

Second Lieutenant Francis Claude Uzzell

Francis's great grandfather was William Uzzell, an agricultural labourer. He was born in 1796 and resided most of his life in Kempsford, Gloucestershire.ⁱ On 23rd December 1820 William married Elizabeth Trull at the 12th century church of St Mary's, Kempsford.ⁱⁱ



Figure 1: St Mary's Church, Kempsford, Gloucestershire, 1891 by Samuel Ireland

Over the next fourteen years the couple had eight children: Jonathon (b 1822), Jane (b 1824), Thomas (b 1826), David (b 1827), William (b 1830 but died in infancy), Elizabeth (b 1831), William (b 1834) and Isaac (b 1836).ⁱⁱⁱ

Thomas Uzzell started his working life as an agricultural labourer like his father. On 20th November 1856 he married Caroline Bedwell in the nearby town of Lechlade.^{iv} They returned to Kempsford to live and by 1861, Thomas had set up a business as a beer retailer in the village. Caroline was at home looking after their two children, Henry William (b 1858) and John (b 1860).

A third child, George, was born in the autumn of 1861. Caroline died four years later, in early 1865, leaving Thomas with three young children aged four, five and seven years old.

The 1871 census records Thomas as a publican with his three children now thirteen, eleven and ten. Later that year Thomas died, aged forty-five, leaving the three children orphaned.

The youngest child, George, in 1881 was nineteen years old. He was lodging with and apprenticed to Joseph Haywood a 'nursery and seed merchant' at 51 Broad Street, Worcester.

| TO LANDOWNERS AND FARMERS. | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | One Year's. | Two Years'. | Three or Four Years' Lay. |
| THE BEST "SEEDS" for | 11/ per Acre. | 18/6 per Acre. | 18/6 per Acre. |
| REALLY GOOD SEEDS | 10/ " | 12/6 " | 17/6 " |
| THE BEST PERMANENT PASTURE SEEDS, 30/ per Acre; Good Ditto, 27/6 and 24/ | | | |
| THE BEST YELLOW GLOBE MANGEL SEED, 9d. per lb., 65/ per cwt. | | | |
| HAYWOOD'S GOLDEN PERFECTION MANGEL, a Splendid Stock for Heavy Crop, 9d. per lb., 75/ per cwt. | | | |
| HAYWOODS, NE PLUS ULTRA SWEDE, a Splendid Heavy Cropper, 9d. " 75/ | | | |
| PURPLE TOP SWEDE, several Excellent Sorts..... 8d. " 32/ per bus. | | | |

**AT HAYWOOD'S SEED ESTABLISHMENT,
51, BROAD-STREET, WORCESTER.**

Figure 2: Newspaper advert for Haywood's Seed Establishment for whom George worked

In the autumn of 1894, George married Elizabeth Sarah Simmonds at Worcester.^v They set up home at Muilla, 2 Ashley Villas, London Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham. George was working as a 'seedsman and seed merchant' while Elizabeth remained at home to look after their only child, Francis Claude, born on 27th April 1896.^{vi} George went on to become the 'head traveller' and 'manager' of the firm of seed merchants he worked for in Cheltenham.^{vii}

Francis was educated at Douglas School. On 7th December 1909, Francis took the Certificate and Lower Forms Examinations of the College of Preceptors at the Cheltenham Centre. It was a local examination and Francis achieved a Class 3 pass. Six months later, he retook the examination and achieved a Second Class Pass Division.^{viii} In 1912, at the age of sixteen, Francis became an apprentice at the Frederick Street branch of the National Provincial Bank in Birmingham. In July 1915 he was promoted to clerk at the same branch.^{ix}

On 29th November 1915, Francis enlisted, as a private, in the 26th (Bankers) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers for Short Service for the duration of the war. He was 19 years and seven months old and 5' 7½" tall. His address was given as 7 Hill Crest Road, Moseley. His Regimental Number was B/40047.^x

On 16th August 1916, Francis was posted to France but within two weeks was transferred to 'D' Coy 12th Middlesex Regiment. The regiment had just come out of line at Bailleaux-aux-Cornailles and went into reserve at Armentières. On 26th

September the battalion took part in the assault and capture of Thiepval. A month later, on 26th November Francis was promoted to Lance Corporal.

The following year, on 17th February 1917, the battalion was in support at Boom Ravine. Two months after this attack, Francis was promoted to Sergeant on 6th April 1917.

On the 3rd of May, the battalion saw further action and was part of the assault on Cable Trench towards Cherisy. As in many attacks, the battalion found the wire uncut and under intense machine gun fire from the enemy. There were 120 casualties.^{xi} Francis was wounded in this attack and on 16th May travelled back to England to recover. While at home, Francis applied and was selected for officer training. On 31st October 1917, his training completed, Francis was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant with the 2/5th Royal Warwickshire Regiment (2/5 RWR) part of the 182nd Brigade, 61st (2nd South Midland) Division.^{xii}

Returning to France he joined his regiment in Arras. By the following year the 2/5 RWR was in the front line of the Gricourt sector. On 1st February 1918 the enemy raided the battalions No 1 Post but were successfully repelled, leaving one prisoner.^{xiii}

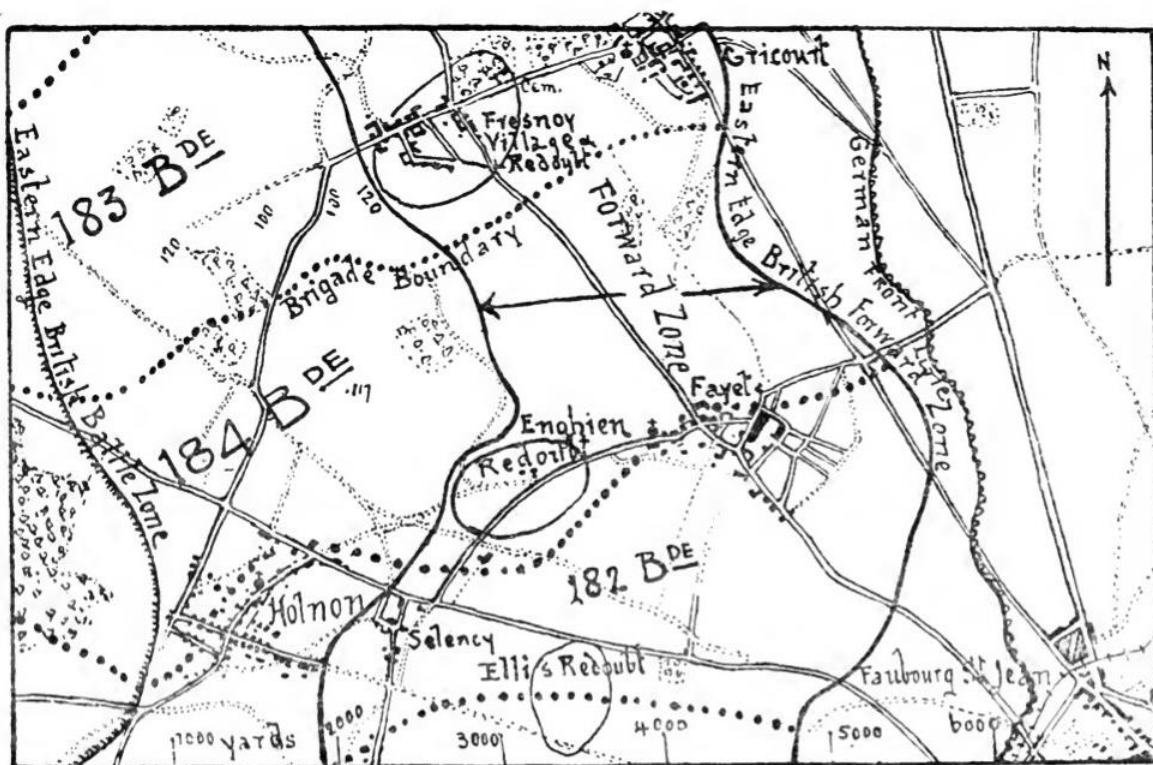


Figure 3: Map showing the British and German front line near Gricourt. The 2/5 RWR was part of the 182 Brigade. The two front lines were particularly close in this sector in 1918

Francis was injured in this attack and died two days later from his wounds at the 61st (South Midland) Casualty Clearing Station based at Ham on the Somme. Francis was buried there. The burial grounds are now known as Ham British Cemetery, Muille-Villette. Francis was just twenty-one years old when he was killed.^{xiv}

Francis is commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley and is named on the National Provincial Bank (NPB) memorial. The NPB memorial was unveiled at its London head office in 1921 and brought together the names of 415 men from its pre-merger banks who had died in the war. The bank also erected generic memorials in its branch offices, bearing no names but worded as 'A tribute to the 2681 members of the staff of this Bank who served in The Great War 1914-1918 and in honoured memory of the 415 who gave their lives for their country.' In larger towns and cities, a more elaborate version of the memorial featured a panel containing the locality's coat of arms.^{xv}



Sec.-Lieut. F. Claude Uzzell, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, the beloved and only son of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Uzzell, of London-road, Cheltenham, died on the 3rd inst. of wounds received on the 1st of Feb. His age was 21. Prior to joining the Forces he was for three years in the National Provincial Bank in Birmingham. He was much respected by all.



Figure 4
 (Above left) Part of a WW1 branch office memorial of the National Provincial Bank
 (Above right) Obituary for Francis from the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucester Graphic*, 9th February 1918
 (Below left) WW1 memorial at St Mary's Church, Moseley

Francis's mother, Elizabeth, died on 15th November 1937 at 17 Priory Street, Cheltenham aged seventy-nine. His father, George, died two years later on 19th December 1939 at 7 Brookway Drive, Cheltenham aged seventy-eight.

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Endnotes

- i Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1813
- ii Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938
- iii Gloucestershire Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1911 for Kempsford
- iv See ii
- v England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, 1994, Worcester, 3/4, 6c, 385
- vi National Archives, Officers after 1913, Ref 374/70312
- vii RBS Remembers
<https://www.rbsremembers.com/remember/our-fallen/u/francis-uzzell.html>
- viii *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 29th January 1910
Cheltenham Chronicle, 26th July 1911
- ix See vii
- x See vi
- xi National Archives War diaries for 12th Middlesex Regiment, Ref WO 95/20441, pp 175-177
- xii See vi
London Gazette, 30th November 1917, Issue 30407, p 12540
- xiii National Archives War diaries for 2/5 RWR, Ref WO 95/3056/1
- xiv See vi

Illustrations

Figure 1 Kempford Church 1791 by Thomas Ireland
<http://thames.me.uk/s02320.htm>

Figure 2 *Worcester Journal*, 18th April 1885

Figure 3 Brigades of the 61st Division with their forward zone and its redoubts
https://oxfordshireandbuckinghamshirelightinfantry.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/fiftharmyinmarch00spar_bw.jpg

Figure 4 See xv
Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic, 9th February 1918