



frontline.

The newsletter of the MK WFA, March 2024.



Our next talk, on Friday 15th March, is by Simon Keable-Elliot about his grandfather, Robert Keable. When Robert Keable's First World War novel '*Simon Called Peter*' was published, critics called it 'offensive', 'a libel' and reeking of 'drink and lust'. Despite this the novel became a huge international best-seller, a Broadway play, and the sequel, a Hollywood movie, making its author a celebrity. What critics did not know was that the novel, about a military chaplain and a young woman having an affair during the war, was autobiographical. Simon has used letters, books, articles, interviews, and a trip to Tahiti to produce a fascinating account of the remarkable true story of his grandfather, from his studies at Cambridge, missionary work in Africa, and war experience as chaplain to the black labourers of the SANLC, where, dispirited by the appallingly treatment of his men, the horrors of the war and the implications of his secret affair, he lost his faith and eventually escaped to Tahiti. Don't miss this amazing true story!

Great news, after the success of last year's seminar we are holding another this year. The venue, Bletchley Masonic Hall, and an exciting line up of speakers, Helen Frost, Peter Hart, Major Charles Barratt, and Nigel Crompton, plus two members of the Great War Society are booked, so please put **19th October** in your diary, we don't want anyone to miss this one!

Also, after our successful group trip to the Soldier's of Oxfordshire Museum, we (mainly Gary) are arranging another outing, nearly back to the August idea (better weather and no talk in August), but not quite. We were keen to visit Stow Maries (see previous 'Frontlines') but discovered they are holding a special World War One day on the **27th July**, so that really is the day to visit. We are also intending to book a coach, so again, please reserve the date so we can arrange a good turnout. The bigger the turnout, the cheaper the coach, so friends, family, all are welcome. More details to follow shortly.



MARCH

Walter Lingard, Anne's great-grandfather's cousin

He was wounded at Courcelles and died in the No 47 Casualty Clearing Station on 11th March 1917 aged 35. He was in the 13th Bn E Yorks Regt and married with 2 young sons. (See next page.)

James Ward Kirkman, Anne's great-grandfather's cousin by marriage

He was killed while out on a patrol at Arras on 28th March 1918 aged 32. James was in the 6th Bn Yorkshire Regt; he was a married man - his widow never re-married.

Lance corporal James Suckling, Eric's great-uncle by marriage.

James enlisted in the Border Regiment in 1905 and served for 2 years in South Africa. On completion of his 7-years' service in 1912 he was discharged. In 1914 he re-joined 2nd Borders which became part of 20th Brigade, 7th Division on the Western Front in France and Flanders. In November 1917 James was drafted to 8th Bn., (the Kendal Pals). He was killed in action during the opening phase of the Ludendorff Offensive on 22nd March 1918. His body was not recovered, and he is commemorated at Tyne Cot. He was 31, and married with a baby daughter.

Private Norman Short, Gary's great uncle.

One of the three brothers of Gary's grandfather who were killed in action in WW1, Norman was in the 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. He was killed in action on 18th March 1916 and is interred in Vermelles British Cemetery. (See article in this Frontline for full details.)



Private Walter Lingard 13th Bn East Yorks.

Private Walter Lingard 13th Bn East Yorks died of wounds 11th March 1917 (my maternal grandmother's second cousin once removed)

Walter Lingard was born in Walsden, Lancashire in January 1882, the son of Ellis, an insurance agent, and Frances Ann (née Cockcroft), a cotton weaver. Since their marriage in 1877, Ellis and Frances had lived at the home of Frances' widowed mother. They had two children before Ellis died in 1884 at just 31 years of age, when Walter was 2 and his brother Albert, only a few months old. The family continued to live with Walter's grandmother and his Aunt Ada who had a spinal illness. By the age of 19, Walter was working as a picker maker – pickers were strong leather attachments fitted to a weaving loom to drive the shuttle across the loom. The leather needed to be durable and must have been hard to handle. Walter would have been working in a workshop in the cotton mill.

On 7th August 1902, Walter, aged 20, married Betsy Hardman, 22, at Mankinholes Wesleyan Chapel. Betsy was pregnant at the time of their marriage and their first son, Albert, was born less than 5 months later on New Year's Day 1903. A second son, Arnold, was born on the 28th May 1909.

Walter's brother Albert married Mary Elizabeth Sanders on 16th April 1904 at Mankinholes Chapel and they had a son Fred on 7th October 1904 – so it seems it was another hastily arranged marriage!

In January 1916 the Military Service Act was passed. This imposed conscription upon all single men aged between 18 and 41 and was expanded that summer to married men too. This would be the call-up for Walter, and he enlisted on the 31st August 1916 at Halifax into the 4th Bn East Yorkshire Regiment. He was aged 34 and was by now an insurance agent.

Following four months training, he was mobilised for France on 1st January 1917 and posted to the 13th E Yorks Regiment joining 'B' company on the 26th at Longuevillette near the front line.

The Battalion marched to Franqueville on the 31st Jan, then on 18th Feb they marched to billets in Beauval, then onto billets in Rossignol Farm.



Rossignol Wood

On 26th Feb the 13th E Yorks took up position in the reserve trenches and the following day 'B' and 'D' companies relieved the 10th East Yorks near Rossignol Wood in the front line.

By this time the German army was retreating to the Hindenburg line, destroying everything en route – orchards were felled, villages razed to the ground, bridges blown, and roads and railways torn up.

Relieved on 1st March by 12th E Yorks, the Bn returned to billets in Rossignol Farm. But not for long.

On the 3rd March the Battalion marched to Courcelles and on the 5th March, they relieved the 11th E Yorks in the front line trenches opposite Bucquoy. They were part of the British advance along the Ancre Valley pushing the Germans back to the Hindenburg line.

In the fighting in the front line on 7th March, Walter was shot and carried back to the reserve lines. He was one of 6 men (all from 'B' company) wounded that day.

Walter was admitted to 47th Casualty Clearing Station (then located at Varennes) with gunshot wounds to his abdomen, back and side and had a fractured arm. He died here on the 11th March aged 35 just two months after landing in France. He is buried in Varennes Military Cemetery.



Varennes Cemetery in the 1920s



CWGC Headstone in Varennes Cemetery

Walter Lingard is also commemorated on the Todmorden war memorial.



In June 1917, Walter's personal effects were sent to his widow, Betsy - photos, pipe, pocket book, Gospel of St John, tobacco pouch, cap badge, wallet with stamps, postcards and a silk card. Betsy received a war pension of 27/11d a week in 1919 for herself and their two sons. Both sons married - Albert, a cotton mill hand warehouseman, married Isabella Stansfield in 1929 while Arnold, a letterpress printer, married Evelyn Stansfield (not sisters) in 1930. They had a son, Ralph, who was born in 1936.

Betsy Lingard died on 15th May 1946 aged 66.

Walter's brother, Albert, served in the East Lancs Regiment and survived the war.

Anne McIntyre.

Mentioned in Despatches



Twinning News.

The following is from Chris Madeley, the Wolverton Community Engagement and Projects Officer. Chris is organising this year's Twinning trip to Belgium, and those members of MK WFA who have already expressed an interest will already have seen the following draft itinerary which will be finalised soon.

Friday 14th June:

- Arrival at Flanders Lodge Hotel (Ypres)
- Depart by coach for Ypres town centre
- The Last Post Service at the Menin Gate
- Depart for return to hotel

Saturday 15th June:

- Visit to the Ribbon Museum + opening of the Blockhaus 14-18
- Reception at the Town Hall (Welcome drink + sandwiches)
- Free time in Ypres (activities to be arranged)
- Return of the group to Le Bizet district
- Concert dinner with Belgian musicians at Le Bizet

Sunday 16th June:

- Meet at Hyde Park
- Albert French Ceremony
- Departure for Ploegsteert Hall
- Good bye drink with Belgian counterparts
- Meal (location to be confirmed)
- Departure to Wolverton (and arrival into Wolverton at approximately 10:45pm)

This trip has always been very enjoyable and worthwhile in the past and is a great opportunity for MK WFA to have a get-together, as well as playing an important part in the twinning. Anyone who would like to go on the trip and has not yet registered an interest, please contact George, our Wolverton Town Council liaison, at ggmabey45@gmail.com or Chris direct at Community@wolvertonandgreenleystowncouncil.gov.uk asap.

Crested China ships

Following on from last month's article on Crested China ships, my sister has supplied two much clearer photographs than the ones I took!



This model of the Lusitania is by Alexandra China with a Ramsgate crest.



This one with a Hastings crest doesn't have a name or makers mark and has so far eluded identification.

'The Doughboys 1917-18' - Mike Sheil

On Friday, February 16th Mike presented us with a thoroughly fascinating talk entitled 'The Doughboys 1917-18'. Mike opened by posing us two questions, 'Were the Americans late entering the First World War?' and 'Were they ineffective?'. The main response to the first question was yes, the jury was out on the second. Mike then set out to provide us with the proper answers.

There were 1,200 Americans in Europe at the outbreak of war. Immediately a repatriation scheme was set up, providing loans to fund passage back to the States. American aid began arriving in many forms, American businessmen set up the Belgian Relief Fund, which supplied two million tons of food to Europe during the war. Ann Morgan, daughter of industrialist J P Morgan, attempted to ease the plight of civilians by sending over sewing machines for women, machine tools for men, and libraries for children - help for destroyed villages. Americans living in France joined First Aid units, and the American Field Service, using model T Ford ambulances, was created. Alan Seeger (uncle of folk singer Pete Seeger) enlisted in the French Foreign Legion to join the fight, as did other Americans. The French Foreign Legion required only an oath to the Legion, not another country, so Americans could join. Alan Seeger was a poet and his most well-known work was a poem entitled "I Have a Rendezvous With Death." And indeed, he did. On July 3, 1916, while fighting in the brutal opening phase of the Somme offensive, Seeger was cut down by German machine gunfire. Seeger died on the Fourth of July. He was 28 years old. As for "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," it would survive to become what is now considered a classic piece of American literature. (See last page but one.)



Anne Morgan



American Field Service ambulance 1915

Another American volunteer that Mike included in his talk was Helen Fairchild. She was a 1913 graduate of Pennsylvania Hospital Training School in Philadelphia. When the United States entered the World War in 1917 Helen joined the Pennsylvania Hospital unit as a nurse. These American Expeditionary Force Base Hospitals included physicians, nurses and dietitians and six such units from across the country departed for France in May 1917 to serve with the British Expeditionary Forces. The Pennsylvania unit included 64 nurses and in April 1917 she was stationed at British No. 16 that became known as Pennsylvania Base Hospital No. 10. In July she was assigned to Casualty Clearing Station No. 4 at Poperinghe, near Ypres, where she nursed thousands of gassed casualties under fire.

She herself became a casualty, possibly from the exposure to mustard gas and stresses of combat. She died following exploratory surgery; the autopsy listed 'acute yellow atrophy of the liver' as the cause of death. Helen Fairchild has been memorialized by the creation of the Helen Fairchild American Legion Post No. 421 in Philadelphia for women veterans. There was also an oak tree planted at Pennsylvania Hospital in her honour.

Wealthy young Americans made their way to France and joined Squadron Escadrille of the French Air Force. In August 1915 the French government approved a revolutionary new concept in military

aviation. Three Americans: Norman Prince of Boston, William Thaw of Pittsburgh, and Dr Edmond Gros (founder of the American Field Service), lobbied the French government to create an All-American fighter squadron in the French Air Service. They were called the Lafayette Escadrille. These pilots, flying under the command of French officers, became America's first combat aviators.



The Lafayette Escadrille Sioux Warrior Insignia

The fighter squadron was named in honour of the French, American Revolutionary War hero, Marquis de Lafayette. The French word 'escadrille' translates to 'squadron' and so the Lafayette Escadrille was born.



As tales of their exploits spread these young American pilots stood as noble champions to the Allied cause, just as their founders intended. Hundreds of Americans travelled to France to join the famed unit, causing the French to create the Lafayette Flying Corps. With over two hundred volunteers shooting down nearly the same number of German aircraft, they made an undeniable contribution to the Allied cause. When America officially entered the war, these pilots donned American uniforms and transferred to the American Expeditionary Force.

Back in America a huge propaganda war was waging. America had a large German population, with 64 German language newspapers published there. Britain was America's major trading partner. The American president, Woodrow Wilson stated that this was not America's war. Britain had cut off Germany's undersea cable connections with America and blockaded German ports. Germany responded with unconditional submarine warfare, desperate to knock Britain out of the war before the Americans did join in. There were huge shipping losses, at one point Britain was down to five weeks supply of wheat.

When America did enter the war their involvement was massive. The American army numbered 200,000 men, but was mainly untried, reliant on horses, and lacking any aircraft, or military tradition.

However American engineers had been planning since 1915, and they were soon on their way to France. The port of Brest was out of bounds, so they built their own. They took over the French railway system, 62,000 men built 5,000 miles of track and imported 1,600 locomotives. The building materials required for the port and the railways was vast, in 1918 2-4 million tons of goods were moved. The storage site at the port alone covered 500 hectares. 20,000 men were employed in the timber corps, and 42 hospitals were built. The Americans brought fresh thinking and ideas too, increasing the range of the 75 pounders by tweaking the trajectories. American engineers also gained valuable combat experience, caught up in German pushes they fought valiantly with their outdated Springfield rifles, and even spades. Size brought its own problems though, the outbreak of Spanish flu started in one of the many vast and crowded American camps.

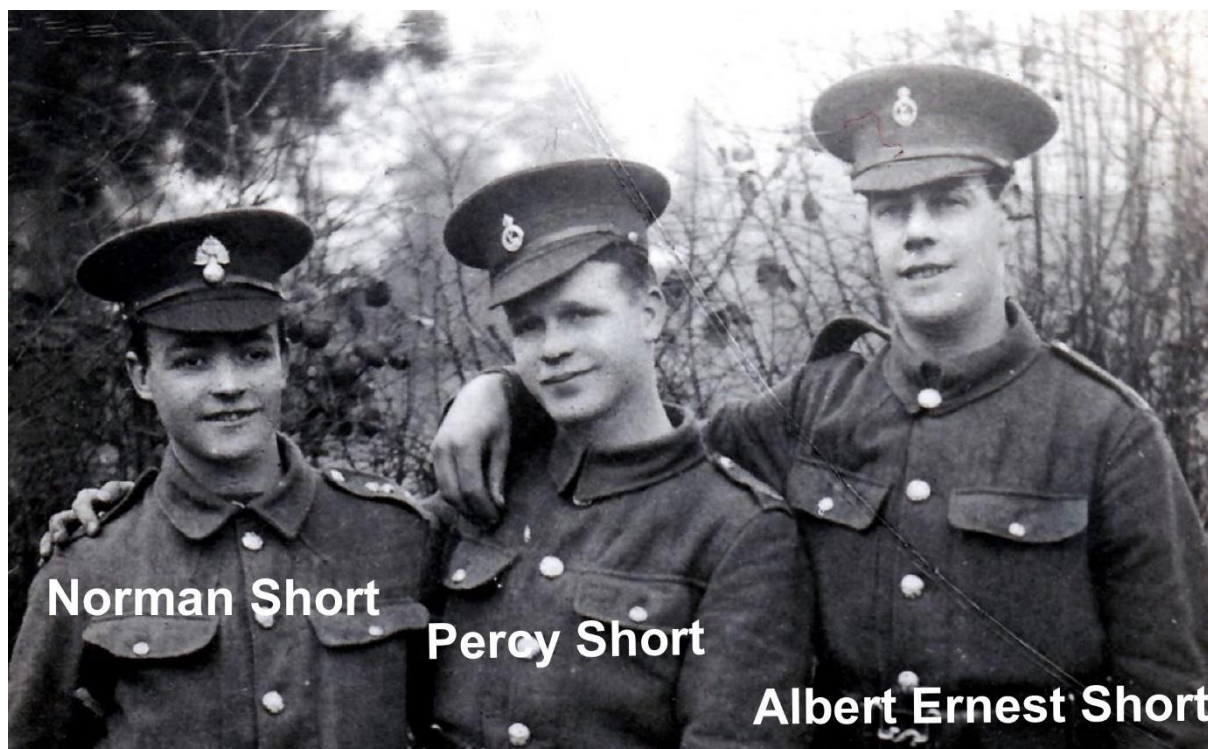
The American general, Pershing, was reluctant to let his inexperienced troops be used piecemeal, although many gained valuable experience alongside British and French troops. Many went into battle for the first time without ever firing their rifles. At the beginning, during the spring of 1918, the four battle-ready U.S. divisions were deployed under French and British command to gain combat experience by defending relatively quiet sectors of their lines. After the first offensive action and American-led AEF victory on 28 May 1918 at the Battles of Cantigny and Belleau Wood, Pershing worked towards the deployment of an independent US field Army. The rest followed at an accelerating pace during the spring and summer of 1918. By June Americans were arriving in-theatre at the rate of 10,000 a day; most of which entered training by British, Canadian and Australian battle-experienced officers and senior non-commissioned ranks. The training took a minimum of six weeks due to the inexperience of the servicemen. The first offensive action by AEF units serving under non-American command was 1,000 men at the Battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918. Mike also mentioned the role of black Americans on the Western Front. Although the 'Rainbow' division (created by taking men from all regions of America so to avoid any 'favouritism to any particular state) the main opinion was that 'black is not a colour of the rainbow' and black troops were usually used as labourers. Many were handed over to French control, the French thought they were marvellous. Mike also mentioned the exploits of other American soldiers including 'Hiking' Hiram Bearss and Alvin York. In October 1918, Private (Acting Corporal) York was one of a group of seventeen soldiers assigned to infiltrate German lines and silence a machine gun position. After the American patrol had captured a large group of enemy soldiers, German small arms fire killed six Americans and wounded three. York and the other Americans attacked the machine gun position, killing several German soldiers. The German officer responsible for the machine gun position had emptied his pistol while firing at York but failed to hit him. This officer then offered to surrender and York accepted. York and his men marched back to their unit's command post with more than 130 prisoners.

American troops played a key role in helping stop the German thrust towards Paris, during the Second Battle of the Marne, Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood. The first major and distinctly American offensive was the reduction of the Saint Mihiel salient during September 1918. During this battle Pershing commanded the US first army, composed of seven divisions and more than 500,000 men, in the largest offensive operation ever undertaken by United States armed forces. This successful offensive was followed by the Meuse-Argonne offensive lasting from September 26 to November 11, 1918, during which Pershing commanded more than one million American and French combatants. In these two military operations, Allied forces recovered more than 200 square miles of French territory from the German army.

Mike ended his fascinating talk by outlining the gains and losses of American involvement in WW1. Many thanks Mike for a great evening.

In Life and Death – The Story of the Short Brothers

by Paul Johnson



The devastating loss of a family member during the First World War occurred in many homes across the British Isles. The county of Hertfordshire would share in the nation's grief, seeing more than 23,000 of its serving personnel losing their lives in various locations across the world. The anguish of any loss was greatly augmented in cases where parents lost one, or more, of their children, losses that continue to resonate through their families to this day.

One such case is that of William and Alice Short, who would see three of their eight children lost on foreign fields. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the family lived at 1 Pretoria Cottages, Church Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth. William Short had married Alice Gunter in 1887 and there would soon be a series of children Edward Daniel (1887), Harvey William (1888), Rose Charlotte (1890), Albert Ernest (1892), Norman (1894), Laura (1896), Percy (1898) and John (1904). William worked hard as a Brewers labourer whilst Alice did her utmost to care for the ever-expanding family, ensuring they all survived infancy and early childhood, at a time when infant mortality was very high.

At least two of the brothers, Albert and Percy, chose to enlist in the Territorial Army, joining the ranks of the Hertfordshire Regiment at Rickmansworth, a part-time volunteer component of the British Army, created in 1908 to augment British

land forces without resorting to conscription. As members of the TA, they would attend weekly parades and annual camps, for which they would receive an annual bounty. Uniforms and equipment, food and transport would all be provided, and it would also be a highly effective means of socialising with members of the community from the location where they lived.

The outbreak of the First World War would see those serving with the Territorial Army liable for service anywhere in the UK but could not be compelled to serve overseas. However, in the first two months of the war, territorials volunteered for foreign service in significant numbers, allowing territorial units such as the Hertfordshire Regiment to be deployed abroad. At the same time many civilians flocked to recruiting stations to join the fight, including more members of the Short family.

This is their story.

Private Norman Short

Service Number: 882

Regiment: 8th Battalion, Royal

Fusiliers Date of Death: 18 March

1916 aged 21.

Buried at Vermelles British Cemetery,

France Grave Reference: II. L. 3.

Awards: 1914/15 Star, British War and Victory medals

Norman would be the first of three brothers to fall on the battlefields of France. Born in Rickmansworth on 19 October 1894, he was baptised at West Hyde on 26 January 1895.

Following his formal education at St

Peter's school in Mill End, he began working for a renowned watchmaking company, Ingersoll, which was based in the city of London. Records show that with the outbreak of hostilities Norman enlisted in the British Army at Marylebone and entered service with the 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.

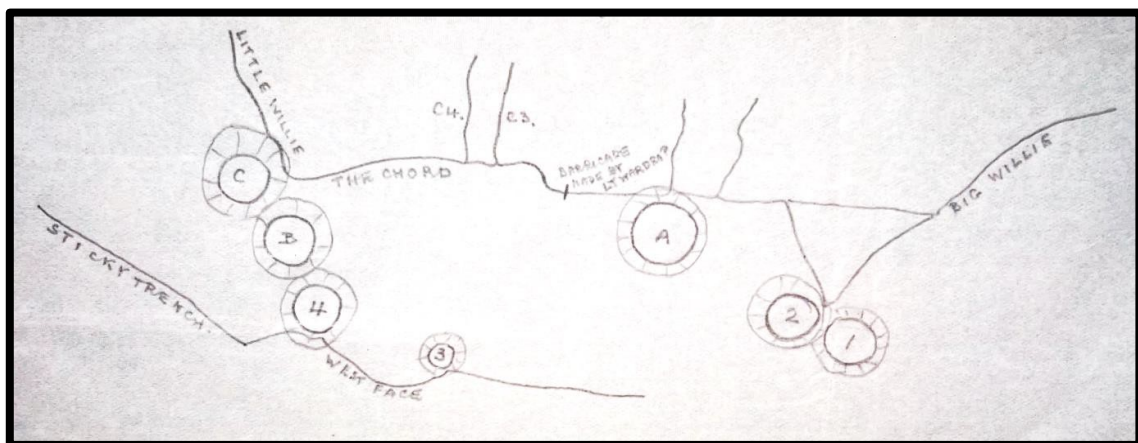
The battalion was part of 36th Brigade, 12th (Eastern) Division, and left Aldershot at 5:30pm on 31st May 1915, reaching Boulogne, France, by 10:30pm the following day. Norman was attached to "A" Company and, following a journey of 11



days, which took the men through Arques, Le Creche and Armentieres, they arrived at L'Epinette. At 9:00pm on 11 June 1915, "A" and "B" Companies entered the front-line trenches for the first time, in the company of the 1st Battalion, Kings Royal Rifle Corps and 2nd Battalion, Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. The following morning, "C" and "D" Companies of the Fusiliers relieved them, having suffered one slight casualty from a bullet wound.

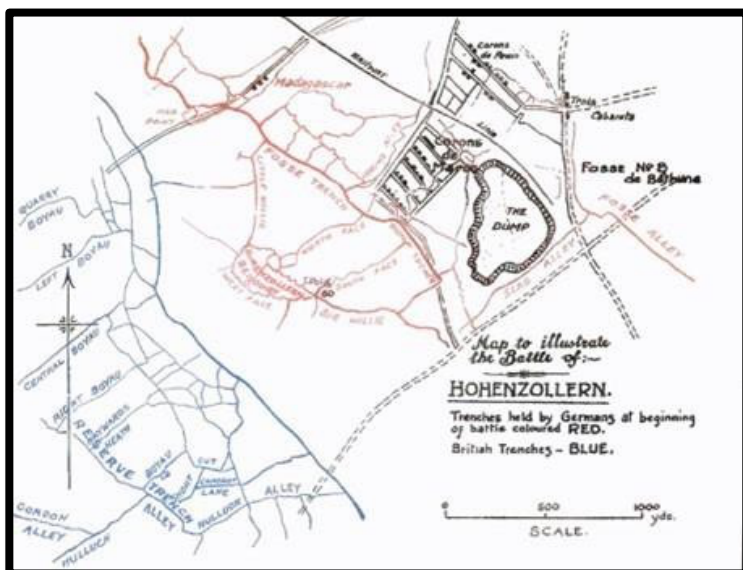
The Battalion served continuously in the vicinity of Houplines throughout the Summer of 1915, taking part in actions in locations that would become synonymous with the Western Front in the early part of the First World, such as Ploegsteert, Armentieres, Le Touret, and in late September and early October the Battalion was engaged in the Battle of Loos. Often providing working parties to aid in the building and repair of frontline trenches, work that was both arduous and extremely dangerous, the Battalion suffered many casualties, some of whom would have been known to Norman.

On Christmas Eve 1915, the men of the Battalion spent the day carrying 7000 grenades and 1200 rifle grenades into the trenches at Givenchy in preparation for the defence of their positions. At 9pm on Christmas Day they moved into the front-line trenches, relieving the men of the 7th Battalion, Sussex Regiment. With the 9th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on their left and the 21st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on their right. The Germans attacked their positions by blowing a mine between two saps, and then mounting a machine gun on the forward lip of the crater. The fusiliers attempted to bomb the Germans out of the position on Boxing Day, but their attempts proved unsuccessful. With the assistance of a Trench Mortar Battery, the crater was finally cleared on 27th December, at which point the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Battalion, Sussex Regiment and returned to billets at Le Quesnoy. By January 1916, the Battalion were in billets in the Tobacco Factory in Bethune. Following a brief period on the front line in Givenchy, they moved to locations at Festubert, after which they moved into reserve at Bourecq where they underwent a period of rest and training. Below is a map of 'Sticky



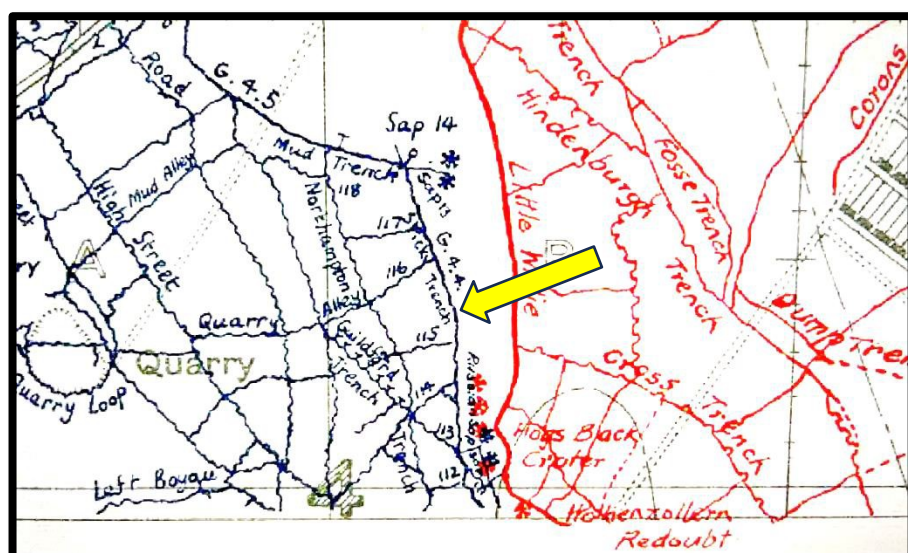
Trench, a place of immense danger, where the men of 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers were situated during the early months of 1916. The maps below provide a detailed

perspective of the location and the shell craters that were bitterly fought over.



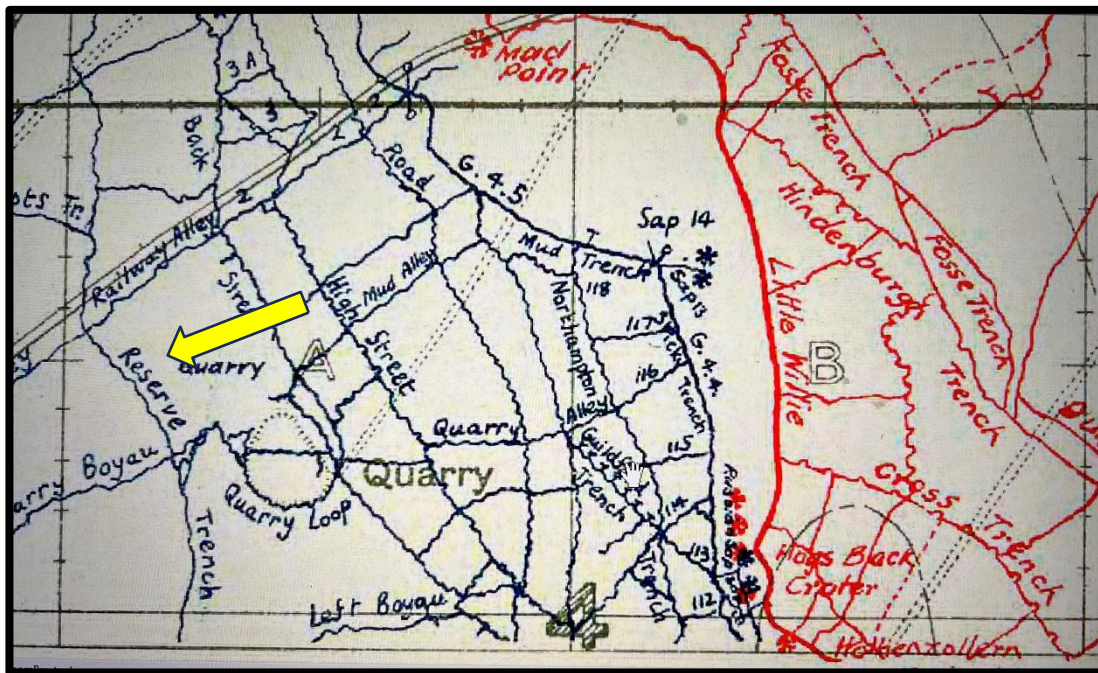
On 13 February 1916, the men of the Battalion returned to the front line, taking up positions at Vermelles, close to Hohenzollern Redoubt. On 18 February, a party of Naval troops consisting of 1 officer and 7 other ranks, entered the trenches to gain an understanding of trench life. They were "not favourably impressed" with trench life, and quickly asked to be shown the artillery

positions, which were well away from the trenches. Two days later, a group of American journalists paid a visit to the very same trenches. Due to an unusual amount of bombing around Sticky Trench, they were shown an officer's dugout, after which they "hastily withdrew".



At 5:30pm on the 18 March 1916, the Battalion were in billets in Vermelles when there was a heavy bombardment of high explosive and gas shells in the village. The unit war diary describes the fumes from the Lachryolatory gas as being "in spite of smoke helmets irritating to the eyes" At the same time, the Germans assaulted the craters in the Hohenzollern sector. "A" and "D" Companies were sent forward at 7:30pm to hold Reserve Trench. "B" and "C" Companies were sent into Vermelles in preparation to defend the village. By early the next morning the craters that had so bitterly been fought over had fallen into German hands, all except for No.4. It is uncertain if Norman was a victim of the initial shelling of Vermelles, or if he perished in Reserve trench.

Map showing location of Reserve Trench where "A" Company were located on the



evening of 18 March 1916.

Buried alongside Norman at Vermelles British Cemetery are the comrades whose lives were lost on the night.

- 6713 Private Herbert William Hayden aged 24.
- 1474 Private George Edwin Osborn aged 28.
- 17700 Private Fredrick Williams aged 20 (Died of Wounds on 19 March 1916)

Private Albert Ernest Short

Service Number: 5547

Regiment: 1st Battalion, Hertfordshire

Regiment Date of Death: 13 November

1916 aged 23.

Commemorated at Thiepval Memorial,

France Panel Reference: Pier and Face

12C



Awards: British War and Victory medals

Memorials

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial
- St. Peter's Church Memorial, Mill End
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School Memorial, Mill End
- Hertfordshire Regimental Memorial, All Saints Church, Hertford

The eldest of the three brothers, Albert, was born on 22 April 1892 in Harefield, Middlesex. He was christened on 29 May 1892 at West Hyde. Following his formal education at St Peter's school in Mill End, Albert is known to have worked as a gardener and nurseryman. Records indicate that Albert did not serve overseas until after January 1916, during which time the Hertfordshire Regiment formed part of 118th Brigade and 39th Division.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

It was on 10th August 1916 that the Battalion left the Trenches near Festubert for the last time, after being relieved by the 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. They marched back to Bethune, where the Brigades of the 39th Division were placed into Army Reserve, and prepared to move South to the Somme sector, where the British Army had been engaged in a major offensive since the 1st July.

On 11th August, the Brigade marched to billets at Cauchy-A-Le-Tour, a 9-mile march. The following day they moved to Monchy Breton, a further 7 miles. By 13th August they had reached Ostreville, where they remained for a period of 10 days, undergoing training in preparation for their arrival on the Somme. It was here that another draft of 12 Other Ranks joined the Battalion on the 15 July. They marched to billets at Houvin-Houvigneul on the 23rd August, and the following day marched a further 9 miles to the village of Grouches-Luchuel, where they were joined by a further draft of 64 Other Ranks. The following day, another 9-mile march took the Battalion to the village of Bus-Le-Artois and, following an overnight rest, they marched the remaining 5 miles to their objective, the village of Englebemer, arriving there on the 26th August 1916. The journey had been completed entirely on foot and they had covered nearly 50 miles, with each man marching in full-service order, carrying all of his own kit in the high heat of the summer.

On the night of the 26th August 1916 the 39th Division took over positions near Thiepval from the 6th Division. Fighting had been very heavy in this area since the 1st July, when the Battle of the Somme opened, and the men of the Hertfordshire Regiment knew that some of their number would soon be lost in the bitter

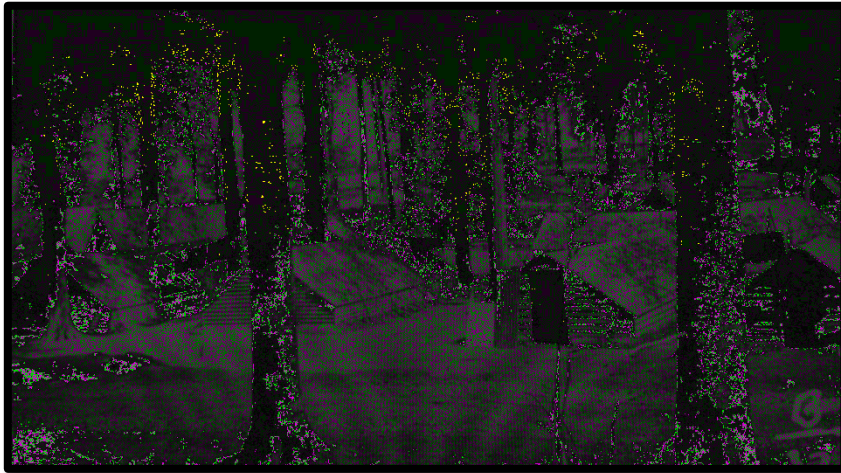
stalemate that typified the Western Front at that time. On the last day of the month a further new draft of 30 Other Ranks arrived to ensure that the Battalion maintained full strength.

The 1st September 1916 saw the arrival of 6 Officers and 30 Other Ranks from England. The following day the Battalion moved into positions overlooking the Ancre Valley, known as Fort Prowse and Fort Moulin. No.1 Company were positioned a short distance away in the village of Mesnil, in preparation for an assault on German positions on the 3rd September. The 118th Brigade were in support of the attack, but it was deemed to be a failure as the Germans made a successful counterattack in the afternoon, forcing the attacking British troops to withdraw. The German artillery had been particularly aggressive during the operation of the 3rd September, and there was considerable damage to the British trenches. Working parties from the Hertfordshire Regiment assisted in the repair work, which involved extremely hard labour throughout the night. For the troops in the trenches, things were not much better. Due to the high level of gas shells the Germans had been firing, they were required to wear their gas helmets all through the night.

On the 12th September, the Hertfordshire's were relieved by the 1st/6th Cheshire Regiment and moved into billets in Englebelmer, a welcome relief from the drudgery of the trenches, which had been made worse by continued rainfall in the area. During the time they had been in the Somme sector, a total of four drafts had arrived, bringing 86 new faces to the Battalion. Sadly, since their arrival in the sector the Battalion had seen 17 members killed or dying of their wounds, with many more wounded. For Jack Willmott, and many of his comrades, it was a time of great fear, as it was not a question as to whether they would be killed or wounded, but when?

The 19th September 1916 saw the Battalion back in the frontline. This time they were holding the sub section of well-known position named Y Ravine, remaining there until the 3rd October. During this time, they were engaged in mainly repairing Trenches, Dug-Outs and Tram Lines. On the night of the 20th/21st September two Patrols were sent out under Corporal's King and Bilby to investigate the enemy fortifications. They reported the German barbed wire as up to 30 feet deep and heavily staked with very long spikes, and completely impassable.

The Battalion were relieved by the 13th Royal Sussex Regiment on the 3rd October, and they, in turn, took over positions from the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment in the right sub section of the village of Hamel. The Hertfordshire's remained here until the 7th October when they moved into Huts and Billets in the village of Martinsart, after being relieved by the 11th Royal Sussex Regiment.



British Huts in the village of Martinsart, similar to those in which the men of the Battalion stayed (IWM).

On the 14th October 1916, the 118th Brigade were ordered to attack a German strongpoint known as the Schwaben Redoubt, on the outskirts of Thiepval. The Hertfordshire Regiment were held in Reserve to support the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment who were at the forefront of the assault. The attack was successful and the Cambridgeshire's were able to seize and hold the position. A Platoon of the Hertfordshire's were used in a supporting role during the attack, with two Officers winning the Military Cross and three Other Ranks winning the Military Medal.

THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE

The Battle of the Ancre began on the 13th November 1916, and was the final large scale British attack of the Battle of the Somme. The Hertfordshire Regiment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Page DSO, achieved notable success in the battle advancing 1600 yards and holding their position. The attack was preceded by seven days of heavy shellfire and was launched before dawn to try and take the Germans by surprise. The men travelled lightly, each had been given bombs and around half the men carried spades. Moving an entire Brigade into position in the dark was an exceedingly difficult operation and careful reconnaissance had to be carried out ahead of the attack. Second Lieutenant Gilbey had carefully marked out the lines on which the different Companies had to assemble over the previous nights and this work helped the Brigade get into position without too many difficulties. Every man was in his place before 2am, ready for the attack.

The Hertfordshire Regiment attacked from the Schwaben Redoubt which they had been involved in capturing a few weeks earlier. The attack was aided both by the darkness and a mist which hid the soldiers. It had also been dry for several days leading up to the 13th November which allowed the men to move much faster across the battlefield although they still had to carefully avoid shell holes, some of which contained up to a foot of water. Despite the mist and darkness, the battalion kept

together and moved quickly towards the Hansa Line, their ultimate objective. The advance was a great success and the battalion was able to seize the whole of the Hansa Line as well as capturing 250 prisoners and nine machine guns. During the battle, seven of the Regiment's officers were wounded and another 150 men were either killed or wounded.



Some of the *German* stores and equipment captured during the Battle of the Ancre (IWM)

It was at 7.36am on the 19th November 1916 that the Battalion, along with a quarter of the 118th Machine Gun Company, left the Somme sector, after boarding Train No.24 at Candas. The journey took them back to Belgium, where the Battalion had first seen service in November 1914. Albert's body was not recovered from the Somme battlefield and his name is recorded on Pier and Face 12C of the Thiepval Memorial, France

Private Percy Short

Service Number: 203113

Regiment: 6th/7th Battalion, Royal Scots

Fusiliers Date of Death: 18 April 1918

aged 19.



Commemorated at Ploegsteert Memorial,

Belgium Panel Reference: 4.

Awards: British War and Victory medals

Memorials:

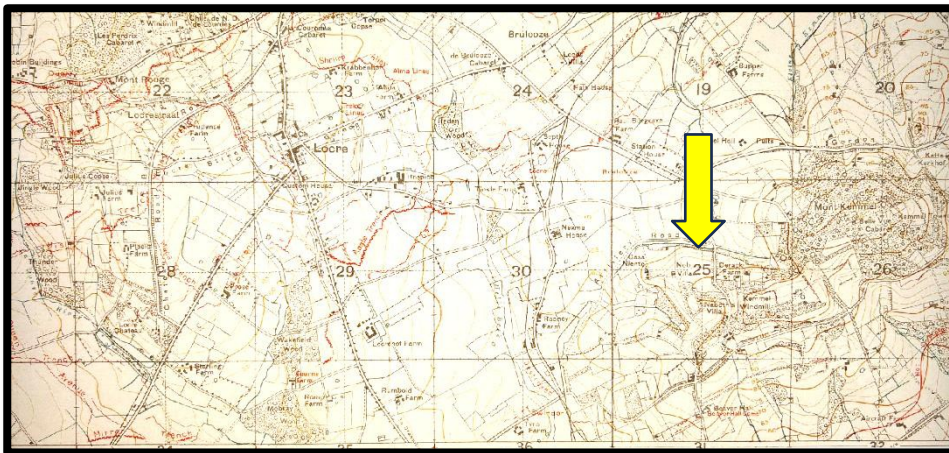
- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial,
- St. Peter's Church, Mill End,
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School, Mill End,
- John Dickinson & Co, Croxley Mills, Croxley Green

Percy was the youngest of the three brothers, and the last to perish on the battlefield. He was born on 20 July 1898 and was baptised at St Peter's Mill End on 21 September 1898. Like his older brothers, he attended St Peter's school, and after leaving his formal education worked as a labourer.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Percy enlisted in the Hertfordshire in September 1914, but was too young to serve on the frontline and was held in reserve until he was old enough to be sent overseas. Although he was a member of the Hertfordshire Regiment, the shortage of men in combat units saw him transferred to the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, being given the Regimental Number 7237. Following this, he was transferred for a second time to the 6th/7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers (Pioneers), part of the 59th Division. On this occasion his Regimental Number changed again, this time to 203113. During March 1918, Percy's battalion had been continuously in the front line attempting to resist the German Spring Offensive near Vaulx-Vraucourt, east of Bapaume. At the beginning of April, the battalion moved to Ypres and relieved the 18th Middlesex Pioneers at Middlesex Camp, Ypres. They mounted working parties to repair shell damage to infrastructure such as railway tracks.

By 15 April the battalion was defending the front line near Bailleul. On 17 April 100 rifles from 'A' company were placed at the disposal of 100th Infantry Brigade for a counterattack which took place that night. There were 20 casualties. Percy appears to amongst those whose bodies were not recovered from the battlefield and therefore, his name is recorded on Panel 4 of the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium.

Map showing approximate location of detachment on the night of 17 April 1918, which suffered 20 casualties during an assault on German positions.



This image, taken at some point between September 1914 and March 1916, shows the three brothers most likely close to their home at Mill End.

1 A.M. Harvey William Short (12157) - The Fledging Service

On 30 October 1915, with his brothers serving in the Army, Harvey William Short enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps. In civilian life he had been a Fitter, and his skills

were in great demand in the fledgling air service. Initially, he was attached to a Kite Balloon section but by 1 February 1916, he would find himself promoted to 1st Class Air Mechanic after which he was posted France. He initially served with No. 6 Squadron but was later posted to No.101 Squadron, eventually serving most of his time with No.40 Squadron. It seems the Harvey suffered some health issues and found himself in hospital at Calais on more than one occasion

Harvey served with the Royal Air Force until May 1919, when he eventually returned home. By 1921, the 32-year-old was still living with his parents at Mill End, and was working as an Engine Driver for the Bells United Asbestos Company. In the Summer of 1921, he married Blanche Ashworth but it appears she passed away in 1929. Harvey then married Celia May Groom in the winter of 1937, and the couple ran the "Stag & Hounds" public house in Eton. Harvey passed away in October 1969



Private Bertie Thomas Sharpe

Service Number: G/66345

Regiment: 1st Battalion, Royal

Fusiliers Date of Death: 13

October 1918

Buried at Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny,

France Grave Reference: 4.

Awards: British War and Victory medals

Memorials:

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial,
- St. Peter's Church, Mill End,
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School, Mill End,
- John Dickinson & Co, Croxley Mills, Croxley Green

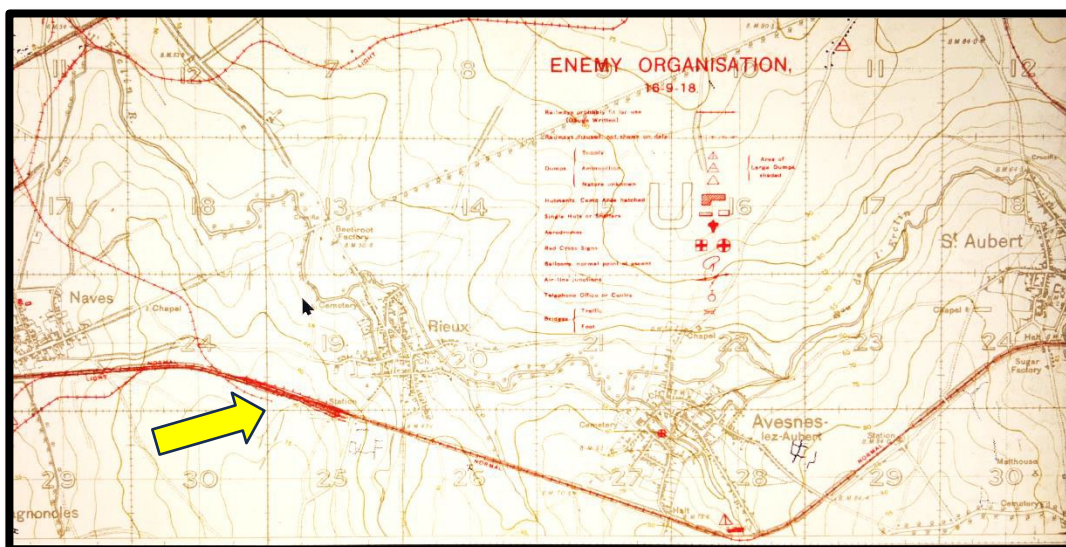


Although William & Alice would lose three of their sons to the Great War, it was

perhaps Rose Short who would make the greatest sacrifice, not only losing her siblings but also her husband. In the Summer of 1911, the 21-year-old married a local lad, Bertie Thomas Sharpe, who was born in Rickmansworth on 26 October 1885, the son of Thomas and Alice Sharpe (nee East), and baptised on 22 November 1885 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth. His parents had married on 9 November 1873 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth, and his father died in 1899 when Bertie was aged 14. He was aged 50 and was buried on 10 May 1899 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth. Bertie worked for John Dickinson & Co. at Croxley Mills.

Ater marrying Rose Short, the couple were to have three children, William Thomas (1912), Doris Rose (1912) and Frederick Arthur (1917), and made a home at 69 Fearnley Street, Watford.

Like his brothers-in-law, Bertie joined the army and initially served as a Private in the Northamptonshire Regiment with the Service Number 46078. He was later attached to the Northumberland Fusiliers and on the 8 July 1917 was transferred to the 12th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, whom he served with for 6 months. He was then transferred to 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on 30 January 1918.



On 10 October 1918, the Battalion moved from Niergnies to Cagnoncles, a short distance from Cambrai, where they were to support the 73rd Infantry Brigade. At 4:00am the following morning, as the Battalion were assembling near the village of Rieux, they came under a heavy artillery barrage. The intention was for them to move through the 73rd Infantry Brigade and assault German positions but they were held up by intense machine gun fire and casualties were very heavy. The nature of the ground and the absence of tanks made it impossible for the men to move. Later in the morning, as the 73rd Brigade were being relieved, a lone German tank attacked the battalion with machine gun fire and a few shrapnel rounds, but quickly retired

G66345	Pte. ✓ SHARPE Bertie	North'h.R. Pte. 46078	1(a) 19. 6. 17 to 7. 7. 17.	OK	✓
	Thomas	12/R. Fus. 66345	1(a) 8. 7. 17 " 29. 1. 18.		
		1/ " "	1(a) 30. 1. 18 " 13. 10. 18.		

W.D.O. 4216
W.I.

Name Sharpe Bertie Thomas Regimental No. G/66345 Case No. 4658

Regiment 1st Royal Fusiliers Rank PA

Form 104-88 received 25.10.18 Date of notification } 19.10.18 of death } Form 10476 received 31.10.18

Date and cause of death 13.10.18. Wounds rec'd in action. MM1566

Widow Rose Charlotte, 69 Fearnley St. Date of birth 14.3.89

Children:—
Watford. Herts.

Name	Date of birth	Date of Expiry	Remarks
<u>William Thomas</u>	<u>20.5.12</u>	<u>20.5.28</u>	<u>\$8 grant paid 29.10.18. until</u>
<u>Doris Rose</u>	<u>26.9.14</u>	<u>26.9.30</u>	<u>50% reviewed 25/3/19.</u>
<u>Fred K Arthur</u>	<u>13.9.17</u>	<u>13.9.33</u>	<u>Case received from A.P. B31.7.19.</u>
			<u>A.P. refused 21.7.19</u>
			<u>Case returned to Registry 5.8.19</u>
			<u>Sent to A.P. 12.8.19</u>

Pension 29/7. a week from 21.4.19.

Date awarded 3.4.19. If refused, reason { }

Papers { }

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from the battlefield.

The Battalion suffered 43 officers and men killed, 187 wounded and 4 other ranks missing. Bertie was amongst the wounded and was evacuated most likely to either the 29th or 46th Casualty Clearing Stations which were nearby. He is buried at Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny.

Now a war widow with three young children, Rose found love again with a much older man, James Henry Miles, whom she married in the autumn of 1919. James passed away in the Summer of 1965, Rose joined him in the Autumn of 1974.

Joseph George Spicer - A Wounded Soldier



After the First World War had ended, the brother's younger sister, Laura, married Joseph George Spicer, a man who had served with the British army and had been discharged as no longer physically fit for service on 25 January 1919.



Joseph had enlisted with 3rd Batt. Bedfordshire regiment, no 26993, later transferred to 6th Northamptonshire regiment with the no 43248. After he was discharged from service, under the terms of Para.392 of the Kings Regulations, Joseph was granted a Silver War Badge numbered B140178. The couple married in 1921 and a year later their only son, Joseph Victor H Spicer, was born. Sadly, her husband was to pass away in 1929. Laura joined him in March 1972 and their son passed away in 1990.

REMEMBER THEM.

Paul Johnson, military historian, for Gary Short.

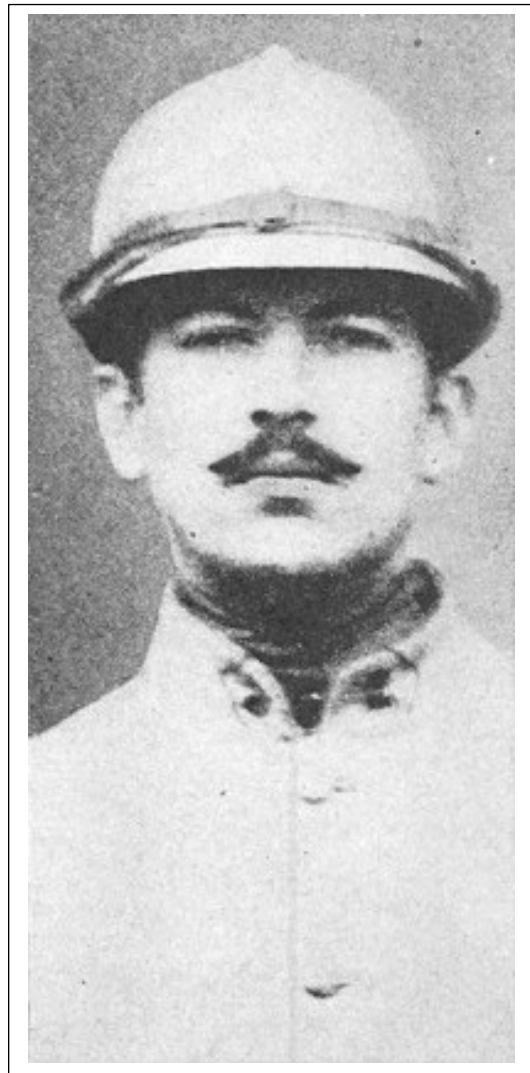
I have a rendezvous with Death (1917)

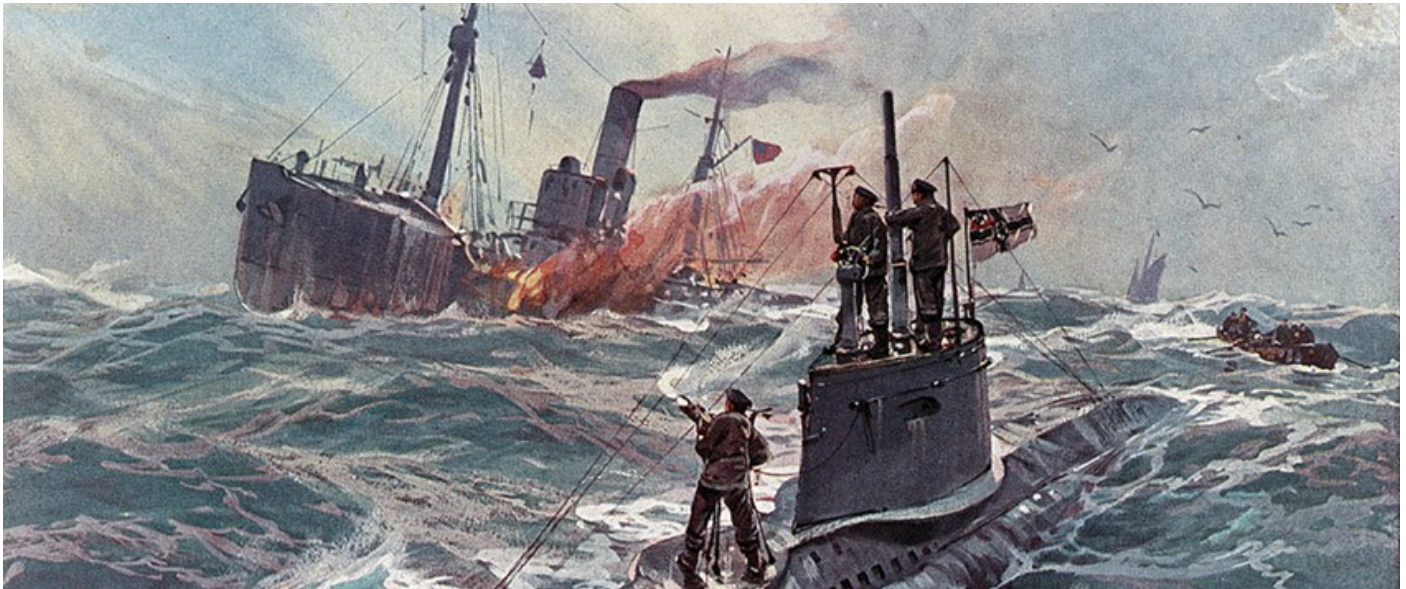
I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear...
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Alan Seeger.





April 19th 'Historian Dr Graham Kemp's presentation introduces the essential differences between U-boats and submarines and examines the different kinds of U Boats used in the First World War. He then looks at how Germany first planned to use them and how they, almost by accident, developed them into a deadly raider. The talk will then cover the U boat Commerce campaign of 1917-18, its aims, hopes and intentions, before explaining why it was doomed to inevitable failure, and huge cost that Germany paid for that failure. Dr Kemp is an experienced speaker, and his passion is getting across the human perspective and experience in his talks. Therefore, the second part of the presentation will examine the actual experiences of the crews serving in the boats, what it was like to serve in them, the danger, the humour, and is drawn from the very few accounts ever written by their crews.

March 15th 'Robert Keable, utterly immoral WW1 chaplain?' -Simon Keable-Elliott

April 19th The U-Boat Campaign 1914-18' - Dr Graham Kemp

May 17th 'Now the War is Over' - Dr Daniel Weinbren

June 14th - 16th Twinning Trip to Belgium

June 15th Albert French Commemoration at MK Rose (Not organised by us this year)

June 21st 'Repairs and maintenance on the Western Front' - Roy Larkin

July 12th Albert French 10th Anniversary of MK Rose pillar.

July 19th India's Great War - Adam Prime.

Meetings are 7.30 - 9.30.at Wolverton Working Men's Social Club, 49 - 50, Stratford Road MK12 5LS

Committee members are...

Stuart Macfarlan - Chairman (macfarlan87@gmail.com)

Anne McIntyre - Secretary/historical events co-ordinator (annefmmcintyre@gmail.com)

Ian Wright - Talks organiser

Caroline Wright - Treasurer

Jim Barrett - Seminar and visits co-ordinator

George Maby - Wolverton Town Council liaison (Twining and Albert French commemoration)

Gary Short - Social Media co-ordinator.