, also serving) yet but hope to do so before long. From your loving brother, Jim.'*





Right:  
James Liley,  
in uniform,  
with his  
sisters  
Hannah (at  
the back)  
Ethel and  
Nellie



Private Liley's battalion, the 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, was part of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 11<sup>th</sup> (Northern) Division under Major Woollcombe. James was killed in the Battle of Thiepval alongside many from his battalion. Trying to find his name on the website dedicated exclusively to the 9<sup>th</sup> - [www.ypressalient.co.uk](http://www.ypressalient.co.uk) – took this researcher far, far too long, so great were the numbers on its Roll of Honour who died that day.

From the Newark Advertiser:

*'Sunday 15 October 1916: Collingham discovered it had lost James Liley, 26, and William Henry Hammond, 19, who went to War early in 1914 and never had a chance to return home.*

*James's parents Henry and Sarah first heard of his demise on 26 September from a comrade in the Sherwoods, Private R Phillips; the pair had made a pact to carry out the 'melancholy duty' if the worst happened. But they clung to the slim possibility that it might just be a case of mistaken identity. Now official confirmed had snuffed out their final hope. Private 12602 Liley of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwoods is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.'*

**Private 12602 Liley is also remembered on the St John the Baptist War Memorial Window, South Collingham and the South Collingham Roll of Honour.**

James's older brother, William, also volunteered. A farm labourer, he joined the Royal Field Artillery in 1915. He survived the war and was awarded the Victory Medal. William died in 1963, aged 78.

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*Above: William Liley*

## **Fleet: Vol 53 No. 3 April 2016**

### **Part 8: The Somme (continued): October 1916**

Florence May Nicholson was crossing the fields off Trent Lane with her two boys, Gordon and Edward, when the whirlwind struck. It came bowling over the fields, taking everything with it in its path. Stooks of hay were lifted, in their entirety, *'hundreds of feet into the sky.'* There was no time to run and nowhere to hide. Instead, the draper's wife flung herself on top of her sons, pinning them down on the hard earth, protecting them as best she could until the worst of it was over.

Sixty years later Edward Nicholson (pictured here on the right around 1918 with Gordon and baby sister Mary) recalled the incident for Fleet magazine. *'It would have been 1916'* he wrote in *'A Collingham Lad at School.'*



1916. The year so many parents wished they could do what Florence had and save their sons from harm. It was often a futile hope. In October the Battle of the Somme entered its final phase and the death toll for Collingham and district continued to rise.

On Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 23-year old George Ashworth was killed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant enlisted with the 1/9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters but was attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Loyal North Lancashires when he fell.

I admit to being stumped by George and later, his brother Leonard's, inclusion on the Collingham Memorials<sup>34</sup>. Neither I nor fellow researcher Charlie Stothard could find an obvious link to the village. Both Ashworths were born, raised and worked in Nottingham and there is nothing to suggest a connection with the Collingham apart from the fact their mother Clara's maiden name was Hoe and on the 1911 census Clara's twenty –year old sister, Florence Hoe, was living with them.

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<sup>34</sup> Later: It was discovered that George and Leonard's father, Wm Hilton, ran the Royal Oak for a brief time during the war. However, it was their sister, Elsie, who married locally and settled here long-term until her death in 1966.

The Hoes were well known in Collingham. Two brothers, George and James (pictured), settled here around 1850 from Bottesford in Leicestershire. George set up a successful coach and house painting business from Magnolia Cottage (now Camellia Cottage, 52 Low Street) and James ran the Royal Oak. However, neither they nor their numerous offspring (seventeen children between them) had a daughter called Clara as far as my research shows and while there were two Collingham-born Florence Hoes, one in 1873, the other in 1888, the Ashworth Florence was born in Derby in 1881. I may well have missed some other Collingham connection altogether for George and Leonard Ashworth and if anyone can enlighten me, I'd be happy to fill in the gaps.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant George Ashworth was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and is remembered on the Thiepval Museum, Mundella School Roll of Honour and the North Collingham Memorials.**

#### Private William Henry Hammond

**Born:** 1897

**Enlisted:** 1914

**Service no.** No: 2964 1/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters

**Killed:** October 7<sup>th</sup> 1916, aged 19



Like so many other labouring families at the time, the Hammonds had led a nomadic existence until settling in South Collingham around 1900. William's father, George Walter Hammond, born in Pimlico, was listed as a 'coachman'. This occupation took him and his



wife, Mary Jane, to Redmile, birthplace of their first child, George, in 1895, then over to Elston, where they had Annie Elizabeth (c1896) and on to Muskham where William Henry (1897) and Albert Edward (1898) came along. A further three children, Ellen Mary, John Thomas and Frederick James, were all born and baptised in South Collingham.

The family lived on the High Street, near Warburton's the grocer's shop (7 High Street shown in the picture). According to the 1911 Census, the Hammond dwelling had '3 rooms up and 3 rooms down.' 6 males and 3 females were recorded as living there.<sup>35</sup>

In 1914, William exchanged his role of 'houseboy' in Collingham to that of Lewis Gunner for the 1<sup>st</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters under the command of Captain W C C Weetman. Perhaps it was his job as a houseboy – a servant who undertook domestic chores and acted as a personal assistant to his employer - that led to William's unfortunate death. The Newark Advertiser report of October 15<sup>th</sup> states that: '*...he was dodging down a trench at Blairville in search of rations when a mortar shell exploded near him on 7 October.*' Had someone sent him on this errand or had he taken a risk, swayed by hunger and the relative calm in the trenches at the time? Certainly, there was no enemy action. According to Weetman's diary, the battalion's stay at Bellacourt from July 2<sup>nd</sup> – October 29<sup>th</sup> was a relatively stable one. '*The sector was reputed to be the quietest on the British Front.... rumour said that some of our troops had been in the habit of going out and repairing the barbed wire by daylight.*' This observation is borne out by the fact that William's death in

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<sup>35</sup> Clarification: It was later established that the Hammonds lived on The Green – possibly no 10.



the battalion's Roll of Honour is the only one recorded since August and the last of the year for the 1<sup>st</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>.

Stray, unexploded shells still pose a threat to French and Belgian farmers in the region today. They call it the 'Iron Harvest.' The danger now is not so much from explosions as the toxic chemicals the shells contain. According to one online article in the Daily Telegraph in 2013, the British shells are taking longer to disintegrate than German ones because the steel was of better quality.

**Private 2964 Hammond is remembered in the Military Cemetery at Bellacourt and the South Collingham Church Memorial and Roll of Honour.**

### Corporal Fred East

**Born:** South Scarle 1886

**Enlisted:** January 1916

**Battalion:** 43<sup>rd</sup> battalion Canadian Infantry, Manitoba

**Service no.** 152370

**Killed in Action:** 8<sup>th</sup> October 1916



As we have discovered from looking at many of the soldiers' backgrounds, life in rural England could be harsh and uncertain. Little wonder then, that when Canada began advertising for farmers and settlers in the late 1800s early 1900s, many took the opportunity to start a new life. Sylvia Woodhurst, a Canadian historian now living in Collingham, writes: *'By 1911 the farmers in Britain were competing with North American farmers who could undersell them because of the scale of operations on the open prairies. The west of Canada was being heavily settled for the first time and British capital was flowing from the county to build the Canadian Northern Railway. There was a huge Campaign from Ottawa to encourage settlers especially farmers although they did prefer*

*those from Eastern Europe because they were happy to settle on the prairies while British preferred urban areas.'*

Fred East, a butcher, was among those who went. He was born in South Scarle to William East, a joiner, and his wife Elizabeth, who later settled on Bell Lane in North Collingham. Fred departed for Canada in 1913 when he was 27. His attestation papers show he was living in Manitoba and married<sup>36</sup> when he enlisted in 1916. It must have been a wrench leaving his new home but having served seven years in the 8<sup>th</sup> Notts Territorials, the call to duty would have been too strong for Fred to ignore.

According to local historian Jeremy Lodge, the Canadian Corps wasn't involved in any serious action until September, after which it was fully engaged in the fighting. Their troops were heavily involved in the Battle of Thiepval Ridge. *'When the Battle of the Somme finally ended in the later part of November, the Canadian Corps had sustained 29,029 casualties. The Canadian Expedition Force was so respected and combat so efficient that the Germans nicknamed them 'Stormtroopers'.'*

**Corporal East is remembered in Regina Trench Cemetery, Grandcourt, and on All Saints' War Memorial and Roll of Honour.**

### **Private Arthur Tonn**

**Born:** Hykeham, 1884

**Enlisted:** 31 January 1915

**Battalion:** 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Own Royal (Lancaster) Regiment Formerly 3<sup>rd</sup> Btn Lincolnshire Regiment

**Service no.:** 16133

**Killed in Action:** 23 October 1916 aged 33

Only three months after losing her brother, **Jack Peet Bee** (see March 2016 issue) on the Somme, mother of three Harriett Tonn lost her husband, Arthur.

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<sup>36</sup> Later: Fred East's wife, Marion, risked life and limb to travel from Canada to England with her newborn baby, Fred Jr, in August 1916. She is thought to have lived for a time with her sister-in-law Laura on Low Street. She later remarried and moved to Lincoln.

Arthur and Harriett were from similar backgrounds. Harriett was raised by her grandparents on 'Bocock's Row' (1881 Census) and then in one of the six dwellings known as 'Cabbage Row' or 'Fleet Yard' on South End (pictured). The row was demolished in the 1960s and the bricks used in the foundations of the new



property 'West Fleet House' built by schoolteacher Ray Sanders in 1965.

Arthur's upbringing was equally as humble as Harriett's. His mother died when he was thirteen, leaving his father, Philip, an ironstone quarryman, to raise thirteen-year old Arthur and his three younger siblings. By sixteen, Arthur was already earning a living as an agricultural labourer, destined to move from farm to farm to find work. At some stage he possibly worked in or near Collingham where he met Harriett. They married in St John the Baptist's Church in 1905. As a labourer's wife, Harriett shared Arthur's roving life and their three children were born in South Collingham (Eva 1907), Carlton-on Trent (George 1909) and Thorpe-on-the-Hill (Lillian 1912). By 1915, when 5 ft 3ins Arthur enlisted, they were living in Ludford, Lincolnshire.

Arthur was killed near Bethune and is buried in the Guards' Cemetery, Les Boeufs. Interestingly, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website reveals that Arthur's grave registration details were changed in 1920 when the unknown soldier's plot he had been assigned was marked with a new cross and Harriet had the wording changed from the general '*Known Unto God*' to '*Thy Will Be Done.*' By then, Harriett was residing on Besthorpe Road where she lived until her death in 1952.

To add to her troubles, her son George died in 1940, aged only 31. Eve lived longer, in the same house as her mother on Besthorpe Road, passing away in 1976 aged 68. It is unknown what happened to Lillian.

**Private Tonn is remembered in the Guards' Cemetery, Les Boeufs and on the North Collingham War Memorials.**

### Private Robert Stanley Hunt

**Born: 1895**

**Enlisted: 1916 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters**

**Service no. 27555**

**Killed in Action: October 24<sup>th</sup> 1916 aged 22**



When the Baptist Church closed in 2011 some of the contents went to Monksthorpe Chapel on the Gunby Hall Estate near Spilsby, Lincolnshire. Two wooden collection plates and a portrait of an unknown Victorian pastor were deposited with Collingham and District Local History Society in the Jubilee Room and a brass plaque, dedicated to Robert Stanley Hunt, was given a new home in the Memorial Hall (pictured above).

Robert Stanley Hunt was the only son of farmer William Barton Hunt and his wife Lois Elizabeth Hunt. However, he was part of a long dynasty of Hunts going back six generations, many of whom had strong connections to the Baptist Church. Not only that, his mother was a Boccock, another long-established Collingham family. Robert could count at least three of his Boccock cousins - Charles, Joseph and James - already away fighting in the war.

The Hunts lived on Newark Road in 1901 but had moved to Low Street by 1915. Robert was an apprentice joiner when he enlisted with the local regiment of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters under the command of the much-respected Lieut. Col. Oates. Injured during the Easter Uprising in April, Robert spent three weeks in a Dublin hospital recovering. A few months later he was posted to France and transferred to the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The 10<sup>th</sup> were involved in the Battle of Ancre Heights at the time Robert was killed. His body was never recovered.

**Private Hunt is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial, Collingham Baptist Church (now in the Memorial Hall) and on the North Collingham Roll of Honour.**

And what of Florence May Nicholson (1881-1968 pictured below), the mother who so instinctively protected her sons during the storm of 1916? Florence and husband George continued to raise their family in 'Ivydene' on the corner of Low Street and Bell Lane and



later 'Sunnycroft' on Station Road. In February 1918 they had their daughter, Mary, and in December 1919 completed the family with a third son, Stanley George. Sadly, Florence was powerless to save her youngest boy when he, too, faced danger. He perished at sea during World War Two on the SS Warlaby, aged 21. War hadn't finished with Collingham yet, not by a long chalk.

With thanks to the Nicholson and Pennington family for permission to use family photographs



Even today, Lady Charlotte Ossington's (1806 – 1889) Coffee Palace, currently Zizzi's Restaurant, is one of Newark town centre's most striking buildings. It was opened in 1882 as an alternative venue for farmers on market days, with the specific intention of luring them away from the town's numerous public houses and the demon drink.

The finished design was certainly impressive, with accommodation including a large assembly room, a billiard room, a library, a meeting room, offices and bedrooms. Outside had stables and a bowling alley.



### **Tribunals**

Whether the Coffee Palace proved popular with farmers in its heyday is unclear but it's doubtful that any farmer, tea-total or otherwise, relished entering the building between 1916 and 1918. During this short period, the military took it over and the Coffee Palace was used, among other things, to host the Newark Rural Tribunals. These tribunals were set up to hear the cases put to them by local farmers and traders as to why they or their men couldn't enlist in the forces. Mindful of the urgent need for reinforcements on the Front, few explanations met with much sympathy. Even 38-year-old Collingham grocer Bernard Fairest's explanation that he wasn't fit for service because he had been crushed by colliery trucks when working down the pit in Sutton-in-Ashfield merely earned him a deferment until he'd had medical checks.

In Trevor Frecknall's book, *Collingham and District in the Great War*, the Tribunals' Chairman, Alderman John Kew, made his reason for such a hard line plain. At the November 7<sup>th</sup> hearing he stated: *If the Germans are successful, there will be no work for blacksmiths to*

*do – and I am sure our farmers would rather help to win the War than grow corn for the Germans!’*



*John Ralph Starkey (1859-1940)  
MP for Newark 1906 – 1922 Photo  
c/o John Starkey website  
([www.johnstarkey.co.uk](http://www.johnstarkey.co.uk))*

Kew’s fears of invasion were understandable but the implication that farmers lacked a sense of moral duty must have rankled, especially among those who had already lost family members or who faced bankruptcy as businesses floundered. Newark MP John R Starkey, a former president of Collingham Farmers’ Club, was more empathetic. In his closing speech at the Farmers’ Club Annual Dinner the previous week (November 2<sup>nd</sup>), he had praised the work being done by the district’s farmers. Unlike Kew, he was *‘...sure the farmers were not lacking in patriotism and that the judgement of the nation would be that they, as farmers, in this great crisis had done their level best for our country in its trial.’* The MP also lauded the increasing role women were playing in keeping the rural economy afloat.

Of that there was no doubt. As South Collingham farmer Joseph Gibson had boasted at a meeting of the War Agricultural Sub-committee back in February, Collingham women weren’t afraid to *‘get slugged up’* in the carrot fields. Nor were they afraid to take on other traditionally male roles. Charlotte Thompson, for example, had replaced her brother Ralph in the slaughterhouse of her father’s butcher’s shop (now the Chinese takeaway at 160 High Street).

## **1<sup>st</sup> Women’s Ploughing Match**

Perhaps as an acknowledgment of the women’s contribution to farming, the Collingham Farmers’ Club Annual Ploughing Match and Agricultural Show of 1916 included the first ever class open to ‘Women of All England’ for ‘Wheel or Swing Ploughs’. This was a real indicator of how much things had changed. Catalogues from the era show women usually only entered the more ‘domestic’ classes such as Dressed Poultry, Butter, Eggs and

Bread. Class 61 in 1913, for example, was: 'Two 2-lb Loaves of Household Bread, made and baked by a Member's wife, daughter or housekeeper – First Prize - a teapot value 15s. Ploughing (cash prizes of between £1 - £3) was traditionally left to the men, youths and 'servants', '*...who have been for the last three months continuously employed by Members of the Club.*'

No wonder such a large crowd gathered to watch the three women who had entered the inaugural Women's Plough Class. They were Mrs Pinder from Church Farm, South Scarle, Miss E M Jackson of Tattershall Thorpe near Coningsby and Collingham's very own Miss May Boccock, the 21-year old daughter of farmer Joseph Boccock and his wife Harriet.

Ploughing is a real test of skill and stamina. Competitors were expected to arrive at 6.30 a.m. to draw tickets and start ploughing at 7.30 a.m. sharp. They had to provide their own horses and plough 'with *coulters* (cutting blades) *out*' and plough half an acre of land within four hours without any assistance.



*May Boccock and judges at the Women of All England Ploughing Match. Photo c/o CDLHS*

Mike Childerley, a current steward at ploughing matches describes what the judge would look for:

- The furrows to be absolutely identical across the whole plot including the crown or ridge.
- There must be no loose weeds or stubble showing on top of the ploughing to avoid re-growth of weeds
- The furrows must be tightly packed together such that air is excluded to ensure the decay of the weeds and debris which have been ploughed in
- The crest of the furrow must be cut such as to provide tilth for the next stage of cultivation and seed drilling.
- The plough must enter and leave the ground at the same point on each round.
- Above all, the ploughing must be dead straight. It is said that poor ploughing can still look good as long as it's straight.

May Boccock would have known all this. She was used to ploughing her parents' land, especially since her brother, William (19), had volunteered and was now serving in the Machine Gun Corps. However, it is one thing ploughing when no one is watching and quite another when half the village is peering over your shoulder. May came second to Miss Jackson. The judges apparently liked Miss Jackson's 'calm deliberation.'

A full report of the Collingham Show 1916 can be found in the Newark Advertiser, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 1916 edition and on page 69-70 of '*Straight Furrows'- a History of Collingham Farmers' Club*' by Norman Pickerill, published in 1950 (copies in CDLHS collection and Collingham Library). There is a copy of May's motor cycle certificate in the archives, too. What a role model for women she was! May went on to marry William Huntley (Collingham's Station Master from 1946-1964). She died in 1962, aged 68. Her brother, William Edward Boccock (1896-1979), survived the war. He was one of the fortunate ones.

A hundred years later, the death toll from the First Battle of the Somme still shocks. By the end of the five months (July – November), Allied Forces had advanced a mere thirty miles. According to C N Trueman's '*The Battle of the Somme*', that worked out: '*...about 88,000 Allied men killed for one mile gained.*' German casualties were also high – an estimated 719,000 compared to the Allies' estimate of 950,000. Those grim statistics included a further two from Collingham: **Charles Alfred Bunn** and **Harold Millns**.



# SCHEDULE OF PRIZES.

## PLOUGHING & PLASHING.

### PLOUGHING RULES.

1.—To a ploughman who shall best plough half-an-acre of land with a pair of horses and no driver, within four hours.

2.—Each ploughman will be allowed the use of two wads only, with assistance to set them, and pick them up only, and no other assistance whatever, verbal or otherwise, will be allowed during the Match, set one ridge, show four top rounds, and finish one furrow.

3.—Ploughmen to be at the ploughfield at 6-30 a.m. to draw tickets, and start ploughing at 7-30 sharp. They will bring their ploughs with coulter out, and they will be required to set their own irons and measure their own ground.

4.—In the event of any dispute, the matter shall be referred to the Plough Stewards, and their decision shall be final. The objector shall deposit 5s. with the Stewards, which shall be forfeited to the funds in case the objection is held to be frivolous.

5.—Any improvement made in a furrow either by the ploughman or any other person at his instigation, shall disqualify him for any prize.

6.—Headlands will be chipped out, and competitors must set in and take out at the mark. Judges will be instructed to take special notice of this.

7.—Competitors in Classes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, who complete their work, will be allowed 1s. each.

JUDGES— S. LEGGATE, Dogdyke.  
E. ROE, Thurlby.  
W. H. BINGHAM, Bennington.  
J. W. SPRAY, Barnby.

### CLASS 1. For Wheel Plough.

A SILVER CUP, value £5, given by the Right Hon. EARL MANVERS  
Second Prize ... .. £2, by the Club  
Third (if six competitors) ... .. £1, "

Open to Farmers of England (who occupy not less than 50 acre of land) or their sons. Non-members to pay 4s. entrance. No ploughs to be used exceeding 4 feet 6 inches in length, from the point of the share to the upper end of the mould board.

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### CLASS 2. For Single Furrow Ploughs any description.

	£	s.	d.
First Prize ... ..	4	0	0
Second (if three competitors) ... ..	2	10	0
Third (if five competitors or upwards) ... ..	1	0	0

Open to all England. Entrance Fee for men who have not been continuously employed by a Member of the Club for the last three months, 4/-; Members' servants, 1/-. No restriction in ploughs.

### CLASS 3. For General Purpose Ploughs.

	£	s.	d.
First Prize ... ..	3	0	0
Second (if four competitors) ... ..	2	0	0
Third (if six competitors and upwards) ... ..	1	0	0

Open to Members, their Sons, Servants, or Labourers, who have been for the last three months continuously employed by a Member of the Club. Ploughs in this Class must have been used on the farm for at least 6 months previous to the Match. No ploughs to be used with breast exceeding 4 feet in length from the point of share to the upper end of mould board. Entrance Fee 1/-.

NOTE.—Winner of First Prize in All England Class not eligible to compete in this Class.

### CLASS 4. For Wheel Ploughs.

(For Men or Youths under 24 years of age).

	£	s.	d.
First Prize ... ..	3	0	0
Second (if four competitors) ... ..	2	0	0
Third (if six competitors) ... ..	1	0	0

Open to Members, their Sons, Servants, or Labourers, who have been for the last three months continuously employed by a Member of the Club. Same restriction in Ploughs as Class 1. Entrance Fee, 1/-.

### CLASS 5. For Swing Ploughs only.

	£	s.	d.
First Prize ... ..	2	0	0
Second ... ..	1	10	0
Third (if six competitors or upwards) ... ..	1	0	0
Fourth (if ten competitors or upwards) ... ..	0	10	0

NOTE.—In this Class, Judges shall have power to award all prizes if the work is of sufficient merit.

Open to all All England. Entrance Fee for men who have not been continuously employed by a Member of the Club for the last three months, 3/-; Members' Servants 1/-. Same restrictions in Ploughs as Class 1. No Skeith allowed.

5



## Charles Alfred Bunn

**Born:** North Collingham 1893 (son of James Bunn, land surveyor's assistant [likely to be at Smith-Woolley's] and Mary Bunn, née Bealby, of Besthorpe)

**Battalion:** Notts & Derby Reg then Royal Marine Light Infantry

**Enrolled:** 1914 in Warsop

**Died:** 17 Nov 1916 aged 23

**Buried:** Puchevillers British Cemetery, Somme.



Charles Bunn was working as a fitter at Warsop Colliery when he responded to Kitchener's 'Call to Arms' in 1914, joining the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment. This provided a massive surplus of recruits for the Army. However, the Admiralty had an immediate requirement for recruits and toured the Army depots for volunteers. As a result 600 'Kitchener's men' voluntarily transferred from the Army to the R M L I in September 1914, some of whom had only spent one day 'with the colours' in the Army. A very high proportion of these were miners or labourers. Four hundred of these transfers were from the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment). Half of whom were sent to the Portsmouth Division and given service numbers beginning PO. – Charles Bunn's number was PO/75(S).



Prior to WW1 all Royal Marines were engaged for Long Service –twelve years - of which there were 18,000 at the outbreak of War. In September 1914, short service recruitment

began. Long Servicemen received six months training; short servicemen received six weeks infantry training.

From 4<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 1914; the Portsmouth Bn was involved in the defence of Antwerp where 300 of their number were interned and twenty-five killed. This is likely before Charles had finished his training.

Charles Bunn was wounded on 15 June 1915 on the Turkish Peninsular but was back in action within a fortnight. He was also in hospital in Cairo for a time suffering from dysentery. He proceeded straight to France. The Battalion were stationed in France and Belgium from May 1916: deaths recorded outside of the dates of major attacks were the unlucky few who 'copped it' either in accidents or in the normal trench routine and duties in holding the line. The firing line was a dangerous place, even during the long periods of stalemate that preceded and followed the comparatively few occasions of going 'over the top.' Trench Mortars, shellfire, gas, trench raids and laying barbed wire defences (Wiring Parties) were the most common causes of deaths outside of the dates normally expected, while deaths from wounds received during the attacks, sometimes months later, accounted for many more. Many minor actions were undertaken and the Battalion was involved in a major battle in this period prior to Charles's death. The Battalion saw action between 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 1916; the Battle of Ancre - the final large scale British attack of the Battle of the Somme in 1916 - before the winter brought a halt.

- Research on C Bunn by Jeremy Lodge Aug 2014

In addition, Trevor Frecknall discovered the report of Bunn's death in the Newark Advertiser. From it we learn that Charles was: *'...a lively member of Collingham's gymnastics, swimming and cricket clubs'* as well as details of how he died. *'The first intimation of sad news was a letter to Charles' parents from a Chaplain dated 14<sup>th</sup> November, stating he had been wounded the previous day and was in a casualty clearing station. The next letter, from the sister-in-charge, said he died on 18<sup>th</sup> November from a severe gunshot wound to the abdomen. She wrote: 'He was too ill to talk or to realise that he would not get better.'* – extract from *'Collingham and district in The Great War'* page 77.

*Grateful thanks to Trevor Frecknall for supplying the cutting of Charles Bunn's photograph, too.*

**Private C A Bunn is remembered on:**

**North Collingham - All Saint's Church - Cross War Memorial as Charles Alfred BUNN  
Pte. R.M.L.I.**

**North Collingham - All Saint's Church - Parishioners War Memorial as Charles Alfred  
BUNN**

**Warsop with Sookholme - St Peter and St Pauls Church War Memorial as A Bunn**

**Private PO75/S Charles Alfred Bunn: the British Cemetery at Puchevillers**

Charles' death was an added cruel blow for his parents, coming so soon after the death of their daughter, Louisa, in January 1915, aged only sixteen. Louisa is buried in All Saints' Churchyard. Also in All Saints' Churchyard is the grave of Harold Millns. Harold is one of the few soldiers who died to have been laid to rest in his native village.

#### **Private Harold Millns**

**Born: 1895 North Collingham**

**Battalion: 15<sup>th</sup> Prince of Wales Own West**

**Yorkshire Regiment**

**Service no. 40365**

**Formerly Lincolnshire Regiment Service no. 53617**

**Died of Wounds: 15 Dec 1916 aged 21**



Harold was the youngest of four children of Thomas (Tom) Nicholson Millns and his wife Emma. The 1911 census shows Thomas was a bricklayer, as was his father, John, and it appeared that his oldest son, Tom, had followed them into the family trade. Second son John Edward was farming and it seemed that this was where Harold was heading, too. Then 15, he was recorded as 'working on a farm.' The Millns' only daughter, Eve, 20, was living at home and, like her siblings, single.

Again, grateful thanks to Jeremy Lodge for the following research on Harold Millns' military service:

*'I have not found why Harold transferred from the Lincolnshire Regiment to the 'Leeds Pals'. Perhaps, as was the case elsewhere, the Lincolnshire Regiment became over-subscribed and voluntary transfers were requested. The exact date of his transfer is also unknown. However, the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st Leeds) moved to Egypt in December 1915 and took over a section on the Suez Canal defences. The following March they moved to France and engaged in various actions on the Western Front including two battles of the Somme offensive:*

*The Battle of Albert: 1<sup>st</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July and the Battle of the Ancre: 1<sup>st</sup> October – 11<sup>th</sup> November. Ancre was a confusing succession of unremitting attacks, to capture intricate German defensive positions, which involved brutal fighting in poor weather and appalling battlefield conditions. Harold is likely to have taken part in one or both of the above battles. Research thus far only indicates that Harold was wounded in France and died of his wounds in the County of Middlesex War Hospital, Napsbury, near St Albans on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1916.'*

Harold Millns' funeral was reported in the Newark Advertiser as follows:

*'Tuesday 19 December 1916: With full military honours, Harold Millns, 21, was laid*



*to rest in North Collingham Churchyard, four weeks after the death of his comrade in arms Charles Titchener. He was wounded in France and died in a London hospital on Friday. The first part of his funeral service was held in the Wesleyan Chapel, where he had been a scholar and Sunday School teacher.'*

Nottinghamshire County

Council's online Roll of Honour reveals that Harold's 'comrade-in-arms' Charles Titchener was a 19-year old from Wellington Road, Newark, who was in the same regiment as Harold. He was killed on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps this was around the time Harold was wounded?

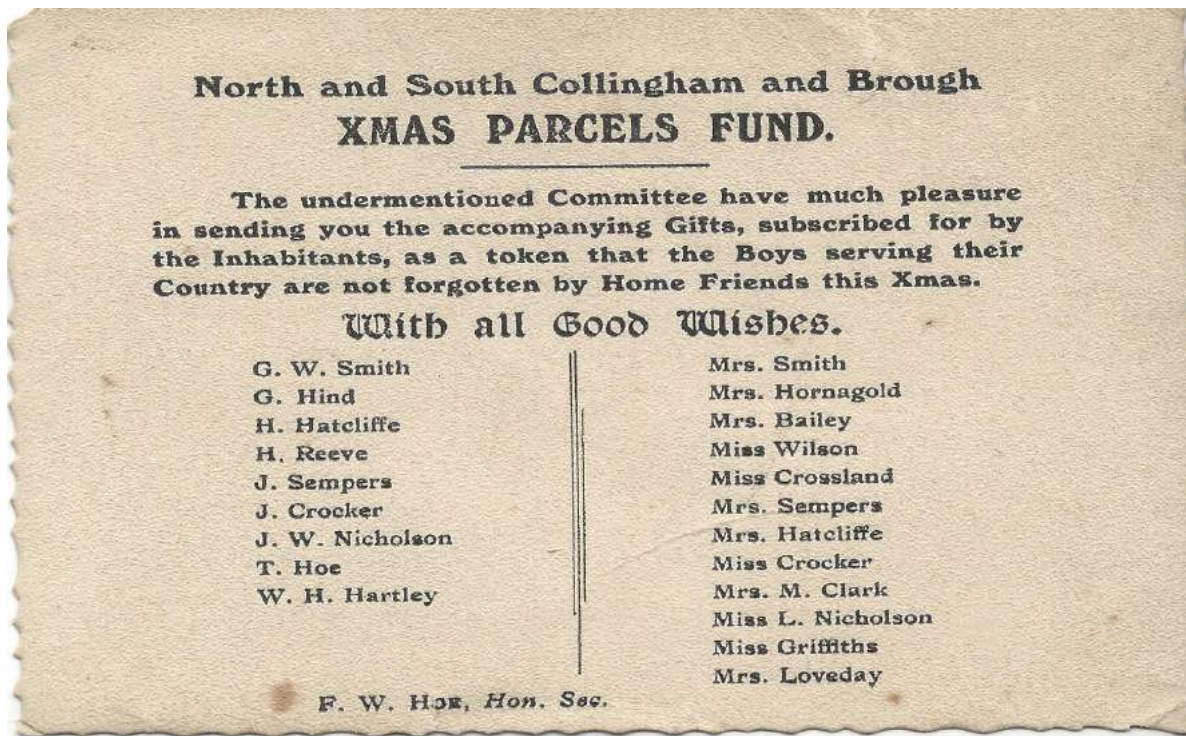
Above: Harold Millns' grave in All Saints' Churchyard Row G 75

Photo: M Davies



The heartbreak for Harold's parents didn't end in 1916. The East Trent Genealogy website reveals that Tom's<sup>37</sup> (1863-1946) and Emma (1865-1943) pre-deceased three out of their four children, with only Tom Millns (1888 – 1961) living beyond his forties.

And so the wretched year of 1916, which saw fourteen Collingham lives lost, drew to a close. Of some cheer to those fighting in the trenches would have been the Christmas letters and parcels sent from the villagers and the postcards received in return.



*Card from the 'Xmas Parcels Fund' Committee. The parcels would have included clothing, food and tobacco. Co-incidentally, committee member Mrs Myra Hatcliffe was Harold Millns' aunt. Image scanned from an original card in CDLHS archives*



<sup>37</sup> Tom's brother, William Millns of Bank House, High Street, and his wife Sarah, lost three members of his immediate family during the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. Sarah died, aged 50, a few months later.





# 1917

**Fleet Volume 54 Nos 2-10  
(March-December 2017)  
Parts 10 - 17**



## **Fleet Vol 54 No 2 (March 2017)**

### **Part 10: Winter to Spring 1917**



*'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' Romans viii,28.*

*– A J Maxwell, Rector of St John the Baptist Church writing in the January 1917 newsletter to his parishioners*

Cold and hunger are as great an enemy of soldiers in combat as guns and tanks and the winter of 1916-17 was 'the coldest in living memory'. As the war entered its third year, the bitter conditions heaped further misery on those in the trenches:

*'Soldiers suffered from frostbite and exposure, causing them to lose fingers. The trenches did little to provide shelter or warmth from the extreme low temperatures, especially at night, when even clothes and blankets froze solid. The muddy walls became hard as bricks, and any food and water became almost impossible to eat. Vehicles also succumbed to the cold: engines wouldn't start, prompting soldiers to attempt to revive them using hot water bottles.'*

- Meteorologist Jen Bertram on 'Weather in the Trenches.'

Further evidence of just how extreme the weather was came from Besthorpe man Lt-Col. William Coape Oates, leading the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters Battalion ('A' Company) in which many East Trent men served. In early February, while awaiting embarkation orders in Wiltshire, he wrote in his war diary: *'The writer has experienced plenty of cold, has for weeks together slept on the ground and in the open with 14 degrees of frost, but he has never felt the cold so much as during the late Winter and Spring of 1917.'*

Our district was likewise affected. In Brough, children struggled to get to school through the snow and the log book of February 6<sup>th</sup> reported that inkpots were frozen overnight. A water pipe burst at Collingham Girls' and Infants' School (now 11 High Street) and flooded the classroom. This post card (below) from the archives shows how deep the snow was on Station Road, with Stationmaster Mr Arthur Kind and helpers needing to clear a path to the station.



*Stationmaster Arthur Kind in the foreground. Kind was stationmaster at Collingham from 1900 to 1931*

Things hadn't improved by late Spring. Having joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Army under General (Sir) Henry Rawlinson (1864-1925) in early March, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, *'...delighted at the prospect of active service'* had already been in combat and lost men, including Lance Corporal Barratt *'the best signaller in the battalion.'* The weather was, Oates reports on April

3<sup>rd</sup> '...just about as bad as it could be, one snowstorm quickly following another, and we should have had much sickness but for the care Officers took of their men. Dry socks and hot food were taken up to the trenches, chilled feet were massaged and men were sent into the valley [near Le Verguier] from time to time to restore circulation.'

Such ministrations were vital to avoid the dreaded 'Trench Foot', a term coined in the war to describe the painful affliction of the feet exacerbated by cold, damp and insanitary conditions. If untreated, Trench Foot could lead to gangrene and amputation. Whale Oil was used as a balm and keeping the feet dry and clean was essential.

RECEIVED FOR WORKING PARTY MATERIALS.		
	£	s. d.
Aug. 1915. Garden Fete ...	21	5 6
Jan. 10, 1916, Mrs. Rice ...	2	0 0
" 29. Proceeds of Whist Drive per Committee ...	7	10 0
March. Proceeds of Children's Concert per Mr. Coging ...	10	6 0
" Mrs. Simpson ...	1	0 0
" Mrs. Bradley ...	0	10 0
" School Children, per Miss Wilson ...	1	3 0
" Part proceeds dance, Collingham Gymnastic Club, per Mr. Hoë ...	0	10 6
" Mr. W. Holland ...	0	5 0
" Miss Turton ...	0	2 6
Apr. 25. Proceeds of Whist Drive per Committee ...	3	5 "
June 26. School Children, per Miss Wilson ...	0	10 0
July 10. Mrs. Rice ...	1	1 0
" 10. The Misses Manuel ...	2	2 0
Aug. 1. Part proceeds Rummage Sale, per Miss Wigram ...	3	3 3
" 7. The Misses Woolley ...	2	0 0
" 11. School Children, per Miss Wilson ...	0	3 5
" 11. Lavender, per Mrs. Norman ...	0	2 6
Sept. 3. Mrs. Berry ...	0	2 6
Aug. 10. Proceeds of Fete, per Committee ...	31	15 7
Oct. 26. Mrs. Jane Taylor, Brough ...	0	2 6
" 30. Mrs. Lucas ...	1	0 0
Nov. 13. Miss Browné ...	0	6 0
	£90	6 3
PAID,		
	£	s. d.
Oct. 1915 Mr. G. W. Nicholson ...	13	13 8
Jan. 1916 Messrs. Harvey and Nichols, Fyiana girdles ...	0	3 6
Feb. Messrs. Bainbridge ...	3	0 6
" Messrs. Mawer and Collingham ...	0	0 7

" Mr. W. Holland ...	3	0 0
" Messrs. Hammond (Hull) wool ...	0	18 1½
" Red Cross Depot (Nottingham) ...	1	6 0
" Bradford Warehouse ...	5	14 7
" Messrs. Bainbridge ...	0	5 10
" Mr. G. W. Nicholson ...	3	1 9
" Mr. W. Holland ...	5	2 0
" Messrs. Hammond, Wool ...	2	9 8
" Messrs. Catt (London) ...	1	8 0
Aug. Mr. W. Holland ...	4	14 8
" Mr. G. Nicholson ...	2	2 0
" Messrs. Griffen and Spalding ...	5	15 0
" Messrs. Hammond ...	1	8 10½
Oct. Messrs. Catt, wool... ..	0	5 8
Nov. 11. Mr. G. W. Nicholson ...	2	3 11
" Messrs. Hammond ...	0	13 11
Nov. 13. Messrs. Holland ...	2	12 3
	£60	0 6
Balance ...	30	5 9
	£90	6 3

I certify that I have examined the above account with the vouchers, and find it correct.  
(Signed) JOHN WIGRAM,  
South Collingham,  
Nov. 13th 1916.

**St. Stephen's, Brough.**  
SERVICES.

Dec. 1. Friday. Intercession for Missions 7.30.
" 3. 1st Sunday in Advent. Mattins 11.0. Evensong 6.0
" 10. 2nd Sunday in Advent. Evensong 3.0.
" 17. 3rd Sunday in Advent. Holy Communion 9.0. Evensong 6.0.
" 21. Thursday. Feast of St. Thomas. Evensong 7.30.
" 24. 4th Sunday in Advent. Christmas Eve. Evensong. 3.0.
" 25. Christmas Day. Holy Communion 9.15. Evensong 6.0.
" 31. 1st Sunday after Christmas. Mattins 11.0. Evensong 6.0.

How vital then those woollen socks knitted by everyone at home. How vital the fundraising efforts of the Collingham Red Cross Working Party, raising money to provide wool, not only socks but also scarves, gloves, balaclavas and other garments needed to keep the soldiers warm. The summary of the previous year's fundraising reproduced here from December 1916's South Collingham Parish Church Newsletter (CDLHS Archives URN: EC/B/49), shows the range of events that took place. It must have been heartening for everyone, including the schoolchildren, to know they were 'doing their bit'.



## Bertie Walton

Accused of not 'doing their bit' were the Conscientious Objectors. Goodness, the Newark Rural Tribunals did get worked up about them! As far as my limited research has taken me, there was only one C.O. in Collingham – 18-year-old Christadelphian Bertie Walton on Woodhill Road. In January, February and March he was once again brought before the Newark Tribunals and once more Chairman John Kew was incensed at not being able to force Walton to enlist, going so far as to ask Newark's MP Captain Starkey to raise the matter in the House of Commons.

## Tribunals

Perhaps his lack of success meant Kew took out his frustration on other local men when they made their pleas for exemption. Butcher Percy Holland was given a month to find someone else to run his business (56 High St), brush and bootmaker Ernest Healey (17 High Street) was given three months to do the same, despite having three young children. Harry Griffin, 18, of Harby, was warned he would be called up as soon as a wagoner was found for his boss, Herbert Brown at Clifton.

Faring no better, despite his father John Willis being head gardener to the influential Curtis family and having three older brothers already serving, 18-year-old William Henry Willis from Tong's Row (pictured with his best friend, Ben Armstrong, shortly after enlisting) was told he could not continue his apprenticeship with Arthur Hoe, the butcher on The Green. He joined the 5<sup>th</sup> East Yorks Cyclist Battalion. Luckily, he was never posted abroad and lived until his mid – seventies.





The panel were more lenient with Ronald Ross, acting head of the Boys' School (in place of Mr Sam Coving). He was classed as unfit for active service by the Medical Board.

Those mentioned all survived the war and there were no Collingham fatalities in the first three months of 1917, this period being 'relatively calm' on the Front in the aftermath of the gruelling and bloody Battle of the Somme. That is not to say there weren't any physical and mental injuries sustained and fighting continued, most notably in the Artois region ('Operations on the Ancre').

Meanwhile, as the weather improved, Oates' 2/8<sup>th</sup> were '*very comfortable*' apart from the presence of rats. '*Not content with using one's bed as a playground, they nibbled our noses, hair and ears, waking us up in the process.*' On a lighter note, Oates recorded on March 9<sup>th</sup> that two young officers, trying to get a bath, unwittingly used one that had been used for dipping sheep and came out purple!

## **Fleet Vol 54 No 3 (April 2017)**

### **Part 11: April 1917**



On the evening of April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1917, three officers met together in a cellar somewhere near the French village of Hervilly to have a *'final yarn'* ahead of their offensive early next morning. Those officers included Captain Thomas Hugh Corbett Woolley (left), known to family and friends as Hugh, in command of 'B' Company. The other two could have been any combination from Captain C P Elliott in command of 'A' Co., Captain J L Warry, 'C' Co., Captain John S C Oates M.C., 'D' Co., the son of Lieut-Col Oates, their commanding officer, or Oates himself.

In his war diary, Lieut-Col Oates observed: *'It was noticeable that Captain*

*Woolley was the life of the party, happily discussing what he would do when the war was over in company with his wife and child to whom he was devoted.'*

The discussion no doubt included Captain Woolley's recent move with his wife, Violet, and six-month old daughter, Vera Joan, to 'The Cottage' on Westfield Lane (now known as Westfield House), one of several properties owned by the Smith-Woolley family. The young land agent must have been eager to settle down in the former shooting lodge so close to the offices where he was a partner in Smith-Woolley, the firm founded by his great-grandfather, Thomas Smith-Woolley Snr., around 1810. Hugh had never lived in Collingham, having been born and raised in Lincoln; his father, Reginald, and a senior partner at the firm, preferring to commute to work from their house in Minster Yard. Village life would be a novelty for both Hugh and Violet.

Ah, Violet; the love of his life whom he had married in 1913 and who last November had made his happiness complete by presenting him with their first child, Vera Joan. What a blessing tiny Vera was. That smile! Those soft cheeks he had kissed only a few weeks ago when home on leave. Who knew what the future held for her – maybe she would grow up to be a land agent too - anything was possible these days. Oh, yes, Captain Hugh Woolley had good cause to be the ‘life of the party’ in that cold, damp cellar that evening.

And so, in the early hours of April 27<sup>th</sup>, the 28-year old set off with ‘B’ Company alongside those from the 2/8<sup>th</sup>, 2/5<sup>th</sup>, 2/6<sup>th</sup> and 2/7<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters and battalions from other regiments – including the Lincolns – to walk the five miles from their base in Hervilly to their destination

near the village of Hargicourt, a couple of miles west of the formidable Hindenburg Line. Their objectives were not the bombed-out village itself but the chalk quarries, ‘*some acres in extent*’ and several fortified farms flanking them. The difficult

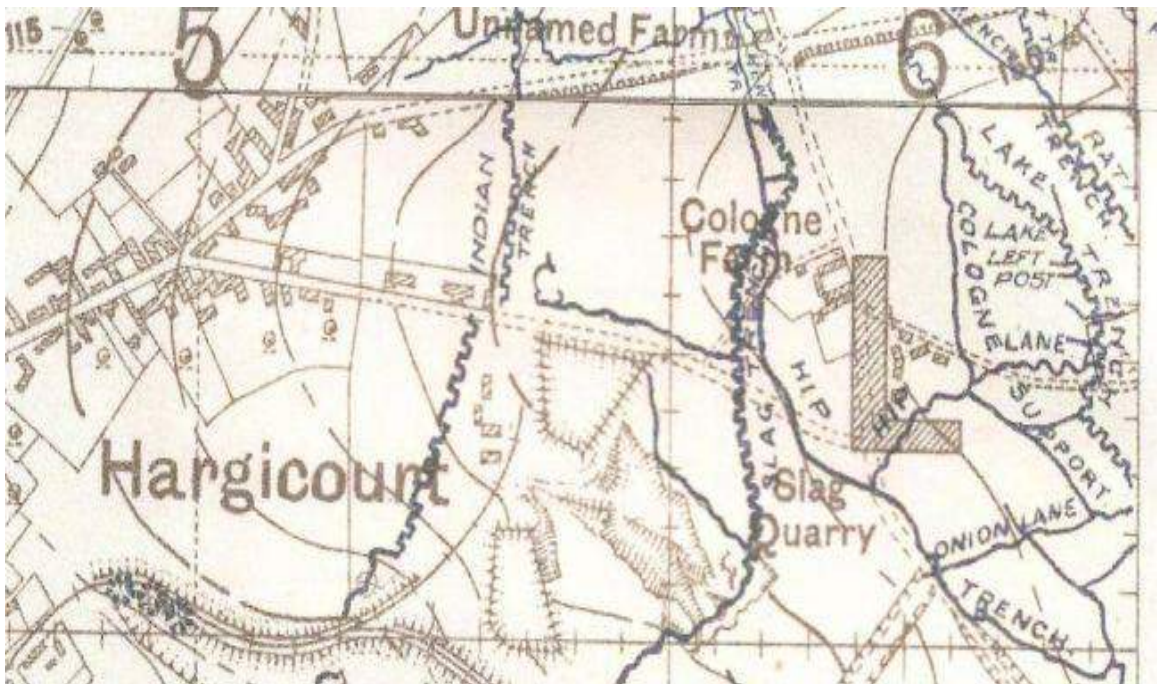


*'The Cottage' (now Westfield House) c 1920*

terrain, razed by the Germans in their scorched earth policy, not to mention the double line of trenches reinforced with shells and barbed wire, made the planned offensive dangerous and risky; others had tried and failed to capture this stronghold.

Woolley would have been alert and focused, encouraging his men, leading by example. Ill health may have forced him to resign from the militia in 1910 but his four years' experience in the 4<sup>th</sup> Notts & Derby territorials prior to that, plus his previous training as a lance corporal in the officer training corps at Lancing College, had stood him in good stead so far. He was proud to serve his country and proud to serve under the Boer War veteran Lieut-Col Oates too; he could think of no better man to have in charge. Look at the way he'd trained them for this assault after the mistakes of Le Verguier three weeks ago, when poor communications and atrocious weather conditions had led to heavy losses, some inflicted by their own men by mistake. Not this time. As soon as Oates had received their instructions he'd taken measures to avoid another catastrophe. In the countryside round Hervilly he had marked out an area roughly the size of Hargicourt, using the similar hills and dips to good effect, with fencing representing the barbed wire and white stones for the roadways. The four companies had rehearsed their plan of action here many times over.

All the more reason for Woolley and his men, as they reached their destination and



gathered round the portable cookers for a final drink of tea, to feel the odds of success were favourable.

*Above: Map of Hargicourt showing the trenches. NB: This image was not used in the original Fleet piece*

At 'Zero' (around 3.55 am) the operation began. The 2/8<sup>th</sup> were to take control of two of the farms plus two separate lines of trenches which included a 'switch trench' - that is, a trench connecting the second trench system to the first one in the event of the first being overwhelmed. Captain Woolley's orders were to rush the switch trench with one platoon



while the other three companies were deployed elsewhere. This he did, leading from the front, as usual. Initially the plan worked; the trench was captured but almost inevitably the enemy counter-attacked and the courageous father-of-one was killed and his lieutenant (Lieut. Perry) injured.

Reinforcements were quickly dispatched by Captain Oates who ordered a reserve platoon led by NCO Sgt. Wayte to rush the trench again. This time it remained in British possession albeit with the loss of a further six lives.

The affable Captain Warry, originally from the Artists' Rifles, was also killed in his section as was Lieut. Jamieson who *'came with the avowed intention of avenging his brother, who had recently fallen.'*

There was little opportunity to rest or even gather the dead. Heavy fighting continued and it would be another week before the area was fully secured and the push declared a 'success'. This was thanks in no small part to 23-year old Captain Oates. His deeds on May 1<sup>st</sup> in capturing 'Unnamed Farm' in broad daylight and under heavy bombardment earned him a DSO. Lieut-Col Oates was also awarded a DSO for bravery at Hargicourt and father and son received the award from King George V on the same day – Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 1918.



*Above: Captain John Sherbrooke Coape Oates, DSO MC JP (1894 – 1978)*

*After the war, Oates farmed West View Farm, Besthorpe, before renting it out to H J Crocker. He also served in WW2. He later lived with his wife Florence, with whom he had two children, in 'Chaise House', Besthorpe. He was Vice- President of Collingham Farmers' Club in 1950 and president in 1951.*

In all, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> lost three officers and 34 men in other ranks, with another three officers and 101 wounded at Hargicourt. Captain Woolley quite rightly received a posthumous *Mention in Despatches* in November 1917 for his role. In his tribute, Lieut-Col. Oates' affection for his lost officer is clear:



*'The death of Captain Woolley was deeply felt throughout the Battalion. Capt. Woolley was an officer of exceptional ability and boundless energy, his pluck and vitality making up to some extent for a rather frail body and indifferent health. He was gallantly leading his Company in action when he fell, just doing (as he always did) a little more hard work and a little more courageous work than his body would stand. What his Company will do without him I do not know, as his whole life was wrapped up in their welfare. I shall miss him terribly.'*

Violet must have missed him terribly, too. Sources indicate that she didn't stay in 'The Cottage' much longer (if at all) and understandably chose to live in South Kensington near her widowed mother. She never remarried and died in 1932 in Newbury, aged 43. Her daughter, Vera, married Archie Macintyre Wicksteed in 1936; he remarried in 1945. Searches so far have not revealed further details of Vera or her date of death.

As for 'The Cottage' trade directories list it was occupied by Frances Fosbery, widow of the Rev. George Fosbery, during the 1920s; her two daughters ran it as a private school. The house was sold by the Smith-Woolley Estate in 1953 to Dr Brown for £4,800.

Reginald Woolley and his wife Norah were no doubt relieved their other two sons, Charles Austin (1890 – 1930) and Edward Reginald (1895-1954), would be spared the same fate as their eldest child. Charles had been discharged as 'unfit' from the Royal Fusiliers in 1914 after only twenty days in the army, possibly because of the same 'indifferent health' that ran in the family. He chose the ministry as a career and notice of his ordination in St Alban's Cathedral appeared beneath the tribute to his older brother in the June 1917 South Collingham Parish Newsletter. Edward became the organist and choir master at Newark Parish Church. This meant that, as their 19- year old cousin, Ronald C. Aitchison, had also been killed in the war (the first Collingham casualty in December 1914) there was no member of the Woolley family to continue after Reginald Woolley's death in 1929. The firm was sold by the executors to Mr Chris Fordham that year. It finally closed in 2005.

There is one lasting memorial to Captain T H C Woolley (1888-1917) in Collingham. Although he is buried in Templeux-le-Guerard Cemetery, 26 km east of Peronne, his wooden

grave marker was returned to the village sometime after the war. For many years, the marker was affixed to the outer wall of St John the Baptist's Church until 1995 when the late David Collins requested it was moved inside to preserve it. The marker has been on display above the Roll of Honour ever since; a constant reminder of those who made the supreme sacrifice.



*Photo showing Woolley's grave marker in St John the Baptist Church*

## **Fleet Vol 54 No 4 May 2016**

### **Part 12: May 1917**

After the death of Captain Woolley in April there are thankfully no deaths to report for May of 1917; instead we can concentrate on what was happening back in the village. One of the main resources for researching Collingham in the Great War is the 1911 Census. It gives a whole raft of information about the people living here three years before the outbreak of hostilities and can be accessed via Ancestry. co.uk free of charge for library members at Collingham Library (71 High Street).

#### **1911 Census**

From the Census, we can glean the date and place of birth of the soldiers, marital status and occupation before they enlisted. Of the 44 names on the memorials, for instance, the vast majority were from farming backgrounds or in trades linked to agriculture. Over half were teenagers; many still at school or serving apprenticeships; those over sixteen were already in full-time work, often in places outside the district. Roughly 50% were born in the East Trent Benefice.

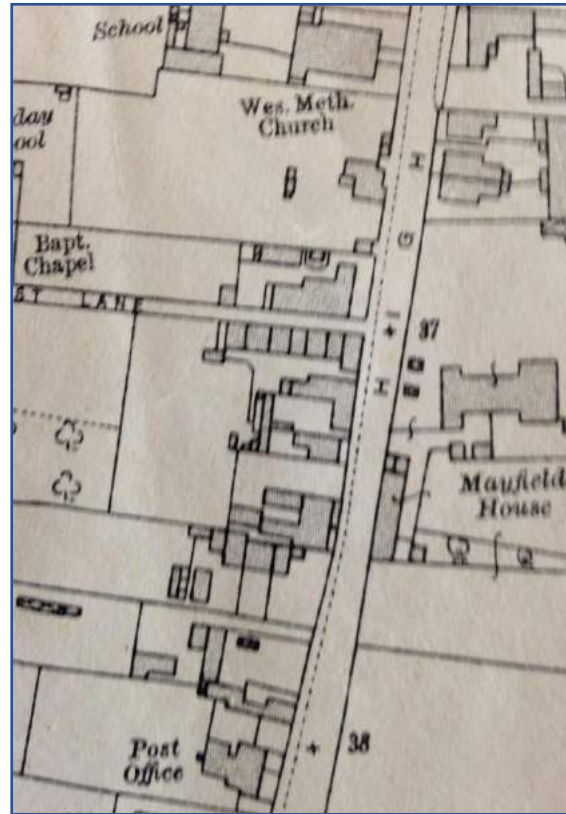


Social status is derived from data giving the number of rooms in the dwelling and the number of servants (if any) employed by the head of household. For example, 1911 found landowner Charles Constable

Curtis and his wife, Edith, living in Langford Hall (shown above) which had 26 rooms & employed 11 servants. Meanwhile, their head gardener, John Willis, was living in a four-

roomed cottage on Tong's Row, North Collingham, with his wife, Maria, and three of their six children.

'Tong's Row' in Baptist Lane, consisted of a row of six four-roomed cottages butting up to 87 High St and were rented out to a variety of tenants over the years; the cottages were demolished in the 1960s to make way for Collingham Fire Station. At one time, Collingham had many yards and rows of humble dwellings like Tong's Row. Some were named after locals, such as 'Bocock's Row' or 'Jalland's Row' and others reflected their location such as 'Crown Yard.'



1885 OS Map showing Tong's Row on the south side of Baptist Lane

In 1911, the Willis's neighbours on one side were 85-year old retired shoemaker Evan Davies (born in South Wales) and his wife Susan. On the other were retired farm labourer Charles Marrows (1848-1919) and his wife Selina (1851 -1931) who moved there from Brough sometime between 1897 and 1901, bringing three of their ten children with them, plus a granddaughter, Ellen.

No one else must be included (The order of entries given see Examples in back of Schedule)		Sex		Age		Marital Status		Occupation		Place of Birth		Date of Birth		Date of Arrival		Date of Departure		Date of Death	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	Charles Marrows	Head	M	63	Married	58	18	8	X	Farm Labourer	140	Worcester	1848						
2	Selina Marrows	Wife	F	60	Married	38	10	8	2			Brough	1851						
3	Charles Marrows	Son	M	27	Single					Farm Labourer	140	Worcester							
4	Harry Marrows	Son	M	15	Single					Apprentice to		Worcester							
5	Ellen Marrows	Granddaughter	F	15	Single					Mother's help		Brough							

Census Return for the Marrows on Tong's Row 1911

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)			(To be filled up by, or on behalf of the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge of this dwelling)		
I certify that—			I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.		
1. All the names on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.			Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchens, Toilets, or Apartments). Count the outhouses as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, clove, bathroom, store-rooms, office, shop.		
2. I have counted the males and females in Column 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.			Signature <u>Charles Marrows, Inger Rev</u>		
3. After making the necessary corrections, I have completed all entries on this Schedule which appeared to be deficient, and have corrected such as appeared to be incorrect.			Postal Address <u>Collingham N. Newark</u>		
Title of Enumerator <u>Mr. C</u>			Initial <u>H</u>		
Males	Females	Total	Rooms		
3	2	5			



Census Returns, however, can only tell us so much; to bring these names and basic details to life historians need additional material such as newspaper cuttings, letters, postcards, memoirs and photographs. It was from a newspaper report in the Newark Advertiser that Trevor Frecknall discovered that the Marrows' youngest son, Harry, a 15-year old apprentice wheelwright in 1911, a 21-year old sapper in the Royal Engineers by 1917, had been awarded the prestigious Military Medal for destroying a dug-out and bomb store. The whole of Tong's Row must have cheered when the envelope delivered to the Marrows' door didn't contain the dreaded telegram of a son's death but a letter (fully reproduced on page 85 of Trevor Frecknall's book *Collingham in the Great War*) announcing his achievement. 'Time, place and date I cannot say.' Harry (1896 – 1963) added.



*Above: photograph of a Military Medal. This was a Level 3 award (with Level 1 being the VC) instituted in March 1916. It was awarded for gallantry and bravery under fire.*



*Mary Willis as a young woman*

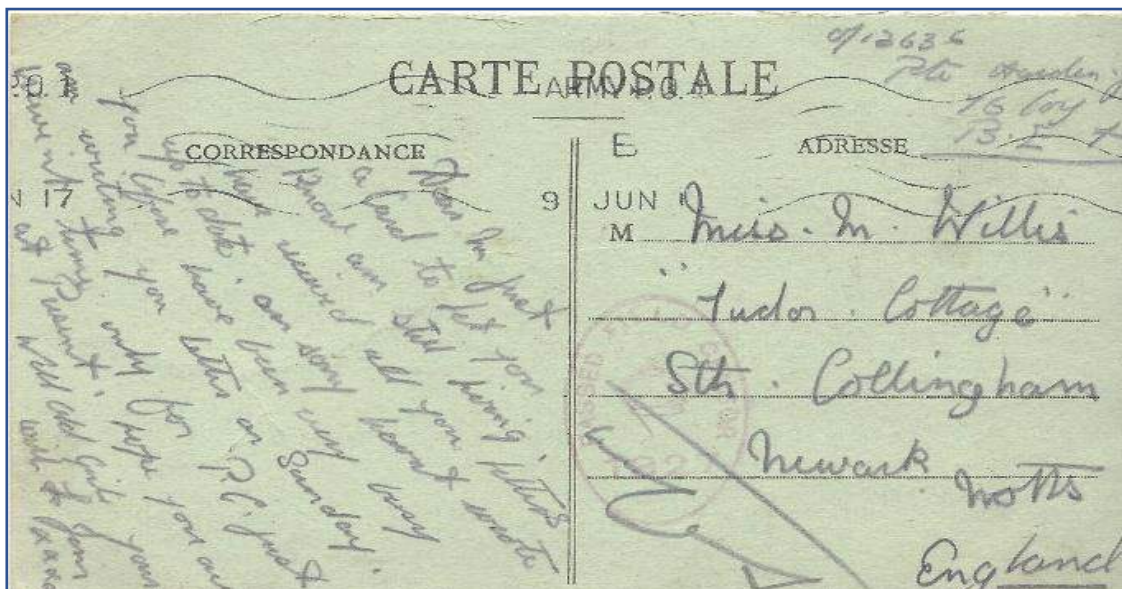
We know the post-boy was no stranger to Tudor Cottage on Dykes End during the war, either. Again, this is thanks to material in the Jubilee Room, rather than the Census. Skilled seamstress Mary Willis, 31, daughter of John and Maria on Tong's Row, lived here with her sister Constance, 27. Mary, like her father, was employed by the Curtis Family. A recent donation to the archives

from Mary's niece, Mrs Marie Taylor, included a small cache of post-cards from soldiers serving on the Front between 1916 and 1917. Whether the soldiers were fellow members of staff now serving in the trenches or whether Langford Hall was, like many large country houses at the time, a rehabilitation centre for the wounded, and Mary was a temporary nurse, is unclear.



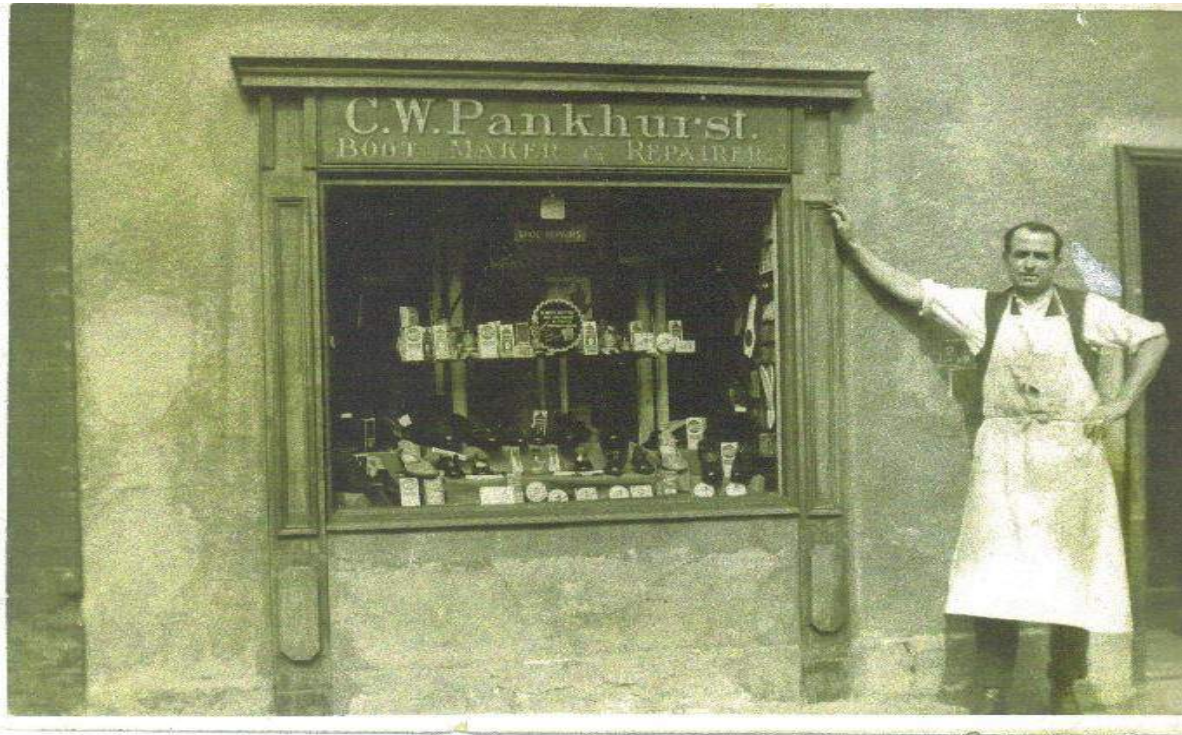
One post-card from a soldier listing himself as '5880. II. Timothy, Coldstream Guards, Machine Gun Base, Depot 5 18-A- PO

BEF' simply reads: 'Kind regards to Sid and all the household.' Half a dozen were from 'Jim' sent between April and July 1917. Jim was obviously fond of Mary, given the pictures he chose (above), but had to keep his messages brief and vague. 'Only time for a PC (post-card) as very busy.' 'Very busy' being quite an understatement from someone fighting in the trenches.



Post-card sent to Mary Willis in 1917 from 'Jim'





*Charles Pankhurst outside his boot and shoe repairer's shop  
87 High St (the house was originally two cottages).*

It is unknown what happened to Jim. In 1919, Mary married airman Charles Pankhurst, whose certificate for gallantry is also in the Collingham archives.

Later, the Pankhursts settled in South Collingham and came to reside at 87 High Street, the property adjoining 'Tong's Row' where Mary's parents had once lived in the 1930s. Charles Pankhurst became a cobbler and the shop window of his shoe repairer's can still be seen. The house is named 'Pankhurst Cottage' after them and is owned by a member of the Willis family to this day.

### **The Belgians' Fund**

In his monthly newsletter, Rev. Maxwell published the 1916 end-of-year financial statement for the South Collingham and Brough Parish Churches. Of interest was the monies relating to the Belgians' Fund. The two Collinghams had taken in at least three Belgian families soon after the outbreak of war. It would seem that in March 1917 they were found homes in Newark and Lincoln, with costs of removal, furniture and rent being met from the joint church funds raised (£63. 11s.0d). We know one of the families, the

Tanghes, eventually returned to Belgium. It would be interesting to know what happened to the De Vos and Pateets.



Above: Henri and Ludovica Tanghe. Mme Tanghe fled Belgium with six of her children at the outbreak of war. Her husband, Henri, and eldest son, Firmin, stayed to fight and survived. Youngest son Robert (born 1905) died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in WW2. One of the Tanghes' daughters, Elodie, stayed on in England and returned to her surrogate Collingham family (the Hoes) throughout her life.

Photo c/o the late Mrs Broad-Davies. NB: This photograph did not appear in the original Fleet article

*and these marks will help to determine the character of the annual prizes won by the scholars.'* The vicar must have been a bit miffed with the St John the Baptist choir boys, too, as their Choir Outing Fund balance-sheet was incomplete *'...Owing to the boys having lost the collecting book on the last day of making the collection.'*

Meanwhile, North and South Collingham Parish Councils were dishing out money for rats' tails and dead sparrows. Although it would be another year before rationing was introduced, there was already a shortage of food in the country. German U-boats were sinking ships importing vital grain supplies which made it all the more necessary to protect the home-grown crops at all costs. Sparrow Clubs sprang up everywhere; these birds were considered a pest as they devoured grain and seeds. The sum of 4d per dozen for old

In the same newsletter, Rev. Maxwell laments the fall in numbers of children attending church services at St Stephen's in Brough. *'In future, extra marks will be given to those children who attend church as well as*

*Sunday School,*



sparrows was offered (see p. 87 Frecknall). How times change – the House Sparrow is now in severe decline according to the RSPB.

## **Fleet Vol 54 No 5 June 2017**

### **Part 13: June 1917**



*Elisabeth 'Betty' Hunt 1884 - 1917 wearing her Queen Alexandra Royal Navy Nurse's uniform.*

*Image © Jane Stirland*

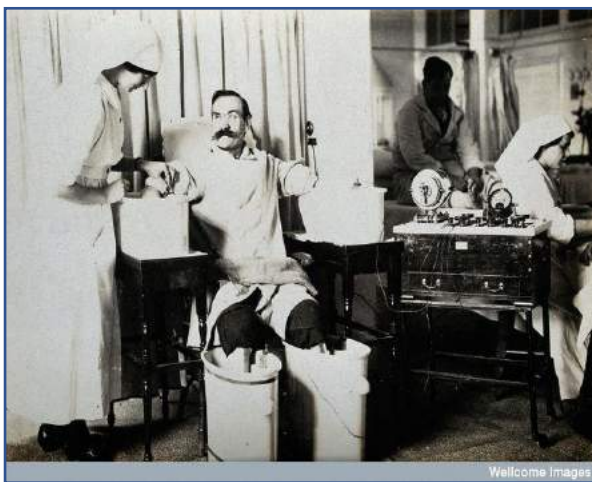
Sister Elisabeth (Betty) Hunt winced as she tried to sit up; the pain in her side was getting worse, despite the ice packs the staff kept bringing her. Oh, this was ridiculous, being on the ward instead of running it! How could she be ill when there was so much to do?

She took a sip of barley water and gingerly reached across for her pen and notepaper. She must finish her letter to Nell. Her sister Nell, a nurse up in Leeds, could pass the news of her incapacity on to Mother and Father in Collingham. There was no point writing directly to them when they had enough to worry about, what with Ted still serving in the Army Veterinary Corps and their nephew, Robert's, death last October still so raw. Poor Robert – only twenty-two and not a chance of them ever

recovering his body. Perhaps that was no bad thing; she'd seen the mess an artillery shell could make to flesh and bone. How glad her Uncle William and Aunt Lois must be of the support from the rest of the family.

The thought made her homesick. What she'd give to be up there with them all now; all the Hunts on her father's side and the Bococks on her mother's. Maltsters, farmers, domestic servants, cottagers, house painters – you name it – they did it; anything to put bread on the table. It would be such a tonic to see them all. Perhaps she'd be granted leave when she was fit enough to travel and she could go back for a few days and stay at her parents' rented cottage near the station, listening to the trains clatter past and catching up with all the gossip.

Betty glanced round the ward where not a single bed was unoccupied and knew there was little chance of that. The Royal Sea Bathing Hospital in Margate, where she'd worked since leaving Haslar just over a year ago, was not a military hospital like Haslar, but it was still full to capacity after taking in the wounded from the Front as well as civilians. Besides, she was a qualified surgical nurse; her experience and skills were too useful for her even to contemplate leaving Kent at the moment. Here, she was in the thick of it. Only last week a 650lb bomb had been dropped on Ramsgate, destroying seven hundred houses. There was no need to cross the Channel to see what devastation the Germans were causing, that was for sure.



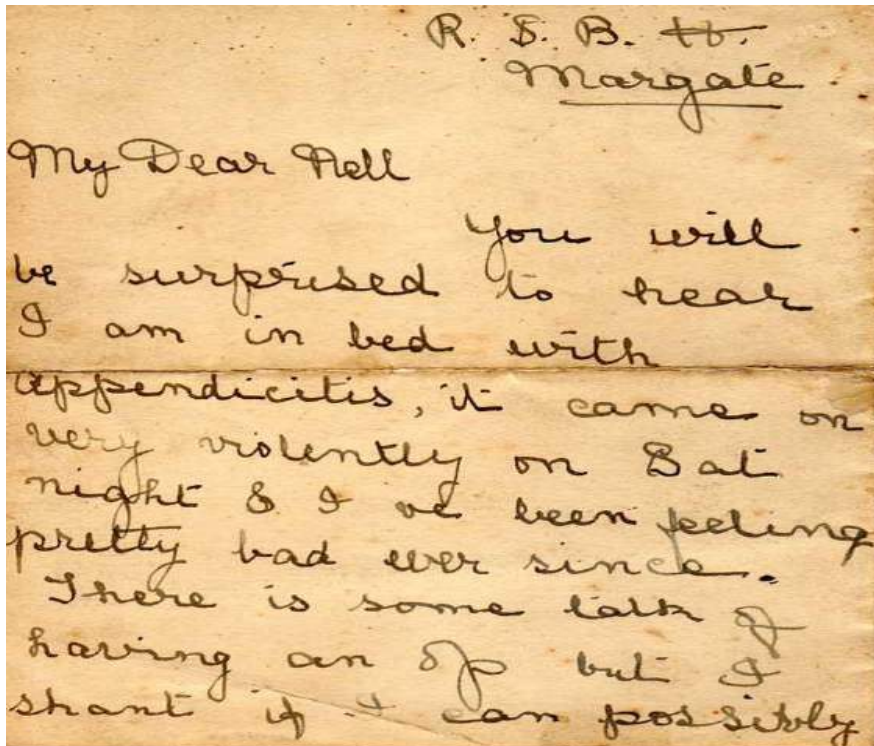
*Photo of nurses treating a wounded soldier at Haslar during WW1.*



*Royal Hospital Haslar, Gosport, was the first purpose-built military hospital in England. Its frontage was an impressive 567 feet long. The site contained 144 wards and provide 2,500 beds. It closed in 2009.*

She adjusted her ice pack and surveyed the cool, high ceiling of the ward that had once been exclusively for TB patients. She found it a much more pleasant building to work in than Haslar. What an eye-opener that twenty months as a Queens Royal Navy Nurse (Reserves) had been. She'd thought Sheffield Royal Infirmary, where she'd trained for three years from 1911 onwards, had been imposing, but Haslar was something else. Opened around 1754 to treat the wounded of HM Royal Navy, it was designed as both a hospital and a prison, to prevent the press-ganged sailors from escaping once they'd recovered. The largest brick-built building in Europe, it had taken her days to get used to the vast layout. Adjusting to the strict and exhausting demands of a military hospital during wartime hadn't been easy, either. QUARNNs here might have been treating the wounded since before

Waterloo but never in such vast numbers and with such a complexity of injuries. Without her best friend and fellow nurse, Daisy Ellwood, whom she'd known since her training days in Sheffield, she probably couldn't have got through it.



Scan of the original letter written by Elisabeth Hunt to her sister, Nell. ©Jane Stirland

The thought of Ellwood jabbed at her as much as the pain in her side. Oh, how she missed her companionship. Why did she have to go off and get married last week? And worse, re-locate to Newcastle where her naval surgeon husband awaited disembarkation orders. Of course, they'd promised to

keep in touch but friendships were never quite the same once husbands and babies came along.

To distract herself from these glum thoughts, Betty re-read through the few lines she'd managed to Nell so far:

*'My Dear Nell,*

*You will be surprised to hear I am in bed with appendicitis, it came on very violently on Saturday night and I've been feeling pretty bad ever since.*

*There is some talk of an op but I shan't if I can possibly avoid it...'*



That was an understatement. Competent though the surgeons at the RSB were, appendectomies were highly risky and Sister Hunt had witnessed more deaths on the



**Nellie Hunt 1883-1958**

*Nellie returned to Collingham after the war and lived in 'Tyne Cottage' on The Green (no 28). She never married.*

*Image ©Jane Stirland.*

operating table from peritonitis than she cared to remember. An operation was a last resort as far as she was concerned. Again, she thought of Daisy Ellwood and wished she were here. Ellwood's calming presence was what she needed right now.

Annoyed at herself for being so silly, Betty continued her letter to Nell. Good, reliable Nell, the big sister who'd always been there for her. That's who she'd focus on from now on. Family. She grasped her pen, and wrote quickly in her cursive handwriting, a testament to the many hours Miss Wilson had drilled her and Nell at Collingham Girls' and Infants' School all those years ago. *'... Am getting every possible attention and everyone is most kind, but I hope I shall soon be out of it. Am not allowed to have anything but sips of barley*

*water, soda water, milk etc., so you can imagine what with the pain and the ice bags on my tummy, I don't feel particularly happy...'*

She paused. Was she laying it on a bit thick? She didn't want Nell worrying unduly. To change the subject, she informed her sister briefly about Ellwood's wedding in Deal the previous week and ended with a brisk: *'Must dry up now as it is very awkward writing in this position. Best love, Betty.'*

The letter was posted to Nellie Hunt in her lodgings in Gomersall, near Leeds. News must have reached Nellie immediately afterwards, or may even crossed in the post, that her sister had died on Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1917 (the date given in the family bible), just as Elisabeth feared she might, from complications following surgery. She was 32.

The fact that Elisabeth Hunt died from something as mundane as appendicitis did not prevent Canon Gould, the vicar at All Saints, from bestowing his parishioner the same respect he paid to all those who had given their lives in the war. *The Newark Advertiser* on July 4<sup>th</sup> reported that:

*'Preaching at North Collingham Church on Sunday morning the Vicar, Rev: Gould made reference to the passing of the deceased. He said: 'Before I begin my sermon I would like to say a few words in reference to the death, a few days since, of one who has a place on our Roll of Honour, and whose name has been remembered in our prayers here week by week with the others from among us who have given themselves to the service of their country in this time of war. I think we rightly include in our remembrance the nurses who are labouring so splendidly in our military hospitals, and who have shown such wonderful patience and devotion in their grand work of ministering to the sufferings and alleviating the pain of our brave and stricken soldiers and sailors.'*



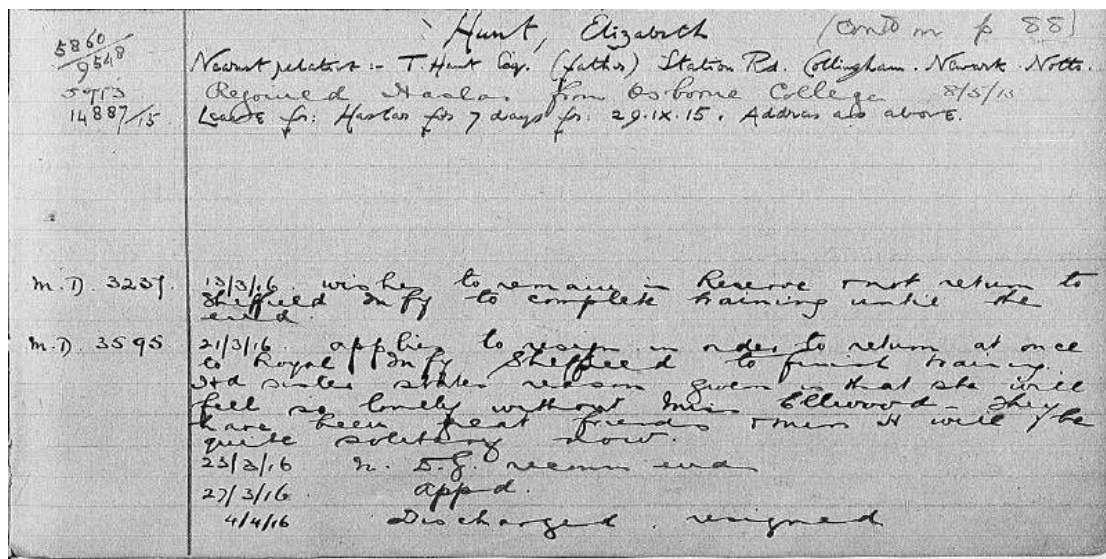
*Elisabeth Hunt's grave in All Saints' Churchyard (almost overlooking Trent Lane) Her sister Nellie is buried in the same grave. Photo HP 2017*

*In the case of Nurse Hunt, if her own fatal illness was not directly due to her professional work, it, at all events overtook her at her post of duty in the Margate Hospital, where, after a serious operation (which it was hoped would be successful) she passed peacefully away, and was laid to rest here on Thursday last (June 28<sup>th</sup>).*

The well-attended funeral took place at North Collingham. There were many floral tributes which included some from Hospital Medical Staff, the Sisters and the patients to: *'...one of the best of Sisters.'*

The original letter Betty wrote to Nell is still in the family. Her great-niece, Jane Stirland, whose grandfather was the 'Ted' (Robert Edward Hunt 1878 – 1937) serving in the army, has provided much useful background information about the Hunt/Bocock family. Jane remembers her Auntie Nellie and dressing up in the nurses' uniforms when she was little. She also remembers being told that an 'unknown benefactor' paid for Elisabeth and Nellie's training in Sheffield. Without this sponsorship, they would never have been able to enrol. Nursing was seen as a respected profession for many working-class women and a way to better themselves. Pay was relatively fair, too, compared to that of domestic service or shop work, and the fact that Betty was able to send her parents, Thomas and Ruth, a 'war bonus' of £15 for every six months she served at Haslar, would have been welcomed.

Historian Sue Light was invaluable in helping locate Elisabeth Hunt's nursing records from the National Archives. Those records give us an indication of Elisabeth's wartime service history and show us that she was inseparable from Daisy Ellwood (1885-1974).



Above: An extract from Elisabeth Hunt's official nursing records 1915 -1916

In March 1916, having been at Haslar since late 1914, Elisabeth resigned, then changed her mind a week later, then resigned again to return to Sheffield. The reason given was that: '... she will feel so very lonely without Miss Ellwood.' Daisy Ellwood's record show she needed to complete a fourth year at Sheffield to gain her nursing certificate. This she did and three months later, they both returned to Kent. Daisy found a nursing post in Deal, where she presumably met her husband-to-be, Dr Dermot Loughlin (1886-1946). At the

same time, Elisabeth took a post at the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital in Margate further along the Kent coast. Such close friendships were not uncommon among nurses; without them many could not have borne the long hours and extreme demands on their nursing skills in such challenging circumstances.

Elisabeth Hunt was unlucky to die of appendicitis. It would be another decade before Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin (in 1928), that crucial breakthrough in medical science which might have saved her life. However, her place on Collingham's Roll of Honour is in no doubt. When her name is read out among those of the Fallen every Remembrance Sunday, we will remember Elisabeth Hunt as '*...one of the best of Sisters.*'

**Further Interest:** For anyone interested in the vital role nurses played in general during the Great War, do go to the late Sue Light's blog, '*This Intrepid Band,*' and her website, '*Scarlet Finders*' ([www.scarletfinders.co.uk](http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk)) Both give fascinating insights into nursing life at the time. A new book, '*Veiled Warriors – Allied Nurses of the First World War*' by Christine E. Hallett (pub OUP 2014) is another in-depth source.

There are two excellent programmes about Haslar's history available online. One is a 2013 'Open Country' recording for Radio 4 called *Royal Haslar Hospital* and the other is a BBC documentary from 2015 '*The Secrets of a War Hospital.*'

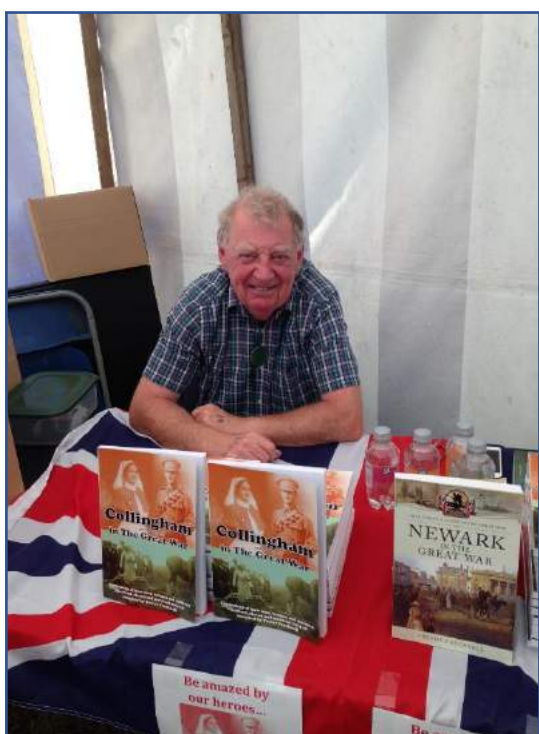


## **Fleet Vol 54 No 6 July/Aug 2017**

### **Part 14: July & August 1917**

**Part 14 in the series is extracted from Trevor Frecknall's book  
'Collingham and district in The Great War' published in 2015.**

**Additional information, images & captions by Helena Pielichaty**



*Journalist and Newark historian Trevor Frecknall signing copies of his book at Collingham Show in 2015*

**Tuesday 17 July 1917:** When Newark Rural Tribunal met, military representative Nicholson scoffed that he had counted 35 men this morning “hanging over the Cattle Market wall looking at the cattle”. His inference was that the hang-backs should be working or, better still, fighting. Conditional exemption was given to gamekeeper Maurice Butler (born 1877, Saxilby) after two Tribunal members agreed it was vital that he continued to kill rabbits and moles in 700 acres of woods around Thorney. The decision was a relief to Maurice’s wife Lizzie (born 1879, Gainsborough). She would have been left alone with four young children: Cyril Henry (born 1903), James Maurice (born 1904), Margaret Eleanor (born 1906) and Florence Evelyn (born 1907).

Monday 23 July 1917: Farmer Noton sent the police to Brough School “...to complain about four young boys who pluck the ears of corn on their way to school,” stated the school log book. They now come to school “by the road”.

**Saturday 28 July 1917:** Despite grieving for her two lost sons, Mary Browne never failed to host the annual Red Cross Fete in the beautiful grounds of South Collingham House; and today's event was such a success that even the traditional thunderstorms stayed away, the Advertiser noted on the following Wednesday. The profit, largely thanks to the hard work of the Ladies' Committee headed by Fanny Hornagold, amounted to £51 10s 4d which went to Collingham Red Cross Working Party and Hospital Supply Depot in a ratio of four to one.



*Mrs Mary Browne (1850 – 1932) planting a tree at the 1911 Coronation from an original photograph in Collingham Archives in the Jubilee Room. In 1921, the tenancy on South Collingham House expired and Mrs Browne moved with her daughter, Dorothy, to Rutland House.*

On the same glorious afternoon, the Langford branch of the Broadberry family also had something to celebrate. George's third daughter, Mary Hannah (born 1884), a certificated elementary teacher, was married at All Saints', Winthorpe, to Cuthbert Walter Lane (born 1888, Grantham), who was on 'important war work as a draughtsman.'

**Tuesday 31 July 1917:** Farmer's son **Frederick Lyon** was killed in action, aged 30. He worked for his widower father John (born 1861, Castle Bytham) at Ingleby and then North Collingham before he joined the Lincolnshire Regiment as Private 18499. He had been transferred in "the poor bloody infantry" – to the 25th Company Machine Gun Corps – and given a new service number, 15788, before his death near Ypres. He is remembered in the Divisional Collecting Post Cemetery and Extension.

*[Added notes: Also killed in action in July (31<sup>st</sup>) was Thomas Henry Bacon. However, as his death was not reported until September, the details appear later on in Frecknall's book. Thomas Henry Bacon's tribute will be in September's Fleet - HP]*

## AUGUST 1917

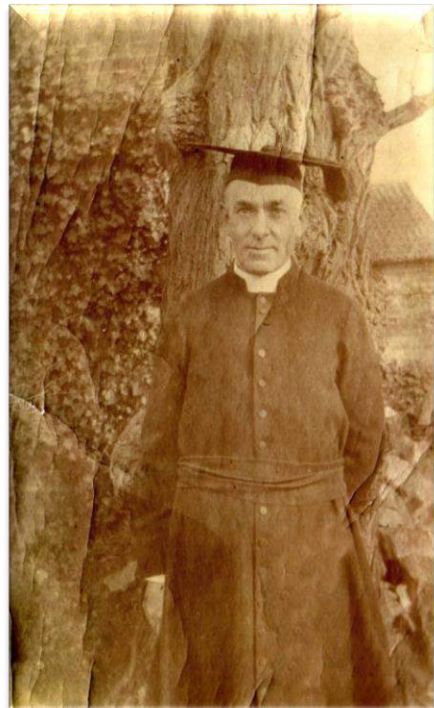
**Thursday 2 August 1917: Ernest Cook Dickinson** (born 1894) died from wounds received while he was earning the Military Medal as a Signaller with D Battery 91st Brigade Royal Field Artillery. He had been reared in North Collingham while his father John Tom (born 1863 in the village) worked as a joiner and mother Frances Ada (born 1866, Sheffield) stayed home in their High Street cottage and cared for him and his siblings Ethel (born 1895), Dorothy (born 1899) and Harold (born 1901). Having begun his education at the Central School, he progressed so well after the family moved to Western Road, Crookes, Sheffield, that he took a scholarship and became an evening student at Sheffield University while working for steel manufacturers Moses Eadon and Sons Ltd, Provident Works, Sheffield. Now Ernest's commanding officer wrote to Tom: *"He was wounded on 31 July. I saw him being carried down to the dressing station on the afternoon of the 1st. He had been given every attention and was not moved before owing to the nature of his wound. When I saw him he was very cheerful, and was bearing himself with that courage which he had always showed, and which endeared him to all. He did exceedingly well on the day he was wounded, showing great bravery. It will be some consolation to you to know, I hope, that I was able to tell him that his name was being sent in for bravery. I cannot tell you how much all of us in the Battery feel his loss. As a signaller, he often came out with me and, like everyone else, I admired his cheerfulness and courage immensely."* Ernest was awarded the MM posthumously. Gunner 20489 Dickinson is remembered in the Dozinghem Military Cemetery, near three groups of casualty-clearing stations close to Ypres.

[Added notes: *Although born in Collingham, Ernest C Dickinson does not appear on the North Collingham War Memorial or Roll of Honour. The family appear to have moved to Sheffield around 1903, which might explain it. - HP*]

**Friday 3 August 1917:** Collingham Boys' School pupil Charles Edward Clifton (born 1905, Harby), the son of a policeman who had retired to South Collingham, spent the last two weeks of term on a student teacher's course, after which he was awarded an "Intending Teacher Scholarship" at Magnus Grammar School.

**Saturday 4 August 1917:** The Reverend Maxwell commemorated the third anniversary of the start of the War by counting the cost to South Collingham: *“There are 92 names on our Roll of Honour [parishioners who had joined the Forces], of whom nine have given their lives for their country, five have been incapacitated for further service by the wounds they have received, or other causes.”* Mindful of the controversy surrounding Bertie Walton (a conscientious objector) in North Collingham, he added: *“Not one in this parish has refused to serve when the call has come, by slinking away through the loophole of a conscientious objection, which was most regrettably left open by the late Government responsible for the Conscription Act.”* [The Military Service Act of 27 January 1916 brought conscription into effect. But it offered exemption to men with a “conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service.”]

And the Rector again took the opportunity to criticise families who were not praying for their boys frequently enough for his liking: *“In public worship at all services, we pray God to bless our cause, but alas, how few, comparatively speaking, take part with us in this great duty? On Sunday evenings we mention in prayer to God the names of all those on our Roll who are on active service and yet, most sad to say, many of the parents and other friends of those who are so prayed for seldom or never join us ... The question is often asked, ‘Does God care?’ The answer is, ‘Do you pray?’ A true and blessed victory will only be given to a God-fearing and praying people. “Therefore, my dear parishioners, I invite you to draw nearer to the Throne of Grace and to join with me and each other in public prayer more earnestly and insistently than you have done before, that the great God who made and governs all things will grant unto the Allied nations such faith, courage and perseverance that their efforts for the victory of the cause of righteousness may be crowned by an early and convincing success.”*



*Rev. Albert J. Maxwell (1870 – 1937) He was rector of South Collingham’s churches for 30 years (1907 – 1937)*



**Monday 6 August 1917:** Brough scholars began taking eggs to school every Monday morning and sending them for wounded soldiers via the Red Cross depot at Collingham.

**Wednesday 8 August 1917:** 'Hang-backs' were forewarned of more pressure ... An article in the Advertiser announced that a major attempt was being made on the following Saturday to form a 'Home Guard'. What the article did not say, of course, was that the Volunteers' main task would be to marshal civil resistance in the event of an invasion, which was still feared despite the trench stalemate.

**Thursday 9 August 1917:** Collingham Boys' School head Samuel Coging (1882 -1959), who



also acted as Sunday School Superintendent despite living in Balderton, was lucky to escape with shrapnel wounds as the battle raged at Ypres. He had joined the 12th Leicestershire Regiment on 9 June 1916, transferred as musketry instructor to the 83rd Training Reserve Battalion and then to the East

Kent Regiment (The Buffs) with whom he went to the Western Front on 19 June 1917. When he was blown-up less than two months later, he suffered a dislocated left shoulder, shrapnel wounds in his arm, wrist and hand, and lost part of a finger. Yet upon his formal discharge on 14 December 1918, Acting Sergeant Coging would report to his employers, Nottinghamshire County Council Education Department, that he had "*no real disability*". What a cavalier of an influence he must have been to the village boys and girls!

[Added notes: According to Ian Coging a descendent of Samuel Coging's, who corresponded via email, **Coging Close** in Balderton was named in Samuel Coging's honour. Samuel Coging did not return to the Boys' School in Collingham after the war, although he continued teaching in Newark. His position in Collingham was taken up by Mr JW Beard c. 1919. HP]

**Saturday 11 August 1917:** Walter Hill (born 1885, Linton, Cambridgeshire) left a young North Collingham family in despair when he was killed in Flanders. He had been working on a farm and living in Low Street with his wife Mabel (nee Squires, born 1888, Coleby, Lincs) and their sons Walter (born 1911, Collingham) and Henry (born 1912, Collingham)



plus Mabel Squires (born 1909, Sleaford, a year before her mother married). Come the Great War, he fought so well that he was promoted to Sergeant 45311 with 'B' Battery, 110th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. He is remembered in the Belgian Battery Corner Cemetery, close to Ypres.

[Added notes since Fleet publication: In the census of 1911 they are living on Low Street, Collingham (near 'The Old Bakery') in a 4-roomed house so probably moved to the village around 1910.

According to the Kirk Family research on Ancestry.co.uk, Mabel went on to have 5 more children with another partner after Walter was killed: (Herbert born 1921) (Stanley 1923), Leslie (1925) Melvi (1927-1929) and Vera (1930), all with surname Hill. Mabel remarried in 1941 (aged 57) to Navenby native Herbert Bellamy, born 1893 & likely to be the father of Mabel's subsequent children. Mabel is buried in Navenby. One of Walter's sisters, Florence, lived in Walesby, Notts. Below: Walter Hill's medal roll index card]

Campaign :—		1914-15		(A) Where decoration was earned.		(B) Present situation.	
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)			
(A) HILL	RFA	A/Batter 45311		MEDAL	* ROLL	PAGE	
(B) Walker	"	Sgt.	"	VICTORY	RFA/174 B.	14760	
				BRITISH	do	do	
				15 STAR	RFA/8/AFB 3717		
Action taken							
THEATRE OF WAR (I) France							
QUALIFYING DATE 26.9.15							

(6 34 46) W231—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608 [OVER.]

Walter Hill (1885-1917) photo c/o the late Cliff Housley

**Monday 20 August 1917:** Collingham's Section of the Newark Company of the Volunteers – the 'Home Guard' of The Great War – was formally inaugurated. A Lieutenant and Sergeant Major from the Newark HQ of the Sherwood Foresters attended the evening meeting, and

the first dozen men were sworn-in by Magistrate Thomas Bradley who lived in The Willows on Low Street.

The Advertiser report two days later contained no vitriol whatsoever about hang-backs. On the contrary, it was gushingly optimistic:

*“This, of course, is only a beginning and it is hoped that as soon as possible the numbers will grow to 20 so that drills can be properly carried out under the direction of qualified instructors. There will be another parade at the Public Hall tomorrow (Thursday) night at 7 o’ clock when a second squad will be sworn-in. The only test for a man over military age who is in a fair state of health is the ability to march five miles, and it is not too much to expect that before very long a good Section will be in existence in Collingham. Members will be welcomed from the surrounding villages of South Scarle, Besthorpe, Clifton, etc. A special effort is being made to cater for those under military age, as well as those over. Young men between 17 and 18, who look forward in the future to being called up for military service at 18, will not find themselves in the Army one minute sooner from being in the Volunteers but, on the other hand, if and when they are called up they will be in a very favourable position by reason of the fact that they will probably be excused the drudgery of drill on the Barrack Square. They will have learnt the routine part under the more easy-going and pleasurable*



*Above: Collingham Angling Society c 1905. Gervaise W. Bradwell (1866 – 1934), landlord of The Grey Horse from about 1905 to around 1925 and of the Royal Oak from 1925 until his death in 1934, is on the second row from the front, third in from the right. Photograph CDLHS*

*conditions of drill at home, instead of being rushed at express speed through a course. It only remains for the fit men of Collingham and district who, whether from age or any other reason are not in khaki, to support the movement.”*

All that spoilt the impetus of this momentous announcement was its position in the Advertiser. It was tucked away beneath a report of the annual fishing match organised by the Grey Horse Inn landlord Gervase William Bradwell (born 1866, Southwell) – the 13 competitors caught 223 fish weighing 181lb – and an announcement that all orders placed with Collingham Horticultural Society secretary George Hind for the supply of eight-and-a-half gross of glass jars for preserving fruit had been distributed. The jars had cost £22 19s, leaving 8s 4½d in the Society’s deposit account.

**Wednesday 22 August 1917:** Collingham Farmers’ Club Committee met under the chairmanship of William Roe and unanimously decided not to hold a show this year.

**Tuesday 28 August 1917:** Claypole Rural Tribunal settled confusion surrounding North Scarle blacksmith Charles James Weeks, 34. He was rejected for service 13 months earlier. Then he was called-up. Now he was given exemption from enlisting.



## **Fleet Volume 54 No7 (September 2017)**

### **Part 15: September 1917**

*'I died in hell... they called it Passchendaele.'* – Siegfried Sassoon



*The Menin Road by Paul Nash (1919)*

It is officially called the Third Battle of Ypres but is more often referred to as 'Passchendaele.' Even taking into account the carnage that had unfolded since 1914, this was one of the most horrific episodes of the war so far and one that earned Commander-in-Chief Field Marshall Douglas Haig his reputation as a 'blunderer' and 'dunderhead.'

It began on July 31<sup>st</sup> and during the three months that followed until the battle ended on November 6<sup>th</sup>, around 275,000 BEF and 220,000 German soldiers either lost their lives or were wounded. 90,000 bodies were never identified and 42,000 bodies never recovered, such was the scale of the offensive. What distinguished Passchendaele from previous battles was mud. From August 3<sup>rd</sup>, a period of unrelenting rainfall – the heaviest in thirty years – turned the heavy clay soils of the region into a death trap. The war artist Paul Nash describes the impact on the landscape:

*'No glimmer of God's hand is seen anywhere. Sunset and sunrise are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all*

*through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land. The rain drives on, the stinking mud becomes more evilly yellow, the shell holes fill up with green-white water, the roads and tracks are covered in inches of slime, the black dying trees ooze and sweat and the shells never cease. They alone plunge overhead, tearing away at the rotten tree stumps, breaking the plank roads, striking down horses and mules, annihilating, maiming, maddening. They plunge into the grave which is this land; one huge grave, and cast up on it the poor dead. It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless.'*

- Extracted from 'Outline' by Paul Nash (pub. 2016)

### L/Corp Thomas Bacon

By September, Passchendaele had already claimed the lives of three men with Collingham connections – farmer's son **Frederick Lyon** on July 31<sup>st</sup>, **Ernest Cook Dickinson** on August 2<sup>nd</sup>

and **Walter Hill** on August 11<sup>th</sup>. A fourth,

26-year old **Lance Corporal Thomas**

**Henry Bacon**, had also been killed in

battle. Like Frederick Lyon, he'd died on the first day of action but such was the confusion and chaos in Ypres that

Thomas's widowed mother, Mary Ann

Bacon, wasn't informed until 3<sup>rd</sup>

September. By a cruel twist of fate, she

received the dreaded news in her rented cottage (then the north end part of 53

Low Street, 'Cleave Cottage') exactly a

year to the day since her younger son,

Private John William 'Jack' Bacon (22), had also perished (See Fleet Vol 53/2

March 2016).

Both single, the brothers had enlisted in

their late father's regiment, the King's

Royal Rifles, as soon as war broke out.

Thomas, a railway porter before the



*Mary Ann Bacon with 5 of her 6 children c 1901/2. John William back left would be about 7, Thomas (back right) around 9 or 10. Florence on the front right is about 3. Photo c/o Mrs Brenda Sills, great granddaughter of Florence Bacon.*

war, later transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment. His attestation papers reveal he was five-foot-three and weighed eight and a half stone on enlistment and that he had been classed as A1 fit. The private had risen in the ranks to lance corporal and been awarded the Military Medal for bravery on July 19<sup>th</sup>, less than two weeks before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolns' engagement on Pilckem Ridge.

**Lance Corporal Thomas Bacon is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial and All Saints' Church, Collingham.**

A month after Mary Ann received her bad news, another mother further along Low Street was about to have her life changed forever. Laura Louisa East (1891 - 1955) had been married to Tom Dakin East for four years. They had two young children, Horace (born 1913) and Elizabeth Mary (born 1915). Also sharing her small rented property (possibly one end of Ercles Cottage) was her widowed Scottish sister-in-law, 21-year old Marion East (1896 – 1945) and her one-year old baby, Fred. Fred Jr's father, Tom's younger brother, Fred East, had been killed in October 1916 (see Fleet Vol. 53/3 April 2016). Now Laura discovered that she, too, had become a widow. The Newark Advertiser reported the news as follows:

Thursday 4 October 1917: Mother of two Laura East at Collingham discovered in the post this morning that her husband of four years, Tom, 31, a Private in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters, was dead. *'He was killed on 21 September about midnight by the explosion of a trench mortar,'* wrote an officer. *'Your husband had only just returned to the Company and this was his first tour in the line since rejoining.'*



Tom East, second from the left, with work colleagues c 1914. Jim Marshall is on his left. Other names unknown. Photograph c/o Mr John Tutty, grandson of Tom Dakin East

**Tom Dakin East** (1887 – 1917) was born in South Scarle but lived most of his life in Collingham, where his parents had

moved around 1892. They'd lived on Bell Lane and Tom had trained first as a plumber with Arthur Bingham on the High Street and then, after Arthur's sudden death at 43 in 1914, he'd been taken on by Sam Moss, the joiner and undertaker two doors up from his parents' home on Bell Lane (The Moss's address was Wicksted Lodge).

Tom had been conscripted into the army but the exact date of him 're-joining' his unit is not known. It is also a puzzle why he was killed in Arras when the 10<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters had moved on to Ypres, 73 km away, by then. Perhaps East's company had stayed behind. East was a signaller, which was a key role in communicating news between the trenches. His skills would be much in demand.

Laura East never remarried and lived on Low Street until her death in 1955. Marion moved to Lincoln soon after the war and went on to marry John Rudd in October 1919 and had another son, Bruce. Sadly, Fred Jr. died in an accident at RAF Waddington in 1937. He was 21.

Spare a thought also for Elizabeth East, Tom and Fred East's mother. Now living back in her native South Scarle, news of Tom's death must have devastated her as much as her daughter-in-law, for it meant that out of the eight children she'd borne, only two, Emmie (her firstborn 1881 – 1960) and Eliza (1892 - 1954) seventh of the eight, were still alive. Her son Robert had only been 15 months old when he'd died in 1890; the year after saw the deaths of John William and George, aged 8 and 7, gone less than a month apart, and finally poor newborn Herbert, baptised at All Saints' one day and buried the next, at the end of December 1892.

To compound matters, Elizabeth's 63-year old husband William, to whom she'd been married for 36 years, had passed away in January 1917 after 'a short illness', three months after Fred. And now Tom. It was too much to bear. Elizabeth East died at the end of November 1917. She was 62.

**Private Tom Dakin East is buried in Brown's Copse Cemetery, Roeux near Fampoux, France, Ref: IV B 55 and remembered on the All Saints' Memorial.**





*Left: Sherwood Forester Private Tom Dakin  
East c/o Mrs E Wilson of Winthorpe*

A special thanks go to Mrs Elisabeth Wilson and Mr John Tutty, for the additional information about their grandfather, Tom Dakin East, and his family.

The next Collingham man to fall at Passchendaele in September was 30-year old **Private Herbert Priestley** (1887 – 1917) of Dykes End, Collingham. Again, the news wasn't relayed to his parents, William and Hannah, until much later. In fact, although Herbert was killed on 26th September, the news of his younger brother Leonard's death, from wounds on 8<sup>th</sup> October, reached them first.

Herbert, who'd been a horseman on a farm in South Collingham before enlisting in 1915, was attached to the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters – the Robin Hoods - formerly the Robin Hood Rifles.

As Herbert's headstone is in Tyne Cot Cemetery, West – Vlaanderen, Belgium (Tyne Cot is the largest British war cemetery in the world, with 11,908 registered graves), it is likely that he was fatally wounded in the Battle of Menin Road Ridge. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, the 2/7<sup>th</sup> were already engaged in a new battle in a different location, that of Polygon Wood. The British and Australian forces killed in that encounter are mainly buried in Polygon Wood Cemetery.

**Pte Herbert Priestley is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial and South Collingham's Roll of Honour. A tribute to his brother, Leonard Priestley, will appear in October's Fleet where the ghastly toll from Passchendaele continues.**



*Pte Herbert Priestley's war grave at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium. Photo c/o Gary Wood from [www.robinhoods.org.uk](http://www.robinhoods.org.uk)*

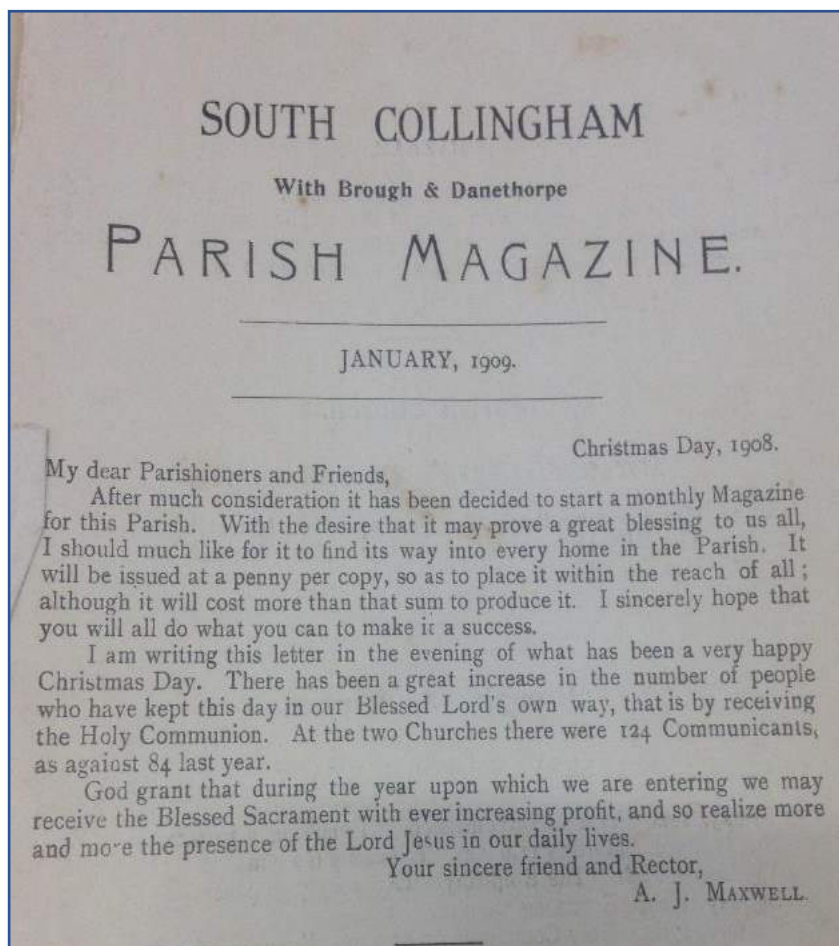
Other local men who were killed in action in September but do not appear on the Collingham war memorials were Brough's **Archie Kelley**, a private in the 24<sup>th</sup> Royal Welsh Fusiliers, whose father was head gardener at Langford Hall. Pte. Kelley died in Egypt and is remembered in the Deir El Belah, Palestine. Holme Church has a tablet dedicated to 22-year old **Herbert Charles 'Bertie' Key**, a lance corporal in the 1<sup>st</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters. Key was reported missing around the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September after an attempted raid against enemy trenches by 'C' Company led by Captain Martelli was foiled. According to Captain Weetman's War Diary of the 1/8<sup>th</sup>, Martelli's men were caught in No Man's Land by intense bombardment of gas bombs near the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Bertie Key was one of three who lost their lives that day and thirty wounded. Lance Corporal Key is remembered on the Loos Memorial and Holme Church

## Fleet Volume 54 No8 (October 2017)

### Part 16: October 1917

Albert Maxwell, Rector of South Collingham from 1907 to 1937, probably had no idea that extracts from the newsletters he'd been producing every month since 1909 would become such a rich source of information a century later. The archives in the Jubilee Room hold copies of every newsletter printed between 1909 and 1920 and we can only be grateful to whoever donated them.

Sometimes, the newsletter would read like an actual letter, beginning with *'My Dear Parishioners'* and ending, *'Your sincere friend and Rector, A J Maxwell'* but more often than not it would consist of brief summaries of events that had taken place, under headings such as 'Coal Club' 'Choir Outing' and 'Vestry Meeting' along with the times of the month's services, burials and baptisms. The newsletter would also be used to circulate the Parish's balance sheets, which revealed, among other things, that his one-page publication, printed by Stennet's in the Market Place, Newark, and sold at a penny a copy, always struggled to break even and was often bailed out by various parishioners' 'kind donations.' A deficit of 13s 3d was recorded for 1917.

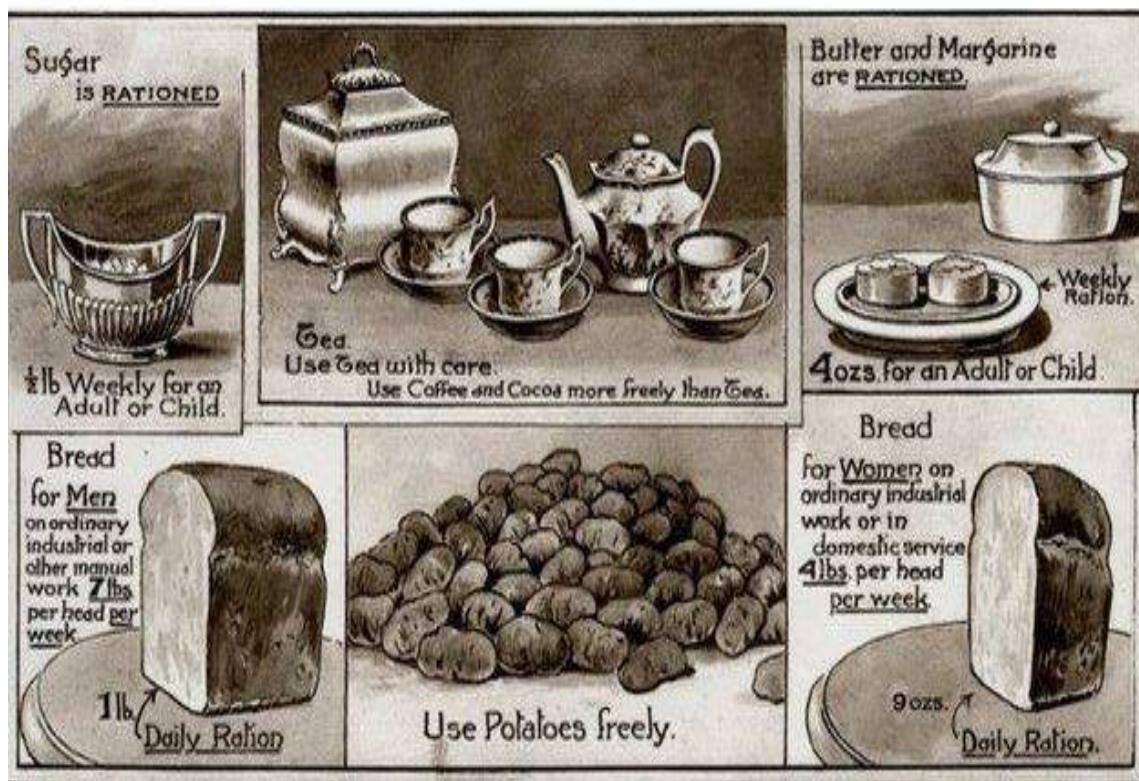


Above: The first Parish Magazine newsletter issued January 1909 c/o CDLHS Archive

During the war, the newsletters reflected the times and this is why they are so useful today. In the July entry, under the heading 'Sunday School Treat' we learn that:

*'Owing to the regulations of the Food Controller and the very urgent necessity which exists for the restricted consumption of food... it (the annual Sunday School Treat) will have to be on a scale much reduced from that to which we are accustomed. We hope to invite the South Collingham and Brough children to plain tea at the Rectory but we shall be unable to extend the invitation to parent and other friends as formerly.'*

**The Minister for Food Control** in 1917 was David Alfred Thomas, the Viscount Rhondda, who had taken over from Lord Davenport that June. He introduced rationing and encouraged everyone to eat less and not waste anything as part of the war effort. It is likely the children's 'plain tea' would have included sandwiches using 'War Bread', a loaf made more from sago or potatoes than wheat flour. Butter, margarine and sugar were also rationed so it would have been quite a challenge to make the Treat a proper 'treat', food-wise.



Advertisement showing daily allowances of basic commodities during the war



In the September issue, an interim update of the Collingham Working Party, founded in December 1915, revealed it had raised £79.15.9 for the Collingham War Hospital Supply Depot the previous financial year (the equivalent of about £5,070 today). The money was spent on flannelette and bandage cloth supplied by Wallis & Co of Newark and calico from Collingham's drapers George Nicholson and Walter Holland. Brown paper for bandages was purchased from Davage's, a printer's on Kirkgate, Newark.

A plea from the Working Party for more volunteers was also made as: *'the need of swabs and bandages is still very great.'*

COLLINGHAM WAR HOSPITAL SUPPLY DEPOT.			
AUGUST 10TH, 1916, TO JULY 26TH, 1917.			
RECEIVED.			£ s. d.
Donations	...	...	25 8 0
Collection by Girl Guides (10 boxes)	...	...	2 7 8
Collingham "Flower Day"	...	...	10 5 1
Half Proceeds of Rummage Sale	...	...	6 14 0
Donation from the Wesleyan Sale of Work	...	...	1 0 0
Collingham War Charities' Committee,			
Whist Drive	...	...	12 0 0
Donation from Scarle Whist Drive	...	...	2 0 0
45 Weeks' Collection in the Workroom	...	...	20 1 0
			<hr/>
			£79 15 9
			<hr/>
Spent...	...	...	78 8 11
Balance	...	...	1 6 10
			<hr/>
			£79 15 9
			<hr/>

Extract from the September 1917 newsletter showing the ways money was raised to help wounded soldiers. A pound sterling in 1917 is the equivalent of c. £65.00 today.

It was indeed. The Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) was not yet over. *'Still Germany threatens to inflict her tyranny upon the rest of the world,'* Maxwell wrote in August. He continued: *'There are ninety-two names on our Roll of Honour (for South Collingham), of whom nine have given their lives for their country, five have been incapacitated from further service by the wounds they have received, or other causes...'*



*A tranquil Gillemont Farm in 2016, scene of intense combat during 1917 & 1918.*

One of those incapacitated did not survive. He was 23-year old **Lance Corporal Leonard Priestley** of 'W' Coy 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters. Leonard had enlisted with the Bantams (for men under the regulation 5'3" height) soon after war broke out and had been engaged in some of the most bitter battles on the Western Front ever since. In October 1916, the former horseman for the late Dr Frank Broadbent had been wounded in the back but had recovered enough to return to the line by December.

August 1917 saw Priestley's battalion engaged in trying to knock out the German lines in an area called 'The Knoll', SW of

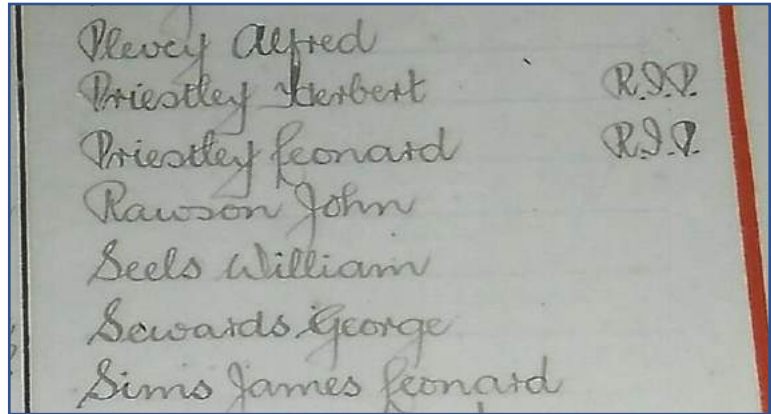
Cambrai. On August 25<sup>th</sup>, under heavy shelling near Gillemont Farm, the battalion sustained heavy losses; 19 men were killed and 44 wounded. Of those 44, Leonard Priestley was one of the most severely wounded, necessitating both legs being amputated. Still, his parents, Collingham-born William and Hannah Priestley, living on Dykes End, held out hope, especially after receiving a cheery letter from their youngest son on the 4th October, written from Rouen Hospital. Alas, it was not to be and Leonard passed away two days later.

Albert Maxwell's fondness for his young parishioner is transparent in his glowing tribute to him in the November newsletter:

*'Leonard Priestley was a lad of sterling character, being steady reliable and painstaking in everything he undertook to do. These characteristics were observable all through his life, in the Sunday School, in the Choir, in his preparation for Confirmation, and in his everyday occupation. He was much esteemed by his employers, both the late Dr Broadbent, for whom he worked for 4 ½ years and Mr John Wigram in whose employ he was in the 2 years before he joined the army in the autumn of 1914. Always a regular churchgoer and Communicant in times of peace, he did not neglect these sacred customs in the war whenever opportunity occurred. He was a Christian soldier of whom we are proud and of whom we mourn. RIP.'*

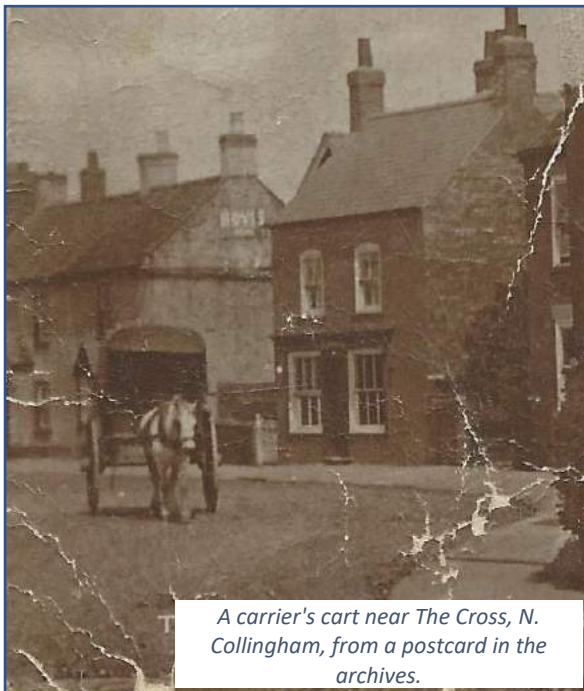
There followed a post-script, informing readers that: *'Just as this month's number of the Parish Magazine is going to press news has come to hand that Herbert Priestley (Leonard's only brother) has been missing since the battle of September 26<sup>th</sup>. The greatest sympathy of us all will be with the Priestley family in this time of great sorrow and anxiety.'*

In fact, Herbert, also with the Sherwood Foresters, had died ten days before Leonard on September 26<sup>th</sup> but it wasn't confirmed until mid-October (see Fleet, September 2017). What heartbreak for the two brothers' parents, their sister Alice and Leonard's fiancée, Lill.



*Detail of the Roll of Honour in St John the Baptist Church showing the RIPs next to brothers Herbert and Leonard Priestley's names*

**Lance Corporal Leonard Priestley (1894-1917) of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters is buried at St Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen and remembered on the South Collingham War Memorial.**



*A carrier's cart near The Cross, N. Collingham, from a postcard in the archives.*

It is a pity we do not have copies of newsletters penned by Canon Gould, Rev. Maxwell's opposite number in North Collingham, in the archives. He too, would have written tributes about the thirteen souls from his parish who had so far either been killed or had died as a result of the conflict. Whether he mentioned the fourteenth to die is unknown. Possibly not, as **Arthur Ernest Williams** didn't live in the village and was not a worshipper at All Saints.

Born in Stragglethorpe and raised in Eakring, the 35-year old lived with his wife, Ada, in Maplebeck. Like a few other men on the war memorials, Williams was connected to the

village through his occupation. From about 1913 until ordered by the Newark Tribunals to enlist in 1916, he, alongside William Hickman, was the village carrier and as such played an important role in transporting goods and passengers from Collingham to Lincoln on Fridays and to Newark and back on Wednesday and Saturdays (market days). Although there were a few motorised vehicles in the village - John Wigram at the Manor had a car for example, as did Herbert Hatcliffe of Hatcliffe's Motors, (now Dennis Thacker's garage on High Street) there was no bus service until the 1920s and the horse and cart was still very much a village fixture. A clear description of what carriers did is offered here:

*'Carriers were often used as the buses of yesterday with the passengers sharing the ride with an assortment of animals including chickens, rabbits, ducks and even occasionally goats and sheep.*

*Dependent on the location of a house there could be two or three carriers a day passing and the occupants of the properties adjacent to the carriers' route would hang out a flag or other sign to alert the carrier that they wanted to travel with him or had some produce to be delivered.*

*The carrier would arrive and depart from a particular inn at a set time and day, timetables of carriers leaving and the places they served were posted but it is likely that such routes were common knowledge to the locals well before then. Carriers in the main respected their chief asset (their horses) and it was not uncommon for passengers to be asked to get out and walk up the hills to save the horses.'* – Guy Etchells, extracted from 'Northern Farmland Carriers'

No doubt it was Arthur Williams' skill with horses that saw him conscripted in July 1916 to the Army Veterinary Corps. The A. V. C. was in charge of animal welfare, no small task during World War One when horses, mules and pigeons were used throughout.

Private Williams was not killed by shelling but consumption (TB). This deadly respiratory disease had actually been on the decline before the war but cases escalated dramatically during 1914 -1918 and then fell again afterwards. There are several theories as to why consumption was so prevalent, such as poison gas and poor circulation of the air in the trenches, but these have since been dismissed. Certainly



Photograph of AE Williams' grave c/o Peter Gillings, Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour website



undernourishment, prolonged physical and mental stress and poor medical care would have played a part. Williams was transferred from France to Manchester General Infirmary in early October. He died there on the 17<sup>th</sup>, making him the 27<sup>th</sup> name to be added, when the time came, to the Collingham memorials.

**Private Arthur Ernest Williams, A.V.C., 1882 – 1917 is buried in St Radegund's Church, Maplebeck and remembered on All Saints' War Memorial.**

## **Fleet Volume 54 No9 (November 2017)**

### **Part 17: November - December 1917**

Down in the Jubilee Room on Swinderby Road, in a map-chest drawer marked 'Shops', sits a pie dish. Its glaze is crazed and chipped but its branding of *Thompson, Collingham*, is clear to see. A glazed and chipped pie dish isn't a lot to show for almost seventy years of



trade as one of North Collingham's most prominent butchers, but it's still a worthy symbol of one family's contribution to the life of the village.

*Thompson's pie dish in the Collingham Archives on Swinderby Road.*

The Thompsons: George, his wife Sarah and their two young children, Frank (4) and Charlotte (2), moved to North Collingham from Eagle Hall around 1886. Previously a farmer like his father before him, George Thompson was used to hard work and he and Sarah put all their energy into establishing themselves as a family butcher's. There was stiff competition. In Kelly's 1885 trade directory, there were already four butchers in North Collingham – William H. Perkins, John Rossington (who was also a shepherd), John Rylett and Thomas Selby. Judging by the location of the Perkins family on the 1881 census, it would seem that Thompson took over from Perkins when Perkins moved back to his native Warwickshire. The property, 160 High Street, is currently the Chinese take-away.

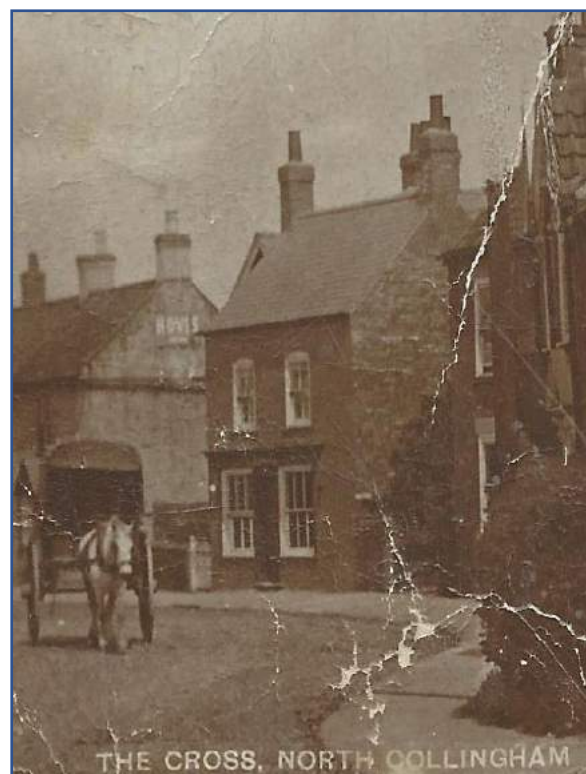


*Thompson's butcher's shop today. The original brackets for advertising signs can still be seen either side of the upper windows. Afterwards the premises became Peter Morrell's photography business.*

In 1904, only Thomas Selby on Low Street (possibly the White House) was still in business and by the start of the Great War, George Thompson was the only butcher listed in North Collingham.

By 1917, George and Sarah Thompson had four grown-up children. As well as Frank (now 35) and Charlotte (33) there was Collingham-born Ralph (28) and Albert (22).

The war was a trying time for George. Like all the farmers, shopkeepers and tradesmen in the area, he was pressurised by the Newark Tribunals to send Ralph and Albert to enlist. It wasn't enough, apparently, that Frank was already at the Front, and had been since 1915. Perhaps it didn't count because Frank wasn't seen as a 'local' anymore. Soon after leaving the Magnus School he had moved to London to work for the GPO (General Post Office) in the sorting office. He'd married a girl from down south, too – Mary – in 1908 and was happily settled in Stoke Newington. So, yes, George could accept that maybe Frank didn't 'count' to the tribunals but surely they could have spared



*An old postcard in the archives with Thompsons' butcher's shop between the bakery & steam mill (then run by George Widdowson, now One Stop & flats) and the Crown Inn (now Crown House). Running down the sides of these premises were yards containing several dwellings.*

Albert at least? When George had protested, back in 1916, telling them that he'd have no one to help with the deliveries, they'd had the brass neck to suggest Charlotte could take over in the slaughterhouse – as if that was suitable work for a woman! To add insult to injury, they were now after young Norman Cook, the 19-year old lad who was covering for Albert. It was ridiculous. How was he supposed to operate under these conditions?

His son, **Frank, a Rifleman with the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Own Royal Rifles** (Motto: '*Celer et Audax*' – '*Swift and Bold*'), must have wondered the same thing. The things he'd witnessed in Passchendaele were far worse than anything seen in the slaughterhouse behind his father's shop; his father would never have allowed an animal to suffer in the way he'd seen men suffer in the trenches. Still, it was kill or be killed and he was grateful for the extra training he'd received as a Lewis gunner, and proud when his commander had put him in charge of the platoon's Lewis gun, although he knew the honour came at a price.



*The Lewis Gun badge Frank Thompson would have worn on his sleeve.*

*revolver. Lewis crews had a Number 1 who was in charge and carried the machine gun around from post to post. The Number 2 carried the spare parts that accompanied the gun. Each man carried in the region of three stones in extra weight as a result – one of the reasons why they did not need to be encumbered by a rifle. It was up to the Number 1 as to where a Lewis gun was placed. However, the five-man crew moved with a degree of frequency during a German attack, as they knew that the Germans would quickly establish where a Lewis machine gun was*

*'Those who joined a Lewis machine gun team were given a 'LG' badge to wear on a sleeve. To those in the trenches the badge was nicknamed the 'suicide badge' as it was believed by the infantry that if the Germans captured you, you would be shot out of hand because of the terrible casualties caused by the Lewis gun. The Numbers 1 and 2 of Lewis machine gun crews (those who carried the gun and spare parts) were also required to hand over their Lee Enfield rifles, as these would have hindered ease of movement. Instead, they were issued with a Webley*



*A soldier firing a Lewis gun from a trench on The Somme, 1916 c/o National Army Museum website*



*placed and artillery would home in on it.’ - extracted from C N Trueman’s History Learning Website ‘Life in the Infantry.’*

Frank Thompson’s skill was to be his undoing. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, despite the official ending of Passchendaele on the 6<sup>th</sup>, he was shot through the head by a sniper and killed.

**Rifleman Frank Thompson R/37781 is remembered on Tye Cot Memorial Panel 119A, Belgium, Newark; St Mary Magdalen Church on the Magnus Grammar School War Memorial, London East Central District Sorting Office Staff War Memorial and All Saints’ War Memorial Collingham.**



*The GPO War Memorial commemorating those employees killed from East Central District is located at the Mount Pleasant Mail Centre Farringdon Road London EC1. Over 75,000 GPO workers fought in WW1.*



*Magnus Grammar School Memorial is situated in St Mary Magdalen Church, Newark. Photograph c/o Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour database. F Thompson’s name is fourth from the bottom on the left-hand panel.*

Both **Ralph** (1889 – 1961) and **Albert Thompson** (1895- 1968) survived the war, with Ralph taking over the business from his father George (1854 - 1930) until retiring through ill health

in 1958. **Norman Cook** of Besthorpe Road also survived but died in 1928 aged only 30. George's widow, Sarah Thompson passed away in 1934, aged 76, and spinster Charlotte in 1945 aged 61. All, apart from Frank, are buried in All Saints' Churchyard. It is not known what became of Frank's wife, Mary.

And so, as yet another family grieved for the loss of a loved one, 1917 drew to an end. The year had been another tumultuous one with huge loss of life on all sides and America now joining the Allies. The Russians, having overthrown the Tsar and being led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, were seeking an amnesty with Germany, thus putting the operation on the Eastern Front in turmoil. There was no sign of an end to the war yet.

## **Fleet Volume 54 No10: (December 2017)**

### **Title: Christmas during the Great War (a supplementary article)**



*Princess Mary (1897-1965) volunteered as a nurse during WW1.*

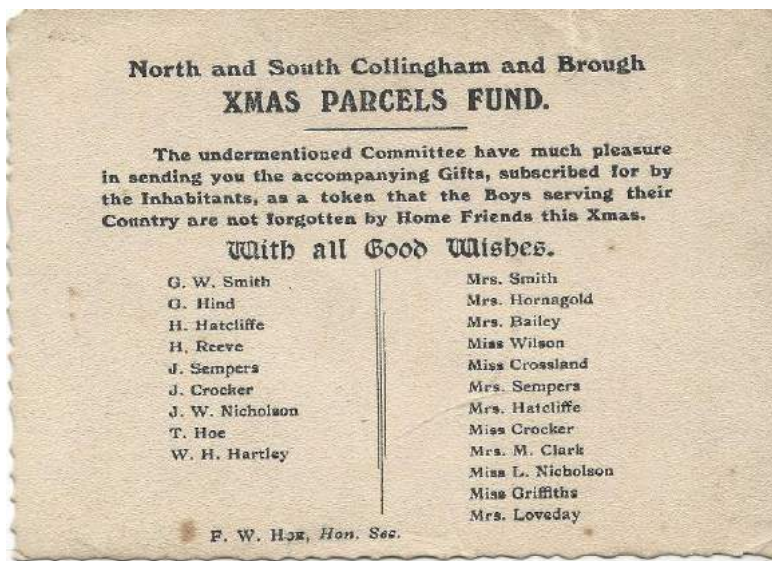
was established, with an appeal for donations. It proved a popular idea and a brass tin with contents including tobacco, a photograph and a personal letter from Princess Mary, who was the same age as many of those serving, was duly dispatched. Unfortunately, some had to wait well beyond 1914 for their gift, with tales of some only arriving after the Armistice. However, the gesture caught on and it became a tradition for locals to raise money

In 1914, Princess Mary, daughter of King George V and Queen Mary, desired that 'every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front' should have a present in time for Christmas. So that no one felt excluded, the gift idea was extended to include all who were serving, whether at home or abroad, and to prisoners of war and the next of kin of 1914 casualties. This 'widened eligibility', according to the Imperial War Museum website, to an estimated figure of 2,620,019 and meant Princess Mary could not cover costs from her personal allowance, as she had originally intended. A fund



*The original brass tin and contents from the Princess Mary Fund. Contents varied, with cigarettes and pipe tobacco for smokers, acid drops and stationery for non-smokers and sugar candy and spices for Sikhs serving in the Indian Forces. Image: Imperial War Museum website*

for special gifts to send to the forces at Christmas. In Newark, donations for Christmas boxes in 1917 amounted to £276. 5s, with each box valued at 10 shillings (Source: T. Frecknall *Newark in the Great War* p. 159). Given that by today's calculations a pound sterling in 1917 was the equivalent of c. £79.00, that was a generous gesture from cash-strapped families. In Collingham, our doughty Working Party ensured everyone serving from the district would receive some memento from the villagers. We don't know exactly what the contents of each box were: knitted socks and scarves, tobacco, chocolate or sweets at a guess, complete with a card listing the 'Xmas Parcels Fund' committee members.



A card accompanying the Christmas gifts, exact year unknown c/o CDLHS archives. The 'Xmas Party Fund' committee may have been a separate organisation from the Working party.

At least one Collingham soldier, **Percy Holland**, a driver with the Royal Field Artillery, was grateful for: '*...the small slice of Notts north of Newark and west of the Trent,*' (Source: Trevor Frecknall '*Collingham and District during the Great War*' p 106). '*...We all like to think that the folks at home have us always in mind,*' Percy wrote in

thanks for the gift, '*... and a practical demonstration of this sort is an inestimable pleasure to us. I am sure my brothers, Albert and Arthur, serving in France, will fully share this feeling with me.*'



Percy Holland, one of 14 children born to Walter and Sylvia Holland, had been lodging in Newark on Mount Lane before the war. He, like his brothers Albert and Arthur, survived the war and later returned to his native Collingham where, unlike his siblings who ran three grocery and drapers businesses known as 'top' 'middle' and 'bottom' Hollands between them, appears in the 1928 trade directory as a butcher (Pear Tree Cottage, High St) and lived at Yew Tree Farm.



*Percy Holland from an original photograph taken about 1916 c/o Peter Holland of Low Street.*

The inhabitants of North and South Clifton were equally as considerate of their soldiers fighting in the trenches, sending Christmas gifts to all 28 with the £40 raised from a house-to-house collection. The vicar of South Clifton, Rev. Rothwell, paid the postage of 11s 1d himself (*Source: T Frecknall*).

Today, Prince Mary's idea continues. The charity uk4u distributes a Christmas Box (known as the 'Square Stocking') to all troops serving abroad over Christmas.





# 1918

**Fleet Volume 55 Nos 2-10  
(March-December 2018)**

**Parts 18 - 26**



## **Fleet Volume 55 No 2 (March 2018)**

### **Part 18: January – March 1918**

*'The naked earth is warm with Spring  
And with green grass and bursting trees.'*

- Opening lines to *Into Battle* (poem) by Julian Grenfell (1888-1915)



It was quiet, the beginning of 1918. All the action seemed to be over in Arabia and Egypt, where the Allies were fighting the Turks. From what people could gather, a British officer called T E Lawrence seemed to be making a bit of a name for himself and handling it all rather splendidly.

In Collingham, there had been no new 'missing' or 'killed in action' notices put up in Miss Annie Gibson's post office window for some months – not since poor Frank Thompson's on November 12th. True, Ernest Starr, John and Mary Ann Starr's son,

had been taken prisoner sometime in February but surely that meant at least he was safe and much better than losing him altogether like they had his brother, **Arthur Starr**, (killed by a shell, September 27th 1915).

There had been some cheery news, too. On January 31st, Besthorpe's **Lt. Colonel William Coape Oates** (above) of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, had been to Buckingham Palace to receive his DSO (Distinguished Service Order) from the King. The 55-year old had been invalided out the previous October with a combination of gas poisoning and pneumonia after three years exemplary service in Ireland and on the Western Front. It must have been a proud moment for this doughty veteran. Doubly proud, because by his side was his son, Captain John Sherbrooke Oates, from the same battalion, also receiving his DSO for gallantry at Hargicourt on April 27th 1917.

## Disbandment of 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters

The award must have been bitter-sweet, as notice had been given four days earlier that the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, raised at Newark on 11th September 1914, were to be disbanded under orders from General Haig. Captain Oates reported that all ranks were 'utterly despondent' despite Haig's assurance that it was no reflection on their efficiency but due 'entirely to the serious man-power situation and the impossibility of finding further reinforcements.' The men were dispersed to other Sherwood Foresters battalions.

## Food Shortages

Apart from that, all the talk back home was all about food shortages and rationing. German U-boats had been sinking merchant ships at a terrific rate - 13 a day during one stark period in 1917 - in a bid to starve the British into submission. This was having a huge impact on food supplies, especially of Canadian wheat. Early in the New Year, the Minister of Food Control, the 1st Viscount Rhondda, introduced a sugar-card which limited families to half a pound of sugar a week per household. More rationing would follow, with butter, margarine, cheese, jam and bacon all restricted. In fact, meat, especially beef, was in such short supply butchers in Newark and Southwell were closing their shops on Mondays and Tuesdays. It meant meals were mainly vegetable-based these days with a bit of pork or chicken for those with their own pigs and poultry. Perhaps the Poor Allotments off Cottage Lane and the market gardens and allotments off the Braemers, between Station Road and Swinderby Road, provided enough for parishioners to subsist on?

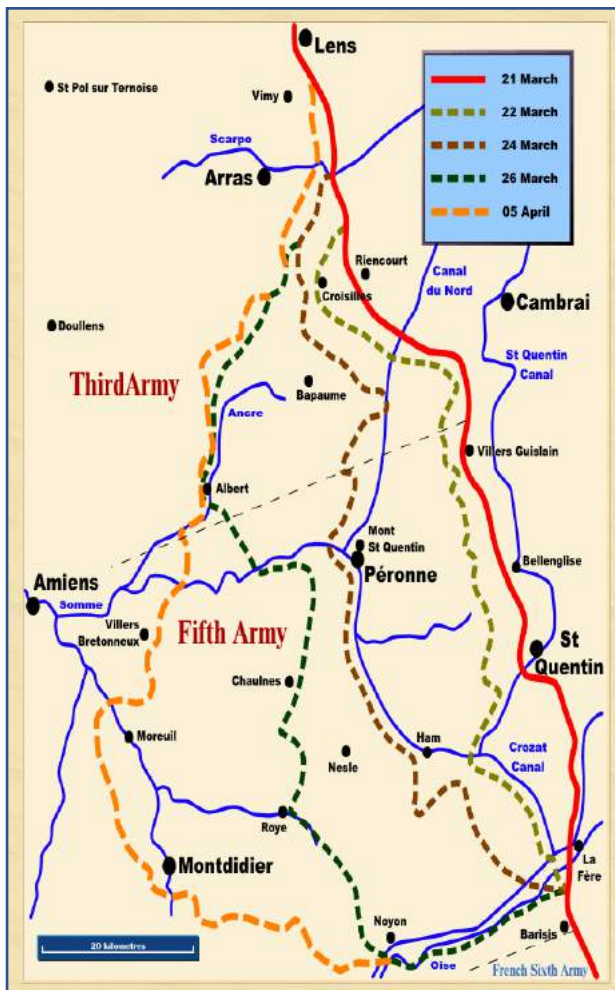
## All Quiet on the Western Front

But it was eerie, this silence from the Western Front. It was as if everyone were waiting for something. 'Waiting', as The Daily Telegraph observed on February 1st, *'...for orders which, in this new year of war, will decide the fate of the world in some way, by blood or by peace. But no direct challenge comes. The guns which are the modern heralds of battle, have not roared out their summons. In the enemy's camp, the vast camp of Central Europe, where the councils of war are surrounded by people crying for bread and peace, angry now as well as agonised, there seems to be hesitation and delay, as if the generals were afraid of giving the*



word, which, if it comes, will hurl the last reserves of their manhood into the dice-box of this gambler's throw with fate...'

### March 21<sup>st</sup> 1918: Operation Michael (Kaiserchlacht)



The Germans and their allies weren't hesitating; they were planning. Boosted by Bolshevik Russia's withdrawal from the war and their subsequent signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3rd, the German Supreme Command under General Ludendorff now had extra troops from the East to top up those in the West. The time was ripe for decisive action, to win this war once and for all. On a foggy morning on March 21st 'Kaiserchlacht' or codename 'Operation Michael' began. The battleground for this 'Spring Offensive', was, once again, the Somme. The idea was to 'punch a hole and things would develop' with the intent of surrounding the 3rd (under General Byng) and 5th (Lt General Sir Hubert Gough) British Armies,

whose depleted battalions were still reeling from the aftermath of Passchendaele.

British troops were heavily outnumbered: 62 German divisions against 26 British ones. 6,600 German artillery pieces against 2,600 British guns. The ensuing attack, which, if not entirely a surprise to the Allies, nevertheless caught them woefully unprepared. The Spring Offensive was fierce, determined and ruthless. Between March 21st and 27th came the Battles of St. Quentin (March 21-23rd) the 1st Battle of Bapaume (24th/25th) Noyon (25th) and then Rosières (26th/27th). The Germans won them all, pushing back the Allies' hard-won line by several miles and creating many casualties in the process. Inevitably, Miss Gibson had a new name to post in the window at 69 High Street.

He was 29-year old **George Henry Pilgrim**. 'Harry' as Rev. Maxwell referred to him

has come to hand that Harry Pilgrim was killed on an early date of the present great German offensive. For many years he was a most enthusiastic member of Brough Church Choir and of Mr. Cecil Woolley's Bible Class. He was very popular with his associates and his death will be greatly deplored by all who knew him. R.I.P.

*Notice of Pilgrim's death in South Collingham Parish Newsletter May 1918*

in his obituary (Newsletter May 1918) was the eldest of nine children born on to Langford Moor native Thomas Richard Pilgrim (1860-1939) and Emily Pilgrim (1868-1924). Harry, too, was born in Langford Moor, on June 6th 1888. He attended Brough School and according to Rev Maxwell had been a keen member of St Stephen's Church Choir and also attended Bible Classes.

By 1911 Harry had left home and was a gardener at Tatton Park on the Tatton Hall Estate in Knutsford, Cheshire. It would appear he moved on from there soon afterwards to Dorset. As his name is remembered on St Andrew's Roll of Honour in Milterne Magna, near Cerne Abbas, it is a fair guess that he was working at Milterne House, stately home of the early Churchills and then the Digbys, less than a mile from the church. The house is still owned by the present Lord Digby.

These grand houses were favoured by many local men and women at the time. They



*Above: Insignia of the 9th Queen's Lancers by kind permission of the 9th/12th Lancers Museum, Derby*

provided not only employment but food and accommodation, too. The hours were long and the work was demanding in exchange for low wages but life expectancy was still higher than for those who worked in the dust-heavy confines of mines and mills.

Unfortunately, life expectancy in the trenches was a different matter altogether. In December 1914, Harry joined the **9th Queen's Lancers** as a Private, enlisting in Dorchester. The Lancers were a Cavalry Division and their days of charging at the enemy on horseback were numbered. Despite their bravery in battle, it soon became clear that horses and lances

were no match for machine guns and tanks and the Lancers had to retrain as dismounted infantry. This in no way detracts from their war record.

History researcher Jeremy Lodge traced the major operations this regiment was involved in and they are numerous. Private Pilgrim would have seen action at Mons (1914) Ypres (1914 and 1915) Flers-Courcelette (1916) and Cambrai (1917).

In March 1918, the 9th Lancers were part of the 5th Army under Gough. During the Battle of St Quentin, the 12th Lancers won praise at Bois de Hangard, which was afterwards renamed 'Lancer Wood' in their honour. However, casualties were heavy and the 9th lost more than a third of their men.

Jeremy Lodge again: *'On the day and in the area that George Pilgrim died on March 27th 1918, a 'confused series of vicious actions followed involving six British Divisions who were attacked from the front, flank and rear by eleven German Divisions. Ordered to 'hold the line at all costs,' bitter fighting saw trapped British units driven to attempt difficult retirements through German-held positions but Rosières temporarily, held firm.'*

Major E W Sheppard, in his War Diary, confirms this. The following extract was kindly supplied by Angela Tarnowski, Curator of the 9th/12th Lancers Museum in Derby: *'Locating the 9th on high ground south east of Treux, near Morlancourt, the three squadrons of the 9th, 'A', "B" and 'C' with 'C' (Pilgrim's squadron) in the centre – became a target for heavy machine gun fire... the regiment's lines were now woefully thin, but still highly resilient, as some Germans who tried to set up machine guns on the high ground above the line held by 'C' Squadron soon found.'*

After nightfall the regiment withdrew and counted their losses. Two officers and seven men had been killed and one officer and twelve other ranks wounded or missing. Private Pilgrim was among that number either killed or missing (presumed dead). As a result of the mounting defeats since the 21st, General Sir Hubert Gough (1870-1963) was relieved of his post by orders of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, on March 28th.





Private G H Pilgrim (Service no. 10355) Squadron 'C' 9th Queen's Lancers is remembered on several memorials: • Pozières Memorial, Somme Panel 4 B (indicating his body was never recovered) • Balderton - St. Giles Church War Memorial as G H PILGRIM Tpr. Lancers • South Collingham - St John's Church - Parishioners War Memorial as G H PILGRIM Private 9th (Queens Royal) Lancers • South Collingham - St John's Church - Roll of Honour War Memorial as George Henry PILGRIM • Canterbury Cathedral 9th Queens Royal Lancers War Memorial and Roll of Honour • St Andrew's Milterne Magna, Dorset (left). Harry had made a will. His probate shows an amount of £130.0s.10d left to his father, Tom.

There was better news for John and Mary Ann Starr on Low Street. Their son, **Ernest Starr**, survived his ordeal as a POW and returned home. He married Arnold girl Eveline Boot at All Saints' Church in Collingham in 1924 and soon afterwards moved to Blackpool where he and Eveline ran a small hotel



and raised two sons. Ernest died in 1963 aged 72. Ernest and Eveline shown here on the left at their son's wedding in 1949. Photo c/o Claire Cookson (granddaughter)

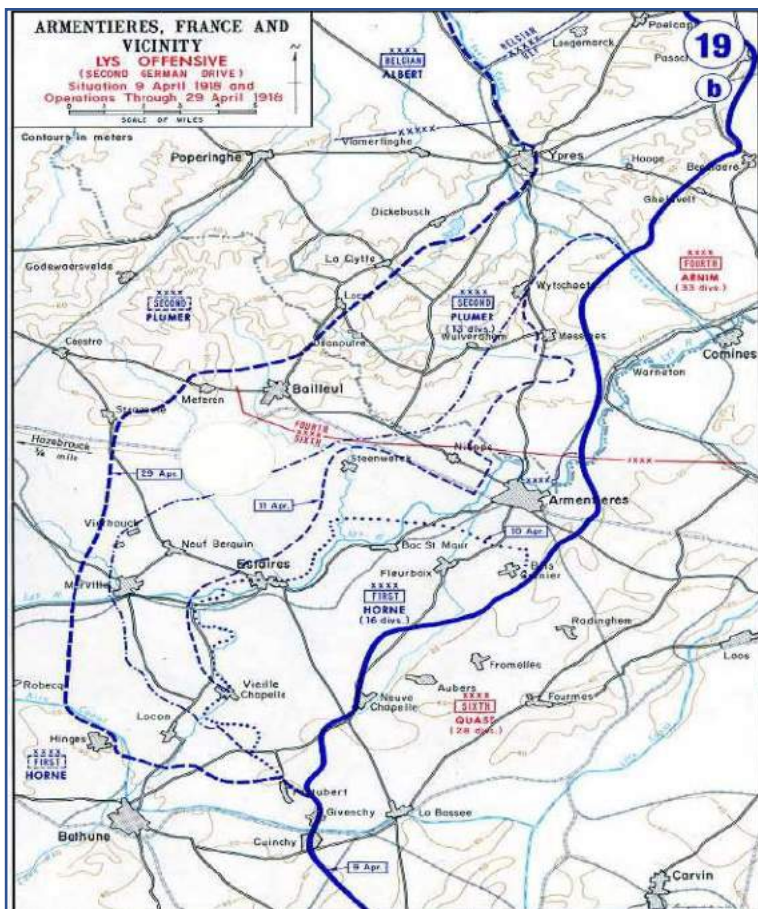


# Fleet Volume 55 No 3 (April 2018)

## Part 19: April 1918

### 'Backs to the Wall'

Spring 1918. The countryside around the tranquil River Lys on the northern part of the French-Belgian border was doing its best to bloom. 'Above the banks, celandine are gleaming. I have found wild periwinkles in the copse and the fat buds of kingcups are bursting in the marshes,' wrote war artist Paul Nash to his wife Margaret. 'The buds everywhere make the country just like real spring. I say 'real' advisedly because nothing is real now...'



Above: Map of the Lys region. The solid line on the right with 19 at the top shows the line on April 9<sup>th</sup>, the dotted line on the left-hand side shows the line on April 29<sup>th</sup> pushed west approximately 12 km by the German armies.

### The Second Spring Offensive

Things were real enough for Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934), the German Chief of Staff. 'Operation Michael', the first Spring Offensive begun at the end of March in a bid to break the stalemate on the Western Front, had only met with partial success. Von Hindenburg knew his armies needed to strike hard and fast before the newly arrived American troops – half a million of

them - could find their feet and bolster the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) and their allies.

The German high command decided the area around the River Lys was the best bet for another big push; the British lines weren't as strong here and once across the river there would be little to hamper their advance to the Channel ports. What a blow for the English that would be, having their sworn enemy virtually on their doorstep.

On April 7<sup>th</sup> the second Spring Offensive - 'Operation Georgette' - commenced with a heavy bombardment followed by full-scale attack two days later when, according to von Hindenburg, '*...our storm troops rose from their muddy trenches on the Lys front from Armentières to La Bassée.*' These 'storm troops' – Stoßtroppen - were elite, battle-hardened troops, primed to lead attacks in small, efficient detachments.

There to hold them back was the fatigued British 1<sup>st</sup> Army under General Henry Horne and two divisions of Portuguese. The latter were soon overwhelmed, as were the 40<sup>th</sup> Division. The 55<sup>th</sup> (West Lancashires) somehow held their ground, despite being subjected to mustard gas shelling.



*Above: Gassed soldiers from the 55<sup>th</sup> (Lancashire) Division Battle of Estaires April 10<sup>th</sup>. Photograph by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Thomas Aitken 1918 Image Creative commons copyright IWM (Q 11586). Although use of chemical weapons was against the 1907 Hague Convention, they were widely used during World War 1. Mustard gas was particularly toxic.*

*'I wish those people who write so glibly about this being a holy war and the orators who talk so much about going on no matter how long the war lasts and what it may mean, could see a case – to say nothing of ten cases – of mustard gas in its early stages – could see the poor things burnt and blistered all over with great mustard coloured suppurating blisters, with blinded eyes – all sticky and stuck together, and always fighting for breath, with voices a mere whisper, saying that their throats are closing and they know they will choke...'*

- Vera Brittain, nurse during WW1 in her book 'Testament of Youth' first published in 1933

## The Battle of Estaires

Meanwhile, on April 11<sup>th</sup> further German Divisions focused on Estaires. Estaires, a small town north of the Lys, was a mere 48 kilometres from Dunkirk. Here were the 50<sup>th</sup> (Northumbrian) Division under Major-General Sir Henry Jackson (1879-1972).

Among their number was **Albert Hammond**, a private with the 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Durham Light Infantry. Albert, who'd lived in South Collingham with his parents and six siblings since he was two, enlisted in August, 1916, a month shy of his eighteenth birthday. His brother, William, had been killed in action two months later but his oldest brother, George, who'd joined up as soon as war had been declared and was now with the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters, was still going strong.

He'd be like George, Albert decided. He'd be a survivor. After all, he'd already got through Passchendaele, hadn't he? If he could get through that, he could get through anything. Then, as soon as the war was over, he would go back to working for Mrs Colton up at South Scarle Hall. Mrs C. would need his help now she'd lost a second son. Her first, Michael Herbert Edmonds Colton, a stretcher-bearer with the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, had been killed at Gallipoli. Last week a sniper had done for Stanley, 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. He was the same age as Albert, too. Nineteen. Funny, wasn't it, how the shells and the snipers never bothered about how old you were or where you were from. Didn't care whether you lived in a big house like the Coltons or a tiddly little cottage on the Green like the Hammonds. Didn't care a bit.

The Battle of Estaires, Albert discovered, wasn't like Passchendaele. It wasn't about mud and 'going over the top.' The fighting was in the streets; in the rubble and bombed out buildings of what had once been a pleasant market town on a river. Estaires had probably looked a bit like Newark once, when you came to think about it.



*William Henry Hammond killed  
October 7<sup>th</sup> 1916*

Albert and his comrades did all right at the start. They had the advantage of being there first, of having machine guns strategically placed in attics and bedroom windows.



That was until the gun nests had been destroyed by German artillery and the street fighting began. By nightfall what was left of the 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Durham Lights withdrew to the north of the town to re-group. Number 77962 Pte A. E Hammond wasn't amongst them.

Albert's body, like so many others, was never recovered and it would be thirteen long months – June 1919 - before his parents, coachman George and his wife Jane, received confirmation that they'd lost a second son. Their boy, at 19 yrs and 5 months of age, has the unhappy distinction of being the youngest name to appear on the Collingham War Memorials. His brother William was the second youngest (19 yrs 7 months). George Walter Hammond survived the war.



A few weeks after the Battle of Estaires, the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Durham Light Infantry were all but wiped out in the Battle of the Aisne (May 27<sup>th</sup>). The surviving soldiers were sent to other battalions and the 1/5<sup>th</sup> ceased to exist as a unit.



*Above: The Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainault in Belgium. The memorial lists the names of 11,403 casualties from the United Kingdom and South African Forces who have no known graves. It was designed by Harold Bradshaw and unveiled in 1931*

**Private Albert Edward Hammond (1898-1918) is remembered in Ploegsteert Cemetery, Haincourt, Belgium (pictured). Panel 8.9 and on the South Collingham Parishioners' Plaque and Roll of Honour**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Leonard Ashworth**

On the same panel as Albert Hammond is 24-year old 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Leonard Ashworth, who was also killed in the Battle of Estaires, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, the day after Albert. Formerly a sergeant in the Sherwood Foresters (battalion unknown) 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Ashworth was transferred to the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment, nicknamed the 'Barnsley Pals', sometime after 1916. The 13<sup>th</sup> York and Lancasters were part of the 94<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> Division, within the 1<sup>st</sup> Army.

Little is known about Leonard Ashworth's connection to Collingham, nor his brother, George Ashworth's, killed in action in 1916. We know from an



*Leonard Ashworth in uniform. Image from an original in The Newark Advertiser*

advertisement on the 1915 Ploughing Match programme that their father, a former cotton mill manager, William Hilton Ashworth, ran the Royal Oak briefly between 1914-1915 and that Leonard's name appears on the team list for Collingham Cricket Club in 1914. Leonards' address was 50 Manor Street, Sneinton, Nottingham, on enlistment.<sup>38</sup>

Conversely, neither Michael nor Stanley Colton appear on the North Collingham War Memorials despite both being born in North Collingham and raised at 'Brooklands' on Low Street. They are remembered on a plaque in St Helena's Church, South Scarle and on the Newark Roll of Honour in St Mary Magdalene Church, Newark.

There are no known records of the North Collingham War Memorial Committee, set up in 1919 to raise funds to pay for the memorials, so we will never know the reasons for the inclusion of some of the names and exclusion of others. In the end, it doesn't really matter; the main thing is to acknowledge the sacrifice they made, each and every one.



*2<sup>nd</sup>/Lt Stanley E Colton, M C. born N Collingham 1898 Killed in action March 28<sup>th</sup> 1918 Photo courtesy of Mrs Pat Pennington*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Ashworth is commemorated on the The Ploegsteert Memorial, Haincourt, Belgium, Panel 8, the North Collingham War Memorial Cross and Parishioners' Plaque and Loggerheads Public House Roll of Honour, Narrow Marsh, Nottingham (now in St Mary's Church, Nottingham, near his brother George's memorial).**

<sup>38</sup> See also part 8 Oct 1916 – the Ashworth connection was later discovered to have been through Leonard's sister Elsie, who provided a link to Collingham. In 1917 she married local William Henry Would (1891-1953). Would was from Langford and the pair appear to have worked at The Lodge on Newark Road after the war. Elsie later married Collingham butcher Ralph Thompson and is buried in All Saints' Churchyard.



### Lance Corporal John Harker

The third local soldier whose name is etched into the Ploegsteert Memorial panels as a result of Operation Georgette is 26- year-old Lance Corporal John Harker of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment.

The Harker family's census returns reflect that of many agricultural labourers forced to move from place to place to find work. John's father, Joseph (born Waddington 1856) and wife, Mary Ann, (born Horncastle 1857), had 13 children. Their children's birthplaces range from Thorney to Harby to Bassingham to Broadholme and back to Harby (where John Harker was born in 1891). They settled on Top Street and had a further two children: Fred, baptised in 1895, who died in 1905 aged 11 after a collision with a horse, and Joseph (1898 - 1980). However, by 1911 the family were in a four-roomed cottage near the old post office in Besthorpe, although by then John had left home and was working and lodging on a farm for the Dove family in Thorpe-on-the-Hill. At the time of John's death, the family address was given as High Street, Collingham.

John Harker's date of joining the army is unknown. The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Battalion were a 'service' battalion – made up entirely of volunteers and conscripts. They were part of the 177<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 59<sup>th</sup> Division and largely inexperienced and hurriedly trained. Despite this, they'd taken part in quelling the Easter Uprising in Dublin in 1916 and seen front line action at Passchendaele in 1917. On 13<sup>th</sup> April they were called to reinforce the beleaguered 19<sup>th</sup> Division at Bailleul, north of Estaires.

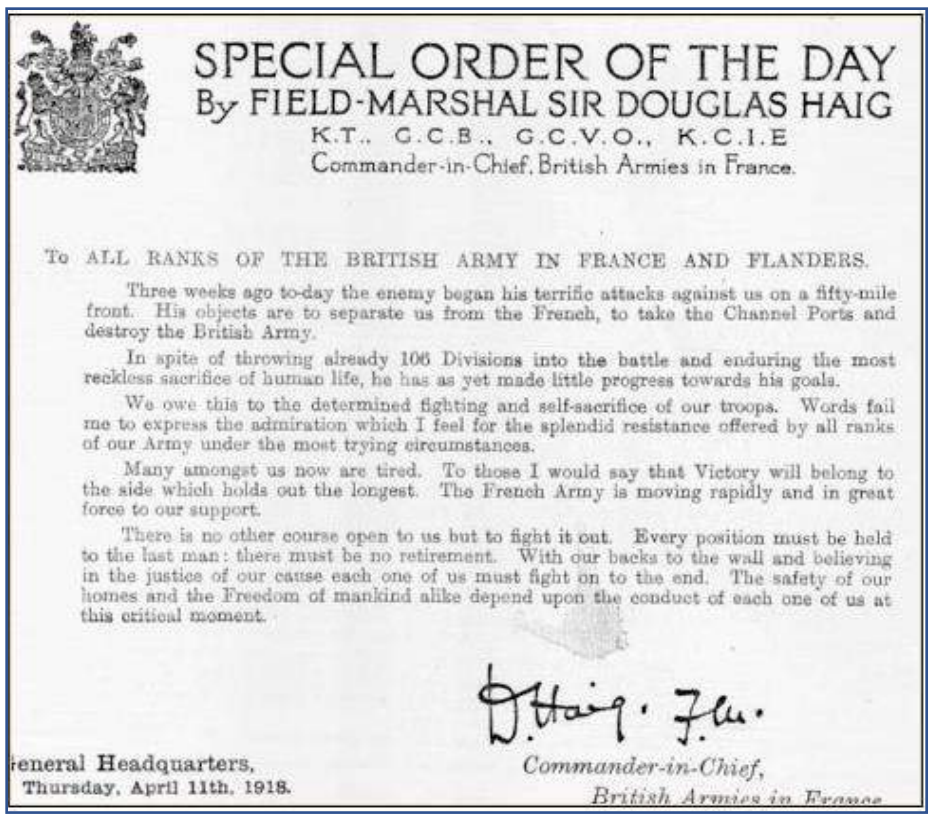
The regimental history of the Lincolnshire Battalion, written by Major General C.R. Simpson, makes for grim reading on the day L/Corporal Harker was killed. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 2/5<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshires had been under fire since 6.00 am on Revetsberg Ridge, close to Bailleul, and had held on for almost twelve hours under intense machine gun fire, until their Lewis Gun section was entirely wiped out.

The various platoons regrouped but were attacked from the front and rear 'at close range.' Only the arrival of the 9<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers stemmed the attack

and prevented them being annihilated. Casualties in the 2/5<sup>th</sup> that day were 355 killed, wounded or missing, including their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel H B Roffey (1875-1918).

**L/ Corporal J. Harker Service no: 15301 is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium (Addenda panel) and on North Collingham War Memorial Cross and Parishioners' Plaque.**

**'Order of the Day'**



In response to these defeats, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, issued his famous 'Order of the Day' – perhaps the equivalent of Churchill's 'We'll fight them on

the beaches' speech during World War Two. *'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 justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.'*

With these stirring words and the help of French reinforcements sent by General Foch, the BEF held on. They had endured a battering during the Battle of the Lys but so had the Germans. By the end of Operation Georgette on April 29<sup>th</sup>, the German Empire's



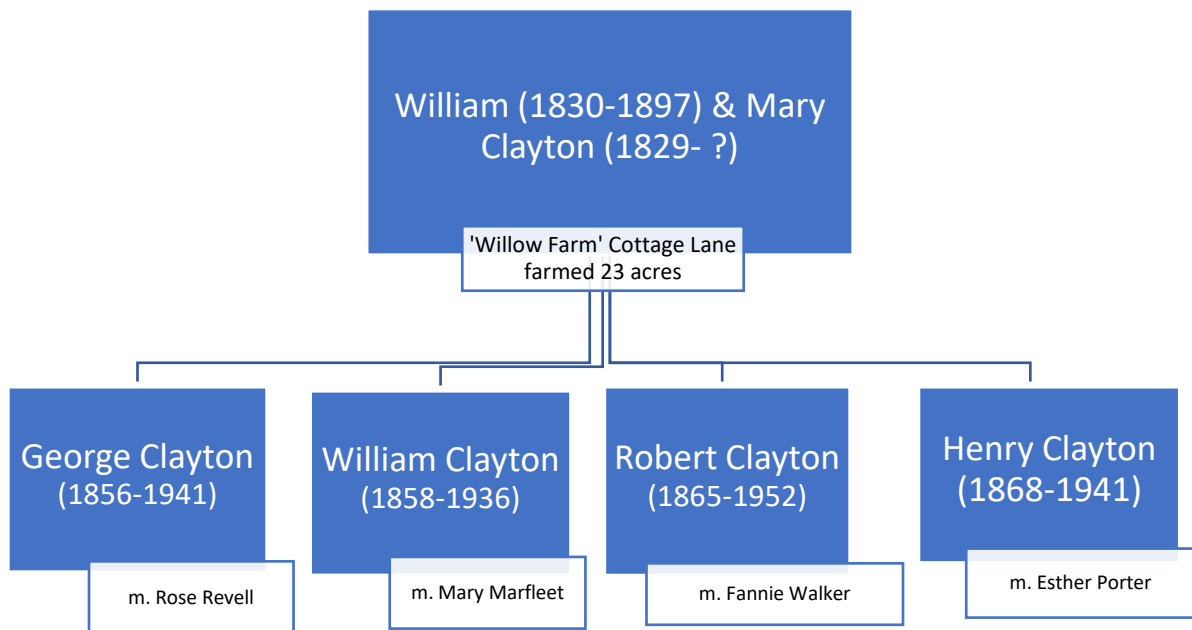
casualties were as high as the Allies' – 120,000, including many of their skilled stormtroopers. After yet more loss of lives, economies in serious trouble and morale low, people on all sides were beginning to ask how much more of this war they could endure.

# Fleet Volume 55 No 4 (May 2018)

## Part 20: May 1918

### The Claytons

There are four Claytons on the Roll of Honour in St John the Baptist Church. Three of them: Alfred, Frank and John Henry, survived the war. The other, George Henry Clayton, was killed in action on May 27<sup>th</sup> 1918. All four were the grandsons of farmer William Clayton and his wife Mary who came to Collingham from Welton in Lincolnshire around 1880. With them came six of their eight children, four of whom went on to farm in Collingham and make a significant contribution to village life.



Children of William (the elder) and Mary Clayton not shown:

Jane Clayton b. 1852 married SANDS

Tom Clayton (1861-1876)

Frank Clayton (1863-1889)

Annie Elizabeth who married Harry Wright, grocer's son, in Collingham 1899

## The Collingham and Brough Claytons during the Great War

**Alfred Clayton** (1897-1982), the youngest of the Claytons on the Roll of Honour, signed up first. The son of George and Rose Clayton, he was born in Collingham but spent his early childhood in Bracebridge Heath. Sometime around 1908, his family moved to one of the Brickyard Cottages on White Moor Lane, Brough, owned by Charles Constable Curtis of Langford Hall. By 13, Alfred was working as a horseman on Turf Moor Farm, Danethorpe, with his older brother Walter. Like many younger men at the outbreak of war, he enlisted early on, fired by a sense of patriotism. He was 17 when he signed up at the start of 1915 and by the time he turned 18 that autumn he was already on the Western Front. He is thought to have enlisted with the Sherwood Foresters but his medals show he was mostly with the Northamptonshire Regiment.



*Arthur Clayton c 1970*

Pte. Alfred Clayton fought throughout the war and was held in the reserve (known as Class Z) until 1919. He was wounded twice, once in the arm and the second time more seriously with an injury to his abdomen.

## George Henry Clayton (1890-1918)



Brickyard Cottages, White Moor Lane, Brough 2015

George was the second child of Henry and Esther Clayton. He lived and worked on the family farm (Willow Farm on Cottage Lane) until 1914 when he married Lizzie Sumner (1891-1971). Lizzie, a cook and housemaid for Canon Gould and his family, had moved to the Vicarage with the Goulds in 1906. George and Lizzie lived in the adjoining cottage next to his Uncle George and Aunt Rose (Alfred's parents). They had two

children, Gladys (born 1915) and Tom (born 1917).

Before the war George had been in the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, a territorial regiment, and enlisting would have been a natural step for him. He volunteered in 1915 and was sent to France in

January 1916, initially with the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters (Robin Hoods) and then with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters. He was promoted to corporal, meaning he was responsible for 12 men in his section. It also meant extra money to send home to Lizzie and the children.



Willow Farm, Cottage Lane (photo 2014)

### **Frank Clayton (1889-1967)**

George's brother Frank was the eldest son of Henry and Esther Clayton. He lived with his parents on 'Willow Farm' throughout the war and eventually took over the running of it. His father appeared before the Newark Rural Tribunals several times in 1916 to plead for Frank not to be

conscripted as George was already away fighting. The pleas fell on deaf ears and in early 1917 the 28-year old was sent to join his brother on the Western Front. It is not known with which regiment he served. Frank married Eva Bocock in 1923, sister of the plucky May Bocock who took part in the first Women's Ploughing Match held at Collingham Show in 1916 (see Fleet May 2016).

### **John Henry Clayton (1883-1944)**

was the son of William Jr. and Mary, who farmed on Coney Green. John married Amy Florence Bocock, daughter of Hadfield and Harriet Bocock of Lime Tree Farm, in 1905. By the outbreak of war, John Henry was a farmer in his own right at 'Grange Farm' on Low Street. Like Frank, John Henry found himself up



Grange Farm, Low Street 2018

before the tribunals on several occasions. Farmers were exempt from military service but expected to join the local Volunteer Force which had a Company in Collingham. Clayton, a father of three, told them he didn't have time. This was no doubt true, given the demands of the farming year, a labour shortage and the extra pressure from the government to produce more food. In December 1917, an exasperated panel told Clayton he had to find time to join the Volunteers or he'd be conscripted. As J



H Clayton's name appears on the Roll of Honour, we have to presume he did undertake military service, either with the Volunteers or in the army.

### The Western Front May 1918: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters (attached to the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade/8<sup>th</sup> Division/6<sup>th</sup> Army)

*Of them who running on that last high place  
Leapt to swift unseen bullets, or went up  
On hot blast and fury of hell's upsurge,  
Or plunged and fell away past this world's verge,  
Some say God caught them even before they fell.*

from *Spring Offensive* by Wilfred Owen



Soldiers on the way to billets after leaving a front line dressing station

Source: World War Pictured History magazine part 12

**Corporal George Clayton** of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters had been lucky to survive the year so far, especially given the losses at the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux between 23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> April. The 8<sup>th</sup> Division had sustained a total of 3,390 casualties

with half of that number dead or missing. That meant the Division was worn out and depleted as it travelled by foot and train the 70 miles from the Somme region through the Picardy countryside towards Roucy, near Soissons, a few days later.

The good news was they were heading towards 'a quiet place on the Aisne', under the command of the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army. The 8<sup>th</sup> Division were told their stay here would give them a chance to recuperate after what they'd been through.

At first, they couldn't believe their luck. Their base near Roucy, surrounded by sloping hills and woodland, was cramped but luxurious compared to some billets they'd had. True, the five or so mile stretch between Roucy and the front line was a tricky one to defend, what with the River Aisne and the Aisne Canal running through the middle. A smaller river, the Miette, with its marshy riverbank, ran south from the front line until it met the Aisne. North of the river near the trenches, a 20- mile limestone ridge, the Chemin des Dames, had been the scene of bitter fighting in 1914 and 1917 but there's been no major action here for months and none was foreseen.

For two weeks, George was able to rest and recover, to write home and catch up on much needed sleep. His battalion took a turn in the front line trenches but there was still no inkling of what was to come. Then, on the 26<sup>th</sup> May a telegram arrived, warning the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade that a prisoner had told them of an imminent attack. The French command, under the leadership of the truculent General Denis Duchêne (1862-1950) chose not to take this intelligence seriously and so were caught out the next morning when the German army launched their third offensive of the year, in the heart of this *'quiet place on the Aisne.'*

### **Bombardment on the Chemin des Dames**

At 1.00 A.M. a ferocious bombardment began as 300,000 mortar shells rained down on the French and British positions along the Chemin des Dames. The bombardment was followed by the release of a new, more lethal gas, intended not to kill as much as to incapacitate and provide a deadly smoke screen. The protective gas masks worn by the British and French proved ineffectual and those who inhaled it and survived would endure lifelong health related problems as a result.

At 4.00 A.M. the mighty force of the German army, including the Serbian 'Iron Regiment' so called because of their renowned fighting spirit and for having Milunka Savić (1892-1973), the most decorated female soldier, in its ranks, stormed forward. Their numbers were double – in places treble - those of the British Divisions. Regardless, the British and French were under orders from Duchêne to hold their line at all costs. When the British commander Lt-Gen A. Hamilton-Gordon questioned his tactics, Duchêne rounded on him. 'J'ai dit!' (I have said it). 'Not a yard must be lost,' he ordered. It was a gross misjudgement on the French general's part.

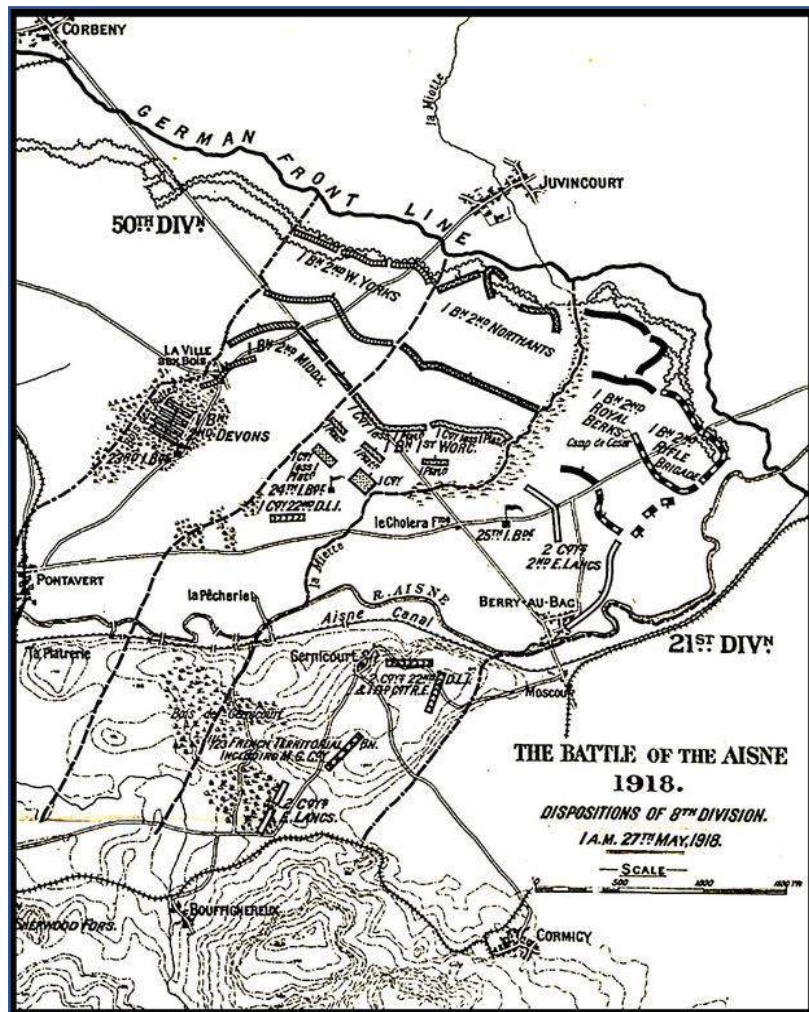
The French armies on the west flank of the Aisne and the British in the middle and right were soon overwhelmed by the sheer numbers the Germans had amassed. The front line trenches were captured, the 1<sup>st</sup> Worcesters, 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshires, 2<sup>nd</sup> Middlesex and 2<sup>nd</sup> Northants taking the

brunt of the onslaught. On their left, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Devons (23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) were 'exterminated almost to a man.'

At 5.30 A.M. the Sherwood Foresters were brought from reserve and told to prepare for immediate action. They arrived at 7.00 A.M. to take up a position near the Bois de Gernicourt with orders to prevent the enemy from crossing the Aisne Canal. They had no chance. The moment their leading platoons reached the bank of the canal they were fired on by Stormtroopers waiting on the opposite side. The term often used is 'enfiladed' as in 'a sweeping crossfire enfiladed our men.'

In total 114 men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters were killed that

day and many were taken prisoner or wounded. Those who remained fought on heroically into the night, regrouping with the remnants of other battalions. By the time the Third Battle of the Aisne finished on June 6<sup>th</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters had lost 680 men. Figures were even higher in other battalions, leaving the 8<sup>th</sup> Division in tatters. In the aftermath, Duchêne was relieved of his position but it was too late for Corporal George Henry Clayton whose body was never recovered.



Map of the Battle of the Aisne May 27<sup>th</sup> 1918 showing the positions of the various regiments at 1.00 AM. The Sherwood Foresters are still in reserve (bottom left). Map c/o John K Reith via the original source 'The History of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division' by Boraston & Bax 1924

**Corporal George H Clayton Service No: 269228 is remembered on the Soissons Memorial, France, the Parishioners' Plaque in St John the Baptist Church and on the South Collingham Roll of honour.**



## Private Harry Blow



LATE PTE. HARRY BLOW.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> Private Harry Blow (1891-1918) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Scots (Lothian) Regiment died of wounds in a Dunkirk Casualty Clearing Station. Harry, whose parents were living and working on a farm in Potter Hill during the war years, had been a miller's drayman in Farnsfield when he enlisted with the Sherwood Foresters in 1915. At 5'2 ½" and with medical problems, the 27-year old would not ordinarily have been considered for the army but these were not ordinary times. In April 1916 he had been transferred to the Royal Scots and retained as a stretcher-bearer. The role of stretcher-bearer was exhausting and dangerous, necessitating negotiating snipers, craters, barbed wire, the dead and the dying, mud and mayhem as they ran to and

fro, carrying wounded men from No Man's Land to the nearest Regimental Aid Post, often for hours on end. It is not clear where or when Harry sustained his injuries from an exploding gas shell as the Royal Scots had not been engaged at the Front since the Battle of Bethune on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Photo of Pte Harry Blow: *The Newark Advertiser* June 5<sup>th</sup> 1918.

**Pte H Blow is buried in Etaples Communal Cemetery, France about 27 kilometres south of Boulogne. His headstone reads: 'He died that we might live.'**

**Pte Blow is also remembered on the North Collingham War Memorials and Roll of Honour**

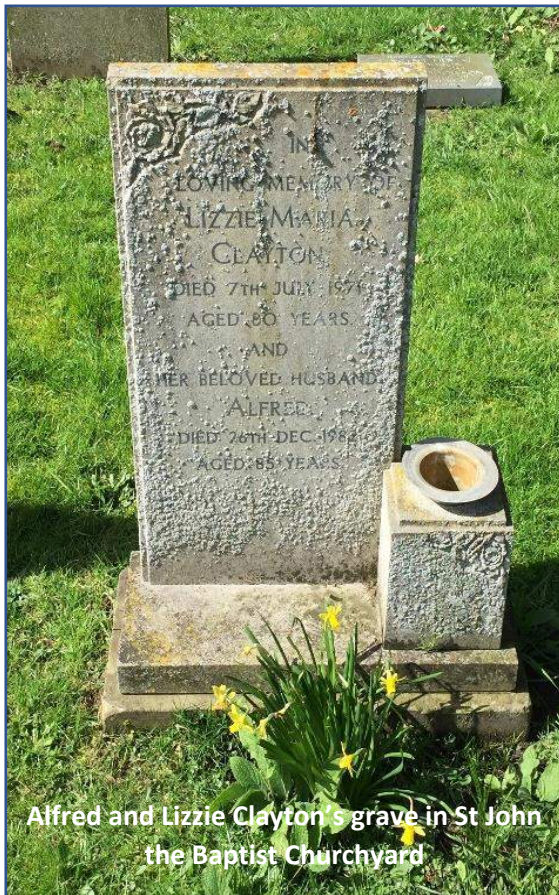
This account does have one happy ending. When Alfred Clayton returned from the war, wounded and jaded, he found settling back into civilian life difficult. He tried living in Canada for a year with his brother, Walter, who'd emigrated there, but it was too cold and he grew homesick. He moved back to Brough, took up farm labouring for a while but farming had entered a recession and there wasn't much work to be had. Instead, he found a job with the council on the roads and progressed to foreman. He also slowly, tentatively, began a courtship with his cousin George's widow, Lizzie.



In 1927 they were married and went on to have four children together: Betty, Margaret, Annie Rose and John. John Clayton (born 1932) still lives in Collingham and has been invaluable in helping write this piece. He recalls that his father never talked about the war but a photograph of George always hung in their living room in Brickyard Cottages, a constant reminder of that shared history.



*Above: Lizzie Clayton with one of her daughters, Betty. Photos courtesy of Mr John Clayton (photo not shown in original Fleet piece)*



**Alfred and Lizzie Clayton's grave in St John the Baptist Churchyard**



*Above: Alfred Clayton's medals from WW1 (photo not shown in original Fleet piece)*

# Fleet Volume 55 No 5 (June 2018)

## Part 21: June 1918

Although we know the war had entered its final year, the people of Collingham and Brough a century ago did not. As far as they were concerned this thing felt as if it would go on forever. June didn't see anyone killed in action from the village but there were still plenty of families waiting for news of 'missing' loved ones.

### 'Missing'

George and Jane Hammond on the Green, for instance, were awaiting news of their son Albert, missing since April. Although they must have suspected the worst, it would be another year before he would be officially declared killed in action. Better news came for 68-year old widower Aaron Pearson (1850-1939) living in a 4-roomed cottage opposite 'The Willows' on Low Street. His grandson Charles, whom he and his late wife Selina had raised since infancy, had been missing since March 21<sup>st</sup>. A private with the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, the former clerk with the Midlands Railways was now reported as having been taken prisoner. The date of Charles's capture was significant, not only because it was his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, but also because March 21<sup>st</sup> had been the launch of the German's first 'Spring Offensive'. The 2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, positioned near the village of Noreuil near Bullecourt, had suffered terrible losses; over a hundred killed with a further 22

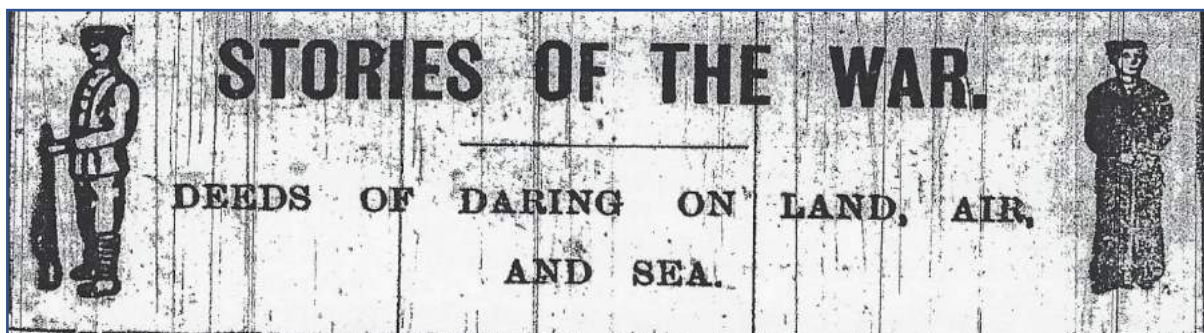


Above: The Newark Advertiser notices column for 'Missing' and Prisoners'. Source: Newark Library (on microfiche)



officers and 599 'other ranks' classed as 'missing.' Many of the missing, like Charles, were taken prisoner. According to The Long, Long Trail website, during the Great War around 7,335 officers and 174,491 other ranks of the British Army were captured by the enemy. Of these, about half fell into captivity between 21 March and 11 November 1918.

While news that someone had been captured was surely better than news of their death, it was nevertheless still an anxious time. The welfare of prisoners wasn't high on the Germans' priority list in 1918, especially when their own troops were undernourished and close to revolt; it shouldn't be ignored that at least 480,000 German civilians died of starvation during World War One (some estimates put the figure even higher, at 750,000). Back home, Newark Advertiser's 'Stories of the War' column hardly made for reassuring reading. First-hand accounts with headings such as 'Skeletons in Rags' painted disturbing pictures of how British prisoners were treated.



Above: heading of the Newark Advertiser's 'Stories of the War' column which ran weekly throughout the war.

The column on June 5<sup>th</sup> featured a Pte. Farrow of the Sherwood Foresters who was put on 'bread and water' for fourteen days. *'He slept in a tiny cell with no blankets and not a particle of light and was very badly treated by his guards.'* Another Sherwood Forester, Pte Matthews, had a bullet wound but the Germans gave it no attention and *'it was by his own efforts that the wound was healed.'* *'We went in trucks to Germany' he said 'and were without food for five days. If we asked for even a drink of water the guards threw the contents of the buckets in our faces.'*

Charles Pearson survived his ordeal but died in 1935, aged only 38, five years before his doting grandfather.

Another result of Germany's Spring Offensives was a huge shortage of allied troops on the Western Front, despite the swelling of numbers from American forces. In response, the British government raised the age of conscription from 41 to 51.

## Agricultural Labour

As more men were drafted in, fewer were left to run the farms. Under increasing pressure to put more land 'to the plough,' a meeting of the Wages Board in Newark suggested that farm workers should be paid 35/- (35 shillings) a week, well above the weekly average, to entice them from the better paid heavier industries in towns and cities. Farmers were outraged and declared they would not and could not pay anything like it until the price of corn changed. One way round the issue was to hire boys as they were paid a lesser rate than men. This led to an argument as to when a boy became a man – at 18 as the Wages Board suggested or the 20 preferred by farmers.



South Collingham's Alice Peet (left) helping with the sugar beet harvest early 1900s. Alice married Tom Bee in 1885. Her son, Jack Peet Bee, and son-in law Arthur Tonn, were killed on the Western Front in 1916.

Women were another cheap source of labour. The Women's Land Army was formed in 1917 and while the cost of their 4-6 weeks training was covered by the Agricultural Board, wages were covered by

the farmers. The average wage was set at 13/- after deductions for a 50-hour week (48 hours in winter). However, there is evidence that many farmers paid women the same rate as the boys or even less. This was justified by the women's 'inexperience' despite the fact that many local women had done farm work and got 'sludged up', as Collingham farmer Joseph Gibson memorably remarked, for years.



It is interesting that in the same report (Newark Advertiser, June 5<sup>th</sup> 1918) the focus on female agricultural labourers is on their 'lack of discipline' as opposed to their poor pay. The Agricultural Board felt much more satisfactory work would be done *'if the girls were under stronger control.'*

Tellingly, the report also states:

*'The real point was whether the Notts. Farmers really*



Collingham's Ethel Liley (2<sup>nd</sup> row from the back next to the gentleman in the trilby) with other munitions workers at Ransome and Marles. Photo: Liley Collection CDLHS

*wanted the women labour. No doubt the prejudice against them was being broken down.'*

The Agricultural Committee appears not to consider the women's 'lack of discipline' might be a reaction to 'the prejudice against them.' Little wonder many local girls and women opted to work at Ransome and Marles munitions factory where wages were higher and hours shorter.

On the other hand, the panel on the Newark Rural Tribunals seemed to have no trouble with women's capabilities at all. According to the all-male panel, women were amazing. When butchers applied for exemption from active duty, they were told their daughters could work in the slaughterhouse. Likewise, when shopkeepers applied for exemption, their wives could easily take on the business in their absence (as well as running the house and rearing the children and paying the bills, of course).

Revised to 1st December, 1915.

C. R.

## SEPARATION ALLOWANCE

FOR  
WIVES AND CHILDREN OF SOLDIERS.

WEEKLY RATES OF SEPARATION ALLOWANCE, INCLUDING THE USUAL ALLOTMENT OF PAY.

	Rank of Soldier				
	Captain and Private	Sergeant	Company Quartermaster Sergeant	Warrant Officer (Class II)	Warrant Officer (Class I)
Wife ... ..	£12 6	£15 0	£16 6	£22 0	£25 0
Wife and 1 child ... ..	£17 6	£20 0	£21 6	£27 0	£30 0
Wife and 2 children ... ..	£21 0	£23 6	£25 0	£30 6	£33 6
Wife and 3 children ... ..	£25 0	£25 6	£27 0	£32 6	£36 6
Motherless child ... ..	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0
Reduction if in public quarters with fuel and light	6 0	6 0	7 6	12 0	13 0

\* These rates include an allotment of 6d. a day from the soldier's pay (see para. 2 and 3).  
† These rates include an allotment of 20s. a day from the soldier's pay (see para. 2 and 3).

1. The total payment to the family, if the soldier makes the usual allotment from his pay, will be as shown in the above table. Any allotment above the usual rate which a soldier may make will be paid in addition.

**ALLOTMENTS.**

2. The rates of allotment are as follows:—  
Soldiers not below the rank of sergeant ... .. 5s. 10d. per week.  
Other soldiers ... .. 3s. 6d. "

3. The allotment for the wife is compulsory in the case of a soldier serving abroad. In the case of a soldier serving at home, the allotment may be at a lower rate or withheld altogether if the wife's income without allotment reaches the amount in the table above. If the husband objects to making the usual allotment on the ground that his wife's income without allotment reaches the standard rate, the Paymaster will notify the wife and tell her what to do.

**CHILDREN.**

4. Separation Allowance is payable for children up to the age of 16 years. It may also be paid for children up to the age of 21, suffering from mental or physical infirmity and, on the recommendation of the Local Education Authority, for apprentices receiving not more than a nominal wage, or children over 16 while in attendance as day pupils at Secondary Schools, Technical Schools or Universities.

**LONDON ALLOWANCE.**

5. In the case of wives of soldiers who at the date of enlistment were married, and

† A separate pamphlet is published relating to separation allowances for the dependants of married soldiers (see p. 100).

The fact of the matter was that women on low incomes had little choice but to work when their men, now mostly privates in the Infantry, were earning the minimal 1s 1d per day (double for a sergeant – 2s 6d - rising to 28s 0d per day for a lieutenant colonel). There was a separation allowance for soldiers' wives which boosted this amount to another 21s 6d for a wife and two children (31s 6d for officer ranks). It is difficult to convert the wages to today's equivalent as different calculators use different criteria. Some give today's pound (£1= 20 shillings) as being worth anything from £45 - £108.

## Wartime Entertainment

It's easy to see why any distractions from the war and work were welcomed. Those looking for entertainment could catch the train or cycle into Newark and go to the Picturedrome on Barnbygate or the Kinema on Middlegate. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> topping the bill at the Picturedrome was 'Bridson', the musical ventriloquist and 'George' the Dummy with the 'phenomenal voice' supported by Tom Kelso who promised to present 'a nonsensical absurdity created for laughing purposes.' The week after, the 'celebrated dramatic actor' John F Preston (1862-1947) was in town in his latest up-to-date sketch 'A Woman Should

Public Notice.

"THE PLACE AT THE CORNER."

# PICTUREDROME,

LARNBYGATE, NEWARK.

Sub Lessee..... GINEVARS, Ltd.      Manager..... Mr. G. HRADE.

## 6.30 | TWICE NIGHTLY. | 8.45

MONDAY, JUNE 14th AND DURING THE WEEK.

The Celebrated dramatic actor, JOHN F. PRESTON, and Company in his latest up-to-date sketch

### A Woman Should Tell!

A reply to the all absorbing question, "Should a Woman reveal her past before marriage?"

### 3 THE ASSETS 3

Vocalists and expert Lightning Dancers, introducing Schottische, Buck, Wing, Clay and Waltz Time Dances!

## GRIFFITHS AND CLARE

(DIA)      (AUDEY)

The Finest Welsh Bardic Tone.      The Reddest Musical Comedy Girl.

(His Soldier Royal Welsh Fusiliers)      Western Import Comedy in Two Parts.

In their Original Vocal and Comedy Scenes, entitled— "THE HERSHENT SUITOR."

PICTURES THURSDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY.

### THE RED ACE. PINCHED IN THE FINISH.

Episode 4.      Western Import Comedy in Two Parts.

And Up-to-date PATHE NEWSGRAPHS, changed twice weekly.

ADMISSION (Including Tax) 2d., 5d., 8d., 1/-.

PICTURE MATINEE ON SATURDAY.

DOORS OPEN AT 5 COMMENCE 5.30.

*Tell!* which asked: 'Should a woman reveal her past before marriage?' For those who preferred the cinema to live acts, an affordable 2 ½d could buy a cheap ticket to see 'The Red Ace' film at the pictures.



**Arthur Clamp of Notts County**

Football fans had to make do with a watered-down regional league (Midland Section) after the FA suspended the official football leagues for the duration. There was excitement in the local papers when it was announced that Notts County's ace centre-half Arthur Clamp (34) had been called up and was training with the Sherwood Foresters. Imagine having Arthur Clamp in the trenches with you!

## Local Weddings

June remained the traditional time to get married and according to the East Trent Genealogy database there were three June brides – Jane Elizabeth Drabble (29) married William Ashmead (37) and munitions worker Amy Shaw (21) walked down the aisle at St John the Baptist's with her Royal Engineers' sapper from Kent, George Smith (20). At St Helena's Church in Girton, Emily Holland (42) married farmer John Brown (42).

A quiet wedding took place on June 27<sup>th</sup> in London between Thomas Lancelot Constable Curtis (1888-1956) and Canadian Irene Hyland (1888-1976). Curtis, the son of landowner Charles Constable and Edith Curtis of Langford Hall, was a professional soldier serving with the Coldstream



**Maj. TLC Curtis and his wife Irene celebrating an event in the early 1950s**

Guards; he rose to the rank of major, retiring in 1926. The couple lived in Mayfield House in Collingham.

Meanwhile, Collingham Boys' School headmaster Sam Coging, discharged from active service after being wounded, was keeping his fingers crossed that the weather stayed fine for July. He was helping to organise a huge fundraiser for the War Hospital Supply Depot and local Working Party; the last thing he wanted was a downpour on his dice bowls.



## **Fleet Volume 55 No 6 (July/August 2018)**

### **Part 22: July 1918**

*'...Sacrifices may be asked of you. Give generously and wholeheartedly, grudging nothing, but remembering that you are giving because your Country needs your help. If you see others in better circumstances than yourself, be patient and think of the men who are fighting amid discomfort and who are often in great pain.'*

- Dame Katharine Furse, commandant-in-chief of the British Red Cross Society women's voluntary aid detachments.

**T**his message of sacrifice had been received loud and clear in Collingham and district during the entire war. The Collingham Working Party had been tireless in its efforts to provide aid for the soldiers and injured; a total of 7,927 bandages and 17,600 swabs were made by volunteers between August 1917 and July 1918 alone.

#### **Garden Fete Fundraiser**

As the fighting on the Western Front intensified, the need to raise funds for the war effort was as pressing as ever. During the summer of 1918, Samuel Coging (1882-1959), headmaster at the Boys' School, and surveyor's clerk Fred W. Hoe (1878-1951), heading up the 25-strong War Charities Committee, were determined to put on the biggest fundraiser of the war yet: a garden fete to be held in the grounds of South Collingham House on July 25th. The preparations took weeks and every type of stall and activity imaginable was devised to entice visitors to attend. The detailed report in the Newark Advertiser on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1918 indicates the effort paid off in grand style:

*'In spite of occasional showers on Thursday last, the visitors to the Garden Fete held in the grounds of South Collingham House (kindly lent by Mrs Browne) had a most enjoyable time and the attendance probably exceeded 1000, the takings this year established a record and will greatly benefit the funds of the War Hospital Supply Depot and local branch of the Red Cross Working Party in whose interests the fete was held.'*

*The committee responsible for the arrangements undertook their task with enthusiasm, ably guided by their energetic secretary, Mr F Hoe and consequently old and young visitors found*

*adequate entertainment, convenience and amusement provided during the whole afternoon and evening. Previous to the day, subscriptions had poured in from the generous and patriotic Collingham people who are always ready to assist in a good cause, over £30 being collected by the committee. Besides this, numerous gifts of all kinds were received for the purpose of sales on stalls, and those represented a large sum of money. The tea arrangements were in the capable hands of Mrs Hornigold and Mrs Bailey, who, with a large staff of fair helpers, were kept very busy the whole time, providing refreshments at a very nominal charge.*

*The great attraction, of course, was the band of the Newark Depot Royal Engineers, conducted by Sgt Brown, RE., which enhanced the pleasure of the fete by the excellence of their musical programme and gave a splendid tone to the proceedings.*

*The children's sports, organised by Messrs Coving and Healey attracted remarkable attention, especially as they were of a novel and amusing kind, and bursts of laughter from the lookers-on were frequent. Visitors freely patronised the various games and competitions provided; extreme youth was served by donkey rides, bran-tub and fish-pond gambles whilst others indulged freely in the delights of quoits, table bowls, dice bowls, the ill-treatment of poor Aunt Sally, the scattering of skittles and bowling through hoops or boards.*

*A butterfly painting competition, organised by Mrs Lucas, occasioned much interest and some youthful competitors evinced much surprise and pleasure at the excellent results of their efforts. Soldiers were not slow in coming forward to take part in the hat-trimming competition, arranged by Mrs Loveday and the lady lookers-on hailed their efforts with delight. Guessing competitions were well patronised but Mrs Ransome's joy wheel excelled as usual.'*

### **Competition Winners:**

Dice Bowls: winner Mr W Golland – prize - a rabbit given by Master James Birch

Hoop Bowling: winner Mr Frank Shaw - prize – couple of rabbits given by Mr Ben Revill

Board-bowling: winner Mr George Osborne – prize – couple of rabbits given by Miss Aitchison

Skittles: winner Miss Bates – prize 1 – cockerel given by Mrs Hugh Woolley

Skittles (2): winner Mr T Waite – prize 2 - a rabbit given by Miss Aitchison

Cake Guessing – prize divided between Mrs W O Merry and Mrs C Sheldon

Cake Guessing (2) divided between Miss Cheetham and Miss Hornagold

Butterfly Painting Competition: Leslie Bourne, F. Hammond, George Gibson, George Osborne.

### **Children's Sports**

	Boys	Girls
Sack Race	W. Clayton	-

Bell Race	C. Lane	Ivy Renshaw
Blind Horse	T. Alsopp & F Nicholson	Cecily Halman & Alice Clayton
Obstacle Race	Jack Crocker	-
Skipping	-	Elodie Tanghe
Pin cushion race	-	Jessie Shaw
Relay	Girls beat boys (close finish)	
Tug-o-War	North beat South	

What the cheery newspaper report doesn't reveal is the stories behind the stories. How Mary Browne (1850-1932), who permitted the use of her extensive garden to host the event, had lost her two sons in the war and now busied herself with fundraising and good causes. How 30-year old Violet Woolley (1888-1932), mentioned as donating the prize cockerel, must have looked on wistfully as her little girl, Vera, almost two, toddled between the stalls. It had been fifteen months since Violet's husband, Captain Hugh Woolley of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, had been killed in action, but the heartache didn't seem to go away, somehow. Likewise, another of the prizegivers, Annie Aitchison (1892-1980) of 'The Burnt House', put on a brave face despite missing her younger brother Ronald, the first on Collingham's Roll of Honour (December 14<sup>th</sup> 1914), every day.

The fact that Samuel Coving was able to serve on the committee was a miracle in itself. Until April he'd been serving on the front until shrapnel shattered his arm at Ypres and earned him a 'Blighty wound' and subsequent discharge from the army. His wife, Ethel, manning the Variety stall, must have glanced across at her husband and given thanks he had lived to see this day.

**A**nnie Hoe (1882- 1963) would have been bursting with pride as 13-year old Elodie Tanghe came first in the skipping race. Annie, who couldn't have children of her own with her husband, Arthur, had all but adopted Elodie



*Above: Belgian refugee Elodie Tanghe Photo c/o Ann Broad-Davies (Elodie's daughter)*

since the young girl had arrived from Belgium with her family in 1914. Elodie's mother, Mme Tanghe and her other five children had initially squeezed into a tiny cottage owned by Annie's father, Hadfield Bocock. The Tanghes had moved to more spacious temporary accommodation in Lincoln the year before but Elodie, much to Annie's delight, had asked to stay behind. Annie felt blessed to have become a surrogate mother to this delightful child who, unbeknown at the time, would grow up to become a nurse and would always return to see her in Collingham for the rest of her life.

What a boost, too, for 12-year old Fred Hammond, one of the winners of the butterfly painting competition. Maybe it would bring a rare smile to his mum's face instead of the haunted expression she'd worn since April when his 19-year old brother Albert was reported missing in action (Albert would never return).

In the afternoon a 'short, stirring speech' was given by Mr J C Kew, JP, MBE (owner of the Newark Advertiser and ex-Mayor of Newark) who implored everyone to buy War Bonds and carry on their good work for this 'sacred cause they were helping.'

The report ended by estimating that over £100 had been raised for the War Hospital Supply Depot (in Bridlesmith Gate, Nottingham) and the Collingham Working Party.

### **Jane Longman Rice**

One notable dignitary missing the fete was **Mrs Jane Longman Rice** (1849-1918) who had passed away, aged 69, the month before. Mrs Rice of The Gables was a huge benefactor of the village. Born in North Collingham to William and Elizabeth Johnson, she had moved to Duffield in Derbyshire upon her marriage to Robert Longman Rice, a district manager on the railways, returning to the village with him around 1890. In his lengthy tribute to Mrs Rice in the July Parish Newsletter, Rev. Maxwell praised her *'wonderful faculty for making friends, and it was always her great delight to gather them about her. Her kindness to the poor was great and consistent. Never did a case of distress come to her notice but assistance and kind sympathy were promptly bestowed. As a churchwoman she loved our parish church... to her generosity we owe our Altar frontals, kneelers, prayer and hymn books, as well as practically all our contributions to our parochial funds.'*

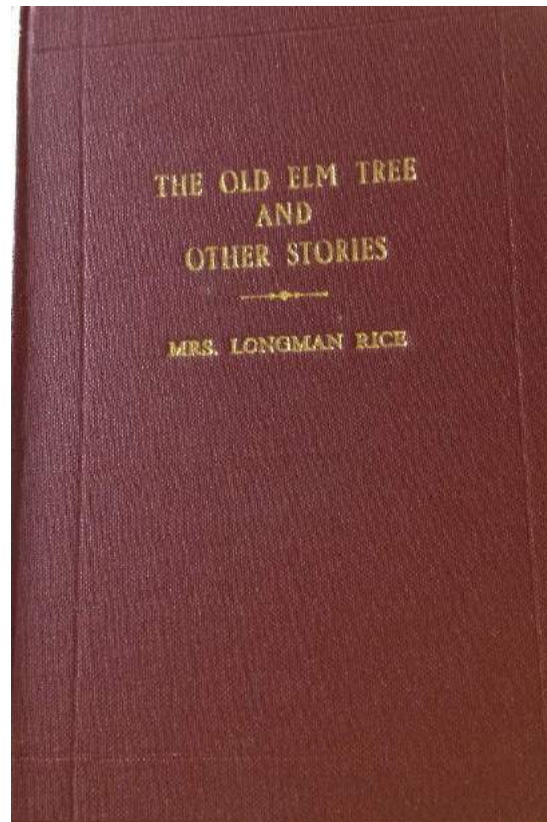
There is a stained glass window in the south wall of All Saints Church dedicated by Jane Longman Rice to her parents, grandparents and late husband Robert. She also wrote and



self-published a book, *The Old Elm Tree and Other Stories*, in 1905. A rare copy can be found in Collingham and District Local History Society archives in the Jubilee Room.

Barely a fortnight after the garden fete, the war entered its final stage. On August 8th the Hundred Days Offensive began with the Battle of Amiens and by the 10th two more local families' lives would be ripped apart.

*Above: The Old Elm Tree and Other Stories*



# Fleet Volume 55 No 7 (September 2018)

## Part 23: August 1918

*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.*

Opening verse from 'In Flanders Fields' by Lt Col John McCrae (1872-1918) Canadian Medical Corps

There are three names on the Collingham War Memorials linked to the Canadian Expeditionary Forces (CEF): **Fred East** (see part 8/ Fleet April 2016) of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Cameron Highlanders, **Arthur Wynne Williams** of the 16<sup>th</sup> Canadian (Scots) and **John Thomas Hickman** of the 44<sup>th</sup> (Manitoba/New Brunswick) Canadians. They were among the thousands of British-born Canadians who heeded the call from the 'motherland' to fight in the war. 'When Britain is at war, Canada is at war. There is no distinction,' Sir Wilfred Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister between 1896-1911, declared in 1910. By the end of 1914, 70% of Canadian volunteers were of British descent (Source: C. Sharpe 2015).

APPENDIX VI					
COUNTRIES OF BIRTH OF OFFICERS AND OTHER RANKS SERVING WITH THE 16th BATTALION THE CANADIAN SCOTTISH					
At organization, Valcartier, P.Q., September, 1914:			From organization to demobilization:		
	Officers	Other Ranks		Officers	Other Ranks
Canada .....	22	175	Canada .....	124	1,560
England .....	11	435	England .....	69	1,720
Scotland .....	9	391	Scotland .....	44	1,234
Ireland .....	1	42	Ireland .....	9	185
Wales .....	..	9	Wales .....	8	59
New Zealand .....	1	..	New Zealand .....	1	..
United States of America .....	2	15	United States of America .....	7	185
Sundry .....	..	49	Sundry .....	6	280
	46	1,116		268	5,223

*Above: Table of the countries of birth of officers and other ranks in the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion showing the vast majority were born in the British Isles. Other Canadian battalions would have shown a similar result. Source: H M Urquhart 'The History of the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion Canadian Scottish Regiment in the Great War 1914-1919' published 1932*

## Collingham connection to Canada

The Collingham area's connections with Canada began in the early to mid-nineteenth century, when what became known as the 'Great Migration of Canada' took place. British farmers and agricultural labourers were much in demand and hundreds of thousands left to start a new life in the mainly unsettled prairie



*Above: William Hall's log cabin in Denham, Canada. Built in 1835 it housed William and his family until a more permanent stone house was built close by. The cabin became his blacksmith's workshop. Photocopy c/o Brent McCutcheon, William and Ann's great great grandson. Picture not shown in original Fleet piece*

regions, lured by the promise of free land and a better life. One of the earliest known families to emigrate from Collingham were William Hall (born 1801), his wife Ann, and their four children, who settled in Denham, Quebec, in the 1830s. A handful of letters from Collingham blacksmith Samuel Hall (1770-1845), William's father, and Hannah, his sister, were discovered by William Hall's great-great grandson and copies were donated to Collingham and District Local History Society in 2017. They give a fascinating insight into life in both Collingham and Canada at the time. Emigration from the area continued until the mid- twentieth century and so it is no surprise to find Canadian regiments listed alongside British ones on our local war memorials.

## Canadian Expeditionary Forces (CEF):

The CEF had been engaged on the Western Front since early 1915. The brave actions of the Newfoundland Regiment on the first day of the Battle of the Somme (July 1916) when 710

of the 790 men in the regiment were either killed or wounded, is the stuff of folklore, and earned them the 'Royal' prefix in 1917. Their most celebrated victory was at Vimy Ridge in April 1917 where the four divisions of the Canadian corps fought together for the first time.

By 1918 the Canadian force, made up primarily of volunteers, had built up a reputation as strong and dependable soldiers and it is no surprise that they were chosen to play a vital role in the Battle of Amiens, General Haig's radical offensive. Interestingly, the codename for the Battle of Amiens was 'Llandoverly Castle' a reference to the Canadian hospital ship that had been sunk by a German U-boat on June 27<sup>th</sup> with the loss of 234 lives.

### **The Battle of Amiens**

The Battle of Amiens began early in the morning of August 8<sup>th</sup> and it was the Canadian corps gallant efforts on the first day, under the leadership of General Arthur 'Guts and Gaiters' Currie (1875-1933), that contributed to what the Germans called their 'blackest day'. The Allies' resounding success on this day marked the beginning of the end of the war. Four Canadians were awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions, three posthumously. The battle lasted for three days during which the Canadian regiments sustained 45, 835 casualties (killed, wounded or taken prisoner) – their highest rate in the entire war. **Arthur Wynne Williams** and **John Thomas Hickman** were two of those killed.

### **Arthur Wynne Williams**

**Private**

**16<sup>th</sup> Btn Canadian Infantry (Manitoba Regiment)**

**Scottish (Infantry) Regiment**

**Service no. 16832**





Surveyor **Arthur Wynne Williams's** (1892-1918) connections to Collingham are fairly tenuous. It is probable he never lived in the village as he had emigrated to Canada by the time his parents moved to Crescent House on Low Street, around 1915. An Arthur W. Williams aged 20 is shown as a passenger on the 'Tunisian' bound for Manitoba in June 1912, although whether this is 'our' Arthur is not certain. We do know Williams enlisted immediately upon the outbreak of the war in August 1914 and landed in France with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion Canadian (Scots) on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1915.



*Arthur Wynne Williams as a young man. Photo c/o Mr Robert Crawley (not shown in original Fleet piece)*

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the day the 25-year old met his fate, the 16<sup>th</sup> Canadians were in an area near the marshy banks of the River Luce, surrounded by chalk pits and ripening rye and wheat fields. Their objective was to attack the Green Line beyond Bosnia Trench. By all accounts they were successful and their early morning start took many of the German platoons in their various outposts by surprise. However, one platoon, under the leadership of a Captain McClellan, was met by heavy machine gun fire coming from a nearby quarry. Being exposed, they were easily targeted. Their battalion history states that: *'...before the men could disperse, nine out of the fourteen were hit.'* Was one of the nine Arthur Williams? A total of 46 men from the 16<sup>th</sup> Canadians lost their lives that day.

Arthur Williams's parents, Robert and Clementina, moved away from Collingham shortly after the war ended. Their address in 1921 was the 'Dower House', Easton, Lincs.

**Later (not included in Fleet piece):**

In 2018 a relative of Arthur Wynne Williams, Mr Robert Crawley of Surrey (seen here at Williams' grave in 2018), contacted the Collingham in the Great War website and gave us further insights into his great uncle, Arthur Williams.

This included details of a letter written to Arthur's platoon commander to his parents in Crescent House giving details of his death and the photograph (right):

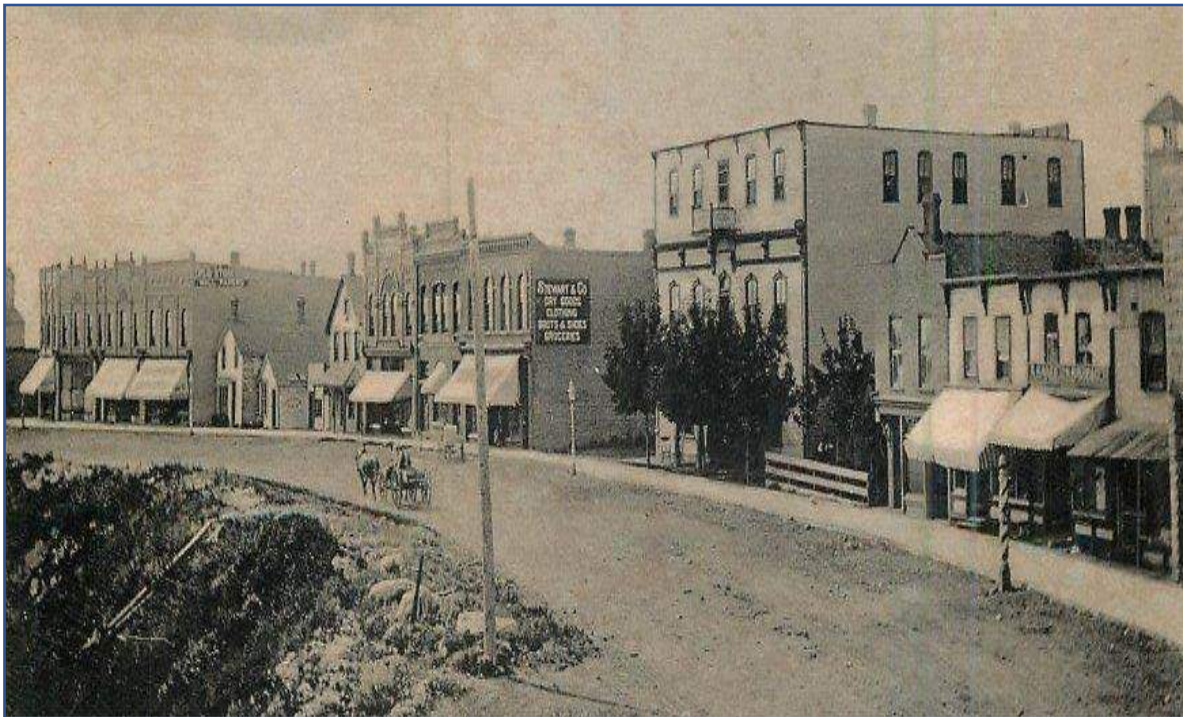
*"Shortly after leaving our jumping off position he was hit with a German machine gun bullet from close range, his wound was dressed at once and in a few minutes he was taken back to a dressing station where he lived, although unconscious, for a short time – he is buried somewhere there. His company commander, his pals and myself all feel his loss very greatly. I have been in command of his platoon for some months now during which time I formed a very pleasant acquaintance with him and I am happy to say that I always found him an excellent soldier and better still a real man".*



**Private Arthur Wynne Williams is remembered on the Hangard Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France 1.A.10 and North Collingham Roll of Honour and War Memorial Cross.**

## John Thomas Hickman

John Thomas Hickman's local roots were deeper than Williams', going back generations. His



*Above: Souris, Manitoba, in 1908. Built on land surveyed in 1880, the new town would have been still growing by the time the Hickmans arrived. Postcard courtesy of Bill Hillman's online 'Manitoba Archive.'*

grandparents on both sides came from Brough. His uncle, William Hickman, (1861-1923) and cousin Samuel Dolphin Hickman (1896-1979) lived in Collingham and were the village carriers for many years until buses took over as a means of transport.

Born in Brickyard Cottages in 1889, John Thomas was the third of five children to farm labourer Thomas Dolphin Hickman (1863-1945) and his wife Martha Vickers (1864-1943). John's eldest brother, William (1884-1948) emigrated to Canada around 1905 and John, aged 16, followed soon after, departing on the S.S. Siberian in April 1907. Their parents and the rest of their siblings followed a month later, where they would have made the long and arduous journey from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Winnipeg, Manitoba (over 4,000 km) and then on to the small township of Souris, where they stayed until the drought of 1934 when they moved to Swan River. In 1917 William married another Brough native, Mary Leverton (1901-1970) whose family had also settled in Souris.



## Service History

Hickman enlisted in September 1916. His attestation papers describe him as 5'3" with a 37" chest and notes that the first joint of his third finger on his left hand was missing. He is shown as single and a farmer. A private in the 44<sup>th</sup> Canadian (New Brunswick) Regiment, 28-year old Hickman was killed in action on August 10<sup>th</sup> at Fouquescourt near Amiens. He is buried in Rosières Cemetery. His headstone, dedicated by his parents, reads *'God be with you till we meet again.'* He is also remembered on the South Collingham War Memorials.

According to the Canada War Museum website, **619,636** Canadians enlisted with the C E F during the war, and approximately **424,000** served overseas. This is a considerable number, given the population at the time was only around 8 million. Of these men and women, 59,544 died during the war, 51,748 of them as a result of enemy action.

Further information on Pte. Williams and Pte. Hickman, and much more, can be found on the *Collingham in the Great War* microsite ([www.collingham-notts.org.uk](http://www.collingham-notts.org.uk)).

## Dr Dall

August also saw the passing of Collingham's interim doctor, Alexander Dall, aged 72. Dall, born in Fifeshire in 1846, was also the Medical Officer for Newark and Eagle District. He had stepped in to replace Collingham's first female doctor, Dr Catherine Love Smith (1872-1919), who had left in January 1916 to take up a post as Medical Inspector of Schools and Medical Officer of School Clinic at Ashford, Kent. This was a little under a year after the premature death of Dr Frank Broadbent (1860-1915), with whom Smith had worked for 15 years.

By all accounts, Dall's health had been failing for quite a few months. A bullish Newark



Alexander Dall's grave in All Saints' Churchyard overlooks Trent Lane. His wife and daughter moved to Bournemouth and are buried there.



Rural Tribunal hadn't helped matters by refusing to allow the over-worked GP to keep his chauffeur to drive him to his patients and meetings. When Rev. Maxwell blamed the doctor's breakdown in health to his having to start the car (a more strenuous exercise in those days) and use a motor cycle for his rounds instead, the chairman of the Tribunal retorted that while they regretted the doctor's illness that was not the place at which to blame the Tribunal (Source: Newark Advertiser '100 Years Ago' May 1<sup>st</sup> 1918).

Collingham had better luck with Dall's successor, William Deane (1884-1964), who arrived in 1919 and ran the practice until 1951. Dr Deane was the last doctor to run a surgery from the Old Hall.

August to November 1918 was known as the *Hundred Days Offensive*. The victory at Amiens may have sent shockwaves through the German high command and delivered a massive blow to their troops' morale but the German army wasn't going to bow out with a whimper after all this time. Europe was about to enter the final reckoning during which many, many more lives would be lost on both sides. Not another month would go by without tragic news for Collingham and Brough.

With thanks to Charlie Stothard and Sylvia Woodhurst for their contributions to this article.

#### **Further Reading:**

Chris Sharpe's detailed paper (2015) '*Enlistment into the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918*' published by Canadian Military History Vol 24, is available to download online as a pdf.

The transcribed letters from Collingham blacksmith Samuel Hall and his daughter Hannah Hall to William Hall are held in the Jubilee Room on Swinderby Road (CDLHS Ref: EF/AA/HAL)

## **Fleet Volume 55 No 8 (October 2018)**

### **Part 24: September 1918**

*What passing bells for those who die as cattle?*

*Only the monstrous anger of the guns.*

*Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle*

*Can patter out their hasty orisons.*

- Opening lines to *Anthem for Doomed Youth* by Wilfred Owen

September 1918 seemed to be a month spent gathering. On the Western Front, the troops were gathering along the Hindenburg Line, ready for the final big push as the German defences began to collapse. In Collingham, the gathering was a less hazardous affair, with pupils at the two schools – the Boys' School in the Wesley Room and the Girls' and Infants' School on the High Street - being given time off lessons on three separate occasions to gather blackberries as part of the war-effort. The pupils took their task seriously and a whopping 410lbs of fruit was harvested altogether.

#### **Church Choir Outing**

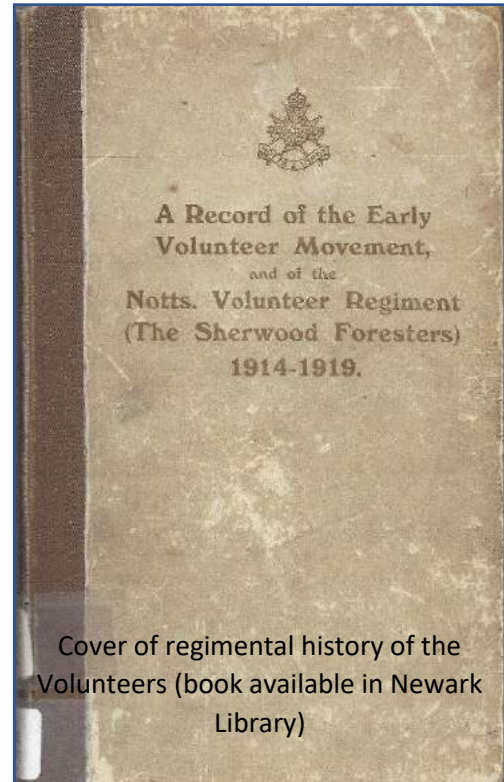
Gathering at Collingham Station early on the morning of Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September, were members of St John the Baptist's church choir and bell-ringers, eager to begin their annual outing. For the boys involved, this was a rare treat and a chance to escape the village, even if the escape was only to Lincoln and not the seaside as in previous years. According to the South Collingham Parish Newsletter (Sept 1918) they spent their morning in Lincoln observing aerial manoeuvres at the aerodrome on Western Common, then walked to the castle, watched a film in the Picture Palace, had lunch in the Lindum Restaurant then attended Evensong in the cathedral. On returning to Lincoln Station, the boys *'thoroughly tested the many automatic machines [on the platform] and sampled their contents'* while waiting for the mail train home.

Meanwhile, in the same newsletter, Edith Maxwell, the wife of the South Collingham rector, made an appeal for items for a forthcoming bazaar in aid of the 'Home' on 55

Victoria Street in Newark. The 'Home' appeared to be a place of refuge for vulnerable girls and women. Mrs Maxwell (1869 -1953) explained that funds were needed at a time when: *'the dangers and temptations which beset young girls are notably great.'*

### Collingham Volunteer Battalion

September brought honours for the Collingham branch of the Newark Volunteers ('C' Co., 12<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters). In the Commandant's Shield at the Trent Range held on September 14<sup>th</sup>, they came 4<sup>th</sup> out of 13 teams, with Pte. Thomas Milner scoring a respectable 41 out of 60 on the shooting range and Pte Fred Parnham (1876 - 1949), a 40. This was to be applauded, considering these Volunteers (known as the Home Guard in the Second World War) worked full-time and had to give up what little spare time they had to attend drill and target practices in the evenings and at weekends.



Cover of regimental history of the Volunteers (book available in Newark Library)

### The Hindenburg Line

It was towards the end of September that the regular troops gathered along the Hindenburg Line were mobilised and began their planned offensive. Immediately, news of casualties was being relayed from the front. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the England and Notts County centre-forward, Arthur Clamp, died of wounds sustained after only three days in the trenches. The 34-year old had made 275 appearances for Notts County before being conscripted into the army. He undertook his military training with the Sherwood Foresters but was drafted to the Queen's Royal regiment on arrival in France.

### Harry Sheldon

A week later, on September 26<sup>th</sup>, the war claimed the life of the 38<sup>th</sup> of the 44 names on the Collingham War Memorials. He was 25-year-old Sgt. Harry Sheldon of the 1/6<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters. Harry was the middle of three children born to farmer and cattle-dealer George and his wife Mary Sheldon of 'The Farm', Low Street. Collingham born-and-bred, Harry attended the Infants' School on Low Street alongside many of the other names on the memorials and was a popular figure in the village.

Harry and his older brother Charles (1890 -1980) were all set to continue in the family business when war broke out. Charles remained to run the farm and land with his father and Harry enlisted with the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry in November 1914. Initially, he served on the home front, rising in the ranks to sergeant by the following May. In December 1917, the young sergeant was transferred to the



*Above: Sgt Harry Sheldon (1892-1918) in his Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry uniform c 1915. Photo c/o Colin Storm*

Sherwood Foresters and posted to France on Christmas Day, where he was to serve with the 1/6<sup>th</sup> battalion. Whether Harry was given leave before he left to attend Charles' wedding to Constance Maria Wright on the 4<sup>th</sup> December at All Saints' Church is unknown.

1918 saw the Sherwood Foresters engaged in some of the bitterest fighting of the entire war. In March alone, the start of the 'Spring Offensive' the battalion lost 958 men. By September, the 1/6<sup>th</sup>, under the leadership of the revered Lt Colonel Bernard William Vann (1887 – 1918), was preparing for a push on Ramicourt, south of Cambrai, near the St Quentin Canal. They were in good company, being supported by the 1/5<sup>th</sup> 1/7<sup>th</sup> and 1/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, the 1/4<sup>th</sup> Black Watch, 139<sup>th</sup> Trench Mortar Battery and 1/3rd London battalion.



However, Harry Sheldon was fated not to participate. The *Newark Advertiser* reported he and three other comrades were killed '*while asleep in a dugout*' on the 26<sup>th</sup>, three days before the offensive began. Fatalities in the actual battle, which lasted until October 10<sup>th</sup>, were high and included Vann, described by General Allenby as '*the most fearless Officer he had ever met.*' Lt Col. Vann, who'd been a chaplain at Wellingborough School before the war, was awarded a Victoria Cross for bravery – the only Church of England clergyman to do so - in the process.

**Sgt H. Sheldon (No. 204788) is remembered in the Roisel Cemetery Extension close to Peronne. His inscription reads: '*Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friend.*'**

**He is also remembered on his parents' grave in All Saints Churchyard, on North Collingham War Memorial Cross and Parishioners' Plaque and the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Roll of Honour in St Swithun's Church, Retford.**

The Sheldon family still play a huge part in the Collingham and Brough community today. 'The Farm' on Low Street is run by Charles and Constance Sheldon's granddaughter, Beth Foster and Tim Sheldon, their grandson, hosts the annual Collingham Show and Ploughing Match on his land at 'Larksfield' on Newark Road.

## October 1918

The Battle of St Quintin Canal (Sept 29<sup>th</sup> – Oct 10<sup>th</sup>) was a notable victory for the allies. Despite fierce opposition, a significant breach of the Hindenburg Line was made and the German high command recognised defeat was imminent. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, the German and Austro-Hungarian governments sent notes to President Wilson of the United States, proposing an armistice. However, it would be another five weeks before the armistice was agreed and signed, during which time the fighting, and killing, continued.

Another local man lost his life a month after Harry Sheldon. He was **Charles Henry**



*Cap badge of the Manchester Regiment*

**Bagley** (1893-1918) a private in the 20<sup>th</sup> Manchester Regiment, who was involved in the final advance in Picardy. Severe fighting took place in the village of Pommereuil on October 23rd, the day Bagley was killed. He was initially reported as missing although his death wasn't confirmed until December. Pte Bagley was the youngest son of Norwell-born George and North Clifton's Sarah Bagley. The 1911 census shows the Bagleys were living on Low Street. Charles (17) was still at home, which was possibly in one end of 'Fleet

Cottage' (30 Low Street) and his occupation was given as gardener. He later married Ethel May, whose maiden name is unknown, and moved to Tennyson Street in Gainsborough. His mother died in 1916 and is buried in All Saints Churchyard. One of his brothers, Edward (1888-1968) lived on Snowden Road. His wife, Sarah (1889-1989) had the distinction of living to the ripe old age of 105. They, too, are buried in North Collingham.

As an aside, Pte Bagley's Manchester Regiment is perhaps best known for having the poet Wilfred Owen among their ranks. Owen served with the 2nd Manchester Battalion and was killed in action on November 4th, 1918. He was 25, the same age as Pte Bagley and Sgt Sheldon.

**Pte. C H Bagley No 54635 is buried alongside 17 other comrades from his battalion in Pommereuil British Cemetery Nord, France. His headstone inscription, chosen by Ethel, reads: 'Faithful unto death A crown of life.'**

## **Fleet Volume 55 No 9 (November 2018)**

### **Part 25: November 1918**

#### **The Armistice**

It would become one of the most significant dates in history. The eleventh hour of the eleventh month in 1918 when, in Marshal Foch's railway carriage on the edge of Compiègne Forest, the German delegation signed the Armistice that brought an end to the Great War. It might be reasonable to expect, therefore, that this column would be filled with tales of the joyous celebrations that took place, both in the trenches and on the home front. Sadly not. It must be remembered the fighting continuing to the bitter end – literally. The 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards were sent on a cavalry charge to take a bridge in Lessines at 10.50 am – ten minutes before the ceasefire. The weeks preceding the signing had been as frenetic as ever; the casualty rate in the local regiment of the Sherwood Foresters for November 1<sup>st</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> was 166 killed – higher than the entire months of either June, July or August. A further 62 would die of wounds sustained during this period. Other divisions would report similar numbers. This meant that for three Collingham families, the sound of the church bells of All Saints and

St John the Baptist announcing the end of hostilities was bittersweet.



L/Corp Harry Wright's grave

#### **Lt/Corp H WRIGHT (1889-1918)**

The first to receive the devastating news that her son wouldn't be returning was Eliza Wright (née Pisani). Born in South Collingham in 1864 and a widow since around 1891, she had reared three children single-handedly in a small cottage on the High Street where numbers 154-158 now stand. Eliza's youngest son, Harry, had been a regular in the army since at least 1911. The lance corporal served with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters throughout the war and

died on November 4<sup>th</sup>, exactly four years to the day since he was mobilized for France. Having fought in some of the toughest battles imaginable, including the first phase of the Somme in 1916, the 29-year old died of pneumonia and passed away in Rouen's Military Hospital.

**Lance Corporal Harry Wright No 11162 is buried in St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen, Saint-Maritime, France. S II P 24**

**He is remembered in North Collingham Cross War Memorial as Harry WRIGHT L/Cpl Sherwood Foresters and on the North Collingham Parishioners War Memorial Plaque as Henry WRIGHT**

### **BELTON OLDHAM (1881-1918)**



**Belton Oldham's grave (in the middle)  
in Cambrai c/o Notts County Council  
Roll of Honour database**

Sharing Eliza's grief that November was cowman James Oldham and his wife Mary living with their granddaughter Winnie (12) in a small row of cottages close to the Wrights. On the same day that Harry Wright was taking his last breath in a hospital bed, their son, Private Belton Oldham, also with the 9<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters, was in action near the village of Sebourg on the France-Belgium border. The former colliery fireman was hit by machine gun fire and wounded in the chest and left arm. Despite being taken to a casualty clearing station at Cambrai, he died of his wounds the next day (November 5<sup>th</sup>). He was thirty years old.

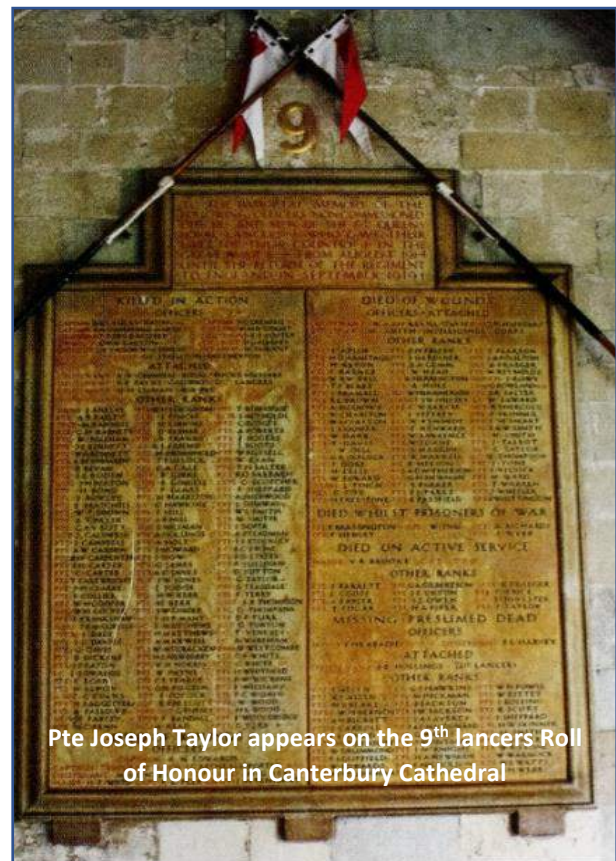
**Private Belton Oldham Service No. 80830 is buried in the Cambrai East Military Cemetery and remembered on the North Collingham Parishioners' Plaque and War Memorial Cross.**



That Belton Oldham had the distinction of being the last man from Collingham to die during the Great War would have brought his family little, if any, comfort. Perhaps even harder to bear, if that is possible, is losing someone *after* a war has ended. Joseph Taylor (1888-1918), was one of three on Collingham's War Memorials to do so.

### **Pte JOSEPH TAYLOR (1888-1918)**

Taylor, a professional soldier, was one of thirteen children born to William Henry Taylor (1856-1929), a farm labourer, and Sarah Ann née Cook (1860 – 1919). Although census returns showed the Collingham-born couple moved to the Eagle area to find work, six of their thirteen children, including Joseph, were baptised in St John the Baptist Church. The Taylors eventually returned to the village for good, settling on Woodhill Road around 1910, by which time Joseph had joined the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers. He was listed as being in barracks at Lydd Camp on Romney Marsh on the 1911 census.



Like L/Corporal Harry Wright, Pte Taylor served throughout the war, first with the 17<sup>th</sup> and then the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers. Initially a cavalry division, the Lancers had quickly learned to adapt to modern warfare and supported the infantry for the most part. The Lancers won recognition for putting up a determined defence of Bois de Hangard (on the Somme) in March 1918, during which Taylor's battalion lost a third of its men. The wood was renamed 'Lancer Wood' in their honour.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers were part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army led by Rawlinson as they advanced on the Sambre-Oise Canal. It is probably here that Taylor received his wounds. The thirty-year old died ten days later, on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Private Joseph Taylor No 934 is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Paris and remembered on the North Collingham Parishioners' Plaque and War Memorial Cross and the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers Roll of Honour in Canterbury Cathedral.**

## THE SPANISH FLU PANDEMIC

There was another reason November 1918 would be remembered as a dark month in Collingham. In October, a second wave of the deadly influenza virus nicknamed the Spanish Flu, had reached pandemic levels on almost every continent. November saw deaths from the virus reaching their highest point. Soldiers were especially susceptible. The dirty and cramped conditions of the trenches, together with the weakened immune systems of the troops, gave the influenza the perfect breeding ground.

Civilians were not immune, either, and in a cruel twist, many of those out in the crowds of London celebrating the Armistice would catch the flu and die '*piling tragedy upon tragedy.*' In all, it is estimated at least 50 million people throughout the world died of the Spanish Flu between 1917-1919; a staggering 3-5% of the world's population.

The precise number of deaths from the flu outbreak in Collingham and district is unknown. According to the East Trent Genealogy database, numbers of burials in the benefice were slightly higher for 1918 and 1919 (41 both years) than the preceding years (32 in 1916, 34 in 1917). Several of the deaths between October 1918 and March 1919 were of younger parishioners – a demographic particularly vulnerable to this strain of the flu. Charles Brownlow was 27, for example, Albert Ernest Cooper 13 months, Irene Wreford 5, Wilfred Hunt 16, Bernard Cook 19 and Frank Marriott 20. Although the causes of death are not given on the database, one suspects some must have been flu-related.

## THE MILLNS FAMILY

One family – the Millns – was particularly badly hit. Builder William Millns (1858-1934) of Bank House on the High Street and his wife Sarah (1860 -1919) lost his daughter, Monica Myatt (31), their grand-daughter Kathleen Myatt (9mths) and another daughter, Kate (25), a VAD nurse on Lombard Street, Newark, within days of each other. Sarah Millns died the following March, aged 59, but whether this was also of the flu is not known. They are all

buried in one grave in North Collingham, close to William's nephew, Harold Millns, who died of wounds sustained on the battlefield, aged 20, in 1916.



*The Millns family grave in North Collingham Churchyard Row G (inscription faces direction of the War Memorial Cross).*

## Post-War Deaths

And so, we arrive at the final two names on the Collingham War Memorials: **Albert Walker** and **Arthur Brompton**. Of the forty-four lives covered in these articles, these two souls had perhaps the most poignant stories of all.

### **ALBERT WALKER (1895-1918)**

Pte Albert Walker passed away at the Star and Garter Home, Richmond in Surrey on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1919. The dark-haired young man with the hazel brown eyes was 23. A Newark lad, the jobbing gardener hadn't had an easy start in life. His mother, Mary (1870-1955) had been pregnant with him when his father died, aged 30, a few months before he was born. Albert and his sister Alice were raised by his grandparents in Coddington until his mother remarried in 1902. By 1911, Albert was a garden boy, living with his mother, step-father Charles Fotherby and two further siblings, in Winthorpe. Their neighbour at the time in Winthorpe House was the formidable suffragist, Miss



Josephine Gilstrap. It was probably during Albert's time at Winthorpe that he joined the choir at St Stephen's Church, Brough and forged a connection to South Collingham Parish.

Albert enlisted on the outbreak of war, when he was 19. Like so many young men, caught up in the patriotic fervour at the time, he was seeking adventure. What he found was blood and pain.

Having enlisted with the Corps of Hussars (of the line) he then transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment. October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1915, during the Battle of Loos, Albert, just 20, was shot in the right



*Above: Soldiers recovering in the Star and Garter Home where Albert Walker spent his final two years.*

lung and spine. He was transferred to the No 6 Casualty Clearing Station in Rouen and then, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, he was transported by hospital train and then boat back to England.

Albert was initially placed in the Lord Derby War Hospital in Warrington, then

moved to the Royal Star and Garter Home,

Richmond, in Middlesex on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1917. The Home was established in 1916 to provide a "permanent haven for paralysed and severely disabled men of the King's Forces." The average age of residents admitted in 1916 was 22 years.

Albert's condition was described as 'paraplegia' (paralysis of the lower body). His hospital report, now available to read online via Ancestry.co.uk, revealed the full extent of his wounds. Although the bullet was removed on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1916 it had done irreparable damage. Albert had complete paralysis of the lower extremities as well as deep bedsores on his heels, buttocks and hips, muscle wastage to his calves and thighs and double incontinence. How the young soldier held on until 1919 is a testament to his willpower, faith and the nursing he received.

Pte Albert Walker died at the Star and Garter Home on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1919, of pneumonia. His weakened state would have made him particularly vulnerable to chest infections.

**Pte. A P. Walker is buried in St Giles' Churchyard, Balderton, Newark and remembered on:  
Balderton - St. Giles Church War Memorial as A P WALKER Pte. Suffolk Regt. Row 6 Newark**



**Cemetery War Memorial as A P WALKER South Collingham - St John the Baptist Church –  
Parishioners' Tablet as A P WALKER Private 1st Btn. Suffolk Regiment South Collingham Roll of  
Honour as Albert WALKER**

**DRIVER ARTHUR BROMPTON (1871-1919)**

By the time war was declared in 1914, Collingham-born Arthur Brompton, a driver with the 119<sup>th</sup> brigade/5<sup>th</sup> Division Royal Field Artillery, had already received his Long Service & Good Conduct medal. This was awarded after 15 years' service and he received it in 1910, suggesting that he joined up in 1895. However, the 1891 census shows him already in barracks at Woolwich, implying he'd been a soldier since he was 19 or 20.

The Royal Field Artillery was the largest arm of the Artillery. They were responsible for mobile (horse-drawn) medium-calibre guns that operated close to the front line. One of their key roles was bombarding the enemy trenches ahead of an offensive to prepare the way for the infantry to attack.



**Arthur Brompton's grave 'Row A'  
North Collingham Churchyard**

Usually, there is no room on these pages to list the various skirmishes and battles each soldier participated in at length but an exception is made in this instance, to highlight one man's experience.

Driver Brompton's time with the Royal Field Artillery between 1914-1918, kindly researched by Jeremy Lodge from the Long, Long Trail website, would have included:

- Battle of Mons. 23-24 Aug 1914.
- Action of Elouges. 24 Aug 1914.
- Battle of Le Cateau. 26 Aug 1914.
- Rearguard action of Crepy en Valies. 1 Sep 1914.

Battle of the Marne. 7-10 Sep 1914, including the passage of the Petit Morin and the passage of the Marne.

Battle of the Aisne. 12-15 Sep 1914, including the capture of the Aisne Heights including the Chemin des Dames.

Battle of La Bassee. 10 Oct-2 Nov 1914.

Battle of Messines. 12 Oct-2 Nov 1914.

Battle of Armentieres. 13 Oct-2 Nov 1914, including the capture of Metern.

Battle of Nonne Bosschen. 11 Nov 1914.

Capture of Hill 60. 17-22 Apr 1915.

Battle of Gravenstaffel. 22-23 Apr 1915.

Battle of St. Julien. 24 Apr-5 May 1915.

Attacks on High Wood. 20-25 Jul 1916.

Battle of Guillemont. 3-6 Sep 1916.

Battle of Flers-Courcelette. 15-22 Sep 1916, including the capture of Martinpuich.

Battle of Morval. 25-28 Sep 1916, including the capture of Combles, Lesboeufs and Gueudecourt

Battle of Vimy. 9-14 Apr 1917.

Attack on La Coulotte. 23 Apr 1917.

Third Battle of the Scarpe. 3-4 May 1917, including the capture of Fresnoy.

Capture of Oppy Wood. 28 Jun 1917.

Battle of Polygon Wood. 26 Sep-3 Oct 1917.

Battle of Broodside. 4 Oct 1917.

Battle of Poelcappelle. 9 Oct 1917.

Second Battle of Passchendaele. 26 Oct-10 Nov 1917.

Battle of Hazebrouck. 12-15 Apr 1918, including the defence of the Hinges Ridge and the Nieppe Forest.

Action of La Becque. 28 Jun 1918.

Battle of Albert. 21-23 Aug 1918, including the capture of Chuignes.

Second Battle of Bapaume. 31 Aug-3 Sep 1918.

Battle of Epehy. 18 Sep 1918.

Battle of the Canal du Nord. 27 Sep-1 Oct 1918, including the capture of Bourlon Wood.

The pursuit to the Selle. 9-12 Oct 1918.

Battle of the Selle. 17-25 Oct 1918.

And how did this valiant soldier and native of Collingham become the last man to join the list of the Fallen on Collingham's War Memorials? He passed away at his brother Herbert and sister Emma's house, possibly from exhaustion, on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1919, two weeks after being discharged from the army he had served so faithfully for almost 30 years. He was 48.

**Driver Arthur Brompton is buried in North Collingham Graveyard, Row B Grave 18, close to his parents, William and Harriet, and brother Herbert (1877-1951). He is also remembered on the North Collingham Cross War Memorial. For some reason he does not appear on the Parishioners' Plaque inside the church.**

In January 2014, five of Arthur Brompton's medals were sold, including the 'Mons' Star. The 'Mons' Star is one of the earliest of the Great War medals, being awarded only to those already recruited into the army and in service from the outset. It is distinguishable from the ordinary 'Star' by having 'Aug-Nov' embossed in the centre. Let us hope whoever bought the medals appreciates the bravery of the man who earned them.

# **Fleet Volume 55 No 10 (December 2018)**

## **Part 26: Aftermath**

*We who are left, how shall we look again  
Happily on the sun or feel the rain,  
Without remembering how they who went  
Ungrudgingly and spent  
Their all for us loved, too, the sun and rain?*

- from 'A Lament' by Wilfred Wilson Gibson (1872-1962)

-

It was over. The Armistice had 'brought an end to the greatest war the world had ever known,' as the Rev. Maxwell observed in his December 1918 parish magazine newsletter. Now came the hard part: getting back to normal.

### **Demobilisation**

The first task for the government was demobilising over three million servicemen scattered over three continents. It would be months before every soldier was sleeping in his own bed again. Even then, some, like Brough's Alfred Clayton (1897-1982), a private in the Northamptonshire Regiment, were retained as 'Class Z' reservists, meaning they could be called back for duty any time. This was a precaution in case the Amnesty didn't hold. Clayton wasn't fully discharged from the army until the following June. Despite all this, the demobilisation process went relatively smoothly but one thing is for sure; few of those who had seen active service would fit seamlessly back into the life they'd had before the war.

Over two hundred men from Collingham and Brough saw active service, although it's hard to give an exact figure. Their descendants, many of whom are still in the district today, nearly all say the same thing about their forefather's experience: they never talked about it. Medals were kept in the backs of drawers, letters and postcards tied in bundles and shoved in a tin somewhere; scars, physical and mental, were hidden from public view as far as possible. The British 'stiff upper lip' was never more in evidence than after the Great War.



Having said that, 21-year-old motor mechanic **Percy Reeve** (1897-1947) was unable to avoid a bit of well-deserved publicity when, in December 1918, he was awarded the Military Medal (MM) by the mayor in Newark Town Hall. Reeve, who'd been a rifleman in the Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own) earned the award for his courage on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1918 when he relayed a key message along the line at St Quentin that saved the lives of two companies. He was wounded in the arm and hand during his mercy dash. Reeve joined fellow ex-pupil at Collingham Boys' school Harry Marrows (1896-1963), a wheelwright living on Tong's Row (Baptist Lane) and Low Street's Thomas Bacon (killed in action 1917) who also received the prestigious



Rifleman Percy Reeve MM

award for bravery. Collingham-born Bernard Cartwright Pennington received the Military Cross (MC) and French Croix de Guerre with palm and South Scarle's Stanley Edmonds Colton (1898-1918) received a posthumous MC. Percy Reeve MM, who later lived at 'The White Hart', is buried in North Collingham alongside his wife, Hilda.

### Normality Returns

There were other positives, too. Blackouts were taken down from windows, church bells pealed once more and gas lighting was switched on again in the streets. The cricket club reconvened in April 1919 and the Collingham Show resumed in October.

1920 saw an increase in the number of weddings in the benefice, among them painter and decorator Harry Hoe (1895-1944) who married Ethel Moor of Besthorpe. Harry and his brother Frank (1898-1982) had both seen active service. In fact, Frank had a German helmet hanging from a nail in his shed<sup>39</sup> to remind him of just how active!

Also walking down the aisle that year was farmer's daughter Hannah Liley (1880-1958), whose brother William (1885-1963) gave her away. Sadly, her other brother, Jim, was not there to share the occasion. He was killed on the Somme in 1916.

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<sup>39</sup> Source: Mr Malcolm Barnard. Malcolm donated the helmet to CDLHS archives in 2018

A new headteacher was appointed to the Boys' School to replace Sam Coging who left to take up an appointment in Balderton. The new man in charge was Joseph Wood Beard (1889-1993). Born in Warsop, Mr Beard returned to teaching after serving in the King's Royal Rifles. He was invalided out in April 1917 and awarded a silver badge to prove he had seen active service. How long his tenure as headteacher lasted is unknown. Miss M J Wilson (born c. 1864) continued serving as headmistress of the Girls' and Infants' School until at least 1922. She began there around 1890.



Those who still had businesses left to run took over the reins again and those who didn't sought work elsewhere. George Willis, whose bakery and grocery stores on 7, High Street, had ended in insolvency in

1916, went to work for Ransome and Marles in Newark. Ransome and Marles (now NSK), an engineering firm known for producing quality ball bearings, armaments and wooden propellers for aeroplanes during the war, welcomed ex-servicemen like George. By 1920, the firm employed 816 men, 200 boys and 360 women. Of the 360 women, only 60 were skilled machine operators – during the war it had been 300 out of a female workforce of 500. Women, despite their tremendous effort to keep the country going during the war, and the landmark ruling in the Representation of the People Act (February 1918), were now expected to return to their more 'traditional' roles. Whether they did or not is another matter.

### Hard Times

Many women had no choice but to find work. On the 'My Story' section of the Collingham in the Great War website, you can read about Jane Scott, whose husband David Emmanuel Scott was drowned off Scarpa Flow in 1914. Jane was initially denied a war widow's pension on the grounds that David, in the Royal Navy Voluntary Reserve, had not served for long enough, leaving her to raise four children single-handedly.

It wasn't only war widows who faced penury. Those dependent on sons or brothers as breadwinners suffered, too. Tom and Jack Bacon's mother, Mary Ann, widowed since 1904

and reliant on her two sons to help out financially, had to take in washing to supplement her meagre pension and bring up her remaining three children.

The clergy were not immune to hardship, either. A circular in 1919 from Dr Edwyn Hoskyns, Bishop of Southwell, read: *'I am receiving evidence of the growing poverty of many of the clergy in this Diocese. Incomes which were inadequate before the War have now so diminished in value that wives and children are suffering. They themselves are silent about their anxiety and will not complain but you will know where help is needed.'* He goes on to suggest the Easter Offering should be donated to clergy and their families.



It soon became clear that while war might be good for business, peace time wasn't. The National Debt had soared and Britain struggled to regain the pre-war trade deals it had once enjoyed. Exports dropped by 25% and high unemployment followed. Businesses were hard pushed to meet the twin demands of higher wages and increased overheads.

John Wigram, who oversaw the accounts for South Collingham Church, wrote several letters of complaint to firms about rising costs of materials. J Stennett, a Newark printer and bookbinder's response was illuminating. In a letter dated June 1920 he writes:

*'Dear Sir,*

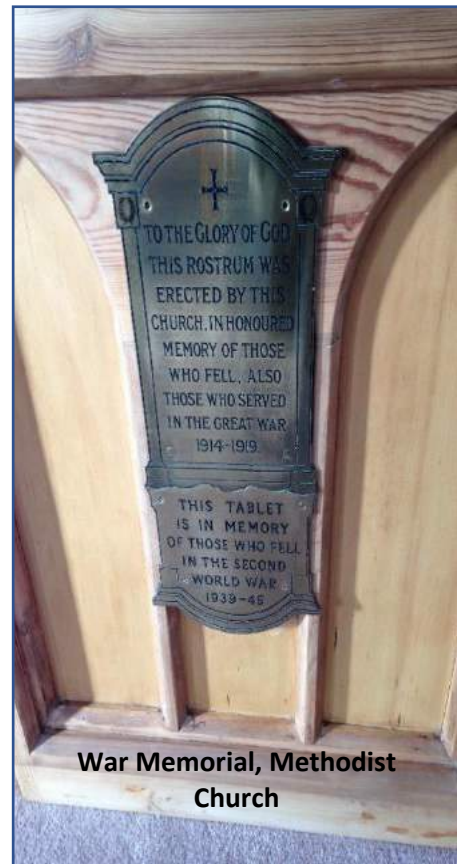
*I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday's date re: the cost of printing South Collingham Church Accounts. I would point out that since April 1919 working hours in our trade have been reduced from 54 to 48 hours per week and wages have advanced 21/- per week per man. We are now paying three times our pre-war cost. Under these circumstances I think you would agree that fixing the pre-war price at 7/6, the charge today of 22/- is a fair one.'*

*[Source: Nottinghamshire Archives P/123/500,83]*

## War Memorials 1919-1920

Given these straitened times it is to the credit of the two parishes that they dug deep to raise funds for suitable memorials to the forty-four souls who had not returned. *'We owe more than gratitude to those men who have laid down their lives on our behalf,'* wrote Rev Maxwell. No one disputed it.

The Methodist Church wasted no time in producing their plaque; a simple, polished metal plate mounted on a rostrum reconstructed from an old pulpit. This was unveiled by Mr Oliver Quibell in March 1919 (right). North and South, meanwhile, both set up a War Memorial Committee with Rev. Maxwell heading South's and All Saints' churchwarden, Mr Thomas Bradley of 'The Willows' on Low Street, chairing North's.



War Memorial, Methodist Church

The two parishes chose different types of memorials; North went for an outdoor stone cross and a parishioners' plaque inside All Saints and South chose an indoor bronze tablet and stained glass window for St John the Baptist. North Collingham had its unveiling ceremony in November 1919 and South Collingham the following July. In addition, each parish received a commercially-produced roll of honour, donated by a generous parishioner and completed by hand then framed and glazed. The rolls of honour included a list of those who served as well as those who had lost their lives.

The first 'Armistice Day' was held on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1919 with a two minutes silence observed in Collingham and Brough schools at 11.00 am. A 'memorial service' in South Church was held during Evensong on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1920, paving the way for what would eventually become Remembrance Sunday.<sup>40</sup>

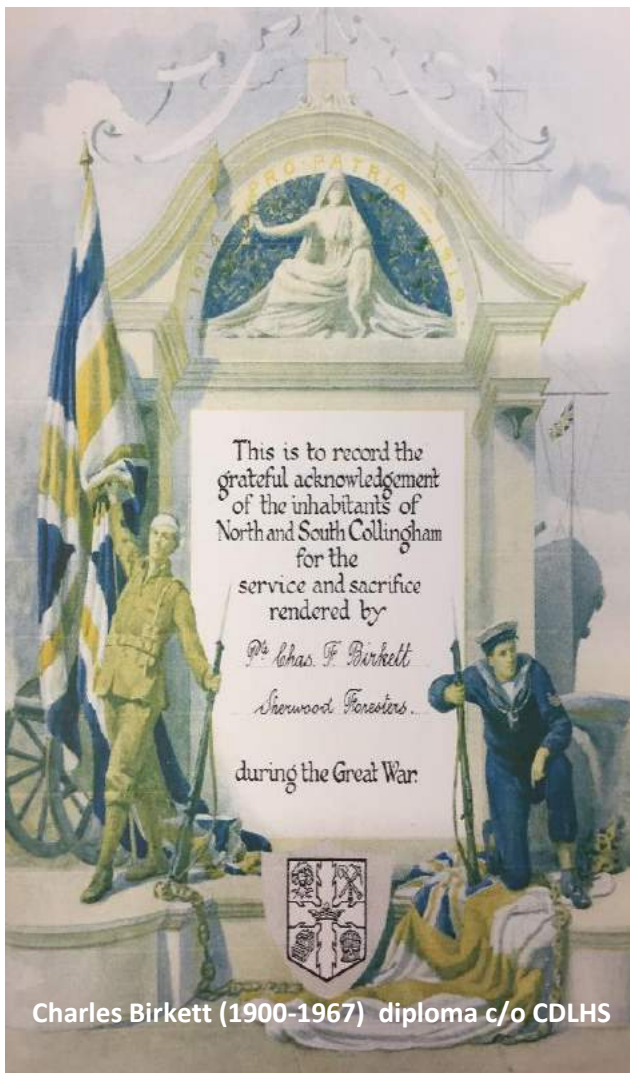
<sup>40</sup> A free booklet 'Collingham's War Memorials' by Helena Pielichaty, published in 2018, available while stocks last (see Appendix)



## Peace Celebrations June 1919

At the same time as fundraising for the war memorials, preparations for the Peace Celebrations in the village were in full swing. Timed to roughly coincide with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28<sup>th</sup> June, the committee of 26 volunteers, chaired by Rev. Gould, opted for the jamboree to take place on Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup>. It must have been quite an event, judging by the box full of paperwork and photographs relating to it held by Collingham and District Local History Society (Ref WCD/FF1). Let us hope the celebrations brought joy to the villagers after a period of unprecedented misery.

## A Final Gesture February 1920



A final gesture to those who served took place on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1920. The Public Hall was the venue for an awards ceremony in '*grateful acknowledgement of the inhabitants of North and South Collingham for the service and sacrifice rendered*'. The local MP, Mr Starkey, gave out diplomas and the organisers provided a 'most enjoyable tea' afterwards. As Trevor Frecknall points out in his book '*Collingham and district in the Great War*', it is a pity the report in the Newark Herald did not list the recipients of the diplomas.

Charles Birkett (1900-1967) diploma c/o CDLHS

For the families of the bereaved, there were official ‘mementos’, should they wish to send for them, most notably the saucer-sized ‘Next of Kin’ bronze commemorative plaques awarded by the government along with a scroll and ‘King’s message’.

These plaques became known as the ‘Widow’s’ or ‘Dead Man’s’ Penny.

The mounted commemorative plaque to Brough’s Jack Peet Bee (right) was displayed on a wall in Jack’s sister Minnie’s home in Sincil Bank, Lincoln, for the rest of her life.



Framed bronze plaque belonging to Jack Peet Bee (1894-1916) Image c/o Steve Allen

## The Coffee Room



*Above: Opening ceremony of the Coffee Room July 1920 Postcard No X33 c/o CDLHS.*

Collingham also had a new place for people to meet – a ‘Coffee Room’ on the High Street, replacing a previous Coffee Room on Station Road that was no longer available. Coffee

Rooms were set up, often by Wesleyans, to provide an alternative social space to the village pub. During the war the one on Station Road was used by billeted soldiers. Edward Nicholson recalled his father, George, would call round in the evenings to 'read and write letters for the illiterate.' [Source: Fleet 1975]

The new Coffee Room consisted of a redundant military hut bought for £270. The cost was mostly met by Lt Colonel Gowrie Aitchison of the Burnt House and Mrs Mary Browne, of South Collingham House, another generous benefactor.

Situated on land fronting the High Street where the entrance to the Medical Centre car park now stands, the Coffee Room served as a multi-functional amenity over the years, from meeting room to youth club to library. It was initially proposed that one evening a week should be given over to 'ladies-only.' The Coffee Room was later demolished to make way for Collingham Medical Centre. Another ex-WW1 military hut can still be seen in the village today, adjoining Dennis Thacker's Garage near the traffic lights (near 40 High Street).

## Aftermath

On the surface, then, Collingham appeared to be doing its best to come to terms with the aftermath of the war. Still, there was always some reminder to snag the heart; Arthur Crocker with his limp, Joe Harker with his missing arm. Perhaps the most poignant reminder of them all were the children of the Fallen. At least thirteen Collingham and Brough children lost their fathers during the war. The youngest, Fred East (1916-1937) was barely three months old when his father, also Fred, was killed. Poor Fred Jr also died young – in an aircraft accident at RAF Waddington aged 21.

Yet this is only half the story. This figure does not include those whose fathers died as a direct result of their war service later on. Take the case of Southwell-born **Walter Wood Bates** (1870-1921), a grocer at 148 High Street (the property opposite the ancient cross currently boarded up). According to Frecknall (page 153), Bates, married with three teenage children, '*dropped dead at Collingham Railway Station just after buying a ticket*' in January 1921. The 51-year old had served in the South Notts Hussars and contracted malaria during

the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915, which had affected his heart. He is buried in North Collingham Churchyard. His wife, Ada, died in Cambridge in 1942 and is buried alongside him.

Another ex-serviceman who barely reached his 50s was Lincoln-born hairdresser and tobacconist **Frank Lavington**. His death was not quite as dramatic as Wood's, nor as soon after the war, but tragic nevertheless. Frank and his wife, Edith, came to Collingham around 1923, soon after they were married.



They initially lived above what is now Gascoigne's Newsagent (then Kemp's, an ironmonger's shop) and established their small hairdressing business, first in the single storey annexe off Aberdeen House and then the small shop adjoining Kemp's. Later, as the business flourished, the Lavingtons moved to double-fronted premises on 52 High Street (Clematis Cottage). A daughter, Winnie Lavington, (later Sunman) was born in 1927.

The account of Frank Lavington's death in the Newark Advertiser (April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1947) begins: *'A shock was felt in the village when it became known that a well-respected inhabitant and tradesman had passed away. Mr Frank Lavington. He was 53 years of age and had been in ill-health for some years, suffering from the effects of the first World War.'*

Frank had indeed had a punishing time during the war. He enlisted with the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment in 1915 and was called up in 1916. Hospitalised three times in 1917, once with scabies and twice with gas poisoning, he was gassed again on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1918. It seems this last attack finally did for his lungs and chest. Pte Lavington was discharged as no longer physically fit on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1919. When asked to put his symptoms in writing to the Medical Board he wrote: *'Owing to being gassed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October I cannot take my food properly and have an annoying cough at night and heavy pain in the right side after walking a long distance owing to being short of breath which I think is caused by gas.'*



These symptoms would dog him the rest of his life, leaving him with a persistent cough and chronic bronchitis. Frank's trade as a hairdresser and tobacconist wouldn't have helped his condition but there is no doubt that it was the gas attacks he sustained during the war that hastened his death. His funeral took place in the Methodist Church on April 11th. Edith later moved to 'Debdale' - 6 Bell Lane - and died in 1991 at the ripe old age of 98.

No doubt there were many more premature deaths among those who served. The Armistice may have been signed in November 1918 but for many, the dust of the battlefields would never leave them.

### ***Lest We Forget***

This concludes the Collingham in the Great War series. Thank you to everyone who has been kind enough to say they have enjoyed the pieces. It has been a privilege to write them and share Collingham and Brough's story with Fleet's readers.

*Helena Pielichaty, Collingham, November 2018*



## **Roll of Honour**

### **Collingham Roll of Honour (North and South) World War 1**

#### **Order of Fatalities**



#### **1914**

- Ronald Andrew Colquhoun Aitchison Dec 14th

#### **1915**

- Thomas Letts Berry b. 1880 March 13<sup>th</sup>
- Percy Browne Aug 9th
- Arthur Starr Sept 27<sup>th</sup>

#### **1916**

- George William Blundy Feb 14<sup>th</sup>
- Montague B Browne April 25th
- Jack Peet Bee July 20<sup>th</sup>
- Frank Golland July 28<sup>th</sup>
- John William Bacon Sept 3rd
- Vincent Wilkinson September 15<sup>th</sup>
- James Liley September 26th
- George Ashworth Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>
- William H Hammond October 7<sup>th</sup>

- Fred East October 8<sup>th</sup>
- Arthur Tonn Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Robert Stanley Hunt October 25<sup>th</sup>
- Charles A Bunn Nov 17<sup>th</sup>
- Harold Millns Dec 14<sup>th</sup>

### 1917

- Thomas H C Woolley April 27<sup>th</sup>
- Elisabeth Hunt June 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Frederick Lyon July 30<sup>th</sup>
- Thomas Henry Bacon July 31
- Walter Hill August 11
- Tom Dakin East Sept 21
- Herbert Priestley Sept 26<sup>th</sup>
- Leonard Priestley October 6<sup>th</sup>
- Arthur Williams October 17<sup>th</sup>
- Frank Thompson November 11<sup>th</sup>

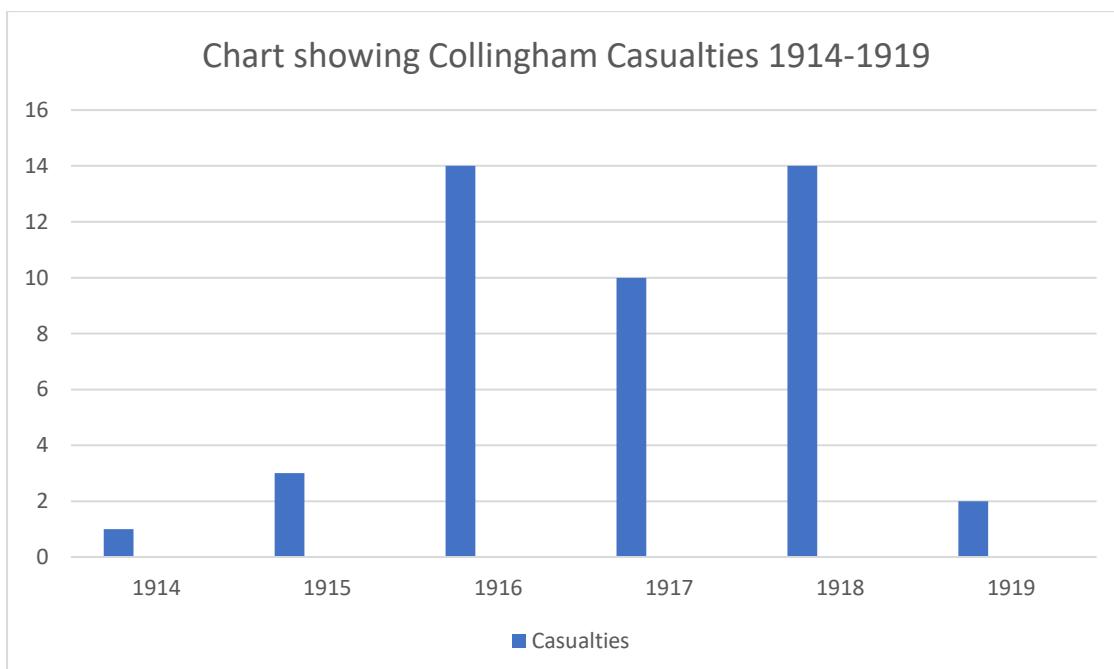
### 1918

- George H Pilgrim March 27<sup>th</sup>
- Frank White March 28<sup>th</sup>
- Albert E Hammond April 11<sup>th</sup>
- Leonard Ashworth April 12<sup>th</sup>
- John Harker April 15<sup>th</sup>
- George H Clayton May 27<sup>th</sup>

- Harry Blow May 29th
- Arthur Wynne Williams August 8th
- John Thomas Hickman August 10th
- Harry Sheldon September 26th
- Charles H Bagley October 23rd
- Harry Wright Nov 4th
- Belton Oldham Nov 5<sup>th</sup>
- Joseph Taylor Nov 14<sup>th</sup>

**1919**

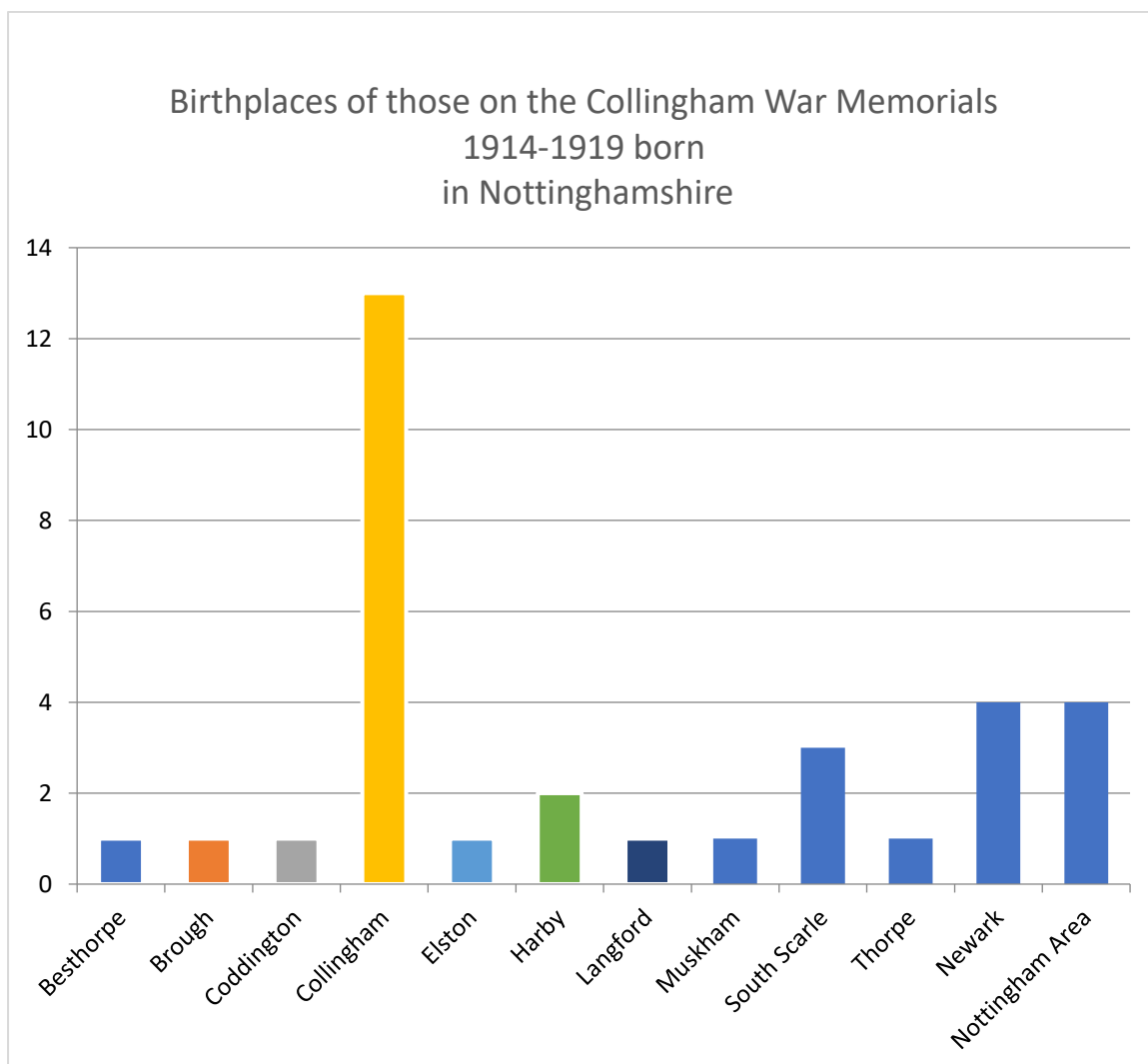
- Albert Percy Walker May 15th
- Arthur Brompton June 6<sup>th</sup>





*Appendix ii*

*Table showing birthplaces of those on the Collingham War Memorials born in Nottinghamshire (33 out of the 44)*



**Places of birth by county:**

Nottinghamshire 33

Lincolnshire 6

Derbyshire 1

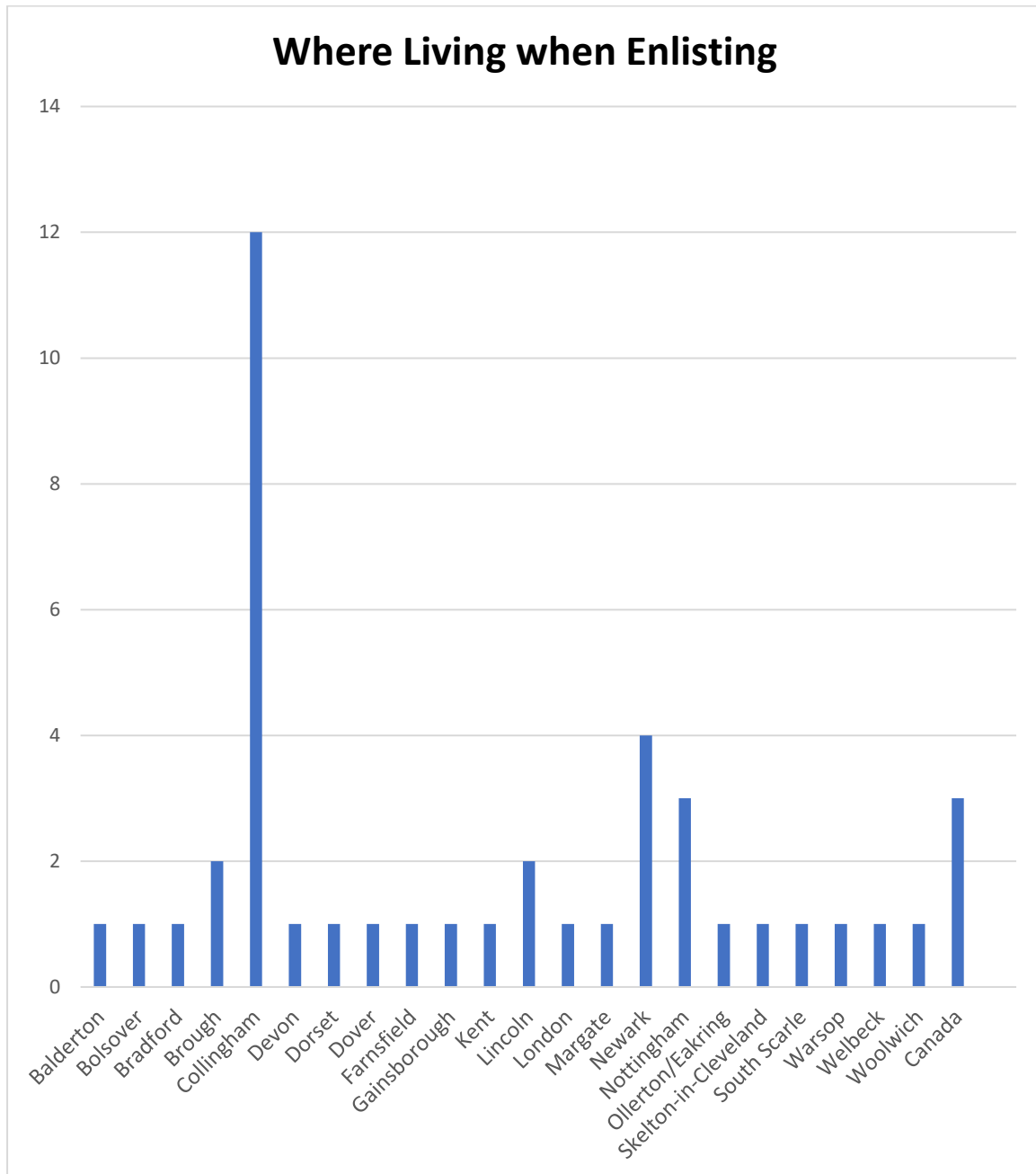
Leicestershire 1

Other 2 (Cambridgeshire & Suffolk)

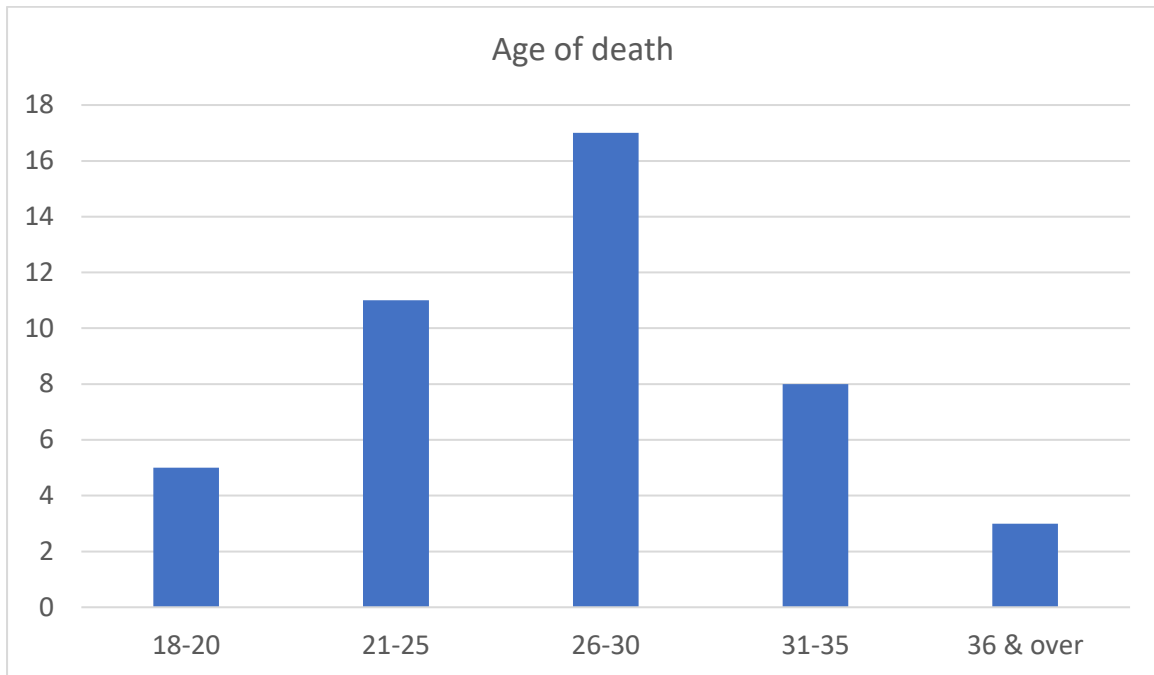
1 unknown (Frank White – likely to be Sheffield)

Appendix iii

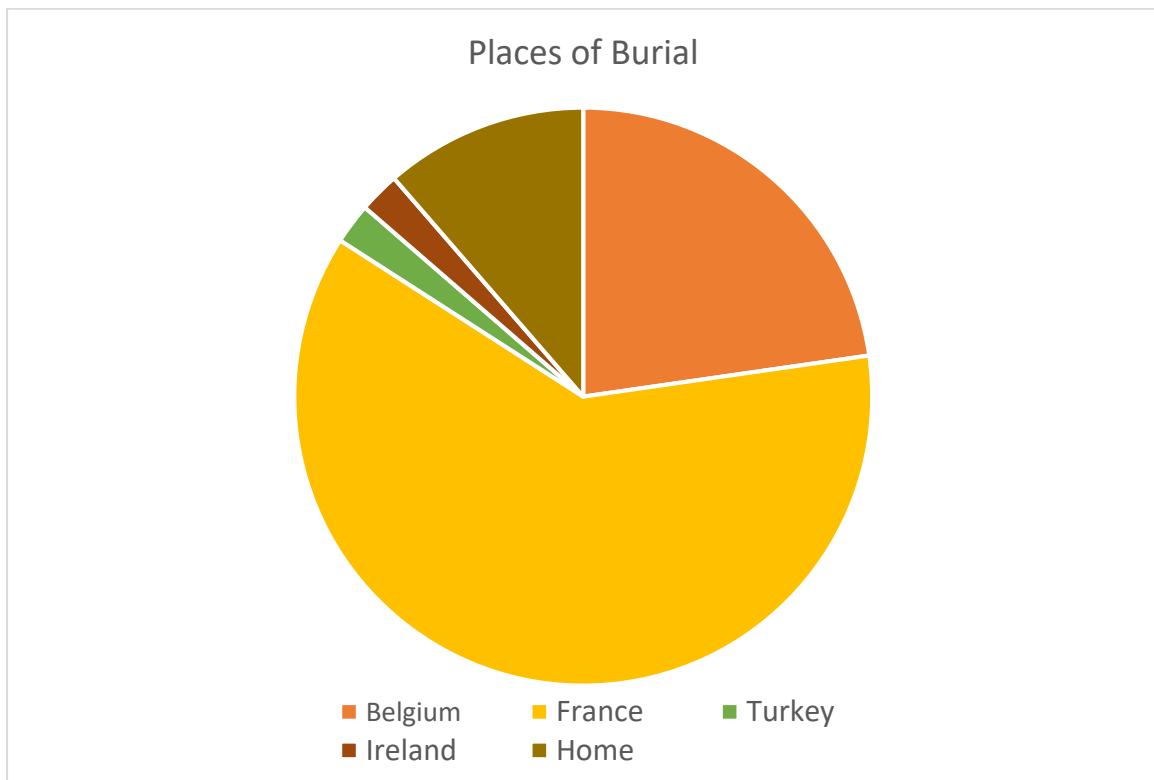
Table showing locations at time of enlistment



*Appendix iv: Table showing age of death*



*Appendix v: Table showing places of burial*



1324.

SOUTH COLLINGHAM PARISH  
WITH BROUGH.

**Memorials to the Fallen.**

**ROLL OF HONOUR.**

R. A. C. Aitchison, Lt., King's Own Royal Lancs.  
Regt.  
P. L. Browne, Capt., Lincolnshire Regt.  
M. B. Browne, 2nd Lieut., 2/8 Sherwood Foresters.  
J. P. Bee, Pte., 1st Batt. Northants Regt.  
V. Wilkinson, Pte., 2nd Batt. Grenadier Guards.  
J. Liley, Lce.-Cpl., 9th Batt. Sherwood Foresters.  
W. H. Hammond, Pte., 1/8 Sherwood Foresters.  
A. Tonn, Pte., 1st Batt. Kings Own Royal Lancs.  
T. H. C. Woolley, Capt., 2/8 Sherwood Foresters.  
H. Priestley, Pte., 2/7 Sherwood Foresters.  
L. Priestley, Lce.-Cpl., 15th Batt. Sherwood  
Foresters.  
G. H. Pilgrim, Pte., 9th Lancers.  
A. E. Hammond, Pte., 1/5 Durham Light Infantry.  
G. H. Clayton, Cpl., 1st Batt. Sherwood Foresters.  
J. T. Hickman, Pte., 44th Canadians.  
A. P. Walker, Pte., 1st Suffolk Regt.

**Dedication Service,**

MONDAY, JULY 19th, 1920,

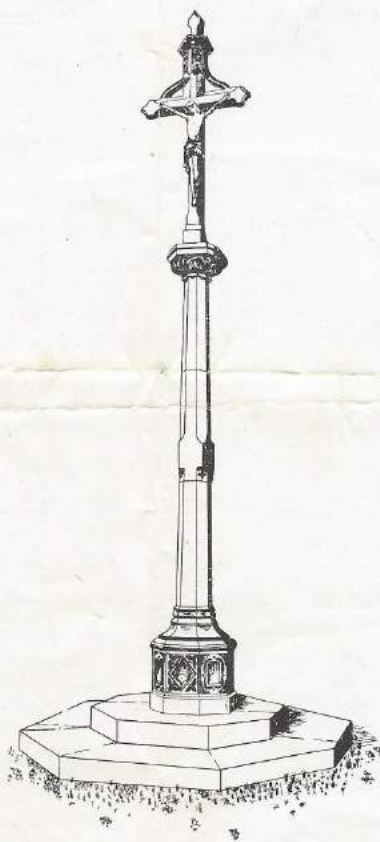
AT 7.30 P.M.



**NORTH COLLINGHAM PARISH.**

**Memorial to the Fallen,**

**1914—1919.**



**Unveiling and Dedication Service,**

**Sunday, November 30th, 1919.**

FF1 8

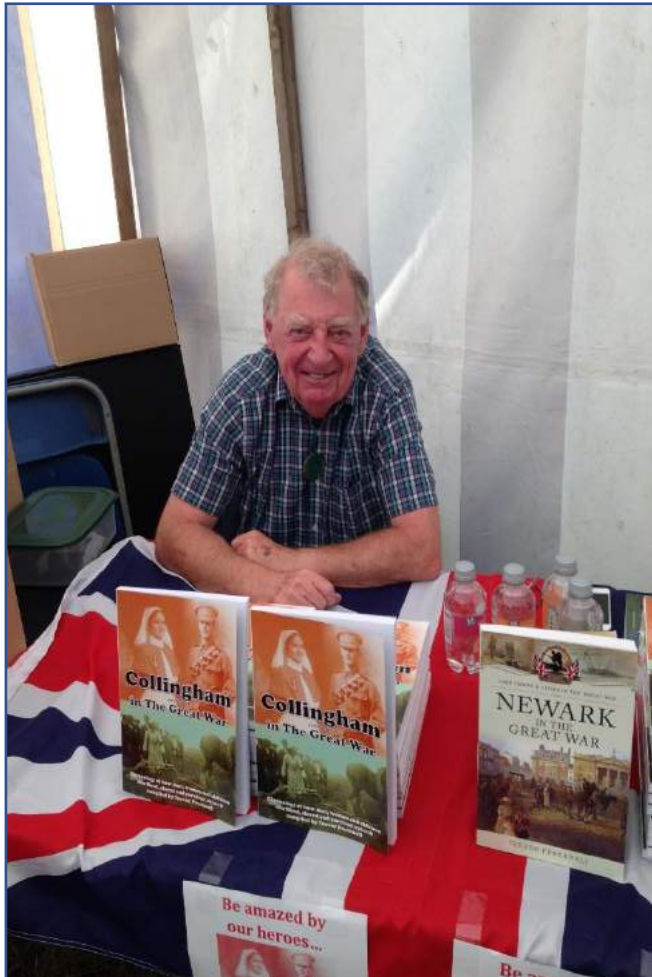
## Names of the Fallen.

George Ashworth	...	...	2nd Lt. Sh. For.	...	...	D. Oct. 2nd, 1916.
Leonard Ashworth	...	...	2nd Lt. York & Lanc. R.	...	...	D. Apr. 12th, 1918.
Thomas Henry Bacon	...	...	L. Corp. Linc. R.	...	...	D. July 31st, 1917.
John William Bacon	...	...	L. Corp. K.R.R.	...	...	D. Sept. 13th, 1916.
Charles Henry Bagley	...	...	Pr. Manchester R.	...	...	D. Oct. 23rd, 1918.
Thomas Letts Berry	...	...	Corp. Sh. For.	...	...	D. Mar. 12th, 1915.
Harry Blow	...	...	Pr. R. Scots. R.	...	...	D. May 29th, 1918.
George William Blundy	...	...	Pr. York R.	...	...	D. Feb. 14th, 1916.
Arthur Brompton	...	...	Driver R.F.A.	...	...	D. June 6th, 1919.
Charles Alfred Bunn	...	...	P. R.M. Light Inf.	...	...	D. Nov. 17th, 1916.
Tom Dakin East	...	...	Pr. Notts. & Derby R.	...	...	D. Sept. 21st, 1917.
Fred East	...	...	Pr. Can. Sc. Infy.	...	...	D. Oct. 8th, 1916.
Frank Golland	...	...	Pr. D. of Wellington's R.	...	...	D. July 28th, 1916.
John Harker	...	...	L. Corpl. Lincs. R.	...	...	D. Apr. 15th, 1918.
Walter Hill	...	...	Driver, Royal Field Art.	...	...	D. Aug. 11th, 1917.
Robert Stanley Hunt	...	...	Pr. Warwickshire R.	...	...	D. Oct. 25th, 1916.
Elizabeth Hunt	...	...	Nurse, M. Hosp., Margate	...	...	D. June 23rd, 1917.
Frederick Lyon	...	...	Pr. Lincs. Regt.	...	...	D. July 30th, 1917.
Harold Millns	...	...	P. Sherwood Rangers	...	...	D. Dec. 14th, 1916.
Belton Oldham	...	...	P. Sherwood Foresters	...	...	D. Nov. 5th, 1918.
Harry Sheldon	...	...	Sgt. Sherwood Foresters	...	...	D. Sept. 26th, 1918.
Arthur Starr	...	...	Rifleman, K.R.R.	...	...	D. Sept. 27th, 1915.
Joseph Taylor	...	...	Pr. 9th Lancers	...	...	D. Nov. 14th, 1918.
Frank Thompson	...	...	Rifleman, K.R.R.	...	...	D. Nov. 11th, 1917.
Frank White	...	...	Pr. Yorks. Light Infantry	...	...	D. July 4th, 1918.
Arthur Ernest Williams	...	...	Pr. Army Vet. Corps.	...	...	D. Oct. 17th, 1917.
Arthur Wynne Williams	...	...	Pr. Can. Scots. Regt.	...	...	D. Oct. 8th, 1918.
Harry Wright	...	...	L. Corpl. Sherwood F.	...	...	D. Nov. 4th, 1918.

Roll of Honour on the rear of the North Collingham Service Sheet (original copy in CDLHS archives)

## **Tribute to Trevor Frecknall, author of 'Collingham and district in The Great War'**

This article appeared in Fleet Volume 55 No 2 March 2018



*Trevor Frecknall signing books at Collingham Show 2015*

Trevor Frecknall (1945-2017) lost his life to cancer last November. A journalist with the Nottingham Evening Post and then news editor of Athletics Weekly, Trevor had turned to writing local histories on his retirement, having been instructed by his wife, Gill, 'not to vegetate.' I met him at his book launch in the summer of 2014 where he signed my copy of the first of his wartime chronologies, Newark in The Great War (Pen and Sword publications). 'I'm writing about Collingham in the Great War,' I informed him. He looked up at me. 'Are you really?' he said, his eyes brightening. 'I've got a lot of stuff on Collingham I couldn't use in my book. Would you like to see it?' Ha!

That 'stuff' became 'Collingham and district in The Great War' which Trevor offered to write after I reassured him it would find an audience. He extended his research and by the following September had written, self-published and launched this definitive book on Collingham between 1914-1918. He put me to shame, unearthing details about the Newark Rural Tribunals I hadn't even heard of and plundering Newark Library and Nottinghamshire Archives to access War Diaries, school log books, Parish Council Minutes and all manner of documents.

He was impressed by the small collection of village archives held in the Jubilee Room and even more impressed by meeting the late George Longland (1922-2016). I set up the meeting thinking George would be the perfect 'old boy' for Trevor to talk to. Sitting opposite the pair of them in George's living room on Snowden Road, I watched as they pored over a weighty album full of photographs and postcards. Trevor was at ease with people, charming and relaxed, asking questions and listening to answers in equal measure. 'I couldn't stand him,' George sniffed, pointing to a picture of Collingham Boys' School headteacher, Herbert Evans, in military uniform. From George, Trevor uncovered details about Bertie Walton, the conscientious objector on Woodhill Road, and George Hind, George's favourite uncle and founder of the 'Home Guard' in the village in 1914.

Long after the book was finished, I would email Trevor for advice and permission to use his information in these Fleet pieces. Even when he knew his cancer was terminal, he always signed off with a cheery 'keep smiling.' At his funeral, held in North Muskhams Methodist Church on November 14th 2017, Trevor's son Ian recalled his father as 'The Champion of the Underdog.' I think this was what drove him to spend as much time researching the lives of the agricultural labourers from Collingham who had seen active service as those from more affluent backgrounds. That said, he had a soft spot for the two Colton boys from South Scarle Hall; Bertie, killed at Gallipoli in 1915 and Stanley, April 1918. Perhaps the fact they'd attended the Magnus School, as he had, helped.

Thank you, Trevor. Rest in Peace.

*Others who have passed away since the Fleet series went to print and who helped with the contributions include Collingham residents George Longland (1922-2016) and Joan Baston (1925-2018), Nottingham historian Cliff Housley (died 2016) and Chester-based Ann Broad-Davies (died 2015). RIP*



## **Resources from the 2018 Collingham in the Great War commemorations**

During 2018, Collingham Parish Council undertook a year-long programme to commemorate Collingham during the Great War. The programme involved a wide range of community groups and events and was funded by a grant from Heritage Lottery UK. The funding also enabled the creation of the following resources:

### **COLLINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR WEBSITE**

(<https://www.hugofox.com/community/collingham-parish-7790/war-memorials/>)

This microsite is attached to Collingham Parish Council's main website. It includes full profiles of all the soldiers who lost their lives during the Great War as well as detailed information about the Home Front, Bertie Walton and the role of women.

There is also a section '*To Honour our Heroes*'. This outlines an undertaking by Collingham resident Jerome Wright to visit every grave on the Rolls of Honour during 2018 and leave a card on the grave linking back to the website. This led to some interesting feedback on the website from visitors to the various cemeteries in France and Belgium.

### **COLLINGHAM GREAT WAR VILLAGE TRAIL**

written & researched by CDLHS/U3A Research Group

A copy was delivered free to every Collingham resident. Copies currently available from CDLHS (see the Society's website at [collingham-history.org.uk](http://collingham-history.org.uk) for details)



### **COLLINGHAM'S WAR MEMORIALS**

Helena Pielichaty.

The 64-page booklet includes WW1 & WW2 memorials & was distributed during the Armistice Day Service held in All Saints' Church on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2018. Copies (free of charge) available from the churchwardens and Collingham Parish Council at the time of going to press.

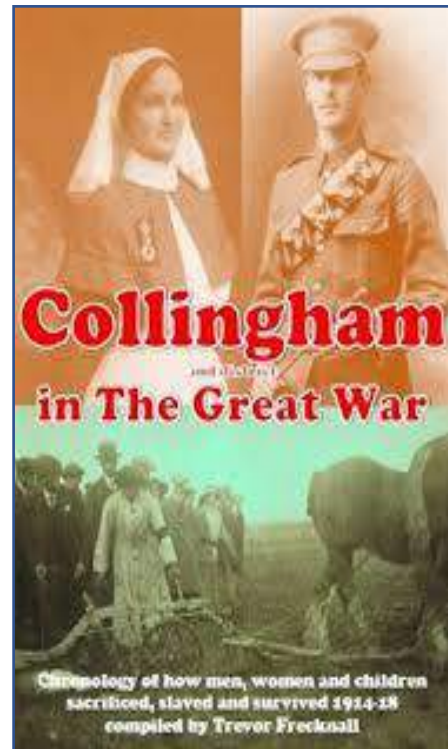
## **Bibliography and Sources:**

### **Websites**

- The Long, Long Trail ([www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk))
- Ancestry.co.uk ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))
- East Trent Genealogy ([www.easttrentgenealogy.co.uk](http://www.easttrentgenealogy.co.uk))
- The Sherwood Foresters Roll of Honour ([www.the-sherwood-foresters.co.uk](http://www.the-sherwood-foresters.co.uk))
- Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour ([www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour))
- Scarlet Finders - WW1 nurses ([www.scarletfinders.co.uk](http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk))
- Various individual regiments' websites

### **Publications**

- 'A Collingham Scrapbook' & 'A Second Collingham Scrapbook' pub. Collingham Museum Committee (available in Collingham Library & CDLHS)
- South Collingham Parish Newsletters 1911-1919 written by Rev. Albert Maxwell (CDLHS)
- 'Collingham in the Great War' Trevor Frecknall (pub. 2015) available from CDLHS and in Collingham Library
- 'Straight Furrows'- a History of Collingham Farmers' Club' by Norman Pickerill, published in 1950 (copies in CDLHS collection and Collingham Library).
- Kelly's Trade Directories (Newark Library Local Studies)
- The Newark Advertiser 'Times gone by...100 Years Ago' columns 2014-2018
- Various regimental histories including 'The Sherwood Foresters in the Great War 1914 -1918 – the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion' by Oates, W. Coape. A copy in its original format is



available in Newark Library and a reproduction is available to buy: ISBN  
781172602704 (£18.00) First published in 1920

- 'The Sherwood Foresters in the Easter Uprising Dublin 1916' by Cliff Housley ISBN 978 9927731 -1-3 £10.00 Miliquet Publications, Long Eaton 2014 (copy in CDLHS)
- 'Nottingham Women in WW1' by Nottingham Women's History Group (edited by Dr Rowena Edlin-White) Smallprint Press 2014

## **Acknowledgements**

With many thanks to Marcia Parkin (editor of Fleet magazine) and Michael Davies, Rosie Scott and Caron Ballantyne of Collingham Parish Council. Thanks also to Charlie Stothard, Jeremy Lodge and Sylvia Woodhurst for their contributions to the research of the soldiers' backgrounds.

A heartfelt thanks goes to the people of Collingham and district, past and present, who shared their family histories over the course of the four years, especially Peter and Pat Holland, Pat Pennington, Trevor and Marion Woodcock, Brenda Foster, Brenda Sills, Liz Wilson, John Tutty, Robina Ellis, Marie Taylor, John Forman, John Clayton, Steve Allen, Malcolm Barnard and many others.



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## FELL IN THE GREAT PUSH.

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### Pte. J. P. Bee succumbs to Wounds.

"I expect before you receive this you will have heard the news that your son, Pte. J. P. Bee, has given his life for his country. He was wounded in action yesterday morning, July 20th, and died shortly after coming into this clearing station. I did not see him before he died, but I buried him yesterday morning, his body being carried to the grave covered with the Union Jack. He lies with many others in a quiet little cemetery just outside this town, in Northern France, quite near the place where he fell. This will, I expect, be a great grief to you, but you must be comforted by the knowledge that your son died the most glorious of all deaths in the service of his King and country, and also whilst taking part in this great advance which is now going on, and which we hope is going to end in victory over the enemy and the restoration of peace."

Thus the letter which Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bee, of 49½, Sincil Bank, Lincoln, and late of Brough, near Newark, received from the Chaplain at the 57th Field Ambulance last week.

Pte. Bee was 22 years of age, and he enlisted at Newark in the Sherwood Foresters. He was afterwards transferred to the Northamptonshire Regiment. He had been at the Front about a year, and amongst other engagements in which he had fought was the memorable charge on the Hohenzollern Redoubt last October.

*Newspaper cutting from the Bee family collection c/o Mr Steve Allen, grandson of Minnie Bee, Jack's sister. See p.59*