Second Lieutenant William Henry Furse

William's great-grandfather Thomas William Furse and his wife Margaret lived in Walworth, London. The baptismal records of St Mary's Church, Newington for their son Septimus Spooner Furse, born 17th January 1826, describe Thomas as a 'gentleman' living at St Paul's Place, Walworth.[i] Septimus and his younger brother, Christopher, worked together as carvers and gilders.[ii]

Septimus married Emma, daughter of Archibald Pringle, a pianoforte maker, on 14th August 1852 at St Pancras Church. In 1855, he started his own independent business in Hanway Street as a carver and gilder, but also as a picture frame maker and picture restorer.

From 1860, Septimus' advertisement for his business, run from 10 Hanway Street, Oxford Street, London, claimed that it had been established 'since 1846' and were 'cleaners, liners and restorers of ancient and modern paintings.' Septimus also promoted his discovery of a 'safer process for cleaning and restoring oil paintings'. On the reverse, of another of his advertisements he states that he is the 'inventor and sole manufacturer of the enamelled washable gilding and pure unoxidising silvering, for looking glass and picture frames, mirrors, window cornices and gilt furniture of every description'.[iii]

Figure 1: Trading card of Septimus Spooner Furse. (See also reference Figure 12)

The 1861 census recorded Septimus and Emma and their sons Alfred Christopher (born 1855) and Ernest Henry (born 1857) living at 50 Albert St, Regents Park. The business employed two men and two boys.

In early 1862 Emma died. With two young boys, aged 5 and 7, to care for, it is unsurprising that Septimus remarried a few months later on 28th August. His second wife was Sarah Lankester (née Wood), a widow. Her husband Henry, a butcher, whom she had married in 1838, had died on 20th December 1860. The couple went on to have two children, Henry, born in 1862, and Emma born two years later. The 1871 and 1881 census records Septimus, Sarah, Arthur and Ernest (now decorator's assistants) with Henry and Emma living at 2 Camden Cottage, St Pancras.

The business became 'Septimus Furse & Son' in 1882 through to 1886, and then 'Furse & Co' in 1887, probably the year Septimus retired from the business.[iv]

Henry, Septimus' son by Sarah, married Florence Mundy Cox, the only daughter of eight children born to Thomas Cox, a local umbrella manufacturer and his wife Marian. The ceremony took place at St John's Church, Sparkhill, Birmingham, on 5th June 1890. Henry's occupation is recorded as 'stockbroker.'[v]After their marriage they returned to London and lived at 32 Agamemnon Road in Hampstead, just three doors down from his parent's house at No. 26. Septimus died a few months later on 9th November 1891, leaving effects worth £447 (around £52,746 in today's money[vi]) with probate granted to Alfred Christian Furse, a decorator and his son by his first marriage.[vii]

Henry and Florence had three children over the next nine years. William (known as Bill by the family) was born in 1891, closely followed by Thomas Alan (known as Alan) a year later[viii]. In 1900 their third son Claude Harold Seymour was born on 21st July.[ix] In 1901 William's mother is documented as residing in a nursing home in Nottingham Place, London. This explains why William, Alan and eight months old Claude, are staying with a maternal family relative in Sidmouth, Devon[x]. Henry was lodging with his uncle Charles Cooper (a printer) and his wife Mary at 42 Hillfield Road, Hampstead.[xi]

By 1911 the family had moved from London to Birmingham and were living at 53 School Road, Moseley. On the day of the census, Claude, then ten years old, appears on the register at his maternal grandmother's address, around the corner from the family, at 'Llanberis', Wake Green Road, Moseley. The family were comfortably off and able to afford domestic help in the home and also send both William and Alan to Solihull Grammar School, a fee paying school, now Solihull School.[xii] William went on to Finchley College, London after leaving school in 1907, before entering the world of work as a clerk in Lloyds Bank, Stirchley.[xiii]

At the outbreak of war, William and Alan joined the 1st Birmingham Battalion, known as the Birmingham Pals (shortly after becoming the 14th Royal Warwicks).[xiv]

Cadet Furze, 1904.

Figure 2: (Above) Cadet Furse at Solihull Grammar School. 1904

SOLDIER'S NAME AND DESCRIPTION ON ATTESTATION.

(REGULAR FORCES.)

Name Furse William Henry.
Enlisted at Birmingham
in the County of Warwickshire
on the 9th Sept. 1914.
at the age of 23 years 3 months
for the 1st Birm Bn R.W.R.
for 3 years in the Army and ~~years in the Reserve~~
Born in the Parish of Hampstead
in or near the Town of London
in the County of London.
Trade or calling Bank Clerk.
Last permanent residence 53 School Row Moseley Birm.
Height 6 feet 4 inches B. 39.
Complexion Sallow.
Eyes Hazel Hair D. Brown.
Marks Nil.

* Religion Church of England.
† Signature of Soldier A.H. Furse

* This should be described under one of the following denominations, viz.:—"Church of England," "Presbyterian," "Wesleyan," "Baptist," or "Congregational," "other Protestant denomination" name of denomination to be noted), "Roman Catholic," or "Jew."
† Whenever a Soldier who cannot write makes his mark in acknowledgment of having received pay or allowances, etc., such mark is to be witnessed by the signature of a witness (other than the pay-sergeant).

Figure 3: (Right) Attestation of William Henry Furse

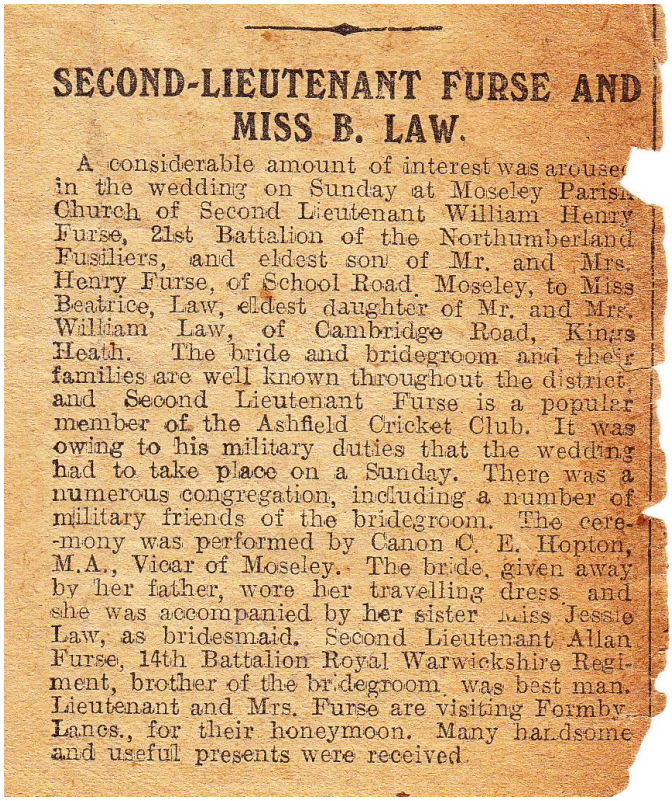
Figure 4: Sergeant Alan Furse and Corporal William Furse, 14th Royal Warwicks taken before 1st February 1915 when Alan was commissioned.

The photographs of the Furse family (Figures 4 & 5) were found, with several others, in the loft by the owners of 36 Salisbury Road. It is known that the Furse family resided in this house from around 1919.[xv] The photographs were donated to the Moseley History Society.

While training with the 14th Royal Warwicks, William (No 14/399) received his inoculations on 29th March and 8th April 1915. He was rapidly promoted and by 21st May that year he had attained the rank of sergeant.[xvi] Both brothers were commissioned to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. Alan received his commission first on 1st February 1915[xvii] opting to stay with the 14th Royal Warwicks, but William, when he received his later that year on 23rd September[xviii], transferred to the 21st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (2ndTyneside Scottish), part of the 102nd Brigade, 34th Division.

Figure 5: 2nd Lt W H Furse, 21st Northumberland Fusiliers

Figure 6: Sergeant William Furse with his fiancée Beatrice Maria Law, father Henry, mother Florence and his brothers Claude, in his army cadet uniform and Alan in his officer's uniform. The photograph was taken sometime between 1st February and before William received his commission in September 1915. From the Dave Vaux archives



SECOND-LIEUTENANT FURSE AND MISS B. LAW.

A considerable amount of interest was aroused in the wedding on Sunday at Moseley Parish Church of Second Lieutenant William Henry Furse, 21st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, and eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Furse, of School Road, Moseley, to Miss Beatrice, Law, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Law, of Cambridge Road, Kings Heath. The bride and bridegroom and their families are well known throughout the district, and Second Lieutenant Furse is a popular member of the Ashfield Cricket Club. It was owing to his military duties that the wedding had to take place on a Sunday. There was a numerous congregation, including a number of military friends of the bridegroom. The ceremony was performed by Canon C. E. Hopton, M.A., Vicar of Moseley. The bride, given away by her father, wore her travelling dress, and she was accompanied by her sister Miss Jessie Law, as bridesmaid. Second Lieutenant Allan Furse, 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment, brother of the bridegroom, was best man. Lieutenant and Mrs. Furse are visiting Formby, Lancs., for their honeymoon. Many handsome and useful presents were received.

Figure 7: (Above) Newspaper cutting of the marriage of William and Beatrice

(Below) 15 Rosemary Lane, Formby

Shortly after becoming an officer, William married Beatrice Maria Law, a private secretary, who lived nearby at 67, Cambridge Road, Kings Heath. The wedding took place on 3rd October 1915 at St Mary's Church, Moseley.[xix] Beatrice's father, William, was a works manager in a silver electroplating business.[xx] The service, unusually, took place on a Sunday because of William's military duties. It was conducted by Canon C E Hopton MA the Vicar of St Mary's Church. The bride wore her travelling dress for the ceremony and was given away by her father. Beatrice's sister Jessie was bridesmaid and William's brother, Allan, was best man. The couple spent their honeymoon at 15 Rosemary Lane, Formby.[xxi]

On 10th January 1916, the Battalion entrained for Southampton and sailed for Le Havre on the *African Prince* and the *Emperor Queen* and billeted at La Crosse, east of St Omer. Before the month was out, a Court of Enquiry was held regarding the case of the Battalion's service boots of which 10% had already worn out![xxii]

The 21st Northumberland Fusiliers were part of the 34th Division of Kitchener's New Army and were to take part in a major action for the first time on 1st July, the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. The position of the 21st Northumberland Fusiliers was on the front line in Sausage Valley. Their task on the day was to capture the front line German trenches and from there the village of La Boisselle. William's unit was the 102 Trench Mortar Battery.[xxiii]

In preparation for this there was a preliminary bombardment. In addition, a huge mine at Lochnagar was detonated at 0728 hours. Two minutes later the whistles were blown, the signal for the British troops to begin their assault.[xxiv]

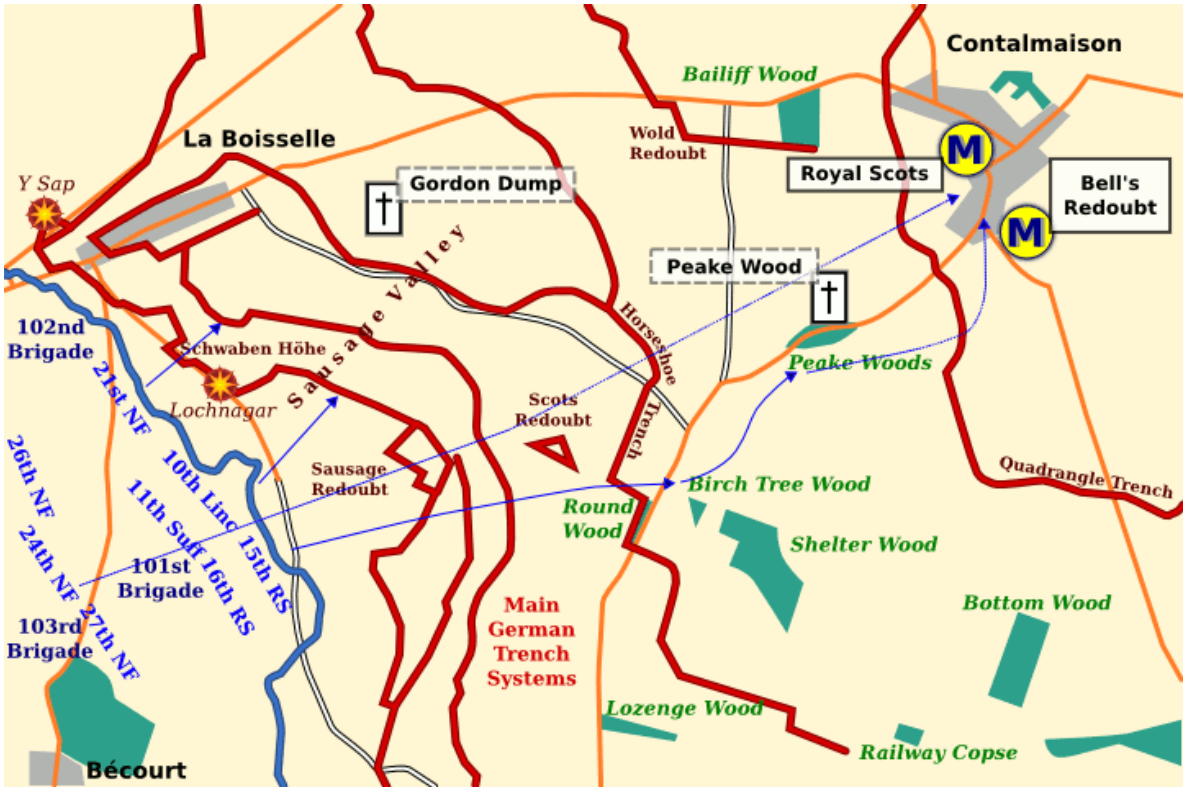


Figure 8: Map showing the front line position of the 21st Northumberland Fusiliers (21st NF on the map) on 1st July 1916.

The troops coming down the slope towards the German lines were not expecting any resistance after the bombardment and the detonation of the crater, but far from being wiped out, the Germans were ready and waiting. Emerging from their deep bunkers, the Germans opened fire with their machine guns and half an hour into the start of the attack, many hundreds of advancing British soldiers were dead or wounded.[xxv] William standing at 6' 5½" (the tallest man in the British Army)[xxvi] and being an officer made him

a prime target for the enemy. The opposing trenches were so close together, that No Man's Land was a mass of overlapping shell holes, known as the 'Glory Hole'. After the initial attack, William along with the rest of the Trench Mortar Battery, made their way across No Man's Land, their objective being to set up the battery in the captured German trenches. Apparently William stopped to light his pipe, and was then hit by a stray bullet and was mortally wounded. He was taken back to the British lines but died soon after.[xxvii] Altogether the battalion suffered 457 casualties on the day.[xxviii]

His brother Alan, billeted at Magnicourt, not far from La Boiselle, received a telegram on 7th July from home, telling him of his brother's death. Alan wrote back to his parents on hearing this news saying:

'Thus goes the finest pal I have ever had and one of the best and most straight forward of men who ever lived. Of course the shock has been bad for me but what you must feel at home having to sit still, I can't imagine but you must not give way more than you can help. Try and bear up. God grant you all His help at this awful time and give you the strength to bear the loss of such a splendid man.'' [xxix]

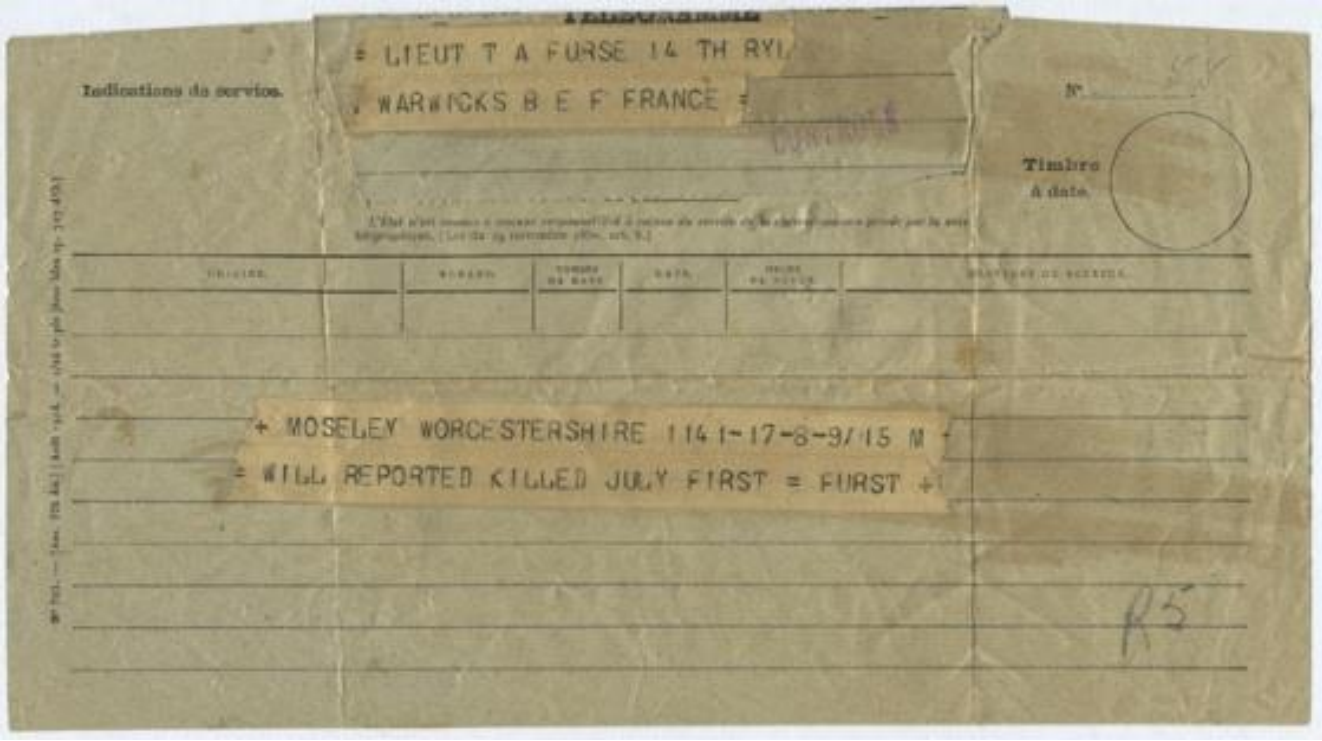
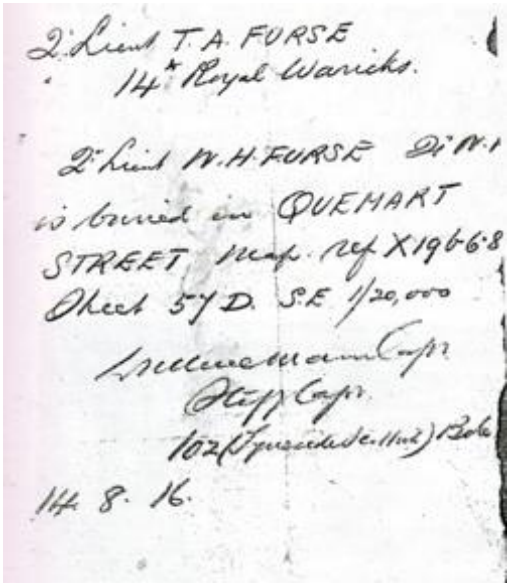


Figure 9: The telegram Alan received from home informing him of William's death.

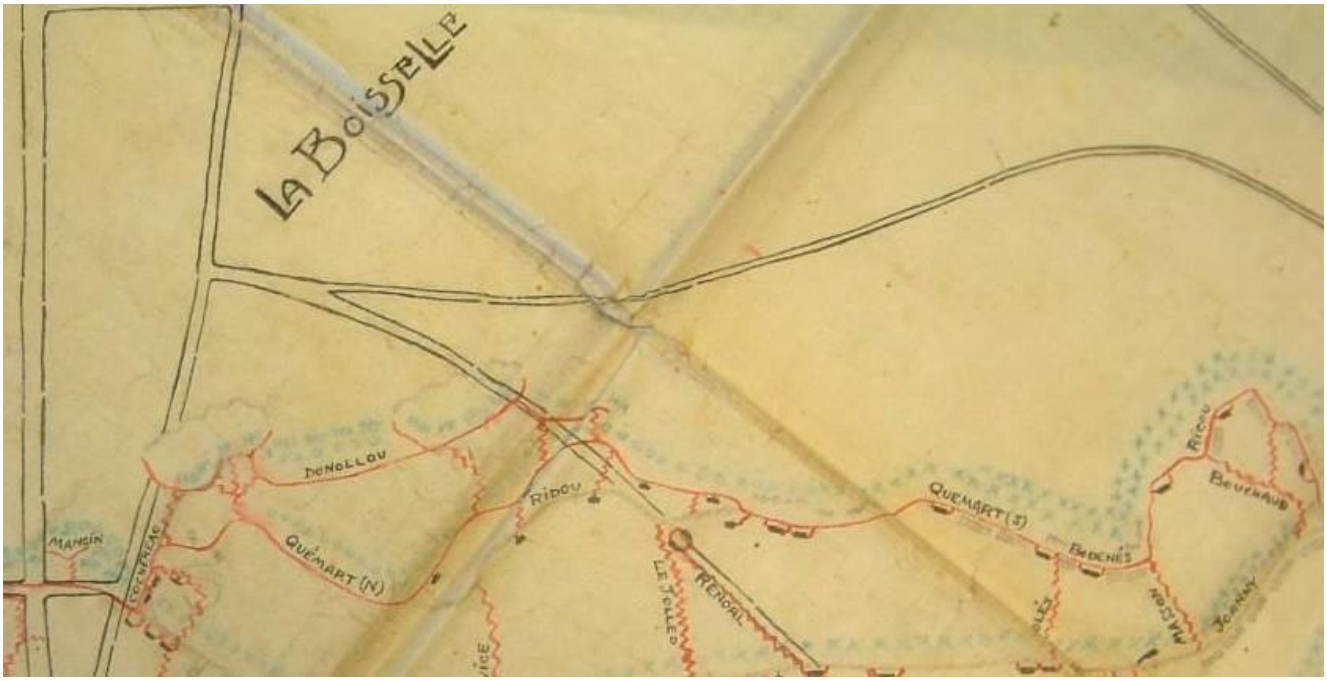
Alan found out that William had been buried near to where he fell. Over the next couple of weeks, he was able to establish the exact spot where he fell. Quemart Street was the name of one of two trenches named after members of the French 19th Infantry Regiment who were killed during fierce fighting there between January and March 1915.



The name was retained by the British when they took over the sector in late July 1915. Quémar though had mutated to Quémart and remained a memorial to these men.[xxx]

Figure 10: (Left) Map reference given to Alan to find the spot where William was buried.

(Below) Trench map of La Boiselle showing the position of Quémart Street.



This is Alan's account of the event, written after the war:

''I got the Sergeant carpenter, a man named Chare (Sergeant Frederick Chare, No 530, from Coventry Road, Small Heath) to make me a cross out of a piece of old oak and then rode across to the Bapaume Road to find the spot. I left my groom and the horses on the road and struck out across the country and eventually found the trench which was fairly well described by map reference. I erected the cross right on the grave and after arranging a cross of white stones on the top of it, took two or three photographs.''[xxxi]

After the war, William's remains were transferred to the Bapaume Post Military Cemetery that is situated near the former Tara Redoubt overlooking La Boiselle.[xxxii]

At the time of William's death, Beatrice was pregnant, but a letter dated 20th February 1917, informs the War office that:

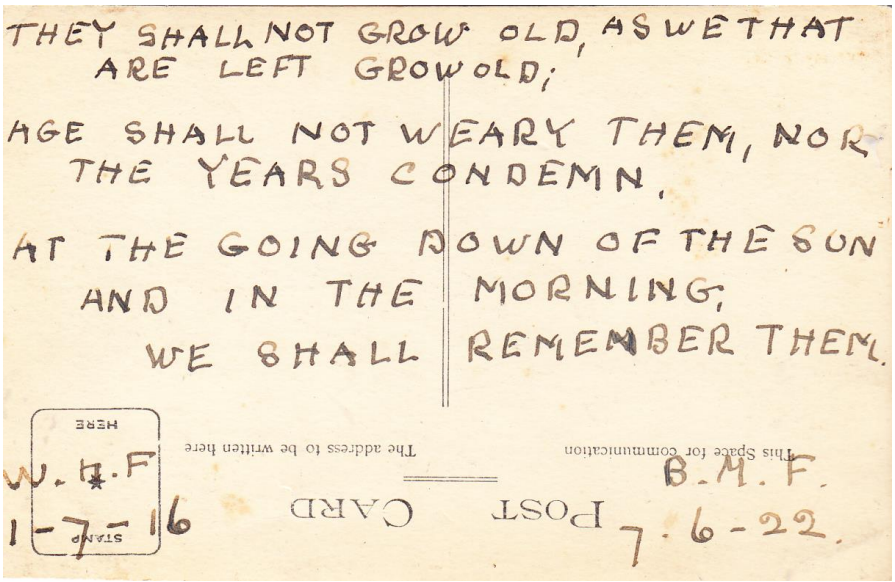
With regard to pension and with some regret, the child was stillborn. [xxxiii]

Figure 11: Quemart Street (above left) where William was given a temporary burial and William's headstone (above right) at Bapaume Military Cemetery.

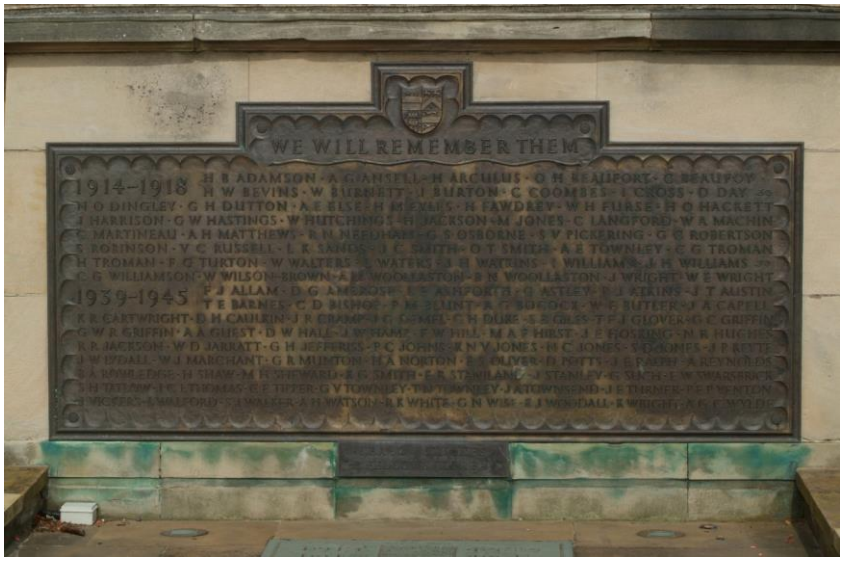
Later that year Alan was hospitalised and then discharged medically 22nd August 1917 unfit for further service[xxxiv]. He became a partner at Cox and Furse, Chartered Accountants before becoming the Director of Bell & Nicholson Ltd in 1940.[xxxv] Neither Alan nor Claude married and continued living at Salisbury Road until they died in 1970 and 1981 respectively.

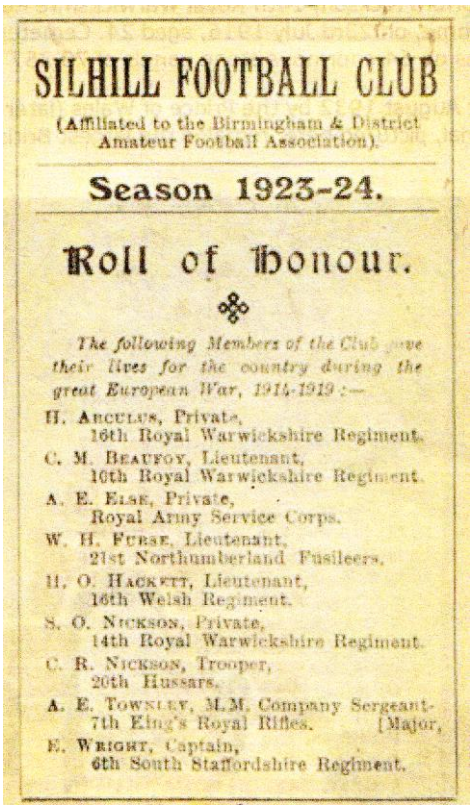
Beatrice continued living at Salisbury Road until she married Frank J D Lindner on 21st January 1921 at St Bartholomew Church, Edgbaston[xxxvi]. She sadly died in childbirth at the Dingle Nursing home in Wake Green Road on 7th June 1922.[xxxvii] Her son James survived and died in 1997.

It likely that William's mother wrote on the front of the postcard (see Figure 7) '*where Bill and Bee spent their honeymoon*' and on the reverse side the fourth verse of the poem by Robert Laurence Binyon written in 1914 to personally commemorate 'Bill and Bee.' The bottom of the postcard records the dates that William and Beatrice died.



William is also commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley, Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club, Solihull School and on the WW1 Roll of Honour at Silhill Football Club and Birmingham Hall of Memory.





SILHILL FOOTBALL CLUB

(Affiliated to the Birmingham & District Amateur Football Association).

Season 1923-24.

Roll of Honour.

The following Members of the Club gave their lives for the country during the great European War, 1914-1919 :—

H. Arculus, Private,
16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

C. M. Beaufoy, Lieutenant,
10th Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

A. E. Else, Private,
Royal Army Service Corps.

W. H. Furse, Lieutenant,
21st Northumberland Fusileers.

H. O. Hackett, Lieutenant,
16th Welsh Regiment.

S. O. Nickson, Private,
14th Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

C. R. Nickson, Trooper,
20th Hussars.

A. E. Townley, M.M. Company Sergeant-Major,
7th King's Royal Rifles.

E. Wright, Captain,
6th South Staffordshire Regiment.

(Top left) Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club WW1 memorial
(Top middle) St Mary's Church WW1 memorial
(Top right) Birmingham Hall of Memory
(Above) Silhill Football Club ww1 Roll of Honour
(Middle left) Solihull School WW1 memorial, 1953 version
(Bottom left) Baupaume Post Military Cemetery just after the war

Graham Richards found the framed photograph (top left) of a WW1 soldier in an antique shop at Stratford-on-Avon many years ago on a visit home to England having emigrated to America around 50 years ago. In it was a newspaper cutting giving details of William Furse's marriage to Beatrice in 1915 and a postcard (Figure 7) featuring where the couple stayed on honeymoon in Formby. Knowing who he was, Graham and his wife, Linda (above right), were able to find more about him on the website of the Birmingham 13 Magazine and, a year later in 2016, the article on 2nd Lt William Henry Furse published by the Moseley Society History Group. They made it their mission to return the framed photo personally to Moseley. On Thursday 29th June 2017 they came to the All Services Club, the home of the Moseley Society History Group and donated it into their care.

Researched and written by Edwina Rees, Moseley Society History Group

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Footnotes

i London, England, Church of England, Birth and Baptisms, 1813-1906

ii a) 1851 census
b) British Picture restorers
http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-british-picture-restorers/british-picture- restorers-1600-1950-f.php

iii British Museum, trade sheet housed with Banks coll., 96.2 and 96.3. See ii b

iv See iib

v 1871 England, Wales & Scotland census transcription
Marriage Certificate of Henry Furse to Florence Mundy Cox

vi Historical Inflation Caculator
http://inflation.stephenmorley.org/

vii See iib
National Probate Calendar, 1858-1966, for 9.11.1891

viii England & Wales births 1837-2006 transcription, 1891, Hampstead, volume 1A, page 632.
England & Wales births 1837-2006 transcription, 1892, Hampstead, volume 1A, page 649.

ix England & Wales Deaths 1837-2007 states DOB as 21.7.1900
England & Wales National Probate Calendar for 1981 for Claude Henry Spencer Fuirse although registered at birth as Harold Seymour

x 1901 England, Wales & Scotland census transcription for Sidmouth, archive reference RG13, No 2024, folio 96

xi 1901 census, Ref RG 13, folio 144, p 27

xii *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 10th July 1916.

xiii *Evening Despatch*, 10th July 1916.

xiv Medal index card transcription, Ref WO372/7 and WO372/7

xv *Moseley B13 Magazine*, June 2014, Issue 439, p 19

xvi National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref W0 339/41091

xvii *London Gazette*, 18th February 1915.
https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29075/supplement/1712/data.pdf

xviii *London Gazette*, 15th October 1915.
https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29328/page/10161/data.pdf
Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/523863/FURSE,%20WILLIAM%20HENRY

xix *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5th October 1915
England & Wales marriages 1837-2008 transcription, Kings Norton, 1915, volume 6D, p 131

xx 1911 England, Wales & Scotland census transcription, Ref RG14PN17854 RG78PN1091 RD383 SD1 ED31 SN98

xxi Newspaper cutting from a Birmingham newspaper dated 9th October 1915

xxii National archives War Diaries of the 21st Northumberland Regiment, Ref WO/95/2462/5, p 6

xxiii National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref W0 339/41091

xxiv The Wartime memories project. Northumberland Fusiliers 21st (2nd Tyneside Scottish) Btn during the Great War.
http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmy-view.php?pid=6794

xxv The Royal Scots, 101st Brigade, 34th Division, 1st July 1916
http://www.webmatters.net/txtpat/?id=120

xxvi *Evening Despatch*, 10th July 1916.

xxvii Carter, Terry, 1997. *Birmingham Pals*: 14th, 15th & 16th (Service) Battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment,
Pen & Sword Books Ltd,, Barnsley, p166

xxviii See xxii, p 26

xxix See xxvii, p 186

xxx The Great War Forum. Brigadier-General Simon Jones
http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=69085

xxxi See xxvii, p 186-7

xxxii Commonwealth War Grave Commission
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx?cpage=1

xxxiii National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref W0 339/41091

xxxiv Silver War Badge transcription
http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbm%2fsilverwar%2fbadges%2f868267

xxxv *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 7th March 1940

xxxvi Birmingham, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1937

xxxvii England and Wales, National Probate Calendar, 1868-1966
Who do you think they were? Stephanie Silk, Moseley B13 Magazine, June 2014, Issue 439, p 18,19

Illustrations

Figure 1 British Museum, trade sheet housed with Banks coll., 96.2 and 96.3

Figure 2 Loynton, J. C. (2010). *A History of Solihull School* ,1560-2010, p 23
http://www.solsch.org.uk/_files/4E7DC2391DC29809398280FAB2EEBE22.pdf?pid=75

Figure 3 From the David Vaux archive with thanks to Oliver Haines, Silhill Football Club

Figure 4 From the Moseley History Society archives

Figure 5 From the Moseley History Society archives

Figure 6 From the David Vaux archive

Figure 7 Newspaper cutting and postcard found in a photo frame donated by Graham and Linda Richards, 29th June 2017

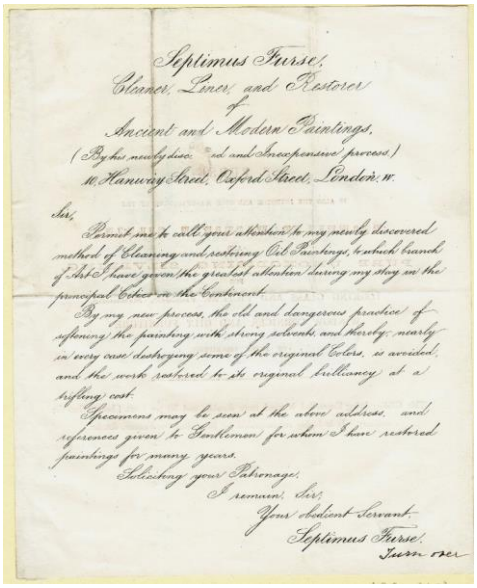
Figure 8 The Royal Scots 1 7 1916
http://www.webmatters.net/txtpat/?id=120

Figure 9 Voices of War and Peace
http://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/portfolio/in-memory-of-bill-furse/

Figure 10 a) Carter, Terry, 1997. *Birmingham Pals*: 14th, 15th & 16th (Service) Battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment,
Pen & Sword Books Ltd,, Barnsley, p 187
b) The Great War Forum
http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/69085-trenches-named-for-soldiers/

Figure 11 See Figure 10a

Figure 12 From the Banks Collection held at the British Museum, Ref Banks 96.3



Septimus Furse,
Cleaner, Liner, and Restorer
of
Ancient and Modern Paintings,
(By his newly discovered and Inexpensive process)
16 Hanway Street, Oxford Street, London, W.

Sir,

Permit me to call your attention to my newly discovered method of Cleaning and restoring Oil Paintings, to which branch of Art I have given the greatest attention during my stay in the principal Cities in the Continent.

By my new process, the old and dangerous practice of softening the painting with strong solvents, and thereby nearly in every case destroying some of the original Colors, is avoided, and the work restored to its original brilliancy at a trifling cost.

Specimens may be seen at the above address, and references given to Gentlemen for whom I have restored paintings for many years.

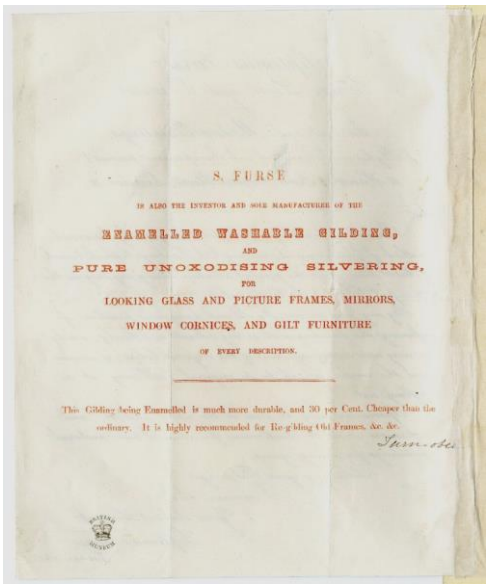
Soliciting your Patronage,

I remain, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

Septimus Furse.

Turn over



S. FURSE

IS ALSO THE INVENTOR AND SOLE MANUFACTURER OF THE

ENAMELLED WASHABLE GILDING,

AND

PURE UNOXODISING SILVERING,

FOR

LOOKING GLASS AND PICTURE FRAMES, MIRRORS,

WINDOW CORNICES, AND GILT FURNITURE

OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

This Gilding being Enamelled is much more durable, and 30 per Cent. Cheaper than the ordinary. It is highly recommended for Re-gilding Old Frames, &c. &c.

Turn over