

Lance Corporal Henry Serle Arkell

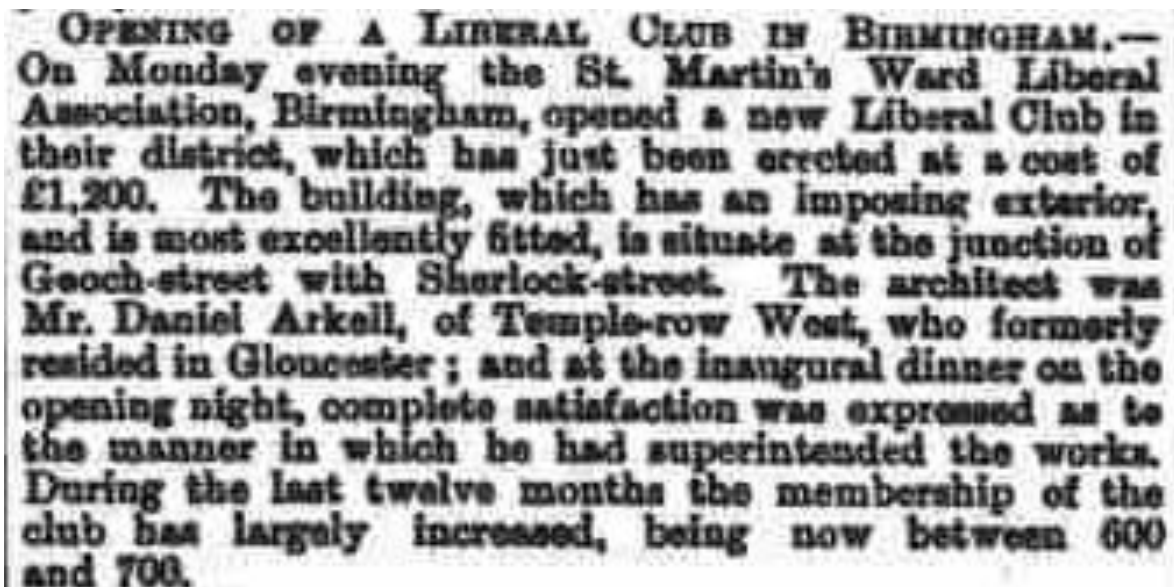
"I died in hell (They called it Passchendaele)" by Siegfried Sassoon

Henry's grandfather, Henry Arkell was born on 14th April 1816, in Maston, Gloucestershire, to William Arkell, an 'edge tool maker' and his wife Elizabeth.ⁱ

In the summer of 1843, Henry married Elizabeth Serle in the Cheltenham district of Gloucestershire.ⁱⁱ The 1851 census records Henry as a 'fruiterer' (a retailer of fruit), and living at 22 Eastgate Street, Gloucester, with Elizabeth and their four children; Mary Ann, Frederick, Daniel and Edwin born in 1844, 1848, 1849 and 1850 respectively. The family employed a twelve year old house servant Jane Harding.

By 1861, Henry had become a builder employing 9 men and lived at 49 Southgate Street, Gloucester. A further child, Elizabeth, was born in 1857. The family continued to live there until Henry's death in 1874.ⁱⁱⁱ

Daniel, Henry and Elizabeth's second son became a surveyor and architect based in Waterloo Chambers, 1 Temple Row West, Birmingham. One of his first commissions was the building of a new Liberal Club at the junction of Gooch Street and Sherlock Street in Birmingham. The foundation stone was laid on 5th July 1884 by Mr George Dixon.^{iv} It was officially opened a year later, in 1885.



OPENING OF A LIBERAL CLUB IN BIRMINGHAM.—
On Monday evening the St. Martin's Ward Liberal Association, Birmingham, opened a new Liberal Club in their district, which has just been erected at a cost of £1,200. The building, which has an imposing exterior, and is most excellently fitted, is situate at the junction of Gooch-street with Sherlock-street. The architect was Mr. Daniel Arkell, of Temple-row West, who formerly resided in Gloucester; and at the inaugural dinner on the opening night, complete satisfaction was expressed as to the manner in which he had superintended the works. During the last twelve months the membership of the club has largely increased, being now between 600 and 700.

Figure 1: A newspaper article vaunting Daniel Arkell as the architect of the new Liberal Club in Birmingham

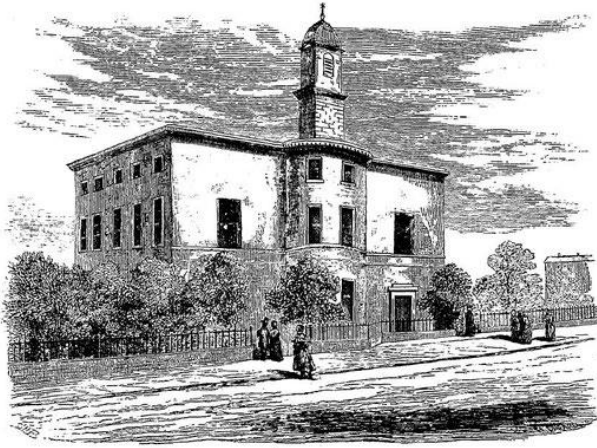


Figure 2: St James the less on the Ashted Estate, Birmingham

On 1st August 1888, Daniel, aged thirty-nine, married Laura Amelia, the daughter of Samuel Goffe, a maltster, at the church of St James the Less in Ashted, Birmingham. Daniel's address at the time of his marriage was 105 Brook Street in the Jewellery Quarter of Birmingham.

The church of St James was set up in the converted country house of Dr John Ash. Ash was one of the prime movers in the establishment

of Birmingham General Hospital which opened in 1779 and was one of its first honorary physicians. He was also one of the first Streets Commissioners of the town and a Governor of King Edward's Grammar School. The Ashted estate was laid out in a grid pattern with the church as a focal point and was a speculative venture aimed at Birmingham's new entrepreneurs keen to move away from Birmingham's smoky centre. However, the estate was downwind of the industrial city. As a result the new district failed to live up to its initial high-status potential. The church was destroyed by German bombs in WW2.

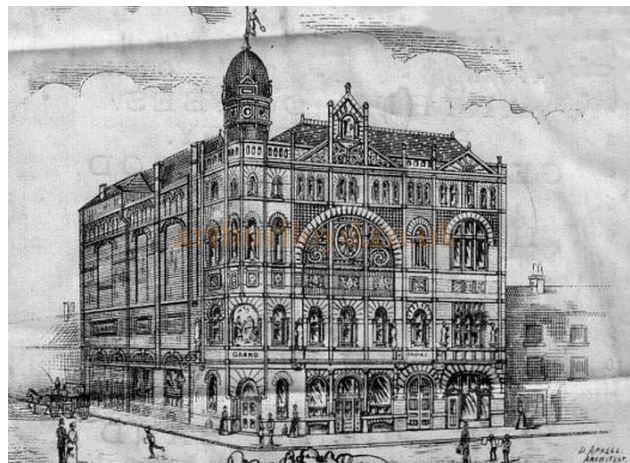


Figure 3: (Left) The old drill hall, H Q of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment (Right) the Grand Theatre, Walsall designed by Daniel Arkell

Daniel also designed the Head Quarters of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment hall at 184 Stafford Street, Wolverhampton. It was erected at a cost of about £8,000, in an Early Gothic style around 1890. The building was eventually acquired by the University of Wolverhampton and is now used for student accommodation.^v

At around the same time, plans for the construction of a new theatre to be called 'The Grand' in Walsall were put out to tender. It was to replace the old Gaiety Theatre. Daniel's design for the new theatre was selected. It was built in a Romanesque style of architecture by Henry Wilcock and opened on Monday the 17th of November 1890. The theatre was destroyed by a fire in 1939 and subsequently demolished.^{vi}

In 1891, Daniel and Laura were living at 96 Ashted Row, Aston with their two children, Daniel and Henry Serle (Serle was Henry's grandmother's maiden name) born in 1889 and 1891 respectively. The family had a domestic servant, aged 16, in their employ.

On 20th September 1893, Daniel was initiated into the Holte Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasons.^{vii}

In 1894 Daniel won first place in a competition, run by Kings Norton Board of Guardians, for the design of a new infirmary at Selly Oak next to, but separate, from Kings Norton Union Workhouse. It was to be run as a separate establishment.^{viii} It was built in 1897 at a cost of £52,000. It was the subject of much heated debate as the original estimate had been £18,000. It was a light, clean and practical building, and generally a source of much pride. In 1911 it was renamed Selly Oak Hospital and served the city for over one hundred years until it was closed in 2012 upon completion of the new Queen Elizabeth hospital.



Figure 4: King's Norton Infirmary, 1897

By 1901, the Arkell family had moved to the Oscott Grange on the Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield. The couple now had six children with the addition of Mildred, Thelma, Haleema and John born in 1892, 1894, 1895 and 1900 respectively. Their last child Evis was born in 1902.

On 26th February 1905, Daniel died, leaving his estate of £6,117 14s 2d to Laura, about £683,000 in today's money. Following Daniel's death, Laura and the family moved to 8 Bloomfield Road, Moseley, Birmingham.

When war was declared on 4th August 1914, Laura's eldest sons, Daniel, an estate agent's clerk and his younger brother Henry, a builder's clerk, enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.



Figure 5: Henry is named as being in this photograph of 'D' Coy, Platoon XIII, 16TH Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Henry joined the 16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment (16th Royal Warwicks) as Private H S Arkell, No 759. He was in Platoon XIII of 'D' Coy.^{ix} The 16th Royal Warwicks were also known as 3rd Birmingham Pals Battalion.

After his initial training with the regiment, Daniel embarked with his battalion at Folkestone on the *Princess Victoria* on 20th November 1915 and arrived at Boulogne the following evening. Just over a month later, the 16th Royal Warwicks were transferred from the 95th Brigade, 32nd Division to the 15th Brigade, 5th Division to ensure the battalion was supported by more experienced regular troops.

In March 1916, the fifth Division took over a section of the front line between St Laurent Blangy and the southern end of Vimy Ridge, near Arras. They moved

south in July to reinforce the armies fighting the Battle of the Somme and were in action at High Wood, the Battle of Guillemont, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the Battle of Morval and the Battle of Le Transloy. In October 1916, the 5th Division moved to Festubert and remained there until March 1917.

By 27th September 1917, the 16th Warwicks had moved to Belgium, via Serques and Wallon Cappel to Westoutre in the Ypres sector in order to support the middle phase of the Third Battle of Ypres, better known as Passchendaele..

On 4th October 1917, the last of three successful 'bite and hold' battles launched by General Herbert Plumer during the middle phase of the third battle of Ypres took place. It involved making limited advances in attacks on shorter stretches of the line and then stopping once a pre-determined point had been reached and digging in ready to repulse the inevitable German counterattack.

The Battle of Broodseinde opened on 4th October 1917 with an ambitious attempt to push the Germans back along a long stretch of their line. Although it was one of the most successful attacks in the Battle of Passchendaele, further



Figure 6: Bedford House with woodland moats and lakes. The Ypres to St Eloi road runs north to south on left.

attacks were made impossible due to the appalling weather conditions until 9th October .

At the time of the battle the 16th Royal Warwicks were in reserve having been moved to Ridge Wood (a wood standing on high ground between the Kimmel road and Dickebusch Lake) before taking positions at Bedford House in the early evening of 3rd October.

Before the war this was the site of a country mansion called Chateau Rosendal. The chateau served as a dressing station and later as a brigade headquarters.

On the day of the battle, the 16th Royal Warwicks, as part of the 15th Brigade, made ready to relieve the 13th Brigade on the night of the 5th and 6th October. The 16th Royal Warwicks were moved up to support HQ and had two companies in trenches immediately north of the Ypres to Menin road.

At 10 am on 6th October the OC of 'D' Coy reported that he was digging in 400 yards north of the Menin road and had received many casualties.^x It is likely that this is when Henry was wounded. He died the same day.

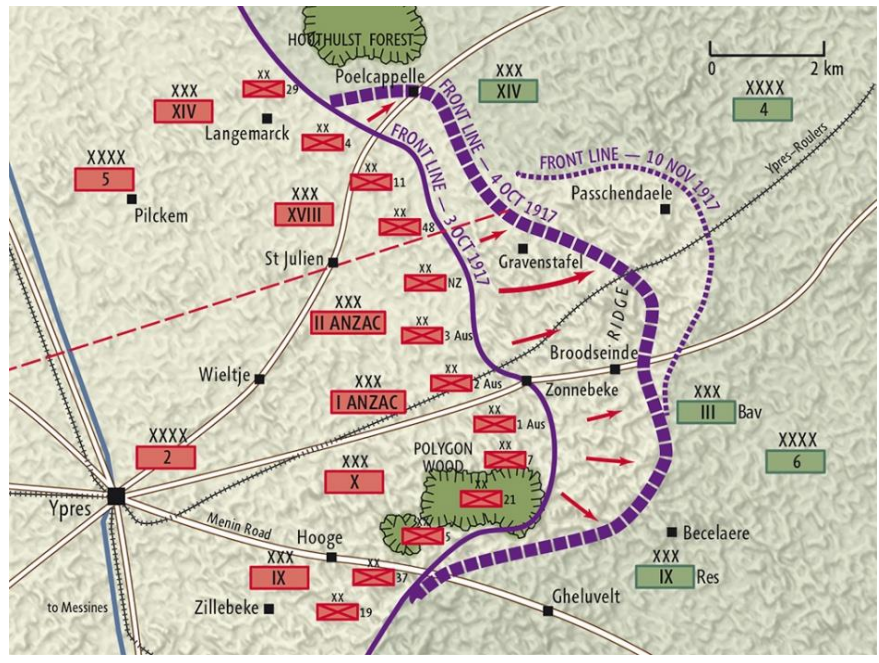


Figure 7: Map showing the position of the 5th Division on the Menin Road, east of Hooge on 6th October 1917.

The casualty record for Officers and Other Ranks in the 16th Royal Warwicks between 5th and 8th October 1917 were: 56 killed, 221 wounded and 32 missing.^{xi}



Figure 8
(Above) Godewaersvelde British Cemetery
(Right) WW1 memorial at St Mary's Church

Henry was buried at Godewaersvelde British Cemetery, France near the Belgium border. He is also commemorated on the WW1 memorial at St Mary's Church, Moseley. He was 26 years old.

Henry's eldest brother, Daniel enlisted as a Private, No 16658, with 4th (Extra Reserve) Battalion on 10th December 1915. He was mobilised and posted to the 11th Battalion Royal Warwicks in France on 24th July 1916. His last posting was to 2/7 Royal Warwicks where he stayed until demobilisation.^{xii} In 1939 he was recorded as being an auctioneer's clerk and estate agent.^{xiii} He never married and died in 1977.

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Endnotes

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- i Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1913 for Henry Arkell
 - ii England & Wales marriages, 1837-2005, Cheltenham, 1843, 3/4, 11, 269
 - iii 1871 census
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 - iv *The Gloucester Journal*, 5th July 1884
 - v Stafford Street Drill Hall
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stafford_Street_drill_hall,_Wolverhampton
<http://livingat184.com/history/>
 - vi The Grand Theatre, Walsall
<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/WalsallTheatres.htm>
 - vii United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751-1921
 - viii *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8.6.1894
 - ix Birmingham City Battalions, Book of Honour, 1920, Midlands Historical Data, p 148

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- x The National Archives, War Diary of 16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment from 1.11.15-30.11.17, Ref WO 95/1574/1, pp 1 -129
16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment
<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=7358>
The Battles of Broodseinde
http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_broodseinde.html
- xi The National Archives, War Diary of 16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment from 1.11.15-30.11.17, Ref WO 95/1574/1, pp 125,126
- xii British Army Service Records 1914-1920
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- Figure 4 The picture of Kings Norton Infirmary was posted by K M Punk in August 1915 on the 'Derelict Places' website
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