

The Soldiers of the Parish

who fell

in

THE GREAT WAR



PREFACE

In 2014 the Parochial Church Council of St Andrew's, Irnham, set out to find what they could about the lives, and circumstances of the deaths, of the soldiers of the Parish who fell in the Great War and whose names are recorded on the village war memorial. To that end, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) database was interrogated, the 1901 and 1911 censuses were consulted and Parish records, held both locally and at the County Archives in Lincoln, were examined. The results of the investigation were presented to a large congregation during a service held on 4th August 2014 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War. The contents of that presentation are recorded on the following few pages so that readers might know something of the soldiers of the Parish who fell in the Great War beyond just their names.



THE WAR MEMORIAL

The war memorial itself presents several anomalies. The first, and most obvious, is the question of alphabetical order. Why does Pte COOPER appear before Pte COCKS? Also Dvr CATES is at the end of the soldiers whose names begin with 'C' when he should be at the top. There is a simple answer to this - Dvr CATES' name is wrongly recorded.

Five soldiers on the memorial are shown as being in the 3rd Bns of their respective regiments. However, the 3rd Bns of the Lincolnshire Regt, the Staffordshire Regt and the Sherwood Foresters never went to France in WW1 so whilst the soldiers may have joined those battalions initially, they were not serving in them when they died.

Moreover, 3 soldiers are recorded by the CWGC as being in different regiments when they were killed from the regiments they are recorded as belonging to on the memorial. This is not too surprising as soldiers were often switched from one regiment to another subject to the requirements of the front. Regimental loyalty counted for little in the latter years of WW1.

It would seem that the relatives of the soldiers who fell chose to record them in the battalions and regiments that they had joined rather than the battalions and regiments in which they died.



GEORGE FREDERICK ASHER

GEORGE FREDERICK ASHER was born in 1897 at Cliff Farm, MARSTON.

He was the son of JAMES ASHER (a farm yardsman) and FANNY ASHER.

- By 1911
- FANNY had borne 9 children of whom 7 were living.
 - GEORGE FREDERICK was a schoolboy, aged 14.
 - The ASHER family were living in BULBY.

The memorial records Pte ASHER as belonging to the 10th Bn Lincolnshire Regiment.

The 10th Bn Lincolnshire Regiment was:

- Part of Kitchener's New Army.
- Known at the Grimsby Chums.
- Part of the 101st Brigade.
- Part of the 34th Division.

The 34th Division arrived in France in Jan 1916 and became part of General Sir Henry Rawlinson's 4th Army which was formed on 5 Feb 1916 to undertake the main British contribution to the SOMME offensive.

The SOMME offensive began on 1 Jul 1916 and 1578 Pte ASHER died on that day - one of 60,000 British casualties. It was almost certainly his first contact with the enemy. He was 19 years old.

Pte ASHER has no known grave but he is commemorated on Lutyens THIEPVAL MEMORIAL which is a memorial to those missing on the SOMME.



ARTHUR DANIEL BUCKBERRY

The researchers have found conflicting evidence about ARTHUR DANIEL BUCKBERRY. The CWGC database describes him as the son of 'H and EMMA BUCKBERRY of Lenton'. However, the census data indicates that he was born in 1895 in ASLACKBY and was the son of GEORGE and MARY ANN BUCKBERRY. In 1911 he was working as a farm labourer.

ARTHUR DANIEL BUCKBERRY of the 4th Bn Lincolnshire Regiment died on 18 Nov 1915. The CWGC indicate him to be 17 at the time of his death but census information would indicate that he was nearer 20.

He is buried in the Royal Irish Rifles Graveyard - LAVENTIE, where he is one of 800 WW1 casualties.

LAVENTIE is a village in the Dept of Pas-de-Calais, 11km SW of ARMENTIERES.

It is impossible to determine if Pte BUCKBERRY died in a specific WW1 battle.

The Lincolnshire Regiment landed in France on 26 Sep 1915 and were in action a few days later. They were part of the 21st Division which, in turn, were part of HAIG's 1st Army. The 1st Army was the principal British contingent of the BATTLE of LOOS (25 Sep 1915 to 14 Oct 1915). The 21st Division was a New Army formation and was in reserve. It was brought into the offensive when the Divisions that began the battle had been stopped.

It must be possible that Pte BUCKBERRY was wounded at the BATTLE of LOOS and died a month after the end of the battle. His grave is only 20Km or so from where the battle was fought.



JOHN JOSEPH COOPER

JOHN JOSEPH COOPER was born “about” (according to the 1901 census) 1892 in IRNHAM to JOHN (a horseman on a farm) and ELIZABETH COOPER. He was baptised here in IRNHAM on 8 Nov 1891 which makes sense given the “about” qualification contained in the census record.

His father - JOHN COOPER (Snr) - was the Parish Clerk in pre-war days and his grave can be found in the NW of the churchyard. He died in 1950. ELIZABETH, Pte COOPER’s mother, died in 1929.

In 1911 Pte COOPER, aged 19, was working as a waggoner for HENRY HOYES, a farmer in HANBY.

Pte COOPER died on 19 Mar 1917 at which time he was serving in B Coy 11th Bn Sherwood Foresters.

He has no known grave but his name is recoded on the MENIN GATE MEMORIAL which is a memorial to the soldiers killed in the YPRES salient.

Pte COOPER’s death - Mar 1917 - does not coincide with any of the 3 specific battles of YPRES.



THE COCKS FAMILY

The COCKS are a prominent local family and the Parish Tithesheets record members of the family renting land in the IRNHAM area as far back as 1839.

The 3 COCKS brothers recoded on the memorial were sons of GEORGE and MARY ANN COCKS. The family were living in IRNHAM in 1901 and in SWINSTEAD in 1911. Church records show that Mrs COCKS provided paraffin for the church in the early 20th century.

She provided no paraffin after 1916 and she died on 17 Jan 1918 at the young age of 49. By that time her son, FREDERICK THOMAS, had been killed.

She is buried with her husband GEORGE in the NE of the churchyard. GEORGE was to see the deaths of 2 more of his sons in WW1. He lived until 1930. The names of the 3 COCKS soldiers who fell in the Great War are recorded on GEORGE and MAY ANN's headstone.



ARTHUR JOSEPH COCKS

ARTHUR JOSEPH COCKS was the youngest of the 3 COCKS brothers who were killed. He was born in 1899 and died on 24 Oct 1918 by which time he was serving in the 2nd Bn Bedfordshire Regiment.

He died at the age of 19 - so close to the end of the war.

He is buried in the AWOINGT BRITISH CEMETERY near CAMBRAI - one of 637 British casualties.

The 38th, 45th and 59th Casualty Clearing Stations were posted in the neighbourhood of the AWOINGT cemetery and the great majority of the burials made there between Oct 1918 and Dec 1918 came from those hospitals.



CHARLES HERBERT COCKS

CHARLES HERBERT COCKS was the eldest of the 3 COCKS brothers who fell in the Great War. He died on 8 May 1918 at the age of 26 whilst serving in the 2/4 Bn Lincolnshire Regiment.

He is buried in the BOULOGNE EASTERN CEMETERY. Until Jun 1918 the soldiers who died in the hospitals of BOULOGNE - one of the main hospital areas - were buried in the EASTERN CEMETERY.

Although the CWGC records do not show it, CHARLES HERBERT was married. His great granddaughter, LOUISE COCKS, still lives locally.



FREDERICK THOMAS COCKS

FREDERICK THOMAS COCKS died on 27 Sep 1917 at the age of 21. He was serving in the 2/5 Bn South Staffordshire Regiment. He has no known grave.

One of the most terrible battles of WW1 was the BATTLE of PASSCHENDAELE, also known as the 3rd Battle of YPRES. It took place between Jul and Nov 1917 - during which period Pte FREDERICK THOMAS COCKS was killed. The South Staffords were at PASSCHENDAELE as part of PLUMER's 2nd Army.

Pte COCKS is remembered on the TYNE COT MEMORIAL and this is consistent with his having been at PASSCHENDAELE and having no known grave.



WILLIAM ARTHUR CROWSON

In the far SW of the churchyard lies the grave of THOMAS and MARY CROWSON both of whom were born in 1824. THOMAS and MARY are almost certainly the parents of WILLIAM CROWSON (Snr), WILLIAM ARTHUR's father. WILLIAM ARTHUR's mother was EMMA CROWSON. The CROWSON family ran the Post Office in IRNHAM around the time of WW1.

WILLIAM ARTHUR was born in 1886 in BILSBY, Lincolnshire and in 1901, aged 15, he was a gamekeeper living with his parents. Ten years later he was still single and still a gamekeeper but by then he was living in GRIMSTHORPE as a boarder of WILLIAM HENRY BRISTOW.

[Somewhat confusingly, WILLIAM HENRY BRISTOW is recorded on a gravestone by the church door as the father of JOHN BUCKBERRY who died in 1898 at the age of 23. JOHN BUCKBERRY was almost certainly related to Pte ARTHUR DANIEL BUCKBERRY whose name appears on the memorial.]

WILLIAM ARTHUR CROWSON lost his life on 16 Jul 1917 at the age of 31 while serving in D Coy 6th Bn Lincolnshire Regiment. He is buried in VLAMTERINGHE NEW MILITARY CEMETERY, WEST VLAANDEREN, Belgium - 5km east of POPERINGHE. VLAMTERINGHE was just outside the range of German shell fire and was often used by field ambulances. The NEW MILITARY CEMETERY was opened in Jun 1917 in anticipation of a major allied offensive - i.e. PASSCHENDAELE.

WILLIAM ARTHUR married LUCY ETHEL sometime after 1911 and she was living in IRNHAM at the time of his death.

BRIAN SALMON, whose early life was in IRNHAM and who still lives locally, is WILLIAM ARTHUR's nephew.



JOHN GATES

The memorial wrongly records JOHN GATES's name as JOHN CATES. Had his name been recorded correctly it would have been in the right place alphabetically on the memorial.

JOHN GATES was born in 1881 in CHEDDINGTON, Buckinghamshire. He was the son of MATTHEW and MARY ANN GATES.

Before the war, JOHN GATES was living in IRNHAM with his wife SARAH JANE (from KIRKBY UNDERWOOD), their 2 children, MATTHEW CHARLES (born in 1906) and MILDRED (born in 1912) and SARAH JANE's widowed mother, Mrs JANE HUNT. JOHN GATES is described as a domestic groom in the census and as a coachman in the Parish Register. Clearly, he could handle horses and accordingly he was recruited to the ROYAL ENGINEERS where he became a Driver.

Dvr GATES died on 27 Nov 1917 at the age of 37 in the little known campaign in SALONIKA, Greece. He is buried in SALONIKA (Lembet Road) MILITARY CEMETERY, THESSALONIKA, Greece - so far from SARAH JANE, MATTHEW and MILDRED.

SARAH JANE died in 1937 at the age of 57 and on her headstone in KIRKBY UNDERWOOD churchyard can be seen a memorial to her husband. It reads:

“Also of JOHN GATES - died Nov 27 1917 aged 37 and
Interred in the Anglo French Cemetery,
Salonika - at rest”



ALFRED HARWOOD

The HARWOODs are a prominent local family and their name, too, is recorded in the Parish Tithesheets of 1839.

ALFRED HARWOOD was born in 1896 and is recoded in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses as living with his grandparents, GEORGE and ELIZA HARWOOD. GEORGE was a Head Shepherd.

In 1901 the family were living in IRNHAM and ALFRED was a schoolboy. By 1911 they had moved to HAWTHORPE and ALFRED had become a Third Waggoner.

ALFRED HARWOOD's grave and headstone are right by the door of St Andrew's church. He died on 14 Feb 1919, at the age of 23. His headstone shows him to have been a soldier in the DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY. To have been awarded a military headstone after the end of the war, he must either have been still in the Army at the time of his death or died of wounds attributable to his wartime service.





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