Men of Ashdown Forest
who fell in the First World War
and who are commemorated at
Forest Row, Hartfield and
Coleman’s Hatch

Volume Two
1917 - 1921
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INTRODUCTION

The Ashdown Forest Research Group is carrying out a project to produce case studies on all the men who died while on military service during the 1914-18 war and who are commemorated by the war memorials at Forest Row and Hartfield and in memorial books at the churches of Holy Trinity, Forest Row, Holy Trinity, Coleman’s Hatch, and St. Mary the Virgin, Hartfield.¹

We have confined ourselves to these locations, which lie on the northern edge of Ashdown Forest, for practical reasons. Men commemorated at other locations around the Forest are not covered by this project.

Our aim is to produce case studies in chronological order, and we expect to produce 116 in total. The first volume dealt with the 46 men who died between the declaration of war on 1 August 1914 and the end of 1916. This second volume deals with the those men who died from January 1917 onwards, including a number who died after the war ended from wounds suffered during the war.

We hope you will find these case studies interesting and thought-provoking. They highlight the contrasting backgrounds and circumstances of the men who fought and died: some were from very humble backgrounds, others from elevated social milieux; some saw action in the ranks, others were officers. A number of cases underline the severe impact that the loss of these men had on local families and communities. The case studies are also a reminder of the varied activities that the men were involved in during the war, whether on land, at sea or in the air, and the different places in which they served – not only the Western Front but in more remote parts of the world such as Gallipoli, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Finally, because there were various reasons why men were commemorated on these war memorials, the case studies range from those men who had close connections to the area to others who had rather more tenuous links, for example, through their parents.

The Ashdown Forest Research Group consists of several independent researchers who undertake research into the historical geography of Ashdown Forest. The authors of each study are identified at the end of each article, and they would welcome any corrections, supplementary information or photographs that would help to improve them. They can be contacted by email at: ashdownforestresearchgroup@yahoo.com

Ashdown Forest Research Group

¹ We have also included a few men buried in Forest Row cemetery who fell during the war but whose names do not appear on the war memorial there.
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Date of Death Unknown

George Victor Hedges
Frederick G Story
GA West

[*] = Completed case study
Private Ernest Stanley Boakes, 45690, 6th Company, the Machine Gun Corps, was born in Hartfield in 1897. He was the son of John (b. 1851) and Hester (née Fermor, b. 1856) Boakes.

In the 1911 census he was listed as a scholar, age 13, and living at Rogers Town, Holtye, Cowden, Kent. His pre-war occupation was as an agricultural labourer.

Ernest’s elder brother Horace, aged 17 was listed in 1911 as a farm labourer, and another brother, Frank, who was 15 at the time, was listed as a houseboy. Horace later worked on the railway at Groombridge and died in 1969. Frank emigrated to the USA and in 1919 enlisted in the US Army. He was posted to Germany in 1919. By 1921 he was back in the US, living in Newport, Rhode Island. Frank died in the USA in 1977 in New Jersey aged 82.

Unfortunately, their brothers Harry and William died in December 1915. Harry was 28 and John was 24. Harry was born on 18 December 1886. In 1906 he was working on the railways at London Bridge. John was christened William George and was a baker in 1911 and lived with Albert and Alice Crittenden in Hartfield. Despite reviewing the East Grinstead Observer and other sources from late 1915 and early 1916 we could not find any records around the cause of death.

Their father, John Boakes, died in May 1924 and their mother, Hester, in 1929. They were both aged 73.

Ernest enlisted on 10 May 1916 at Chichester, originally in the East Surrey Regiment. He died aged 19 on 26 April 1917 at Étaples hospital, Pas de Calais, France of gunshot wounds to his head.
sustained on 9 April 1917. He is buried at Étaples Military Cemetery: Grave XVIII. A. 5A. He is listed on the war memorials in Hartfield and on the Holtye Road.

Carol O’Driscoll

(above) The employment records of Ernest Boakes’ brother, Harry, with the London, Brighton & South Coast railway company. They appear to show that he entered service with the company on 29 June 1906, but moved to Groombridge, Sussex, in June 1907 where he served as a porter earning 16 shillings a week, then moved as a porter (signal) to London Bridge on 3 June 1910, apparently earning 18 shillings a week.
EDWARD DIVALL

Private, 46126, 7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers, 63rd Royal Naval Division
Died 29 April 1917 near Arras, France, aged 41
No known grave. Listed on the Arras Memorial, Bay 3

Edward Divall was born in Hartfield in 1876, the son of Thomas and Hannah Divall (née Davies), of Hurstland Cottages, Hartfield. In 1881 he was living at Chuck Hatch with his parents and brother. His father was listed as a ‘road man’. His grandfather was a brickmaker. By 1891 he had moved to Hartfield with his family, and he and his father were listed as general labourers. He had two sisters and two brothers. In the 1901 census he was recorded as a boarder, aged 24, in Ridgewood, Uckfield, Sussex, where his occupation is given as brickmaker (Ridgewood was the centre of brickmaking in Uckfield).

He was married to Ellen Divall (née Mitchell, b.1880), of 37, New Road, Ridgewood, and they had a daughter Sophia Grace (b.1906). Edward’s pre-war occupation was as a file presser at the Sussex Pottery, Brick and Tile Works, Uckfield.

The Royal Naval Division

Originating in the Royal Navy, and manned by sailors and marines, the Royal Naval Division was incorporated into the Army in 1916. Illustrious figures served in it, such as the poet Rupert Brooke, Bernard Freyberg (the future governor-general of New Zealand) and the author and later parliamentarian Alan Herbert, but also
Edwin Dyett, later executed for cowardice. At the declaration
of the war on 4 August 1914, there was a surplus of some 20-
30,000 men of the reserves of the Royal Navy who would
not find jobs on any ship of war. It was recognised that this
was sufficient to form two naval brigades and a brigade of
marines for operations on land as, at the end of the
Division’s involvement in the Gallipoli campaign, very few
men with sea service remained. The Division was
transferred from the authority of the Admiralty to the War
Office on 29 April 1916 and was redesignated as the 63rd
(Royal Naval) Division on 19 July 1916.

The Arras Offensive and the battle for Gavrelle

The Division moved to France, arriving at Marseilles on 12-
23 May 1916, after which it remained on the Western Front
for the rest of the war. There it took part in the Battle of the
Ancre, a phase of the Battles of the Somme 1916 (13-18 November 1916), the Operations on the
Ancre (January-March 1917), the Second Battle of the Scarpe (23-24 April 1917), a phase of the
Arras offensive, and a further phase of this offensive in which the Division captured Gavrelle in the
Battle of Arleux (28-29 April 1917). It is likely that Edward Divall was involved in these battles.

The Arras offensive of 9 April-16 June 1917 became known primarily for the conquest of Vimy Ridge
by the Canadians, who placed their national memorial there. The British launched their offensive on
9 April 1917. The Third Army, led by General Edmund Allenby, was under orders to proceed to the
north and south of the river Scarpe. The 4th British and 9th Scottish Divisions attack to the north of
the river. The first day went well: the Germans were
surprised and the aims were
achieved. Making some three
miles of progress in one day
was unheard of since the battle
of the Somme. The front moved
north of the Scarpe to beyond
the line between Athies and
Vimy (see map, line 2), and
even the village of Fampoux
was reached. Progress after that
was appreciably more difficult
on account of German action. In mid-April an attack on the village of Roeux, situated on the river, failed and Douglas Haig ordered a break in operations.

On 16 April, meanwhile, the French had launched their attack at the Chemin des Dames, which was a failure from day one. The French demanded however that the British continue their offensive. And thus, fighting carried on. The Royal Naval Division was ordered to take Gavrelle and breach the third German defensive line. The attack on Gavrelle commenced on 23 April and was carried out by the 189th and 190th brigades. At 4.45am Nelson and Drake battalions went ‘over the top’ under cover of an artillery barrage. The first line of German trenches was quickly taken, and an hour later the attack was ceased at the edge of the village. The artillery barrage was relocated across the village, which was reduced to rubble. Other battalions from the brigade were moved forward. House-to-house fighting led to the taking of Gavrelle, at the cost of 1,500 casualties.

On the next day the Germans launched a counter-offensive to re-take Gavrelle, starting with an intense bombardment. This was beaten off, and on 26 April, the attacking battalions were relieved. In the Official History of the Great War the following is printed with regard to the fighting at Gavrelle between 23rd and 25th April:

‘Full justice has not been done to the achievement of the 63rd Division, because the details of the street fighting in which it showed skill and determination are to intricate for description. The division had taken 479 prisoners and in defeating the counterattacks had obviously inflicted heavy loss upon the enemy.’

The relief troops had to continue the British attack towards the windmill, a reinforced German position north-east of the village. This task was allocated to the marines and the Anson battalion of the 188th Brigade, who had not been deployed on 23 April. The attack started at 4.25am. The second battalion of marines succeeded in taking the windmill, and held it as an enclave in German-held territory. That was the only British gain, because after a day of bloody fighting, the situation
was basically unchanged from the start. That did not change until the troops of 31st Division relieved them in the night of 30 April.

The Royal Naval Division suffered 3,000 casualties in the fighting at Gavrelle. In particular, the losses of the Royal Marines Light Infantry were severe, with 850 casualties and many dead, including the commanding officer of the first battalion of marines, lieutenant-colonel Cartwright.

Private Edward Divall died on 29 April 1917 near Arras, aged 41. He has no known grave and is listed on the Arras Memorial, Bay 3. He is listed on the war memorials in Hartfield and Uckfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
George Kenneth Thompson Fisher was born on 4 August 1879 in Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire. He was the eldest son of Bishop George Carnac Fisher, who was successively Bishop of Southampton and Ipswich and Hon. Canon of Norwich, and Mary Penelope Gwendoline Thompson, daughter of the late Thomas Charles Thompson, who had been an M.P. for Durham City. In the 1881 census he is enumerated at The Vicarage, Salthouse Road, Barrow, but by 1891 he is enumerated at The Granville, Ramsgate, Kent, then in 1901 at Burgh House, Burgh St. Margaret (more commonly known as Fleggburgh), Norfolk, and finally in 1911 at 108 Ebury Street, SW1. On 23 August 1914 he married Janet Katherine Mary Anson of 23, Launceston Place, Kensington, W8, at St. Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield, EC1, by special licence from his father. They had two sons.


Captain Fisher was given a commission on the outbreak of the war in the 4th Norfolks. He sailed with them for Gallipoli in June 1915 and took part in the landing at Suvla Bay (8-15 August), when he was Mentioned in Despatches. He was invalided home suffering from dysentery and then held a staff appointment and subsequently a position in the Ministry of Munitions, but returned to his regiment and sailed for Egypt in March 1917. On the night of 2 September 1917 he was out on patrol and, being somewhat in advance of the rest, was mortally wounded by a bomb thrown by a Turkish
sniper. He was brought back into the lines by the patrol but died a few minutes after his return. He was buried in the cemetery four miles south of Gaza.

His Colonel wrote:

“Ever since I took over the command of the Battalion he had been one of my chief supporters... I can’t tell you what a help he was to me. I cannot replace him either as an Officer or companion.”

The Chaplain wrote:

“We could ill afford to lose such a fine character. He was a great favourite and beloved by all who knew him. He was always the same, cheerful and good-humoured. I may say that I have lost a true friend.”

Sir George Barnes, K.C.B., Member of the Indian Council, wrote:

“He will be a real loss to the Board of Trade, for, starting at the very bottom, he had steadily won his way upwards by his industry and by his force of character... All the advancement he got he won for himself, and it is no easy thing to win advancement from the bottom in Government employ.”

Captain George Kenneth Thompson Fisher’s links with Ashdown Forest are based on his residence at Ashdown Park, his wife’s father’s residence, which he inherited. Thomas Charles Thompson M.P. had acquired the estate in 1867 and had promptly knocked down the existing building and set about building a neo-Gothic Victorian manor house that still stands at the heart of Ashdown Hotel and Country Club. The Memorial Book is signed by his widow, Janet, whose address is given as Burgh House, Fleggburgh, but formerly as Ashdown Park.

Carol O’Driscoll
The Kekewich family originated in Lancashire, but over the centuries had moved first to Cornwall and then to London. There were links by marriage to another well-known Forest Row family, the Freshfields. Four of the sons of Lewis Pendarves Kekewich and his wife Lilian Emily Hanbury fought in World War I and three of them - including George - died during the conflict.

George was the third-born in the family, preceded by his brother Hanbury and sister Evelyn. He was born at Foots Cray in Kent in 1890, the Forest Row Memorial Book says at the family home, **Twisdens**, although, according to Byford, he was born at Lamorby Park, in Sidcup. Given that his mother gave the memorial book information, I am inclined to believe the former. His father also appears on the electoral role at 82 Ebury Street, St. George, Hanover Square until 1889, so clearly the family had more than one residence. Lewis was a metal broker in a company called Morrison, Kekewich and co, and the 1891 census shows George in a household wealthy enough to have five live-in staff. When George was still an infant, his father gave evidence in a fraud trial at the Old Bailey:

*I live at Foots Cray; I am one of the executors under the will of George B. Ellicombe... I had to sign cheques as one of the executors—neither of these cheques were signed by me or by my authority—the imitation of my signature is good, but it would not deceive me...*
The fraudster was found guilty.

Shortly after this, the family may have gone abroad, possibly to Argentina; a lady named Kekewich with a 7 year old male child, who would have been the right age to be George, appear on an incoming passenger list from Buenos Aires in 1896. George was sent away to school, and he is recorded aged 11 at Winkfield in Berkshire in 1901 as a pupil at Larnbrook, a prep school run by Edward Ransfield. From 1908, he was educated at Eton, where he was in the same house as his brothers, namely Broadbent. Ten years later, of the family, only Hanbury and George were at home at Kidbrooke Park on census night, although there were 11 staff. Both brothers were recorded as metal merchants.

![Kidbrooke Park](image1.png)

Kidbrooke Park – home of the Kekewich family from 1909 – 1916

During his time living in Forest Row, George served as scoutmaster to the newly formed troop of boy scouts in the village. Forest Row Church Magazine referred to him as ‘the indefatigable scout master’. He apparently took 16 of the troop to the King’s Review at Windsor in 1911 and took the boys camping on Ashdown Forest and Birling Gap. When he relinquished the role of scout master he became the troop’s treasurer instead.

At the outbreak of war, George joined the City of London Yeomanry, nicknamed The Rough Riders, a Territorial Army force which was part of the Household Cavalry and Cavalry of the Line. In April 1915 his regiment embarked from Avonmouth on the Scotian, arriving off Cape Hellas between 23-24 April and steaming on to Alexandria where they arrived on 3 May. By August they had been moved to Suez where they were on patrol duty until August. After that they were moved to the Dardanelles, and George, a 2nd Lieutenant, was placed with the reserve at Chocolate Hill. These were called into action after a disastrous attack on the Turks at Scimitar Hill resulted in a loss of around a third of the men involved. The weather was atrocious and illness had also decimated the ranks. In October, George ordered an attack of grenades on the Turkish lines, but it produced little
positive result. However, their action under appalling conditions meant that George, along with other officers, was commended for his work.

In November 1915, George’s regiment rested in Salonika before being moved back to Egypt to join the London Mounted Brigade. By March 1916, George’s regiment was patrolling the railway in the Sinai Peninsula, dangerous work compounded by the effects of extreme heat, lack of fresh water and food, and illness. On 28 May the City of London Yeomanry marched to El Kubri, on the west bank of the Suez Canal, still on railway patrol and still subject to attack by the Turks. He was mentioned in despatches in July 1916. In an action on 3 August, George’s horse, and others, stampeded while the soldiers were dismounted and he was forced to double up behind his commanding officer in order to get away. Later in the month he was promoted to Staff Captain, followed by a short period of leave.

Once again, George and his regiment went briefly to Salonika, sailing on 12 November 1916 but returning to Palestine the following summer. They were involved in numerous skirmishes there, and after a rest period between 18-24 October, they were moved up to El Buggar and George’s D company was ordered to protect the outpost line which was under attack. There was little cover during their advance over open ground and George and several others were wounded. Despite this, their objective was successful, and they were strongly congratulated by Higher Command. Unfortunately, his wounds proved fatal and George died in Palestine on 28 October 1917. When he was buried at Shellal, according to Byford:

...every available officer in the regiment and a part of ‘D’ squadron attending the funeral

Memorial at St. Bartholomew’s

The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette reported his demise as ‘killed in action’ and noted his:
gallant stand when a line of cavalry posts thrown out in advance of our main position was attacked by a much more numerous force of Turks. General Allenby reports that, though outnumbered and enveloped on both flanks, detachments of London Yeomanry fought with great gallantry, holding their position for six hours until assistance arrived, and thereby rendering a great service to their infantry colleagues. The enemy, who numbered 3,000, with twelve guns, made repeated charges with their cavalry, but only succeeded in securing a slight gain of ground at the expense of heavy losses. The British casualties were under one hundred.

The Western Times more accurately states that he died of wounds rather than in action. Either way, it was a second blow for the family, as his brother John had been missing since 1915. The article also noted the Kekewich boys’ relationship to their uncle, the late General Kekewich, defender of Kimberley, and to Trehawke H Kekewich of Peamore House in Exminster.

George Kekewich was buried at Beersheba War Cemetery in Palestine, but is remembered in a number of places. In London, he appears on the memorial of the Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great in Smithfield. Possibly this is because the church is not far from his place of business in Gracechurch Street. A war tablet which included his name (and that of several other Kekewiches) was unveiled in 1920 at St. Martin’s church, Exminster. It was inscribed:

Remember the following who gave their lives for God and their country in the Great War 1914 – 1919.

As a member of the MCC, he also appears on the Lord’s Cricket Ground Roll of Honour, as well as on the Eton College War Memorial and the Hove Library WWI memorial. As the family lived at Kidbrooke Park for some time, he is also commemorated on the Forest Row War Memorial.

The National Probate Calendar records probate granted to his father on 26 November 1917, with effects of £10,241 7s 3d.

Pam Griffiths
EDWARD JAMES LUXFORD

Gunner, 277542, 119th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Killed in Action near Ypres, Belgium, 8 May 1918, aged 43

Buried in the British Cemetery, Gwalia, Poperinge, Belgium

Grave Reference: Plot 11.F.17

(left) Edward James Luxford pictured in 1916 with his wife before leaving Tilbury for France and Belgium. (centre and right) His gravestone and memorial in the British cemetery at Poperinge, Belgium.

Edward James Luxford was born in 1875 in Forest Row. He was the son of Job and Jane Luxford. At the time of the 1881 census they were living at Witch Cross (sic) Inn. In the 1891 census they were recorded as still living in Forest Row. Although they did not appear in the 1901 census, by 1911 they were living at Little Parrock Farm, Coleman's Hatch.

The entry for Edward James in the Book of Remembrance held in Holy Trinity Church, Forest Row, recorded him as the husband of Elizabeth Luxford of 2, Highfields, Forest Row. They had married in 1906. The Remembrance Book entry was signed by his father, Job Luxford, of The Cottage, Highfields, Forest Row.

In 1891 when Edward James was 16 his occupation was given by the census as ‘house painter, builder's apprentice’.

Edward James would have worked for his father, who was a well known local builder and contractor who, according to a 1909 advertisement in the Forest Row Church Monthly, operated from the Steam Joinery Works in Forest Row. He advertised as a painter, glazier, house decorator, plumber
and gas and hot-water fitter. He was also the authorised plumber to the East Grinstead and East Surrey water companies.

Edward James Luxford had originally enlisted in 1895 at the age of 20 years and 9 months. At various times he served in India, Aden, Gibraltar and at home. He was approaching the age of 40 when the First World War broke out. Now a gunner in the 119th Siege Battery, the Royal Garrison Artillery, Edward was killed in action near Ypres, Belgium, on 8 May 1918. He was 43.

He is buried in the British cemetery at Gwalia, Poperinge, Belgium, plot number 11.F.17. The cemetery holds 467 Commonwealth burials of which 465 are identified.

Kevin Tillett

(above) Gwalia cemetery, Poperinge, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.
WILLIAM GERALD MARTIN

Captain, King’s Royal Rifle Corps

Killed in action at Sailly-Saillisel, France, 14 January 1917, aged 27

Commemorated at Combles Communal Cemetery, Extension Plot VII, Row N, Grave 40

William Gerald Martin, although commemorated on the memorial at Forest Row, was not a local man. He was born in London on 2 February 1889 and his parents, Edward Martin and Alice Maud Martin née Cammell both hailed from Yorkshire. He was christened at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, near his home, on 9 March 1889 but in 1891 the young William was staying with his parents and members of the extended family at Rempstone in Nottinghamshire where his widowed grandmother was head of the household at The Hall, an 18th century mansion recently (2010) on the market for £2.5 million. His father was a barrister at law, his brother was at Eton, and a staff of eight was serving the family. William was clearly born into a privileged position.

Rempstone Hall, Nottinghamshire

The family home was at 4 Queen’s Gardens, near Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, and this was where William had been born. Like most boys of his class he was sent away to school, and in 1901 he was enumerated as a boarder at Hazelwood School, Limpsfield. I am indebted to the school’s war memorial website for much of the following information. In 1902 William went to Eton, where he was in Mr McNaughton’s House.

On leaving school in 1906 he presumably intended to follow a career in property, as in 1911 he was boarding in the household of an estate agent at Swindon, recorded as a Pupil to Estate Agent. He had already studied with several land agents, and was an Assistant Land Agent at Ockham Park in Surrey at the time war broke out. In the interim period (1908-9) he had been a Sandhurst cadet at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich but didn’t at that time graduate.
Soon after the outbreak of war, though, he obtained a commission (on 28 November 1914) as a Second Lieutenant in the 12th Battalion of the King’s Royal Rifle Corps, B company. On 1 December the following year he was promoted to First Lieutenant. He became a Captain on 7 December 1916, possibly in an acting capacity. The 12th battalion, formed in September 1914 at Winchester, had moved to Blackdown by November and then to billets at Hindhead in February 1915. In April it was at Larkhill and on 22 July the battalion reached Boulogne as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Lieutenant Martin served in France and Flanders from 23 July 1915. His battalion saw action at a number of battles in the year leading up to his death early in 1917: namely Mont Sorrel, Delville Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courclette, Morval and Le Transloy, the latter engagements being part of the larger Battle of the Somme. However, in July 1916, he was sent back to England suffering from flu. He had also been troubled with tonsillitis and neuralgia headaches, and it was only in early September that he was considered fit for light duties and posted to the 18th Reserve Training Battalion at South Camp at Seaford. By the third week in September he was pronounced fit for duty and returned to France.

The Hazelwood School War Memorial page gives an account of William Gerald Martin’s last hours:

On the afternoon of the 12th of January 1917 the 12th Battalion King’s Royal Rifle Corps entered support trenches in the area of Bolueax Wood. The following day they moved into the front line trenches at Sailly-Saillisel where they relieved the 11th Battalion of their regiment. B Company, under the command of William Martin, was on the left of the battalion’s line. On the night of the 14th of January William Martin went out to check on the condition of the wire in front of his Company’s positions. He was hit by a rifle bullet and killed.

The same website prints the telegram his father received a few days later:

Deeply regret to inform you Lieut. W.G. Martin Kings Royal Rifles was killed in action January fourteenth. The Army Council express their sympathy.

According to De Ruvigny’s Roll of Honour Martin was buried in the cemetery at Leuze Wood, known to the troops as ‘Lousy Wood’, and a scene of earlier battles. Presumably his body was moved to nearby Combles Cemetery later.

De Ruvigny also quotes his commanding officer’s comments:

His death is a great loss to us all, both as a friend and an officer. I know that all of us, both officers and men, had a great regard for him and will miss him exceedingly. He was always willing and did his work well, and was always cheerful even in trying circumstances, and I could not have wished for a better or braver officer.

Administration was granted to his father. The entry in the probate index describes him as a Lieutenant, and gives his address as Woodcote, Forest Row. He left £425, a considerably smaller sum than that later left by his father.
William Gerald Martin was a keen golfer, and was a member of both the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club and an original member of St George’s Hill Golf Club in Weybridge. He won many prizes at club and open meetings. Colin Strachan in *Fair Ways in Ashdown Forest* describes him as one of the club’s top players. Listed amongst his achievements are: the July Monthly Medal (1907), the Royal Ashdown Cup (August 1907), the Elms Cup (1909 and 1911), the Standen Cup and the Eton Prize (1909), the Gold Club Medal (1911 and 1912), and the Spring Challenge Cup in 1912. In a match in 1913 he was considered ‘equally good’ as Abe Mitchell. The following year he again won the Spring Challenge Cup. At St George’s Hill he is remembered through the Gerald Martin Trophy, presented in 1921 by family and friends, and still played for annually.

Presumably his parents had moved to Forest Row, where they settled at Woodcote, by 1907, which explains why William was playing golf on Ashdown Forest and is recorded on the Forest Row memorial. Although his father described himself as a retired barrister on the 1911 census, he signed the Memorial Book as Edward Martin JP. He died in 1928 and his wife in 1931. William’s three much older siblings, Edward, Winifred and Sybil, all outlived their brother by a considerable period. Edward died in 1937 and the sisters in the 1950s.

![William Gerald Martin](image)

*From De Ruvigny’s Roll of Honour*

Pam Griffiths
JOHN ARTHUR MEDHURST

Sapper, 146264, 91st Field Company, The Royal Engineers

Killed in Action, 9 April 1917, aged 25

Buried in Duisans British Cemetery, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Grave Reference: Plot I. L. 1

John Arthur Medhurst enlisted on 2 December 1915. He was the son of Arthur Bromley Medhurst, a builder, and Fannie Medhurst, the village post mistress, who lived at Vine House, Hartfield. John was a carpenter and joiner by trade, and had two siblings, elder sister Nellie, a post office clerk, and a younger brother, Frederick George, a motor engineer who also served in the First World War but survived and died in 1956. The Medhurst family are now funeral directors in Hartfield and still operate from Vine House, now a grade II listed building. John never married.

John served with the 91st Field Company, The Royal Engineers. The latter joined the 15th (Scottish) Division in January 1915, which had been formed in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Second New Army. They proceeded to France in the second week of July 1915 and saw action in the Battle of Loos (25 September - 18 October 1915). In Spring 1916, they were subject to the German gas attacks near Hulluch and fought in the defence of the Kink position. They were in action during the battles of the Somme, including Pozières, Flers-Courcelette, and the capture of Martinpuich, the battle of Le Transloy and the attacks on the Butte de Warlencourt. In 1917 they were in action in the first and second battle of the Scarpe, including the capture of Guémappe during the Arras offensive.

John was killed in action on 9 April 1917, aged 25, and is buried in Duisans British Cemetery in Etrun. The area around Duisans was occupied by Commonwealth forces from March 1916, but it was not until February 1917 that the site of this cemetery was selected for the 8th Casualty Clearing Station. The first burials took place in March and from the beginning of April the cemetery grew.
very quickly. Most of the graves relate to the Battles of Arras in 1917 and the trench warfare that followed.

John is commemorated on Hartfield war memorial and in Hartfield churchyard.

Carol O’Driscoll
Albert Mitchell

Private, 1st Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment

Killed in Action at Meteren, France, 19 April 1918, aged 33

Buried in Meteren Military Cemetery, France

Grave Reference: 1 E 141

(above) Albert Mitchell in 1900

Albert was born in 1885 in Forest Row, East Sussex, the son of Arthur and Susan Mitchell.

In the 1891 census Albert was recorded as living at The Forest, in 1901 he was living at Forest View, near Broadstone, and in 1911 he appeared in the census as being at St. Leonards. In 1901 Albert was recorded as being a golf caddie at Royal Ashdown Golf Club and by 1911 he had progressed to being a golf assistant at St. Leonards’ Golf Club, where his brother Arthur was the professional.

The extended Mitchell family, who had a long-standing association with Ashdown Forest as foresters, labourers and farmers, were an important local golfing family closely connected to the development of courses on the forest at the end of the 19th century. The Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club was formed around 1889 and the adjoining Cantelupe Golf Club for artisan golfers in 1894. There was a friendly rivalry between the two clubs on neighbouring courses. In the first Cantelupe Handicap Tournament that was won by Alfred Padgham, 8 of the first 9 places were members of local Mitchell families. One of them, Abe Mitchell, was to become a very famous golf professional.

Following the outbreak of war Albert enlisted in the West Kent Yeomanry in February 1915. In 1916 he transferred to the Duke of Cambridge’s Own (Middlesex Regiment 1st Battalion) and was posted to France. He was wounded the same year at the battle of the Somme. After a period of convalescence in England, he returned to France in 1917. Private Albert Mitchell of the 1st Battalion

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the Middlesex Regiment was killed in action near Meteren in France on 19 April 1918 aged 33. His grave, numbered 1E141, is in Meteren Military Cemetery in France.

His mother Susan signed the entry in the Book of Remembrance in Holy Trinity Church, Forest Row. At the time she was living at Forest View, Forest Row.

Kevin Tillett

(above) Memorial commissioned for the Cantelupe Golf Club. (below) Meteren Military Cemetery.
Harry Page was born in 1895 at Meadowlands, Forest Row. He was the son of John and Charlotte Page. In the 1901 census Harry is recorded as living at Shepherds Well (previously Highgate) and in 1911 he was recorded as living in Hartfield Road. At that time he was listed as a builder's labourer.

The entry in the Book of Remembrance held in Holy Trinity Church, Forest Row was signed by Daisy Page (widow) of Rosemary Lane, Haddenham, Berkshire. Harry had married Daisy in 1917 at Steyning, Sussex.

Private Harry Page of the 7th The Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment was killed in action at Ferrar's Wood in France on 23 March 1918, aged 23. He is buried in the British Military Extension of Chauny Communal Cemetery in Aisne, France (Commonwealth War Graves Commission reference IWGC 8.4.22). The British extension was formed after the Armistice in 1918 specifically to hold remains collected from battlefields on the Aisne and to centralise remains from nearby smaller cemeteries. Some of the headstones therefore say 'believed to be' and some say 'buried near this spot'.

Kevin Tillett
EDWARD JOHN PARKER

Private, 5396, 11th Royal Fusiliers

Died in hospital at Abbeville, France, 12 January 1917

Buried at Abbeville Communal Cemetery, Plot 11, Row B, Grave 12

Edward John Parker was born in Hartfield, and baptised at the church there on 29 April 1883, the son of William and Harriet Parker. By 1891 the family was living in Forest Row, at Gilliam’s Lane, near the cemetery. William was a cowman. There were three children in the family at this time: William George – listed as William, Edward John – recorded as John, and Helen Mary – known as Helen. By 1901 they had moved to Parkside Cottages, Forest Row, and another daughter, Edie, or Edith Annie, had been born. Edward, or John as he seems to have always been known, was working as a gardener. The 1911 census shows that the parents were now living at Birchgrove, but John, still working as a gardener, was boarding with John and Sarah Jenner at Morris’s Cottages, Forest Row.

In early 1913, John married Lydia Mary Brooks, somewhere in the East Grinstead Registration District. She was born in Brampford Speke in Devon, but had been working as a servant in the household of Sir Lewis Dibdin (an ecclesiastical lawyer) in Dormansland. A son, Cecil, was born to John and Lydia later in the year.

According to Ancestry’s Soldiers died in the Great War, John Parker enlisted at ‘Grimstead’, but I suspect this is a mis-transcription for East Grinstead. The year is not given, and no attestation papers survive. However, the Royal Fusiliers 11th Battalion (London Regiment) formed on 6 September 1914 at Hounslow, and John may well have joined up in the early days of the war. In July 1915, the battalion was mobilised and subsequently landed at Boulogne. During 1916, John may well have seen action at the battles of Albert, Bazetin Ridge, Delville Wood, Thiepval Ridge and
Ancre Heights. The battalion was also involved in the capture of Regina Trench and the Battle of the Ancre.

![Commonwealth War Graves Commission Graves Registration Register]

Sources differ as to the cause of his death. Edward John Parker either died of wounds or disease, but he did die in hospital at Abbeville, which, for much of the war was headquarters for the Commonwealth lines of communication. There were a number of hospitals serving the troops, but the most likely one to have nursed John was either No. 5 British Red Cross B section or No. 2 Stationary Hospital. Both of these were operational in the right time frame. These base hospitals were part of the casualty evacuation chain, further back from the front line than the Casualty Clearing Stations. Presumably Private Parker was considered suitable for repatriation, but didn’t survive to return to ‘Blighty’. The Communal Cemetery at Abbeville where he was buried was in use from November 1914 until September 1916 when an extension was begun.

Lydia signed the Hartfield Memorial Book as Lydia Parker (widow), Rose Hill Cottage, Forest Row. In 1920, she married again, to Frederick Gurr. She didn’t forget John though and his headstone bears the following inscription:

Thy memory shall never fade  Lydia and Cecil

The Graves Registration Report form refers to her as Mrs L.M. Gurr, Lavender Platt, Forest Row, Sussex.

Pam Griffiths
ALBERT EDWARD RICHARDSON
Private, 6642, 26th Middlesex Regiment
Killed in Action, Salonica, Greece, 27 February 1917
Commemorated at the Anglo-French Military Cemetery, Lembet Road, Salonika, Grave 828

Born in Brighton in 1884, Albert Edward Richardson was the son of Charles James Richardson, a hotel waiter from Alfriston, and his wife Rose née Patching, a Brighton girl whom he had married in 1872. Albert was the penultimate child of a family of eight. In 1891 the family was living at Ashton Street in Brighton, but by 1901, Albert had followed his father into the ‘hospitality’ business and was working as a porter in the Grand Hotel in Brighton.

The Grand Hotel, Brighton

By 1907 he had left his home town, as in this year he married Clara Martin, somewhere in the East Grinstead Registration District. He had also changed his trade, as the 1911 census records him as a house painter, but also as a patient in Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead. Clara was at home in Forest Row with their two children, Albert Thomas Charles and Clara Bessie, born 1907 and 1909 respectively. Another son, Albert, was born in 1915.

Presumably Albert senior had fully recovered by the time he enlisted in the Middlesex Regiment, although there is no record of where or when he did this. This regiment is also known as the Duke of Cambridge’s Own Regiment, and the 26th battalion (a service battalion) was also known as the 3rd Public Works Pioneers. It was formed in 1915 but when it landed in Salonika on 24 August 1916 it came under the command of the 27th Division as Pioneer Battalion.
The Long Long Trail website suggests there was little activity on the Salonika front in 1917, because of political changes in Greece. It names the Battle of Doiran in April as the first of the year, so presumably Albert Edward was killed in a more minor skirmish.

![The Anglo-French Military Cemetery, Salonika](image)

When Clara Richardson signed the Forest Row memorial book, she gave her address as 5, Castle Cottages. She was still living in Forest Row in 1939, but now at 2 Wood View, where her two adult sons – both plumbers – and her daughter (now Clara B. Conley) made up the rest of the household.

Pam Griffiths
Cyril Charles Robinson

Lieutenant, 59th Squadron, Royal Air Force

Killed in Action, Doullens, France, 28 April 1918, aged 22

Buried in Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No. 2, Somme, France

Grave Reference: 1. A 32

Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No. 2

Cyril Robinson was born in Forest Row at Ashdown Park in 1896 and was the son of William Charles and Charlotte Emily Robinson. The family address, Upper Lodge, Ashdown Park, is still given in the 1901 census but by 1911 Cyril is living in Brondesbury, NW6, a clerk in the Magnet works.

At the beginning of the war aeroplanes were used for photographic reconnaissance work, a camera often mounted at the rear. Defensive manoeuvres by the opposing sides led to dogfights and bombing of ground positions. With solo reconnaissance the pilot had to fly, navigate, observe and transmit observations to ground base by wireless morse. When there was a pilot and observer the latter was at first senior, the pilot just the “driver” but gradually the roles were reversed as pilots often needed to take immediate evasive action. Parachutes, just being developed, were not used: senior staff felt that there would be a temptation to abandon the machine and many pilots felt their drag reduced the plane's effectiveness. Some parachutes were available to observers in tethered balloons.

The Royal Flying Corps merged with the Royal Naval Air Service on 1 April 1918 to become the Royal Air Force. Pre-RAF ranks continued to be used for serving men, the new RAF ranks gradually replacing them. Cyril Robinson did not survive long enough to take on a new rank.

His entry in the Forest Row memorial book was signed by his father, by then living in Hounslow, Middlesex.

Vivien Hill
ROBERT CHARLES ROBSON

Private, 28038 15th/48th Royal Highlanders of Canada

Died in hospital at Aubigny, France, 15 May 1918, aged 29

Buried in the Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, near the village of Aubigny-en-Artois, Pas de Calais

Grave Record IV.K.10

The son of Joseph and Marian Robson, Robert Charles Robson was born at Wych Cross in 1889. The family were living in East Grinstead by the time of the 1891 census with Robert employed at Wych Cross Post Office. In 1901 the family were living at 1 Alpha Cottages, Golf Road, now Chapel Lane.

It would seem that Robert later emigrated to Canada. There was encouragement from both the British and Canadian governments for qualified men, labouring men and potential wives to emigrate. The Dominion of Canada, self-governing since 1867, was seen as a land of opportunity with markets for its products such as grain and furs back in industrialised Britain and elsewhere.

At the outbreak of war many men born in Britain as well as thousands of Canadians joined up to fight for the "mother country" and Empire. Many Canadians were of Scottish descent, the 15th/48th Highlanders had and still has links with Scots regiments as do many others. The cap badge has the
Gaelic motto “Dileas Cubrath”, “forever faithful”. During the war the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was authorised to embark on 1 September 1914, embarking on 26 September, and arriving in France on 15 February 1915. The battalion fought as part of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Canadian Division throughout the war.

There is a memorial to the fallen in Queen’s Park, Toronto, the regiment’s home town.

The entry in the Forest Row memorial book was signed by his father, Joseph, still living at Alpha Cottages.

Vivien Hill
William Thomas Sands was born in Forest Row in 1894, the elder son of Thomas and Mary Sands. His younger brother Alfred was also killed in the First World War. In 1901 he was living at Alpha Cottage, Forest Row. [This is in Chapel Lane, but the next houses on the schedule are Stone House Lodge, followed by Stone House - which is on Hartfield Road, so Alpha Cottage may have been at the bottom of Chapel Lane. Tudor Cottage – see below - is close by].

In the 1911 census he was enumerated as an apprentice draper, living with his parents, brother and two sisters at Sands Cottage, Forest Row. His father was a carpenter, born in Hartfield.

William enlisted at Horsham, Sussex. He served as a private in the 2/6th Royal Warwickshire Regiment (formerly 2290, Royal Sussex Regiment). The 2/6 Royal Warwickshire Regiment was formed in Birmingham in 1914 as a second line battalion, but seems to have been incorporated into the 2nd Warwickshire Brigade, 2nd South Midland Division before being redesignated as 182nd Brigade, 61st (2nd South Midland) Division. It arrived in France on 21 May 1916.

William was killed in action north-east of Ypres on 31 August 1917. He was 23. The entry in the Remembrance Book in Holy Trinity Church, Forest Row states that he was killed north-east of Ypres and it is signed by his mother as M Sands of Tudor Cottage [Hartfield Rd] Forest Row.

William was the only person listed in the Remembrance Book as having been part of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment; he was one of five killed at Ypres, although the only one buried at Oxford Road.
William’s father Thomas was buried on 3 December 1926 from an address in Chapel Lane, Forest Row. Mary Sands was buried on 6 February 1965 from Upper Close, also Forest Row [this was one of a group of houses built as council houses between the wars, but now largely privately owned]. She was 92 and had outlived her son by 48 years.

Pam Griffiths
JACK FREDERICK SIPPETTS
Sergeant, 200777, 1/4th (T.F) Battalion (Royal) Hampshire Regiment
Died in hospital at Kasvin, Mesopotamia, 5 October 1918, aged 27
Buried in Kasvin Russian Cemetery*, Persia
Grave Reference: Row 4 Grave 4

Jack Frederick Sippetts was christened at Forest Row on 30 October 1892, the son of Richard and Jemima Sippetts. In 1901 he was living at Queensborough Cottage with his parents; he seems to have been the only child. His father was enumerated in the census as a bricklayer's labourer and his mother as a laundress. He has not been found in the 1911 census, though his father – a general labourer – and mother were living at 5, Castle Cottages in Forest Row.

Jack enlisted at Hamilton Camp, Hampshire, and was 27 when he died. The entry in the Remembrance Book in Holy Trinity Church, signed by his mother, Jemima Sippetts, of 3, Castle Cottages, Forest Row, states that he was born on Tompsetts Bank (which places him in the heart of Ashdown Forest) and died in hospital in Kasvin, Mesopotamia (presumably Qazvin in modern Iran, about 150 km north-west of Tehran). However, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website places him in Tehran Cemetery.

Jack was the only person listed in the Remembrance Book as having been part of the 1/4th Hampshire Regiment, and the only person to have died and be buried at Kasvin. The 1/4th Battalion Hampshire Regiment was formed as part of the Territorial Force at Winchester in 1914 as part of the Hampshire Brigade in Wessex Division. If Jack joined up at the outbreak of war he would have sailed with them to India in August 1914. By March 1915, though, the battalion was in Basra and remained in Mesopotamia and Persia for the rest of the war.
Queensborough Cottage was an adapted, timber-framed Wealden house, and stood across the present Forresters Green from the pub. It was also known, presumably ironically, as Queensborough Castle. It was demolished in the 1930s, but there is a picture in the Peter Kirby photographic collection. Castle Cottages were situated near the Brambletye Castle pub.

Pam Griffiths

*The CWGC site refers to this as Kasvin British War Cemetery; there is no reference to a Kasvin Russian Cemetery.*
Albert Ernest Standen Tomsett was born in 1893 at Forest Row. His parents were Albert and Bertha Tomsett née Weller, who had married in 1891. Albert’s namesake, Albert senior’s brother Ernest Standen Tomsett, had joined the Rifle Brigade in 1887, which may have influenced his nephew’s decision to join up (both Standen names commemorate Albert senior’s father, who is recorded as Standing Tomsett). By contrast, Albert senior was a house painter. The census returns show the family, including a younger sister Dora, living in Hartfield Road, Forest Row in 1901 and at Clyde Cottage, Highgate, in 1911, when Albert junior was recorded as an apprentice at the cycle works. His father also gave Clyde Cottage as his address when he signed the Memorial Book.

Both the names Tomsett and Standen would suggest long-standing roots in the area: Forest Row has a road named Tompsets Bank, named for one Widow Tompset who was granted land there at the time of the 17th century enclosures, while Standen was a farm in East Grinstead, developed by the Beale family in the late 19th century into an Arts and Crafts house and garden.

Albert is one of five men commemorated on the Forest Row Memorial who were members of the 4th Royal Sussex Regiment. This was formed in 1908, and became part of the Territorial Force, with C company being recruited from East Grinstead and Crawley. In 1914 the companies were
rationalised, with C joining with E which recruited from Horsham, and the 4th became the 1/4th Battalion which served in Gallipoli between August and December 1915. The battalion then moved to Egypt before taking part in operations in Palestine in 1917 – notably the three Battles of Gaza and the Capture of Jerusalem. 1918 found the battalion on the Western Front in France where it fought in the Battles of the Marne and at Ypres, but by this time Albert was already dead.

Pam Griffiths
ERIC GORDON WATERS

Lieutenant, Hants Carabiniers and 6th Squadron, Royal Flying Corps

Killed in Action flying over Poperinge, West Flanders, Belgium, 24 January 1917, aged 30

Buried at Lijsseenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinghe

Grave Reference: Plot X, Row A, Grave 1

Eric Gordon Waters was born in Forest Row in 1886, son of James and Elizabeth Ann Waters. James had married second wife Elizabeth Ann Woodhead in Kensington in 1871, and Eric was the ninth of their 12 children. The census returns show Eric living at Oakcroft, in Forest Row, a house situated where the present Christian Community Church now stands in Hartfield Road. James Waters was a builder and some of his brothers followed their father into the construction business, either as builders or carpenters; the family firm is still operating today. Eric, however, chose to follow a career as an electrical engineer, which is how he is recorded on the 1911 census, and he appears in a list of students in the Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1903 (see http://www.archive.org/stream/journal00statgoog/journal00statgoog_djvu.txt).

A reference in the National Archives Catalogue suggests that 2nd Lieutenant Eric Gordon Waters was connected to the Royal Garrison artillery in 1914, although the London Gazette posted him as 2nd Lieutenant in the Hants Carabiniers as of 19 October 1914. It also notes that ‘Second Lieutenant Eric Gordon Waters is appointed to command the 1st South Western Mounted Brigade, Signal Troop, and is seconded while so employed’. However, he was also still operating as an electrical engineer as on 31 August 1915 he was granted a patent on an electric protective system (which he filed in April that year) which related to the protection of electric systems formed in sections, for example, ring main systems (see http://www.google.com/patents/US1152362).
While stationed at B.E. Brightlingsea in 1915, he was summoned for ‘driving a motor car in a manner dangerous to the public’ at Chelmsford on 9 October. He apparently took a corner so fast that his vehicle ended up on the wrong side of the road, narrowly missing a cyclist, and skidding 10’ when the brakes were applied. Waters denied the charge, but was fined 50/- and 10/- costs anyway. (see http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/?gclid=CPfCgevgs7kCFe_LT0odnSwA8Q)

It is not known whether this took place before or after he transferred to No.6 Squadron Royal Flying Corps, but this was where he was serving when he was killed. He was apparently wounded escorting a photographic patrol. His plane was shot up; the observer Sgt Slingsby climbed into the pilot’s cockpit and succeeded in landing between Vlamertinge and Ypres. He survived, but Eric, shot in the back and head, did not. He was 30 years old (see http://www.lijssenthoek.be/en/adres/2570/-eric-gordon-waters.html)

Probate of his estate was granted to his mother Elizabeth Ann Waters, with effects valued at £1,215 17/3.

Pam Griffiths
George Weeding was born in 1885 at Coleman’s Hatch, the son of George and Sarah Ann Weeding. In the 1911 census his occupation is given as labourer but at his death he is listed as a gardener.

In October 1912 he married Alice Wheatley at St. Mary’s Church, Hartfield. Alice was born 1888 at Lowlands Farm, Hartfield, the daughter of Joseph Wheatley, a farmer, and Ellen Eliza Wheatley. At the time of her marriage she lived at ‘Hillside’, Coleman’s Hatch. Alice, who died in 1974 at the age of 85, lost her brother, Harry Wheatley (also profiled in this document), in 1918.

George and Alice Weeding had two children, Geoffrey Joseph (1913-1978) and Peter George, who was born and died as an infant in 1914.

George Weeding served as a trooper during the First World War in No. 2 Company, the Household Battalion. The Household Battalion was formed in September 1916. It was an infantry battalion with Household Cavalry Officers and NCOs, with men who had volunteered for the duration of the war for the Household Cavalry. Three months after it was formed the battalion was in France, fighting in the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel, in the Somme valley, with the 4th Division. This first action cost them 300 casualties.
In 1917 the Household Battalion were at the Third Battle of the Scarpe River (May 1917). In a subsidiary action during the Battle of Arras (1917) the battalion fought for 14 days to capture Roeux village; it was during this action that George was killed.


Carol O’Driscoll
JOHN WEEDING
Private, G/13259, ‘D’ Company, 7th Battalion, East Kent Regiment (The Buffs)

Died of appendicitis, 20 August 1917, aged 20
Buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, Belgium
Grave reference: XVII-K-4A

John J. Weeding was the son of George and Sarah Ann Weeding of Edgemount, Coleman’s Hatch. A gardener, he first enlisted in 1915 at East Grinstead with the Lancers. He later transferred to the East Kent Regiment (‘The Buffs’), where he served in ‘D’ company, 7th Battalion.

The 7th (Service) Battalion, the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), was raised at Canterbury in September 1914 as part of Kitchener’s Second New Army and joined 55th Brigade, 18th (Eastern) Division. The Division initially concentrated in the Colchester area but moved to Salisbury Plain in May 1915. They proceeded to France in July and concentrated near Flesselles.

In 1916 they were in action on the Somme in the Battle of Albert, capturing their objectives near Montauban, the Battle of Bazentin Ridge, including the capture of Trones Wood, the Battle of Delville Wood, the Battle of Thiepval Ridge, the Battle of the Ancre Heights, playing a part in the capture of the Schwaben Redoubt and Regina Trench, and the Battle of the Ancre.

In 1917 they took part in the operations on the Ancre including Miraumont and the capture of Irles. They fought during the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and in the Third Battle of the Scarpe before moving to Flanders. They were in action in the Battle of Pilkem Ridge, the Battle of Langemarck and the First and Second Battles of Passchendaele.

John Weeding died of appendicitis on 20 August 1917 at the age of 20 in No 3 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.

Carol O’Driscoll
GEORGE WHEATLEY

G/8, 6th Battalion, Queen’s Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)

Killed in Action, 3 May 1917, near Arras, France, aged 32

No known grave. Listed on the Arras Memorial: Bay 7

Lance Corporal George Wheatley G/8, 6th Battalion, Queen’s Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), was born in Hartfield in 1888. He lived in Hartfield and enlisted in Maidstone. He was the son of George (b.1856) and Ellen (née Everest) (b.1866) Wheatley. His pre-war occupation was in the employ of Nelson Miles as a farm labourer and he was listed as living at Stairs Farm, Hartfield in the 1911 census. The family lived at Newton’s Hill in Hartfield. He had two sisters, Lizzie and Caroline. His father was a platelayer on the railway.

His brother, William James Wheatley, was born in Hartfield in 1893. He died of wounds to the head on 7 April 1915 while in hospital at Boulogne, Pas de Calais, France, age 23 and is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery. He was previously a labourer on a farm.

The 6th Battalion of the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) was formed at Maidstone on 14 August 1914 as part of K1 (Kitchener’s Army) and came under command of 37th Brigade in 12th (Eastern) Division. The battalion moved initially to Colchester and on to Purfleet in September 1914 before going to billets in Hythe in December. It moved to Aldershot in February 1915. On 1 June 2015 they landed in Boulogne.

The battles George Wheatley may have been involved in included, during 1915, the Battle of Loos, during 1916, the battles of Albert, Pozières, and Le Transloy, and during 1917 the First Battle of the Scarpe, the Battle of Arleux, and the Third Battle of the Scarpe.

He is listed on the war memorial in Hartfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
HARRY WHEATLEY

Private, 11406, ‘D’ Squadron, 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers
Killed in Action on the Somme, 26 March 1918, aged 23
Commemorated at Holy Trinity Church, Colemans Hatch

Born in 1895, Harry Wheatley was the son of Joseph Wheatley, a farmer, and Ellen Eliza Wheatley, of Hillside Farm, Coleman’s Hatch.

At the time of the 1911 census Harry was 16, his occupation listed as a “son working on the farm”.

Harry was the brother of Alice Wheatley. In 1912 Alice married George Weeding (also profiled in this document), who was also killed during the Great War.

Harry also had another sister, Ellen, and two brothers, Frederick and Sydney. Although Frederick was two years older there is no record of his First World War service.

Harry spent most of his First World War career on the Western Front. A private with the ‘D’ squadron of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers, he was reported missing near St. Quentin in March 1918 and later listed as killed in action on 26 March 1918, at the age of 23.

He is remembered with honour on the Pozières Memorial on the Somme and commemorated at Holy Trinity Church, Coleman’s Hatch.

Carol O’Driscoll
SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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