

Moseley Men with No Local Memorial

These articles have been researched and written by Jim Hone who was inspired to tell the stories of those brave Moseley men who died serving their King and country and yet have no local memorial here in Moseley, in order to ensure that their fortitude and sacrifice is not forgotten.

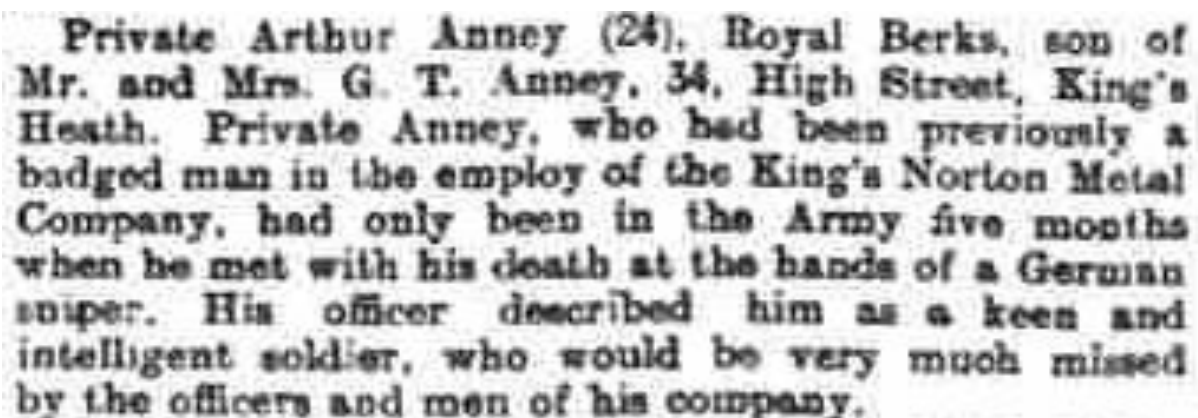
(Articles are listed in alphabetical order of surname)

Private Arthur Anney

Arthur was born in late 1894 to George and Elizabeth Anney. He was the second child in a family of seven children. The family lived mostly in King's Heath (Heathfield Road) but latterly moved to Grange Road, Moseley. Census records show that whilst his father and elder brother worked for Cadbury's, Arthur worked as a shop assistant in a boot and shoe shop.

We know very little of his military career other than he was serving in the 6th Royal Berkshire Regiment, which during the war, saw a very great deal of action. On July 31st 1917 the British Army started an enormous offensive around Ypres known as the Third Battle of Ypres (commonly referred to as The Battle of Passchendaele). The Battalion's War Diary outlines the actions of that day. They lost "around 250 men of which a great number were killed". Arthur was almost certainly amongst the casualties there. He was just 22 years old.

Like so many of his colleagues, his body was never recovered. He is remembered, however, on the famous Menin Gate memorial in Ypres.



Private Arthur Anney (24), Royal Berks, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. T. Anney, 34, High Street, King's Heath. Private Anney, who had been previously a badged man in the employ of the King's Norton Metal Company, had only been in the Army five months when he met with his death at the hands of a German sniper. His officer described him as a keen and intelligent soldier, who would be very much missed by the officers and men of his company.

Private William Walter Bagley

William was the son of William and the late Martha Bagley. He was born in the summer of 1892 the seventh child of ten born to the family. The family lived at 125, St Alban's Rd, Moseley having previously lived in Aston.

William junior is shown on the 1911 Census as a coachwork painter in a pram factory. Confusingly, his father (of the same name) was also shown as doing a similar job. There is not much detailed information about William jr, but we do know that he was a keen cricketer locally.

Military details about William are very scarce, as most service records were destroyed during the Second World War. We do know that he was a private in the 1st Battalion Princess Charlotte of Wales Regiment (more commonly known as The Royal Berkshire Regiment).

Records show that William's battalion was active throughout the War. They were involved throughout the Somme campaign in 1916 where they had major losses. In early May 1917, however, they were based at a place called Rodincourt near Arras. Army records show that there was an Allied raid/attack from trenches there on May 3rd.

It was here that William was killed. His body was never recovered, like so many others. He is remembered on the Arras Memorial to the missing. He was 25 years old.

Private W. W. Bagley, Royal Berks R., reported missing on May 3 inst, now reported killed on that date, was a son of Mr. William Bagley, 12, St. Alban's Road, Moseley. Before the war he was employed at the Warwick Mews, Hurst Street, also at Wells and Mayner's Garage, Ladywell Walk, and subsequently carried on business in Lidyppool Road, Sparkbrook. When reported missing he had been at the front eleven months.

Private Leonard Brinkworth

Leonard was born in early 1894 to Hiram and Eliza Brinkworth of Raddle Barn Road, Selly Oak. He was one of 9 children and along with one of his brothers followed their father into the Brass Tube trade.

We have very little information about Leonard's early life or indeed where and when he enlisted. All we do know is that he served in the 7th Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. Leonard was married. His wife was Eleanor Jessie who lived at 46, Shuttock Lane, Moseley.

What we do know is that the 7th Battalion were very active on the Western Front throughout the war and in the Somme region generally. The Regimental War diary records that on February 23rd 1917, the battalion were in trenches around Montauban. On that particular day, a patrol into no-man's land was ordered. Unfortunately, the patrol encountered opposition and sustained losses. It is most likely that Leonard was one of those casualties. He was 24 years old.

Unfortunately, the area of conflict was hotly contested and forays into no man's land were full of risk for either side. As a result of this, Leonard's body was never recovered. His name however appears on the Thiepval Memorial for those like Leonard who were never found.

After his death, his widow Eleanor left Moseley to live in Bournville. There is no official memorial to him in Moseley other than this account. This is just another story of selfless sacrifice for his country.

Sergeant Henry Augustus Cheeseman

Henry was born on April 20th 1894 in Newport, Monmouthshire to George and Mary Cheeseman of Cardiff. Little is known of Henry's early life other than the family were generally unhappy. So much so that his father deserted the family in 1903 and was not heard from again.

It seems likely that life was tough for Henry as he and his mother moved around the country quite a bit before he made the decision to emigrate to Canada. In 1913, Henry emigrated to Canada and found work there as a clerk. When war was declared, Henry volunteered for the Canadian forces and attested for overseas service on Sept 24th 1914 together with thousands of others keen to answer the Empire's call.

He was assigned to the 10th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry almost immediately. His military record shows a number of pay forfeits for disciplinary problems. Nevertheless, the "Fighting Tenth" as the battalion soon became were glad to have him and he arrived in France on a draft on April 1st 1915.

Within a very short time the Battalion were in action. Over the next few months, they fought in a number of engagements at Gravenstafel (where their CO was killed), St Julien, Festubert, and Mt Sorrell. They were also involved in the Somme Campaign but only in the latter stages when stubborn defence was called for. This was particularly the case at Thiepval and the Ancre Heights.

Throughout this time, Henry survived the fighting and from August 1916 he climbed the ladder steadily until February 1917 when he was promoted to Lance-Sergeant. As an experienced soldier, he benefitted from the extensive casualty figures. But his good fortune did not last too long. On April 24th, he was appointed Acting Sergeant (with pay). This coincided with the start of the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge when the Canadian Forces drove the enemy from the strategically important position at heavy cost. Shortly thereafter, a second engagement developed called the Arleux Loop and it was here that Henry was killed. His body was recovered and he is buried at Encoives Cemetery, St. Eloi.

The story however does not stop there. Some time earlier in December 1916, Henry had been on home leave in Birmingham where his mother was living at the time. He told her that if something happened to him in France, she rather than his father, George, should have any pay etc due to him. When news of Henry's death reached her, she made contact with the relevant military authorities to seek help to fulfil her son's wishes. With their advice, Mary had a legal document drawn up to make a declaration under oath which she signed in the presence of a Justice of the Peace. It appears that this was submitted to the Canadian Forces for consideration. This declaration was fully signed and authenticated on November 29th 1917. It was accepted as legitimate and a payment of 180 Canadian dollars was made on July 28th 1920 over three years after Henry's death.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Henry's Canadian Service Record recorded his mother's last known address as 27, Dovey Road, Moseley.

Sergeant Geoffrey Harry Chester

Geoffrey Harry Chester was born in late 1896 to George and Emma Chester of Rose Cottage, Sandpits Lane, Ludlow, Salop. He was the third child of the family's eight children. The 1911 Census shows that at age 14, he was employed as a lawyer's Clerk.

Very little of his early life is known. He did however enlist in the King's Royal Rifle Corps where he progressed to the rank of Sergeant in their 16th Battalion. Army records show that the battalion

arrived in France in November 1915. It seems likely that Geoffrey was one of the men who answered Lord Kitchener's famous call to enlist and by late 1918 had progressed to Sergeant.

Official records show that the 16th Battalion was part of the 33 Division which was heavily involved on the Western Front throughout the war. In late 1918, when the enemy were in retreat and the end of the war was near, the Battalion were at a place called Engelfontaine near Neuville. The official War Diaries reports that there were heavy engagements during the day which resulted in many casualties, of which Geoffrey was one.

Geoffrey is not remembered in Moseley. He is buried in Montay-Neuville Road Cemetery, Neuville. At the time of his death his parents lived at 69 Tenby Road, Moseley.

Lieutenant Basil Vyse Clark

Basil Vyse Clark was born on November 1st 1896 in La Plata, Argentina. He was the only child of Edward George Clark (A M I C E) and his wife Margaret. George was an engineer who trained at Messrs Hunter and English in Bow where he specialised in design and production of cranes, pumping-engines, dredgers and other similar equipment.

In 1892, George was sent by the firm to Peru to reconstruct and work on a dredger on Lake Titicaca, which is the highest lake in the world. Later on, he oversaw the construction of a canal between Puno and Chicuo Point, and then surveyed for a new port at Huaje.

In 1896, George was appointed sub-manager to the River Plate Electric Light Co in La Plata, Argentina (where Basil was born). Eventually, George became Manager and worked there until 1904 when he resigned due to ill-health. Unfortunately, ill health dogged George until his early death in 1911 aged 48.

The family returned to England in 1904 and Basil studied at Saffron Walden Grammar School until September 1911 when he left to attend Tonbridge School. He was there until Easter 1914 when he left their Science Fifth to begin a civil engineering degree at the University of Birmingham. Unfortunately, his university career did not last too long as he responded to his country's call and enlisted in November 1914.

His first service was with the Life Guards where he was a trooper until November 1915 when he was admitted to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich for which he had received a nomination. The RMA was renowned for training artillery officers, and it is obvious that he did very well there, being promoted to Sergeant and eventually commissioned into the Royal Field Artillery on May 10th 1916. He then joined his Battery on May 20th and served throughout the horrors of the Somme campaign. Regimental records describe Basil as “always cheerful and bright” and this would have helped when, in November 1916, probably due as much to attrition in the officer class, he was appointed Acting Captain commanding V/38 Trench Mortar Battery. This lasted until June 1917 when he became, as Acting Lieutenant, commander of TM Battery Z/38. He saw a lot of action throughout his service and was slightly gassed on a number of occasions. There was also a time when severe sciatica caused a temporary loss of movement in his right arm and leg. After a short spell in Base Hospital in Boulogne, he returned to duty and finally achieved the full rank of Lieutenant on November 10th 1917. Basil commanded this Battery throughout the next few months including the very difficult period after March 21st 1918 when the enemy launched their massive assault on the Allies. He must have done very well as he was “mentioned in dispatches” by Sir Douglas Haig, for his “distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty between Sept 25th 1917 and 25th March 1918”. After this, around May 1918, he left Trench Mortars and was posted to “A” Battery, 121st Brigade Royal Field Artillery.

His service with the Battery continued until July 24th. On that day, Basil was on duty at a forward Observation Post (OP) in front of the line at Acheux some seven miles NE of Albert. This was almost certainly needed to supply corrections to his Battery to improve their accuracy of fire. Unfortunately, these spotters were often targeted by the enemy with counter battery fire. This was what happened to Basil. His OP was hit by a shell and he was killed instantly. He was 21 years of age.

Basil was buried in the Military Cemetery in Acheux. Later, his Battery Commander wrote "His death is a very severe blow to us and especially to me. He was one of my best subalterns. He always did his duty thoroughly and willingly, and he was always merry and bright. In fact we all called him 'Jolly old Clark'. Although he had actually only been a short time in the Brigade, yet he was associated with me previously for some months at Armentieres, when I was with Trench Mortars in my group. He was a sound, reliable officer and his loss will be much felt. He was with us right through the Lys operations and had done very well indeed."

There remain only these scanty details of Basil's life. There is no recognition of him in Moseley. Indeed, records show that his widowed mother soon returned to the South of England. It is apparent that she was only here whilst Basil was at Birmingham University.

Lieutenant Basil Vyse Clark, R.F.A., who was killed in action on July 24, was the only child of the late Edward G. Clark, A.M.I.C.E., of Highfield, near Newmarket, and of Mrs. Clark, of "The Hollies," Greenhill Road, Moseley. Twenty-one years of age, he was born in La Plata, Argentine Republic. He left Tonbridge School in 1914, to begin a course of civil engineering at the University of Birmingham, but enlisted in the 1st Life Guards three months after the outbreak of the war. In November, 1915, he entered the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, as a cadet. He obtained his commission in May, 1916, and was gazetted to the Royal Field Artillery. Two weeks later he joined his battery in France, where he served continuously to the day of his death. He was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's despatches in April last.

Air Mechanic 1st Class John Stanley Clarke

John was born on October 31st 1898, the eldest child of Ernest and Agnes Clarke of 12, Hillcrest Road, Moseley. He was born in Wrexham where his family ran a travelling “bazaar”. There were three other children (2 boys and 1 girl) born to the family in various places around Britain.

The family appear in the 1911 census for Tewkesbury where John is listed as a student. He was educated at the local Grammar School. At a later stage, the family moved to Moseley and John was employed as a clerk at Birmingham University. He enlisted in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in August 1915 (even though he was officially under age!) Despite his age, he served in France from October 1915

The next we hear of him is when he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in June 1917 as an Air Mechanic. He obviously took to his new role very well, as he was quickly promoted to Gunner/Observer in July. There is evidence that he was in a very active area and performed very well. He is credited with one “kill” during his time with 57 Squadron. Unfortunately, John's machine was involved in a dogfight over St Eloi on Oct 10th and shot down behind enemy lines. It was reported that John was buried by the enemy with all due respect. After the war, John's remains were transferred to the British cemetery at Harlebeke in Belgium where he lies with many others from both wars.

Following his death, his CO Major Pattinson wrote “I am very sorry to lose him as he was an excellent gunner and put up a good fight recently against a number of German machines, shooting down one. He was popular with all ranks in the Squadron.”

Corporal Earnest Curbishley

Earnest was born in early 1896 to William Curbishley, an ivory artist, and his wife Fanny. His parents married fairly late in life and Earnest was their only child. We know very little of his early life other than that the 1911 Census shows him working at the age of 15 as an errand boy. At that time, the family were living at 3, Mount Pleasant Grove, Coundon Street, Birmingham. William and his wife moved later to 3, Greenhill Road, Moseley.



*Friends Institute Memorial,
Moseley Road*

As with many casualties of the Great War, there is little documentary evidence available to assist in research of Earnest's military history. However, we do know that he was in the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment as a lance-corporal in their B Company. For someone as young as he was in that rank, he must have seen quite a lot of service and action. The South Staffs wartime record was very impressive as they seemed to have been involved throughout the conflict.

The Regimental War Diary for April 1916 records that B Company were out of the line, resting near Hersin where they were billeted. The entry for April 6th reports that a random 4.2 inch enemy shell fell on the troops and one OR (other rank) was wounded and subsequently died of his wounds. This, sadly was Earnest who died on April 19th.

He is buried with over 800 others from WW1 in the Loos British Cemetery where his grave bears the inscription “Not Dead But Only Sleeping”. There is no memorial to Earnest in Moseley, but he is named on the Friends Institute WW1 Memorial in Moseley Road, Highgate,

Birmingham. He was 20 years of age when he died.

Lieutenant Wilfred Albert Denham

Wilfred was born on December 31st 1893 in Manchester, the only child of Wilfred and Nancy Denham. The family were originally based in Chorlton upon Medlock where the elder Wilfred worked as a cycle manufacturer. At a later date, the family moved to Birmingham and were resident at Northwood House, Alcester Road, King's Heath but eventually settled at The Glen, Chantry Road, Moseley.

The family were obviously wealthy as young Wilfred was educated at Rossall School in Lancashire. This was, and still is, a well known Public School near Fleetwood. Wilfred was a boarder there and became a member of their OTC (Officer Training Corps) as a private. He left the school in December 1910 and returned to his parents in Birmingham. We do not know how young Wilfred occupied himself, but we do know that in early 1914, he was involved in a very serious car accident. Apparently, he was driving on the Bristol Road in Birmingham, when he was in collision with a taxi. A passenger in the car Wilfred was driving was killed and the taxi driver seriously injured. Wilfred and his father were fortunate in avoiding injury. There does not appear to have been any legal follow-up to this incident.

There is little known about Wilfred's early adult years. But after the outbreak of war in 1914, Wilfred eventually answered the nation's call and applied on March 10th 1915 to the 2/4th Northumbrian Brigade Royal Field Artillery for a post as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Territorial Force. On his attestation record he described himself as a secretary and mentioned his OTC service at Rossall. His appointment to the Territorials was confirmed and the unit arrived at Le Havre on April 23rd 1915. Eventually, in March 1916, he was accepted for a commission in the Royal Field Artillery where he was appointed to the 50th Divisional Ammunition Column. The unit had a very busy war indeed, being involved in many of the great battles in France. Their Division, the 50th (Northumberland) Division, earned itself several battle honours for conspicuous service - 2nd Ypres, The Somme, Arras, 3rd Ypres (Passchendaele) and the German Spring Offensive. Very early on May 25th 1918, the German Army launched a stunning attack on the Chemin des Dames. As a result, the allied forces including Wilfred's unit were overrun and destroyed. There were many casualties and the few survivors were mostly captured. Initially, Wilfred was listed as "missing in action" but, after a long and somewhat drawn-out correspondence between his family and The War Office which lasted until November 1919, it was confirmed that he was killed on or around April 25th. Wilfred was 24 years old when he died, and, as his body was never found, his name is inscribed on the Soissons War Memorial along with 3895 others with no known grave. There is nothing in Moseley other than this short tribute to a brave soldier.

2nd Lieutenant James Henry Duffell

See the article on [2nd Lt James Henry Duffell](#) published on the World War 1 project page of the website.

Lieutenant Francis Paul Gascoyne

Francis Paul Gascoyne was born on May 27th 1894 to Edward & Catherine Gascoyne of Chapel Ash, Wolverhampton. He was the 4th of 6 children in the family. Edward, his father was recorded as a Chemist/Druggist with his own business.

The family appear in the 1901 Census at Gill Street, Nottingham, but by the time of the 1911 Census, the family had relocated to Moseley, where they lived at 160, Alcester Road. The family had a chemist's shop at this address from 1904 until 1912 when they moved to Woodhurst Road. It appears likely that Edward may have retired and sold the business on.

Francis attended St Philips Grammar School until he was 16. The 1911 Census describes him as a Clerk in a shop-fitters company. This occupation appears to continue until 15th December 1915 when he volunteered for Army service and was posted, as a Territorial, to the 3/8 Royal Warwickshire Regiment as a Private on March 1st 1916. His training followed until September 1916 when he was posted to the 7th Royal Warwicks. This was essentially a Reserve battalion which supplied drafts of men to fill gaps in the other battalions caused by various losses.

This situation continued until early 1917 when he signed his "Imperial and General Service Obligation" declaration which cleared him for service overseas. At that time, he was stationed at Cheltenham. Francis appears to have done quite well in his service as he was promoted to Lance Corporal (unpaid!) Following on from this, he applied for and was accepted as an Officer Cadet whilst serving at Catterick Camp. Eventually he qualified as a 2nd Lieutenant and was posted to the 8th Royal Warwicks in France on August 1st 1917. The battalion had arrived in France in early 1916 and had seen much action in various engagements.

As a 2nd Lt, Francis would eventually have been given command of a platoon with very little command experience. However, it would not have taken too long for him to have got a taste of real command in tough conditions as his arrival in France coincided with the start of the British offensive that became The Third Battle of Ypres. This was possibly the most horrific and attritional battle of the whole war. The 8th RWR were involved in it and it proved costly to them. Nevertheless, Francis survived this campaign and, along with his colleagues probably enjoyed the lull in fighting that took place from late 1917 until spring 1918. This "quieter" time allowed both sides to rest, recuperate, re-arm and to bring up reserves. The German Army benefited from the collapse of the Russian Army and the consequent armistice on the Eastern Front, and was able to transfer many battle hardened divisions to face a fairly exhausted Allied force. Despite the expectation of an imminent enemy attack, the Allies were taken by complete surprise when, in the early hours of March 21st, a massive attack struck the Allied forces over a wide area. Very quickly, the front lines were overrun by the enemy's storm troopers employing revolutionary new tactics. Within hours the Allies were in full retreat.

Francis and his Battalion were operating in the area around Herbecourt near Peronne. On March 22nd, his battalion was fighting vainly to hold their position, but were eventually overrun. Nothing was heard of Francis, who was posted as Missing. This uncertainty about him continued until well after the Armistice, when the Army wrote to Francis's family to enclose a statement from his CO, Capt J W Griffin M.C Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who had been a prisoner-of-war, about how Francis met his death.

This is his statement:

"On the morning of the 22nd March 1918, 2/Lt Gascoyne was commanding one of the platoons of my Company, which was defending the above-named village (presumably Herbecourt) I saw 2L/t Gascoyne at about 11.30am but at 12 noon, an orderly reported to me that Mr Gascoyne had been killed. I did not see him again, nor can I say if he was buried by

any of my men, because I was captured shortly afterwards, and the position we had been holding was taken by the Germans.”

Francis' body was never found. He is remembered on the Pozieres War Memorial (Panel 18 and 19) for the Missing. He was 23 years of age. He is not featured on any memorial in Moseley.

2nd Lieutenant Howard Hallam

Howard Hallam was born in Balsall Heath on March 25th 1887 to Alderman Frederick and Ellen Hallam. He was their 4th son of six. Frederick was successful in business as well as in local politics. He ran a Corn Merchant's and Grocer's business and one of his shops was sited in Moseley Village at the junction of Alcester Road and Salisbury Road (where Boots used to be).

Howard was a pupil at King Edwards School, Edgbaston from January 1898 where he proved himself as a talented student, particularly in Science and Languages. He also excelled in Sport, and after leaving school played cricket for Moseley CC and rugby for the Old Edwardians.

We next come across Howard in the 1911 Census, by which time he was living with his widowed mother and 4 of his brothers (who were also Old Edwardians) at 24, Strensham Road, Balsall Heath. He had by this time become an insurance clerk with the Royal Insurance Company where he was very happy and made a very good impression.

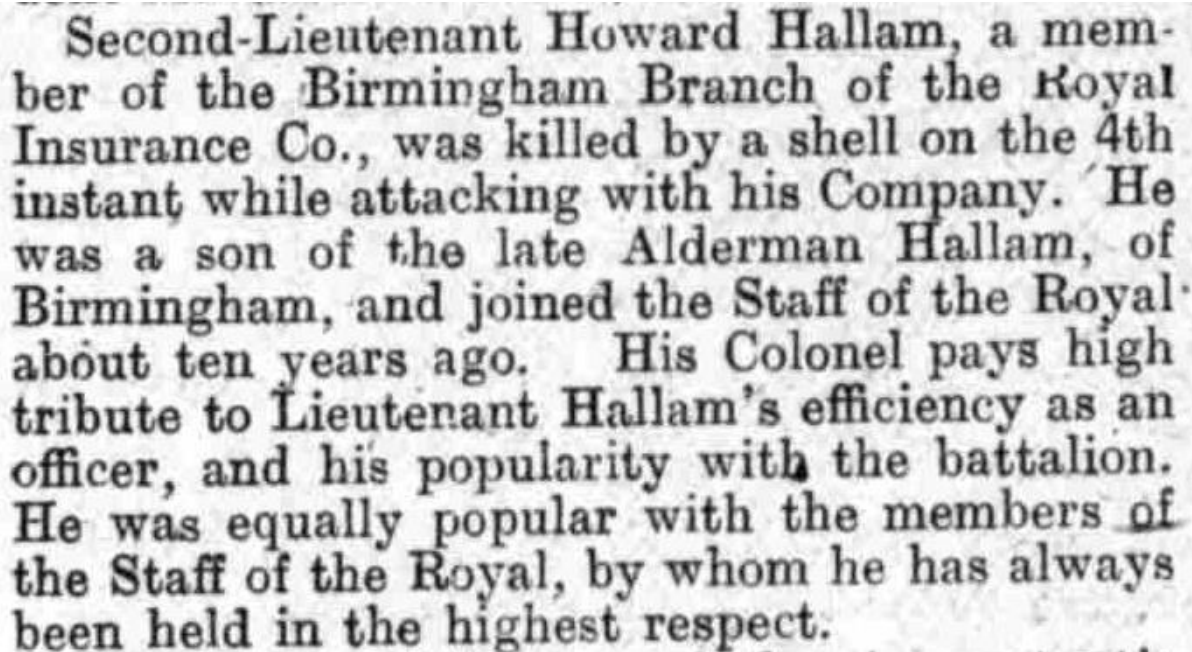
Howard enlisted in late 1914 and joined the Warwickshire Yeomanry as a trooper in A Squadron. After initial training, in early 1915, he was sent with his Regiment to Egypt and eventually to the Dardanelles, where the Allied forces were facing a strong resistance from the Turkish Army. Despite being primarily a cavalry unit, the troopers of the yeomanry became “unmounted” and served in the trenches alongside the infantrymen. Unfortunately, Howard was severely wounded at Suvla Bay. After initial treatment in Egypt, he was brought back to England to convalesce and recuperate in December 1915.

His recovery took several months and when he was fully recovered, Howard applied for and was accepted at the Officer Training College in Oxford. He was successful on the course and in March 1917 was gazetted as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 1/6th Royal Warwickshire Regiment and joined the Battalion in the Ypres area where the Allies were trying to make progress against a very determined enemy. The conditions that either side faced were as dreadful as can be imagined due to the incessant rain they had and the fact that the constant heavy shelling had turned the landscape into a nightmarish combination of mud and shell holes. On numerous occasions the Allied front line was a series of shell holes rather than trenches.

In late July, the Allies launched a huge attack on the enemy, seeking to capture the higher ground around the village of Passchendaele. The attacking forces were predominantly the British and Canadian Armies who faced a well organised enemy who were well set up in deep defences. This soon became officially known as the 3rd Battle of Ypres but has gone down in history as the Battle of Passchendaele. In increasingly horrific conditions the battle became one of the most attritional and costly engagements of the war. The Battle lasted 105 days until the Canadian forces finally captured what was left of Passchendaele village on November 6th. The cost in human terms can only be estimated. The Allies suffered approximately 275,000 casualties and the German Army approximately 220,000.

But, what of Howard? He was killed on November 4th. His Colonel described Howard as a very efficient officer who was popular with his men and was killed by a shell as he led them in an attack. He was 29 years old. Unsurprisingly, his body was never recovered but he is remembered by name on

the walls of the Allied cemetery at Tyne Cot which is just a stone's throw from where thousands of men of both sides died. Thousands of names appear on the memorials there as well as 12,000 graves. There is no mention of Howard on any Moseley memorial.



Second-Lieutenant Howard Hallam, a member of the Birmingham Branch of the Royal Insurance Co., was killed by a shell on the 4th instant while attacking with his Company. He was a son of the late Alderman Hallam, of Birmingham, and joined the Staff of the Royal about ten years ago. His Colonel pays high tribute to Lieutenant Hallam's efficiency as an officer, and his popularity with the battalion. He was equally popular with the members of the Staff of the Royal, by whom he has always been held in the highest respect.

Private Arthur Halley

Arthur Halley was the son of Arthur Halley a saddler by trade and Clara (née Parry), a fish shop keeper. In 1901 they lived at 104 Bell Barn Road, Edgbaston. Records show Arthur Halley was born sometime between April and June 1897 in Birmingham. After the death of her husband in 1905, Clara remarried in 1910. Her second husband was Edwin Charles Bates, a musical instrument maker.

The only trace of Arthur on the 1911 Census is on the lengthy list of boarders at Blue Coat School, Colmore Row in Birmingham city centre. On leaving school, Arthur was employed as a 'Goods Porter' for the London and North Western Railway based at Curzon Street Goods Depot.

Arthur volunteered for military service and found himself in the 6th Battalion of The Royal Berkshire Regiment. This was a "service" Battalion introduced as part of The New Army demanded by Lord Kitchener. After extensive training in various parts of England, the Battalion arrived in Boulogne on July 26th 1915.

The Royal Berkshires were involved in fighting almost at once, but were really heavily involved in the Somme Campaign. The names of their battle sites make sad reading - Delville Wood, Wood Lane, Langemarke etc. However, the War Diaries state that before "The Big Push" of July 1st, the Battalion were involved in the extensive preparation for the attack. On June 29th, they were at Carnoy and suffered heavy losses from enemy counter-battery fire in response to the preparatory artillery barrage. It is here on that day that Arthur was killed.

His body was found and is buried in Carnoy Military Cemetery along with over 800 other British soldiers and airmen. The inscription on his grave reads: "Sadly Missed By His Lonely Mother". At the time of his death his mother lived at 248 Wake Green Road, Moseley Birmingham. Arthur was 18 years old when he died and has not until now been remembered in Moseley.

Mr. Edwin C. Bates, 122, High Street, Bordesley, having already lost in Gallipoli in April his own son, who was in the Worcesters, has now been notified of the death of his stepson, Private Arthur Halley, Royal Berkshires, who was killed in action on June 29. He was educated at the Birmingham Bluecoat School, and prior to the war was employed at the London and North-Western Goods Office, Curzon Street.

Privates John Edward and Henry Clarence Heafield



Private Henry Clarence Heafield

This is the story of two young men caught up in the tragedy of war. They are John Edward Heafield born in late 1891 and his younger brother Henry Clarence who was born in late 1894. They were the sons of James and Rosanna Heafield of 270, Alcester Road, Moseley. James is recorded as an Engineering Foreman and head of a family of 12 children.

The 1911 Census shows the family as resident in Willow Road, Edgbaston and that both John and Henry were listed as "Clerk Merchants". Nothing is known of their education history, but the fact that Henry was just 16 and the family's youngest son rather suggests that they left school at the earliest opportunity.

The brothers were obviously fairly close and when War was declared in August 1914, they felt compelled to enlist in the Army "to do their bit". As a result of the massive response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for recruits, various "Pals" battalions were set up around the country, and Birmingham was no exception. The response in Birmingham was such that three Battalions of the Royal

Warwickshire Regiment were formed. The Heafield brothers enlisted together (their service numbers were consecutive!). Initially they were allocated to the 14th RWR (1st B'ham Pals) for training etc, although they were later reassigned to other battalions.

After their basic training etc in various locations around the country, the brothers as members of the 1st B'ham Pals then found themselves at Folkestone on November 21st 1915, ready for transit to France. The crossing to Boulogne on the SS Invicta went without mishap. After a period of acclimatisation, further training and a lot of marching round Northern France, the brothers had their first experiences of life in the trenches when the Battalion moved to the "quiet" Bray area. They had their baptism of fire there and suffered their first casualties. Later in 1916, the 1st Pals then spent a fairly rough time in the line around Arras before being relieved. Then as part of the 5th Division they served in the Somme campaign. They were not involved in the tragic July 1st attack, but soon enough felt the pain of battle.

On July 23rd, Henry, John and his comrades were ordered to attack a very strong German position at a location called Wood Lane which was a trench network linking the notorious High Wood and

Delville Wood (or Devil's Wood as named by Tommies). The attack was grossly under-prepared. The artillery barrage was limited and ineffective against the defenders. In addition, the lie of the land was much in favour of the enemy. The Pals were cut to pieces by machine gun fire within minutes of approaching the enemy. Amongst the dead was Henry Heafield who was 21 years old. His body was never found and he is named on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing.

The Birmingham Battalions had other costly days during the Somme campaign but Wood Lane was probably the worst. In the period July- October, the Pals' Battalions had over 1000 men killed and many more wounded and missing. Henry's brother John survived the Somme but because of losses, he was re-assigned to the 16th RWR (3rd Birmingham Pals)

The 16th RWR were then moved to the area around La Bassée where the action continued but less intensely. It was thought that the German line opposite was manned by a Bavarian division which had also been badly mauled on the Somme and wanted a more peaceful time. But they did not get their wish as the 16th conducted a number of raids to harass the enemy. This wearing-down process lasted into early 1917 and caused regular losses on both sides.

John, as an "original" Pal was by now becoming something of a rarity. As a private in the 3rd Pals, he survived the turmoil of 1917 which included action at Vimy Ridge (attached to the Canadian Corps), a difficult attack on Oppy Wood and perhaps more significantly the attacks on a German stronghold called Polderhoek Chateau which cost the 16th Pals heavy casualties before it was neutralised.

As 1917 became 1918, both sides were licking their wounds, rearming, reinforcing when possible and generally planning further attacks. The German Army were able to transfer many experienced divisions from the Eastern Front to France following the collapse of Russia. An attack duly happened in the early hours of March 21st which caught the Allies by surprise. Only the stubborn performance of the British Army combined with an element of over-confidence by the German High Command stemmed the tide and paved the way to final victory. John survived all this. However, his luck did eventually run out in August 1918 when, as part of what became known as "The Hundred Days", the 3rd Pals as part of the 5th Division took part in the Battle of Albert. On the 23rd, they were tasked to target the village of Irles near Beaumont. They advanced under a creeping barrage, but were still subjected to heavy resistance. John Heafield was among many men killed here. (An officer Capt Leslie Sayer MC, another "forgotten" Moseley man, died here also). John is not remembered in Moseley, but is buried in Gommecourt British cemetery No 2 in Hebuterne. He was 27 and was, as we know, the second member of the Heafield family to die in the war.

2nd Lieutenant Sidney Hirst



Above and below - 2nd. Lt. Sidney Hirst

Sidney Hirst was born in early 1895 to Sidney Snr and Fanny of Eastgate, 10 Forest Road, Moseley. The family had lived there for many years and were obviously fairly well off as records show they were able to support live-in domestic staff. Sidney Snr is shown on Census records as an estate agent/auctioneer in both 1901 and 1911 censuses. It appears that was the proprietor of the business as Sidney Jnr is listed in the 1911 census as an auctioneer's clerk.

We know little of Sidney's early life other than that he was educated at Tettenhall College, a fairly well-known boarding school. Following his time at Tettenhall, he returned to the family home and continued working with his father.

In August 1914 when war was declared, it is reported from a number of sources that Sidney joined up three days later and became a motor-cycle dispatch rider. Later on, he was involved at Mons and was on active service thereafter. Records show that Sidney advanced to the rank of Corporal in The Royal Engineers (No 2840) before being commissioned in the Royal Flying Corps on October 24th 1917 after a spell as a Cadet from July of that year, which involved courses at Flying School and service in a Training Squadron. Eventually, in February 1918, his appointment as a Flying Officer was confirmed and his promotion to 2nd Lieutenant

soon followed. He was subsequently posted to 103 Squadron which was predominantly a Bomber squadron flying DH9 biplanes.

These aircraft became notoriously unreliable and extremely dangerous to fly. Between May and November 1918, two squadrons of DH9s (99 and Sidney's 103) between them lost 54 machines shot down and had 94 written off due to accidents, as well as the consequent personnel losses. During bombing raids, it was common for less than half of the flight to actually reach their intended target. To achieve a positive outcome, a successful raid relied heavily on the courage, tenacity and ingenuity of the two-man crew.

So it was then, on June 16th that Sidney and his engineer/observer 2nd Lt J M Hughes in their DH9 (C6192) took part in a bombing raid on enemy lines. After releasing their bombs, it appears that on their way back to base, they were shot down near Crape-au-Mesnil. Whether this was due to anti-aircraft fire or in an aerial dogfight is unclear. There is even a suggestion that

Sidney survived the incident but died in enemy hands. We will never know the real story but the Air Ministry after some investigation accepted June 16th as Sidney's and 2nd Lt Hughes' date of death.

His Commanding Officer described Sidney, who died aged 23, as a skilful and absolutely fearless pilot who was well liked by his colleagues and would be sorely missed. Unsurprisingly, Sidney has no



known grave, but is remembered on the RAF Memorial to the Missing at Arras. Sadly, there is no memorial in Moseley.

Sec. Lieut. SIDNEY HIRST, R.A.F., only son of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Hirst, of Forest Road, Moseley, as already reported, has been missing since June 16. A letter received from his C.O. states that when returning from a bombing raid, he went to the assistance of a comrade in difficulties, and it was believed that he was shot down. A communication from the Air Ministry states that from unofficial but apparently reliable information, Second Lieutenant Hirst had died in enemy hands. Second Lieutenant Hirst, who was in his 24th year, joined the army as a despatch rider three days after the declaration of war. He served at Mons, and had been on active service ever since. Last summer he was gazetted to the Flying Force. His C.O. describes him as a skilful and absolutely fearless pilot.

Able Seaman Owen Frederick Hogg MM

Owen Hogg was born on September 10th 1887 the only son of Frederick Birkett Hogg and Lydia Rose (nee Owen). He had a sister Eleanor who was seven years younger than him. Owen's early life was in the Balsall Heath area as his family are shown on the 1891 Census at 53, Brighton Road. Frederick was employed as a managing clerk in stationery manufacture. By the time of the 1901 Census, the family had moved to 82, Wilton Road, Yardley and whilst Owen was at school, his father was now a cashier in retail stationery.

Owen was by now a pupil at King Edwards Camp Hill School (1900-1903) where he had made "very good progress" in most of his subjects, and also gained something of a reputation on the Rugby field where he scored many tries for the school XV. It is clear that, overall, he was a good student with a bright future. The next thing for Owen to sort out was his career, and on January 4th 1904, he joined the London City & Midland Bank.

It is clear that Owen was into banking for the long term. By the time of the 1911 Census, the family, with Owen still living at home, had moved to 99 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook. It appears that he had been working very hard to improve himself and his prospects. This culminated in his success in passing his final Institute of Banking Examination in 1914. By this time, however, Owen had met and married Winifred Florence Payne. The ceremony took place on August 24th 1914 - a few short weeks after the War started.

The next we know of Owen is on December 12th 1915 when he enlisted in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. This may seem strange for a Midland lad, but by this time he was working at the L & M Bank's branch in Paignton, Devon. Having passed his exams, Owen was probably an Assistant

Manager or even a Manager. His very occupation was deemed a reserved one, and it was not until January 1917 that he was called up. Since 1914, there had been a great surplus of naval recruits and not enough ships for them to serve on. Therefore, thousands of them were drafted into the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to provide additional divisions for the Western Front and the Dardanelles Campaign also. It was during his early days in the service, that he and Winifred welcomed their son Derek Owen Hogg (DoB 27.4.17) into the world.

Owen joined the Royal Naval Division as an Ordinary Seaman, but it was not long before he was promoted to Able Seaman. He eventually arrived in France on June 6th 1917 where he was assigned to the Nelson Battalion. There followed a further period of infantry training before being finally reassigned to the Hawke Battalion. However, misfortune struck as Owen fell ill with influenza on March 15th 1918 and after hospital treatment and convalescence did not take up his post with Hawke until September 2nd 1918.

At this time, the Hawke Battalion as part of the 68th Division was heavily involved in actions against the formidable Hindenburg Line. (This episode was one of the deciding factors of the famous “100 Days” period which eventually led to the German surrender and the Armistice of November 11th.) Owen's unit was fighting near Cambrai on October 8th when he was severely wounded to the left leg. He was rescued eventually, and after treatment at a Casualty Clearing Station was taken to the US “Chicago” Military Hospital at Dannes-Cammiers where his wounds were assessed some three days after the injury. It was decided that a new procedure for the treatment of leg wounds, the “Carel-Dakin” method would be tried. Initially things were going well for Owen, but it did not last. Gangrene was found in the leg which had to be amputated above the knee during surgery, he haemorrhaged and needed a blood transfusion. His wife was sent a telegram on October 17th saying Owen was dangerously ill and that she should come and visit him. Whether she did or not we do not know, but suspect she did. Unfortunately, Owen died on October 25th 1918 – a matter of days before hostilities ceased.

He is buried in the Military Cemetery in Etaples. He is remembered on the Midland Bank's Memorial and has a headstone on the family grave in Solihull. His wife, Winifred who lived at 96, Anderton Park Road, Moseley lived until 1970 and apparently never remarried. Owen's son Derek died in 1988 aged 74.



Able Seaman Hogg's medals which were auctioned together with his plaque.

There is a footnote to this story. In 1919, Winifred was informed that Owen had been posthumously awarded the Military Medal for his actions in battle - scant reward for the loss of a beloved husband and father. Incidentally, I have discovered that his medals etc were sold at auction recently for £1500. This is a story of yet another Moseley

man who is not mentioned on any memorials here in Moseley. He is however named on the family headstone at Solihull Cemetery.

Private John Frederick Lewis Hornsby

John Frederick Lewis Hornsby was born on October 4th 1890 to Mr F.G and Mrs S A Hornsby of “West View”, Mayfield Road, Moseley. The family lived there for some time before moving to “Locarno”, Hampton Road, Solihull.

We know very little of John's early life in England, but at some stage, he emigrated to New Zealand and worked there as a farmer. He enlisted in the 1st New Zealand Infantry Brigade on June 14th 1915. His unit, the Wellington Regiment, left for Suez on October 9th 1915 and undertook extensive training in the shadow of the Pyramids, before arriving in France in early 1916.

After a further period of training and acclimatisation, NZ forces were heavily involved in the Somme Campaign from July to November 1916. By this time, John, still a private, was a part of the 9th Company of XII Corps. As a result of their involvement in the Anzac campaign in Gallipoli, the NZ Division were viewed by the Allies as elite troops and were used in very testing situations. In the later stages of the Somme campaign, they were involved in their first major engagement that became known as the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. This was where tanks were introduced for the first time on the Western Front.

The Wellington Regiment was deployed on the 2nd day of the battle (Sept 17th) when the attack had been stopped by various problems but had still managed to hold on to Flers village against many enemy counter attacks. Supported by artillery, they advanced from Flers and captured an enemy position called Grove Alley. They managed to hold it despite atrocious weather conditions which lasted several days. The New Zealanders were continually harassed by artillery and localised attacks from enemy positions overlooking Grove Alley. Despite everything, they held firm until October 4th by which time the NZ forces had suffered 7048 casualties of whom 1560 were killed.

It was during this time that John was wounded by gunshot fire on Sept 17th. Records show that he was rescued and taken to Casualty Clearing Station 15 but sadly died later the same day. He is buried along with many others at Dartmoor Cemetery Becordel-Becourt. He was 25 years old. Although there is no Moseley recognition of John, his name does appear on the NZ Roll of Honour with nearly 17000 New Zealanders..

Private Albert Victor Hunt MM

Albert was born on February 16th 1887 to William and Sarah Hunt of 127, Gooch St, Edgbaston. He was the fourth child of eight born to the family. His father is recorded as a butcher.

By the 1901 census, the family had moved to live at 96, Oldfield Road, Balsall Heath and Albert, then 14, had left school and was employed as a pawnbroker's assistant, where it is likely he had a variety of duties including bookkeeping and shop work. Pawnbrokers provided a vital service for the large number of poor families in the area at that time.

At the time of the 1911 census, Albert was still at home in Oldfield Road, but was no longer working for a pawnbroker. He was employed by Messrs Baldwin and Marriott of Tenby Street as a silversmith, a popular occupation in a booming industry, particularly in Birmingham with its many factories and workshops. When Albert was not working he took a prominent part in various activities in connection with St Paul's Church in Balsall Heath and was a superintendent of the Vincent Street Branch of St Paul's Sunday Schools.

On September 26th 1914 Albert enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) as a private and was posted to the 77th Field Ambulance, which spent most of the war attached to the 25th Division.

His family has a picture of him training as a driver, apparently in a Birmingham Park. In the spring of 1915 Albert married Lizzie Sophia Selvidge and moved to York House, 11 St Mary's Row, Moseley.

On September 27th 1915, Albert arrived in France. In the war, a Field Ambulance was a mobile front-line medical unit manned by troops of the RAMC. It was attached to a particular Brigade and was responsible for setting up and running a number of points on the casualty evacuation chain. At full strength, it would be led by a Lieutenant-Colonel with 9 other officers and up to 224 men in a number of specialised units. Almost certainly, Albert served in the transport section ferrying supplies to the trenches and returning with any casualties.

The Division had a very busy war, as can be imagined. Although not initially involved on July 1st 1916, they were quickly needed to shore up the line after the disasters of that fateful day. By July 3rd they were in action at Ovillers, and thereafter were in the thick of the fighting until the Somme campaign ended in November. Albert was awarded the Military Medal for bravery and devotion in the Battle of the Somme.

There followed similar situations throughout the attritional 1917 battles at Messines, Ypres and Cambrai. The Division suffered horrific losses and Albert's unit must have had some very tough times indeed. Eventually, both sides called a halt to the slaughter from late 1917 to early 1918 to lick their collective wounds and try to recover. The Allies were desperately short of men (as the American Army had yet to become a fighting entity), and most units were well below strength. The Germans, however, were benefitting from the collapse of Russia and almost a million battle-hardened troops were re-assigned to the Western Front. A major attack was expected, as this appeared to be the enemy's chance to win the war. But the question was where and when.

When the blow fell on March 21st, the enemy using new tactics overwhelmed the under-strength Allied defences. Unfortunately, the 25th Division was right in the path of this onslaught and were eventually forced to retreat after heavy losses. Within three days, the Germans had advanced over 20 miles. There are no records or account of the 77th Field Ambulance, but it is recorded that Albert was killed in action on that day. (The Allies lost, in the first three days of the attack a similar number of casualties to the first day of the Somme)

Albert is buried at Achiet-le-Grand Cemetery Extension along with many others who died around that time. He was 31 years old when he died.

Gunner George Ironmonger

George Ironmonger was born on May 18th 1884 to Alfred and Catherine Ironmonger of Balsall Heath, Birmingham. He was the fifth of 9 children (4 girls 5 boys). Their father is recorded on the 1901 Census as a "Canal Carriers Foreman" and the family were living at 11, St Paul's Road, Balsall Heath.

The 1901 Census is the first record we have of George who, at that time was working as a cabinet maker's clerk aged 16. We have very little if any knowledge of his early life and schooling, but he must have done fairly well at school to have obtained employment as a clerk which would have required him to have been proficient in English and Maths.

We next find him mentioned on the 1911 Census when he was living at home with his widowed father and two of his siblings at 34, St Alban's Road, Moseley. Employment-wise, he was still working as a clerk but was now based in a local brewery Mitchell & Butler, where he apparently specialised in statistics.

By the time that war was declared in August 1914, George was 30 years of age. He did not, however, join in the rush to enlist in the armed forces. We do not know why this was so, but he did eventually attest on December 10th 1915 at the Citadel in Plymouth with a view to joining the Royal Garrison Artillery. The following day, he was enlisted as a Private. After initial training, he was mobilized as a Gunner and on April 6th, was posted to the 41st Company RGA at Plymouth which was the central depot for the South West Coastal Defences. Whilst he was there, George underwent a lot of training and eventually achieved a rating as an advanced signaller. After about six months at the depot, George was appointed as acting sergeant on October 10th.

At this time, the British Army was suffering badly in the last throes of the Somme campaign and many elements of their forces were seriously under strength. The RGA were no exception, so in late October 1916, George was posted to the 242nd Siege Battery which in January 1917 was sent to France. Research shows that the 242nd was also known as the “5th Warwickshire Artillery” which may explain George's move. He stayed with them until March 21st when he was posted to the 29th Siege Battery. This was a unit that was equipped with the heaviest artillery pieces and consequently was almost continuously involved in enemy action. When he was in training, George had achieved proficiency as an “advanced signaller” which involved getting accurate sightings of where the fire was falling and assisting the FOO (the Forward Observation Officer) in getting firing corrections to the guns when telephone contact was either not possible or when it had been cut by enemy action. This must have been a very dangerous job.

Throughout 1917, George's unit was involved in many of the year's great battles at Arras and Passchendaele amongst others where great losses were incurred by both sides. However, he managed to survive those attritional battles and like so many others must have really appreciated the relative calm of the very cold, wet winter of 1917/18 on the Western Front. Whilst both sides sought to recuperate and refresh their ranks, it became obvious that the German Army was going to be “on the front foot” as their numbers were being vastly increased as divisions on the Eastern front were released due to the collapse of the Russian Army after the Revolution there. There was, however, great uncertainty as to where and when the attack would happen.

The blow fell in the early hours of March 21st when the enemy unleashed a new style of warfare that foreshadowed the “Blitzkrieg” tactics used in the Second World War. The British Army were very quickly overwhelmed by the speed and ferocity of the attack and, within a few hours the Fourth Army were in full retreat. There was such havoc that several Regimental Commanders were among the enormous casualties. There followed a series of successive German attacks which severely weakened the Allies. One of these was The Battle of the Lys which started on April 9th around Hazebrouck near Ypres.

At this time, George and his colleagues in the 29th Siege Battery had been in action a lot, but were particularly involved in this battle. Details are very sketchy, but it would appear that George was seriously wounded at some stage and was taken to a military hospital near the coast. George unfortunately succumbed to his injuries and died there of what was described as “gas poisoning” on May 8th, aged 34. He was one of approximately 220,000 casualties of the battle.

He is buried in the Boulogne East Cemetery, and is mentioned on the M & B Roll of Honour. There is however no mention of him in his home area of Moseley.

Corporal Gerald Southam Kirk

Gerald Kirk was born in late 1893 to Harry Southam Kirk and his wife Sarah Louise Elizabeth (nee Dean), known as Louise, of “Roscoe”, 3. Sandhurst Road, Moseley. His father was a partner in a Cycle Factors agency based in Birmingham. The family were originally from Southam in Warwickshire but moved to Birmingham some time before Gerald was born.

The first mention we find of Gerald is on the 1901 Census when the family were living at 60, Station Road, King's Heath. At that time the household included a Mr Grunwald, who was described as a partner in Harry's business. Also shown was Gerald's younger sister Amy Vera Southam, known as Vera, (born 1897).

In 1905, Gerald's mother died and in the spring of 1910 his father remarried. His second wife was Edith Ellen Lilly. The 1911 Census shows that the family had by then moved to Sandhurst Road, Moseley and Gerald was no longer living at home.

Gerald was educated at Bourne College, a boarding school in Quinton, Birmingham for sons of Primitive Methodists. The College's aim was to prepare boys from the lower middle classes for professions ranging from bricklaying to bookkeeping. They were also very keen to provide physical skills as well as educational ones and encouraged football, cricket and tennis activities. It is thought Gerald would have stayed at Bourne Collage until age 15/16 in 1907. He was the president of Ye Old Red Lion Bowling Club in Kings Heath.

The local press reported that Gerald enlisted in the army at the outbreak of war having previously been at sea.. He enlisted in the 14th Battalion of the London Regiment – better known as The London Scottish (who fought in kilts throughout the war). The Battalion achieved fame by being the first Territorial Battalion to join The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in September 1914 and they were the territorial unit in action against the enemy at Messines later the same year.

Gerald, however, after training etc arrived in France on April 23rd 1915 which coincided with the start of the 2nd Battle of Ypres. Thereafter, he was involved in a number of major battles at Loos and Festubert amongst others. He came through these unscathed until January 1916 when he was with “C” Company. It is recorded that he was admitted to the 2nd General Hospital at Le Havre on January 9th with a serious leg wound. He was subsequently discharged from Hospital on Feb 18th and returned to the UK for convalescence.

The next information about Gerald is that he returned to France on June 10th 1917 when the Battalion had been reorganised into the 168th Brigade in the 56th Division. They were again in the thick of the fighting, during which Gerald appears to have performed well enough to have been promoted to Corporal and Mentioned in Dispatches.

Eventually, the Battalion took part in the famous Battle of Cambrai where the Allies first introduced tanks. Initially they were quite successful and the enemy positions were quickly overrun and much ground was captured. Then rather controversially, the High Command dithered about following up the initial success. The delay allowed the Germans to regroup and counter-attack.

During the counter-attack, the London Scottish fought a local skirmish at a place called Boulon Wood on November 28th. They were heavily shelled by the enemy and it was here that it was reported that Gerald was killed by a shell explosion before his group was forced to retire. Consequently, Gerald's body was never recovered but his name appears on the Cambrai Memorial to the Missing in Louverval along with 7000 others.

Gerald was 25 years old when he died. Later, his company officer wrote that he was “one of the best NCO's we ever had and was extremely popular with the men”. Originally, Gerald's name appeared

on the Roll of Honour at Bourne College in Quinton and on a formal plaque at the College itself. Sadly, the plaque was lost when the building was demolished in 1967. However, following an appeal project by the Quinton Local History Society, a replacement made by a local artist, Paul Baker, was installed in the new Quinton Centre in 2001. Gerald's name appears on it along with 29 others.

Private Charles Ledbrook

Charles was born in 1881, the son of John Ledbrook of Woodbine Cottages, Billesley Lane, Moseley who is listed as a general labourer/gardener. We have little or no real knowledge of his early life, other than that he was apparently educated in Bickenhall, Warwickshire and later became an agricultural labourer in the Kings Norton area.

What records we have discovered show that Charles was a member of the 4th Worcestershire Regiment, and that he was posted to the Dardanelles on July 24th 1915. It seems likely that he was not a Regular soldier but had enlisted in what was a well-known local regiment which had many local men in its ranks.

Shortly after his arrival, his Battalion were facing the Turkish Army at an area of difficult ground that became known as Krithia Vineyard. The plan was to attack the enemy there in order to relieve the pressure on the Anzac forces around the Lone Pine area. On August 6th 1915, the 88th Brigade (29th Division) attacked the Turkish positions. There was initial success and trenches were captured but subsequently lost to counter attack. The action went back and forth over a prolonged period but was finally abandoned. The attack was under prepared and not supported by artillery and was looked upon as a disastrous fiasco, so typical in many ways of the Dardanelles Campaign. The cost to the Allies was enormous. There were 3469 casualties on the first day alone and the overall loss over two days was 4000+. The Ottoman losses were thought to be over 7000! The attack did not really help the situation at Lone Pine where the Anzacs continued to fight and die. It was here at Krithia Vineyard that Charles was killed. Unfortunately, like so many others, Charles' body was never found and his name appears on the Cape Helles Memorial.

Private Ernest Chandos Prinn

Ernest was born in late 1885 to George and Celia Prinn of 79, Constitution Hill, Birmingham. He was one of eight children in the family, who later resided at 271, Moseley Road. His father George died when Ernest was very young, and he and the other siblings were raised by Celia alone, who was recorded as working as a pattern maker in the textile trade.

Ernest appears in the 1901 Census where he is listed as worker in the cycle industry, one of many thousands of workers doing the same thing in Birmingham. By the next Census in 1911 Ernest had changed direction and was working as a silversmith.

Unfortunately, there is little information available about Ernest's later life and his military career. What we do know is that he joined up and was in the Gloucestershire Regiment initially in the 14th Battalion, but later in the 1st Battalion and finally in the 8th Battalion.

The Gloucesters had a very busy war and suffered greatly. So it was that the 8th Glosters (as they were known) were at Oosttaverne in the Ypres/ Messines area on July 23rd 1917. At that time, they were facing a strong German defensive line known as the Oosttaverne line which was an Allied objective after the Battle of Messines Ridge. The official War Diary records that the 8th were "in the line improving trenches" which probably meant that it was a relatively quiet time but was still subject

to enemy activity and subsequent losses. Ernest was killed on that day but there is no definitive information about how it happened.

Unfortunately, Ernest's body was never recovered and he has no known grave. His name is however inscribed on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres for the thousands of Allied troops who have no known grave in the Ypres area. There is no memorial for Ernest in the Moseley area, but he is named on the WW1 memorial for Birmingham Head Post Office Staff at the Mail Centre, St Stephens Street, Birmingham

Private Vincent Charles Reeve

Vincent Charles Reeve was born on August 9th 1896 to Joseph and Emma Reeve who were living on the premises of the cycle manufacturing business that Joseph owned in St Stephen Street at the time of the 1901 Census. Vincent was the 6th of 7 children of the family, which was wealthy enough to employ a servant.

By the time of the 1911 Census, the family, which had not increased, had moved to 183, Alcester Road, Moseley, where Vincent, aged 14, was shown as a student. This was another sign of the family's affluence as most boys were already in work by that age.

Nothing is known of Vincent's life until War was declared. As in many places in Britain, there was a huge rush of young men wishing to enlist in Birmingham and 3 Birmingham Pals battalions were formed very quickly. Vincent was one of these young hopefuls and found himself as one the first recruits in the 2nd Birmingham Battalion. His Army service number was 173 which made him an "original".

There followed a very strenuous and difficult training regime which required much moving around training areas all over England and a great deal of harsh discipline to prepare these young men for the rigours and demands of modern warfare. Training lasted from early January 1915 in Sutton Park until November that year at Codford Camp on Salisbury Plain. The wonderful book "The Birmingham Pals" by Terry Carter (ISBN 9781848844223) paints a vivid picture of this phase of the Pals' development.

The 15th Battalion together with its fellow Pals units sailed to France on November 21st on the SS Invicta and reached Boulogne around 10am. As part of the 32nd Division, Vincent's battalion had to undergo a period of acclimatisation and extra training before their introduction to trench warfare. The 15th Royal Warwicks were then posted to the Bray sector near to Maricourt. Losses were incurred, despite it being a "quiet" sector at that time; their biggest enemy was the mud. But by the end of February, they were on the move again, this time to the Arras sector.

The Arras area was a very active area with a lot of contact with the enemy one way or another by way of sniping, shelling and machine gun action. The 15th Battalion were quickly into the routine of trench time and rest in reserve. This continued as the weather improved and the conditions became more bearable. On May 22nd 2 platoons of the 15th were ordered to make an evening trench raid on the German position opposite. Despite detailed planning and preparation, the raid almost completely failed and many officers and men became casualties. It was apparent that the enemy were ready for them and were able to bring heavy firepower into play. The 15th suffered badly on that day but were quickly becoming more experienced in the business of fighting.

On the sunny afternoon of May 4th as normal trench life continued, the trenches occupied by the 15th were suddenly subjected to very heavy shelling from the enemy. Many casualties were caused by this and then three mines were exploded. One of them obliterated a length of trench and the other two

produced huge craters in front of the Battalion's position. The enemy's artillery then moved their aim to rear support areas. This was the signal for their infantry to attack. Although some enemy got into the front line trenches, they were soon repulsed at great loss. There was some hand to-hand fighting before the raid ended with many casualties on both sides. Vincent survived the raid which had caused the Battalion 114 casualties (including 70 killed or died of wounds).

The next few days were quieter as both sides licked their wounds. The 15th had much work to do in order to repair their trench system which had been extensively damaged before and during the raid. The work continued reasonably well in the next few days, but on May 15th a random German “whizz-bang” smashed through the parapet and exploded in part of the trench occupied by A Company killing four men outright and wounding another four. Unfortunately, Vincent was one of those killed. He was 19 years old.

His body was recovered and is buried in the Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery near Arras along with many, many others from the Birmingham Pals Battalions who had died since the move to the Arras area. There is no memorial to him in Moseley.

Acknowledgement is given for the information gained from Terry Carter's book which has proved invaluable.

Lance Corporal Oliver Rudd

Oliver Rudd was born in July 1897 to William and Amy Rudd of Northfield, Birmingham. William worked in the pen making trade which was a very significant industry in Birmingham in the late 19th century. Oliver was the youngest of the family's three boys, the others being Alexander (born 1892) and George (born 1894).

The first record of Oliver is in the 1901 Census which shows the family living at 227, Bristol Road, Northfield. At that time, William was recorded as a commercial traveller whilst his wife Amy looked after the family.

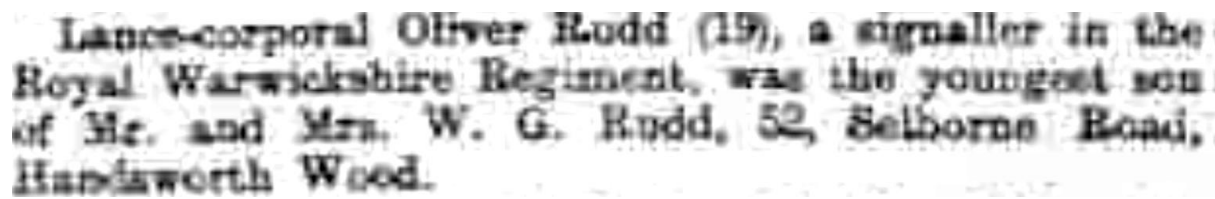
By the time of the 1911 Census, the family had moved to live at 109, Holly Road, Handsworth. Oliver is recorded as being a 13 year old scholar. Unfortunately, we know nothing of either his schooling or his subsequent working life until the outbreak of the War when he answered the call to arms and enlisted in the 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment - otherwise known as the 1st Birmingham Pals. The family later moved to 9, Ascot Road, Moseley.

It appears that Oliver must have been one of the first volunteers to enlist after the outbreak of war in August 1914. His service number 486 confirms this. He enlisted in the 14th Royal Warwickshire Regiment which was eventually renamed as the 1st Birmingham Pals. There followed several months of preparation and training in several locations across the country. Eventually, in August 1915, the Battalion were moved from a camp in Hornsea to Codford Camp on Salisbury Plain where their final battle training took place. They were there until late November when, as part of the 32nd Division, they embarked on the SS Invicta from Folkestone to Boulogne. For the next few months the 1st Pals were in and out of the line before moving to Vaux sur Somme for more training. After this episode, there followed more time in and out of the front line mostly in the Arras sector. Just a few weeks later, the great Somme offensive began. Fortunately for Oliver and his battalion, they were not involved directly on the disastrous first day. But their time would arrive soon enough. Later in July, there was heavy fighting in the area around the infamous High Wood and Delville Wood where the enemy were well established. These woods were connected by a farm track which was known as Wood Lane and was an enemy strongpoint. This was to be the objective for the 1st Pals on July 23rd as part of a

“concerted” night offensive. The enemy were about 300 yards away but no man’s land sloped upwards slightly. This was crucial as the advancing men were very visible as they crested the slope.

The result was disastrous. The Battalion were hit by overwhelming machine gun fire and were forced to return to their start line. They took 485 casualties of which 194 were killed in a very short time. The accompanying battalion of the King’s Own Royal Kents suffered similar losses. Overall in what was described as a preliminary attack, over 1000 casualties were incurred - a familiar story in the early Somme campaign.

It was here that Oliver was killed, aged 19. His body was recovered and he is buried alongside many comrades in the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery in Longueval. There is no memorial to this brave young man.



Lance-corporal Oliver Rudd (19), a signaller in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Rudd, 52, Selborne Road, Handsworth Wood.

Lance Corporal Philip Augustus Salt MM

Philip Salt was born in January 1893 to Edward and Anna Salt of West Bromwich. He was one of 3 boys and 1 girl who made up the family. Edward was a draper by trade, an occupation which in later years his children followed to some degree. As years went by, the family moved around and by the time of the 1901 Census, they were living together at 53, Holly Lane, Erdington. Eventually, the family moved to Moseley living at 125, Sandford Road.

Philip was 8 years old at the 1901 Census and interestingly, his father, Edward is recorded as being a retired draper which seems unusual at age 44. Philip was at school locally as far as we can tell. By the time of the next Census in 1911, when Philip was 18, the family, which now showed 1 daughter and 2 sons resident, had moved to 66, Durham Road, Sparkhill. All of the children were now involved one way or another in the drapery trade, which may well have been the family business. One brother was a clerk, the daughter was a drapery assistant, but Philip was shown as a wholesale wool warehouse assistant.

On 1st September 1914, Philip answered his country’s call and enlisted in the Army. Strangely enough, this took place in Bodmin, Cornwall. Almost immediately he was posted to the 1st Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry (DCLI). For Philip, there followed the usual exhausting field training before he and his comrades were sent to France. They arrived there on May 21st 1915 and became part of the 95th Brigade. The main part of the 1st Battalion had been in France since the first weeks of the War (and indeed served the whole war in France except for a few months service on the Italian Front.) Philip served with them and must have done reasonably well as he was temporarily promoted to Lance-Corporal in October 1915 probably due to his ability as a machine-gunner. He was getting experience of life in the trenches but then, in March 1916, he was posted to the 3rd Battalion which was a Reserve battalion stationed on the Isle of Wight where his experience would have helped in training the new troops. This continued for him until mid-July 1916, when he was returned to France as the Battle of the Somme needed much reinforcement after terrible losses.

Philip must have been heavily involved in the Somme fighting but he survived. Late in November 1916, the 1st DCLI was part of the 95th Brigade that was sent to serve on the Italian Front where the Austrian Army was severely threatening our Italian allies. Eventually, the DCLI returned to France in

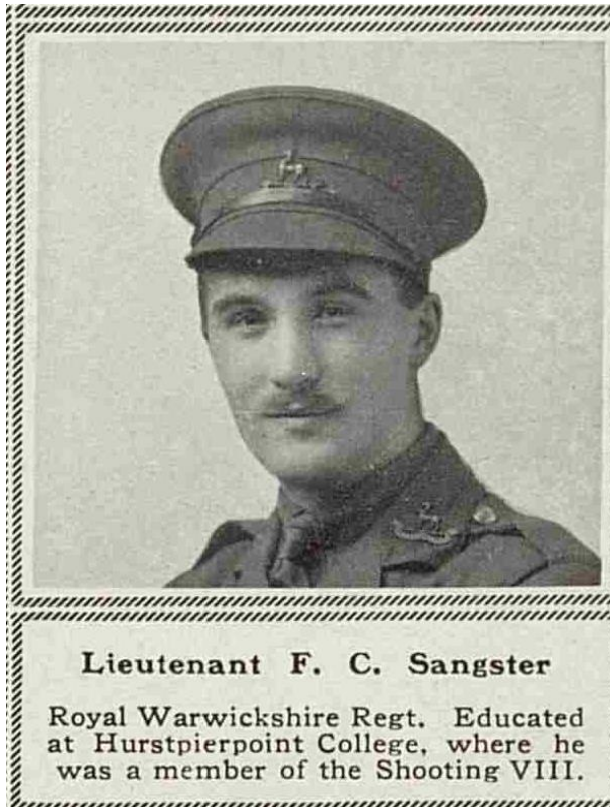
April 1918 following the German Spring Offensive. On his return to France, Philip voluntarily reverted to the rank of private and on April 20th was transferred to the 25th Machine Gun Corps probably due to his expertise but also possibly as a volunteer.

The situation his Corps faced in April 1918 was a desperate one as the German Spring Offensive was into its second month and the British Army was in almost full retreat. It fell to the Machine Gun units to do their best to hold up the advancing enemy shock troops and cover any infantry retreat. They were also vulnerable to enemy artillery which benefitted from accurate sightings of their positions.

So it was then on April 26th that Philip and his unit were in action somewhere in the Ypres sector, when he was killed in action aged 25. It is most likely that their position was overrun and no prisoners were taken in the fierce fighting. Due to the situation in that sector, Philip's body was never recovered. He is remembered though on one of the wall panels at Tyne Cot Cemetery at Zonnebeek near Ypres. His name is one of about 35,000 officers and men who died in that area but have no known grave. An interesting point is that The Machine Gun Corps suffered over 61,000 casualties killed, wounded and missing during the war out of 170,000 men (36%) - a relatively high rate which underlines their bravery. There is no recognition of Philip in Moseley.

However, the story does not quite end there, as in August 1918 Philip was awarded the Military Medal for his actions. Unfortunately, there remains no account of what they were or what the citation quoted. Suffice it to say that he was a good, brave soldier, recognised and rewarded for his actions. This would have been of some consolation to his family at home.

Lieutenant Frederick Charles Sangster



Frederick Charles Sangster was born on April 27th 1894 to Charles and Louise Sangster in Coventry. He was the elder of their two sons. Charles appears to have worked in the cycle industry there.

We next find the family in the 1901 Census where they are listed at 197, Bristol Road, Edgbaston. By this time, Charles is shown as manager of a cycle factory. We know little of the family then, but do know that at some later stage they moved to live at "Overdale" 161, Russell Road, Moseley. This indicates that Charles was a very successful businessman, so much so that he was able to send Frederick to school at Hurstpierpoint College in Sussex where he excelled at most sports, and crucially for his future, became a member of their Officer Training Corps.

He served in their OTC for two years and one term, reaching the level of Sergeant. Eventually, he resigned at that level, so as to attend the Public School Camp at Aldershot in 1908 and 1909. He even represented the Course in their shooting team, having qualified in Course B Musketry where he was marked "proficient".

After leaving Hurstpierpoint, Frederick returned to Birmingham to take up a place at Birmingham University, where once again he was very active in their OTC, actually taking part in some 40 drills. Whilst he was at University, it is unclear whether he completed his engineering degree or not. Thereafter, he joined The Dunlop Rubber Company, where he worked as a manager. What type of work it was is not known, but to be in a management role at such a young age was unusual. What is interesting is that he is reported to have been prominent in the relatively new circle of motoring.

At the outbreak of the War in 1914, he was still at Dunlop, but that did not stop him from answering his country's call to arms. On Sept 8th, he volunteered and was immediately accepted as a Private in the 14th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (The 1st Birmingham Pals). After only a few weeks of service, he was promoted to Sergeant on October 19th. His battalion eventually arrived in France in late November and had its first taste of life in the trenches in Northern France. He obviously

impressed a lot of senior officers as he applied for and was granted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. He then returned to England for Officer Training.

On completion of his training, Frederick returned to France on May 25th 1916 just before the start of the Somme Campaign, whereupon, he was transferred to the 16th Royal Warwicks where he was assigned to A platoon, which saw a lot of action from July onwards. By late August/early September, the Allies were making slow progress in the Somme area. Major attacks took place around Guillemont with limited success and serious losses. In the period Sept 1-4, Frederick's battalion were fighting around a German strongpoint at Falfemont Farm. At one stage in the fighting, the War Diary reports "A" platoon were held up by enemy fire just a few yards from the enemy's front line. They were ordered to dig in and were trying to do so under heavy fire. It was during this action that

Frederick was severely wounded. He was evacuated to Casualty Clearing Station 5, but sadly died of his wounds on Sept 6th aged 22. Frederick is buried at Corbie Community Cemetery near Amiens and does not appear on any Moseley memorial. He is however named on Hurstpierpoint College's WW1 memorial.

LIEUT. F. C. SANGSTER (DIED OF WOUNDS).

Lieutenant Fred C. Sangster, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who died on the 6th inst. of wounds received in action, was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sangster, Overdale, Russell Road, Moseley. Lieutenant Sangster joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as a private in September, 1914, and was almost immediately promoted to the rank of sergeant. He was granted his commission in the same battalion in December of that year, and on going to the front was transferred to another battalion of the Warwicks. He was educated at Hurstpierpoint College, Sussex, where he was a member of the O.T.C., and foremost in all sports. He was well known in motoring circles in Birmingham, and at the outbreak of war was employed by the Dunlop Rubber Company. Lieutenant Sangster was 22 years of age.

Captain Leslie Sayer MC



Captain Leslie Sayer

Leslie Sayer was born on September 15th 1893 to Henry James and Ada Sayer of Beech Croft, Belle Walk, Moseley. He was one of five children born to the family of a former Lord Mayor of Birmingham. Records show that Mr Sayer Senior was a metal merchant by profession.

Leslie was educated at Winterbourne School in Moseley and then later in his school career in January 1908 moved to King Edwards School. Although a late entrant to the school, he did very well and excelled in most subjects and was a member of the school's Officer Training Corps. He left KES in 1910 and began work as an accounts clerk in his father's metal merchant's business where he was, presumably, learning the business as a background to his possibly taking over later in his life.

On the outbreak of war, Leslie was one of the first recruits to enlist in the 14th Battalion RWR (1st City Battalion) otherwise known as the "Birmingham Pals" on Sept 10th 1914. During his lengthy training, he must have made a good impression as, by January 21st 1915, he was granted a Temporary Commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the same Battalion. After subsequently achieving a permanent rank of 2nd Lt, his progress was such that he was promoted to full Lieutenant in November 1915 just

prior to the Battalion's arrival in France.

Leslie certainly had a very active war, serving in major battles (the last two being part of the Somme Campaign) at Arras, Mametz Wood and finally at Morval, where he was wounded. It was at Morval that Leslie won the first of his Military Crosses on Sept 27th 1916. The official citation read as follows: "During an attack, this officer led his company to the final objective with magnificent courage and ability. When a withdrawal became necessary, he saw a gap on the right flank and at once took his company and established touch with the flanks. He did splendid work reorganising and consolidating the position under very heavy machine gun fire."

Leslie suffered a serious leg wound and was evacuated back to England. His recovery took four months, by which time, the Somme Campaign was at an end. He rejoined his Battalion in early 1917 after they had been sent to Italy to reinforce their beleaguered ally. Later that year, he was promoted to Captain.

In 1918 the British Army were being driven back by the many fierce German attacks which began early on March 21st and continued into the summer when the tide began to turn as the impetus of the enemy offensive began to fade. From the beginning of August, the Allies began to get the upper hand. On August 23rd, the Battalion was at Beaucourt on the River Ancre. Leslie's Division attacked and according to witnesses, he led his company with "magnificent courage" to take and hold their new position. Unfortunately, Leslie was shot and killed during the action. However, his valour was recognised with the award of a Bar to his Military Cross.

Leslie's body was recovered and he was buried in the Shrine Cemetery in Bucquoy. It seems strange that such a brave young soldier from a distinguished local family, whose father had recently been Lord Mayor of Birmingham, is not remembered officially anywhere in Moseley.

As a footnote, Leslie's brother Alfred Henry Sayer also won an MC and Bar. He was very seriously wounded in the shoulder in an attack two days before Leslie was killed. Mercifully, he survived and later became Chairman of Birmingham City Magistrates.

Lieutenant William Bernard Sherwood RAF

William Bernard Sherwood was born on March 28th 1890 to William Snr and Kate Sherwood of Packington, Derbyshire. The elder Sherwood is recorded in subsequent censuses as a Commercial Traveller in the textile trade. William junior was an only child until 1908 when his brother Charles Noel arrived as a late addition to the family, which by this time had relocated to 129, College Rd, Moseley.

Young William attended Coleshill Grammar School from 1903 to 1906 where he obtained a Foundation Scholarship by competitive examination in 1904, passed the Junior Cambridge Local Examination in 1905 and attained a good educational standard, according to S G Fenn, Headmaster. Thereafter, William attended New Hall College, Sutton Coldfield. Following his spell at College, William is recorded on the 1911 Census as an insurance surveyor.

It is apparent that William was very much into machines and engines and became a skilful motor cyclist in his spare time. When war broke out in 1914, he continued his insurance work, but was very keen to "do his bit". To this end, he enrolled in a Civilian Flying School with a view to maximising his prospects of joining the Royal Flying Corps. He also gained experience by flying with qualified pilots at Hendon where his knowledge of plans and maps (from his surveying duties) was a particular asset. Eventually, he was successful and obtained his Royal Aero Club Aviator Certificate (No 2123) on November 27th 1915.

Interestingly, William had originally applied to join the RFC in July 1915 by way of The Special Reserve of Officers, and then again in November, he made another request which was at last successful. Initially, it appears that he was appointed to as a Temporary 2nd Lt from February 16th 1916 and was posted to 4th Reserve Squadron at Northolt on February 21st and then on March 15th to 11th Reserve Squadron where his field training was completed.

He was subsequently appointed Flying Officer on May 25th and posted overseas to 29 Squadron where he served throughout most of the Somme campaign. This involved general patrolling over an active battle front and attacking the enemy aircraft (mostly Fokker fighters). As a result of the squadron's efforts, air superiority was gained for most of the campaign until new German fighters were introduced late in 1916. This was obviously a very testing and stressful time for William and, as a result of such sustained action, he became unfit for duty and was admitted to No 7 Station Hospital in Boulogne suffering from "Nervous Debility" on November 29th. (This diagnosis was something of a generalised term for what we now recognise as post traumatic stress disorder..PTSD, but at this time was rather frowned upon and considered a weakness of spirit.) Nevertheless, he was unable to carry on and remained on sick leave until March 23rd 1917 when he was assessed as fit for light duties. This involved admin duties at Squadron HQ and occasional ferrying of planes to active airfields. He was however eventually passed fit for flying duty in April 1917 and returned to 29 Squadron. There followed a spell where the squadron was active in the Ypres area, but unfortunately, William again fell sick and was admitted to hospital on June 2nd with a recurrence of his nervous debility. He returned to duty on August 2nd but with 60 Squadron which at that time were stationed on Marie Capelle aerodrome near Cassel (HQ of the British 2nd Army). This was a time and place where the 2nd and 5th Armies were attacking almost every day as part of the Third Battle of Ypres. In addition to the Squadron's ordinary work of offensive patrols, wireless interception etc, they co-operated with the

Army by low flying and firing at troops and transport on the ground. Occasionally they also dropped Cooper bombs on “suitable” targets.

In one of the accounts of the Squadron's activities at this time, William was mentioned by name as being very conspicuous and successful during the fighting in October. However, it was shortly after this that William's luck ran out. On 27th October 1917, he was flying an SE 5a B534 when he left Ste-Marie-Cappel aerodrome at 12.40 on an Offensive Patrol, and was shot down at Moorslede. Vizefeldwebel Carl Menckhoff of *Jasta 3* was credited with a victory; it was the 15th of his eventual 39 victories. After William was reported missing on October 27th, much investigation over many weeks could find no trace of him or any evidence of what had happened to him. His mother, not unnaturally, was very anxious for news and corresponded regularly with the Air Ministry seeking answers. Enquiries were even made to check whether he had been captured and was a prisoner of war. Nevertheless, for official purposes, William is shown as having died on October 27th 1917 in the vicinity of Passchendaele. His name appears on the Flying Services Memorial to the Missing at Arras. There is no memorial or recognition of William's service and sacrifice in Moseley.

Corporal Alfred Stockton

Alfred was born in 1894 in Saltley to John and Jane Stockton of George Arthur Street, Aston. He was one of eight children of the family. His mother had been a widow for some time but was helped by four of her older children being in full-time employment, mostly as warehouse operatives.

By the time of the 1911 Census, the family had moved and were now resident at 372, Washwood Heath Road. There were now only 3 children with Jane, one of whom, rather surprisingly, had been adopted. Even more surprisingly, Alfred, aged 17, was no longer living at home as he was now a student, living in the household of one Arthur Dade of Forest Cottage, Kinver. The 1911 Census records Mr Dade, 47, as a schoolmaster and Alfred, his boarder, as “a student for schoolmaster”. This presumably means he was training to be a teacher under Dade's or someone else's tutelage. There were two schools in the village, a primary one and Kinver High School, but we cannot be sure where he trained.

Alfred, now 20 years old, answered the call to arms when war was declared in August 1914. He is listed as joining The Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry, a popular regiment in the Birmingham area.

Records show that he reached France on September 21st 1915. His regiment was heavily involved in fighting throughout the rest of 1915 including The Battle of Loos (25th September to 8th October 1915) and a subsequent attack on Te Hohenzollen Redoubt. On both occasions they suffered heavy losses and were severely depleted and eventually withdrawn to rest and recover. Alfred was fortunate to survive those attacks and indeed, he progressed in the Battalion and soon became a Corporal. His good fortune continued for quite some time thereafter. The Ox and Bucks fought throughout 1916 including the Somme Campaign where they suffered greatly at familiar places such as Mametz, Pozieres and the Ancre. Alfred's battalion were also suffering at Waterlot Farm, Delville Wood, Guillemont and Beaumont Hamel.

After the trials of 1916, the Regiment were moved for rest to rear areas near Arras in early 1917. Their next major engagement was The Battle of Arras (April 19th - May 16th) and this is where Alfred was wounded. He suffered serious bullet wounds to his arms and legs. It is most likely that he was brought back to England for treatment. His recovery took many months before he was able to return to action. His family had by this time moved to 122, Tenby Road, Moseley.

In the meantime, the British Army was being heavily attacked as Germany made a do-or-die effort to win the war before the Allies could bring US forces into action. There were manpower shortages,

divisional reductions and heavily reduced regiments disbanded. So, when Alfred returned to France in June 1918, he was posted to the 7th Wiltshire Regiment which was part of the 50th Division. They, like most British divisions were being fiercely attacked but eventually the tide was turning for the Allies. A major offensive began in early August with a stunning advance around Amiens. This began what was to become known as “The Hundred Days” which ended with Germany’s defeat on November 11th. Alfred’s battalion was fighting in the area of the St Quentin Canal at a place called Prospect Hill on October 2nd when he was severely wounded and eventually died of his wounds on October 4th just 5 weeks before the Armistice. He was 24 years old.

He is buried in the Unicorn Cemetery Vendhuile near Cambrai along with over a thousand other Allied Comrades. There is no memorial to him in Moseley.

Lance Corporal Ralph Richard Walters

Ralph was born in January 1897 to Richard and Florence Walters of 86, Grove Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham. He was one of five children born to the couple. Richard is listed as a fitter/toolmaker. We know very little about Ralph and his siblings. By the 1911 Census the family had moved to 9, Baronet Grove, Tottenham in North London, close to Edmonton where Richard was born in 1868, and Richard was working for a company making cartridges and other ammunition.

Eventually, the family returned to Birmingham to live at 37, Tenby Road, Moseley. We know nothing of Ralph’s education or employment history, but we do know that he enlisted in the army in Birmingham. As to when he enlisted, we can only surmise that it may have been in the 1915/16 period due to his age. Nevertheless, what we do know is that he was initially posted to the Royal Hampshire Regiment as a private (Serial Number 206174).

The Hampshires have a proud record of service in the field and were heavily involved in many of the fiercest fights in 1916 and 1917 losing many, many casualties. Those years were very costly to the British Army and with the supply of new recruits drying up somewhat, it was decided to reorganise Divisions into smaller units. This resulted in regiments/ battalions being disbanded or amalgamated. This is what appeared to happen to Ralph’s battalion, which became part of Princess Charlotte of Wales Royal Berkshire Regiment in early 1918.

This was a very difficult time for the British Army as the Germans were very much on the attack after their massive surprise attack in March. Thereafter a number of other attacks severely weakened the Allies and threatened them with total defeat. However, the enemy were suffering greatly too and in early August, a brilliant Allied attack around Amiens caught the enemy by surprise. This was followed up by what is now known as “The Hundred Days” which eventually led to the Armistice on November 11th.

Ralph’s Regiment, the 5th Royal Berkshires were certainly involved. Their War Diaries show that on August 26th they were ordered to make an attack on an enemy position east of Carnoy at 4.45am. After a long route march to their assembly point, the attack went in but was beaten back by heavy machine gun fire suffering heavy casualties. Ralph, now a lance-corporal was one of those who was killed. He was 19 years old.

He is buried in the Peronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt. There is no mention of him in Moseley at all.

As a footnote, his sister Ethel Walters died in May 2005 - aged 107!

Sergeant Frank Walton



Sergeant Frank Walton

Frank Walton was born in July 1891 to Jonathan and Caroline Walton of 3, Wake Green Road Cottages, Moseley. He was one of four sons and a daughter in the family. The 1901 Census describes Jonathan as a farm waggoner working for a local farmer. An elder brother George is listed as a plough boy, whilst Frank was still at school.

By the time of the 1911 Census, the family were still at Wake Green Road, but only Frank and his sister Rose were still living at home. Frank is listed as working as a domestic gardener. Interestingly, it appears that the Census form was signed by Frank rather than his father. Later on, in June 1914, Caroline died and the family moved to 252, Wake Green Road. Frank was a regular member of the congregation of Yardley Wood Church.

Little is known of Frank until Sept 1915 when he arrived in France. We do know, however, that he enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment in Birmingham. He would certainly have undergone a gruelling training period before arriving in France.

At the time of Frank's arrival in France on September 22nd 1915, the 3rd Worcesters were part of the 7th Brigade (3rd Division), but shortly thereafter, on Oct 18th, 25th Div were transferred to the 74th Brigade (25th Division). This Division was very actively involved in fighting, particularly in the Somme Campaign in 1916. Frank undoubtedly must have seen a lot of fighting and lost many of his colleagues, but he must have made a positive impression as he was made an Acting Sergeant which was a key role for a young, relatively inexperienced soldier. On July 7th, the Division were at Aveluy Wood and were ordered to attack an enemy position near Ovillers. Like so many at that time, the attack was under-prepared and not supported by artillery. It was intended as an effort to consolidate small gains obtained on July 1st.

The Battalion were hit by machine-gun fire and suffered heavy casualties. Unfortunately, this included Frank, who was killed outright aged 25. His body was never recovered, but his name is included on the Thiepval Memorial for The Missing along with over 72,000 others who also have no known grave.

Private Albert Cecil Wheeler

Albert was born in early 1892 in the village of Much Marcle in Herefordshire. He is something of a mystery, as details of his parents cannot be found. The first we hear of him is on the 1911 Census where he is recorded as a servant in the household of Hubert and Emma West of Wellesbourne Hastings in Warwickshire. Hubert West was the proprietor of a baking and confectionery business. Although he is classified as a servant, his occupation is listed as a baker.

We have no information at all about how Albert ended up in Warwickshire. It is known that he lived at various times in Smethwick and Redditch but nothing more than that. It is possible that the West family had recruited him as a young apprentice and given him a home if he did not have a proper one but that is only conjecture.

What we do know is that Albert enlisted in the Army and was posted into the Royal Worcestershire Regiment as a private in the 1/8th (Territorial) Battalion. This unit was raised in Worcester in August

1914 and after training landed in Boulogne on March 31st 1915 where it became part of the 144th Brigade, 48th (South Midlands) Division. The Division was heavily involved in the Somme Campaign and is recognised for its capture of Ovillers.

Albert, however, had other things on his mind around that time as he married Elsie May Humphries in Redditch in August 1916. The Commonwealth War Grave Commission's records state that the couple's home was 29, Passey Road, Moseley.

The War, however, continued into the very attritional struggles of 1917 and the Royal Worcesters were very much involved. The War Diary of the 1/8th Royal Worcesters recorded that on April 24th elements of the Battalion (Platoons A,B,C &D) attacked in an area near to Gillemont Farm called the Homecourt Outpost. The attack failed causing casualties. It is most likely that Albert was killed in this action.

Albert's remains were recovered and he is buried in the Temple-Eaux-Guerand Cemetery alongside many of his fallen comrades. His name does not appear on any memorial in Moseley. He was 25 years old.

Private Wallace James Winter



Private Wallace James Winter

Wallace James Winter was born on November 11th 1881 to Thomas and Hannah Winter of 26, Alcester Road, Moseley one of the family's eight children. Thomas is recorded as being a builder with his own business.

We know very little of his early life until 1901 when the Census of that year showed the family still at Alcester Road, and that Wallace was described as a commercial clerk. What then transpires is something of a surprise. At some stage, he was employed as a clerk at The Palmer Tyre Co. Ltd in Coventry (which later became part of the Dunlop Co Ltd) and probably then lived in Coventry. On November 19th 1907, he appeared in court to face three charges of theft and embezzlement over a period of six months. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 6 months hard labour.

Wallace's Canadian Service Record indicates that he served one year in the 7th Royal Warwickshire Regiment but it is unclear as to when exactly that took place. This RWR unit was a Territorial battalion recruited from and based in The Drill Hall, Queen Victoria Road, Coventry. (This building subsequently survived until the late 80s before being demolished as part of urban redevelopment).

The next census in the spring of 1911 shows Wallace living with his brother-in-law Llewellyn Morgan and family at 512, Stechford Road, Sparkhill and working for his baking business as a clerk. However, shortly after, he decided to seek his fortune in Canada and, in July 1911 sailed on the SS Corsican for a new life in Canada, arriving in Quebec on July 21st. Wallace found employment as a book keeper. He also joined the 72nd Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders, an active Canadian Militia.

In March 1915 Wallace attested for the Canadian Expeditionary Force at New Westminster in British Columbia. He had served in the local Active Militia from the outbreak of War with his previous service in UK standing him in good stead despite the fact that he was already 33 years old and quite

small physically at 5ft 3in! The militia service was with the Seaforth Highlanders and latterly the 47th Battalion. On attestation, he was enlisted in the 7th Battalion of the Second Reinforcement Draft.

After training and preparation, the Draft duly arrived in England on July 4th 1915. They then served a period of acclimatisation before reaching France on Sept 9th. Wallace was finally taken onto the strength of the 7th (British Columbia) Battalion on October 16th. They were involved fairly continuously in action thereafter, particularly in the latter stages of the Somme campaign in Summer 1916.

Interestingly, in his attestation, Wallace nominated his next of kin as a Miss Gertrude Rowe of 1, Coppice Road, Moseley. Apparently, they had kept in touch whilst he was in Canada. So much so that in August 1915, he was given leave to return to England and the couple were married in Bromsgrove on August 28th.

Wallace's unit was part of the 1st Canadian Division on the Western Front which really came into its own during the bitter campaigns of 1917. Like most of the Empire soldiers, the Canadians were considered crack troops so they were given a lot of very demanding tasks. These included the famous capture of Vimy Ridge, the Battle of Messines and perhaps the worst battle of all The Third Battle of Ypres (which culminated in the capture of Passchendaele after 3 attempts to do so!) The 1st Division were tasked on November 10th in torrential rain alongside the British Army to take a vulnerable salient above Passchendaele. This area was secured eventually after German artillery had unmercifully pounded it for four days, but had not been able to dislodge the allied defenders. Shortly after this action, on November 15th The Third Battle of Ypres was called off. It has been estimated that there were 244,897 British and Empire casualties, 8525 French and some 230,000 German.

It was on November 10th that Wallace Winter was killed just one day before his 36th birthday. Initially he was noted as Missing - wounded. However it was soon discovered that he had been killed in action. The whole area of the battle was virtually impassable due to the flooding of various streams and the constant torrential rain that autumn. Unsurprisingly, Wallace's body was never recovered. However, his name is engraved on the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres along with thousands of others who have no known grave in the Ypres area. There is a beautiful memorial in New Westminster British Columbia for the fallen from WW1 and it is to be hoped that his name appears on it:

Bombardier William Wright RHA



Bombardier William Wright RHA

William was born in Needwood nr Burton on Trent in 1888 to William and Ellen Wright. He was the eldest of four children in the family. They were Harry (Born 1890), Herbert (Born 1891), and Helen (Born 30.11.1892). William senior is listed as a plumber who eventually had his own business. Unfortunately, Helen died in late 1893 when Helen was barely a year old. The family were living at 21 Chapman road, Balsall Heath at this time.

We next find the family in the 1901 Census living at 414, Chandos Avenue, Moseley where William senior was bringing up William, Herbert and Harry. The daughter Helen is not shown but may have been living with another member of the family. In late 1903, William senior remarried. His bride was Lucy Ann Brookes who was the sister of his first wife, Ellen. The family was completed the following year when their son Arthur was born.

By the time of the next Census in 1911, the family had moved to 50, Woodbridge Road, Moseley. William senior had by now set up his own plumbing business and William junior was working there too. 1911 was a significant year

for William junior, in that he married Hilda Blunn and later that year on October 13th joined the Birmingham Fire Service and was posted to the Aston station.

Life continued normally for William Jnr until June 1914 when Hilda had a daughter, Agnes Adela. This was a turbulent year for the world with tension in the Balkans which resulted in the Sarajevo assassination leading to the outbreak of World War 1. Like thousands of his contemporaries, William volunteered for service. Two years earlier, his younger brother had enlisted in the Royal Horse Artillery and was serving with E Battery. So, not unnaturally William followed in his brother's footsteps and, after enlisting, was allocated to L Battery as a Driver (No 38972).

The Battery arrived in France on August 14th 1914 and was involved very quickly with the enemy. They were heavily engaged in the Battle of Mons and during the famous (or infamous) retreat, they took part in a desperate action at Nery on Sept 1st. Around dawn, the Battery was attacked by a much larger German Horse Artillery force. Both sides then fought it out dismounted, and all battery's guns except one were put out of action. The last remaining gun continued to fire until reinforcements arrived and routed the enemy. Three Victoria Crosses were won that day and there is a famous painting of the incident. After the battle, L Battery was decimated by its losses and was withdrawn to reform. William survived the battle and lived to fight another day.

The Battery was withdrawn from the line and it is likely that they allowed their men some leave time back in Britain. William must have had the opportunity to do this as Hilda fell pregnant in late 1914. This confirmed by the Birmingham Daily Gazette which reported on October 28th that William, "one of the heroes of L battery", had returned home on leave.

The next we hear of William is in April 1915, when as part of the 29th Division, his 15th Brigade RHA were landed in Gallipoli. The Division were involved in a number of battles – the capture of Sedd el Bahr, the 3 Battles of Krithia, the Battle of Gully Ravine and the Battle of Krithia Vineyard. The majority of the Division then served at Suvla, but William's Battery stayed around Cape Helles. They did a fair amount of trench fighting. And so it was on October 13th that the official War Diary reports

“No 38972 Bombardier W Wright killed by HE shell in F O Station (Forward Observation Post) - Captain Percival standing nearby just scratched”.

William was initially buried nearby but apparently the burial site was lost. He is however on a special memorial at Pink Farm Cemetery at Helles (but not in Moseley). What was even sadder was the fact that his second daughter Gwendoline Ellen was born on Sept 19th and her father never met her and was probably unaware of her arrival. William was 26 when he died.

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