

Second Lieutenant Henry Arthur Matthews

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

Henry's grandfather, William Emmets Matthewsⁱ, born in 1807, was the eldest child of John Matthews and his wife Charlotte (nee Watts). John, born on 24th April 1777, was a farmer of 180 acres and employed 4 labourers and 3 boys at Combe Slade Farm (the spelling of this varies in the censuses) in the Parish of Brailes, Warwickshire.

William married Mary Harris in the Parish of Brailes on 8th February 1827.ⁱⁱ A daughter, Elizabeth, was born later that year and baptised on 12th December.ⁱⁱⁱ Tragically, Mary died the following year, aged only 24. Elizabeth could have been no more than nine months old when her mother was buried on 6th September 1828.^{iv}

On 26th May 1841, William remarried at the Parish Church of Hook Norton, Oxfordshire. His second wife, Sarah, just nineteen years old, was the daughter of John Haynes, a farmer.^v The 1841 census, taken a few days after the marriage, on 6th June, records William living at Combe Slade House, in the Parish of Brailes with his daughter Elizabeth, aged 13 and his wife Sarah, together with his two sisters Charlotte and Kezia, aged 20 and 19 years respectively and his father, John.. In 1843 Sarah gave birth to a daughter, Sarah Ellen, followed by a son, John William in 1845 and lastly, in the autumn of 1846, another son, Samuel Poole.^{vi}

Figure 1: St Margaret's Church, Westminster



The census for 1851, records that William was, once more, a widower. He was farming 90 acres at Sibford Gower, near Banbury, Oxfordshire. His daughter, Elizabeth, aged 25, and the three younger children by Sarah, aged 8, 6 and 4 years were living with him on the farm. Ruth, Sarah's sister was recorded as a 'visitor'.

William married again in the spring of 1851 at St Margaret's Church, Westminster. His third wife was Sarah Colegrove (born 1812), from Burdrop, a hamlet near Sibford Gower.^{vii}

When his father, John, died in 1853 William took over the running of Combe Slade farm. The 1861 census records Elizabeth and Samuel overseeing the farm with the help of three cousins, as William was 5 miles away at Oxhill, quite possibly in his role as a Wesleyan preacher.^{viii}

Samuel, William's youngest son, took a very different occupation to his father, and became an ironmonger in Birmingham. In 1870 Samuel went into partnership with an established ironmongers based at 80 Bull Street, Birmingham and formed the company Evans and Matthews.^{ix} In the spring of 1878, Samuel married Clementina Lovell.^x Three years later, the couple are recorded as living at Anglesea Villa, Gravelly Hill, Aston, with two children, Florence Clementina and Herbert Samuel, born in 1879 and 1881 respectively.^{xi}

The business thrived and by the time the 1891 census was taken, Samuel had branched out to become a 'silversmith and iron monger' and moved his wife and family of six children to a larger home, Richmond House, on the Lichfield Road, in Sutton Coldfield. A further child, Leslie Noel was born in 1897.^{xii}

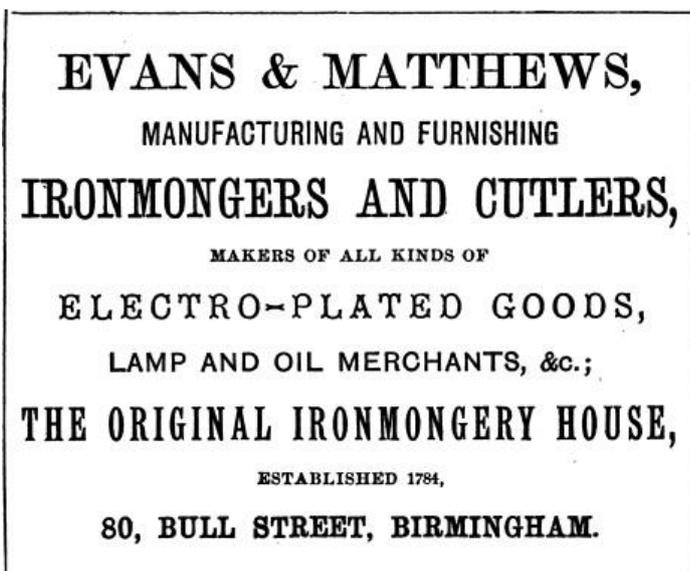


Figure 2
(Top left) An Evans and Matthews trading card
(Top right) An Evans and Matthews canteen of cutlery
(Left) The Evans and Matthews trade mark

By 1911, two of Samuel's sons had joined him in the running of the business, Henry as an assistant and Sidney as a traveller in hardware. The family had moved again to a substantial house at 'Yenton', 14 Amesbury Road, Moseley, Birmingham.



Figure 3: Evans and Matthews Ironmongers, Bull Street, around 1890

Henry, known as Arthur, was born 22nd December 1886. He was a pupil at Solihull Grammar School, now Solihull School, where he was noted as a 'keen hockey player'.^{xiii} When he left school, Arthur continued playing hockey and was a regular player for the Erdington Hockey Club and became its captain. He was described as 'being possessed of great speed and ability to centre and shoot from practically any angle. He was an exceedingly fine outside left-wing player and not only rendered yeoman service to his club but also to Warwickshire County and Midland Counties Hockey Association'.^{xiv}

Arthur was already a member of the Volunteer Corps when war was declared in August 1914, but fifteen months later, on 16th November 1915, he joined the Derby scheme.^{xv}

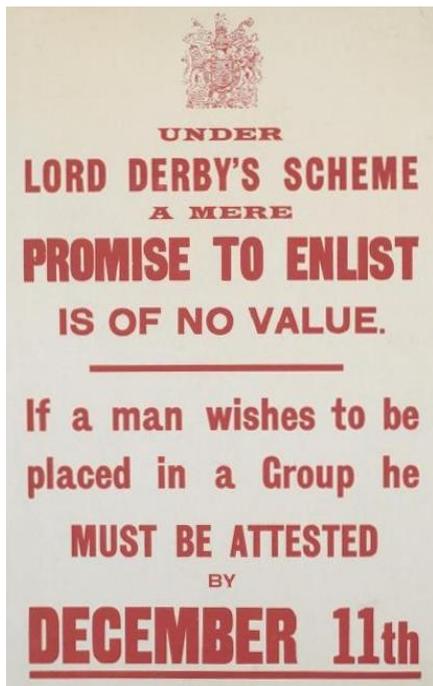


Figure 4: Poster for the Derby Scheme

The scheme was introduced in Britain by Herbert Kitchener's new Director General of Recruiting, Edward Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby (1865-1948). Under the scheme, men aged 18 to 40 were informed that they could continue to enlist voluntarily or attest with an obligation to come if called up later on. The War Office notified the public that voluntary enlistment would soon cease and that the last day of registration would be 15th December 1915.

Arthur took the second option and attested with an obligation to come back later.

On 8th June 1916, Arthur was called up to serve and was posted to the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) and became Gunner H A Matthews, No 96728 and was based at No 3 Depot RGA, The Citadel, Plymouth

A year later, Arthur applied for a commission. At the time of his application, he declared that he was 30 years old and in the employ of his father's business as 'Manager and Director'. His medical records state that he stood at 5' 10" tall, had normal eyesight and was passed as 'fit'. He was gazetted six days later, on 15th June 1916.



After a three month period of officer training, Arthur was posted to 465th Battery, 65th Brigade, RFA. He departed for France to join his new regiment on 28th September 1917.^{xvi}

The 65th Brigade RFA was formed of four 18-pounder batteries made up to six guns each on 7 Aug 1917.

Figure 5: 2nd Lieut H Arthur Matthews

When Arthur joined the Brigade, the 65th RFA had just finished supporting the 59th Division, V Corps in the Ypres sector which at that time was part of the 5th Army under the command of General Herbert Gough.

From 4th to 23rd October the Brigade supported the XIV Corps, firstly, the 4th Division (1st to 4th October 1917) in the Battle of Broodseinde and then the 29th Division (6th to 10th October) in the Battle of Poelcapelle and finally the 17th Division (11 Oct to 23 Oct 1917) in the First Battle of Passchendaele.^{xvii}

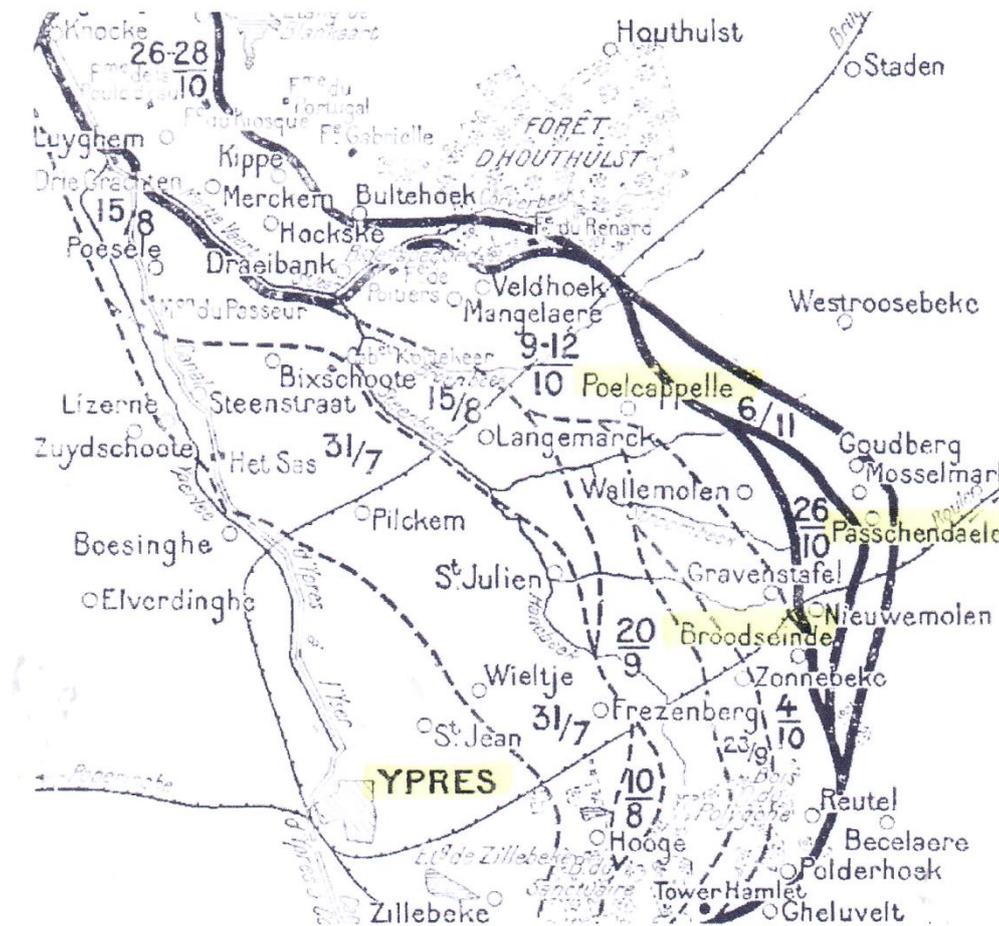


Figure 6: Map showing the locations of Broodseimde, Paelcapelle and Passchendaele in the Ypres sector in 1917

Less than a month after arriving in Belgium, Arthur died. The exact circumstances surrounding how he came to be wounded on the 24th October is not known. He was evacuated to 61 Clearing Station where he died from his wounds the following day. He was just 31 years old. The Clearing Station where Arthur died and was buried became Dozinghem British Cemetery after the war. It is situated west of Vleteren and 8 km north of Poperinghe, Belgium.

His personal belongings consisting of a: disc and chain, cheque book, wrist watch, photo and case (damaged), tobacco pouch, penknife, flask, advance book, signet ring, cigarette case, address cards, match box cover, stud, Franc (souvenir) and papers were returned to his parents.^{xviii}

At the time of his death, Arthur was engaged and about to be married to the daughter of Mr A D Butler and Mrs Butler, of Sandford Road, Moseley.^{xix}

Arthur is also commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley and St Barnabas Church, Erdington and is named on the Roll of Honour at Birmingham's Hall of Memory and the WW1 memorial at Solihull School (1953 version).



Figure 7
(Left) WW1 memorial at St Barnabas Church, Erdington
(Centre Top) Dozinghem Military cemetery, Belgium
(Centre bottom) Solihull School WW1 memorial
(Right) WW1 memorial at St Mary's Church, Moseley

Arthur's two younger brothers, Sydney and Leslie served in the Great War. They obtained their commissions on the same day, 29th December 1915 in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. At the time of Arthur's death, Leslie was in hospital near Torquay suffering from a shrapnel wound in his ankle.

By the bye, Arthur entered the Derby Scheme with his friend George William Stephens, the English amateur cricketer who played first class cricket for Warwickshire from 1907 to 1925.^{xx}

Researched and written by Edwina Rees, Moseley Society History Group

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Endnotes

- i On Williams civil registration of marriage the spelling is with just one 't', but it is likely that it was once spelt with two t's, as it was the maiden name of his paternal grandmother Ann Emmetts.
Reference - Public members tree of the Matthews family, Ancestry
- ii Warwickshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1910
Public members tree of the Lewis family, Ancestry
- iii Warwickshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1910
- iv Warwickshire, Church of England Burials, 1813-1910
- v Marriage Certificate of William Emmits Matthews and Sarah Haynes.
England and Wales Marriages 1837-2005. Ref: Banbury, 1841, 2/4, 16, 23
Spelling error of 'Emmits'. Should be 'Emmets'
- vi 1851 census
England & Wales births, 1837-2006
Shipston-on-Stour, 1843, 2/4, 11, 352
Banbury, 1845, 2/4, 16, 21
Banbury, 1846, 3/4, 16,26
- vii England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, St Margaret,
Westminster, 1851, 2/4, 1,468
1871 census
- viii 1861 census. William was stopping with John Gardner, a corn factor and baker.
- ix Post Office Directory for Birmingham, 1870. The earliest trade directory to list Evans and Matthews, 80 Bull Street
- x England & Wales marriages 1837-2005, Birmingham, 2/4, 6D, 118

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- xi England & Wales Births, 1837-2006 ,
Aston, 1879, 2/4,6D, 401 (Florence Clementina)
Aston, 1881, 1/4, 6D, 446 (Herbert Samuel)
- xii The post-1881 children were, Frank William, Henry Arthur, Ellen Elizabeth , Sydney
Poole and Leslie Noel in 1884 1886, 1888, 1890 and 1897 respectively.
- xiii Loynton, John. *Solihull School During the First World War*, p 51
- xiv *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 29th October 1917
- xv Officers after 1913, National Archives, Ref WO 374/46286
See xiii
- xvi See xiii and xiv
- xvii Great War Forum, Major General R Flory
<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/topic/125645-help/>
Divisions in the British Army in the Third Battle of Ypres
<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battles-of-ypres-1917-third-ypres/>
- xviii Officers after 1913, National Archives, Ref WO 374/46286
- xix See xiii
- xx *London Gazette*, 28th October 1915

Illustrations

- Figure 1 London Churches
<http://princevulpinelondonchurches.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/st-margaret-westminster.html>
- Figure 2 Canteen of Cutlery from the saleroom of Richard Winterton auctioneers
Trading card for Evans and Matthews
<http://www.925-1000.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14729&start=200>
Trade mark of Evans and Matthews
http://www.oldcopper.org/marks/marks_e.php
- Figure 3 Evans and Matthews, Bull Street, Birmingham
<https://twitter.com/BrumMfr/status/902195798506647552>
- Figure 4 Derby Scheme poster
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Derby_Scheme_poster_Nov_1915.jpg
- Figure 5 *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 29th October 1917

Figure 6 Battle of Passchendaele
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Passchendaele

Figure 7 Commonwealth War Graves Commission
St Barnabus Church, Erdington, WW1 memorial
<https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/246647/>