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

January 1917 Onwards
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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 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.
## INDEX OF COMPLETED STUDIES, BY SURNAME

*Click on any man’s name to go to their case study*

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*Click on underlined names to go to the completed case study.*

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<td>George Frank Baker</td>
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**Date of Death Unknown**

George Victor Hedges
Frederick G Story
GA West
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.
WILLIAM GEORGE BROWN

Private, 55569, 198th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)
Killed in Action on 26 September 1917 near Ypres, Belgium, aged 25
No known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial

Private William George Brown, 55569, 198th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), was born in Hartfield in 1892. He lived at Fincham Farm, Cat Street, Hartfield, and in Forest Row and enlisted in Tunbridge Wells. He was killed in action on 26 September 1917 near Ypres, Belgium, aged 25. He has no known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

He was the son of Jane Ann Brown. He married Ethel Brown (nee Heasman) in the summer of 1914. Ethel Heasman was the sister of George James Heasman who was killed on 9 October 1917, less than a month after his brother-in-law.

William’s pre-war occupation was as a builder’s clerk. In 1911 he was living with his grandmother, Esther Heasman, aged 70, her son James Heasman, a builder’s carter, aged 50, and his mother Jane Ann Brown, aged 41, at Fincham Cottages, Hartfield.

It is very likely that William Brown was killed in the battle for the Battle of Polygon Wood (26-27 September). The 198th Machine Gun Corps had been transferred to the 174th (2/2nd London) Brigade of the 58th London Division.

The 58th Division attacked with one brigade at 5:50 a.m on 26 September. In a thick mist some of the British troops lost direction and were then held up by fire from Dom Trench and a pillbox; after these were captured the advance resumed until stopped at Dear House, Aviatik Farm and Vale House, about 400 yards (370 metres) short of the final objective. A German counter-attack pushed the British back from Aviatik Farm and Dale House and an attempt to regain them failed. Another
attack at 6:11 p.m. reached Nile on the divisional boundary with the 3rd Division. German troops trickling forward to Riverside and Otto pillboxes were stopped by artillery and machine-gun fire.


Listed on the War Memorial in Hartfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
RAYMOND COX

Private, 19019, 6th Middlesex Regiment
Killed in Action in Belgium, 11 August 1917.

Buried at La Laiterie Military Cemetery, Kemmel, Belgium

Plot 1, Row C, Grave 20

La Laiterie Military Cemetery

Raymond Cox was the ninth of eleven children belonging to Stephen Cox and his wife Mary Ann, née Gammon. He was born in Withyham and baptised there on 7 June 1885. Stephen was an agricultural labourer and clearly often moved to find work, as children in the family were born variously at Maresfield, Buxted, Withyham, Hever, Brasted and Hartfield. In 1891, though, the family was at Forstal Cottage, Hartfield, as it was in 1901 when Raymond was enumerated as a ‘carter’s boy on farm’.

In 1910, he married Florance [sic] May Baker, in the East Grinstead Registration District. He and his new wife were enumerated in 1911 at Prospect Cottages, Ashurstwood, and Raymond was now recorded as an agricultural worker. A short-lived son, also named Raymond, was born in 1911.

At a time unknown, according to Soldiers who died in the Great War, Raymond enlisted at Chichester in the 16th Battalion of the Duke of Cambridge’s own (Middlesex) Regiment. This seems slightly unlikely as this was subtitled Public Schools but is corroborated by the Army Register of Soldiers’ Effects. The 16th Battalion was formed in London in 1914; in November 1915 it landed at
Boulogne, and presumably stayed on the Western Front until it was disbanded at Poperinge in 1918.

The regiment was in Flanders in August 1917 and the regimental diary records the events at the time of Raymond’s death. On 10-11 August, the 16th Battalion found itself on the front line, between the French on the left and the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers on the right, near Steenbeek. On 11-12 August:

...at 4.20 a.m. under a pocket barrage attack[ed] PASSERELLE FARM...Two machine guns and one howitzer captured... Total casualties for tour: .... Other ranks – 30 killed, 83 wounded.

Several officers were also killed.

Although the Forest Row Memorial Book (pictured below) suggests that he was killed in France, the Army Register of Soldiers’ Effects places the event in Belgium. His widow Florence was authorised to receive his effects of £2 8s 3d on 28 November 1917, and received a further war gratuity payment of £3 on 21 October 1919. By this time she may well have been living at an address recorded in the book as Keeper’s Cottage Ashdown Forest Row.

It seems likely that Florence remarried in 1922 in East Grinstead, and became Mrs John S Pankhurst, although there were no further children. Her death was registered at Cuckfield in 1968.

Pam Griffiths
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.’

![Artist’s impression of the fight for the windmill at Gavrelle](https://example.com/artist-impression)

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
GEORGE JAMES HEASMAN

Private, 228699, 1st Battalion London Regiment / Attached to 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers, London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)

Killed in Action on 9 October 1917 near Ypres, Belgium, aged 35

He has no known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial: Panel 148 to 150

Private George James Heasman, 228699, 1st Battalion London Regiment / Attached to 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers, London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers), was born in Hartfield in 1882. He lived at Neaves Farm, Hartfield, but previously lived at Pump House, High Steet, Hartfield.

He was the son of George (1850) and Emily (née Gadd) Heasman. He was engaged to Miss C.M. Thrift.

In the 1911 census he was aged 28 and listed as an agricultural labourer, as was his father, a widower aged 61. His sister Ethel aged 20 was their housekeeper and his brother Horace was a gardener aged 18. They all lived in the High Street, Hartfield.

His sister Ethel married William George Brown, Fincham Farm, Hartfield, in the summer of 1914. Her husband was killed on 26 September 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres (his study may be found elsewhere in this compilation).

George Heasman enlisted in Hastings. He was killed in action on 9 October 1917 near Ypres, Belgium, aged 35. He has no known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial: Panel 148 to 150.
During 1917 the 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers was engaged in the following battles: the First Battle of the Scarpe, the Second Battle of the Scarpe, the Third Battle of the Scarpe, the Battle of Langemarck, the Battle of Broodseinde, the Battle of Poelcapelle, the Battle of Cambrai.

On the day George Heasman died the Battle of Poelcapelle was raging as part of the Third Battle of Ypres. Bad weather in October led to the battlefield becoming an impossible quagmire.

Listed on the War Memorial in Hartfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
GEORGE KEKEWICH

Captain, Yeomanry City of London, Attd 103rd MGC
Died of Wounds, Beersheba, Palestine, 28 October 1917, aged c.27
Commemorated at the Beersheba Military Cemetery, Plot O, Grave 27

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. Ellicome... 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 – 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
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.

*Army Register of Soldiers’ Effects*

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

16th (Sussex Yeomanry) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action, Beersheba, Palestine, 6 November 1917

Commemorated at the Beersheba Military Cemetery, Plot M, Grave 38

Hanbury Lewis Kekewich was the eldest of the three Kekewich brothers killed in the First World War, but the last of them to die. He was the first child of Lewis Pendarves and Lilian Emily Kekewich, was born on 30 July 1885 at the family’s London home in Ebury Street, and was given his mother’s maiden name as his first Christian name. As the daughter of Sampson Hanbury, Lilian was part of the brewing family of Truman, Hanbury and Buxton’s. Their brewery, based in Spitalfields, was the oldest in London and may even have predated the Great Fire of 1666. No wonder Lilian wanted the name perpetuated.

By 1891 the family was living at Twisdens in Foots Cray, Kent. Presumably, a few years later, like his brothers, he would have been sent away to Prep School, but where has not come to light. He is also absent from the 1901 census, when he would have been 16. In all probability he was still at Eton, where he was in Broadbent House, but he may have been abroad. Certainly once he joined the family business as a metal merchant, he travelled; he appears on an incoming passenger list in 1907 on a ship travelling from New York to Liverpool and made another return journey from New York in 1912.
Hanbury joined the Sussex Yeomanry as 2nd Lieutenant on 1 May 1910, giving his profession as metal broker. The London Gazette noted:

*Supernumerary Second Lieutenant Hanbury L. Kekewich is restored to the establishment.*

However, he still gave his occupation as metal merchant on the 1911 census at Kidbrooke Park. The 1st Line regiment of the Sussex Yeomanry was mobilised on 4 August 1914, at which time it was at Hode Farm near Canterbury. Hanbury was in the machine gun section, and later commanded C Company. On 1 November 1914 Hanbury married Dorothy Anne Lane at St. Barnabas, Clapham Common. A daughter, Sylvia Lilian, was born in 1916.

The regiment was camped at Maresfield in 1915 but in September that year it marched to Wrotham, Kent, to entrain for Liverpool. On 25 September it embarked on RMS Olympic, headed for Lemnos, where it arrived on 1 October. By the 8th the men had arrived in Gallipoli. Almost immediately, soldiers started to go down with enteritis. However, they also served in trenches at Border Barricade and Fusilier Bluff. On 30 December the regiment was evacuated to Mudros, and it must have been here that Hanbury gathered the seed which was later sent back to England and planted.

In February 1916, the regiment was moved to Egypt to defend the Suez Canal, and more particularly, the railway beside it. With some exceptions, the Sussex Yeomanry spent most of the year there. On 3 January 1917, following amalgamation of several units, the regiment was re-designated as 16th (Sussex Yeomanry) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. Hanbury was promoted to commanding officer of C Company with a temporary Captaincy.
In July 1917 he was promoted to 2nd in command of the 16th Battalion. On 6 November 1917 he was in command of his company attacking the Turkish lines and defending Gaza with about 600 of the battalion. They came under heavy fire and he was killed in action along with around 125 others. He was buried near Gaza. His effects as a soldier were listed as £65 9s. 9d. Probate was granted to his wife, Dorothy Annie, on 27 September 1918, with the effects valued at £618 2s. 11d. Although he had died on active service, his address was given as 69, Elspeth Road, Clapham Common. In 1919 his widow remarried in a civil ceremony at St George’s, Hanover Square, and became the wife of Hugh Page-Turner.

The Western Times reported Hanbury’s death on 19th November 1917, saying:

_Captain Hanbury L. Kekewich, Yeomanry, killed on November 6, aged 32, was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Kekewich. He had been seven years in the Yeomanry, and was a very efficient officer._

_A fine memorial remembers all three brothers in the church at Exminster, in which parish Peamore, the family estate, lies. Another tablet was dedicated at the same church on Remembrance Day 1920, which listed:_

_Those brave lads from the village who laid down their lives in the war._

As well as the three brothers, there were two other Kekewiches – Robert and Arthur.
Like his brothers, Hanbury Lewis Kekewich had numerous memorials. As well as Forest Row and St Martin’s, Exminster, his name appears on the memorial at Hove Library, the MCC roll of honour and Eton College’s roll of honour.

When Hanbury’s mother gave information for the Forest Row Memorial Book, she was living at 14, Adelaide Crescent in Hove. Both parents must have been devastated by the toll the war had demanded of them. However, happier times were to come. On 2 October 1934, Lewes and Lilian celebrated their golden wedding at Peamore. The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette reported that, to mark the occasion, Mr Kekewich planted a Golden Cypress tree. Despite their losses, the paper noted that they had one remaining son, Sydney, a married daughter and three grandchildren. Lewis was noted as a keen sportsman, passionate about hunting, shooting and golf, and one-time Master of West Kent Harriers, while Lilian was described as an enthusiastic sportswoman. She died on Coronation Day 1937 while Lewis survived a second war and died, aged 88, in 1947.

Pam Griffiths
HENRY JAMES KENSETT

Private, 5388, 13th Royal Fusiliers (London) Regiment
Killed in Action, aged 34, on 10 April 1917 at Monchy-le-Preux, France
Buried at Row D, Grave 22, at Orange Trench British Cemetery

Henry James Kensett was born in early 1883 at Shipley, Southwater, near Horsham, Sussex, to parents Reuben and Rose Kensett, who had married on 13 March 1873 at New Malden, Surrey.

He was married to Charlotte Kensett, and they lived at Majuba Hill, Hartfield Road, Forest Row. The memorial book in Holy Trinity church was signed by his widow, Charlotte, by then living at The Broadway, Forest Row.

In the 1891 census, Henry James Kensett, aged 8, was living with his widowed mother, Rose, at Old House, Coolham, Shipley, Sussex, with three brothers and two sisters and a lodger, Raymond Lakers, an agricultural labourer. In 1901 he was living at ‘Trawlers’ in Shipley, where his occupation was recorded by the census as a poultryman and undergamekeeper. He was now the step-son of Raymond Lakers, who had married Rose after the death of Reuben; Raymond was by now a farm foreman and gamekeeper. The census identifies ‘Trawlers’ as being “on the north side of the main road leading from Cowfold to Billingshurst.”

By the time of the 1911 census Henry James Kensett was living at Maplehurst Place, Maplehurst Farm, Nuthurst, Sussex, where he was recorded as a gamekeeper living as a boarder in the household of Samuel and Ruth Coles and their three children.
Henry James Kensett enrolled in the army at East Grinstead and served in France and Flanders. He was probably awarded the standard three medals known as 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' (the 1914-1915 Star, the British war Medal, and the Victory Medal, automatically awarded to soldiers who had served and died on active service).

On the day he died, according to the Battalion War Diary, the battalion withdrew at 4.00am to Freuchy Chapel, before advancing at 10.00am to the railway line under slight enemy artillery and machine gun fire until they were checked by intense machine gun fire about 600 yards west of Monchy-le-Preaux. At this time their casualties, including Henry James Kensett, were fairly heavy. Over the two days they lost 12 officers and 240 other ranks.

Plan of Orange Trench British Cemetery

Henry James Kensett is buried in Orange Trench British Cemetery at Row D, Grave 22 (above). This cemetery in the Pas de Calais on the road from Arras to Cambrai, holds 118 burials with 59 identified casualties. Commonwealth forces were active in this area south of the River Scarpe in April 1917, during the Battle of Arras. The cemetery was made after fighting between April 9th and 11th when the 12th, 15th and 37th Divisions took Monchy-le-Preaux and the area between it and the River Scarpe.

Memorial Death Plaque
The next of kin of the war dead (except Commonwealth military personnel who were executed following a court martial) later received in the post a small bronze Memorial Death Plaque of which from 1919 over 1,150,000 were produced. Of these over 600 were for women. These plaques became known as the Dead Man's Penny or the Widow's Penny. The plaque was inscribed with “he died for freedom and honour”.

In January 1918 a War Gratuity of £2 18s. 4d was authorised and paid in September 1919 together with £3 0s.0d. to his widow Charlotte.

Kevin Tillett
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.

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-Courcelette, 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)

William Gerald Martin

*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 Mills was baptised on 27 June 1897 in East Grinstead, the son of James Mills and his wife Sarah Ann (née Coomber). The family – consisting of builder’s foreman James, Sarah Ann, James junior, Minnie, Arthur, Albert, Nellie and Stanley – were all born in East Grinstead but were enumerated in 1911 at Highgate in Forest Row. An older daughter, Edith, had married by this time. Ten years earlier, the family was living in Glenvue Road in East Grinstead, and a second daughter, Alice, was still at home; James was then a bricklayer.

Albert was 13 and still at school in 1911 and must have been very young when he took the king’s shilling. Unfortunately, his attestation papers have not survived, so it’s not possible to tell when he joined up, but his rank of Lance Corporal suggests he must have served for a reasonable length of time. However, original members of the 12th Battalion who signed up in November 1914 were given the prefix SD for South Downs on their regimental numbers, so Albert must have been a later recruit. In all probability, though, by the time the battalion crossed to France, landing at Le Havre in March 1916, Albert would have been part of it.

The Forest Row Memorial Book, which records information given by his father James (living after the war at Felbridge Park) says that Albert was killed in France. However, the Battle of St Julien was fought to release the Flanders village of St Juliana, north-east of Ypres, from the Germans who had held it since 1916. The World War I Battlefields website [http://www.ww1battlefields.co.uk/flanders/stjulien.html](http://www.ww1battlefields.co.uk/flanders/stjulien.html) suggests the village was taken on 31 July 1917 – the day of Albert’s death – by the 13th Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, but both the War Memorial Book and Commonwealth War Graves Commission place Mills in the 12th. Other sources suggest the 11th, 12th and 13th battalions were almost seen as an entity, which may be the reason for the confusion. Certainly, when the 12th battalion ceased to exist in February 1918, some of its surviving members were used to reinforce the 11th and 13th. The Battle of St Julien took place on the first day of the much longer 3rd Battle of Ypres.

Albert was buried in West Vlaanderen in Belgium, not far from Ypres, one of 1,450 casualties interred at New Irish Farm, Sint Jan. This cemetery, named after a nearby farm, was opened at the outbreak of the 3rd Battle of Ypres, also known as Passchendaele, on land that had until the beginning of 1917 been the front line.
Albert’s oldest brother James Mills joined the Territorial Army in 1910, attesting his willingness to be part of the Royal Sussex 4th Battalion. He was discharged in February 1916 having completed his five year term and been awarded the 1914 and 15 Star and the British War and Victory medals. In his initial attestation he gave the name of the family home at Highgate as Oakfield Cottages.

The two other brothers, Arthur and Stanley, have left no record of their war service, but appear to have lived to a ripe old age.

Pam Griffiths
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
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
Private, 7th The Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment
Killed in Action, Ferrar's Wood, France, 23 March 1918, aged 23
Buried in Chauny Communal Cemetery, Aisne, France
CWGC Reference: IWGC 8.4.22

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 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.

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.

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 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

(above left) The regimental badge of the 48th Highlanders of Canada
(above right) the regimental memorial in Queen's Park, Toronto

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

Private, 241867, 2/6th Royal Warwickshire Regiment (formerly 2290, Royal Sussex Regiment)

Killed in Action north-east of Ypres, Belgium, 31 August 1917, aged 23

Buried in Oxford Road Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

Grave Reference I.B.3

(above) The grave of WT Sands, Ypres  (above) Oxford Road Cemetery, Ypres

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."
WILLIAM EDGAR TESTER

Private, G/4534, 12th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action on 24 September 1917 during the Battle of the Menin Road, Third Battle of Ypres, near Ypres, Belgium

He has no known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial: Panel 86 to 88

Private William Edgar Tester, G/4534, 12th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, was born in Forest Row. He enlisted at East Grinstead. He was killed in action during the Battle of the Menin Road, Third Battle of Ypres, on 24 September 1917 near Ypres, Belgium. He has no known grave and is listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial: Panel 86 to 88.

In 1911 William Tester was 22 and living in Nutley Road, Forest Row, with his father, William, aged 50, who was a painter’s labourer, and his mother, Fanny, aged 52. He was a gardener. His brother, Gilbert, lived at the same address, aged 20 and was a groom. Gilbert died in 1977 aged 86 in Crawley.

The 12th battalion was formed on 3 November 1914 by Lieutenant-Colonel Claude Lowther M.P. and Committee. It was known as “Lowther’s Lambs”.

The "Battle of the Menin Road" was the third British general attack of the Third Battle of Ypres. The battle took place from 20-25 September 1917 in the Ypres Salient in Flanders on the Western Front.

On 23 and 24 September 1917 the Battalion was active in an area known as Tower Hamlets. They were relieving the 13th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment and the 14th Hampshire. They experienced very heavy shelling: 2 officers were wounded; of the other ranks 48 were killed, 117 wounded and 26 listed as missing. It is likely that William Tester was one of these men.
Tower Hamlets remained in German hands after the battle.

*The British Army at the Battle of the Menin Road Ridge, 24 September 1917.*

*(Source:www.warhistoryonline.com)*

Listed on the War Memorials in Coleman’s Hatch and Hartfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
Private Arthur William Titcomb, 40983, Depot, Royal Fusiliers (37th) was born in South Marston, near Swindon, Wiltshire in 1877, the son of Ralph and Alice Titcomb. He enlisted in June 1916 and died from the effects of shell shock on 29 January 1917 at Lewisham Hospital, London, aged 40. He is buried in the churchyard of St Mary’s, Hartfield (grave H 23), and is listed on the war memorial in Hartfield.

Arthur’s father, Ralph, was listed in the 1871 census as a publican in South Marston, Wiltshire. By the 1881 census he was listed as a farmer aged 48 at Manor Farm in Woolstone, Berkshire and his mother, Alice, was listed as a farmer’s wife. Arthur had eight siblings at that time. By 1901 his father had been widowed and was listed as a general labourer aged 67.

In 1911 Arthur’s address was Furzedown, Kings Somborne, Hampshire and his occupation is listed as a groom. His pre-war occupation was coachman, and he was living at the Coach House, Bolebroke Castle, Hartfield.
It is believed that Arthur married Jane Eliza (née Kemm) Titcomb in 1910 and it appears that they moved to Hartfield between 1911 and 1916. They had the following children: Ernest Arthur Robert (1911-45), William J. (b.1912), Sydney R. (b.1913), Cecil J. (1916-1923), Margaret (b.1919). (It is likely that Margaret took her late father's surname although we are unsure of the identity of her father.)

Jane Eliza was living at 30, Drew St., Rodbourne, Swindon, Wiltshire in 1917.

Arthur’s first-born son, Ernest, served with the Royal Navy in the Second World War and was killed in January 1945 aged 34 while serving on HMS Searcher. He was buried in Glasgow, where his wife, Margaret, came from. He had been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) and is commemorated on the Wroughton War Memorial in Wiltshire.

The birth of his fourth son, Cecil, was registered in East Grinstead in 1916. He died aged 7 in 1923 and his death was registered in Swindon, Wiltshire.

Arthur’s sister Emily was listed as a widowed nurse, living in Swindon, in 1911. Her married name was Godwin. Emily and mother Alice were living with Emily’s brother Ernest, who was listed as a general labourer aged 33 in 1911. His sister Sarah was a servant for a solicitor, Alfred Vacek, and his mother Caroline Vacek in Merton, south London in 1901. His younger sister Beatrice’s husband, Sydney, also served in the First World War, having signed up as a Territorial in 1913.

Before enlisting in June 1916 Arthur worked as a coachman for Percival Ramsay Mann, who owned Bolebroke, near Hartfield, a castle that is a former hunting lodge of Henry VIII. Percival Mann (1882-1942), a member of the Mann brewery family, served in the First World War as a captain in the Royal Artillery, and was awarded the OBE for services in France in 1919.

Percival’s son also served with the Royal Artillery in the Second World War. He died from a ruptured appendix in hospital on 7 January 1941 in Khartoum, Sudan, aged 21, and is buried in Khartoum War Cemetery: Grave 9. B. 7. He is also listed on the war memorial in Hartfield, and there is also a memorial plaque on the north wall of St Mary’s Church, Hartfield in his memory.

Percival Mann had a cricket ground built at Bolebroke and occasionally fielded his own team which included a visit from his cousin F J Mann, the England and Middlesex cricketer.

Carol O’Driscoll
The grave of Arthur William Titcomb in Hartfield churchyard
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
ALGERNON HYDE VILLIERS

Lieutenant, Lothians and Border, Horse, Att’d 121st Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Killed in action, Battle of Cambrai, Bourlon Hill, France, 23 November 1917

Commemorated at Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Nord Pas-de-Calais, Panel 1

At first glance, there seems to be no good reason why the name Algernon Hyde Villiers should appear on the Forest Row War Memorial. Neither he nor any of his immediate birth family had ever lived in the area. However, I suspect it was to her parents’ home at Cherry Orchard in Forest Row that his widow returned after his death, and it was she who put his name forward for the memorial book there.

Algernon Hyde Villiers had a distinguished ancestry. His grandfather, George Villiers, was 4th Earl of Clarendon, and owed his title to the first earl, Edward Hyde, who in turn was grandfather to two Queens of England – Mary II and Anne. After the male Hyde line failed, a granddaughter of the last Earl married a member of the Villiers family – a man whose ancestor was brother to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, favourite of James I – and the earldom was created anew. In addition, Algernon Villiers could claim descent from the Howard Dukes of Norfolk.

To come back up to date, Villiers was the son of the Right Honourable Sir Francis Hyde Villiers and his wife Virgina Katharine Smith (whom he had married in 1876.) The Times announced his birth on 1 February 1886 at 55 Cadogan Place, although his wife placed the birth at 103 Sloane Street, which lies opposite Cadogan Place, just across a private park. Both addresses lie between Sloane...
Square and Knightsbridge. There were three older siblings, Dorothy, Eric and Gerald, and a sister Marjory was born a few years later. Like two of his elder siblings, he was baptised at Chelsea Holy Trinity Church, on 15 March 1886 in his case. (The other two were christened at Slaugham in Sussex.)

The father boasted a distinguished career in the Foreign Office and was appointed Private Secretary to Lord Rosebery (later Prime Minister) three days after Algernon’s birth. He held several posts at different times as a Private Secretary as well as being a Privy Counsellor. Between 1906 and 1911 he was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Portugal, a role he repeated in Belgium before becoming Ambassador to that country after the War. He was awarded numerous decorations, including the Order of the Bath. It is probably because of his father’s role in Portugal that Algernon Hyde Villiers’ name appears on the first class passenger list of the SS Thames, arriving at Southampton from Lisbon in 1906. He returned to Lisbon on the SS Aragnaya in 1907.

In 1891 the family was living at 103 Sloane Street, Chelsea, being cared for by a live-in staff of eight. Francis was described as a clerk at the Foreign Office. Ten years later, Algernon was at Wellington College in Berkshire as a pupil. Interestingly, he gave his place of birth as Sloane Street, so maybe the family moved ‘across the road’ shortly after his birth.

According to the London Stock Exchange Memorial Roll he won a scholarship at Wellington, and:

    When only sixteen gained a Demyship at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he graduated with double honours.

A demyship is a form of scholarship; he matriculated in 1903. The same source has him travelling to America with the Head of Ruskin College before entering the office of James Capel and Co., a stockbroker’s company in London. In 1911 the electoral roll shows him living at 5 Tedworth Square, Chelsea although the census places him at Oakley Square in north-west London and describes him as a Clerk at the Stock Exchange. The following year he was made partner in another stockbroking firm – Govett, Sons and co.

In the interim he had married Beatrice Elinor Paul at St Margaret’s, Westminster (the church of the Houses of Parliament) on 4 October 1911. She had been born in Chelsea but was living with her mother and siblings in Forest Row in 1911. Her parents were Herbert Woodfield Paul, variously a journalist, barrister and MP, and his wife Elinor (née Budworth). This was very much a society wedding, and as such was extensively reported. On 6 October 1911 the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser published a long piece describing Francis Villiers as British minister at Brussels and Henry Paul as a well-known historian and late MP for Northampton:
The bride... wore a dress of soft white satin, the corsage being covered with pearl-embroidered tulle, while she also wore a veil of gossamer tulle over a wreath of orange flowers and myrtle, and carried a bouquet of white roses.

Small Talk – The Sketch, 23 August 1911

Algernon’s brother Eric was best man; the reception was at 5 Buckingham Gate, and Sir Harry Verney lent the couple Claydon House in Buckinghamshire for the honeymoon. The marriage was also reported in the Buckinghamshire Advertiser, The Scotsman, The Tatler, The Globe, The London Daily News, and, of course, The Times.

A son Charles was born to the couple in 1912 and a daughter Mary followed in 1917, only two months before Algernon died. In the interim, the electoral register places him in Tedworth Street and Ampthill Square, St Pancras (1913) and Draycott Place, Chelsea (1915). It was presumably while he was living at St Pancras that he helped run Boys’ Clubs in the run-down area of Somerstown behind St Pancras railway station. It was at this time also that he applied to become a member of the Stock Exchange, for the year commencing 25 March 1912 (presumably he had to renew his membership each year). He stated himself to be 26 years of age and a British citizen, living at 21 Ampthill Square Euston with offices at Basildon House in Moorgate and banking with London County and Westminster Bank, Euston Road branch. He proposed to act as a clerk; two signatures of referees also appear on the form.
Algernon Hyde Villiers was a prolific letter writer. After his death, these and other writings were collated into a volume entitled, *Letters and Papers of Algernon Hyde Villiers*. This begins with a memoir by Harry Graham, a writer and poet married to Algernon’s sister Dorothy. In this, he explains that Villiers had always wanted to be a soldier, but was prevented by short sight, and was not even allowed to join the Officer Training Corps when he was at the Inns of Court. Consequently he was untrained in military matters when war broke out. Determined to serve, even when turned down by the Infantry, he joined the Hertfordshire Yeomanry as a trooper, i.e. a private, and embarked for Egypt in September 1914.

![Part of Villiers’ early army record](image1)

Graham declares that ‘eight delightful months’ followed; Villiers was promoted to Lance Corporal, and took part in defeating a Turkish attack on the Suez Canal. Beatrice joined him for a while in Port Said in January 1915. By this time he felt he had enough experience to become an officer, and, on 10 April accepted a commission as Second Lieutenant with the Lothians and Border Horse, a move which took him to Scotland in Spring 1915. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your
viewpoint, the effects of malaria, presumably contracted in Egypt, kept Villiers in England for the next two years.

Algernon Hyde Villiers, from the ‘Stock Exchange War Memorial Book’

In winter 1916-17, Villiers had helped to run a machine gun school in East Lothian, and so, although in early 1917 he was promoted to Captain as part of the cavalry, he gave this up and transferred to the Machine Gun Corps in the hope of seeing active service again. He finally got to France in command of a section in July that year. Graham described his end simply as follows:

Four months later, on November 23rd, while taking part in the glorious capture of Bourlon Wood by the 40th British Infantry Division, he was killed.

His body was laid to rest in the little cemetery of Anneux.

The action at Bourlon Wood was part of the bigger battle of Cambrai, a British attack followed by a massive retaliation by the Germans, who were responding to the threat to their supply lines. Despite what Wikipedia calls ‘reckless determination’ with one group of eight British machine guns firing over 70,000 rounds in an effort to stop the German attack, the battle ended with over 47,000 British casualties.
Ironically, on the day he died, his mother-in-law’s diary\(^2\) records:

*A letter was forwarded to Beatrix from Algny. All news excellent. We are strengthening our gain on the Somme – in one day we gained half as much ground as we won in all the autumn fighting on the Somme last year.*

\[\text{Algernon Hyde Villiers, from ‘The Letters and Papers of Algernon Hyde Villiers’}\]

A few days later, the diary makes reference to the ‘cruel’ telegram announcing his death.

As the Stock Exchange War Memorial Book records:

*An officer on the Staff of his Division wrote: “The General has paid a particular tribute to the work done by the Machine Gunners, and that such praise is really deserved by Villiers’ men is largely due to the infinite pains he took over their training, and to the inspiring example he set them to the very end. His brother officers cannot speak too highly of his capacity as a leader, of his charm as a companion, and of all those qualities of his which made him the leading spirit of his mess and the idol of his men. He loved his men and they* 

\(^2\) [http://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/topics/world_war_one/casualty-passchendaele-1917](http://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/topics/world_war_one/casualty-passchendaele-1917)
loved him, and his invincible optimism carried him safely through those dark days of danger and discomfort, which set weaker men grumbling and despairing. It is no exaggeration to say that officers and men adored him.”

His obituary in *The Times* quotes a correspondent who had written:

*No one more willingly gave up a life of noble promise to a call which he felt was sacred…. He was happy in the circumstances of his death. For he had a peculiar love of France, and the spirit of comradeship in the Army realised his ideal of the brotherhood of man.*

A glance at his collected letters show a cultured man determined to be optimistic. In his penultimate letter home, on 18 November, he writes:

*The weather is wonderful – rather misty in the mornings, but very dry for the season, and with gleams of sunlight now and then.*

He also alludes to his strong Christian faith:

*I want some way of saying that I believe in Christ without implying that I am like Him…. Perhaps I shall find a way before long; one usually does by being patient…. It is in God’s hands. I feel no fear of heavy trials, no doubt which is the rock on which to build a safe and happy house. I read glorious Joshua i 1-9 yesterday… It is a supreme passage, none finer in the Old Testament…*

In 1919, his widow remarried, and became Mrs Walter D Gibbs although her husband later became 4th Baron Aldenham. She died in 1978. Villiers’ son Charles was awarded the MC for his services to the Special Operations Executive in World War II and became chairman of British Steel in 1976.

As well as being named on the Forest Row memorial, Villiers is commemorated on the memorial at Wellington College, in the Oxford University Roll of Service and in the Stock Exchange Memorial Book.

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 Lijsntenhoek Military Cemetery, Poperinghe
Grave Reference: Plot X, Row A, Grave 1

Er diversities and (above right) The grave of Eric Gordon Waters at Lijsntenhoek Military Cemetery

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_LtAodnSwA8Q)

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

Trooper 1548, N°.2 Company, The Household Battalion

Killed in Action, 3 May 1917, aged 32

Buried at Roeux British Cemetery (Sp. Mem. H. 7)

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 N° 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
DAVID WEEKES

Private David Weekes G/60598, 9th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

Killed in Action, 9 April 1917, near Arras, Pas de Calais, France, aged about 37

Buried in Sainte Catherine British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France: Grave G 2

Private David Weekes

Private David Weekes, G/60598, 9th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, was born in Frant, East Sussex, in about 1880. He lived at No 1 Oak Cottage, Chuck Hatch and enlisted in East Grinstead. He was formerly No 23392, 6th Battalion Middlesex.

Sainte Catherine British Cemetery

He was married to Naomi (née Divall) Weekes in Spring 1910. Naomi was born in 1886 in Hartfield. In the 1911 census the couple were living at Chuck Hatch, near Hartfield.
David’s pre-war occupation was as a gardener in the employ of Robert Benson of Buckhurst Park, Withyham, Sussex.

Buckhurst Park c 1900 when David Weekes was a gardener there

In the early twentieth century Buckhurst Park was leased from the De La Warr family by Mr and Mrs Robert Benson, for whom Sir Edwin Lutyens designed additions to the house and a new formal garden. Gertrude Jekyll provided planting plans. In May 1912 Buckhurst Park appeared in an early edition of *Country Life* magazine, “The Residence of Mr. R. H. Benson”, with a ten-page write-up with black and white illustrations of the Park.

Country Life magazine, May 1912

Robert Henry Benson (1850-1929), senior partner of Robert Benson & Co. Ltd., merchant bankers, London, was a trustee of the National Gallery from 1912 and a collector of paintings, mostly early
Italian, early Chinese porcelain, and other works of art. His properties included Walpole House, Chiswick Mall, London, W4, though by 1924 he was living at 16 South Street, Park Lane. His country house was Buckhurst Park. Robert Benson & Co. later became part of Kleinwort Benson.

Benson married Evelyn Holford (1857-1943) in 1887 and who was herself a collector of Chinese porcelain and was joint owner of the Benson collection of Renaissance paintings, sold to Joseph Duveen in 1927 for US$2.5 million and dispersed to collectors such as Kress, Frick and Rockefeller.

Benson was a member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club and lent generously to public museums, for instance to the City of Manchester Art Gallery 'Exhibition of Chinese Applied Art', 1913, to the V&A prior to his major Chinese ceramics sale in 1924, and the Benson Collection of paintings loaned to Manchester in 1927, which was subsequently purchased by Duveen.

The Battle of Arras took place in the spring of 1917 and was one of the principal offensives undertaken by the British Army on the Western Front, similar in scale to the Battle of the Somme and the Third Battle of Ypres. The battle began on Monday 9 April 1917 at 5.30 a.m., after an intensive bombardment lasting four days to preclude any retaliation from the enemy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank and Initials</th>
<th>Date of Death</th>
<th>Plot, Row and Grave</th>
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<tr>
<td>6th E.H.Buffs.</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>STREET</td>
<td>Pte.A</td>
<td>9-4-17</td>
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<td>Pte.</td>
<td>9/4/17</td>
<td>A.28 d</td>
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<td>COLLIP</td>
<td>Pte.A</td>
<td>8/8/17</td>
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<td>3259</td>
<td>JONES</td>
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<td>Sjt.C.O.</td>
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<tr>
<td>do</td>
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<td>ZANDER</td>
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<td>9/4/17</td>
<td>F.33 b</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.gwc.org)

David Weekes was killed on the first day of the battle. The 9th of April 1917 was Easter Monday. Many of the troops had been quartered in the cellars of Arras prior to the battle – a welcome
situation given that there had been snow fall on 2 April. The 9th Battalion gained all their objectives on the first day, capturing two machine guns and 220 prisoners.

At first glance the Battle of Arras could be considered a British success: 20,000 prisoners had been taken, a large quantity of munitions had been captured and much important ground had been won, pushing the combat zone back about ten kilometres and relieving the pressure on the town of Arras which had suffered incessant German shelling since October 1914. But these promising results were obtained at a great cost: more than 100,000 British soldiers were put out of action in the fighting at Arras between April and May 1917.

The Royal Fusiliers memorial at Holborn in London, commemorating the 22,000 men of the regiment who lost their lives in the Great War

Listed on the War Memorials in Hartfield and Withyham.

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
Sergeant Thomas Henry Woodhams, G/1307, 9th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, was born in Hartfield in 1893. He lived at New Cottages, Cotchford Farm, Hartfield and at Beeches Farm, Butcherfield Lane, Hartfield. He enlisted in September 1914 in Tunbridge Wells. He was killed in action on 13 April 1917 near Arras, Pas de Calais, France, age 24 and has no known grave and is listed on the Arras Memorial: Bay 6.

He was the son of Henry Thomas (1865-1932) and Sophia Catherine (née Jenner) (1869-1947). His mother was born in Cowden, Kent, and his father in Withyham.

His parents married around 1891 and in the 1911 census were listed as living at Cotchford Hill, Hartfield. His father was a farm labourer as was his elder brother, Albert, aged 20 in 1911.
Thomas’ pre-war occupation was as a cowman. In 1911 he was listed as working as a cowman for Harriet Taylor at Beeches Farm in Hartfield aged 18. His brother Thomas was also working as a horseman on the farm aged 16. They had five other siblings living with their parents in 1911.

The 9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment in Brighton in 1914.

The 9th Battalion was formed at Chichester in September 1914 and was part of Kitchener’s New Army. After formation the battalion went into camp on the South Downs around Brighton where it often took part in recruitment marches on the seafront. Here it became part of the 73rd Brigade of 24th Division. In December 1914 the battalion moved to Portslade, and in April 1915 to Shoreham. In June 1915 a further move was made to Woking, Surrey.

The 9th Battalion landed in France, at Boulogne, on 31 August 1915. Within a few weeks of arrival, the battalion was thrown into the Battle of Loos, suffering heavy losses.

13 April 1917 was the fourth day of the Battle of Arras. The 9th Battalion were involved in the attack on Vimy Ridge. Five officers were killed and four wounded on that date and of the other ranks 40 were killed in action and 63 died of wounds. Thomas Woodhams is likely to have been one of the other ranks’ fatalities. The 9th Battalion had been in action the day before in the attack on Bois en Hache. They had gone over the top in blizzard conditions and had faced severe machine gun fire. They achieved their objective of capturing the German front line. However the attack had taken place, according to the Battalion diaries, “in a blinding snow storm and over ground full of large shell holes and churned into a sea of mud by bad weather and heavy shelling”.

Listed on the War Memorial in Hartfield.

Carol O’Driscoll
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