

STOKE CLIMSLAND WW1 WAR MEMORIAL

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, many believed it would be over by Christmas. Thousands rushed to join the forces. Over the following four years some 200 men who lived locally or who had connections with Stoke Climsland enlisted and served. Many did not return home. This is their story.

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FORWARD

My wife, Jan, and I often look at war memorials. To stand on a village green, in a country churchyard or in some isolated burial place always provokes a sense of sadness, awe and disbelief. How could so many men, and it is invariably men, be lost to such small communities in the space of just four years? What pain and suffering was involved in their deaths? All too often the sadness is compounded by repeated surnames indicating brothers or, at least, members of the same family who did not come home. The Parish of Stoke Climsland is no different from countless others and no different in commemorating those lost at each Remembrance Day Ceremony.

It was at one of these that it struck me that, although, the congregation intoned "We will remember them", this remembrance only extended to the recitation of surnames and initials. It prompted me to find out more about each name on our local war memorials. All have been identified but, as the quantity and quality of the information available for each man varies, some biographies have more detail than others. I have tried to be as accurate as possible and I apologise for any errors of fact or omission.

This compilation is dedicated to the memories of those men connected with Stoke Climsland Parish who fought and fell in World War One. It was supposed to be the 'War to end all wars'. It wasn't and I'd also like to make a dedication to two soldiers who fought in the next World War - my father-in-law, Harry Laws, who was a Desert Rat at Tobruk, and my father, Derrick Parsons, who was in the Royal Marines during the D-Day Landings.

Derrick Parsons
Higher Downgate
November 2018



INTRODUCTION

How it all started

The First World War broke out 100 years ago and it still stands out as a unique and incomprehensible phenomenon. Even though atrocities had occurred before, and certainly since, the shattering realities of this war still render it in a class of its own. There had not been a war in Europe of the scale that the First World War would reach since Napoleon had been defeated by Wellington at Waterloo in 1815. That all changed when, on 28th June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, one of a group of six Bosnian Serb terrorists.

This act of terrorism plunged the world into its first global war and the events that followed. It occurred like falling dominoes. The single act prompted the various countries-of Europe to take sides as they tried to settle old scores. Conferences were held, lines were drawn, sabres were rattled and all during the summer of 1914 there was a countdown to war. Effectively Great Britain and France stated that they would side with neutral Belgium should Germany invade this small country; Russia supported Serbia who were being threatened by the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Germany threatened Russia. On 28th July 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Two days later Russia mobilised her troops, which led to the Germans giving an ultimatum that if the Russians did not cease this within twelve hours, then they would begin mobilisation: Austria began to shell Belgrade (Serbia) on the same day and on 1st August 1914, when Germany's ultimatum to Russia ended, France and Germany mobilised their troops and Germany declared war on Russia. Belgium had also mobilised her troops on 1st August and had received a note from Germany to request access to their country to counter a perceived intention that France intended to send troops to the Meuse area of the country. When this was refused Germany declared war on France on 3rd August and on Belgium on the following day; her troops began to pour into Luxembourg and Belgium. Great Britain eventually mobilised fully on 4th August 1914 and declared war on Germany.


Daily

Daily Net SALE Six Times as Large as That of Any Penny Lon

EDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1914 LONDON MANCHESTER

GREAT BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY

The following announcement was issued at the Foreign Office at 12.15 a.m.

SUMMARY REJECTION

Britain had sent an ultimatum to Germany which expired at midnight. This was due to Germany's refusal to leave Belgium neutral and her invasion of that country.

The German Ambassador went to 10 Downing Street

WAR DECLARED (OFFICIAL)

The consequences for Stoke Climsland Parish

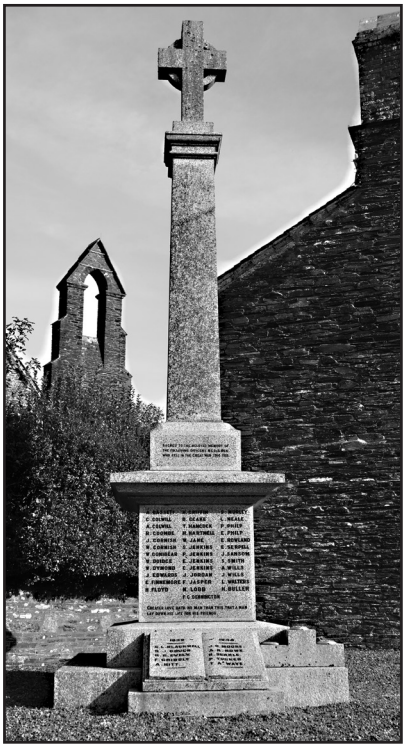
Over the next four years over 200 men left the comfort and stability of a rural parish and became involved in land and sea engagements with the enemy. Many statistics about WW1 are available and here are some relevant to the parish.

- There are 37 names on the granite War Memorial in the centre of Stoke Climsland Village.
- There are 38 names on the wooden Memorial Plaque in Stoke Climsland Parish Church.
- Richard Stidwell, not named on either of the above memorials but who is listed on the Callington War Memorial, is buried in Stoke Climsland churchyard.
- There are two graves in the churchyard which are listed as War Graves by the Commonwealth

War Graves Commission. These are those of Richard Stidwell and Hamilton Buller.

- There are 176 names on the Roll of Honour in the church. These men served and survived.
- Of those on the memorials, eight served in the Royal Navy, the remainder served in the Army.
- Most of those who died are buried in the various Theatres of War (1 is buried in Gaza in Egypt and Palestine, 1 is buried in Salonika, 1 is buried in Basra in Mesopotamia, 1 is buried on the Island of Lemnos, 1 is buried in Germany and 13 are buried in France and Flanders).
- Nine have no known graves in France and Flanders.
- Seven were lost at sea and their bodies never recovered.
- Five are buried locally (2 in Stoke Climsland, 1 in Venterdon, 1 in St Germans and one whose exact burial location is not known).
- Seven men died of illness and disease rather than combat-related injuries.
- Three men (Hamilton Buller, Rundle Coumbe, Edwin Serpell) fought in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.
- Wilfred Cornish fought in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.
- William Dymond was born in Australia and fought in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.
- The first death in the conflict was that of Thomas Hancock on 16th March 1915.
- The last death of the men listed was that of Hamilton Buller on 13th October 1919.
- The youngest men to die were William Dymond and Stanley Jenkins, both were 18.
- The oldest man to die was John Jordan, who was 40.
- All levels of Stoke Climsland society suffered losses: miners, agricultural labourers, clergy, teachers, tradesmen and farmers.

Commemoration: The Granite Memorial



The Cenotaph in Whitehall is the national War Memorial for the United Kingdom. Originally made from wood and plaster it was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens as a temporary cenotaph for a national Peace Day Celebration and the Peace Parade held in London on 19th July 1919. The origin of the word cenotaph is taken from the Greek words kenos meaning "empty" and taphos meaning "tomb". During the Peace Parade on its route through Whitehall, thousands of troops marched past this temporary Cenotaph, turned their eyes to it in respect as they passed and the commanding officers saluted it. Following the parade members of the public placed flowers there and the structure quickly became a focal point of national grief for all those many thousands of people who had lost loved ones in the war. The decision to build a permanent structure in place of the wooden one was made and Lutyen's design was built in Portland Stone from December 1919 and was finished in time for a parade to pass by it on 11th November 1920 to mark the interment of the British "Unknown Warrior" at Westminster Abbey.

At the local level, people still needed a more accessible focus for their grief, loss and pride, particularly because of the policy that bodies remained where they fell. This lead to the erection of many war memorials across the country. There was no central directive that this should be done and, similarly, no guidance on design or who should be commemorated. In this sense, every monument is unique and reflects the wishes of its locality. That in Stoke Climsland is no exception.

The first mention of a war memorial for the Parish is in the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on February 3rd 1919 where "it was decided to call a Parish Meeting on Monday February 10th to

consider a War Memorial". At the subsequent meeting, the following options were tabled: lych-gate, Reading and Recreational Room (as an extension to the Parish Hall), a stone monument, a stone monument and library, the erection of cottages for parish needs, with brass plaques in each with the names of those fallen on the War Memorial inscribed. It was decided that a committee be formed to decide on a suitable memorial. On April 13th 1920, the Annual Parish Meeting voted that 'the Committee recommendation be approved and that the erection of the memorial proceeded with'. On October 18th 1920, it was noted that 'there was £79 13s 11p still to be raised for the memorial. A long discussion took place on the best way to raise the money and it was agreed that a Jumble Sale would be held in the last week of November'. There seems to be no further mention of the War Memorial in the Annual Parish Meeting Minutes and the story continues in the deliberations of the Parish Council.

On October 3rd 1921, the Parish Council agreed that it would be responsible for the care and maintenance of the Memorial and on April 24th 1922, the Council agreed that Mr Edward Dingle would be asked to clean the Memorial and that a load of Lee Moor gravel would be placed around it. On July 3rd 1922, the Chairman of the Council reported that he had been advised that the War Memorial was a Public Building and, as such, all reasonable expenses incurred in its maintenance could be charged to the rates. At the same meeting, the suggestion of a united Memorial Service was mooted and this developed into the Armistice Day Service that is held each year.



Although there seems to be no accurate record for who designed or carved the Memorial, it can be assumed that it was probably completed sometime around late 1921 and early 1922. The granite structure was erected on the site of the old Manorial pound and, as is detailed in its formal listing as a Category II structure, 'comprises a two-step square base surmounted by a cube plinth with a moulded cornice, above which is a further plinth and a square-section tapering shaft and simple Celtic cross head. The shaft's plinth is inscribed in black lettering: SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS NCOS & MEN WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 – 1918, with the names inscribed on the principal face of the square plinth below, followed by the inscription: GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT A MAN / LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS. The names of the 10 men who fell in the Second World War are inscribed under the dates 1939-1945 on a granite tablet in the shape of an open book at the foot of the memorial'.

Commemoration: Memorial Boards in Parish Church



From the Parish Church Vestry Minutes, it is apparent that the Lady Chapel was going to be restored as 'a memorial to those who fell and served in the Great War'. The then incumbent, Canon Leonard Martin Andrews MC, MA., who had been installed as rector on 21st December 1921, had served in the War and could very well have been the instigator of this restoration.

The Vestry Minutes for Tuesday April 23rd 1925 record; 'Concerning the matter of the Memorial Chapel, it was decided that, in view of the Bishop's visit during this year, the furnishing of the Chapel be proceeded with. It was also decided that a fête be held on June 4th. Miss Stumbles seconding a motion to raise funds for the furnishing of the Memorial Chapel'. At a subsequent meeting, on July 25th, a scheme for the design of the Memorial was submitted. This was obviously accepted as, at the September 19th meeting, 'The Rector announced that he had interviewed the woodcarver at Ashwater respecting the panelling of the Memorial and he had expressed his ability to complete the work prior to the visit of the Bishop for the dedication of the Chapel'.

A short history of the church produced in 1929 adds a little more detail. A crucifix and other gifts for the Chapel were presented in memory of Mrs Marrin Andrews, the mother of the Rector. The work of restoration and redecoration was carried out by Mr A. Dingle and the carving executed by Mr Northcott of Ashwater, Devon. The entire work cost £230 at the time, which is approximately £14000 at today's rates.

John Northcott was a well known ecclesiastical wood carver who worked from Ashwater, near Beaworthy, just north of Launceston. His fine carvings can be seen in many churches in Devon and Cornwall. Like other men in his profession, he turned to carving war memorials in the first few years following the end of WW1 as this work was useful given the slump which followed the war. He was highly regarded for his skill and, although a considerable presence in the embellishment of local churches. he was not in the league of people like Harry Hems, Herbert Read or Violet Pinwill but, as he himself said, his costs were lower! He died in 1940 at the age of 84.

For many years, the annual Service of Remembrance was held outside by the granite memorial. This moved to being held inside the Parish Church because, or so it is commonly thought, of the weather. Wreaths dedicated at the Service are first laid at the foot of the Memorial Boards and then taken outside to be placed at the foot of the granite memorial.

Commemoration: Who decided the people to be commemorated?

There appear to be no records of how the names on the Stoke Climsland memorials were collected. In other places this was done by a local organising committee, which would decide on who would be commemorated. Criteria might be imposed to limit commemoration to those killed or to include those who served and returned. Strict geographical boundaries might be applied. Sometimes a financial donation was required for inclusion as a contribution to the cost. Some committees were flexible and open to individual requests. Whatever the system of choice, there was no central list of casualties for each area so information had to be collected door-to-door or by post, through church or local press announcements or by word of mouth. Information about the reasons for decisions and the process of name gathering is often now lost, as is the case for Stoke Climsland.

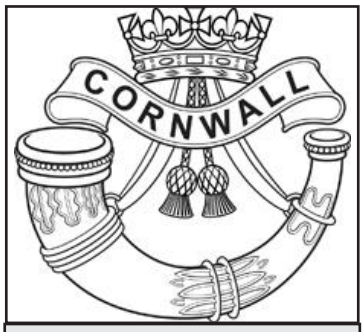
What is clear is that, whatever criteria were used for Stoke Climsland, they were fairly broad and inclusive. Those listed did not just include those who lived in the Parish but also those whose connection with the Parish was through relatives and, possibly, friends. It is obvious that the names of Hamilton Buller and Ernest Dennington (incorrectly cited as F.C.Dennington) were late additions to the granite plaque as they appear out of the otherwise alphabetical sequence. The name of George Hoskin Brock only appears on the church memorial, even though he had died in 1916. Have all the relevant names been included? Perhaps there are others yet to be identified and recognised.

INDIVIDUAL BIOGRAPHIES

These are given in chronological order of date of death

Private 3/4261
Thomas Hancock
1st Batallion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 16th March 1915
Age 33

Thomas Hancock has the dubious distinction of being the first man listed on the War Memorial to die in WW1. Thomas's parents, William and Mary Anne, were living at Treburyse Farm Cottages, just outside of the village of Tregadillet, when he was born in April 1877. He was baptised in Saint Paternus church, South Petherwin, on the 8th of that month. His father was an agricultural labourer and the family seems to have moved from farm to farm in the area until they settled in Venterdon in the late 1890s. At the time of the 1911 census, Thomas was still living with his parents and was working from home as a fruit grower. Both of Thomas's parents are buried in the graveyard of Venterdon chapel.

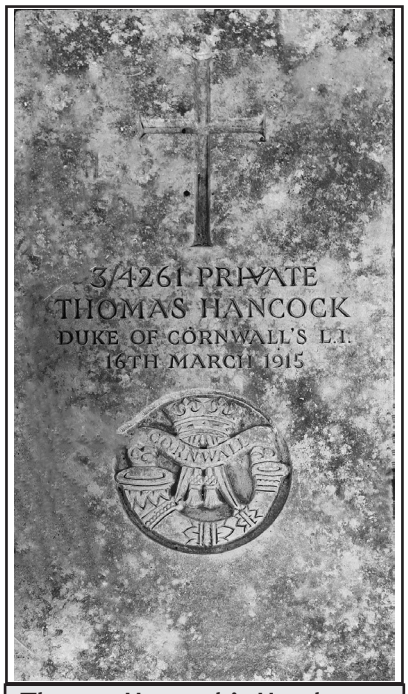


DCLI Regimental Badge

Thomas's regimental number, 3/4261, suggests that he was a pre-war reservist, probably a member of the 3rd (Reserve) Batallion, formerly known as the Royal Cornwall Rangers, Duke of Cornwall's Own Rifles. As such, he would have been called up for active duty very early after the outbreak of war and his Medal Roll records that he entered the France and Flanders Theatre of War on 1st November 1914. He arrived in France in time to experience a dreadful winter in the trenches of the Western Front, with endless days and nights spent standing in deep water and mud: conditions made much worse with endless rain, frost and snow. Although it was not involved in any major battles, the 1st Batallion was in and out of the front line over the winter months. It saw many actions and was subject to regular enemy shellfire. In the period just before his death, the batallion was alternating between trenches south-west of the Messines ridge and billets in the village of Neuve Eglise.

Thomas died on 16th March 1915 and, from his medical records and entries in the Batallion War Diary, we can construct the events immediately prior to his death. No major activities with the enemy were recorded at the time and it is likely that Thomas received his injury - bullet wound to thigh and buttock - whilst on patrol or in the trenches. He was wounded on the 3rd March and, after assessment in a first aid post at the front, was transferred by Sick Convoy on 4th March to Number 8 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in Bailleul. Such Clearing Stations were the first large, well-equipped and static medical facility that wounded men would visit. Their role was to retain all serious cases that were unfit for further travel, to treat and return slight cases to their unit and evacuate all others to Base Hospitals. They were often a tented camp although, when possible, the accommodation would be in huts. CCS's were frequently grouped into clusters of two or three in a small area, usually a few miles behind the lines and on a railway line.

At some point thereafter, due to the seriousness of his injuries, Thomas was transferred to the Number 11 General Hospital, situated in the Imperial Hotel in Boulogne. This was a Base Hospital and gave the best treatment available in the combat area. These hospitals could hold 1000 patients and were located near the army's principal bases at Boulogne, Le Havre, Rouen, Le Touquet and Etaples. They needed to be close to a railway line, in order for casualties to arrive and they near a port where men could be evacuated for longer-term treatment in Britain. Sadly, Thomas died in hospital on 16th March and his death certificate gives the cause of death as 'died of wounds'.



Thomas Hancock's Headstone

Thomas is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, at location III.D.20. Boulogne was one of the chief hospital areas for the Western Front and the dead from the various hospitals were buried in the Cimetiere de L'Est, one of the town cemeteries, the Commonwealth graves forming a long, narrow strip along the right hand edge of the cemetery. It contains 5,577 Commonwealth burials from the First World War and 224 from the Second World War.

Private 18364
William Dymond
1st Batallion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 18th April 1915
Age 17

Apart from being the second man listed on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial to be killed in the conflict, William John Dymond is notable because he is one of the youngest mentioned and the one who had the shortest military career.

William's parents (William John Dymond and Mary Jane Stratton), both from Stoke Climsland, had emigrated to Australia shortly after their marriage in 1888. They settled in Charters Towers in Queensland, a mining town booming at the time after the discovery of gold. It was there that William and his two siblings were born, one of whom, Edith, died when she was 3 months old. Sometime after 1905 (his mother features in the 1905 electoral role for Queensland but not thereafter), Mary Jane Dymond and her two sons, William and Ernest, returned to the UK and settled locally - they were living in Tower Street, Launceston in 1911. It seems that William's father remained in Charters Towers until his death in 1940.

William was born on 21st May 1897 and when he enlisted into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in Bodmin on 8th February 1915, he was some three months younger than the formal recruitment age of 18. Underage enlistment was not uncommon as Recruiting Officers were paid for each man signed up and many turned a blind eye to younger volunteers. William's enlistment record describes him as 'A farm labourer aged 20. Height 5' 4 1/2". Weight 126 pounds. Chest 32 inches and 34 1/2 inches expanded.' He was almost immediately shipped abroad, arriving in France on 23rd February, just two weeks after his enlistment and despite the rules at the time stating that no one under 19 years of age would be sent overseas to fight.

He joined his batallion after it had experienced the torrid winter months of 1914-1915, described previously for Private Thomas Hancock and whilst it was still very active. In every sense of the words, it was a frontline unit during February, March and April and its duties alternated between spells in the trenches, both fighting and maintenance, and time spent in various billets in Neuve Eglise, Bailleul and Locre in the Western Flanders area of Belgium. Throughout this time, the trenches were regularly bombarded by enemy fire and the Batallion War Diary records the steady death toll caused by these actions.

On 17th April, The Battle of Hill 60, south of Ypres, began with the explosion of two large mines. Hill 60 was, in fact, a 60 metre high spoil heap made from the diggings of a cutting for a nearby railway. But, due to the flatness of the surrounding area, this height gave it a strategic advantage and possession was bitterly contested. Although the Batallion War Diary entry for 18th April is relatively anodyne, it is probable that William died during one of the many intense bombardments of the trenches by the German artillery. From enlistment to death, he had been in the army for 69 days.

William's final resting place is in the Aeroplane Cemetery, which is quite close to Hill 60. Originally it was called New Cemetery, Frezenberg, but within a few weeks it became known as Aeroplane Cemetery because there was the wreck of a crashed plane close to the original graves. He was first buried in the Bedford House Cemetery (Enclosure No. 5) at Zillebeke, a little East of the Ypres-Wytschaete Road. This enclosure, which was separate from the others now forming the present-day Bedford House Cemetery, contained the graves of 14 men of the 1st Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and six of the 1st Devons who fell in April 1915. The Commonwealth War Grave Commission's records indicate that his exhumed remains were reinterred on 2nd September 1919. This process was known as 'concentration' and allowed otherwise unmaintainable graves to be moved into established war grave cemeteries where the Commission could ensure proper commemoration.



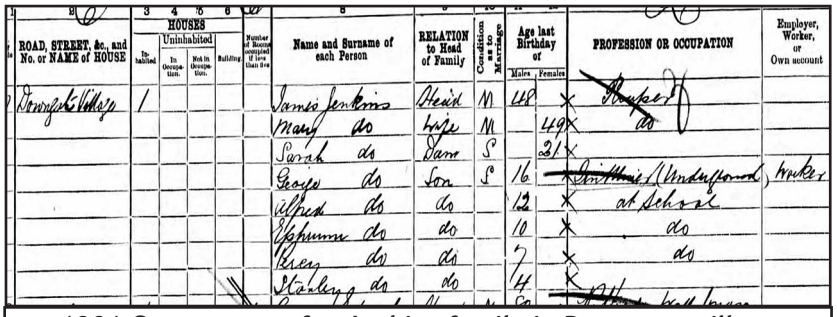
William Dymond's headstone

Records show that William's personal effects of £3 17s 5p were never claimed by anyone and remained unissued.

Stoker 1st Class
Ephraim Jenkins
Died 9th May 1915
Age 24

Anyone looking at the names on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial cannot but help notice that there are four Jenkins' listed. "Poor family", you might say and poor they were in more ways than one. Poor because, of the five sons of William James and Mary Anne Jenkins of Lower Downgate and Kelly Bray, four died during WW1 And poor because, in the 1901 census for Lower Downgate, the

Jenkins' were listed as 'paupers' It would seem that those with the least to give, gave the most in the conflict Perhaps it was some cold comfort to the family that both William and Mary died in 1907, well before the start of the war and well before the demise of their sons.



ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Uninhabited	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of Males	Age last Birthday of Females	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account
Downgate Village	1	James Jenkins	Head	M	48		Pauper	
		Mary do	Wife	M		49	do	
		Sarah do	Dau	S		21		
		George do	Son	S	16		Tinman's Underground	Worker
		Alfred do	do		12		at School	
		Ephraim do	do		10		do	
		Percy do	do		7		do	
		Stanley do	do		4			

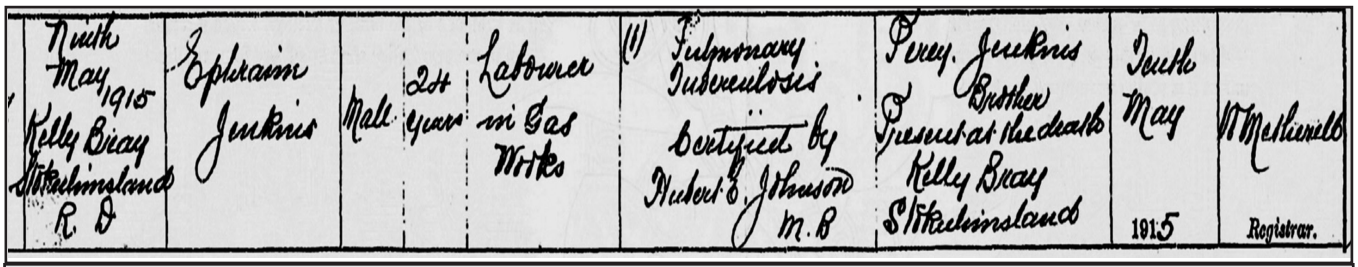
1901 Census entry for Jenkins family in Downgate village

The first of their sons to die, Ephraim, was not, in fact, a casualty of the war. He had enlisted in the Royal Navy at Devonport on 27th August 1908 for a 12 year period but had been invalided out on 8th May 1913 due to Pulmonary Laryngeal Tuberculosis. This one of the most serious and common complications of pulmonary tuberculosis and often fatal. After his discharge he returned to Kelly Bray and may have stayed with his brothers, George and Alfred, and his sister, Alice, who were living together in a house there. He worked as a labourer in the Gas Works at Callington but died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis in Kelly Bray on 9th May 1915. His burial place is unknown. It is poignant to note that his brother Percy, who was killed in France some 6 months later on 22nd December 1915, was present at his death.

What else have we been able to find out about Ephraim Jenkins? We know that he was born on 6th August 1890 and was baptised in the now closed Downgate Chapel on 26th March 1891. At this time, his father's occupation was given as a miner. When Ephraim enlisted in the Royal Navy, he had given his own occupation as a tin miner Perhaps both son and father had worked together at the Redmoor or Holmbush mines? The only personal details we have of Ephraim are those on his naval service record, where he is described as 5′7″, with black hair, brown eyes, a fresh complexion and a scar on his lip. He went into the service as a Stoker 2nd Class and had gone up one step of the ladder to Stoker 1st Class when he was discharged. Irrespective of this change in rank, his job was shovelling coal into the steamship's boilers in high temperatures in the engine room. I cannot help but think that the hot, steamy conditions of a ship's boiler room would not have been a very healthy working place for someone with incipient tuberculosis. The major part of his naval service was aboard the cruiser HMS Aboukir which was subsequently torpedoed off the Dutch coast on 22nd September 1914, along with HMS Cressy and HMS Hogue; the first major naval losses of WW1. Three cruisers and 1459 men were lost in the space of an hour and a half. This could have been Ephraim's fate?

Given that Ephraim was not an active serviceman or a direct casualty of the war, the question arises as to why he is commemorated on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial. There are no records available that describe the process whereby names were chosen for commemmoration, but is it unreasonable to suggest that he is listed along with his brothers as a recognition of the sacrifice that one poor family made?

As a footnote, it does seem that Ephraim married Winifred Squance in 1911 but no other details of this are available.



Ninth May 1915 Kelly Bray St Ka Climsland R D	Ephraim Jenkins	Male	24th year	Labourer in Gas Works	(1) Pulmonary Tuberculosis Certified by Robert B. Johnson M.B	Percy Jenkins Brother Present at the death Kelly Bray St Ka Climsland	Tenth May 1915	W Mitchell	Registrar.

Detail from Ephraim Jenkins' Death Certificate

Private 108169
Rundle Coumbe
3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles
1st December 1915
Age 22

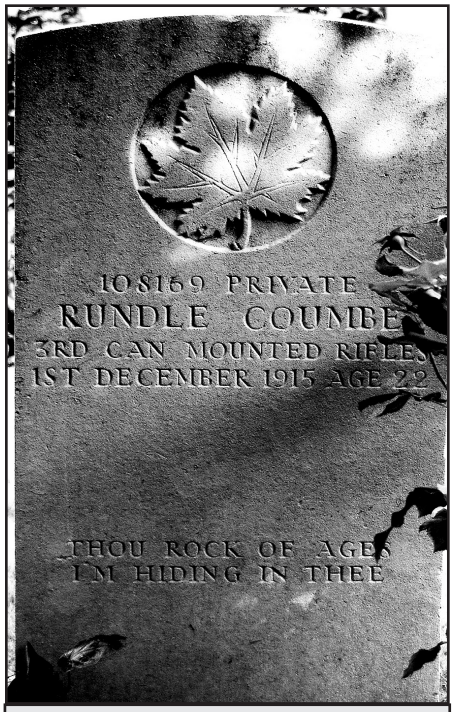
Although, Rundle Coumbe was a soldier in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, he was Cornish. He was born in 1893 at Underhill Farm in Tutwell, a hamlet in the east of Stoke Climsland Parish, and was one of the four sons of James and Elizabeth Coumbe. He was working on the family farm when he emigrated to Canada in 1913, a move which, at the time, was not uncommon as opportunities for farmers in Canada were actively promoted in the UK. He travelled 2nd Class on the White Star Dominion Line's passenger ship, the SS Arabic, departing Liverpool on 29th March, landing in Portland, Maine, on 9th April and finally disembarking at Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was travelling with his cousin, Rendell Coumbe, both men having their mother's maiden name as their Christian name, a common practice at the time in this part of the world.



3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles Badge

From Halifax, he travelled to take up his occupation of farming in Edmonton, Alberta. It was there that he enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on February 8th 1915 and his Attestation Papers show that he had already spent 16 months in a militia unit, the 19th Alberta Dragoons. He was assigned subsequently to the 3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles.

At some point the regiment moved to England to take up quarters in Shorncliffe Army Camp. Shorncliffe, just outside of Folkestone at Cheriton, was used as a staging post for troops destined for the Western Front during World War I and, from April 1915, a Canadian Training Division was formed there. The Regimental War Diary details their training on a day-by-day basis and also records the many visits they had from royal personages and high ranking military officials. From the middle of September onwards, preparations for moving to the Front are evident, culminating in their departure from Folkestone for Boulogne on September 22nd.



Rundell Coumbe's Headstone

Within a few days the Regiment had moved to the front line at Dickebusch near Ypres and over the next couple of months were fully engaged in active service in the trenches. Full details can be read in the Regimental War Diary and the entry for Wednesday December 1st 1915 reads:

2 pm. Heavy artillery duel. In the early stages the heavy artillery was paying attention to Brigade and Divisional Hdqrs. About 2.20 p.m. Regimental Hdqrs., communication trenches, support and front line trenches came under shrapnel and H.E. shell fire which continued until sunset.

Nine named soldiers, including Rundle Coumbe, died as a result of this bombardment. It is very unusual to find the names of non-officers mentioned in War Diaries but this seems to have been the custom for this particular Regiment.

Rundle's body was originally interred in the Rosenberg Château Military Cemetery but was subsequently moved with many others (very controversially at the time because the owner of the chateau objected to having a cemetery on his land) in 1930 to the Berks Cemetery Extension, just south of Ypres. Commonwealth War Grave Commission's protocols only allowed limited scope for the personalisation of headstones and their records show that his, at Cemetery Reference II.D.34, is inscribed with a quote chosen by his mother at the time of his reinterrment, from the hymn Rock of Ages:

Thou Rock of Ages,
I am hiding in thee

As well as being commemorated on the war memorials in Stoke Climsland, Rundle Coumbe received a full citation in the Canadian First World War Book of Remembrance and on the Canadian Maple Leaf Virtual War Memorial.

Private 17099
PERCY JENKIN
7th Batallion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
22nd December 1915
Died age 22

Percy Jenkin was the first of the three sons of James and Mary Jenkin who were killed in the war, and the second to die within the war years (see previous entry for his brother, Ephraim). He was born in 1893 in Lower Downgate, and was baptised at home there on 19th October 1893 under the rites of the Callington Bible Christian Circuit. In 1911 he was working as a live-in waggoner employed by Lawry Rickard at Manaton Farm in South Hill.

Percy's military career began when he enlisted in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry at Launceston on 5th December 1914. Initially he joined the 9th Battalion at Falmouth but had transferred to the 7th by the time he had landed in Boulogne on 27th October 1915. From there, his battalion moved to the front line around Armentieres where preparations for the Battle of the Somme were underway. His battalion had to maintain the trench system, which was prone to collapse due to the constant wet weather. There were only a few minor skirmishes with the enemy but they would have been under the extremely vigilant gaze of German snipers. On 22nd December, Percy was shot through the head and killed.



Percy Jenkins in his DCLI uniform

A poignant report in the West Briton dated 15th January 1916 tells us: *"It is understood that Private Jenkin had been in the trenches for nearly six weeks and had obtained leave to go on a journey of one mile to procure and despatch a Xmas greeting card for a little friend of his at Golberdon. The card, accompanied by a letter to the child's parents, intimating that he was in good health, was dated on the day of his death. So it is assumed that on his return to the trenches he was killed. The deceased joined the army about twelve months ago and was drafted to France. Having been connected with the Golberdon Wesleyan Church and Sunday School work, Private Jenkin will be greatly missed and his genial disposition won him high esteem and many friends".*

Percy lies buried in Plot K7 at the Y Farm Military Cemetery at Bois-Grenier, a village just to the south of Armentieres. The cemetery was named after a nearby farm, called by the Army "Y" (or Wye) Farm. It was begun in March 1915 and used by units holding this sector until February 1918. At the Armistice it contained 335 burials, but this number increased when graves were brought in from the battlefields south of Armentieres and from a number of other, smaller cemeteries This cemetery now contains 835 burials and commemorations from the First World War. 288 of the burials are unidentified and a special memorial commemorates one New Zealand casualty believed to be buried among them. Percy's headstone records his name, rank, serial number, regiment and date of death but there is no personal tribute. Relatives could choose their own words, providing it was suitably tasteful or choose from a menu of texts written by Rudyard Kipling whose own son was killed in WW1. Not all relatives were in a position to take advantage of this opportunity and it may be that Percy's family couldn't afford the fee of six shillings, although the Commission did waive this in some circumstances.



Percy Jenkins' Headstone

Percy's outstanding pay and War Gratuity, an allowance made to all serving men on the basis of their length of service, were left to his only remaining brother, Alfred, as his sole legatee. Alfred received the sum of £5 14s 10p on 13th June 1919, which would be worth around £250 at present day rates. As well as being commemmorated on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, Percy also features on two other local memorials: that for South Hill Parish in Golberdon, perhaps because of his connection with the Chapel there, and the memorial in St Cleer, presumably because his sister was a resident in that village.

Private 2811
JOHN EDWARDS
2nd/4th Batallion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
16th January 1916
Age 25

John Edwards was born in Stoke Climsland village, just behind the church, in 1891. His parents were Philip, a boot and shoe maker, and Sarah. He was the younger son of three sons and a daughter and was baptised in Stoke Climsland church on 9th August 1891. He must have been a pupil at the local school in Stoke Climsland. After leaving school, he worked as a labourer and appears to have lived in the village all his life, leaving only to enlist in the army at Camborne.

His regiment sailed for India at the end of 1914 and landed at Karachi on 1st January 1915. The 2nd/4th Battalion remained in India for the duration of the war but provided many men to other regiments at front-lines elsewhere. It was because of this that John Edwards was fighting in Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) and attached to the 2nd Norfolk Regiment when he was killed in action on 16th January 1916.



Basra War Memorial

India itself was not classed as a 'theatre of war' but Mesopotamia was Code 5A, according to army classification. As any medal entitlement dated from a soldier's actual entry into a theatre of war, it is possible to date John Edwards' arrival in Mesopotamia from his medal roll card as 25th August 1915.

In most accounts, Mesopotamian is regarded as a campaign peripheral to the major battles in France and Belgium. But this view should not detract from the atrocious conditions that soldiers in this arena had to withstand - heat, disease, starvation, thirst were ever-present. We cannot ascertain the exact circumstances of John's death on 16th January 1916 as relevant diaries for the 2nd DCLI and 2nd Norfolks seem not to exist, but it is highly probable that he was involved in the fierce fighting around the River Tigris and Kut Al Almara on that date. His death certificate states that he was killed in action but gives no further details. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated, along with many of his colleagues, on the War Memorial at Basra.

The Basra Memorial commemorates 40604 members of the Commonwealth forces, including 21 from the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, who died in the operations in Mesopotamia from the Autumn of 1914 to the end of August 1921 and whose graves are not known. Until 1997 it was located on the main quay of the naval dockyard at Maqil, on the west bank of the Shatt-al-Arab, about 8 kilometres north of Basra. Because of the sensitivity of the site, the Memorial was moved by presidential decree. The move, carried out by the authorities in Iraq, involved a considerable amount of manpower, transport costs and sheer engineering on their part, and the Memorial has been re-erected in its entirety. It is now located 32 kilometres along the road to Nasiriyah, in the middle of what was a major battleground during the first Gulf War. It is worth noting that whilst the current climate of political instability persists it is extremely challenging for the Commission to manage or maintain this and its other cemeteries and memorials located within Iraq.



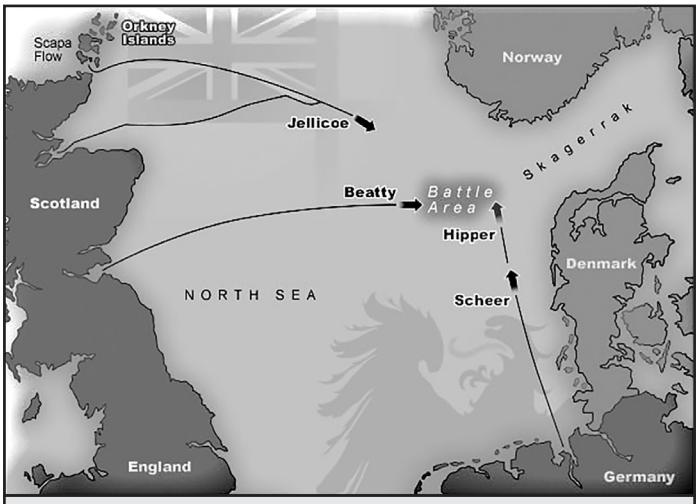
Detail from Panel 20 on Basra War Memorial

Sometime after the war was over, on 30th July 1919, John's father received the balance of money owing to John, including the War Gratuity. This amounted to £5 6s 11p, equivalent to around £300 at current spending power.

MAY 31ST 1916 - THE BLACKEST DAY FOR STOKE CLIMSLAND DURING WORLD WAR I

May 31st 1916 would have been long remembered in Stoke Climsland as it was the day that saw the greatest loss of life for the Parish throughout the duration of WW1. Four sailors were killed during the Battle of Jutland. The bodies of all four were never recovered and, as well as our own memorials, they are commemorated on the Royal Navy Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

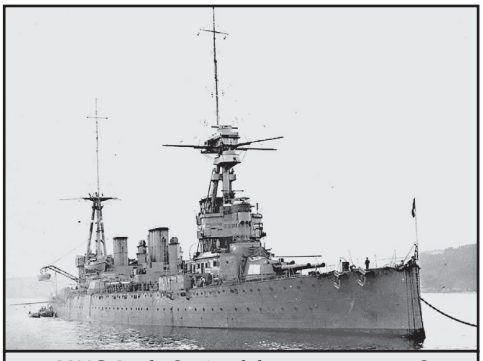
On the 30th May, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe led the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet from Orkney's Scapa Flow towards the Battle of Jutland, just off the west coast of Denmark, the largest naval engagement of the First World War. Jutland brought together the two most powerful naval forces of the time. By the end of the battle in the early hours of the 1st of June 1916, more than eight thousand British and German personnel had lost their lives. Amongst the British ships lost were HMS Indefatigable and HMS Defence.



The area in which the Battle of Jutland was fought

HMS Indefatigable was hit several times in the first minutes of the opening phase of the battlecruiser action. At approximately 4 pm shells from the German battlecruiser Von der Tann caused an explosion ripping a hole in her hull, and a second explosion, at 4.03 pm hurled large pieces of the ship 200 feet in the air. Only three of the crew of 1,018 survived. Amongst those killed were local men Stoker 1st Class Charley Colwill and Leading Stoker William Thomas Doidge.

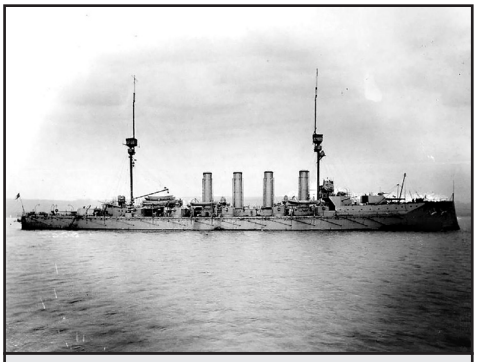
HMS Defence blew up whilst under heavy fire from the German battleship "Friedrich Der Grosse". At 6.20 pm she was struck by two salvoes that detonated her rear magazine. The fire from that explosion spread to her secondary magazines, which exploded in turn. All of her increased war time complement of 904 men were killed and these included Stoker 2nd Class Herbert Floyd and Able Seaman Stanley Jenkins.



HMS Indefatigable was part of Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty's Battlecruiser Fleet, she was hit several times in the first minutes of the "Run to the South", the opening phase of the battlecruiser action. Shells from the German battlecruiser Von der Tann caused an explosion ripping a hole in her hull, and a second explosion hurled large pieces of the ship 200 feet (60 m) in the air. Only three of the crew of 1,019 survived.



The Plymouth Naval Memorial commemorates more than 7,200 naval personnel of WW1 and nearly 16,000 of WW2 who were lost or buried at sea.



HMS Defence was Escorting the main body of the Grand Fleet, the ship was fired upon by one German battlecruiser and four dreadnoughts as she attempted to engage a disabled German light cruiser. She was struck by two salvoes from the German ships that detonated her rear magazine. The fire from that explosion spread to the ship's secondary magazines, which exploded in turn. There were no survivors.

Stoker 1st Class K/306535
Charley Colwill
HMS Indefatigable
Age 38

Charley Colwill was born in Trewarlet, Lezant the son of John, an agricultural labourer, and Martha Colwill. There is a doubt over his exact date of birth because, although he was baptised 'privately' at Lezant on 8th June 1881, his date of birth on his service record is given as 7th May 1883. Possibly this is a simple clerical error with 1883 being entered instead of 1881? Charley was working as a waggoner at Sheers Barton farm in Lawhitton in 1911 and described himself as a farm labourer when he enlisted at Devonport for 12 years on 15th June 1905. His personal details at the time were 5' 6" tall, with brown hair, hazel eyes and a dark complexion. He remained a stoker for all of his service, his promotion opportunities were hampered by his regular sojourns in the cells (10 stays ranging from 3 to 23 days). His final posting was to HMS Indefatigable which he joined on HMS Indefatigable on 4th December 1915. He was 38 when he died.

Leading Stoker K/4259
William Thomas Doidge
HMS Indefatigable
Age 28

William Thomas Doidge was born in Quethiock on 30th June 1889. He was the eldest son and oldest of the seven children of Williammand Elzabeth Ann. His father was a farm labourer who moved around the area. In 1901 the family was living at Polhilsa Cottage and William Senior was working as a cattleman. By 1911, the family had moved yet again, this time to Cross Farm at Luckett, in 1911. William Junior enlisted at Devonport for a 12 year term of service in the Royal Navy on 21st September 1909. He was a farm labourer/cowman before joining up and was 5' 3" in height, with light brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion. After training in the shorebase HMS Vivid II, he served on the battleships, Argyll and Impregnable and progressed up the ranks to become a Leading Stoker. He became part of Indefatigable's company on 14th December 1915. He married Dorothy Florence Ellis in Plymouth in 1912.

Stoker 2nd Class K/28294
Herbert Floyd
HMS Defence
Age 26

Herbert Floyd was born in Callington on 16 April 1890 to Mary Elizabeth Floyd, a housemaid age 21, who was unmarried at the time. Mary went on to marry Frederick Smeeth, a farm labourer, on 22nd August 1895. Mary and Frederick Smeeth seemed to have moved from farm to farm and were living in Pempwell at the time Herbert died. Herbert enlisted into the Navy at Devonport 'for the duration of the hostilities' on 11th October 1915. He was a farm labourer and at the time of his joining up, he was a live-in-servant at the farm of Harry Cory in South Hill. His personal details on enlistment tell us that he was 5' 6" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion. He was trained at Vivid II and, after a short spell on HMS Dublin, he was transferred to HMS Defence on 20th February 1916. He was on this ship for only 95 days before it was sank. His previous ship was also involved in the Battle of Jutland and, altough damaged, did survive.

Able Seaman J/22481
Stanley Herbert Jenkin
HMS Defence
Age 18

Stanley Herbert Jenkin has the poignant distinction of being the youngest person to be named on our war memorials. He was the second of the three sons of James and Mary Jenkin who were killed in the war. He was born in 1897 in Lower Downgate and baptised at home there on 18th December 1897, under the auspices of the Callington Bible Christian Circuit. His parents later moved to Kelly Bray and both had died well before WW1 started. He was 16, and working as a farm boy, when he joined the Royal Navy at Devonport on 11th January 1913 as a Boy Seaman. At the time he was 5' tall, with dark brown hair and eyes and a fresh complexion. Two years later, on 11th Janaury 1925, he enlisted,a the age of 18, to serve for a full term of 12 years, He progressed from Boy Seaman through Ordinary Seaman to become an Able Bodied Seaman, the rank he was holding on HMS Defence when it was sunk.

Private 12885
George Hoskin Brock
Signal Battery 8th Battalion
Gloucestershire Regiment
3rd July 1916
Age 21

George was born on 2nd September 1895 at Tregrove in Linkinhorne, the only son of George, listed as a farmer, and Beatrice Mary Brock. He was baptised on 15th September 1895 at Calstock church - his mother was the daughter of a ship owner there. By the time of the 1901 census, the Brock family was living in Stoke Village, in Lower Town, where his parents ran a small sweetshop/grocery shop. There is a story that they dispensed sweets from their kitchen window. George was another of the former pupils of Stoke Climsland school who died in the war. The family were at the same place at the time of the 1911 census when George Senior is now a labourer and George Junior, at age 16, is listed as being an apprentice blacksmith. Given his future employment in an engineering works, it is not fanciful to assume that he was apprenticed with Dingle's in Venterdon. George's parents later moved to 3, Moss Side, Callington.

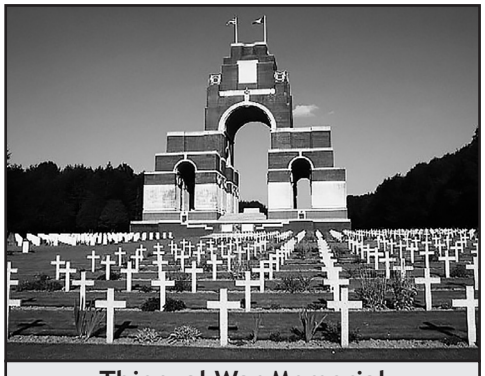


George Brock with his parents, George and Beatrice

Sometime after this he moved to Dursley in Gloucestershire where he was employed in the Zone Works of Mawdsley's, a large manufacturer of electrical machinery. He may have been one of the many people attracted to the area to work at either Mawdsley's or R.A. Lister's. He lodged in Woodmancote, a part of Dursley, and was a regular member of the congregation of St. George's Church in Upper Cam (a village adjoining Dursley). He was described as a *"splendid, willing worker and a nice young fellow with many local friends"*.

George enlisted into the Gloucestershire Regiment in Dursley at a recruiting meeting held in the R.A. Lister Mess Room on 3rd September 1914. The Regiment was raised from men in the Bristol area in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Second New Army and joined 57th Brigade in 19th (Western) Division. They trained at Perham Down on the edge of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire and in March 1915 moved to Tidworth for final training. The battalion embarked for France and Flanders on 18th July 1915, the date appearing on George's Medal Roll Card as the date he entered the France and Flanders Theatre of War. The Division concentrated near St Omer. Their first action was at Moulin du Pietre on 25th September, which was a diversionary action supporting the Battle of Loos. It was designed purely to pin down German reserves and serve as a diversion from the main engagement at Loos. But it was perhaps on the smallest scale of any of the holding actions. All that was hoped from it at best was the capture of the German front-line trench upon a front of about 1,200 yards, after which it was intended to join it up to the existing British line. In order to allow the consolidation of the front line, when taken, the second line was also to be captured, and the troops withdrawn as soon as the front had been put into a state of defence.

In the summer of 1916 they were involved in the Battle of the Somme. Although held in reserve for the first day – 1st July – they, as part of the 19th Division, were put into the attack on 2nd July. They attacked south of La Boisselle, using a ruse of bombarding Ovillers in order to confuse the Germans. By 15.30 some of the men had bombed their way into the village; this led to some severe house-to-house fighting with the German defenders, and the village was eventually taken the following day. Counter-attacks from the Germans had to be fought off and only by 5th July could the village be said to be safely in Allied hands.



Thiepval War Memorial

An extract from the War Diary of the 8th Gloucesters for the day George died reads: *July 3rd 1915: Location Tara-Usna Line*

1.30 am: Moved forward to attack via St Andrews Trench

3.15 am: Attacked La Boiselle and consolidated position. Remained there all day and night. Officers killed: Capt. H.Cox, Capt, E.H.Crooke, Capt. W.J.Mason, 2nd Lt. E.J.Evans, 2nd Lt. F.J.Gadney, 2nd Lt. G.E.H.Ross.

Elsewhere in the diary are given the official casualty figures for the action: Officers killed: 6; Officers wounded: 14; Other ranks killed, missing or wounded: 282. George was one of the men missing and his body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. Pier and Face 5 A and 5 B.



Badge of the Gloucestershire Regiment

The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916. The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial. The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on 1st August 1932 (originally scheduled for 16th May but due to the death of French President Doumer the ceremony was postponed until August.

As well as the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, George Hoskin Brock is also remembered on memorials in Callington, where his parents subsequently lived, and Dursley in Gloucestershire, where he enlisted into the army.

A notice about his death appeared in the Cornish and Devon Post on 22nd July 1916. It reads *"Private George Brock, who has been reported killed in action, was another old boy of Stoke Climsland Council School. The teachers and scholars of his time as well as the villagers will ever remember George with affectionate regard as a boy of remarkable integrity and sweet disposition. Sympathy is felt for his parents and it is hoped that his splendid character and soldierly bearing will be an example for many a youth in the parish to emulate".*


The War Memorial Gates outside of Dursley Church

An article in a Dursley newspaper at the time reads:

PRIVATE GEORGE BROCK KILLED IN ACTION *The death occured in action in France on Monday, July 3rd, of Private George Brock of the Gloucesters. The deceased soldier, who was about 22 years of age, was the only son of Mr and Mrs Brock, of Callington (Cornwall), and before enlisting was employed at the Zone Works, Dursley. He lodged at Mr C. Miles' residence at Woodmancote.*

A letter from Lieut. Priestly, of the Gloucester Regiment, to deceased's parents, stated that they had very severe fighting at La Boiselle. He added that Pte. Brock did his duty and, with many of his fellow men, died a gallant death. He should miss the deceased very much as he was a splendid worker and always did everything very willingly. The parents and relatives had his heartfelt sympathy in their trial. Pte. Brock came forward to serve his country at the great recruiting meeting held in Messrs. R.A.Lister and Co.'s messroom at Dursley on September 3rd, 1914. He was a nice young fellow and had many friends locally, who will deeply sympathise with Mr and Mrs Brock in their loss. He was a regular member of the congregation of the Cam Parish Church during the time he lived in the district.

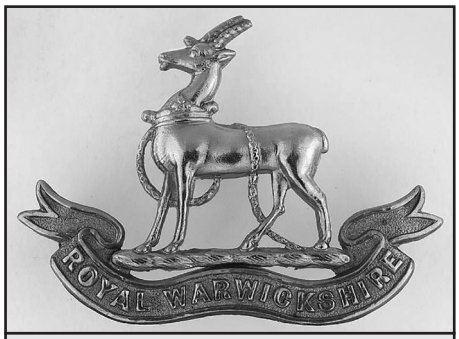
On the anniversary of his death (July 3rd 1922), the following notice appeared in the Western Morning News. It read *"BROCK. In fond and ever-loving memory of Pte. George Hoskin Brock, Sig. Batt. 8th Gloucester Regt., who gave his life for King and country in France, July 3rd, 1916, aged 21 years, the only darling son of George and Beatrice M Brock, 3, Moss Side, Callington".*

George's final settlement of wages and War Gratuity was send to his father on 12th June 1919.

Sergeant 542
John Adams Cornish
16th Batallion
Royal Warwickshire Regiment
Died 27th July 1916
Age 29

John Adams Cornish was born towards the end of 1887, the fifth of the six sons of William and Anne (Annie) Cornish. William was the long serving headmaster of the Luckett Board School and it was in the School House at Luckett that John lived for all of his life in the area. It will be no surprise to learn that he was a pupil in his father's school, where one of older brothers was also a teacher.

In 1911, John was living in London at 75, Sheen Road, Richmond with his cousin, George Adams and his family. At this time John was an accounts clerk and, given subsequent events, this is likely to have been in the Civil Service. Sometime after this date he was transferred to the Board of Trade Labour Department (West Midlands Division) in Birmingham and he was there at the outbreak of the war.

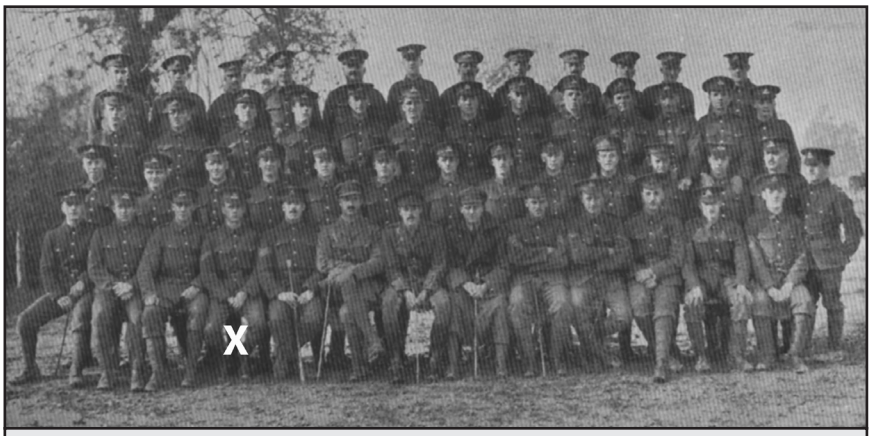


Royal Warwickshire Regiment Badge

When war was declared in August 1914, it did not take long for John Adams Cornish to enlist and he signed up in Birmingham for service. This was into the third of three battalions of Birmingham Pals raised by a Local Recruiting Committee chaired by the Lord Mayor. He was one of the thousands of men who enlisted in the early months of the war, leading to the creation of many new battalions of the so-called Kitchener Army. All of the men in these units were volunteers and were recruited from specific localities, largely of groups of friends: mates from school, workmates, sports teams, etc. hence the name 'Pals' regiments. The folly of creating the Pals battalions was revealed as the war progressed and as town after town heard the news of catastrophic losses among their local units.

Initially known as the 3rd Birmingham Battalion, it first trained at Moseley and while there was given the title 16th (Service) Battalion, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. It then moved to Malvern for continued training, followed by some time at Wharfedale and finally Codford, on Salisbury Plain, where large training and transfer camps were established for the tens of thousands of troops waiting to move to France. The Battalion sailed to France, landing at Boulogne on 21st November 1915, which is the date shown on John Adam's Medal Roll for his formal entry into the France and Flanders Theatre of War. Initially the 16th Battalion was part of 95th Brigade, 32nd Division but the following month the Division was reorganised by swapping battalions between it and the veteran 5th Division. The idea was to 'stiffen' the new troops by mixing them with the veterans (though the 5th Division itself consisted largely of fresh replacements after its mauling in the 2nd Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915). The 16th Battalion was transferred to the 15th Brigade in 5th Division. The 14th Battalion went to the 13th Brigade and the 15th Battalion to the 14th Brigade - this placed all three Birmingham Pals battalions in the same unit.

While training in England group photographs were taken of these Battalions and these were later published in the 'Birmingham City Battalions Book of Honour'. As an original member of the 16th Battalion John Adams Cornish appears in one of these pictures. This shows that he was in B Company, Platoon VIII and was already a Corporal before leaving England. While the book says who is in each picture, it does not say where they are in it. Luckily he was a Corporal then and, as he is the only Corporal in the picture, he can be identified by the two stripes on his sleeve.



B Company, Platoon VIII, 16th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Corporal John Cornish Adams is marked by a X.

After arriving in France the Battalion moved to Longpré, a few miles south-west of Abbeville where it underwent

further training before moving to the Bray sector of the front. It first held trenches near Carnoy from 16th December 1915 and was in the front line over Christmas and New Year, suffering its first casualties during this period. On Christmas Day, men from B Company (John Adam's Company) were employed digging new support trenches behind Carnoy. The area came under heavy shelling from German 5.9 Howitzers which resulted in nine casualties, mostly from Number VIII Platoon (John Adam's Platoon). Four men were killed outright and two more died of wounds the same day. On 27th December, the battalion was relieved and returned from the front line to Bray sur Somme, where, presumably, they could open their parcels from home and enjoy their Christmas dinner. However their respite was short-lived as on 30th December, they returned to the 'C2' sector of trenches in front of Carnoy. By the time the 16th Battalion were finally relieved on 1st February 1916, the month of January had seen nine men killed and thirteen wounded.

In March 1916 the 16th Battalion moved to the Arras sector, where, over the next few months, it alternated between holding trenches and resting in billets until moving to take part in the Battle of the Somme. The total casualties of the 16th whilst on the Arras front amounted to: nine killed in action, two died of wounds, one died of sickness and forty-one wounded. As it left the Arras front it was still predominantly made up of original volunteers from October 1914.



The Board of Trade Roll of Honour

The Battle of the Somme started on July 1st 1916 and for the first few weeks of the month the 16th were held in reserve, although this did not prevent them sustaining casualties during the persistent bombardment from German shellfire. During the evening of 26th July, the 16th Battalion, as did the rest of the 15th Brigade, prepared to resume the offensive against Longueval and Delville Wood, which was due to begin at 07.10 am the following day. Both sides kept up their heavy artillery barrages and the infantry attack would take place within a curtain of incessant shellfire. At 06.10 am British artillery was brought to bear on Longueval and Delville Wood and at 07.10 am, Zero Hour, the barrage was to leap forward at three intervals of 90 minutes. The infantry were then to rush forward and consolidate each time until the village and wood were cleared. However, the German defenders had dug in well and emerged from the British barrage to provide withering resistance. It was a day of attrition but, gradually as the day wore on, the 15th Brigade slowly gained more and more of their targeted gains. As the Battalion War Diary shows, the 16th were at the heart of the action and their casualties for the Other Ranks for this action were: 42 killed, 179 wounded and 46 missing. John Adams Cornish was one of those missing, presumed killed in action. His body was never recovered.

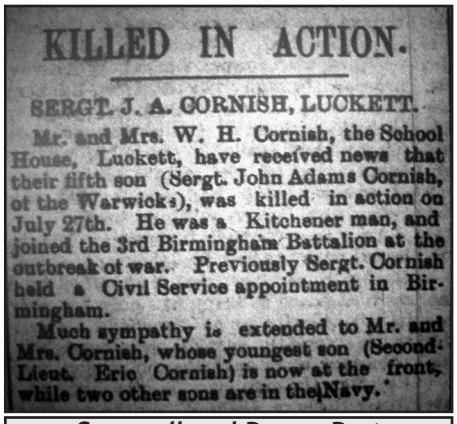
John Adams Cornish is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 9A 9B and 10B). He is also commemorated on the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) 'virtual' memorial and on the Board of Trade Roll of Honour. The original of the latter went missing during WW2 and a replacement replica of which is now in place in the main entrance area of the DTI in 1, Victoria Street, London.

The following notice appeared in the Cornwall and Devon Post on 26th August 1916:

SERGT. J.A. CORNISH, LUCKETT.

Mr and Mrs W.H. Cornish, the School House, Luckett, have received news that their fifth son (Sergt. John Adams Cornish of the Warwicks), was killed in action on July 27th. He was a Kitchener man and joined the 3rd Birmingham Battalion at the outbreak of war, Previously Sergt. Cornish held a Civil Service appointment in Birmingham.

Much sympathy is extended to Mr. and Mrs Cornish, whose youngest son (Second Lieut. Eric Cornish) is now at the front, while two other sons are in the navy.


KILLED IN ACTION.

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Much sympathy is extended to Mr. and Mrs. Cornish, whose youngest son (Second Lieut. Eric Cornish) is now at the front, while two other sons are in the Navy.

Cornwall and Devon Post 26th August 1916

John's personal effects and War Gratuity were paid to his father in two instalments. On 23rd October 1916, £5 7s 10p was sent as wages owed, followed by on 11th September 1919, the War Gratuity of £11 10s 0p. The total of £16 17s 10p was equivalent to approximately £800 in current spending power.

Guardsman 25386
Ernest Finnamore
1st Battalion
Grenadier Guards
Died 25th September 1916
Age 24

Ernest Finnamore was born on 31st May 1891 at Church Town, St John near Torpoint, one of the sons of John, an agricultural labourer, and Emma Finnamore. His parents seemed to have died when he was young and at the time of the 1901 census, he was living with his uncle and aunt, William and Ann Finnamore, in Venterdon.

Luckily and very unusually, Ernest's Service Record has survived and we are able to get a good picture of his army service. He joined the 5th Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry (DCLI) Territorial Force in Callington on 14th January 1910 but moved shortly after that to Falmouth where the 1911 census shows him boarding at 4 Kohinoor Place and working as a ship breaker. Ernest remained with the 4th Battalion DCLI as a territorial taking part in its regular training activities and had the rank of Lance Corporal at the time of the outbreak of WW1.

Pre 1914 there were two DCLI Territorial battalions of the DCLI – the 4th and 5th DCLI. The former recruited in the west of the County (including Truro) and the latter in the east of the County. Territorial Force soldiers had no liability to serve outside the United Kingdom unless they had signed an agreement to do so. When war was declared on 4th August 1914, all those who had signed such an agreement were formed into two battalions, regardless of whether they were originally from the 4th or 5th . These battalions were known as the 1/4th and 2/4th DCLI (TF). They were to be employed in India to relieve regular battalions for service on the Western Front.

In early 1915 Ernest became a Temporary Acting Corporal in the 1st/4th Battalion, by which time he was serving in India. He was based there until December 1915 when he returned to the UK to serve out the remainder of his 6 year engagement with the DCLI. On the very day this expired, he enlisted in the Grenadier Guards in Truro on 13th January 1916. He then travelled to the Grenadier Guards barracks at Caterham in Surrey and, after a period of training, he entered the French Theatre of War on 28th August 1916. In less than one month on French soil he was killed at the Battle for Les-boeufs on the Somme on 25th September.

During this action, which was successful in meeting its objectives, the total casualties for the 1st Battalion from the trench warfare were: 4 officers killed, 12 wounded. 80 other ranks killed and 431 wounded. 84 missing. Ernest was one of the missing and his body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Part XV). As well as the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, Ernest is remembered on memorials in Torpoint, St John by Anthony and Falmouth, representing places associated with his early years and where he worked.

The obituary for Ernest appeared in the Cornish and Devon Post on 28th October 1916:

PTE. FINNEMORE OF STOKE CLIMSLAND- *News has been received of the death of Private Ernest Finnemore (Grenadier Guards) of Stoke-climsland. Deceased went across to France in August, having previously been to India as a member of the Territorial Forces. He was reported wounded about three weeks ago, and now comes the more regretable news of his having been killed in action on Sept. 25th. Deceased was 25 years of age. Having obtained the rank of corporal while in the Territorials it was hoped his known perseverance and smartness would have soon met with a similar acknowledgement in the Guards. Much sympathy is expressed for his brother, William, and his three sisters who mourn his loss.*

Ernest's entitlement to decorations is interesting. As might be expected he had the War and Victory medals from his time in the Grenardier Guards but from his time in the DCLI, he was also entitled to the Territorial Force War Medal. This was a campaign medal awarded to members of the British Territorial Force and Territorial Force Nursing Services who served overseas in World War I; it is the rarest of the five British Great War medals, with only 34,000 issued. The medal was established in April 1920 for award to members of the Territorial Force and Territorial Force Nursing Services who volunteered for service overseas on or before 30th September 1914.



Territorial Force War Medal

Private 100143
Edwin Serpell
49th Battalion
Canadian Infantry
Died 4th October 1916
Age 29

Edwin Charles Serpell was born in Venterdon on March 8th, 1887, the son of Samuel Henry (1854-1932), a carpenter, and his second wife, Mary Johns (1857-1931). He had three brothers and four sisters, was baptised in Stoke Climsland church on 24th September 1893 and attended the local primary school. At the time of the 1911 census, he was living with his parents and working as a 'Steam Roller Assistant', presumably at nearby Dingles.

Like so many other young men from Cornwall, Edwin decided to seek his fortunes overseas, perhaps responding to the publicity and active encouragement of the Canadian government who were keen to increase their population and reclaim land. On 3rd June 1913, he sailed from Bristol, on the Royal Line steamship Royal Edward, bound for Quebec and Montreal. He cleared immigration at Quebec on 10th June 1913, stating that his ultimate destination was Edmonton, Alberta. There he seems to have found work as a gardener as this was the occupation he gave when he enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force in Edmonton on 1st July 1915. Interestingly, most of the 1,000 initial recruits were originally from Britain: only 208 were Canadian-born. The battalion subsequently landed in France on 9th October 1915, where it fought as part of the 7th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division in France and Flanders. It entered the fighting line on October 16th 1915 and remained on active service until the end of the war.



Canadian 49th Battalion badge

The action in which Edwin Serpell lost his life was during one of several conflicts that became part of the larger Battle of the Somme. It was a desperate fight for the strategically important high ground along the Pozieres Ridge, an area that was heavily defended by the Germans. The Battle of Flers-Courcelette was a large-scale general renewal of the offensive after the weeks of attritional fighting for the third German system at Pozieres, High Wood, Delville Wood, Guillemont and Ginchy. It is historically noteworthy for being the first time that tanks were used in battle and the first time that the Canadian Corps entered the Somme. The 49th suffered 63 casualties, 14 killed and 49 wounded. Edwin was one of those who died. His body was initially marked and recorded with a cross by a Graves Registration Unit. It was subsequently exhumed on 1st March 1919 and reburied at Plot 7 Row D Grave 6 in the Courcelette British Cemetery, just north of Pozieres in Picardy. The identification of his body at the time of exhumation was through the reference number on the marker cross: there did not appear to be any other form of identification and there were no personal effects recovered to be forwarded to base for ultimate return to the family. In some cases, the GRU cross was returned to the family but not in the case of Edwin Serpell. There are now 1,970 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in the Courcelette cemetery. 1,180 of the burials are unidentified.


Edwin Serpell's Headstone

As well as on our local war memorials, Edwin Serpell is commemorated on the Canadian Maple Leaf virtual war memorial. An obituary appeared in the Cornish and Devon Post on 28th October 1916. It read:

PTE. SERPELL OF VENTERDON

Official notice has been received of the death of Private Edwin Serpell, aged 29 years. Deceased, who was in the Canadian Infantry, came across about 18 months since and had been in France since July 1916. He fell in action on the Somme on October 3rd. Private Serpell was much respected and loved by those who knew him and especially will his loss be felt in the village, and the Wesleyan Sunday School, Venterdon, of which he was a member from childhood. His even temper and transparent goodness remains as 'lessons in life' for all the young people of his acquaintance. At the Sunday morning service, the organist (Mr T Mutten) played 'O Rest in the Lord' in memoriam morning and much sympathy is felt for Mr and Mrs Serpell and family.

Private 23871
William John Jane
10th Battalion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 16th November 1916
Age 28

William (Bill) John Jane was born in Luckett village in 1888, the eldest son of John and Selina Jane. His father was a copper miner and it was into this trade that William followed his father. At the time of the 1901 census, when the family were living at Treovis Mill, William, then aged 13, is listed as working as a 'copper miner, labourer above ground', as was his father. John and William would have been employed in the nearby Luckett mine, which worked a complex lode carrying copper, arsenic, silver, wolfram, tin, and pyrite, intermittently over many years and under a variety of names. Wheal Martha (1836), Great Wheal Martha (1844-49), New Wheal Martha (1861), and in combination with other adjoining properties, New Great Consols (1867) and finally New Consols. By the time of the 1911 census (2nd April 1911), there had been significant changes in the circumstances of the family, possibly due to the fortunes of the mine, as they were now living in Deerpark Cottage, with both William and his father working as farm labourers.



Jane family wedding at Lidwell (circa 1910) with William Jane (X)

On 22nd November 1915 William enlisted into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in Callington. Possibly because of his mining and labouring background, he was assigned to the 10th Battalion and was based in Hayle. The 10th Battalion was one of the 'Pioneer' battalions whose duty it was to provide logistical support to those on the frontline. Their duties included trench digging; installation of barbed wire entanglements and moving of supplies and munitions They underwent basic military training including firearms, but were also supplied with the necessary additional tools required for the work they were assigned to do in the field as Pioneers.



Luckett Cricket Team (July 2nd 1910) with William Jane (X)

William's battalion landed at Le Havre on 20th June 1916 and were attached as Pioneers to the 2nd Army Division. They were immediately involved in the Battle of the Somme and from August to late November were active in the Hebuterne/Colincamps sector. During this time, their work involved the establishment and maintenance of the very important network of communication and access trenches near the frontline. Another task they had was, under cover of darkness, the recovery of the dead and wounded from wherever they lay. The Battalion War Diary for the 16th November reads: *Battalion remain at Camp B during the day. G at 5.0 pm sent infantry of 150 men to the left. Chapman to Red House to look for and receive orders re searching for wounded in Lager Alley. The party was sent back later. About 10.15pm Capt W.P.Nutley took party of 100 men up to search near Ellis Square. The party was unsuccessful in not finding wounded and were ordered to retun at 6am.*

As was everything that was done at or near the front line, this was extremely dangerous work as much of it had to be done under enemy fire, either from snipers or from artillery bombardment. It was during the above exercise that William was killed. His body was never recovered and, as well as our local memorials, he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 6B), along with others from Stoke Climsland.

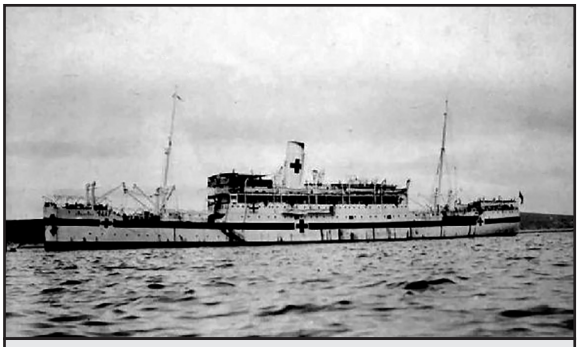
William's personal effects, amounting to £2 2s 7p, and £3 War Gratuity, were paid to his widow, Emily. L. Jane, on 7th October 1919.

Chief Petty Officer 179147
Alfred Bassett
HMS Savage/HMS Blenheim
Died 22nd November 1916
Age 39

Alfred Bassett was born in Stoke Climsland on 5th November 1877 to Harry and Eliza Bassett. Harry was the publican of the Half Moon Inn in Stoke Climsland village. Alfred was baptised in Stoke Climsland church on 29th April 1878 and he must have gone to Stoke Climsland School, just across the road from the pub.

On 28th June 1906 he married Isabel Dingle (daughter of John and Marian Dingle who lived at Mugford for many years whilst John was a mine agent) at the Congregational Chapel in Emma Place, Stonehouse, Plymouth. There were no children. At the time of the 1911 census (2nd April 1911), he and Isabel were living at 57, Abingdon Road, Southsea as Alfred was stationed at the shore establishment, HMS Vernon.

Alfred joined the Royal Navy on 24th April 1894 as a Boy Second Class at the age of 16. His naval record says that he was 5' 3 ¾" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He had a sailor tattooed on his right forearm and his occupation at the time of his enlistment was given as a porter. At this time he entered the shore establishment, HMS St Vincent at Gosport, which was a training establishment for boys and juniors. When he was 18 (5th November 1895) he enlisted to serve for a period of 12 years. He subsequently re-enlisted on 5th November 1907 'to completion'. His first posting was to the battleship HMS Edinburgh. He served in many other ships and travelled extensively (for example, on the night of the 1901 census – 31st March 1901 – he was on board the cruiser HMS Marathon anchored off Trincomalee in Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon). He progressed through the ranks (ordinary, able-bodied, leading seaman, PO 2nd Class, PO 1st Class, Acting CPO). His final posting was to HMS Blenheim, a depot ship to the destroyer HMS Savage, both were part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force involved in the Dardanelle Campaign in the Eastern Mediterranean. He must have fallen ill and been transferred to the Hospital Ship Karapara as it was there that he died of a perforated gastric ulcer. He was buried in the East Mudros Military Cemetery (Reference: III.F.185) and is commemorated there as well as on the memorials in Stoke Climsland. East Mudros Military Cemetery is on the Greek island of Limnos (Lemnos) in the north-east Aegean Sea. East Mudros Military Cemetery was begun in April 1915 and used until September 1919. It contains 885 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 86 of them unidentified, and one Second World War burial. Because of its position, the island of Lemnos played an important part in the campaigns against Turkey during the First World War.



HM Hospital Ship Karapara, upon which Alfred Bassett died

As can be seen from the headstone, there is an inscription as requested by his wife. It reads *'God is love in all their affliction, He was afflicted'*. **Such inscriptions were the only personalisations allowed by relatives and were charged for at the rate of 3 1/2p (old money) per letter. The CWGC records indicate that Mrs Bassett was charged 12s 6p for the 43 letters the inscription contained.** Probate records show that Alfred left £123 10s to his widow (which has a present day purchasing power of approximately £7000). This policy of charging relatives for lettering was not popular as many could not afford to pay and it was eventually was discarded.



Alfred Bassett's Headstone in East Mudros Military Cemetery

The Cornish and Devon Post of 4th November 1916 carried this obituary of Alfred Bassett:
LUCKETT *Mrs Bassett, who resides with her mother (Mrs Dingle) at Lidwell farm, Luckett, has received the sad news that her husband, Chief Petty Officer Alfred Bassett has died from gastric ulcers. Much sympathy is felt for the relatives.*

Private 19854
Edwin Philp
2nd Battalion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 8th December 1916
Age 31

Of all the names researched for the War Memorial, that of Edwin Philp is the one whose details are most unsatisfactory. All of the evidence supports what is written below but further research will either confirm or question these findings.

Edwin Philp was born in Tutwell in 1886, one of the eleven children of William Henry and Elizabeth Anne (formerly Chegwidden) Philp. William Philp was a farmer and fruit grower and Edwin worked on the family farm until he enlisted in the army at Launceston on 24th April 1915. He was initially assigned to the 3rd Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry with whom he landed in France on 24th August 1915. Nothing is known of his service in France but he was subsequently transferred to the 2nd Battalion, which became part of the British Salonika Force (BSF) to fight in what has been rather disparagingly called, a 'peripheral campaign'.



Edwin Philp's parents, William and Elizabeth Anne

In October 1915 the first British troops landed at the Greek port of Salonika (now Thessaloniki) from Gallipoli and France. The BSF fought alongside French, Greek, Italian, Russian and Serbian contingents. British and French colonial troops from the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and Indochina also took part. Of a total allied force of around 600,000 men the BSF numbered 220,000 men at its peak strength. War Office reluctance to support the campaign led to a gradual decline in numbers and, until April 1917, the front was relatively quiet. The major effort came in September 1918 as part of all-encompassing allied offensives, which led to the end of hostilities with Bulgaria on 30th September 1918. As well as battle casualties, the force suffered severely from malaria, there being about 160,000 admissions to hospital in three years, almost equal to the fighting strength of the force. The health of many men was permanently ruined.

The 2nd Battalion DCLI was heavily involved in the actions of the campaign and, in December, took part in an attack on Tumbitza Farm on the Struma Front in Macedonia. At a location called Rabbit Wood, Edwin was killed in action on 6th December 1916. He was the only man killed in action from his battalion that day and his body was never recovered. As well as on our local war memorials, he is commemorated on the Doiran Military Memorial, which is situated in the north of Greece close to the Macedonia border and near the south-east shore of Lake Doiran.

The Doiran Memorial stands roughly in the centre of the line occupied for two years by the Allies in Macedonia, but close to the western end, which was held by Commonwealth forces. It marks the scene of the fierce fighting of 1917-1918, which caused the majority of the Commonwealth battle casualties. The memorial serves the dual purpose of Battle Memorial of the British Salonika Force (for which a large sum of money was subscribed by the officers and men of that force), and place of commemoration for more than 2,000 Commonwealth servicemen who died in Macedonia and whose graves are not known. The memorial stands near the Doiran Military Cemetery. The cemetery (originally known as Colonial Hill Cemetery No.2) was formed at the end of 1916 as a cemetery for the Doiran front. It now contains 1,338 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 449 of them unidentified. There are also 45 Greek and one French war graves.

The sole legatee for Edwin Philp's effects and War Gratuity was his mother, Elizabeth Anne. She received monies from her son's estate in three settlements: 8s 2p on 2nd March 1917, £9 13s 11p on 2nd May 1917 and the final payment of the £7 War Gratuity on 10th October 1919. The total of £10 2s 12p was equivalent to approximately £800 at today's spending power.

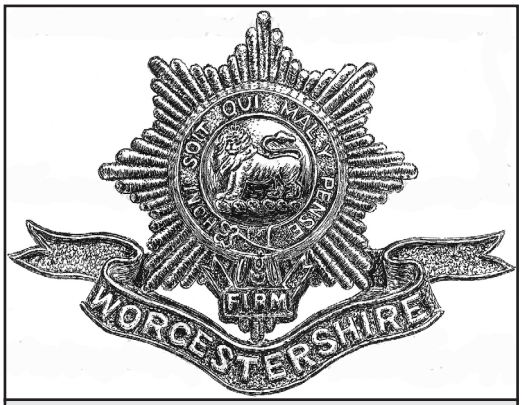


Dorien War Memorial

Private 36436
Frank Jasper
1st Battalion
Worcestershire Regiment
Died 4th March 1917
Age 24

The men appearing on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial have a variety of connections with the Parish. Some connections are direct through residence, some are indirect through relatives. Frank Jasper falls into the latter category: his mother had been born in the Parish but had moved away when she got married.

Frank was born in Mount Pleasant in Lezant and baptised in the parish church there on the 17th March 1893. His parents were William and Jane (nee Mayne) Jasper. In 1901 the family lived in Illand but by 1911 they had moved the short distance to Newtown, Coads Green. Frank and his younger sister, Laura, at this time were living and working on the farm of Thomas Trewin at Tolcarne in North Hill. Frank came from a very large family: the return for the 1911 census lists the children born to his parents - 16 children, 12 still living and 4 dead.



Worcestershire Regiment
Cap Badge

He joined the army in Launceston, records showing that he was living in Callington at the time. He enlisted into the Worcestershire regiment, initially into the 10th Battalion but subsequently he was transferred to the 1st and travelled to France. Somewhat unusually, his Medal Roll does not give the date of his entry into the France and Flanders Theatre of War.

On 4th March 1917, the battalion, who had spent the previous night in trenches to the north of Bouchavesnes near Peronne, were assigned to raid the German trenches. The Worcestershire men had the objectives to capture Pallas Trench, the front line, and Fritz Trench, the second line. The battalion was in the centre with the Northants to their left and the Berkshires to their right. The assault would be lead by A Coy, on the left , with D Coy in the centre and C Coy on the right abreast the Bouchavesnes – Moislains road. B Coy would follow in support. At zero hour, 5.30am, the British guns opened up. This was the signal to start and the men left their trenches advanced under a creeping barrage.

The Worcestershire men easily overran Pallas Trench and then moved on to the second objective, Fritz Trench. Here the resistance was stiffer. An enemy machine gun held up the assault but it was rushed and quickly put out of action and the crew killed. Once at the trench there was a short and desperate bombing fight lasting about 15 minutes when the second objective was taken. A great many Germans were killed, 2 machine guns captured and about 100 prisoners taken. A party of men, in the heat of the battle, then continued and rushed down the slope to Bremen Trench, the third line, here too they bombed dugouts and captured prisoners, however, British shells were falling around them, they had advanced too close to the barrage. Realising they had gone too far, they made their way back to the main body. The men began to consolidate the position in readiness for the inevitable enemy counterattack and soon enemy shells began to fall on the captured positions.

From Fritz Trench there was good observation down towards Moislains, it was an important position and the Germans were determined to recapture it; they soon brought their full weight to bear. Under heavy shelling the battalion worked to consolidate the shattered trenches. Counter attacks were made against the battalions to the left and right of the Worcesters and also on their front. They were able to see German forces grouping near Moislains and brought rapid rifle and Lewis gun fire to bear and the Germans were dispersed and beaten back. Counter attacks and heavy shelling continued and lasted throughout the day accounting for most of the casualties. That evening the battalion was relieved by 2 Bn West Yorkshire Regiment, the relief was carried out under a heavy bombardment. Casualties for the action were Officers 5 KIA, 4 wounded, 1 missing and ORs 44 KIA, 158 wounded, 11 missing. Those fallen who have no known place of rest, Frank amongst them, are commemorated on the Thiepval Monument (Panel Reference: Pier and Face 5 A and 6 C).

As well as featuring on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, Frank's name also appears on the Lewannick and North Hill Memorials through his connections with these Parishes, through residence and working locally.

Sergeant 5818
Nathaniel Lobb MM
Special Section and Brigade
Royal Engineers
Died 10th March 1917
Age 38

Nathaniel Lobb was born in Tavistock in 1879, the son of Nathaniel and Annie Lobb, both of whom had long connections with Stoke Climsland and Downgate. Nathaniel Senior was a long term employee on the railways and progressed from being a Railway Porter to being a Signalman. His other two sons, William and Henry, followed their father's profession and worked on the railway. Nathaniel Junior, however, followed a different career path and became a soldier, joining up in 1900 and ending his career in France in 1917. The following obituary written just after his death gives a good summary of his military service.

SERGEANT LOBB KILLED IN ACTION

We regret to report that Mrs Lobb of Downgate, Stoke Climsland, has received the sad news of the death of her son, Sergeant Nathaniel Lobb RE in France. Sergeant Lobb, who joined that Royal Engineers on June 13th 1900, went through the South African War (Second Boer War) and went to France at the commencement of the present war.



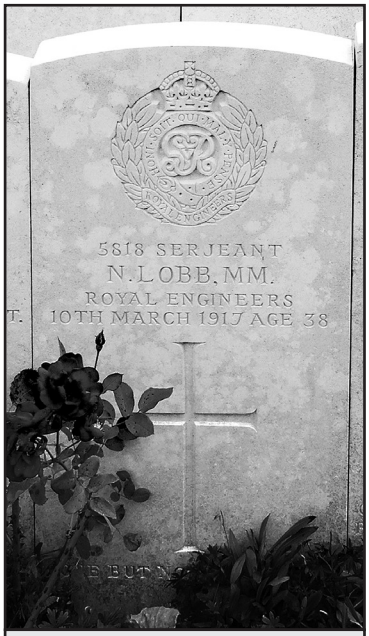
Nathaniel Lobb's Queen's South Africa Medal and campaign clasps

He was reported wounded three times, the first time receiving wounds in the shoulder, knee, leg, hand and foot. Recovering from these he met the enemy and was wounded in the foot and, in a third effort, was wounded in the hand. He was at the Battle of the Somme and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. So recently as January, he was home on a well earned ten days' leave but, on returning to the Front, he developed bronchial pneumonia brought on by exposure and died in a French Hospital (10th Stationary Hospital, St Omer) on March 10th 1917.

Sympathetic letters from Sergeant Lobb's fellow officers and comrades have been received by his widowed mother testifying to his 'fearlessness and gallantry in action' and his being 'a remarkably cool and collected leader'. The Reverend Alfred Coutts, Chaplain to the Forces, in a touching and highly appreciative letter received on March 20th says Sergeant Lobb 'was one of the finest men I have ever met'. Much sympathy is felt for the relatives in their bereavement of one of such sterling qualities both as a man and a soldier.

Sergeant Lobb's time in the Second Boer War entitled him to wear the Queen's South Africa medal, with clasps for service in 1901 and 1902 and for the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Colony campaigns. His medals feature prominently in a display at the Museum of the Royal Engineers at Gillingham in Kent.

Although we do not know the nature of his work in South Africa, his assignment to the Special Section of the Special Brigade of the Royal Engineers during his time in France is very interesting. This indicates he was one of the engineers drafted in from other units, initially as volunteers, to develop and deliver poisonous gas. These moves were in retaliation to the Germans' deployment of similar materials earlier on in the war. The British efforts started in 1915 and the British army employed poison gas for the first time in the opening barrage for the Battle of Loos, principally to overcome a shortage of artillery.



Nathaniel Lobb's Headstone

Full details of Sergeant Loob's service in France are not available. We know he entered the Theatre of War very early on - on 8th September 1914 and we know that he was in the thick of the action during his time there. He was present at the Battles of Ypres and the Somme, as the obituary records, he was wounded several times and recognised for his bravery. His final resting place is in the Longuenesse Souvenir Cemetery (Plot Reference: IV.B.37), near St Omer. His effects and monies from his estate were left to his brothers, William and Henry. He is remembered on his parents' headstone in Stoke Climsland graveyard.

Private 45628
Thomas Stanley Murley
8th Battalion
Devonshire Regiment
Died 2nd April 1917
Age 25

Thomas Stanley Murley was born in 1892 in Lynton, Devon. He was one of the four sons and two daughters of Thomas and Elizabeth Murley. His mother, Elizabeth, was a daughter of Edmund Gill, a well known Victorian fern-hunter and grower. Thomas Murley Senior joined his father-in-law in this business, the mild climate of North Devon being particularly well suited to the cultivation of ferns. Thomas's aunty, Annie, had married Edmund Dingle from Venterdon and it was here that Thomas Stanley lived and it is here that he is mentioned in the 1901 and 1911 censuses. At the time of the 1901 census the rest of his family were still living at the Victoria Fernery in Lynton. His father died in 1907 and, after that, his widow ran the Fernery as a boarding house. In the 1911 census, Thomas's occupation is given as a 'student engineer'.



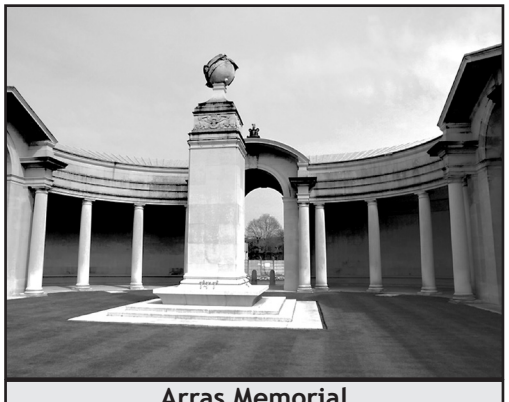
Devonshire Regiment Badge

Records of Thomas Murley's military serve are scarce. At some point, he enlisted in the Devonshire Regiment in Exeter and entered the France and Flanders Theatre of War as part of the 8th (Service) Battalion. His War Gratuity payment of £9 would suggest that he had served for several years, in which case he must have travelled to France fairly early in the war. His service thereafter is unknown but the 8th were involved in heavy fighting during his time.

In early August 1915, the 8th joined the 20th Brigade in the 7th Division in France. After the briefest experience in the line, the Battalion was hurled into the Battle of Loos on 25th September. Despite German shelling and British gas blowing back on them during the attack, the 8th pressed on leading the attack and captured the German position. The survivors of the two Battalions held the position until the evening of 26th September, when they were withdrawn. In this single battle the 8th suffered 639 casualties. After a spell near Givenchy, the 8th moved to the Somme area. The Somme remained a relatively quiet sector until the offensive began on 1st July 1916. On that morning the 8th attacked towards Mansel Copse, where well-placed machine guns, whose crews had survived the preliminary bombardment, cut down hundreds of advancing men. By noon survivors were scattered across the battlefield. At 1530 hours the final company of the 8th Devons were ordered forward. Their commander, Eric Savill, realising what had happened to the other companies, found a route that avoided the machine guns and was able to occupy a stretch of German trench. On the 2nd the 8th Battalion beat off a German counter-attack and were able to advance. On the 4th the Padre of the 8th Devons, Capt Crosse, buried 160 officers and men of both Devonshire Battalions at Mansel Copse, erecting a plaque: *The Devonshires held this trench. The Devonshires hold it still.*

The 8th were engaged in several more actions before the Battle of Arras when, on April 2nd 1917, the battalion attacked the village of Ecoust, just south east of Arras. One description of this engagement describes it as a 'great success and light casualties'. This description is at odds with the official version in the Battalion War Diary which details an advance under cover of a creeping barrage of artillery firepower, meeting a hail of machine gun and rifle fire and ending up with hand-to-hand combat.

It was in this battle that Thomas was killed and his body was never recovered. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial (Reference: Course E Stone 3 Bay 4). He is also remembered on two memorials in his birthplace, the War Memorial and the Memorial Plaque in Lynton Church Cemetery. He left few effects and his mother received his estate of £11 19s 6p, including his War Gratuity of £9, which is worth around £500 today.

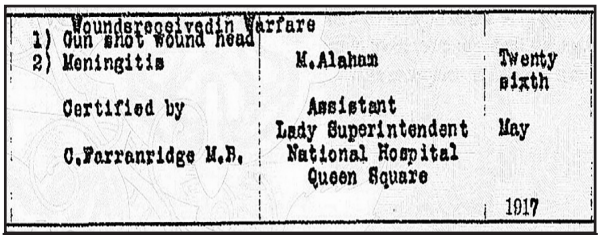

Arras Memorial

Sadly Thomas's younger brother, Percy Douglas Murley, also of the 8th Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment, predeceased him and was killed on 1st July 1916 aged 20.

Private 45783
John Sansom
9th Battalion
Devonshire Regiment
Died 23rd May 1917
Age 22

John Sansom was born in Ford, Devonport, in 1894, the fifth child and only son of William and Louisa Jane Sansom. William was a farmer and, given the size of the farms he had and the house servants he employed, it would appear that he was quite prosperous. After many years farming in the Morval area near Liskeard, the family moved to Whiteford in Stoke Climsland sometime before 1911. In the 1911 census, John, aged 17, is listed as working on his father's farm. Although the address is given in several documents as Whiteford House, it is probable that the family was living in the ancillary buildings and not the original 'big' house as this was being used as offices by the Duchy of Cornwall at the time.

John Sansom's service record has not survived and, although the exact date of his enlistment into the army at Liskeard is not known, a good estimate from the amount of his War Gratuity payment suggests that he entered service in December 1914. The 9th Devons were almost a twin of the 8th Devons with whom they would serve very closely until 1918. Because of this closeness, John Sansom's experiences would have matched those of the previous soldier, Thomas Murley of the 8th Devons, at least up until Thomas's death on 2nd April 1917. After that, during the Battle of Arras both Battalions attacked Ecoust with great success and relatively light casualties but, a month later, capturing part of Bullecourt cost them 382 killed and wounded.


Wounds received in Warfare
1) Gun shot wound head
2) Meningitis
M.Alahan
Twenty sixth
Certified by
Assistant Lady Superintendent National Hospital Queen Square
May
C.Farranridge M.B.
1917

Detail from John Sansom's Death Certificate

The date during the Bullecourt action most relevant to John Sansom was May 7th. On this day, the 9th Devons were involved in an attack on the eastern side of Bullecourt, which started at 3.45am. They were part of the second wave which, after fierce close fighting, successfully achieved their objective - a trench running from U28 a 87 to U27 c 82. This success was accompanied by considerable loss, with one officer killed and two wounded. Amongst the Other Ranks, 22 were killed, 94 were wounded and 7 were missing. John Sansom was one of those wounded.

From his medical records, his subsequent progress can be followed. Initially he was taken to No. 49 Casualty Clearing Station on 7th May just behind the frontline and then transferred by sick convoy in No. 5 Ambulance Train to No. 18 General Hospital at Camiers, approximately 100 miles away and just south of the port of Boulogne. There he was admitted to Hut 1 on 14th May and his injury was formally categorised as 'Gunshot wound I(3) Severe' which meant 'gunshot wound to the head, with fracture of the cranium with depression'. On the 18th May he was taken back to England by hospital ship and transferred to the National Hospital in Queen Square, London, a hospital specialising in severe neurological cases. There he succombed to his injuries on 23rd May and his death certificate records that he died of wounds received in warfare and the exact cause of death in given as 'gun shot wound to the head and meningitis'.

Local newspaper reports at the time told the story of John's progress: *14th April - Mr & Mrs Sansom, Whiteford, have heard that their son, John, has been wounded in the thigh; 25th May - News has been received that the following Stoke boys have been more or less seriously injured and are in hospital in England .....J.Sansom.* The final report on 2nd June details John's funeral in St German's. His final resting place is in the graveyard there, where he shares a plot with his sister, Olive, who had died in 1912. Their parents lie close to them in a separate grave.



John Sansom's headstone in the old graveyard at St Germans

John's effects, totalling £26 6s 2p, which included his War Gratuity of £10 10s, were left to his father, William. His shares in the Great Western Railway company, worth £4569 15s 9p, were also left to his father. At present day rates, somewhere in the region of £180,000.

Driver 18966
William Conibear
D Battery, 106th Battalion
Royal Field Artillery
Died 4th June 1917
age 20

William Richard Conibear was born in Barry, South Wales, in early 1897, the son of William Richard and Lydia Conibear. His father, a blacksmith, had moved from Ilfracombe to Barry, presumably attracted by work in the expanding enginnering and docks industry there. By the time of the 1911 census, the familywere living in Bray Shop where William Snr had a blacksmith's shop and William Jnr, aged 14, was 'working on a farm'. At some stage the family were living at Tregoffe Cottage, north east of Bray Shop, as this was the address given for William Jnr's parents as his next-of-kin



William Conibear 1915, age 18

William Jnr enlisted at Launceston, the exact date for which is unknown but, from his War Gratuity payment, this can be estimated that it was in 1914. He joined the Royal Horse Artillery/ Royal Field Artillery (indistinguishable for all practical purposes) and was a Driver, a role for which his farming background presumably had prepared him. A Driver in the Royal Artillery was someone trained to drive a horse drawn vehicle, including gun teams and ammunition wagons. When the guns were in action, the Drivers remained at the wagon lines, and assisted in the supply of ammunition. They were also available to replace casualties, so had to have a grounding in gun drill and duties of the various gun numbers. William served in D Battery, a unit which had responsibility for the operation of a 4.5″ Howitzer.

William's Medal Roll entry records that he entered the French and Flanders Theatre of War on 30th August 1915. The Division to which his battalion was attached concentrated in the area between Etaples and St Pol on 4th September and a few days later moved across France into the reserve for the British assault at Loos, going into action on the 26th September and suffering heavy losses. In 1916 they suffered in the German gas attack at Wulverghem (April 30th) and then moved to The Somme seeing action in The Battle of Delville Wood (14th July – 3rd September) and The Battle of Guillemont (3rd–6th September). In 1917 they were in action at The Battle of Vimy Ridge in the Spring (9th – 12th April) and The Battle of Messines in June. It was in this latter engagement that William was killed on 4th June 1917.

An extract from the Brigade War Diary for that day reads: *Monday June 4th: 2.30pm. Railway Dugouts shelled with gas shell. D (Battery)/106 shelled 9 casualities.* And the memoirs of the brigade commander, Lieutenant Colonel The Hon Ralph Gerard Alexander Hamilton, records: *On arrival at my own brigade I found that A and D had been heavily shelled whilst I was away. D had bad luck, a 5.9 shell crashing into one of their gunpits and killing two and wounding seven men. I do not think it was meant for them at all, but was a bad shot for A Battery.*

William Jnr is buried very close to where he was killed in the Railway Dugouts Cemetery in Grave IV.G.1. This cemetery is 2 km west of Zillebeke village in Belgium, where the railway runs on an embankment overlooking a small farmstead, which was known to the troops as Transport Farm. The site of the cemetery was screened by slightly rising ground to the east, and burials began there in April 1915. They continued until the Armistice, especially in 1916 and 1917, when Advanced Dressing Stations were placed in the dugouts and the farm. They were made in small groups, without any definite arrangement and in the summer of 1917 a considerable number were obliterated by shell fire before they could be marked.



William Conibear's Headstone

His headstone bears the words 'Thy will be done' which were chosen by the family, for which they were charged 3s 9p. William's father was his sole legatee and received his estate totalling £32 10 5p, worth around £300 at present day spending rates.

Gunner 107471
John Jordan
238th Siege Battery
Royal Garrison Artillery
Died 16th September 1917
Age 41

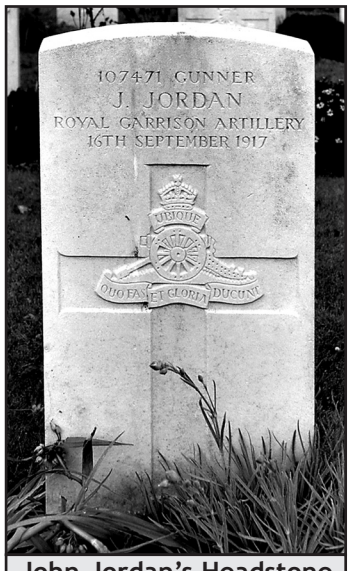
John Jordan was born in Lezant in 1876, the son of Elias and Elizabeth Jordan. He was baptised as John Tredinnick Jordan in Lezant church on 5th November 1876. In 1881 he was living in Launceston with his parents and in 1891 he was working and living as a farm servant in Lake, Lifton. By 1901 he had changed occupations and was working as a storeman in Wheal Russell mine, on Morwell Down above Morwellham. In 1902, John married Edith Friend at Tavistock Registry Office on 5th October 1901 and they went on to have two sons, William John and Charles Herbert, who were both born in Stoke Climsland parish. At the time of the 1911 census, the family was living at Winsor in Kelly Bray and John was working as a storeman/mill-hand, presumably in one of the local mines.



Crest of the Royal Garrison Artillery

John's Service Record has survived and this tells us that he enlisted at Callington on 9th December 1915 when he was 40 years 4 months old and was assigned to the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), based at the Citadel in Plymouth. He remained in reserve until 22nd July 1916 when he was mobilised and posted to a base in Bexhill. He subsequently embarked in France on 19th March 1917 and went into action on 18th May 1917.

The Siege Batteries of the RGA were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory, plummeting fire. They were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strong points, trenches, dumps, stores, roads and railways behind enemy lines. In the case of the 238th, its weapon was a 6 inch howitzer which fires shells upwards and with a curved trajectory. Guns were located in gun pits, where they had a good field of fire but could be hidden out of the direct sight of the enemy. As a Gunner, John Jordan's role would have been to keep the large guns loaded and fired. The shells used were large and heavy and, given the firing rate required during a barrage, it would have been an arduous job in very dangerous conditions. Unit Diaries were not routinely maintained by individual Siege Batteries and that for the 238th covers only August and October 1917, tantalisingly not the month during which John Jordan was killed. What is clear, however, from those two months is that the Battery was in continuous active service around Ypres as part of the Battle of Passchendaele, firing many rounds and, in return, coming under heavy enemy fire. It was in one of these barrages that he was killed. His body was recovered and was buried in the Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery (Grave reference: III.C.3), which is a few miles south west of Ypres. The cemetery was begun in January 1917 and Plots I to III were made by field ambulances and fighting units before the middle of January 1918. Plot IV was begun in April 1918. It now contains 805 First World War burials, 109 of them unidentified.



John Jordan's Headstone

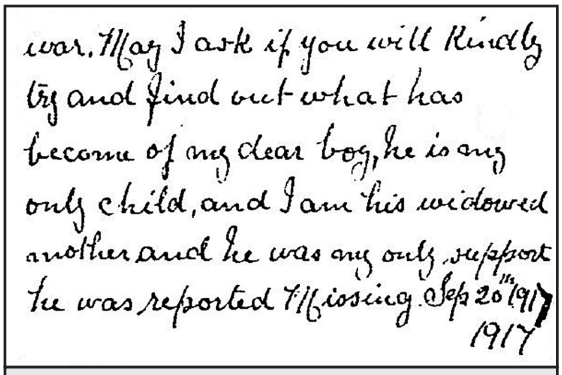
At 40 years of age when he died, he has the dubious position of being the oldest of those listed on the Stoke Climsland memorial. His Service Record gives an almost unique insight into his personal effects. The items recovered from his body and returned to his widow, Edith, are listed as: disc, notebook, 2 Ingersoll watches (in tin), safety razor and blades (in case), shaving soap, belt, mirror, 2 writing pads, 3 pencils, metal watch and chain with cover, wallet, testament, diary, letters and papers, religious tracts, 2 coins. She received these on 2nd February 1918. She also received his residual salary (£3 3s 9p) and War Gratuity (£4).

As a war widow, Edith was entitled to claim a war pension, which was not a statutory right until 19th August, 1919, and, following the completion of the requisite forms and provision of various marriage and birth certificates (all of which are documented), she was awarded a weekly pension of 8 s 9p. This was given for herself and one child. Her eldest son, William John, was over 16 at the time of his father's death and was deemed not to be dependent on his mother.

Private 204545
Sydney John Smith
B Company, 15th Battalion
Hamsphire Regiment
Died 20th September 1917
Age 33

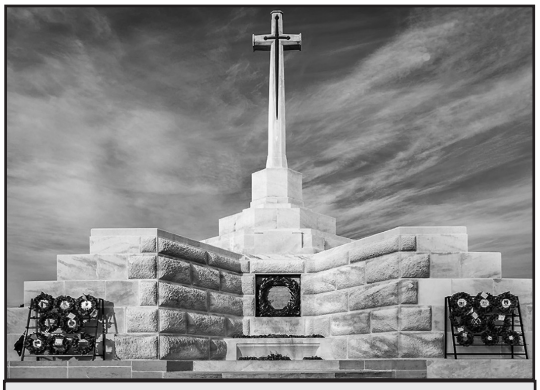
Sydney John Smith was the only son of John and Jane Smith. His father was a miller at Manaton Mill and it was there that Sydney was privately baptised at home on 5th February 1884. By the time of the 1901 census, taken on 31st March of that year, the Smith family was living in Kelly Bray and Sydney, aged 18, was working as a general labourer, while his father was a corn miller. In the 1911 census (2nd April 1911), the family is still in Kelly Bray and Sydney's occupation is given as a sawyer, possibly at the sawmill which was on the corner of Station and Launceston Roads.

Sydney enlisted in the army at Launceston, possibly in mid-1916 as his War Gratuity payment suggests he had 12 months qualifying service, and seemed to have moved regiments several times, from the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to the Devonshire Regiment and, finally, to the Hampshire Regiment. It may be that these moves were in response to the need to make up regimental numbers in the field. We don't know when he entered the France and Flanders Theatre of War but, from the War Diary of his battalion, we do know that just before the 20th September 1917, the 15th Hampshires were in Trench Street Tunnels, just outside of Zillebeke, to the south of Ypres. They were preparing for engagement on the 20th for what became known as The Battle of the Menin Road Ridge, the third British general attack of the Third Battle of Ypres or Passchendaele as it is also known. The battle took place from 20th to 25th September 1917 and heralded a change in some infantry tactics, by adopting the "leap-frog" method of advance, when waves of infantry stopped once they reached their objective, then consolidated the ground, while other waves passed through the objective to attack the next one and the earlier waves became the tactical reserve. The Battalion War Diary gives a graphic description of the fighting Sydney and his comrades were engaged in. On the 20th September, the Hampshires went into action with the objective of capturing Tower Trench east of Gheluvelt. It was a day of attack and counter-attack, trenches being raked by gun and machine-gun fire. Eventually the position was secured and enemy prisoners and armament captured. The objective was subsequently consolidated and held against several determined counter-attacks, despite other battalions involved being apparently too disorganised to achieve theirs. Although those for the 20th are not quoted, the Diary does record that, at the end of the battle, the battalion casualties were significant: 55 killed, 255 wounded and 34 missing believed killed. Sydney was one of the latter. His body was never recovered and he is one of the many commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial. It bears the names of some 35,000 men of the British and New Zealand forces who have no known grave, nearly all of whom died between August 1917 and November 1918. It is one of four memorials which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient


war. May I ask if you will Kindly
try and find out what has
become of my dear boy, he is my
only child, and I am his widowed
mother and he was my only support
he was reported M/Missing Sept 20th 1917
1917

Extract of letter from John Smith's mother to the Red Cross Missing Persons Bureau

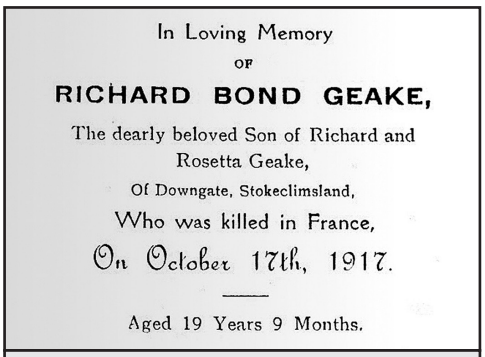
Sydney's mother clung on to the fact that he was originally listed as 'missing believed killed' and correspondence archived with the Red Cross contains a record of the poignant letters Jane Smith wrote to the authorities trying to track down her son. All to no avail and Sydney was eventually listed as 'killed'. Sydney is remembered on his parents' headstone in Stoke Climsland graveyard: his father had predeceased him in 1914 and his mother died in 1934. Sydney's residual pay (£2 4s 10p) and War Gratuity (£3) were given to his mother, Jane, as sole legatee. On 30th January 1919, probate for his estate of £122 6s 10p was granted by the Bodmin Registry to Jane Smith widow. This is more likely to refer to his widowed mother rather than a widowed wife, for whom there is no evidence of any marriage.



Tyne Cot Memorial

Private 34242
Richard Bond Geake
'B' Company, 6th Battalion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 17th October 1917
Age 19

Richard Bond Geake was born in Stoke Climsland village in 1898, the eldest son of Richard and Rosetta Jane. He was baptised by Reverend Manley in the church on March 13th of that year. His father was a butcher but, by 1911, the family had moved to Higher Downgate where Richard Senior had become a farmer. Richard Junior enlisted into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in Callington on 7th June 1916, initially into the 3rd Battalion but he was later transferred to B Company in the 6th Battalion. When he enlisted he was 18 years 6 months old and was one of the youngest victims of the war to be named on the Stoke Climsland memorial. At the time of his enlistment his occupation is given as a carpenter's apprentice.


In Loving Memory
OF
RICHARD BOND GEAKE,
The dearly beloved Son of Richard and Rosetta Geake,
Of Downgate, Stokeclimsland,
Who was killed in France,
On October 17th, 1917.
Aged 19 Years 9 Months.

Richard Geake's Memorial Card circulated by his parents

When Richard Bond entered the France and Flanders Theatre of War is unknown but we do know, from his battalion's war diary where he was when he died. The 6th Battalion was involved in the preparations for the First and Second Battles of Passchendale and were based just south of Ypres. Although they were not actually at the front line, the Battalion were employed as 'carrying parties', moving materials to the forward line and maintaining trenches. As the War Diary records: *'Theirs was a humble duty - carrying - but nevertheless of very great importance. It would be impossible to state how many actions, won or lost, were swayed by the successful or unsuccessful efforts of the carrying parties to keep the supply of SAA (small arms ammunition), machine-gun and trench-mortar ammunition'*. It was also very dangerous work as the area came under regular heavy bombardment with shells and nerve gas. The water logged nature of the terrain was another great burden and one of Richard Bond's company members was listed as 'drowned in mud'. On the 17th October 1917, B Company was carrying rations to and from Sanctuary Wood and were under conditions described as *'hideous, as usual, by the Bosche shelling the Wood with gas shells and high explosives'*. On this day, the casualties recorded for 6th Battalion were 8 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 12 other ranks were wounded and 3 other ranks were missing, presumed killed. Richard was one of those killed. These were noted as *'extraordinarily light considering the heavy shell-fire'*.

His body was initially buried in a small cemetery at Zillebeke but was subsequently exhumed and reburied in the Hooge Crater Cemetery, quite near where he fell, at Reference: XII. F. 13. The Exhumation Records mention that no personal effects were recovered to be returned to his relatives. Hooge Crater Cemetery itself was begun by the 7th Division Burial Officer early in October 1917. It contained originally 76 graves, in Rows A to D of Plot I, but was greatly increased after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields of Zillebeke, Zantvoorde and Gheluvelt. There are now 5,916 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 3,570 of the burials are unidentified, but special memorials record the names of a number of casualties either known or believed to be buried among them, or whose graves in other cemeteries were destroyed by shell fire.

Richard's headstone bears the inscription chosen by his mother, *'Father in your gracious keeping, Leave we now your servant sleeping'*. The charge for the 54 letters in this was 15s 9p, which, or may not, have been levied and collected. The printed 'In Memoriam' card shown, which had a biblical verse on the reverse, was produced, as were many others, as a memento to send to friends and family. Richard is also remembered on his parents' headstone on Stoke Climsland graveyard, his epitaph reading '*duty nobly done*'.



Richard Geake's Headstone

Richard's wage that was outstanding at the time of his death was paid to his father on 3rd August 1918. It amounted to 10s 2p.

Private 34782
Philip Philp
16th Battalion
Royal Warwickshire Regiment
Died 5th November 1917
Age 24

Philip Philp was born in September 1893 at Tutwell, one of the eight sons and four daughters of John Henry and Emma Jane Philp. John Henry, originally a copper miner, was a woodman on the Duke of Bedford's estate. Philip was baptised at Stoke Climsland church on 18th October 1897, at the same time as his sisters, Winifred and Minnie. It was not uncommon for a number of siblings to be baptised during the same ceremony. We are lucky to have a photograph, albeit slightly out of focus, of Philip which was taken on July 2nd 1910 when he was a member of the Luckett Cricket Team. With regards to Philip's occupation, the 1911 census tells us that he was working as a farm labourer.



Philip Philp's Memorial Plaque

Although the exact date is not known, we believe that Philip originally enrolled into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry at Bodmin in late 1915, when his first allocated Service Number was 4985. He was transferred to the Royal Warwicks at some stage in France, probably to make up regimental numbers in the field. It is known that significant numbers of those sent to the 16th Battalion were not from its 'home' of Birmingham.

In April 1917 the 16th Battalion was attached to a Canadian formation and was involved in the attack on Vimy Ridge. Over the summer of 1917 it was in the Pas de Calais area between Arleux and Oppy and contributed to the capture of Oppy Wood, a strategically important German defensive position that overlooked British positions. This was followed by the Third Battle of Ypres during which the battalion took part in repeated attacks on Polderhoek Chateau in October. Although the attacks were initially successful, there was a high cost of life and the Château could not be held due to a combination of stiff resistance from an enemy firmly ensconced in concrete pill-boxes, heavy German artillery fire, and the fact that the pervasive mud continuously rendered the attackers' weapons inoperative. The Battalion was still in the Ypres Salient when Private Philp fell on 5th November. The Battalion War Diary has the following brief, rather matter-of-fact, entry for the day *"Weather fine. 1.40 pm. A small party of the enemy attempted a raid on Number 3 post in the left company's sector but were driven off by bombs and Lewis gun fire"*. It is likely that involvement in this action led to his death. His body was never recovered and he is one of the 35000 men commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgian Flanders, just outside of Ypres. The exaact location reference for Philip is Panel 23 to 28 and 163A.


Philip Philp (detail from Luckett Cricket Team photograph 1910)

Private Philp's residual wage of £4 8s 1p was divided in equal amounts of 9s 9p between five brothers and four sisters. In addition to this, his sister Winnie also received his War Gratuity payment of £6 4s 6p. For some unspecified reason, his brother Robert was given the additional sum of 15s 6p

The photograph of Philip's Memorial Plaque has been provided by a relative.These are made from Bronze and were popularly known as the "Dead Man's Penny" among front-line troops, also becoming widely known as, the "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny". It was in October 1916 that the British Government setup a committee for the idea of a commemorative plaque that could be given to the next of kin for those men and women whose deaths were due to the First World War of 1914-18. The first a family would know of the death of family member was the arrival of a telegram from the War Office. This would be followed by the World War One Death Plaque and any medals the serviceman would have earned serving his country. The original plaque was a 12 centimetre disk cast in bronze gunmetal and approximately 1,150,000 were issued for those fell between 4th August, 1914 and 10th January, 1920.

Acting Lieutenant
Lancelot John Barrington Walters
HMS Partridge
Royal Navy
Died 12th December 1917
Age 22

Lancelot John Barrington Walters was born on January 19th 1895 at Castle Bromwich, Worcestershire, and was baptised in the local church on February 2nd. His parents were Charles Barrington and Selina Harriette Perotine Walters. Charles was rector of that church at the time and subsequently became vicar of Stoke Climsland, where he was the incumbent when his son was killed in 1917. Lancelot joined the Royal Navy, entering as a naval cadet at the age of 13 in 1908. He trained at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth (His Royal Highness Prince Albert Frederick Arthur George, the future King George IV was a fellow midshipman) and joined the Home Fleet as a midshipman in 1913. He was fatefully posted from Greenwich to HMS Partridge in July 1917.



The final moments of HMS Partridge

In late 1917 HMS Partridge was one of a number of ships, based at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, being used to escort convoys to and from Norway. On 11th December 1917 the destroyer left port in company with the destroyer HMS Pellew and four armed trawlers, escorting a convoy of six merchant ships. At 11.45 am on 12th December the convoy was south west of Bjorne Fjord when enemy ships were sighted to the north. The convoy was ordered to scatter and the Partridge and the Pellew prepared to engage the enemy in the form of four destroyers. The Partridge was quickly hit, and with her main steam-pipe severed was rendered helpless and a sitting target. After being hit by another torpedo her Captain gave orders for her to be abandoned. Despite this order, Lieutenant Walters, and his colleague Aubrey Grey, were determined to continue the fight. Manning a torpedo tube they fired one which hit an enemy destroyer but failed to explode. Soon afterwards Grey was wounded in the thigh. The two Lieutenants then made for a boat but this capsized casting both into the water. Grey, although wounded, then performed an unselfish act of bravery. He swam to help Walters who was exhausted, and although badly wounded himself in the leg, swam with him for more than a quarter of a mile and placed him on the only vacant place on a raft. After that, he swam for around half-an-hour towards one of the vessels, blood flowing freely from his leg wound, before he was spotted by the crew of the V100. After three unsuccessful attempts he was finally hauled aboard, where he fell unconscious. He spent the rest of the war as a prisoner at Kiel, on Germany's Baltic coast. He had been one of only 24 of the crew of the Partridge to have survived. Reports indicate that 97 were killed. For this gallant act of life saving, Lieutenant Grey was awarded the Royal Humane Society's Silver Medal and was subsequently awarded the Society's Stanhope Gold Medal in 1919. The medal was introduced in 1873 and was first awarded to Captain Matthew Webb, the first man to swim across the channel, after he attempted to rescue a sailor who had fallen from the rigging of a ship into the Atlantic Ocean.

Sadly, despite Lieutenant Grey's efforts, Lieutenant Walters died and his body was lost at sea and never recovered. As well as being commemorated on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, Lieutenant Walters is also remembered on the Royal Navy Memorial at Portsmouth, and on a memorial and a stained glass window at St Catwg's church in Cwmcarvan in Monmouthshire.

Lancelot's connection with Cwmcarvan comes through his uncle, Captain Henry Edward Walters, who owned the nearby 'big' house, Caer Llan, for many years. Incidentally, when Henry Walters died in 1932, the estate passed initially to his wife and then, quite shortly afterwards, to his nephew, Robnett Walters, the step-brother of Lancelot. Robnett was born in Stoke Climsland which, in a way, brings us full circle back to Cornwall.



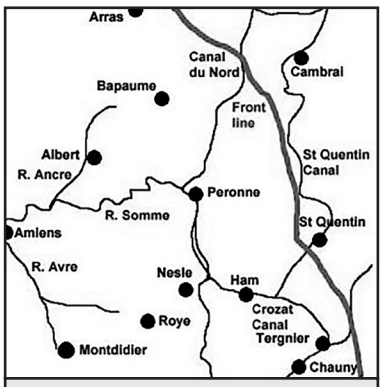
Stained glass window in St Catwg's, Cwmcarvan

On 13th May 1918, Lancelot's father, Charles, was granted probate over his son's estate of £3,521 which is equivalent in purchasing power to just under £200,000 in 2018.

Corporal 240672
George Henry Jenkin
1st/5th Battalion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 21st March 1918
Age 33

George Henry Jenkin was the third, and last, son of James and Mary Jenkin to be killed in combat. He was the eldest of their four sons named on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial. He is erroneously listed as C Jenkin rather than G.H. George was born in Downgate and was baptised in Downgate Chapel on 21st November 1889. At the age of 16, he was working underground as a tin miner but, at 24, he was living in Kelly Bray with his brother, Alfred, and sister, Alice, and his occupation had changed to farm labourer.

We can estimate from the amount of his War Gratuity that George enlisted in the army at Bodmin sometime in mid-1915. He was drafted into the 1/5th Battalion and would have been involved in the various movements of the battalion from that time. In 1915 it moved to Falmouth and then, in April 1916, it moved to Perham Down and then Tidworth and became a Pioneer Battalion of the 61st Division. On 22nd May 1916, it was mobilised for war and travelled to France, landing at Le Havre. From that time on, the battalion was on active service and took part in many actions on the Western Front including, in 1916, the attack at Fromelles, which was an unsuccessful diversionary tactic during the Battle of the Somme. They were very active in 1917 and were involved in the operations on the Ancre, the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, the Battle of Langemark and the many German counter attacks.



The area in Northern France where the Battle of St Quentin was fought

At the time of George's death, his unit was in the Somme region and engaged in the Battle of St Quentin, which took place between 21st and 23rd March, and which was part of the German Spring Offensive of 1918. The German's goal was to break through the Allied lines and advance in a north-westerly direction to seize the Channel Ports, which supplied the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and to drive the BEF into the sea. Two days later General Ludendorff, the chief of the German General Staff, changed his plan and pushed for an offensive due west, along the whole of the British front north of the River Somme. This was designed to separate the French and British Armies and crush the British forces by pushing them into the sea. The offensive ended at Villers-Bretonneux, to the east of the Allied communications centre at Amiens, where the Allies managed to halt the German advance; the German Armies had suffered many casualties and were unable to maintain supplies to the advancing troops. The series of battles were termed the First Battles of the Somme and the British Official History, which made a painstaking compilation of casualty statistics, quotes a total of 177,739 men of Britain and the Commonwealth lost as killed, wounded and missing over the entire campaign.

Returning to the fate of George Jenkin: the 21st March began with an extremely heavy German artillery bombardment of high explosive and gas shells. The 1/5th DCLI were ordered to 'man battle stations at 5.30 am', moved into position and came under considerable enemy fire all day. An officer of the DCLI wrote afterwards *'we were entrenched or rather spread along a sunken road. We had thrown up a thin barbed wire fence in front which gave us a feeling of protection, although in reality it was of no use at all'*. In this action many men were lost, including George Jenkin. He was listed as 'missing in action' and his body was never recovered.

As well as being remembered in Stoke Climsland, George is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial Panel 45B), near Albert in Northern France. The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21st March to 7th August 1918.


Pozieres Memorial

After the war, George's residual pay was divided equally between his only surviving brother, Alfred, and his three sisters, Ellen, Sarah (Bone) and Alice. Alfred was the sole recipient of the War Gratuity.

Engine Room Artificer 271831
Ernest William Dennington
HMtB 90
Royal Navy
Died 25th April 1918
Age 29

Of all the names on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial, that of Ernest William Dennington was probably the most difficult to assign. The monument itself incorrectly identifies E.W. Dennington as P.C. Dennington (and seems to have been added, out of alphabetical sequence, after the majority of the other names) whilst the Roll of Honour in the church lists E.W. Dennington and R. Dennington as two of those who fought and returned safely from the conflict. Notwithstanding these anomalies, the biography below has been validated by a number of sources.



Ernest William Dennington

Ernest William Dennington was born in Devonport on 25th April 1889, one of the three sons and eight daughters of Herbert and Harriet Dennington, a schoolmaster in the Navy. On his 18th birthday in 1907, he joined the Royal Navy in Devonport for a period of 12 years. The personal details recorded show that he was 5' 6" tall, with light brown hair, grey eyes and with a freckled complexion. It is by strange and tragic coincidence that he died on the exact same day in 1918 – 25th April. He entered the service as a Boy Artificer (engineering apprentice) and worked his way up the ranks, by service (on ships such as Suffolk, Bristol, Majestic and Argyll) and training, to reach Engine Room Artificer Second Class. As such, he helped to maintain and operate the mechanical plant of the ships he served on. Throughout his service, his character was always assessed as 'superior' and he received many good conduct badges.

His final posting was to HMS Cormorant, a 'receiving ship' or shore establishment at Gibraltar. Such an establishment had a variety of functions. For many men it was a Naval barracks, for those who worked ashore or for those 'between ships' for whatever reason. In addition there might be men who were on vessels which were too small to do their own administration, so the men were carried on the books of the shore base. Ernest Dennington fell into this latter category, as his last posting was to a small boat, Motor Torpedo Boat Number 90. He was based in Gibraltar for a couple of years, long enough for his to enrol in the Freemason's Lodge there in 1917 and pay a 7s 6d membership fee. HMTB 90 was a 140-footer, built in Yarrow in 1894/95.Few details are known of its fate and it is listed as 'capsized off Gibraltar in bad weather ' on 25th April 1918, with the loss of all hands. No bodies were recovered for subsequent burial. As well as being remembered in Stoke Climsland, Ernest William Dennington is commemorated on the Royal Naval Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

The Plymouth Naval Memorial is one of three naval memorials in the UK. The others are at Chatham and Portsmouth. All three memorials were designed by Sir Robert Lorimer with sculpture by Henry Poole. Each design is the same with an obelisk of Portland stone surmounted by a copper sphere. The memorial commemorates more than 7,200 sailors of the First World War and nearly 16,000 of the Second World War. The Second World War extension was designed by Sir Edward Maufe designed with additional sculpture is by Charles Wheeler and William McMillan. It was unveiled by Prince George in July 1924. The extension was unveiled by HRH Princess Margaret on 20 May 1954

Ernest's estate of £340 11s was left to his father, Herbert. This is worth around £13,000 at today's spending power.



Plymouth Naval Memorial

Confirmation of Ernest William as the correct focus of our researches came from a nephew. He was able to tell us that Ernest's parents, Herbert and Harriet, were living at 1, Waterloo Terrace in Kelly Bray at the time of his death and they were regular worshippers at Stoke Climsland church. He also gave us the accompanying photograph of his uncle.

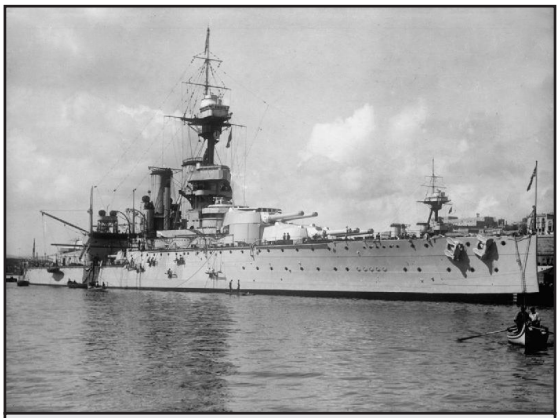
Leading Stoker K/18812
Albert Colwill
HMS Anchusa
Royal Navy
Died 16th July 1918
Age 29

Albert Colwill was born on 15th June 1889, the second son of William and Thurza Colwill. At the time of his birth, his father was a farm labourer and the family was living at Higher Wooladon Farm, which is between Lifton and Launceston. A couple of years later, in the 1891 census (5th April 1891), his father is listed as an agricultural labourer and the family was living in one of the Albert Cottages at Bradstone, which housed workers on the Duke of Bedfords's estate. By the time Albert was 11, the family was living at Tencreek Cottages, just outside of Menheniot. His father is a general agricultural labourer and it is probable that Albert helped out on the farm. At the time of the 1911 census (2nd April 1911) Albert was living and working at Batten's Farm, North Hill, as a servant and waggoner. His parents lived nearby in Batten's Cottage, his father was a general labourer. By the time of his death in 1918, William and Thurza had moved yet again, this time to Higher Downgate.



WW1 Roll of Honour at North Hill Church

Albert enlisted into the Navy at Devonport for a 12 year term on 7th April 1913. His given date of birth, and one that appears on all subsequent records, is 15th June 1893 so, for some reason, he must have given a wrong age. At the time of his enlistment his occupation is given as farm servant. He is 5' 5 ½", with an expanded chest measurement of 35". His eyes are brown, his complexion dark and his hair dark brown. After a period of training as a Stoker 2nd Class attached to Vivid II (Vivid II was an 'Accounting Base' at Devonport and was the Stokers and Engine Room Artificers School), he was assigned to the destroyer HMS Ajax on 16th October 1913 where he remained until 31st January 1917. Over that period he progressed through the Stoker ranks, from Stoker 2nd Class, through Stoker 1st Class, Acting Leading Stoker to Leading Stoker. HMS Ajax was a new ship when Albert joined and it saw action at the Battle of Jutland on 31st May 1916.


HMS Ajax

Upon leaving HMS Ajax, and after several months re-attached to Vivid II, Albert joined the mine-sweeper/Q ship HMS Anchusa on 30th May 1917. A Q-ship was essentially designed as a decoy vessel to deceive and lure submarines. Unfortunately it was torpedoed by the German submarine U-54 (Hellmuth von Ruckteschell) off the north coast of Ireland on 16th July, 1918 the majority of the eighty officers, men and boys were killed. The official report of the incident reads *"Having sailed from Lough Swiley on 14 July, she screened a homeward-bound convoy off the Northern Ireland coast the following morning and was then ordered to return to Lough Swilly. On the way she was diverted to assist with a search or a submarine reported in the area, but without success, after which she resumed her passage to Lough Swilly. At 2:07am she was hit on the starboard side by two torpedoes fired from a submerged U 54 (von Ruckteschell). She broke up and sank rapidly, going under in just two minutes, the boilers exploding as she sank. Twelve survivors were picked up the following morning in position 55.37N, -7.35.W".*

The sinking of the Anchusa was reported by Georg Haidt, the wireless operator of the U54. This gives a unique insight into the incident by the 'enemy'. He wrote: *'At 2.55 came the command: "Tubes one and two fire!" A double shot at 1000 metres range! Two powerful explosions and – the steamer sinks. Nevertheless it rears up and pushes its bow vertically out of the water. Curious smouldering flames flicker from the ship. .....Suddenly a volcano spews from the middle of the sea. Amid unheard-of noise the entire steamer, torn to atoms, flies into the air'.*

Albert's body was not recovered for burial. He is remembered on the Royal Naval Memorial in Plymouth (Panel 28) as well as those in Stoke Climsland and North Hill Parish.

840 Gunner
Richard Stidwell
Royal Garrison Artillery
Died 3rd August 1918
Age 24

Richard Stidwell's name does not appear on the Stoke Climsland War Memorial but he is buried in the church graveyard with a military headstone. It is appropriate to include his story in this compilation as his grave is one of the three in the graveyard that are listed with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The other two are those of Hamilton Buller, the last soldier in this series, and Sergeant Harry Doidge Searle who was a WW2 casualty.

He was born in Boyton in 1895, one of the five children of John and Betsy Ann (nee Lawrence). The family were farming in Laneast at the time of the 1901 census (although John Stidwell seems not to be living with the family at this time and cannot be traced in the census returns) and had moved to Winsor in Kelly Bray by the 1911 census. Richard's father, John, had died in 1907 and his mother is listed as the head of household: Richard's occupation is given as a farm labourer. Luckily, Richard's full Service Record exists and from this we can see that he enlisted 'for the duration of the war' in Callington on 23rd October 1915, when his health was assessed as 'good' and he was declared medically fit to enlist. He joined the 1/5th Cornwall Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Teamster, later a Gunner, although there is mention of the 2/5th in his record. He served for only 182 days before, in what appears to be a fairly rapid change in his health, he was discharged as medically unfit, because of 'tubercle of the lung', on 21st April 1916. His official discharge form states that he was *'discharged in consequence of being a recruit with more than three months service considered medically unfit for further military service (Kings Regs. Para 392)'*. He went to live with his mother at Kitty Bren, Bowling Green and he subsequently died of pulmonary tuberculosis on 3rd August 1918 at Zaggy Lane, Callington. He was buried in Stoke Climsland graveyard on 8th August of the same year. His slate headstone is shown below. It is inscribed with the words 'Always remembered'. CWGC records show that his widow was charged 4s 8p for these 16 letters.



Callington War Memorial

There are a couple of questions that still remain to be clarified for Richard Stidwell. These are:

1. Every year, near Armistice Sunday, a poppy wreath is placed on his headstone. It is accompanied by a note that reads 'from his Comrades in Arms in the 1st, The Queen's Dragoon Guards'. This regiment is based in Cardiff and, as far as can be ascertained, Richard never had any connection with it during his service years, neither is there any connection with the Cornwall Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery. Who is responsible for the appearance of the wreath? Wide ranging enquiries have been made but all have been drawn a blank so far. It would be interesting to find out the truth behind this mystery but, on the other hand, perhaps it would be better if it remained an unsolved mystery. 2. Richard's formal citation on the CWGC's website mentions his wife, Mary Stidwell (nee Tideswell), of 19, Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. They were married in Coventry Registry Office on 9th October 1917 and their marriage certificate gives a clue as to where they met. They were both working in a munitions factory: Richard as an engineer and Mary as a forge worker. Apparently they did spend some time together in Cornwall as a son, George, was born locally on 14th April 1918. A grand daughter of Richard has indicated that Mary, and their son, returned to Staffordshire, and her family, after his death. Apart from the citation on the CWGC website, there is no mention of Mary in any of the information we have been able to access. It would be interesting to complete the picture by finding out a little more about her and her subsequent life.



Richard Stidwell's Headstone

Second Lieutenant 87209
Alfred James Wills
182nd Royal Garrison Artillery
Died 18th October 1918
Age 23

Alfred James Wills was born on 3rd August 1895 at Middlewood in North Hill, one of the three sons and three daughters of James and Jessie Wills. He was baptised at St Torney's church in North Hill on 2nd September 1895. His father was a bootmaker and the family moved from North Hill to South Petherwin and then to Venterdon, from where Alfred attended Stoke Climsland School. In the 1911 census, he seems to be working with his father as an apprentice bootmaker but this must ahve changed as his given occupation when he joined the army was farm hand/ horseman. In early 1918, before his posting abroad, Alfred married Ethel Annie Jones, also from North Hill, in Launceston Registry Office. Their time together was very short because, within a few months, Alfred was killed. His widow lived until 1990.



WW1 BL 6 inch 26cwt Howitzer

Alfred's full Service Record survives and the salient points of Alfred's military career can be summarised as follows. He was attested (technically enlisted) on 9th December 1915 and posted to the Army Reserve same date. This was a "Derby Scheme" enlistment and was quite normal. Effectively it meant that he had enlisted but his services are not immediately required. He was subsequently mobilised (called-up) on 29th May 1916 and posted to the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) depot in Bury St Edmunds. He was appointed as a bombardier on 28th September 1916 and posted to a reinforcements depot on 10th November 1916, making him available for overseas service. He joined the No 423 Siege Battery on 5th May 1917 and applied for a commission and posted to a cadet school in Aldershot in the same month.

After his officer training, on 20th January 1918, he was given a commission in the RGA and embarked for France (Folkestone to Le Havre) on 30th March 1918, where he joined the 182nd Siege Battery on 20th April 1918. The battery was equipped with 6 Ordnance BL 6 inch 26cwt howitzers - the qualifier "26cwt" refers to the weight of the barrel and breech together. These guns needed 10 crew and could fire a 40kg shell a distance of 10km. One source gives that guns of this type fired 22.4 million rounds during the Western Front campaign.

Alfred's unit was involved in the Battle of the Selle which started in thick mist at 5:20 a.m. on 17th October 1918. Behind a creeping barrage, the infantry and tanks moved forward on a ten mile long front, south of Le Cateau. Despite tenacious enemy resistance and much uncut wire, the River Selle was crossed during the first day and by nightfall Le Cateau had been captured. The fighting continued into the next day and it is likely that Alfred was killed at this time during enemy counter barrage fire. On the same day two other 182 men (Gunners J Waugh and W Harrison) also died. All three bodies were exhumed in 1920 from a grave location at the entrance to a sugar factory near Inchy, nearly three miles from Le Cateau, and reinterred together at the nearby Highland Cemetery in Le Cateau, a small town in Northern France about 19 kilometres south-east of Cambrai, quite close to the border with Belgium. All three were identified by their clothes and identifying cross. The inscription on Alfred's headstone, *'A loving son, true and kind. A beautiful memory left behind. They will be done',* was chosen by his father, James. The charge levied for these 60 letters was 19s 6p.



Alfred Wills' Headstone

Alfred's residual wage and War Gratuity amounted to £81 18s 10p but there is no record of who received these monies.

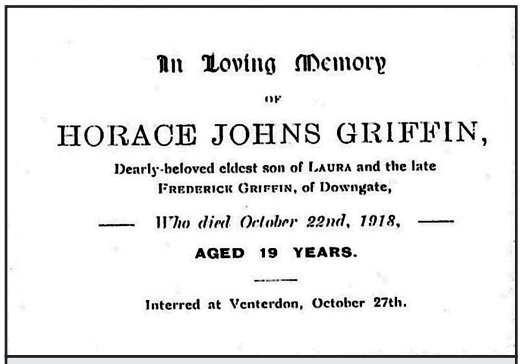
Private 318066
Horace Johns Griffin
Army Service Corps
Died 22nd October 1918
Aged 19

Horace Johns Griffin was born in 1899 at Downgate, Stoke Climsland, the eldest child of Frederick and Laura (nee Johns) Griffin. He had two sisters, Ida and Hettie, and one brother, Frederick. Horace was a pupil at Stoke Climsland School. His father had been a grocer and draper in Chillaton at the time of the 1901 census and the family subsequently moved to Lower Downgate. Frederick died in 1908 and his wife then ran the grocery shop and post office next to the chapel there. In the 1911 census, Laura is listed as grocer and employer. Two live-in grocery assistants also feature in the census return for the household. If you look closely, there are residual traces of the shop's sign still visible on the outside of the house.



Downgate Village in 1908, with the shop of Horace Griffin's parents to the right

Horace's Service Record is available and shows that he enlisted, at the age of 17 years 11 months, with the Royal Army Service Corps (regimental no. 318066) as a Private on 7th January 1917 for the duration of the war. His pre-war occupation was given as an apprentice engine fitter and he was sent to serve at the Motor Transport depots at Grove Park and Battersea. He was admitted to hospital in Battersea on 17th March 1918 with chronic bronchitis, the condition being '*considerably aggravated by exposure. Rales (small clicking, bubbling or rattling sounds in the lungs) all over chest, especially right side where musical signs predominate. Has been losing flesh. Cough troublesome in the morning. Very debilitated*'. He was subsequently deemed to be *'no longer physically fit for war service'* on 1st October and was discharged on October 11th 1918. He died 11 days later in Downgate. His death certificate records the cause of death as pleurisy and chronic tubercular meningitis. He was buried at the Methodist Chapel in Venterdon, together with his parents Frederick and Laura, the latter dying in 1955.



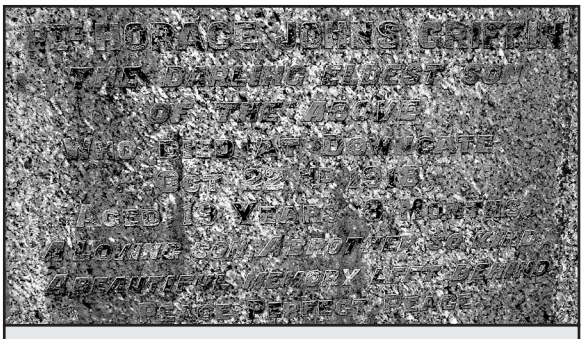
In Loving Memory
OF
HORACE JOHNS GRIFFIN,
Dearly-beloved eldest son of LAURA and the late
FREDERICK GRIFFIN, of Downgate,
— *Who died October 22nd, 1918,* —
AGED 19 YEARS.
Interred at Venterdon, October 27th.

Horace Griffin's Memorial Card

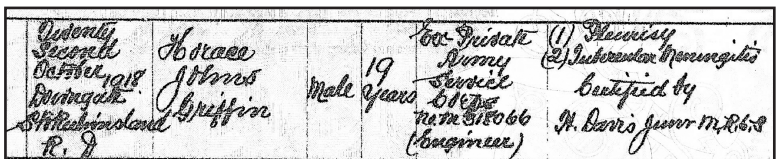
Horace's illness and time in hospital are fully documented in his Service Record and it seems that,at some stage, he was classified as a Chelsea Pensioner. This may suggest that he might have spent some time in hospital there.



The Griffin Family headstone in Venterdon Chapel graveyard



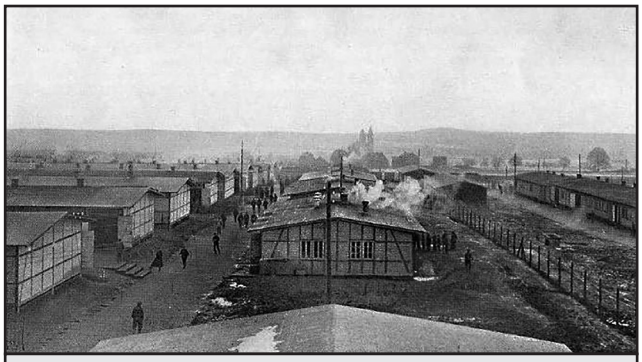
Detail for Horace Griffin on family headstone



Detail from Horace Griffin's Death Certificate

Private 240646
Edward John Wills
1st/5th Battalion
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
Died 24th October 1918
Age 25

Edward John Wills, often known as John, was born in Stoke Climsland, in 1894, the only son of John and Betsy Anne Wills. He was baptised in the local church on the 6th May of that year. He seems to have had at least thirteen sisters. John was a copper miner and he and his family lived in Treovis Mill and Broadgate. John died in early 1901 and the census for that year records his widow living as a pauper with her son and six daughters at Treovis Mill. She remarried in 1909 to Francis Dawe, who was a general labourer, and lived at Luckett House, Luckett. We can assume that Edward John attended Luckett school and left to work as a general labourer, as he is listed in the 1911 census as having general work in fruit gardens.

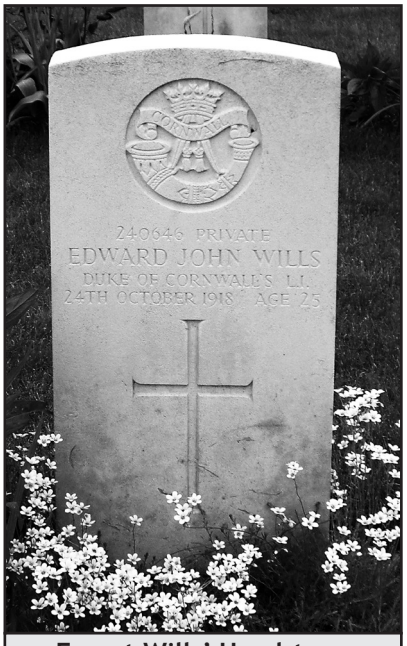


Limburg Prisoner of War Camp circa 1916

Details of Edward's military service are sparse. He seems to have had two service numbers, an early one of 2965 and the later one of 240646. This was not an unusual occurrence when a soldier changed regiments: whether or not this was the case with Edward is not known. He did enlist into the 1st/5th Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry at Bodmin but we do not know when or where he entered service overseas. We do know, however, that he was at the Front when his battalion became embroiled in the Battle of Estaires, an engagement in the Battle of the Lys (7th-29th April). This was part of the German Spring Offensive, originally planned with the objective of capturing Ypres and forcing the Allied Forces back to the Channel Ports and out of the war. Extracts from the History of the DCLI will put the involvement of Edward's battalion into context: *'Orders were received to take up a line east of Merville.....But the whole of the draft were youths without any experience of real warfare and the change practically from the barrack-square to the firing-line against a well-trained, war-bitten enemy was a terrible experience. Nevertheless these youngsters did very well, playing their part nobly in holding up the advance of the enemy and helping to rob him of victory'.*

The 1/5th had put up a splendid fight over 11th-13th April but their losses were very heavy. No less than sixteen officers and 467 other ranks were killed, wounded or missing. Edward was one of the latter, not missing but wounded and captured by the Germans.

After the war, the belligerent countries involved provided lists of prisoners to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which created an index card for each prisoner and detainee. Edward Wills is one of these and his record card tells us what happened to him after his capture. He was taken at Merville on 12th April 1918 and had sustained a wound to the thigh. From the battle zone, he was transported to the Prisoner of War Camp at Limburg. Sometime thereafter he was transferred to the hospital at Munster Camp (Munsterlager) where he died of pneumonia on 24th October 1918. It is likely that he was buried, initially, somewhere close to the hospital. His final resting place is the Commonwealth War Graves area in the Hamburg Cemetery, closer to the city of Hamburg.



Ernest Wills' Headstone

During the First World War, Hamburg Cemetery was used for the burial of over 300 Allied servicemen who died as prisoners of war. In 1923, it was decided that the graves of Commonwealth servicemen who had died all over Germany should be brought together into four permanent cemeteries. Hamburg was one of those chosen, and bodies were brought into the cemetery from 120 burial grounds, including 130 from the Munster POW camp cemetery. Edward would have been amongst those transferred and reinterred in 1923. He is buried in Plot IV. C7.

Saddler 966507
Ernest Henry Rowland
53rd Brigade
Royal Field Artillery
Died 28th October 1918
Age 29

Ernest Henry Rowland was born in Treskinnick Cross village, near Poundstock in 1889, one of the six surviving children of Richard and Elizabeth. Richard was an agricultural labourer and the family seemed to have moved with his work. In 1901 he was employed as a horseman in Dinnacoomb, Jacobstow and in 1911, he was living at Old Mill in Stoke Climsland and employed again as a farm labourer. At this time, Ernest was staying at Dannett farm near Quethiock and working as a waggoner for Joseph Wenmoth.

We know that Ernest enlisted into the army in Callington but do not know exactly when. But it must have been before 1916 as, when he was married on 15th January 1916 at the Registry Office in Launceston, his profession is given as 'Saddler, Territorial Royal Field Artillery' and his address as Barrack Lane, Exeter. He was married to Lily Wills from Luckett, whose brother, Edward John Wills, sadly died in a Prison of War camp in Germany on 24th October 1918, just four days before her husband. At this point, Ernest's Service Number was 2269 but this changed to 966507 when all Territorial Service Numbers were reassigned to 6 digit format on 1st March 1917.


Gaza War Cemetery at the end of WW1

At some subsequent point, Ernest joined the 53rd Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and travelled to the Middle East, probably disembarking in Alexandria. His Brigade would have been formed of three battalions, responsible for medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close the front line. The armaments were reasonably mobile and, as they were horse-drawn, the skills of Edward and other saddlers were very much needed. The 53rd Brigade was involved, as part of the 3rd (Lahore) Division in activities against the Ottoman Empire Eight Army, culminating in the Battle of Tabsor in modern-day Palestine on 19th and 20th September 1918, an engagement that effectively neutralised the enemy threat. During this battle, the 3rd (Lahore), together with the 7th (Meerut) and 75th Divisions attacked the entrenched Ottoman positions defending the Tabsor defences. These defences were located in the middle section of the front line, assigned to the XXI Corps. On their left the Battle of Tulkarm was being fought, with the Battle of Arara fought on their right. Together with the cavalry phase, these battles make up the Battle of Sharon, which, with the Battle of Nablus, fought by the XX Corps and Chaytor's Force, have become known as the Battle of Megiddo. Megiddo developed into a major set piece offensive, when large formations of the Allied Egyptian Expeditionary Force, attacked and responded to the reactions of three Ottoman armies, each time following a predetermined plan. The offensive resulted in defeat for Ottoman forces in Palestine, Syria and the Transjordan.

After this action, the 53rd Brigade was involved in general clean up operations around Jiljulieh in Gaza and the unit's war diary does not mention any activity with the enemy. What caused Ernest's death a month after the last reporting of any fighting was not wounds received but pneumonia, as his death certificate records. Another victim of a virulent epidemic that killed millions towards the end of the conflict and beyond. He is buried in the Gaza Military Cemetery, just outside of Gaza City, where many men from various Casualty Clearing Stations and General and Stationary hospitals are also buried. It contains 3,217 Commonwealth burials from WW1, 781 of them unidentified.



Ernest Rowland's Headstone in Gaza Military Cemetery

Ernest's outstanding wages of £13 14s 3p and War Gratuity of £18 10s were sent to his widow, Lily, after the war.

Sergeant 557
Henry James Hartnell MM
18th Battalion
Lancashire Fusiliers
Died 31st October 1918
Age 30

Henry James Hartnell was born in Crediton in 1888, one of the three sons of John and Elizabeth. John was a travelling signalman on the railways. Both John and Elizabeth died when they were young, barely 40: John in 1894 and Elizabeth in 1898. Because of the death of his parents, Henry was living in an orphanage in Warminster in 1901, whereas his brother, Stanley George, was following in his father's footsteps and was working as a signal lad in Exeter. We have no information on the fate of his eldest brother, William.

Henry's military records have not survived but the 1911 census shows him at the Lancashire Fusiliers' depot in Bury, serving as a drummer. We know little of his service, but it is unlikely that he entered the France and Flanders theatre of war much before 1916, as his Medal Roll shows no entitlement to an award for earlier service there.



Badge of the Lancashire Fusiliers

His regiment, the 18th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers, also known as the 2nd South-East Lancashires, was originally formed as a Bantam Regiment, composed of healthy men between 4 ft 10ins (140cm) and 5ft 3ins (160cm) tall. They were named Bantams after the small aggressive fowl which became their emblem. Height notwithstanding, the 18ths was heavily involved in many actions in 1918, including the First Battle of Bapaume, the Battle of Ypres and the Battle of Courtrai, leading up to the Battle of Tieghem, which was an integral part of the final advance in Flanders.

On the 31st October, an attack was led by 104th Brigade, with the 19th Durham Light Infantry on the right, 17th Lancashire Fusiliers in the centre and 18th Lancashire Fusiliers on the left. The entry for the day in the Battalion War Diary reads: *'The Battalion attacked for the 8th time since September 28th and gained the objectives by 11am. A heavy barrage assisted the attack and opposition was slight. About 125 prisoners and a quantity of war material was taken including .....3 message dogs'*. For the 18th, the action resulted in the loss of 48 men killed, 221 wounded and 49 missing in action. Henry was one of those killed and was buried where he fell initially but his body was subsequently exhumed for reburial in Plot V.D.3 at the Vichte Military Cemetery, about 30 miles east of Ypres. This cemetery was started in October 1918, by the burial officers of the 9th and 31st Divisions, and the remainder formed after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields. Vichte now contains 236 Commonwealth burials from WW1, 60 of them unidentified. Henry would have been one of the later additions. CWGC records show that he was exhumed and reburied on 9th September 1920, with the macabre footnote that his body was formally identified from a standard army name tag recovered at the time of exhumation.

At the end of October 1918, Henry was awarded the Military Medal for bravery posthumously. This is given for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire or for individual or associated acts of bravery which were insufficient to merit the Distinguished Conduct Medal. It was the Other Ranks' equivalent to the Military Cross (M.C.), which was awarded to Commissioned Officers. There is no mention of the reasons why Henry deserved this award but it was officially gazetted in the London Gazette in June 1919.


Henry Hartnell's Headstone

It is unlikely that Henry ever visited Stoke Climsland. His connection with the Parish is somewhat indirect and took a lot of research to establish. It can only come through his brother, Stanley George, who had become the traffic manager for the Plymouth, Devonport and South Western Junction Railway. Stanley was based at the station in Kelly Bray and lived locally.

Private 67960
Wilfred Arthur Cornish
1st Battalion, Auckland Regiment
New Zealand Expeditionary Force
Died 4th November 1918
Age 37

Wilfred Arthur Cornish has the dubious distinction of being the last local man to be killed in action in WW1. He was born on 15th September 1881, the third of the six sons of William and Anne (Annie) Cornish. William was the long serving headmaster of the Luckett Board School and it was in the School House at Luckett that Wilfred lived for all of his life in the UK. His brother, John Adams Cornish, was killed in France in July 1916 and at least two of his brothers also served during the war.

Wilfred joined the Royal Navy when he was 19, enlisting at Devonport on 14th September 1900 and signing on for a 12 year engagement. His entry level was Ship Stewart Assistant (SSA) and his first postings were at a number of shore establishments around Devonport. Throughout his naval career his location alternated regularly between shore establishments and ships. His progress up the ranks culminated in his promotion to Ship's Stewart (SS) on 9th January 1908, only for him to be demoted to SSA on 31st July 1908 for 'returning from leave drunk'. He remained at this level until his term of engagement expired on 23rd September 1912.



SS Balmoral Castle - the troopship that brought the Auckland Regiment to Europe in 1918

Wilfred emigrated to New Zealand in 1913, leaving Plymouth as a Third Class passenger on the New Zealand Shipping Company's vessel, SS Rotorua, on 5th July 1913. He had given his occupation as a farmer but, once in New Zealand, he gained employment as a wharf labourer or 'watersider' for the United Steamship Company. The Police Court News section of the New Zealand Herald of 6th June 1917 reports that 'the previous offender Wilfred Arthur Cornish was fined 10s for drunkenness'. Wilfred did not declare this incident when he later applied to join the army.

On 6th August 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war, Britain accepted New Zealand's offer of an expeditionary force of approximately 8000 men. When countrywide recruiting for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force's (NZEF) 'Main Body' began on 8th August 1914, the response was overwhelming. In September 1915 Wilfred did try to join the army but was not accepted, being deemed medically unfit due to 'flat feet (left)'. He was more successful with his second attempt in September 1917 but then only with the rating of C1 'likely to become fit for active service after special training'. The special training needed was never specified.

He was assigned to the 3rd Reserve Battalion and then travelled to Europe on the SS Balmoral Castle, leaving Wellington on the 24th April 1918, disembarking in London on 21st June. On the same day, he was entered Sling Camp, near Bulford on Salisbury Plain, and remained there until 30th September when his battalion left for France, docking at Etaples on 3rd October. He eventually joined his unit in the field, D Company of the 1st Battalion of the Auckland Regiment, on 8th October 1918. Wilfred's Company was soon in action and engaged the enemy in and around the town of Le Quesnoy. The Battalion War Diary for 4th November notes: *'A miserable night but the morning broke fair and fine. At 5.45 a.m. we moved forward, 15 minutes after zero hour..... when crossing the Ruesnes - Le Quesnoy road, an enemy plane came over and immediately after this artillery opened up and heavily shelled the line of advance, but very few casualities were caused'*. As there was no other incidents mentioned that day, it is reasonable to conclude that Wilfred killed during this barrage, just 17 days after he landed in the country.



Wilfred Cornish's Headstone

He is buried in Plot I.C.3 in the Ruesnes Communal Cemetery, just to the east of Cambrai and close to the border with Belgium. There are now 84 soldiers who died in November 1918 commemmorated there, nine of whom were part of the NZEF.

From correspondence included in Wilfred's Service Record, it seems that there was some question over monies owing to him by the NZEF. His mother queried the fact that she had not received any War Gratuity. The explanation given was that as Wilfred had made an allotment to his mother of 3s per day from 21st April until his death, this had accounted for all the money owing to him. As a separate event, his father was granted probate of Wilfred's estate of £60 by the Bodmin Registry Office on 15th December.

Private 69778
John Leslie Neale
1st/5th Battalion
Devonshire Regiment
Died 12th December 1918
Age 20

John Leslie Neale, commonly known as Leslie, was the eldest child and only son of John Henry and Eliza Coumbe Neale. He had two sisters, Blanche and Ena. His father was a farmer and Leslie was born at their farm near Lewannick in 1898. He was baptised there (Newton Farm between Congon's Shop and South Petherwin) under the auspices of the Launceston Bible Christian Circuit on 10th March 1898. Sometime after 1901, the family moved to Crockett farm, from where Leslie and his sisters went to the village school in Stoke Climsland.



Detail from Leslie Neale's Death Certificate

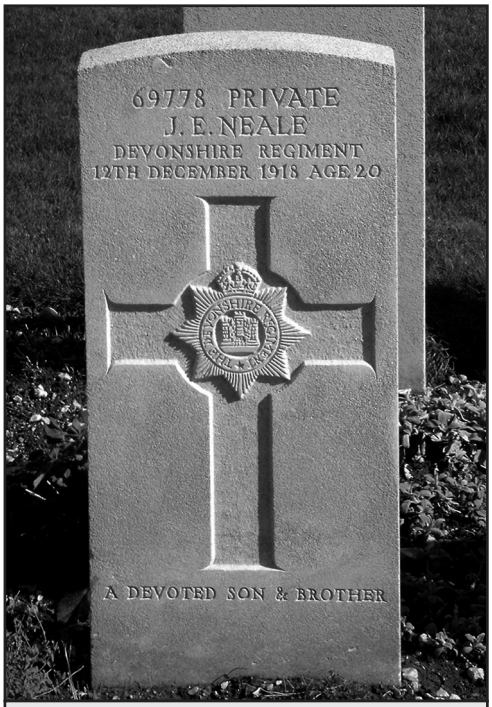


Leslie Neale with his sisters Blanche (on their horse, Tommy) and Ena and their dog, Shep. Taken at Crockett in 1912

We don't know exactly when Leslie enlisted but his regimental number and War Gratuity payment both suggest that it was in mid-1917. This being the case he probably spent some time with the 1st/5th Devons in Egypt and might have fought in the following campaigns.

Third Battle Of Gaza (6th November 1917; Capture Of Junction Station (13th November); Battle Of Nabi Samweil (20th November); Tell 'Asur (11th March 1918); Berukin (9th April). The latter was, perhaps, their most successful action whilst in Egypt, capturing the town at a cost of 88 casualties.

In May 1918 the 1st/5th Devons were ordered to France where they fought on the Marne and elsewhere in many engagements: Battle Of Tardenois (20th July); Battle Of The Scarpe (26th August); Battle Of The Drocourt-Queant Line (2nd September); Battle Of Havrincourt (12th September); Battle Of The Canal Du Nord (27th September) and during the Final Advance In Picardy, the Battle Of The Selle (17th October); the Capture Of Solesmes (20th October) and the Battle Of The Sambre (4th November). The Armistice found the 1st/5th Devons behind the line at Monplaisir after 30 months' fighting in Palestine and France which had cost the lives of 342 of their comrades and won the two battalions ten battle honours.



Leslie Neale's Headstone with the inscription
A Devoted Son and Brother

At some point, Leslie was either wounded or developed an illness and he died on 12th December 1918, a month after the cessation of hostilities. He is buried in Plot S.IV.D.6 in the St. Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen. During the war, Commonwealth camps and hospitals were stationed on the southern outskirts of the city. A base supply depot and the 3rd Echelon of General Headquarters were also established there. Almost all of the hospitals at Rouen remained there for practically the whole of the war. They included eight general, five stationary, one British Red Cross and one labour hospital, and No. 2 Convalescent Depot. A number of the dead from these hospitals were buried in other cemeteries, but the great majority were taken to the city cemetery of St. Sever. In September 1916, it was found necessary to begin an extension, where the last burial took place in April 1920. Leslie would have been a patient of one of these hospitals and was buried in the Extension.

Leslie's effects of £38 16s 5p were given to his father.

Private 781028
Hamilton Thomas Buller
46th Battalion, Canadian Infantry
Saskatchewan Regiment
Died 13th October 1919
Age 27

Hamilton Thomas Buller was born on 8th March 1891 at Treovis Town, Stoke Climsland, the youngest of the three sons of Amos Parsons Buller and Elizabeth Buller. He was baptised at Stoke Climsland Church on 1st June 1891 and was a pupil at Luckett school. At the time of the 1911 census (2nd April 1911), Hamilton was boarding at 9, Valletort Terrace, St Stephen's, Saltash and his occupation is given as a quarryman for road metal, being material used in the construction and repair of roads and roadbeds.



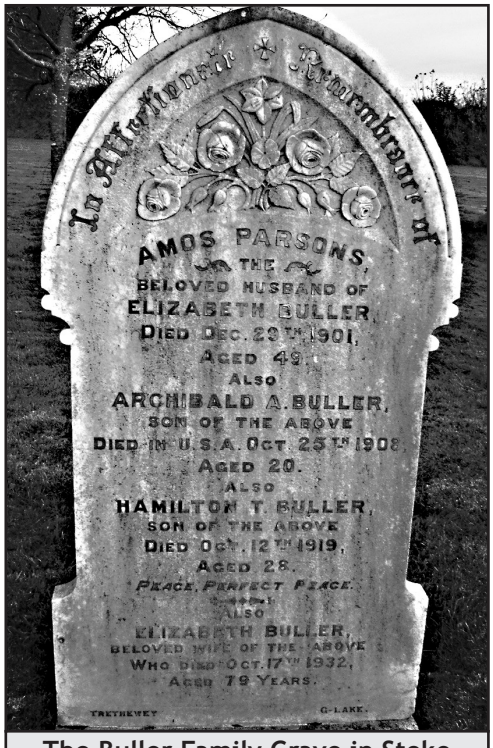
12th Railway Troops Badge

On the 3rd June 1913 Hamilton boarded the Allan Line ship, SS Corinthian, at Plymouth bound for Montreal. He travelled steerage class. At this time, his occupation was 'farm labourer'. He cleared Canadian Immigration procedures at Quebec on 25th June 1913. His ultimate destination was Regina, Saskatchewan, where he was going to work as a farm labourer.

Hamilton enlisted in the 68th (Regina) Battalion in Moose Jaw on 2nd November 1915 (Service Number 105124). His Attestation Papers show that he was living in the nearby village of Craven at the time. He was aged 24 years 7 months; he was 5' 9" with a fully expanded chest of 39". He had a medium complexion with brown eyes and dark brown hair. His occupation was a farmer and his religion was Church of England. On 28th March 1916 he was transferred to the 128th (Moose Jaw) Battalion (Service Number 781028). At a later stage he transferred to the 46th (Saskatchewan) Battalion and retained the same Service Number. The first contingent of the 46th left Halifax for England on 18th October 1915, arriving at Plymouth a week later. While training in England, the 46th received personnel from other battalions such as the 128th Battalion (Moose Jaw). They departed from Southampton on 10th August 1916 and arrived at Le Havre in the next day becoming an integral part of the 10th Infantry Brigade, 4th Canadian Division, from August 11, 1916 until the Armistice.

In the absence of his full military record, it is not possible to describe Hamilton's service but his record on the Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial states that he served at the Front for two and half years. This being the case, it is probable that he saw active service in many campaigns. It was in one of these that he was gassed and rendered unfit for combat duties. At this stage he transferred to the 12th Canadian Railway Troops (formerly the 2nd Labour Battalion) as a Sapper, sometime after November 1917, probably well into 1918.

In the last two years of the war, all light railway construction along the British Front in France and Belgium was a Canadian responsibility. The Railway Troop battalions were responsible for building the tracks that were be used to supply troops and materials to the front lines as the allies gained ground. In 1917-18 alone they laid 1,404 miles of light gauge and 1,169 miles of broad gauge tracks. Although the troops involved were non-combatants, and did not receive military training, many were killed and wounded while laying tracks or repairing lines. Added to the danger was that while regular troops could shelter in trenches, the railway troops worked out in the open where they could be observed by the enemy. A total of 483 Canadian Railway Troops died during the war, while 1,383 were wounded.



The Buller Family Grave in Stoke Clismland Graveyard

The Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial states that Hamilton contracted bronchitis, due to being gassed, at the end of the war. He died of tuberculosis a year later at his mother's home in Lidwell, on 13th October 1919. He was buried in the graveyard of the church in which he was baptised.

STOKE CLIMSLAND ROLL OF HONOUR

Underneath the Memorial Board in the church is a wooden frieze, carved by John Northcott, giving the names of the following 176 men who served and survived. Nothing can be found explaining how the names were chosen so we've got no idea about how comprehensive the list is. Very little is known about them or what happened to them after they returned. It would be facile to think that they served and then picked up their lives after being demobbed. Who knows what horrors they had faced and how these had affected them. Perhaps they carried the scars, both physical and mental, of their service for many years. They, too, should be remembered for their contributions.

J. Adams
A.N. Allen
A.J. Allen
E.W. Arscott
N. Arscott
E. Bartlett
H. Bartlett
J. Bath
B. Bawden
H.T. Bawden
E.S. Blake
A. Bolt
A.D. Bowden
H.J. Bowden
S. Bray
H. Brimacombe
W.J. Burrows
O.E.Coad
W.J.G. Coad
E. Cornish
R. Cornish
W. Couch
J. Crimp
J. Davey
A. Dawe
G. Dawe
A. Dennington
E.W. Dennington
C.H. Dingle
G.A. Dingle
H. Dingle
R.N. Dingle
E. Doidge
S.J. Doidge
E. Downe
H. Drake
R. Drake
H. Dunstan
E. Dymond
E. Ede
K. Ede
W. Ede
B. Edwards
L. Edwards
J. Evans
W. Evans
H. Eveley
J. Eveley
C. Finnamore
C.E. Finnamore
? Gartrell
W. Geake
H. Giles
C. Gilbard
G. Gilbard
F. Gist
C. Goodman
W. Goodman
J.H. Guest
H. Harris
E. Harvey
E. Harvey
J. Harvey
W. Harvey
F. Hawton
J. Heard
W. Heard
B. Hearn
F. Heath
H. Heath
R. Hicks
W. Hiscott
S. Holman
A. Humphries
? Hurrell
E. Jacquett
H. Jacquett
R. Jacquett
C.V. James
J. Jane
E. Jiles
S. Johnson
A. Jones
H.W. Jones
B.W. Kerslake
J. Kerslake
J. Langford
B.F. Lawrence
W.G. Lawrence
J. Lucas
H. Mallet
S.A. Matthews
L. Maunder
S. May
F. Moyse
C.F. Mutten
F. Norish
J. Norish
J. Northam
?. Northam
H. Olver
P. Parsons
C. Pellow
W. Pellow
W. Pellow
W. Pellow
A. Penny
F. Penny
H. Penny
H. Penny
J. Penny
R. Penny
G. Pearn
E.J. Percy
G. Percy
C. Perry
L. Perry
H. Pethick
W. Pethick
A. Philp
H. Philp
R. Philp
J. Poole
A. Pridham
B. Pridham
S. Pridham
S. Pridham
A.V. Prowse
F. Prowse
S. Prowse
N. Rendell
B. Richards
G. Richards
W. Richards
W. Richards
A. Roach
E. Rowe
N. Rowland
F. Rundle
J. Rundle
E. Ryall
W. Ryall
S. Sandercock
S. Savey
A. Saunders
G. Saunders
L. Scantlebury
J. Searle
S. Searle
H. Serpell
A. Simmonds
S. Skuse
F. Smeeth
J.M. Smith
W.A.G. Squires
O.J. Stanton
A. Stumbles
E. Stumbles
R. Stumbles
S. Stumbles
R. Sweet
J. Tink
A. Townsend
V. Vosper
C. Vosper
S.W. Wakeham
P. Wallis
H.G. Ward
T. Waye
W. Wearing
G. Westlake
F. White
W. White
G. Wickett
J. Wickett
H. Wills
L.A. Wills
E. Wood
J.L. Woolcock

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The subscription services of Ancestry, Find My Past and Forces War Records
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The National Archives
The General Records Office
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The Canadian Virtual War Memorial
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National Archives of Australia
The Greatwar internet forum

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