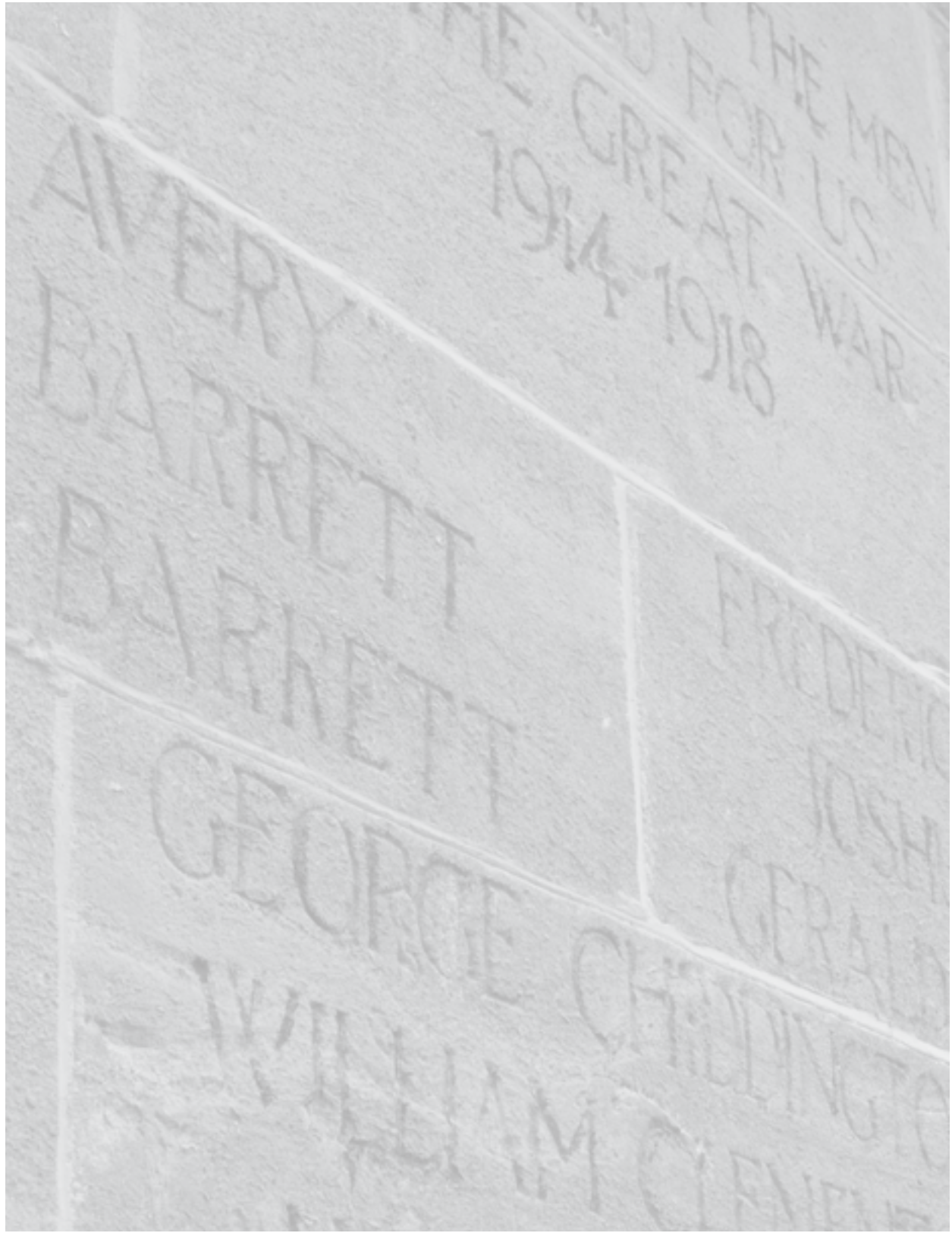


THEY WERE A WALL

WHEATLEY IN A WORLD
AT WAR 1914-19



THEY WERE A WALL



GREAT FOR THE US MEN
1914-1918 WAR

AMERY
BARRY
FREDERICK

FREDERICK
JOSH
GERALD

GEORGE

WILLIAM CHILLINGTO
CLEMENT

THEY WERE A WALL

WHEATLEY IN A WORLD
AT WAR 1914-19



WHEATLEY BRANCH, THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
THE WHEATLEY SOCIETY

2014

‘THE MEN WERE VERY GOOD UNTO US, AND WE WERE NOT HURT.

THEY WERE A WALL UNTO US BOTH BY NIGHT AND DAY.’

1 SAMUEL, XXV, 15, 16.



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Published by the Wheatley Branch of the Royal British Legion, and the Wheatley Society

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PREFACE

This book was an initiative of the Wheatley Branch of the Royal British Legion. The Wheatley Society joined in and an informal group was set up to include volunteers who regularly service the Wheatley Village Archive, alongside historians living in the village. Edward Hess stepped in with generous financial help and the Heritage Lottery Fund was sufficiently impressed to finance publication of *They Were a Wall*, and to support several other commemorative ideas for the village.

People, historians included, argue about The First World War, its slaughter and its justification, but those who served did so for a range of reasons, from adventure, camaraderie and jingoism to a sense of duty about serving their country. Those who survived gave thanks and promised that the dead would be remembered. That promise has been kept for almost a century at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of November, the anniversary of the 1918 Cease Fire. This book helps keep that promise.

Many Wheatley men died, many more returned changed for better by service life and for worse by war. The village community had known bereavement, anxiety and wartime shortage. From 1916, St Mary's church tolled a bell at noon. Our informal Centenary Commemoration Group, most of whose members' own parents were of the 1914 generation, have listened to Wheatley memories which are still fresh in families like their own. The centenary is our last chance to hear from the children of the 1914-19 War.

Four historical chapters set the scene, the reasons for the outbreak of War in the first place, the village as it was in 1914 and the geography of the campaigns in which its men had to fight. The work of local Tribunals which halted, delayed or sent a man after appeal to be a conscript is analysed, and the demands on – and by – women in and after wartime are outlined. Short biographies follow of all servicemen from Wheatley, the dead and the survivors. The book concludes with chapters about keeping the memory alive, through medals and decorations and Wheatley's War Memorials.

The village sent many agricultural workers to this last major horse-drawn war, including grooms and carters well used to horses. The gardener, blacksmith, mole catcher and lime burner joined the baker, plumber, postman, publican and billiard marker, most of them private soldiers, with some NCOs and a handful of commissioned officers. Almost half were infantrymen, but some served at sea and others in the new flying services (RFC and RNAS) which merged to produce the RAF in 1918. Socially, church, chapel and education their by-product, from Bell Lane Infants school, through Elementary to Sunday and Night schools, held Wheatley together in 1914.

Two successive War Memorials and a 1919 list, itself an intended memorial Roll of Service, tell us 36 men died and 145 returned, but the list was not wholly accurate. Newcomers to the village such as Vicar Maurice Bell in 1919 brought new names; others lodged, worked and married here. Some like Richard Stanley, born in 1860 of a family here since 1750, but living in Oxford and serving there by reason of age, were left out altogether. One name is also commemorated on the Stanton St John list, another in Horspath. Others seem to have lived mainly in Forest Hill, Garsington or Holton (Littleworth is and was always part of Wheatley). The Memorial may carry a name which the list does not, and vice versa.

The village lost 19% of those who served, some 4% of its total population. Nearly half have no known grave, their names chiselled on blanket monuments at Thiepval, Cape Helles, Ypres (Tyne Cot), Ploegsteert, Loos, Le Touret, Soissons and Lake Doiran; or Lost at Sea. After 1918 it was ordered that the dead be buried where they had fallen, without exception of rank, status or wealth. Private William Clements was buried in St Mary's churchyard in 1918 because he died in Britain, in the next county. The Wheatley men who died in distant Baghdad, Beirut and Jerusalem are buried there. Some who returned died shortly afterwards, perhaps from physical or mental war damage, but most carried on with life into the mid-20th century, some perhaps silent, others ready to reminisce.

It is right on this centenary to remember also those who suffered for refusing to fight, and the servicemen who fought against Britain. Reconciliation took place long ago, its first flicker in Germany (the British Army of the Rhine) as hostilities ended, and in Britain with the new Save the [German] Children campaign against the prolonging of the Allied Blockade.

Kath Hillsdon (née Shorter, daughter-in-law of Walter Reginald Hillsdon) remembers two public pumps in Wheatley where villagers stood in line for water, on Blenheim Lane and in front of the Manor House opposite Mitcheldene. There in 1914-19 they talked as they waited, and did the same in village shops. 'What a shame that so much of our village oral and social history vanished when those pumps went', she remarked.

A truly village effort, this volume attempts to recover some of that lost history, but no book is a last word and we hope this one will jog more memories. Despite our care, we may have made mistakes and omissions. Bombing in The Second World War destroyed well over half the 1914-19 service records in London and all of those held in Berlin. The evidence we have managed to uncover is now all in Wheatley Village Archive. Despite the flaws, we hope these pages will prove a fitting attempt to commemorate.

In 2014, the best that Wheatley had to give in 1914-19 are not forgotten.

Bill Jackson

Wheatley, July 2014

John Fox

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Marian Darkin who with Anne Ledwith and Pam Reay, voluntarily staffs the Wheatley Village Archive every Thursday afternoon. They prove, if proof were needed, that it is an asset and enrichment to Wheatley. Peter Jackson of the Royal British Legion Branch spent hours in the National Archive and amassed much village documentation. Harry Mennie, also of the Legion, soldiered on with research and support, despite ill-health. Anne Ledwith, graduate genealogist, worked without limit on the service lists and Pam Reay chronicled the Munt family. The group drew in historians from the village: John Fox, author of several works on Wheatley and of *Forgotten Divisions* (1994), on German village life 1914-19; Judith Ormston, former Head of History at Headington School; and John Prest, former History Fellow, Balliol College, author of many books including *The Most Difficult Village: Wheatley, England and The Church*. Bernard Hickey painted a watercolour of the Memorial Garden as part of the front cover. Bill Jackson chaired the group and co-edited its work into this book, and John Halliday, generous with his time and skills, brought everyone's IT into step, light years from the morse and heliograph of 1914.

Wheatley residents (we have no collective name since *Watelegan* died out centuries ago), particularly relatives and those with the longest memories, have reminisced and contributed documents and photographs: Dorothy Avery, Amy Beasley, Eileen Dungey, Lorraine Hammond (née Hilsdon), Kath Hilsdon, Christine Jackson née Tombs, Ray Johnson, Mavis Ramsden, the Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley, Lawrence Ray and Roy West (with other grandchildren of William Clements). David Youd scrutinised the draft for service accuracy, Jim Watson publicised the work in *The Wheatley Newsletter*. Nick Clarke, whose grandfather was George Clarke, designed and typeset, while Paul Edson Print Management handled the production. The South of England staff of the Heritage Lottery Fund advised and encouraged; Clive Hallett, former Head, and Joan Mortars, current Head of Wheatley Primary School, together with Caroline Darnell, School Secretary, helped and welcomed researchers; and Kevin Heritage facilitated use of photographs of Wheatley Park School's visit to WW1 battlefields in May of this year. All concerned have our warmest thanks.

Alan Cowie

*Chairman, Wheatley Branch,
Royal British Legion*

David Harverson

Chairman, The Wheatley Society

THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR

JOHN PREST

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, and from the beginning the newspapers were calling it the Great War. By the time the conflict ended four years later ten million servicemen had died, four million fighting for the Central Powers, Germany, Austria and their ally Turkey, and six million for the Entente Powers, Russia, France, the British Empire and their allies. Nothing like this had been seen in Europe for a hundred years since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Back then a majority of deaths had been caused by disease. Now inoculation kept typhoid at bay, and the twentieth century soldier died in battle. Four years of mass slaughter, and the realisation that it might cost the lives of a hundred thousand men to contest a mile of ground, had shocked the world. It led in every combatant nation to the search for an explanation, and a feeling that a tragedy like this must never be allowed to happen again. In the meantime the three great dynasties, the Romanovs in Russia, the Hohenzollerns in Germany, and the Habsburgs in Austria (together with the Ottomans in Turkey) had all disappeared. This left Britain as the only major power in Europe where the monarchy survived, thanks in part to an adroit change of name from the House of Hanover to the House of Windsor, backdated to Queen Victoria.

How had the system of alliances which led to the catastrophe come about? The prime suspect was 'secret diplomacy'. In the nineteenth century European governments did not consult public opinion or their parliaments (where they had them) about the conduct of foreign policy. States communicated with each other through their embassies by handwritten despatch, courier, and telegram (not, yet, by telephone). Everything was recorded at both ends; the sender retained a copy, and the recipient filed the original. Somewhere among the archives there must be an explanation, and the war led to a call to open up the diplomatic records. Russia, where the Bolsheviks wished to discredit the Tsarist regime, won the race into print. The Germans produced fifty-four scholarly (and surprisingly readable) volumes. The French were not far behind with thirty-four. The first of eleven rather leisurely produced volumes of British documents, which are generally referred to by their editors' names as Gooch and Temperley, appeared in 1927.

Publication revealed the secret clauses of the dual alliance of 1879 between Germany and Austria, Bismarck's so-called reinsurance treaty with Russia (1887), and the details of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894. But it did not solve the war-guilt question, because it turned out that all these had been defensive alliances. In what became known as the International Anarchy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries every power in Europe had felt threatened, and had been searching for security. Meanwhile, international conferences at The Hague in 1898 and 1907, to define the laws and limit the effects of war,

had made little progress because so many powers refused to accept bans on the use of weapons which might give them an advantage (in Britain's case, blockade).

Gooch and Temperley began at 1898. At that point the United States and Germany emerged onto the world scene, and the British response to each was different. The United States (usually overlooked in histories of these events) had just seized the remnants of the Spanish Empire (Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines), and would soon be too powerful to be resisted. Canada could no longer be defended by British arms, and when the Americans started to build a fleet, unpredictable as the United States was, room had to be made for the US Navy on the world stage. The Lion rolled over. With Germany it was different. Germany's bid for colonies in Africa and in the Pacific had been accommodated. But when the Germans prepared to build a navy it was alarming. What need did the Germans have for a battlefleet designed to operate between Heligoland and the Thames estuary? German new-build had to be matched or exceeded. The Lion roared and laid down a Dreadnought.

Thereafter, the post-war inquest centred on the conduct of foreign policy by Lord Lansdowne (Conservative, 1900-1905) and Sir Edward Grey (Liberal, 1905-1915). Lansdowne began to reduce Britain's commitments, starting with the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, which enabled the Royal Navy to withdraw ships from the China Seas. Next came the Anglo-French entente (understanding) of 1904, whereby the two countries resolved their colonial disputes. The British recognised France's position in Morocco – the French Britain's in Egypt. When Grey took over, the Germans were putting the entente to the test, and the new Foreign Secretary authorised 'conversations' between the British and French military to discuss how the British Army could help France resist a German invasion, if it were launched, as seemed likely, through Belgium. There was no formal commitment. But it was, arguably, the decisive moment. Contacts between British and French staff officers continued. In 1907 Britain reached a second entente with France's ally, Russia, defining their respective spheres of influence in Tibet and Persia, thereby freeing the Indian Army for service in the Middle East and even in Europe. Finally in 1912 Britain undertook to defend the French Channel coast from the German navy. The moral obligation was, to say the least, strong.

In Britain, then, debates about the origins of the war have focused upon two questions. Should Grey have done less and kept Britain out of a second Franco-Prussian war as Gladstone's government had done during the first in 1870-71? Or should he have done more and turned the entente with France into an alliance to deter Germany? Either course would have been beset with uncertainty. The first discounted the danger that a French defeat would lead to German battleships stationed in Cherbourg and Brest. The second might not have deterred Germany, where the United Kingdom was thought to be breaking up over the 'Irish Question'. Protestant Ulster had refused to join the Catholic and Nationalist South in a United Ireland, and would resist any attempt to force it to do so. In March 1914, Army officers from the province prepared to resign their commissions (or mutiny, according to your point of view), and in April the Ulster Unionists imported

25,000 rifles from Germany. Even without these early moves towards civil war, the German Staff might still have rated the British Army too small and too unprofessional to make a difference. 'Less' or 'more', the two lines of criticism cancel each other out, and Grey's reputation as the man with clean hands has endured to this day – at any rate in Britain. The German public, however, have always seen him as the architect of the Anglo-Franco-Russian grouping which encircled them.

The war was fought at sea and in many theatres on land, but it is the unprecedented nature of the deadlock on the Western front to which most people are referring nowadays when they shudder at the horrors of the First World War. No wonder both soldiers and civilians were shaken. The Peninsular War and the brief Waterloo campaign apart, the British were used to small scale conflicts taking place along the frontiers of empire. For over two centuries British troops had been reinforced by hired proxies, by German (Hanoverian) regiments in the eighteenth century, and by Indian troops in the nineteenth century. There had been disasters in Afghanistan, southern Africa and the Sudan, but none damped the easy patriotic fervour of the late nineteenth century.

And when you ask us how it's done,
And how it is we've always won,
We'll proudly point to every one
Of the Soldiers of the Queen.

In the 1880s and 1890s, as the missionary followed the soldier into Africa, it was as easy as it was wrong to mistake the exploitation and humiliation of native labour by European masters for 'the spread of civilisation'. What, until the Boer War (a white on white war) of 1899-1902 sounded a caution, was there to question?

In Britain there was no compulsory military service. Soldiering was a voluntary profession, and even the most humble soldier's life had its glamorous side. When Queen Victoria died and Edward VII came to the throne the male child of an agricultural labourer in many an Oxfordshire village still had but two choices, to follow his father into the fields, or 'take the King's shilling' and see the world. 'Nice' people avoided garrison towns, but the army offered a colourful uniform which pulled the girl, adventure, comradeship, and a pension at the end of a man's service. Higher up the social scale a retired army officer could look forward to continuing to be addressed by his rank and taking his seat on the Magistrates Bench. An officer towards the top of the Army List might expect a knighthood to add to his D.S.O., to be followed in due course by a marble memorial among the regimental colours in the local cathedral, and a scholarship named after him at a leading public school.

To the regard in which the army was held we should perhaps add the popularity of 'invasion literature', beginning with *The Battle of Dorking* in 1871 (forts were built along the line of the North Downs shortly afterwards). Next best remembered now was Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*, published in 1903, which imagined a German landing on the east coast (the threat was taken seriously during the war). This was followed by

William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910*, which was serialised in the Daily Mail, and sold over one million copies in book form, and Saki's *When William Came*, imagining life in London under the Hohenzollerns. All lightweight stuff, but it coincided with the 'Haldane' reforms of the British Army, which created the Territorial Army (in 1908), freed the Regular Army to create a British Expeditionary Force, and set up the Imperial General Staff. Years before 1914 both the service itself and the general population were being conditioned to accept that the next war would be a European one, and that Germany would be the enemy.

There was, however, one political group whose reservations about war were articulated and influential. The Radical and largely Nonconformist majority of the Liberal Party were not Pacifist. But they were descended from the mid-nineteenth century 'Manchester' Liberals, or Free Traders, and had inherited their optimistic belief in substituting 'the contest of commerce for the arbitrament of war'. True, they laboured under the handicap that both the two new powers, the U.S.A. and Germany, had prospered and overtaken Britain not by free trade but by developing their industries behind tariffs. Protection was becoming respectable again. But it had not yet won the day. After campaigning on the Large Free Trade Loaf against the Small Protectionist Loaf (and winning the Henley



Following his father into the fields: Richard Munt and his father James at work above Littleworth

THE INVASION OF 1910.
WITH A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE SIEGE OF LONDON.

WHAT LORD ROBERTS SAYS TO YOU:

Seeing in the Wars of 1891 and the War of 1900, I said to the world, I expect to see in the course of the next 20 years a similar period of war, and the day of all that will be the day when the question will arise to all nations of Europe whether it is worth it to risk the world.
The catastrophe that may result if we are unable to deal decisively and intelligently in early and timely mobilisation is all too grave to be taken lightly. It is a matter of the gravest importance who are the authors of the British Empire of 1910. ROBERTS F.M.

Keep this Map for Reference. It will be Valuable.

Keep this Map for Reference. It will be Valuable.

This Intensely Interesting Narrative by Mr. Wm. Le Queux begins in the LONDON "DAILY MAIL" TO-MORROW.

ORDER THE "DAILY MAIL" TO-DAY. ORDER THE "DAILY MAIL" TO-DAY

The Daily Mail's advertisement for its serialisation of Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910*

constituency for the last time), the Free Traders formed a powerful bloc in the House of Commons elected in 1906 – so powerful, in fact, that Sir Edward Grey had not dared tell the party about the military ‘conversations’, which meant that he, at least, was guilty of ‘secret diplomacy’. Eight years and two more general elections later, the Free Traders still had a case, for Germany was Britain's largest trading partner, and supplied a large proportion of the industrial chemicals used in Britain, while many of those which were made in Britain were produced by immigrant families from Germany, Brunners, Hesses and Monds. If the country could not make enough propellants and explosives without help from Germany it had better not fight a war against Germany.

This issue was still unresolved when Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. Austria sent an ultimatum to Serbia, and declared war a month later on 28 July. Events then moved fast. Russia, alarmed lest Austria expand towards Constantinople and close the Straits, began to mobilise, whereupon Germany issued an ultimatum to Russia. On the first of August over half the British cabinet, most of the Liberal rank and file, the Liberal press, and the City of London still wished to remain neutral. On

2 August the German ultimatum to Russia expired. France must now come in. Germany delivered a twelve hour ultimatum to Brussels demanding unopposed passage through Belgium. Kaiser and Chancellor (Bethmann-Hollweg) – misled, perhaps, by Bismarck's achievement fifty years earlier in fighting limited wars – put their trust in the army Staff with its mobilisation timetables and first-strike planning. When Germany invaded Belgium the next day, 3 August, the House of Commons united in favour of coming to the aid of a small nation and the defence of International Law. Even Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, offered his support, thereby nudging public opinion in the United States towards the allied side. Shortage of war materials or no, 'honour' had come into the equation. Britain sent an ultimatum to Germany the same day, and after it expired at midnight, declared war.

It is doubtful whether either side understood at the time the significance of that declaration. Not just the United Kingdom, but the entire British Empire was now at war. The immediate effect was to spread the conflict to the German colonies in Cameroon, German South West and East Africa, Papua and Samoa. In the longer term Indian divisions played a major role in Egypt, protecting the Suez Canal from the Turks, and invading Mesopotamia and Palestine. Canadian troops reached the western front early in 1915. Australian and New Zealand regiments, brought up to strength again after their losses at Gallipoli, a year later. For handicap, Britain had its Irish, upon whom it dare not impose conscription, and Germany its Poles, whom it could never entirely rely on. But Britain alone received faithful reinforcements numbered in the hundred thousands from the 'white' dominions, and in the millions from the Indian Empire. Added to its own efforts these raised the once 'contemptible' little army to a major player.

WHEATLEY IN A WORLD AT WAR 1914-19

JOHN FOX

'After we basked in broiling sunshine on the lawn of The Rose & Lily and paddled our canoe among the rushes and water lilies by the Hotel at Wheatley, and saw Nature to be 'Very Good', the world is plunged into war.'

Sydney Spencer, Oxford, Diary, 29 October 1914

'It's so awkward to eat stew with a Jack Knife'

Reginald Stamp, France, to fiancée Annie, 3 December 1916

BY 1913, Louisa Jane Burgoyne Stanley and her widowed sister Sophia Emma Richold were running a Tea Garden opposite St Mary's church. The village had eleven pubs, but as one visitor explained 'Wheatley landlords refuse us tea'. Sixty guests signed the Visitor Book in October 1913.¹ The Rose & Lily welcomed cyclists in a pre-war cycle-boom, strollers from across Shotover and trippers from further afield. Residential guests even stayed several weeks. In April 1914, fifteen day-guests came on Good Friday, another twenty on Easter Sunday and Monday, and among them an Australian, an Irishwoman and a German. Hans-Jochen von Arnim, a naval officer-cadet from a famous Prussian family, was on leave from Kiel, between ships. By August, he would be 'the enemy'.

Sydney Spencer came up to University from Cookham-on-Thames in January 1914. His brother Stanley, an artist, helped prepare him. In June, Sydney 'discovered' Wheatley: 'a sunny place by character, quiet, mellow, a refuge from noise and disturbance'. Domestic chimneys, GWR fireboxes and brick and lime kiln fumes were its only pollution. Cartwheel rims, railway sounds and Avery's mechanised sawmill were its only noise. Sheldon's forge on Church Road thrived, but the motor car was here to stay. Spencer stayed a week at *The Rose & Lily* among village 'gardens full of roses where the tall St John's Lily will soon flower'. He and a friend hired a canoe from the new Bridge Hotel. 'The Thame here is a laggard stream, all daydream, with white and golden-eyed water lilies and growths of every kind' offset by 'young imps of boys' skinny-dipping and splashing havoc.² Wilfred Sheldon, Wheatley's last blacksmith, even spoke of villagers ice-skating between Cuddesdon and Holton mills during the winter of 1895.

The guest house overlooked the valley in which Wheatley lies. The lawn sloped down past The Merry Bells to High Street. Henry Taunt, the international Oxford photographer,

The original signboard of The Rose & Lily, Church Road, 1913-28. (Courtesy the Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley)



visited Wheatley often, and from above the station captured the valley with its school, church and cattle grazing on Farm Close. In a summer which later became a symbol of the lost peace, Spencer ate outdoors, looking out 'from a hill surrounded by one vast valley, horizoned by the Chilterns and with windmills in the landscape': the sails stopped turning that year. Spencer heard every bird in the valley, swifts, swallows, 'the cuckoo shout beyond the Station', but the sound of 135 children at the Elementary School near the guest house escaped him.

The Village

Wheatley 1914 was not the restive community on which a stone lockup was imposed in 1834 and where a clergyman once led mounted police. The church-chapel divide was healing. The Manor House had become tenements in the 1850s.³ The Vicarage (Morland House) was the new 'Big House', looking down the valley towards the Chilterns. Its Vicar ran a 'muscular christian' boxing club and his two sons were peacetime naval officers. Overall, Wheatley was in fair shape: it had a mixed economy, not hanging on one crop or product; employment was high, the population manageable (966 in 1911) and decades of emigration had helped siphon off any surplus.⁴ The High Street brook was covered, a Board monitored Public Health, Wheatley was an Urban District (1894-1942), and in 1909, the over-70s received Lloyd George's new Pension. They already had their doctor, GWR station, Post and Telegraph Office, sports field, and Police Station (Westfield Road) staffed by one constable. Taunt photographed the new (Shotover) Alms Houses, *Bethrapha* ('healing house'), behind Park Hill in 1908. Infant and Elementary Schools cared for over 200 pupils and added eight more when Holton School closed in 1915. Children between 12 and 14 were allowed 'half time' schooling if jobs or training were on offer. As at church,

school attendance rose and fell with health, weather and available clothing. Wartime youngsters bypassed their childhood in fields, market gardens and workshops. By 1917 'temporary agricultural leave' was common, but many worried about the lost education.

School broke up on 30 July 1914, therefore Head Master, Rees Leyshon, had no need to record Mobilisation 3 August, or War with Germany 4 August, in the required Log Book.⁵ Three months later, War was declared against Turkey, but in half-term. The University term began in October, Sydney Spencer fretted, 'War! A huge cross on the face of Europe ... financial ruin, my Oxford a golden dream of the past': his family might not be able to afford his fees. He also fretted what to do 'should one of those dear ladies offer me a white feather' on an Oxford street. It drove him and two thousand others to apply to the University OTC. After his degree in 1917, when the Oxford student body had shrunk from 1400 undergraduates to 315, he approached a General for an immediate posting to France. A year later, he was dead, gazetted with a Military Cross. 'I thought him a chump at first', said a fellow officer, 'a funny little devil, but he was a man and would do anything for others.'⁶

Wheatley Mixed Elementary

Rees Leyshon, a Glamorgan man, was Head Master.⁷ He ran a sanctuary, with its own priorities, offering security and distraction to children in wartime. Leyshon fought his own war against impetigo, ringworm, scarlet fever, rubella, scabies, choking diphtheria,

Winter morning sunshine, Wheatley, c. 1900. Photographed by Henry Tyndale-Biscoe of Holton Park from Wheatley House (Ladder Hill/Station Road). Foreground: walled garden and backs of houses on High Street and Bell Alley (Burial Ground bottom, out of sight). Middle Ground: L-R, Tudor Cottage (demolished), Oxford House, The Bell and Bell Lane, The Merry Bells. Background: L-R, school playground wall, Church, Rose & Lily, Barn, Sheldon's Smithy, Iliffe House, Stonecroft, Holywell Cottage. (Courtesy the Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley)



malnourishment, poor eyesight (oil lamp light did not help), bad teeth and ignorance. County council, church and other authorities backed him and his three teachers (including Eliza, his wife and Deputy). He had no male teachers to lose to the War. The County Tuberculosis Officer checked, the Lice Inspector de-loused, the dentist pulled and Mrs Miller of Shotover donated prizes. H.M. Inspectors monitored and Anglican clergy and Bishop were familiar faces. A parish dole of bread and a half-crown helped the poor. The Parishes Union at Headington with its workhouse was responsible for Wheatley, a 'Lady Inspectress of Poor Law' visited pupils 'still on parish relief' and Richard Life from High Street, Poor Law Relieving Officer, checked their attendance. In 1915, a student teacher from Siam visited to observe this open beehive of educational and social care. Leyshon, census enumerator, magistrate and wartime Special Constable knew his village. He had a zest for life, enthused children, used the cane and boxed ears, but he did not write of the war until March 1915. Asked about 'children leaving abnormally owing to the War' he recorded briskly, 'We have none'. Watching out for bereaved children was integral to his job, but not for the record.

Scripture loomed large, but 'light-hearted', remembered Wilfred Sheldon. It was a quarry for stories, for memorising, reading aloud and copybook writing. Villagers knew of the biblical Middle East from school, church and chapel, and of Australia, New Zealand and Canada from Wheatley emigrants. Schoolchildren celebrated Empire Day on 24 May, Queen Victoria's Birthday. In November 1914 the school mourned Field Marshal Roberts, who raised the siege of Kandahar in 1880, salvaging some pride from Britain's failure in Afghanistan. On 23 October 1915, Trafalgar Day, Leyshon read out Admiral Jellicoe's letter, which children greeted with *Rule Britannia* and *God Save The King*. Seven months later Jellicoe led The Grand Fleet (with Vicar Curry's son on board) at Jutland. Gardening

Wheatley Elementary School playground, c.1905: possibly a drill lesson.
(Wheatley Village Archive)

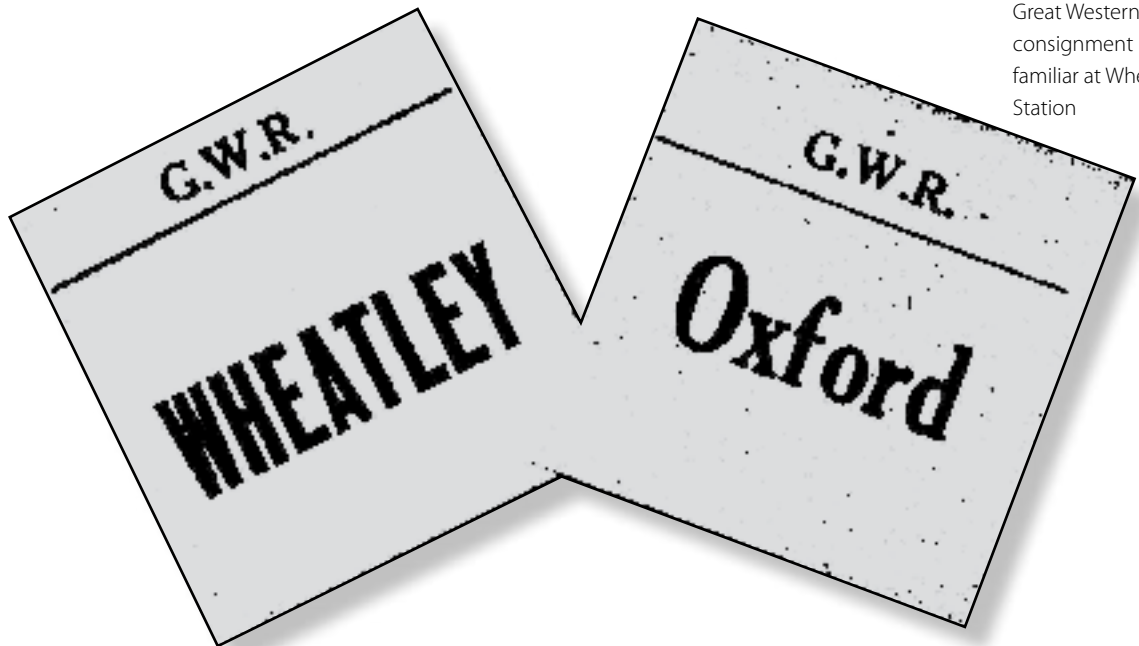


(pruning was taught by a specialist), handwork, PE, cookery, carpentry and observation (glazed) beehives occupied classroom hours. Leyshon constructed the curriculum and advocated the metric system ahead of his time. Children contributed their own experience of plants, crops and seasons, as well as of livestock and forges. They were not blank slates and good teachers would learn from them. Wilfred Sheldon insisted, 'It was by no means a cut-off village'. The railway line had helped.

G.W.R.

For half a century GWR had linked villagers to London, Thame, Oxford and wider Britain.⁸ It brought employment, trade and railway jobs. The rhythm of steam, the clang of buffers and rattle of coupling chains were village music. GWR consignment labels rated Wheatley with Oxford. Wheatley milk took 'The Milky Way' to London before dawn; shoppers and commuters joined fruit and radish for Frank Cooper's factory in Oxford; cattle and sheep waited by the platform for market at Thame; vendors brought fish, butter, meat and poultry by rail; Avery's sawmill sent pit-props to South Wales and timber to Birmingham builders; Tombs, Sheldon and Robbins delivered coal unloaded from South Wales. Village mail and parcels travelled by rail van and villagers adjusted clocks and pocket watches by train arrivals. A tunnel, bridges, cuttings and embankments afforded playgrounds into which children and their imaginations could trespass.

GWR had rehearsed moving whole divisions before the war and a troop train or two had passed through Wheatley. In 1914 the first volunteers, ex-Regulars, Territorials, Naval and Air service men, entrained at August harvest time. Horses requisitioned for artillery and military haulage went off by rail, which also brought the post and first casualty news in November, after the blackberry barrels had been freighted.



Great Western Railway consignment labels, familiar at Wheatley Station

Wheatley Congregational Chapel had debated how to use its spare land. Good nonconformists decided on a schoolroom for Sunday and Night education, to further 'a spirit of enquiry' and the 'religious liberty we now enjoy'. Band of Hope (youth meetings), Temperance groups and Wheatley's second Night School shared the schoolroom. In a new climate of respect, Congregational Chapel pupils at Wheatley (C. of E.) Elementary earned holidays for the whole school for their 'Chapel treats' and outings. The Salvation Army brought band music to the High Street on Sunday afternoons, parading past the temperance hotel and nearby pubs. Soon, the same 'Sally Army' would feed and water men coming out of the Line in France and Belgium.

Joining Up

August and September 1914 saw a rush to the Colours with confidence that it would be 'over by Christmas'. Ex-Regulars re-enlisted, a quarter million Territorial reservists were embodied, their two week summer camp extended to four years. Kitchener's New Army brought in a million raw recruits. In this new pecking order, Territorials buffed their distinctive brass 'T' with extra care. Some Wheatley men were serving Regulars, others on the ex-Regular Special Reserve, while raw recruits could 'learn on the job' with regular battalions and help bring them up to war strength. The overflow from 2nd Battalion, Ox. and Bucks. Light Infantry (OBLI), at Cowley Barracks had to camp on Headington Hill. Citizen soldiers swamped the quarter-million strong Regular Army and the first fighting in August - November 1914 decimated it. In 1919, those citizens came home hardened and with the credibility to demand Army and social reform. At least six Wheatley emigrants reappeared in Britain with the Canadian and ANZAC Expeditionary Forces, and one stayed. In mainland Europe, millions stepped forward, but they were conscripts. Kaiser Wilhelm promised the war would end 'when the leaves begin to fall'. The German army, backed by a mass of trained reservists (*Landwehr*, 'regional' army), quickly put four million under arms. British volunteering could not match German conscripting, but the unprecedented concentrating of millions also bogged armies down. Communications lagged and radio-telephone was years away. Rain, broken field drains, flood plains, artillery barrages and the machine-gun outmoded the cavalry. A 'Turnip winter' 1916-17, a Spanish 'Flu pandemic 1918-19, and blockade weakened entire populations. 'Total war' had arrived. The refusal of politicians to talk condemned all sides to deadlock and to four years of stalemate in the West, for all the talk of big 'Pushes' along the Somme river in 1916 or towards Passchendaele village in 1917.

From August 1914 Wheatley men aged 18 to 50+ volunteered, thirty of them before Christmas. From January 1916 they were conscripted. Coombe Wood, Blenheim, Farm Close, High Street and Crown Road sent them; they came from Bell Lane, the Vicarage and the Manor House tenements, farm workers, railwaymen and brickyard employees. Officially 181 served in Wheatley's war and for all its gaps, the service roll mirrors Sunday and Night School rolls, Elementary School registers, Chapel membership lists and St Mary's birth, marriage and burial registers. The same names recur. From a small community of sometimes large and intermarried families, cohorts of brothers went to war: five Sheldons,

three Averys, three Lifes, three Davises, three Chapmans, three Joneses, three Heaths, two HARRISES, two Cricks and two Yates. Including cousins, eleven Shorters, ten Munts and eight Shepherds served. Thomas White's four brothers and three sons were perhaps a patriotic record.

In the volunteer years, 1914-15, eighty villagers put on uniform, for adventure, to cut a dash, and because the ideal of service before self was instilled at school, church and home. Male camaraderie beckoned, newspapers hectored, and women ambushed with chicken feathers. Friends enlisted together: David Yates and William White queued for the new RFC / RNAS on 18 October 1915, and were issued with consecutive service numbers. Not everyone had such support. No record survives of conscientious objection in Wheatley. Sir Philip Morrell of Garsington Manor, MP for Henley, and his wife Lady Ottoline used the House of Commons and Westminster lobbying to secure fair treatment for conscientious objectors. The great and the good, including the Prime Minister in 1916, visited Garsington to discuss the issue. Many of those who felt that the war – or any war – was wrong, refused to fight. Their courage brought no medals, pensions or job-protection, and was barely recorded.

Physical drill was taught at Wheatley Elementary by visiting instructors, until replaced in 1926 with 'beneficial games'. On his first University OTC parade, January 1915, Sydney Spencer (a drill sergeant's bad dream) found it 'new to be ordered about in matters concerning one's bodily movements ... when I was about 10, I did a little infant school drilling.'⁹

Older men provided role models, not just good stories. The village had supplied Army and Navy with Regulars. Henry Goodin, Thomas Harding and George Hall had seen action in South Africa, John Hutson in Egypt and India. Arthur Miles, Church Road, had served in India too, on the historic Highland Light Infantry station at Lucknow, and in ambulance work at Dum Dum. He wore the silver Durbar medal of 1911, but his India medical record – weak heart and typhoid fever – may explain why he had to be discharged in 1915. William Gould, Crown Road, joined the Regular Army in 1913 which meant he was quickly drafted into France in September 1914. As Wheatley's (possibly sole) surviving official 'Old Contemptible', he was later entitled to the 'Mons' clasp on his 1914 Star ribbon for being first under fire.¹⁰ William White, ex-Crimean War, lived to be the centrepiece on Peace Day in Wheatley, aged 88 in July 1919. Richard Summers of Bell Lane, named after his grandfather (d.1905), another Crimean veteran who lost a leg on the Alma River, was briefly in khaki in 1914. Given his eccentric service career he may have wondered, like Sydney Spencer, 'Me, a soldier? How improbable!'

Service life sharpened wits, socialised and gave men confidence, some even a fresh start, in a strange world of *snapshooters*, *bull*, *rooti gongs* and (always 'lucky') '*blighters*' [*bilyati*, Urdu: foreign country, *blighty*]. In September, Wheatley swore in thirty-three of thirty-five rural Special Constables, (nicknamed 'potato Peelers'), presumably to prevent the anarchy which a single constable had kept at bay for years.

Lawrence Samuel Johnson, Farm Close Lane, carter and GWR platelayer like his father, joined Kitchener's New Army, 9 August, aged 21, at the Marylebone Recruiting Centre, terminus of the Wheatley railway. Three weeks later as a military Driver he landed at a French Atlantic port and contracted typhoid fever. He was Wheatley's first war death, and was buried from the British Military Hospital, Nantes, 21 October. For a fortnight, Army Records, O.C. Corps Depot, Depot Adjutant, and others exchanged telegrams, stamped orders, signed, countersigned, and marked messages 'urgent' and 'priority': commendable efforts 'to prevent relatives being wrongly informed.' His parents and four siblings suffered the double loss of losing him to the Army, hoping for his return, then losing him again, with no hope. Mildred Olive, his nine-year old sister, last of the family to attend Wheatley school, was Rees Leyshon's first bereaved pupil.

Thomas Harding landed in France, mid-August 1914, with 2nd Battalion, OBLI. In May 1915, as the battle at Festubert ended, a sniper shot him through the back and chest. Harry Jones from Wheatley crouched with him as he died in agony: 'Tell them I did my best' was reportedly Thomas's last message home, conveyed in a letter from Harry to his own Aunt Harriet (Shorter), on Westfield Road. She forwarded it to the *Oxford Chronicle*.¹¹

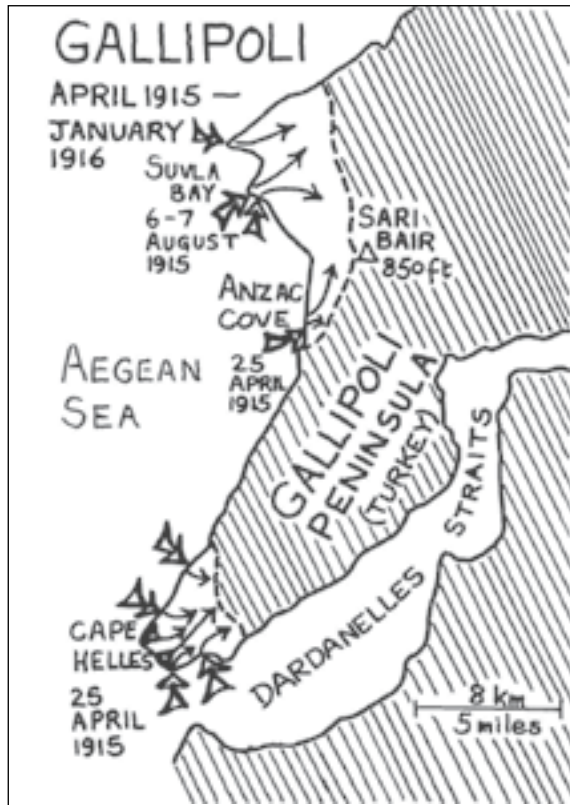
Eleven village Shorters served and all survived, but their cousin Harry Jones died in 1917 with the South Wales Borderers. Albert Harding, formerly of Bell Lane, an emigrant for a better life, died in 1916, an Australian Army corporal preparing for the Somme offensive. Archibald Harding, 1916 conscript and tree feller from a Manor House tenement, returned and is still remembered for his lameness in old age, said to have been a memento of Third Ypres, 1917.¹²

A War of Emperors: Gallipoli and the Middle East

King George V (Emperor of India, *Quaisar-i-Hind*) ruled only Gibraltar and Malta in Europe, but his Grand Fleet, overseas supplies and Dominion forces were Britain's real strength. Kaiser Wilhelm II (Emperor of Germany), Czar Nicholas II (of All The Russias), and Kaiser Franz Josef (of Austria-Hungary – southern central Europe) ruled creaking land empires. Mehmed V, figurehead Sultan of Turkey, whose Ottoman family had ruled the Middle East for 400 years, declared *jihad* against the Allies in 1914. Bulgaria, including Macedonia, had broken free from Turkey, but remained its ally. The Kings of Italy and Belgium, along with France, Britain and Germany, held considerable African territory, where colonial troops did the fighting. The British Navy was seriously challenged, but not matched by Kaiser Wilhelm, save by his U-boats. Britain controlled the Atlantic approaches, the North Sea and the Mediterranean, from Gibraltar to Suez, but not the Baltic. The 'Allies', Britain, France and Russia, with Serbia, opposed the 'Central Powers', Germany and Austro-Hungary with Turkey and Bulgaria. In 1917, the US joined the Allies, but early in 1918, revolutionary Russia withdrew, freeing eastern German forces for the Western Front.

Gerald Chapman, from High Street, left Clearance control at Euston Station for the new Royal Naval Division in September. He landed with Benbow Battalion at Cape Helles, southern Gallipoli, May 1915, but the battalion had to merge with another after heavy

Gallipoli, 1915-16



The Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East, 1914-18

losses in June. Gallipoli was abandoned altogether in January 1916. From Salonika, Chapman fought the Bulgarians in Macedonia before being posted to France. He had one home leave in three years before he was killed near Passchendaele village in October 1917. George Smith, Crown Road, joined a New Army battalion of the Dorset Regiment at 19 and died in a hill assault behind Suvla Bay, August 1915. His body was not found, but his name is on the memorial at Cape Helles. William Gould, his neighbour, a Regular

with 2nd Hampshires, arrived at Helles with his regiment's last draft, 30 June. No more reinforcements came to Gallipoli after August. David Ring of Blenheim, Royal Marine, survived the entire eight months there, but had to be invalided out from France in 1918. In October, General Hamilton, GOC Gallipoli, was dismissed by Kitchener after refusing even to discuss evacuation and after persuading Churchill to allow 95,000 reinforcements: these were promptly vetoed. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty and the mind behind Gallipoli, lost office. Australia, New Zealand and east Lancashire marked Gallipoli for decades with survivors' parades and dignified anger. Eight thousand Allied soldiers died for each of the eight months it took the landing to fail.¹³

The tidal clash of Empires explains why two battalions of the OBLI spent three years in Bulgarian Macedonia. Herbert Scarsbrook (listed Wheatley, possibly Stanton) was among 12,000 British casualties in the defeat by the Bulgarians at Lake Doiran, April-May 1917, where his name, but not his body, is marked. In the Middle East, November 1918, James Clements was buried in Beirut and in December, John Avery in Jerusalem, both just after Turkish forces had been rolled north to the Turkish border and defeated. They probably died in hospitals. Lawrence of Arabia and Arab irregulars fought alongside British and French armies in the campaign which gave us modern Syria, Lebanon, Palestine (from which came Israel in 1948) and Iraq. Muslim battalions with British Indian brigades in the Middle East (and on Gallipoli), were replaced with Hindu, Sikh and Gurkha (mixed Hindu and Buddhist) soldiers, to avoid pitting Muslim against fellow-Muslim. Frederick Sheldon of the blacksmith family was buried in Baghdad, June 1918, 'killed by the explosion of a shell', perhaps accidental. Strategic oil pipelines were being secured in the region, notably one to Basra, and would replace the horse with the car and the blacksmith's trade for the garage. Further north, at Mosul lay oil fields. 1914-19 was the first oil war, in which companies like Anglo-Persian (later BP) and Standard Oil were infants.



British soldiers with a German Fokker VII aeroplane, Nivelles, 1918. Under the terms of the Armistice, planes had to be abandoned as the German forces retreated homeward. (Crick Collection, Wheatley Village Archive)

Horse-drawn armies adapted quickly to the internal combustion engine. Airplanes and 'tanks' multiplied, as did road vehicles, from armoured Rolls Royces in the desert, to Ford trucks and requisitioned London omnibuses (painted khaki) on the Western Front. Steam turbine battleships converted from coal to oil. Barbed wire was factory mass-produced and it frightened cavalry horses. Reginald Weller Stamp, High Street (Oxford House, and Rellaw), had to clean, jump, race, feed and constantly re-deploy columns of Hussar horses in the rear echelon. Largely unused after 1914, until Cambrai 1917 and Amiens 1918, horses still needed care. Even the 'air cavalry' had to sit on their hands in bad weather. Dismounted Corporal Stamp dug trenches, filled shell holes, drove supplies and fought. In training at Tidworth depot, 1915, he would snare rabbits to sell to hungry fellow-recruits. In France he slaughtered sheep, pigs and cows purchased from the French. He was a horse-whisperer before he became an Hussar. At 23, in 1907, he and one assistant had delivered 17 horses to Yokohama, by Japanese steamer, via Antwerp. Immediately after training, he was made up to corporal.¹⁴

From what we know, about a dozen Wheatley men served with the Navy, including a R.M. Artilleryman, a R.M. Light Infantryman and two R.N. Air Service men. Charles Life, High Street, was already a naval reservist 1912-14. Gerald Chapman and David Ring joined the new Royal Naval Division, formed of regular Light Infantry and reservists surplus to ships, but landlocked Oxfordshire heard the Light Infantry bugle more often than the Bosun's Whistle. At least 32 Wheatley men became 'riflemen', (26 with the OBLI at Cowley Barracks) and more than 50 joined standard 'Foot' regiments, making infantrymen about 46% of village recruitment. Wheatley produced 15 munitions men, 14 Sappers, 8 cavalrymen, 2 Vets, and a medic. Modern warfare needed new skills: machine gunners (8), artillerymen (19), aircraftsmen (10), drivers (16), navy telegraphists (2), a 'tank' officer and a pilot. Village blacksmiths, farriers, farmers, carters, wheelwrights, builders and loggers had practical skills, good sense and muscle to offer Ordnance, Service and Engineer Corps.

Seven Light Infantrymen, 19 Infantry and 4 machine-gunners from the village died, but only one cavalryman, James Johnston, (Territorial, or Yeomanry) Hussar, who won the MM. for 'bravery in the field' in 1917.¹⁵ Women's courage under fire was also recognised with eligibility for the MM. Musician and teacher Arthur Sheldon and GWR Signaller Llewellyn Jackson, both practised in synchronising and coordinating, became artillery officers. Lionel Collinson, GWR telegraphist from Birmingham, in lodgings on Kiln Lane joined the Navy to sweep mines in 1914. 'Bob' Dungey, postmaster on Station Road and one of three London brothers to settle in Wheatley, was the last village volunteer eligible for the 1914-15 Star, volunteering on 23 December 1915.

The Vicar's sons, Angus and Douglas Curry, were already naval officers in 1914. Angus, a Merchant Navy marine engineer, had joined a Royal Navy cadre in 1911 on the depot ship HMS *Niobe* to form a Royal Canadian Navy from scratch. Douglas saw action with dreadnought HMS *Superb* at Jutland, 1916. At dawn, 1 June, Day Two of battle, he sketched for his captain's *Report* the wreck of HMS *Invincible*, its bow and stern out of the

water like shark fins. Hans-Jochen von Arnim, day-guest at The Rose & Lily in 1914, also fought at Jutland, a career *Leutnant* with the light cruiser, SMS *München*, which lost eight dead, sustained serious damage and discharged 160 shells.¹⁶

Place names learned at church, chapel and school came alive on Sinai as the Allies pushed Turkish forces east and away from the Suez Canal. Haig called it 'the Last Crusade', marching on framed chicken wire alongside the army railway to Gaza. British soldiers entered Palestine, which Moses had not managed to do, occupied it all and Syria to boot. General Allenby led them into Jerusalem on foot, not horseback: Christ, he observed, had entered on a donkey. It impressed Muslim, Jew and Christian, but Foreign Secretary Balfour's promise, under Lloyd George, of a Palestinian homeland to Jewish settlers, seemed to contradict Britain's promise of the same homeland to Arabs liberated from Turkey. London assumed they would co-habit under never-ending British rule and discipline. Northern Palestine saw the last British cavalry charge, by Indians, Australians and Territorial cavalry on the plain of Megiddo, known in Scripture lessons as Armageddon.

HMS *Superb*, (Dreadnought Class), Thames estuary 1909: Lieutenant Curry's ship at Jutland and British flagship at Constantinople for the Turkish surrender.



SMS *München*, (Bremen Class cruiser), Leutnant von Arnim's ship at Jutland. Courtesy Michael W. Pocock and MaritimeQuest.com



War between Cousins and Friends

Admiral Jellicoe reported generously on Admiral Scheer after Jutland: 'The enemy fought with the gallantry that was expected of them'. Britons and Germans were close and many had hoped that the war was a family spat. Summer 1914, which Germans called 'Kaiser Weather', added to the unreality and only three years previously villagers had celebrated with great gusto the Coronation at which the Kaiser was a first-ranking guest. Wilfred Sheldon, blacksmith, remembered pre-war German bands in the village, along with dancing bears. In 1911 Georg(e) Walde, born in Berlin, was landlord of The Plough.

Victoria's grandchildren, Kaiser Wilhelm and George V were first cousins. Wilhelm was Colonel-in-Chief to several British regiments and he and George wore each other's uniforms. Germans formed a large immigrant community in Britain, and the majority of Oxford University's foreign students. Wilhelm von Richthofen studied at Lincoln College, 1913, but by 1918, propaganda had re-cast him as Manfred (the Red Baron) supposedly fleeing Oxford in 1914 without paying his shoe-bill at Druckers in Turl Street. (It was settled many years later). The von Richthofens were a large clan.

D. H. Lawrence stayed with the Morrells at Garsington in 1915 where his 'enemy alien' wife, Frieda von Richthofen missed having servants. German, the language of Chemistry, was taught in British grammar schools. Some schools exchanged whole year groups with German schools for twelve months. British and German schools imitated each other, but as in its Army, Germany drew the line at school corporal punishment. German headteachers completed a statutory Log Book weekly, like Rees Leyshon, but with more detail.

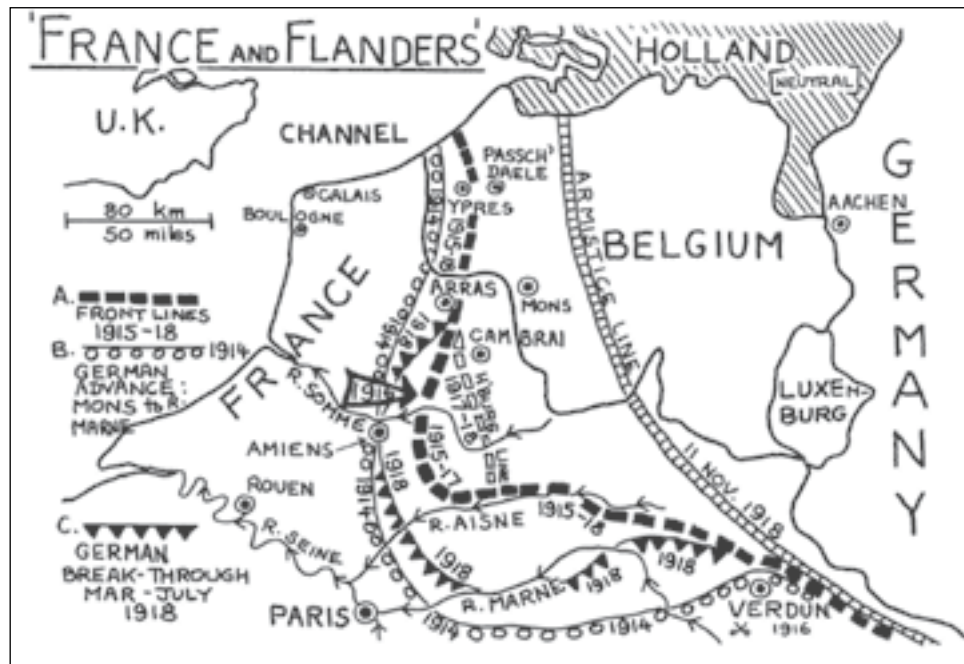
The British Royal Family changed a triple-barrelled German surname to Windsor, the Battenbergs theirs to Mountbatten (the cake was exempt) and German Shepherd Dogs became Alsatians (Germany occupied French Alsace 1870-1919). An Oxford military hospital (see picture in *Oxfordshire Women in WW1*) shows the slogan *Gott Strafe England*, (God Punish England) converted to *God Strafe Germany*, draped across a ward ceiling. Just before he died in France, 1918, Lt Sydney Spencer protested: 'I say *German*. I hate *Hun* or *Boche*. It is petty'. From Garsington in 1918, the anti-war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, reminded the public that German mothers mourned on Golgotha alongside British mothers.¹⁷ Long before the poetry, in 1914, British suffragettes had sent an open letter to German women saying exactly the same. German wounded had been early patients in 3 Southern General Hospital RAMC (TF), Oxford.

Campaigns, Offensives, Battles

In 1914

The British Expeditionary Force landed in August to help French and Belgian troops. Neutral Belgium refused the Kaiser passage west into France, which Germany had last invaded 1870-71. The Kaiser had territorial ambitions east and west, and Britain, France

France and Flanders,
1914-18



and Russia had *ententes*, or informal agreements. A pre-war arms race had ratcheted the tension. Many peoples, Serbs, Ukrainians, Poles and Irish wanted independence from empires. In 1914 senior British officers conspired to mutiny against Parliament over Ireland; in Sarajevo, a Serb killed the heir to the Austrian throne, but the German invasion of Belgium was the immediate reason Britain went to war.

British and French forces retreated 150 miles from Mons, Belgium, to the Marne near Paris, William Gould and apparently Thomas Harding and Harry Jones among them. The Allies rallied in September and regained the lost ground as far as Ypres by November. Germany held eastern Belgium, but in 'First Ypres', October-November, the Allies secured western Belgium and the Channel ports. Ypres at the centre of the Flanders (*Vlaanderen*) Line, formed a 'salient' or wedge into German lines. The Western Front ran through Belgium, down eastern France to the Swiss border, known officially in Britain as 'France and Flanders'. In the east, Germany routed Russian forces in a four-day battle at Tannenberg.

In 1915

Godfrey Symons from occupied Brussels, stayed at The Rose & Lily in February as The Merry Bells raised funds for Belgian refugees. U Boats blockaded, Zeppelins raided, but Germany itself introduced food rationing in January. Britain and France tried to force a route to Russia through the Dardanelles Straits, and eliminate Turkey in the process. It failed, but ANZAC, Indian, British and French troops landed on Gallipoli peninsula alongside the Dardanelles in April to try again. Eight months, 60,770 Allied and 60,000 Turkish deaths later, the force 'hanging on by its eyelids' was evacuated: four Wheatley men served there. In Flanders, 'Second Ypres' reduced the Ypres 'salient' to a more defensible wedge.

Lusitania was torpedoed off Ireland in May, prompting hope that the US might join in. At Wheatley Elementary, 'owing to the war, children have foregone their prizes due 1 September'; they received certificates instead of watches or books. Richard Stanley of a family in Holton Park service since the mid-1700s and early Wheatley nonconformists, joined 3 Southern General Hospital, Oxford, in October aged 55. Reginald Stamp, son of Fred, village grocer, joined the Oxfordshire Hussars in mid-year to disembark in France, January 1916. 'Excuse scribble but my hands are froze' he wrote to Annie, his fiancée, 'very cold to bath in the open'. On sentry duty he wore a leather jerkin on top of a British Warm.

Early in 1916

Wheatley flooded and children missed school: 'Heavy snowstorm, many wet boots' noted Leyshon. Conscription, 18-41, was introduced, married men included. Restless Ireland, which raised 200,000 volunteers for its King's war and lost 25,000 dead, was exempted. In February, Margaret Austin, teacher at Wheatley Elementary, married Hurrell Chapman, the village pump engineer, and lived at The Robins, High Street. In August she resigned, as legislation required married women teachers and nurses to do. Their first child arrived on Christmas day. In March 1917 Hurrell's appeal against conscription failed.

Britain and Germany issued 'battle bowler' and 'nightpot/cookpot' helmets, modelled on medieval armour, and made them obligatory in battle. Turbanned Sikhs of the Indian Army did not wear helmets at all. General Townsend's Army of Mesopotamia surrendered to the Turks. German and British fleets fought off Jutland/Skagerrak, 31 May - 1 June, in fog, at night and under smokescreens. Britain lost far more ships and personnel than Germany at Jutland and Germany retained command of the Baltic, blocking any Allied attempt to link with Russia. However, Germany never regained the freedom of the North Sea, or of its fish stocks. River eel became part of the German diet.

An uprising took place in Dublin at Easter. Walter Heath, son of the landlord of the King and Queen, was the only Wheatley man to serve with an Irish regiment. Fred Sanders, lodging at the pub, a military pensioner born at Newbridge garrison town on The Curragh, Ireland's Salisbury Plain, may have influenced him. Harry Jones, OBLI, transferred to the South Wales Borderers in 1917, two other villagers served with Welsh regiments and three, not all of them Scots, with Scottish regiments.

Britain and France planned a 'Big Push' eastwards in July, along a broad swathe of territory along the Somme where British and French sectors of the Western Front met. When Germany attacked Verdun, Britain had to fight alone on the Somme. 57,500 casualties (killed, wounded and captured), were sustained in the opening attack, 1 July. A dozen Wheatley men fought in the four-month offensive, including Thomas and William John Munt, killed in August and November respectively, and Maurice Crick who died of wounds in December. Five whose bodies were not found are named on the giant Thiepval Memorial: Ernest Barrett, William Naish, Mark Smith, Thomas White and James Sanders.

16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions fought alongside each other and the shared grief helped lower the Belfast religious divide. 17 of 50 'tanks' broke down or floundered short of German lines on the Somme in September, but 'tanks' became crucial, and a Tank Corps was formed. 'Where we are, only shell holes. No flowers to send in return for the heather in your loving letter', wrote Reg Stamp, to Annie, 1 September, halfway through the 'Push'. Scarlet Fever and whooping cough reduced Wheatley School attendance and Wheatley Chapel timed its November anniversary service with the full moon, to allow members to walk home safely in the anti-Zeppelin blackout.

In 1916-17

Lady Morrell called it 'a black, somnolent, bitter winter'. Hungry blockaded Germans called it 'Turnip Winter'. Berlin abolished afternoon school and directed children to field work. 'No young here,' said a Rhineland doctor: 'they have no time to be young'. In March, Wheatley pupils planted parsnips, carrots and broad beans in Ernest Sheldon's 'absent soldier garden'. His son later recorded his having served in Salonika. U Boat attacks and shipping losses made rationing inevitable, and fewer visited The Rose & Lily. A national measles epidemic closed School for three weeks in May, and summer farm work brought more absences. James Johnston, a Wheatley Scot, won the Military Medal 'for bravery in the field', probably defending Gillemont Farm outpost, near Cambrai in May. Russia endured Revolution, Czar Nicholas abdicated, and the US joined the Allies, although US soldiers were not battle-ready for many months. 'Third Ypres' extended the Flanders line six miles east from Ypres town to Passchendaele village, but it took from August to November, and is remembered, like the Somme, for casualties, not gains.

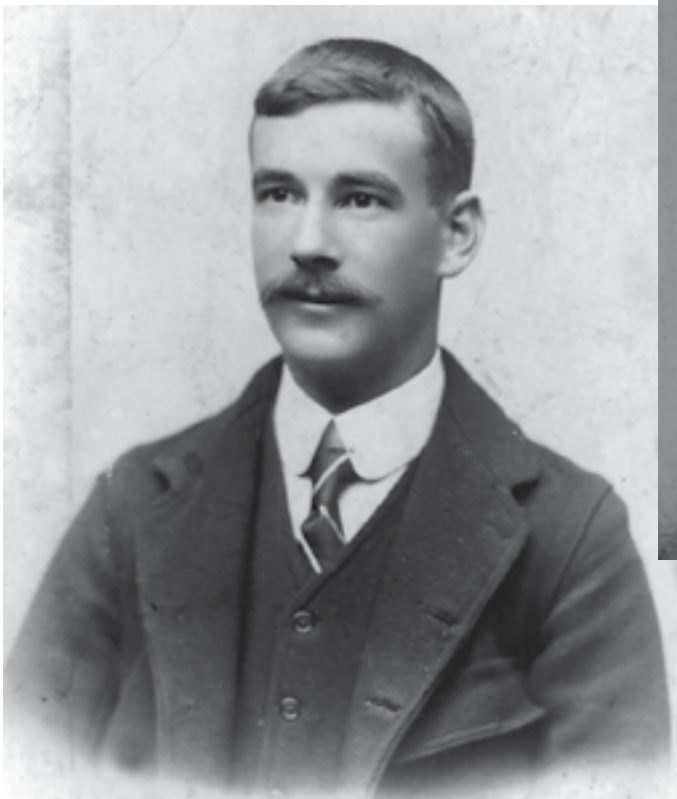
In front of Ypres, German concrete *Blockhausen* ('pillboxes' to the British, from a lady's dressing table item) criss-crossed the terrain with enfilading machine-gun fire. Prime Minister Lloyd George called Third Ypres 'senseless' in 'an impassable quagmire'. British and German dead and wounded totalled half a million. 'Tankie' Lt Anthony Bell was wounded on Day Zero of the offensive; Sidney Shepherd died in August and Petty Officer Gerald Chapman died near Passchendaele village in October when 'a shell burst at his feet as he led his platoon'. Neither Sidney's nor Gerald's body was recovered, but their names are on Tyne Cot Memorial along with Joseph [?John?] Busby over whose identity there is confusion. Frederick Stevens was buried at Canada Farm. By the time Jerusalem fell in December, Wheatley had more than twenty war dead. Nearly that number again would die in the final ten months of the war.

Reuben Leonard Crick, 14, was apprenticed to Wilfred Sheldon at the Church Road smithy from September 1916. One task was to hammer out 60 horseshoes a week for the Government, and take them to the station for direct consignment to France. Each day at 11.50, Reuben also crossed to St Mary's, to ring the noonday toll for Wheatley's dead, as Sheldon had taught him.¹⁸ Two Cricks, five Sheldon brothers and a cousin were away: both Cricks died, Maurice that December, Walter and two of the Sheldons in 1918, the year a

Tribunal rejected Wilfred's second appeal against conscription. At Cambrai in November 1917, over 400 'iron cavalry' joined Corporal Stamp's 'agricultural cavalry' to attack and breach the concrete fortified Hindenburg Line.

In 1918

German armies in the east, freed by Russia's withdrawal from the war, entrained west for 'the Kaiser's Offensive', March-July. (The British called it 'the Ludendorff Offensive'). British and French forces collapsed on a fifty mile front and the Germans came within 40 miles of Paris. Haig issued a memorable order, 11 April: 'With your backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, fight to the end ... every post must be held.' Five Wheatley men died in the retreat, but despite victory bells in Germany, Marshal Pétain halted the Germans at Chateau-Thierry in July. Britain extended conscription to ages 41-51 in May. British and French armies rallied, reinforced by a million US soldiers and US munitions, The German home front was exhausted and General Ludendorff called the Allied recapture of Amiens in August, 'the black day of the German Army'. Reg Stamp's cavalry rode alongside the tanks at Amiens: they expected action after a General turned up to inspect them in July. Three more Wheatley men died in the Hundred Days Offensive between August and November, from Amiens to the Armistice. Three more died in the Middle East. Sydney Spencer, who last visited The Rose & Lily in September 1917 was also killed.



William Clements, Private, Wiltshire Regiment and Labour Corps, d. 11 November 1918 in a Winchester hospital, buried in St Mary's churchyard 16 November 1918. (Courtesy Roy West, on behalf of all W. Clements' grandchildren)

Wheatley Elementary collected 3,300 lbs of blackberries. A similar Rhineland village school collected 2,500 kilos of leaves for industrial compressing into horse fodder. Turkish and Austro-Hungarian morale collapsed, soldiers deserted en masse and the German navy, trapped in two bases, mutinied in November. 'Spanish 'flu' struck down armies and populations across Europe, closing Wheatley Elementary, October-November, and again, January-March 1919. Millions died world-wide. Private William Clements, 'good with horses' according to family memory, died 'of pneumonia' in Winchester on 11 November and is buried in St Mary's churchyard. Agnes, his widow living in The Old Inn (The George), was left with four children. Rees Leyshon's school was closed by Spanish 'flu for three weeks in November, but on re-opening, would watch for eight year old Phyllis Claudine Clements, their latest and among the last war-bereaved pupils.

Reg Stamp 'read [Annie's] six letters lying in a shell hole' and wrote back at night 'under a candle stuck on my pal's boot, our candlestick' (21 August). Days later he too was hospitalised in the 'flu pandemic, 'my head so bad and I so feverish'. He cheered up in November: 'I do not cough as much ... note the papers tomorrow, you will hear great things, [Armistice]'. He was frank with Annie about his affection for and closeness to Mary, a friend in France, and mentioned Mary often. Mary was his warhorse.

Armistice, November 1918 to Peace Treaty, June 1919.

'I was walking in the water meadows by the river [Thame] below Cuddesdon this morning. A quiet grey day. A jolly peal of bells was ringing from the village church and the villagers were hanging little flags out of the windows of their thatched houses. The war is ended. It is impossible to realise. Oxford had much flag-waving also. [In London], masses of people making fools of themselves [in] mob patriotism ... a loathsome ending to the loathsome tragedy of the last four years.'¹⁹

Cease-Fire (Armistice, *Waffenstillstand*) was conceded to Turkey, 30 October, and to Germany, 11 November. Turkish troops were to evacuate Syria, abandon artillery and machine guns, and be back in Turkey by mid-December. Lt Cdr Curry sailed along by a silent Gallipoli peninsula with HMS *Superb*, flagship to the admiral who would occupy Constantinople and negotiate surrender. In the West, fighting was to end at 11.00 London (12.00 Berlin) time, two million German soldiers were to leave artillery, lorries and planes, return to Germany at 10 kilometres a day and be east of the Rhine in a month. On horseback, Reg Stamp and fellow Hussars with 2 Cavalry Division helped monitor the paced withdrawal as they led Fourth Army into Germany, General Rawlinson's way of honouring Territorials. In mid-December, when the operation was nearly complete, Reg told Annie, 'I am not anxious to go any nearer to Germany'. In January, however, he sent her a Bismarck-theme card from Aachen, forty miles from the designated British HQ at Cologne.



Three soldiers, Cologne Cathedral in the background, 1919: (Crick Collection, Wheatley Village Archive)

Three Allied bridgeheads (Cologne, Coblenz and Mainz), free of German soldiers, were established on the eastern Rhine bank, as bases from which to force peace terms on Berlin. (The occupation of the whole west bank as well as the Cologne Bridgehead bred the first 'British Army Of the Rhine' (BAOR) 1919-1929). German and Austrian Kaisers abdicated, and republican Presidents replaced them. European Empires split into many new nations, and Great Britain lost most of Ireland. Thirty years later, the British Empire itself dissolved.

Hostilities were not over, blockade continued and War Secretary Churchill admitted 'widespread collapse of discipline' among British and Dominion troops. Battle-hardened citizen soldiers began to mutiny for a return home. London accelerated demobilisation, diluting BAOR with green conscripts and offering allowances to veteran NCOs and officers to stay to lead them. Germans nicknamed the conscripts 'Chocolate Soldiers', for their khaki, their chocolate ration and their gormlessness. Relations in the British Bridgehead were so (relatively) good that envious German outsiders called it 'the Isle of the Blessed'. No-fraternising orders applied to all over the age of 10, which German children, British horses and 'Chocolate' Tommies soon undermined. (In 1945, Field Marshal Montgomery, himself ex-1919 BAOR, forbade *all* fraternisation).²⁰ Reg Stamp was demobbed from Germany in March and was back in Wheatley in April to plan his summer wedding to Annie and 'to get my bike in running order after being stored for so long'.

In May 1919, Berlin rejected peace terms. X Corps BAOR threatened attack, but given its 'chocolate' ranks, it was bluff. France's alternative idea of annexing the entire Rhineland was revenge, not a solution. Miss Eglantyne Jebb, once a schoolteacher, formed a *Fight the Famine* committee which packed the Albert Hall with protesters, founded *Save the Children* to oppose Allied policy and won huge support from the public. The US Kellogg family

subverted blockade, fed the children and is still remembered for it in Germany. Howitzers, cavalry and infantry exercised and Royal Navy gunboats patrolled the Rhine. General Plumer, respected by soldiers, understood their disaffection over blockade and the military risk of advancing deep into a hostile hinterland. He advised London, 'We are not a police force' and that BAOR was unfit for purpose. 'Final ultimatums' (J-Day) were repeated, a German general proposed a 'last stand', but on 21 June the interned German Fleet at Scapa Flow, Orkney, scuttled 70% of its ships. Two days later, 20 minutes before yet another J-ultimatum expired, Berlin agreed 'under protest' to sign the Versailles Treaty, 28 June. Germany was blamed for the war, its overseas territory confiscated, reparations demanded, and the Kaiser ordered to be put on trial. Holland, where he had fled, refused to extradite him. Already, students, famine relief organisations and veterans began to whisper about reconciliation. BAOR, the first face-to-face encounter with the enemy at home, played matchmaker after June 1919, with over five hundred *'Tommy und Gretchen'* marriages.

Wheatley Elementary marked Peace Day, Saturday 19 July 1919, with a Pageant, Sports and £5.00 towards a War Memorial. On Sunday, ninety veterans lunched at The Merry Bells and money-orders went to forty or so men still serving. So many came back (one sixth of the population) village noise levels must have risen notably. Walter Merritt returned from the Somme 'shell shocked' (today's PTSD). William Goodlake was 'disabled'. Edward Hillsdon was discharged 'unfit' after 3 years soldiering. David Ring was 'invalided out'. Charles Heath, Walter Hillsdon, Arthur Bossom and Frederick Shirley had been 'wounded', as had Reg Hillsdon, regimental medic. Archibald Harding was badly lamed, Bob Dungey had an injury pension, as did Alfred Davis and Robert Holifield, both discharged unfit. Henry Gooding, ex-British army Regular, village emigrant and Australian Army volunteer, was also wounded and decided to settle back in Station Road where he died of TB in 1924. Gladys Summers of Bell Lane had lost her brother, and Miss Flood at Bell Lane Infant School (pupils still remember her in 2014 as 'a kind and gentle teacher'), had lost her fiancé: the two became good friends. It has been suggested that Gladys adopted a son in the 1930s and named him Richard. The mental and emotional cost to survivors, their families and the bereaved, is harder to record than physical wounds.

Fred Stamp, father of the horse-whisperer corporal, paid for a wheelchair at Chapel, which also initiated a Men's Club, smoking permitted, in the spirit of the British Legion and Old Contemptibles. Men needed to talk (or not) and company after the experience. Parliament fixed school-leaving 'firmly' at 14, to recapture childhood, but in hard times potato picking and laundry rounds were a family's lifeline. Inspectors rebuked Rees Leyshon for not qualifying pupils for Secondary School. New legislation allowed Mrs Hurrell Chapman to teach again. Men over 21 and women over 30 could vote, conscientious objectors released from prison could not. On 22 October 1919, Wheatley and Littleworth W.I. was founded: eighty women signed up in twelve days and they too sent £5.00 and a representative to the War Memorial committee. Parliament, pressed by citizen veterans, abolished military Field Punishment No. 1, ('crucifixion'). Wheatley built its War Memorial

and Westminster encouraged house building everywhere: Wheatley had 241 houses in 1921, but 342 by 1931, including the mock timbered WUDC homes of 1927 for which it was noted. Earl Haig led a veterans' *British Legion*, abandoning his preferred *Warriors' Guild* but outflanking the *Union of Ex-Servicemen* (NUX), to serve and fight for the war-damaged and their families.

Two Minutes Silence was first observed at Wheatley School 11 November 1919. After reading out King George's *Letter to His People*, Mr Leyshon explained that the Silence was *thanksgiving* (for War's end), *remembrance* (of the Armistice) and *prayer* (for the fallen). In a small tight-knit community, many if not most of the children listening knew what it was to lose a relative or to welcome a changed man home. Each year since then, the silent November reflection and its attendant bugle calls speak to everyone here and across Britain: *Last Post* of the extinguishing of lights and of secure sleep, *Reveille* of hope and a new dawn.

Notes

- 1 Rose & Lily Visitor Book copy in WVA; J.Prest, *The Most Difficult Village: Wheatley, England and the Church* (2006)
- 2 Sydney Spencer, Diary, (Bodleian Library) 55, 102. Kath Hillsdon remembers droves of swifts/swallows nesting in the cliffs at the Littleworth brickyard. Her uncle also told of boys diving into the river from the iron railway bridge.
- 3 1911 population figure. *A Vision of Britain (Wheatley) Through Time*, Portsmouth University Online Project.
- 4 *Log Book*, Wheatley Elementary School, 1914-25
- 5 Sydney Spencer, *Correspondence*, (Bodleian Library), 101-2
- 6 *Wheatley C of E School* (Wheatley Soc., 1982); *Wheatley C of E Primary School, 1858-2008* (W.P.S., 2008)
- 7 Wilfred Sheldon *Reminiscences*, copy in W.V.A.
- 8 R. Avery, *A Little Book about Wheatley Station*, (1991); R. Lingard, *Princes Risborough, Thame, Oxford Railway*, (Oxf. Pub. Co., 1978)
- 9 Sydney Spencer, Diary, (Bodleian Library), 191, 194, 25 January 1915
- 10 *Oxford Chronicle*, 18 June 1915.
- 11 See *Pip, Squeak, Wilfred and the Other Beggars*, p. 133
- 12 Recollections of Christine Jackson, née Tombs, formerly living in London Road.
- 13 Field Marshal Lord Carver, *The Turkish Front 1914-18*, (2004) is a soldier-scholar's clear guide to the War on Gallipoli and across the Middle East.
- 14 Yokohama Bank receipt for 17 horses, November 1907, Stamp Correspondence, Wheatley Village Archive.
- 15 *London Gazette*, 17 July 1917, Supplement, p. 7251, 'MM to Sgt J. Johnston, Yeomanry' with no further detail given.
- 16 *Battle of Jutland, Despatches and Appendices*, (HMSO 1920), App. 104, HMS *Superb*, 3 June 1916, (not, however, a Mention in Despatches). Douglas Curry was a Lt Commander in 1918. George Smith 'of Wheatley' was listed (*Oxford Times*, 26 September 1914) with HMS *Invincible*. A stoker of that name drowned at Jutland when HMS *Black Prince* sank, 1 June. H-J von Arnim's ship received five direct hits. He transferred to navy flying and left the rump German Navy in 1920 as an *Oberleutnant*. He worked for Junkers, then joined the new Luftwaffe, rising to *Generalmajor* of marine flying, in 1942.
- 17 Captain Siegfried Sassoon, MC, *Reconciliation*, (November 1918), a short cry of a poem.
- 18 Reuben Crick, interviewed by playwright Mick Jones, 1983.
- 19 Captain Siegfried Sassoon, MC, *Diary 1915-18*, (Faber & Faber, 1983), p. 283, 11 November 1918.
- 20 R. Rinaldi, *The Original BAOR* (2006); J. Fox, *Forgotten Divisions: The First World War from Both Sides of No-Man's Land* (Sigma 1994): the writer's father commanded Stieldorf, a 'German Wheatley', in the Bridgehead. Half a century later the writer served eight years as a BAOR reservist, but linked up with Stieldorf only in 1990. There, the children of 1919 shared personal, family and community memories, albums, school Log Books - and Rhineland hospitality. *Forgotten Divisions*, with Geoffrey Moorhouse's Foreword, is the story of that community and its Lancashire counterpart, 1914-20.

THE WHEATLEY TRIBUNAL

JOHN PREST

In 1915 all men and women between fifteen and sixty-five were required to register with their local authority.¹ The army was still attesting as many volunteers as it could handle, but parliament was already looking ahead to universal conscription. But there was a problem. Fighting was for men, but men would also be needed in the shipyards and armaments factories, down the mines, on farms and in fishing boats. How many could be found to serve in the navy, army, and flying corps would depend upon what the country could do without for the duration – new houses, while a reduced labour force ran up camps and barracks; and what it could do with less of – liquor hopefully. Still more would depend upon how far women would be able to take the place of men in the wartime economy. This was an unknown factor. The war would accelerate the dizzy rise of secretarial work, which had begun with the invention of the typewriter. Nursing was a woman's occupation, and there was an obvious need for more nurses. Certificated teachers should remain where they were. In Lancashire and Yorkshire young women worked in the mills before starting a family, and were needed to make cloth for uniforms. In the countryside women found regular employment in the dairy and seasonal work in the fields. But everywhere, huge numbers were forced, for want of alternatives, into domestic service. This was where war workers would come from, but how many women would the trade unions allow into what had traditionally been men's employments?

The navy had a surplus of ratings, and the main thrust of the Military Service Acts which followed in January and May 1916² was to press unmarried men (January) and then all men (May) into the army. Clergymen and ministers of religion apart, every male between the ages of eighteen and forty-one (raised to fifty-one before the war was over) was deemed to have been enlisted and to be subject to military discipline. Inevitably, there would have to be claims for exemption, and the Act laid down four grounds on which these might be based. The first was that a man was doing work of national importance, in a government department or in the munitions industries for example, and could not be spared. Here exemptions were made *en masse*, and in the course of the war additional trades had to be added to the list. Miners had been prominent among the early volunteers, and elite groups continued to tunnel under enemy lines, but the country ran on coal and it wasn't long before men were needed in the pits, not least (like Tommy Atkins himself) to help the French, whose mines lay in the north of the country under German occupation. Then, in 1917, when the German U boat campaign meant more food ought to be grown at home, a number of agricultural workers were released from

THE KING'S APPEAL TO THE NATION.

THE END NOT IN SIGHT.

MORE MEN AND YET MORE.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

TO MY PEOPLE

At this grave moment in the struggle between my people and a highly organised enemy who has transgressed the Laws of Nations and changed the ordinance that binds civilised Europe together, I appeal to you.

I rejoice in my Empire's effort, and I feel pride in the voluntary response from my Subjects all over the world who have sacrificed home, fortune, and life itself, in order that another may not inherit the free Empire which their ancestors and mine have built.

I ask you to make good these sacrifices.

The end is not in sight. More men and yet more are wanted to keep my Armies in the Field, and through them to secure Victory and enduring Peace.

In ancient days the darkest moment has ever produced in men of our race the sternest resolve.

I ask you, men of all-classes, to come forward voluntarily and take your share in the fight.

In freely responding to my appeal, you will be giving your support to our brothers, who, for long months, have nobly upheld Britain's past traditions, and the glory of her Arms.

George V.

the army. The second ground for exemption, hardship, defined as “exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position” was vague, and would have to be clarified as time went on. The third category of “unfitness” was relatively straightforward, though medical standards were lowered before the war was over. The fourth, of conscientious objection, referred mainly to Quakers, who were exempted from combatant duties only, and might be required to act as porters in military hospitals or drive ambulances up to the front.

Local councils were required to appoint a panel of at least five persons to hear claims for exemption, and an appeal might be made from the decision of a Local Tribunal to a County Tribunal. Both the man and the military, represented by a retired officer or one recovering from a wound, might appeal to the county tribunal against the decision of his local one. Women were eligible to serve on tribunals, though in Wheatley none is known to have done so. In due course all but two tribunals (Middlesex, and Lothian and Peebles) were told to destroy their records. This was common practice with many categories of government papers, but on this occasion was probably because the work was sensitive. However, some of what was being destroyed was readily available elsewhere, in the local newspapers. The *Thame Gazette* carried a report on the first meeting of the Wheatley Local Tribunal, including the first flurry of cases, and the *Oxford Times* on the second.³ Thereafter the *Oxford Times* and the *Oxford Chronicle* (short-staffed themselves) chose to cover proceedings in the County Tribunal. But their reports necessarily summarise what had already taken place in the local one. However, it is possible that a decision of the Wheatley Tribunal which was accepted without being taken to the County one, may have passed unrecorded, and this should be kept in mind when reading what follows.

Wheatley was small for an U.D.C., and this made it certain - for better or worse - that the members of the tribunal would know the men whose claims they were hearing. Claimants would be people whom they met every day on the street and in the shops. So who was to do it? The answer seems to have been the senators, older men, preferably those with no children or no sons. Perhaps it is best to deal straight away with the Reverend Halford Halford-Adcock (whose son *was* in the army). He was the retired chaplain of Lincoln Gaol, who used to sit with condemned men the night before their execution, and at the first meeting of the tribunal he was elected to the chair. Afterwards he had doubts. Clergymen were exempt from national service; it was not for him to decide other men's fate, and he resigned. The list of those serving (with their occupations as given in the 1911 census) then read as follows. Joseph Rose, 72, butcher and farmer, in the chair. Frederick Fowler, 54, farmer and his brother Henry Fowler, 47, farmer, Henry Munt, 48, farm traction engine driver, Charles Gomm, 52, bricklayer, and Edward Shepherd, 46, insurance agent (the man from the Pru). Three were employers; three were employed, one in overalls, another in fustian, and the third (still rare at the time) a white collar worker. Joseph Rose and Henry Fowler were single, and Charles Gomm and his wife were childless. Frederick Fowler and his wife had two daughters, and Edward Shepherd and his wife had one child, a daughter. Henry Munt, with four children, was the only member with sons, Edgar 24 and Alfred 20. Both young men seem to have been living outside

the village, and their fate, if they came before a tribunal, would be in other hands. In the difficult position in which they were placed, the six members of the Local Tribunal, meeting, presumably, in the Merry Bells, appear to have treated applicants for exemption sympathetically, allowing them one or two months to settle their affairs. But give them three and the military, with their keen sense of what was due to the men who had already volunteered, would appeal to the County Tribunal to have the period reduced.

Few men will have been in an exempt category. There is no record of a conscientious objector in Wheatley, and not many men between fifteen and forty-one (the healthiest part of the male lifespan between childhood ailments and adult disabilities) will have been able to present medical certificates. Nor can one imagine an Oxfordshire village with many men engaged in work of national importance. The village blacksmith, Wilfred Sheldon, was given exemption so long as he continued to make a hundredweight of horseshoes a week for the cavalry and yeomanry. But who else? Unlike most villages, Wheatley was on a railway line. Women might staff the station, but a man may still have been needed to work the yard and been exempt together with the farmers whose milk was loaded onto the train to London every day. Hard by the station lay Avery's sawmill, but here a man fashioning timbers for shoring up trenches and dugouts could well have been over-age while an apprentice making duckboards would have been below it.

In every case application and appeal were lodged either by an employer or by a self-employed man, not by an employee. Thus, in May 1916, J.H. Cooper from the lime kilns, presented the only appeal we know about which appears to have been argued mainly upon grounds of national importance. His six employees had already been reduced to four, and he appealed to the Oxfordshire Tribunal on behalf of Sidney Shepherd, against the decision of the Local Tribunal. Shepherd who was thirty-seven, had been in his employ, he said, for twelve years, and was "an excellent quarryman". The business "took years to learn, like coal-mining", and now, thanks to the difficulty of importing manures from abroad, lime was essential for farmers and market gardeners.⁴ The appeal failed, and Cooper lost his man, who was killed serving with the O.B.L.I. at Passchendaele on 16 August 1917.

All the other cases seem to have fallen into the catch-all category of "exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position". Whatever these words meant, the authorities were forced to recognise that they would have to cover those aspects of civilian life which must continue. The population had to be able to buy bread and groceries, and many retailers seem to have been allowed to carry on with their usual occupations – at least until the army's needs became desperate in 1917-18. In the meantime builders and innkeepers were especially vulnerable. Two years into the conflict, housebuilding in Great Britain had shrunk from 48,300 in 1914 to 17,000 in 1916 and before the war was over it dropped to almost nothing. Losses from shelling and air raids were minimal, and all the country needed from the building industry was a corps of older men to carry out essential repairs. Wheatley's largest contractors were Messrs Cullum. At the first meeting of the Local Tribunal at the end of February 1916, when

A view of Avery's timber yard ca. 1920



they asked to be allowed to keep Fred Shirley their tree feller, and Robert Tombs their carter, they stated that they had already lost seventeen men from the firm.⁵ A year later when they took the case of their wheelwright, Robert Holifield to the County Tribunal, the figure was twenty-eight.⁶ In November 1916, a builder, William Davis, who wanted to keep his carpenter Arthur Woodley, said that he “employed twelve to fourteen men, and sometimes twenty, before the war”. Now he had nine and a boy.⁷ Five months later when another builder Walter Davis (no relation) had been issued with his call-up papers, he was represented by an advocate, who said that the family employed ten men before the war, of whom nine were now serving and one was dead. Of the six men working for him when his case was heard, five were over age and one was exempt (it was not said why).⁸ Business or no, Davis was called up and served in the Royal Field Artillery. In 1920-21 he was building four new houses in Church Road.⁹

The innkeepers were Christopher Green, from the Cricketer’s Arms in Littleworth, and Percy Bates, the landlord of the Railway Hotel. The production of beer in the United Kingdom fell from 35.9 million barrels in 1914 to 15.8 in 1918, while that of spirits dropped from 26,795 thousand gallons to 10,325. Fewer outlets were needed, and Wheatley had many. Both men admitted trade was flat. Their wives could look after the bars, and both appealed on other grounds. Green was occupied as a market gardener with his father in Headington. But he had been away for eight months erecting a munitions shop in Scotland, and his appeal was dismissed.¹⁰ He must have made a good soldier, because he was taken into the Machine Gun Corps. He was killed on 25 October 1918. Percy Bates always said he was willing to serve, but he asked for time to find someone to take over his two hire-cars, and the Wheatley Tribunal granted him temporary exemption for

three months – perhaps because these were the only motors available in the village at that time (the doctor still visited his patients on horseback). The County Tribunal reduced three months to two. Before they expired he applied again and was allowed a second extension for a further two months¹¹, before going into the Royal Naval Air Service where he was appropriately employed as a batman and driver.

Self-employed men and the owners of family businesses were prominent among the appeals. In March 1916, a rate collector, Arthur Sheldon was allowed an exceptionally long exemption while he continued to manage deliveries from the family coal yard (people must have coal). But a year later when he applied for a renewal, the Wheatley Tribunal refused, and gave him a month to settle his affairs before going into the army.¹² This was confirmed, and he served with the Royal Garrison Artillery. In March 1917 the military appealed against the three months allowed by the Local Tribunal to Hurrell Chapman, who looked after a hundred or so of the pumps Wheatley depended on for its water. But the village's need was trumped by the army's necessity – for men with the skills to go into the R.A.O.C. and carry out the workshop servicing of rifles.¹³ Then there were the butchers, the Whites, the son John Henry White, and (two years later) his father Thomas White. They had already shut down their branch in Headington when the son was called up, and when the father, at forty-eight, received his papers in August 1918, the military representative argued that “the wants of the neighbourhood could certainly be supplied by Mr. Alden”.¹⁴ That said it all. Everything these men had worked for was about to be taken away from them, for even in wartime, if they were forced to serve, a rival would take the trade.

The employers' pleas that they had lost so many men already that they couldn't afford to lose any more, were echoed among families. While the *Oxford Journal Illustrated* was featuring patriotic families with two generations (father and son), or with four or five members in uniform, these tribunal records seem to tell a more complicated story. Families, like employers and the owners of family businesses, had interests of their own. Sidney Shepherd had a widowed mother who was in poor health, and everyone knew that Archibald Harding, a tree feller, supported his father, a one-legged man of nearly seventy.¹⁵ But an aged or sick parent was a matter for the relieving officer, and mothers giving birth understood they were expected to cope on their own. However, reference was frequently made to the number of members of the family already serving. Sidney Shepherd and Christopher Green each had a brother in the army. Walter Davis had two, Hurrell Chapman three, and Wilfred Sheldon four. Thomas White capped them all with four brothers and three sons in uniform.¹⁶ While providing undeniable proof of the family's patriotism, these claims also carried another message. People thought there should be a limit to the demands made upon them. If the family themselves were at ease with a situation in which one or more members went into the forces while another stayed at home, that ought to be enough. Even a War Cabinet should ask no more.

The jury is still out on the national registration, compulsory service and tribunal system. With one and a half million men exempted because they were doing work of national

importance, the War Office expressed disappointment at the numbers produced by national service. On top of that the three-quarters of a million cases taken to the tribunals slowed down the flow of conscripts. But the Generals were prodigal with men, squandering Kitchener's volunteers on the Somme in 1916 and the conscripts who came after them at Passchendaele a year later. The troop shortages which followed may even have helped to stimulate the adoption of better tactics (fire and movement) in 1918. Generals might feel that 'war strategy' was a matter for them. But in Germany, where the Generals were allowed to have everything they wanted, the home front collapsed. In Britain the politicians understood the importance of finding a balance between the army, the war economy which supplied it, and the needs of the civilian population. In Wheatley the number of those producing war material was small. But in this and other Oxfordshire villages the tribunals also served another purpose. They ensured that a man's case was heard, and might be heard twice. Some element of voluntary process persisted in the British state at war, and distinguished Britain from other powers where there was no such nicety.

Notes

- 1 5 and 6 Geo. V, c. 60.
- 2 5 and 6 Geo. V, c. 104, and 6 and 7 Geo. V, c.15.
- 3 *Thame Gazette*, 7 March 1916, *Oxford Times*, 18 March 1916, p. 10
- 4 *Oxford Times*, 13 May 1916, p. 9.
- 5 *Thame Gazette*, 7 March 1916.
- 6 *Oxford Chronicle*, 9 February 1917, p.10.
- 7 *Oxford Times*, 18 November 1916, p. 5.
- 8 *Oxford Times*, 7 April 1917, p. 3.
- 9 *Oxford Chronicle*, 25 March 1921, p. 18.
- 10 *Oxford Times*, 22 July 1916, p.8.
- 11 *Oxford Chronicle*, 10 November 1916, p. 10, and *Oxford Times*, 6 January 1917, p. 8.
- 12 *Oxford Times*, 18 March 1916, p. 10, and *Oxford Times*, 26 May 1917, p. 8.
- 13 *Oxford Times*, 31 March 1917, p. 7.
- 14 *Oxford Chronicle*, 30 August 1918, p.5. Frederick Heward Alden had died in 1916, aged 74. It is not clear who was carrying on the business.
- 15 *Oxford Times*, 13 May 1916, p. 9, and *Oxford Chronicle*, 8 September 1916, p. 10.
- 16 *Oxford Times*, 13 May 1916, p. 9; *Oxford Times*, 22 July 1916, p. 8; *Oxford Times*, 7 April 1917, p. 3; *Oxford Times*, 31 March 1917, p. 7; *Thame Gazette*, 7 March 1916; *Oxford Chronicle*, 30 August 1918, p. 5.

OXFORDSHIRE WOMEN IN WORLD WAR 1

JUDITH ORMSTON

*'The war revolutionised the industrial position of women –
it found them serfs and set them free'*

Millicent Fawcett, *The Women's Victory and After*, 1920

Not everyone would share Millicent Fawcett's optimistic view of the transforming effect of women's war work on the status of women, but the First World War dramatically changed women's lives and the perception of their capabilities. As more men went to fight, more women took over men's jobs. Many also served abroad as nurses, ambulance drivers, YMCA and other voluntary welfare personnel. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women's Royal Naval Service and Women's Royal Air Force were founded 1917-18. At home, women joined the Civil Service, the Land Army and notably in Oxford pioneered a Women's Police Service (1917), helped by unpaid, badged Women Patrols (1914). Women also worked as stokers, tool setters, painters, carpenters and on public transport.

Winifred Leyshon and Radio

Winifred Leyshon of Wheatley made a significant contribution to the war effort. Born in 1890, the daughter of Rees Leyshon, Head Master of Wheatley Elementary School, she won a County Scholarship at the age of 11, the first step in a career achieved by few women in her generation. Her father had hoped she would go to Oxford High School, but she was offered a place instead at Oxford Technical School, where her scientific bent was encouraged. In 1907 she won a science scholarship at Bedford College, London, and graduated Bachelor of Science three years later.

After brief experience as a school teacher, she put her interest and qualifications in physics and electronics towards the war effort, as a Technical Assistant with the Royal Engineers (Signals Experimental Establishment) Woolwich. There she worked on developing a short distance (50 metre) radio telephone.

She was a true pioneer research worker in the radio field, which remained her research interest for life. (*History of Hospital Physicists 1943-83*)

Her wartime activity was later put to good use at her father's school. He noted in the *Log Book*:

February 23rd 1923.

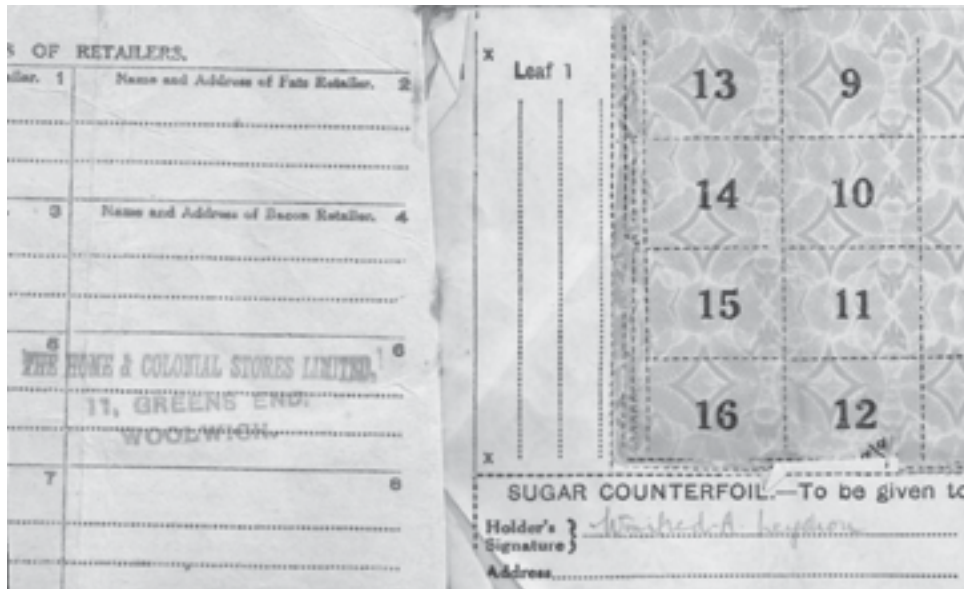
The children listened to Cinderella, broadcast by Marconi 240 on the school wireless.

Broadcasting only began in November 1922. Winifred had spent a vacation building a receiving set. The low and high tension currents were supplied from batteries around the room. Two pairs of headphones were passed from child to child, each being allowed to listen for a minute. It is believed that Wheatley was the first Oxford school to have radio.

In 1923, Mr Leyshon closed the school so that he and his wife could attend Winifred's Ph.D ceremony in the Royal Albert Hall. She later taught at the School of Women's Medicine. After retirement, she settled at 132 Church Road. Much of what is known about the village in the early 20th century is from her work collecting and preserving records and information. She died in 1984 at the age of 94 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

Winifred Leyshon with her mother Eliza, perhaps when at Oxford Technical College (Wheatley Village Archive)





Winifred Leysdon's ration book, Woolwich 1918

Munitions Workers

Many women worked in munitions factories, making weapons and ammunition. National Shell Factory No 9 at Grimsbury, near Banbury, was one of the largest, established in 1916 to meet the demand for shells for the 'Big' Push on the Somme. The factory site is now a field overgrown with brambles with little to show of its former use, apart from several grass-covered bunkers and a derelict railway embankment, clearly visible left of the southbound M40 carriageway as it passes Banbury. It is a designated area of archaeological importance.

150 workers were employed there, mostly women. Gladys Sangster's mother, Mary, was one of them. They were called 'Canary Girls' because their skin was yellow from handling TNT. The side effects could be serious. Gladys was a 'Canary Baby' because her mother became pregnant while working in the factory. Apparently Mary was not worried about her baby: 'they were tougher then'. The women were not allowed to wear anything metal – even shoelaces had to be removed in case they sparked an explosion. The factories were also a target for air raids. Mary, a supervisor, was once asked, 'What would you do if there was an air raid?' She replied, 'Run like Hell!'



A recruitment poster of the time.

Nurses

The best-known war contribution from women is probably the nursing of soldiers at home and abroad. It was vividly described by Vera Brittain in *Testament of Youth*. The Army did not follow up the work of Florence Nightingale, her nuns and her volunteers in the Crimea until 1881 when the Army Nursing Service was established. It grew into Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (and Reserve), together with the Q.A. Royal Naval Nursing



Vera Brittain

Service. In 1908 the new Territorial Reserve Force brought a T.F. Nursing Service along with civilian nurses: V.A.D.s (Voluntary Aid Detachment, came from the Red Cross and St John Ambulance) and F.A.N.Y.s (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) began as mounted medical orderlies. By 1914 they drove ambulances. About 100,000 women nursed in the war effort, many abroad.

The Regular nurses wore scarlet capes, the Reservists, grey. All wore grey/blue dresses, veils and aprons, sometimes with a red cross. A shortage of uniforms allowed improvisation. The FANYs were volunteers – some 450 of them working as nurses, driver mechanics on the western front with all the Allied European armies. They were described as

‘one of the most picturesque, as well as useful and dauntless organisations of women’

They were also one of the most decorated volunteer organisations, amassing many decorations. Like FANYs, the VADs typically came from middle and upper class backgrounds,

straight out of Edwardian drawing rooms to the manifold horrors of WWI.
(Jesse Pope, *Virago Book of Poetry and Verse*)

VADs could serve abroad when they were 23 years old, after ‘three months’ experience in a British hospital.

3 Southern Hospital Ward, c. 1916-18: on the left stand two Queen Alexandra Reservist (Territorial) nurses. At the back, standing, from left to right, Private Richard Stanley (bareheaded); an Australian in slouch hat; behind them a VAD nurse and a Queen Alexandra Regular Army nurse, who would have been in charge of the ward and probably more; and by the window another VAD nurse. Patients wore a blue (sick) uniform with white facings. Overhead bannerettes read (front) ‘God Save the King’ and (behind) ‘God Strafe Germany’. (Courtesy the Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley)



They served on the Western Front, Mesopotamia and Gallipoli (Imbros island base). Vera Brittain studied for a year at Somerville College, Oxford, before joining as a nurse. Her college was also commandeered for the city's Military Hospital complex. 'I know of no place where the wind can be so icy and the damp so penetrating as in Oxford round about Easter time.' She grew used to low pay, long hours and difficult conditions, but was tested by nursing the seriously injured. 'The first dressing at which I assisted, a gangrenous leg wound, slimy and green and scarlet, with the bone laid bare, turned me sick and faint for a moment.' (*Testament of Youth*) She lost her fiancé and her brother in the war and devoted the rest of her life to the peace movement.

Two hospitals in Oxford cared for the wounded: 3 Southern General Military (TF) with wards in the Town Hall, Examination Schools and colleges, and the Ashurst War Hospital, Littlemore, (formerly the County Asylum), which opened in 1918 with 580 neurological beds.

Teachers

The introduction of compulsory schooling across Britain in 1870 and the community role of the local authority responsible for it opened up a new career path for women. They played an important role in wartime in the educating of children and in providing a happy, wholesome childhood in difficult times. Once married, a female teacher had to resign from the profession, but in wartime the absence of so many male teachers meant that married female teachers did a lot of supply teaching. The barrier had been breached by the Sex Disqualification Removal Act, 1919 but Local Authorities often ignored the Act. An entry in the Elementary School *Log Book*, 7 February 1915, is one of few to mention the impact of the war on the children: 'Owing to the war, the children have foregone their prizes for September 1915.'

Emma Christian was Head Teacher at Bell Lane Infant School from 1881-1922. Apart from her duties as Head Teacher, she was a Sunday School Teacher for 41 years, Band of Hope Secretary for 10 years, War Memorial Committee Secretary and Child's Cot Fund Secretary. She was also one of the start-up members of the Wheatley and Littleworth W.I. A presentation was made at The Merry Bells to mark her retirement (*Oxford Times*, 11 November 1922). The Vicar of Wheatley, Rev. Maurice Bell, who had arrived in the village only in 1919, described her as a person 'who wasn't only good herself, but radiated goodness'. Five vicars of Wheatley had worked with her, from before The Merry Bells itself was built.

Four hundred people subscribed to 'a purse of money', their names presented in a book, 'men, women and children of Wheatley, who on the retirement of Miss Christian from active educational work, wish to assure her of their deep respect and affection.' General Miller made the presentation – he had known her well from being School Manager and County Council representative. He said that Wheatley owed her a deep debt of gratitude, to which she responded that she had spent 'a long and happy time in Wheatley and

Emma Christian (centre), with her two colleagues from the Bell Lane Infants School, Miss East (left) and Miss Lizzie Allen (Wheatley Village Archive)



would always give Wheatley people a good character [witness]'. Two villagers have spoken warmly of Miss Christian's assistant, their teacher, Miss Flood, 'kind and gentle'.

Rates to Railways, a Range of Roles

Edith Sheldon was appointed Deputy Rate Collector in October 1916 at her brother Arthur's suggestion. Her position was formally confirmed and by May 1917 she was appointed a full Collector. Annie Life, High Street (*Newholme*) advertised as a draper in *Kelly's Directory* for many years. The snapshot provided by the 1911 census (the 1921 Census remains closed until 2021) shows her as 'Deputy Registrar of Births Marriages and Deaths'. In 1914 two of her sons, Charles and Frederick, joined the Navy and her third boy, Richard, the Army.

The Census also reveals several female teachers who had left home long distances away and lodged in village homes while they taught locally. A 'Manageress' ran The Merry Bells, a District Nurse and Midwife lodged on Westfield Road, and a 'Lady Inspectress (Poor Law)' visited pupils 'on the parish' in the village schools.

We have no figures for any Women's Land Army in Wheatley. It was founded in 1915 for the war effort in food production, but while its ranks totalled some 20,000 workers, a huge but uncounted number of women, thought to be ten times that number, worked the land in the men's absence. Much of the burden of land production fell on the women who were already trying to bring up children alone and in some cases make up for the loss of a man's revenue: a skilled brickworker or plumber was better paid than a private soldier.

The National Railway Museum in York has a database on female workers 1914-18 which shows they kept the railways running. Level Crossing Keepers had been the first women

to work on the railway, a role which fitted in with family life, often given to war widows with children and with it came a war widow's small salary or rent-free home. Roles at first were 'traditionally female' – cooks, cleaners and storekeepers. Nine hundred women staffed railway workshops as skilled trimmers, french polishers and sewing machinists.

From September 1914, 100,000 railwaymen left for the Front and the transport of vital war supplies was threatened. Over the next three years women were drafted, ensuring the rail industry kept going. They did most of the jobs vacated by men, except driving of trains and firing engines (because the training period was too long). The number of women in railway workshops rose from 43 (1914) to 2,547 (1918). They also worked as porters and ticket collectors and varnished and painted engines.

Some people disapproved of women's calling out of station names, as 'unfeminine and immodest'. They were also criticised for wearing men's breeches, despite the fact that some tasks were impossible and dangerous for employees in long skirts.

Until 1915 women were paid two-thirds less than male counterparts. When the National Union of Railwaymen admitted them to membership, it insisted they be paid at least the minimum wage for the job. As the war continued, they took on better paid, more hazardous work, such as track maintenance, plate laying, shunting and guard's van duty.

Wheatley GWR station on the London to Oxford line had opened up new jobs in the village. Village GWR men, among them a signaller, a loader and a porter joined the services, but only one woman linked to Wheatley can be traced as working with GWR 'for the duration'. Mary Stanley, whose father was born at The Rose and Lily on Church Road, and whose nieces returned to the family home in the 1950s, had a role which brought a 'GWR' embroidered uniform, formal brimmed hat and long skirt (therefore not in dangerous work).



Mary Stanley, daughter of Richard, in GWR female platform/office worker's wartime uniform. Lapels embroidered 'GWR', and a large pearl hatpin by the cap badge holds the hat, similar to that worn by the new wartime policewomen. (Courtesy The Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley)

The Women's Institute

The W.I. movement began in 1915, to help underpin isolated rural communities, but in its first years, it depended reluctantly on the Ministry of Agriculture for subsidy. This meant it was regarded as a food production agency. Within months of the Armistice, Wheatley and Littleworth W.I. was founded on 22 October 1919. By 3 November, 80 had enrolled and Forest Hill, Holton and Shotover women were asking to be allowed in too.

A need was being addressed. At organisational level, the local W. I. was firmly and formally embedded in County Federation and London Conference. Visits and exchanges, county and national meetings were highlight events. Personal support in kind and in comfort must have gone on in the background, but as in school, it is unrecorded in the files.

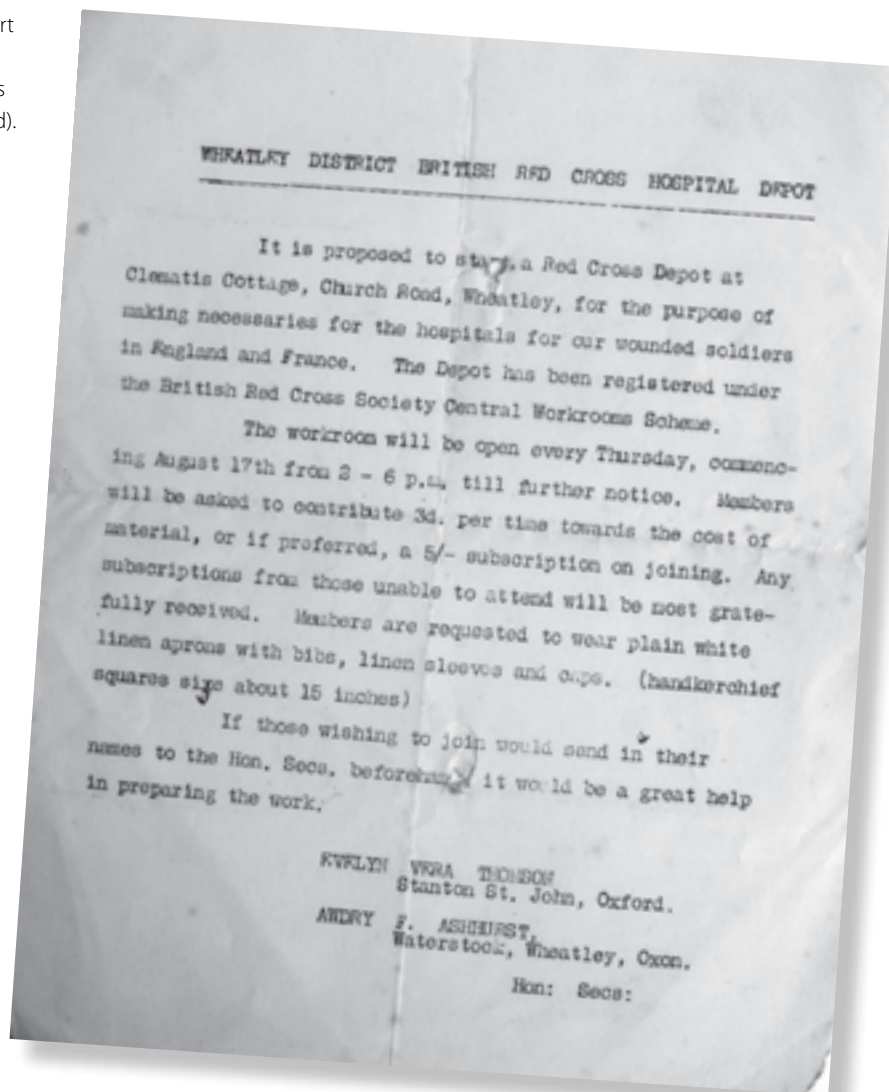
Advice was made available, certainly on making food go further and making it more varied with limited resources and budgets. Upholstery had priority over dress making and visiting experts advised. Meetings allowed pulses to be taken and the needs of members

made known. They pressed for libraries. Village home-made entertainment had raised money for Belgian refugees, disabled soldiers and the packed out military hospitals. In 1919, fittingly, Dorothy Antrobus and Emma Christian of the new W.I. sat on the War Memorial Committee.

Suffragettes and Suffragists

Finally no account of Women's war work would be complete without reference to the Suffragettes and Suffragists who were very active in Oxford. The response to the War varied within the movements. Millicent Fawcett who chaired the less militant National Union of Suffrage Societies involved herself in war work – maternity centres, hospitality for Belgian refugees, Relief Committees and Red Cross Centres. Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst of the Women's Social and Political Union placed their propaganda and recruiting expertise at the service of the government.

A circular seeking support for starting a Red Cross depot based on Clematis Cottage (21 Church Road).



War was the only course for our country to take – we could not be pacifists at any price. We declared an armistice with the government and suspended militancy for the duration of the war.' (Christabel Pankhurst, *Unshackled*, 1959)

Sylvia Pankhurst disagreed with this policy. She continued to campaign for votes for women and spoke about pacifism and socialism. Her organisation, The Workers Suffrage Federation (1917) gave practical help to the poorest in the east end of London, including Infant Welfare Clinics and cost-price restaurants.

In Oxford, suffragists worked with the City Council Emergency Committee for the war effort. They organised soup kitchens, helped Belgian refugees and sponsored doctors and nurses in the war zone. Cambridge Terrace was the site of a kitchen organised by the Oxford Women's Suffrage Society 1917-18 to provide cost-meals to the poor. 35 Holywell Street was an OWSS office in 1914-15 for work with Belgian refugees.

Conclusion

I am aware that there are fewer personal details of women's war work in Oxfordshire than I would like to have included in this Chapter. Historians are now much more focused on women's history – Diane Atkinson and Janet Lee are pioneer writers in this field and also Sue Light who has done extensive research on the nurses (Scarlet Finders.com).

The struggle for equal pay and access to senior posts in the professions and industry and commerce goes on to this day. The most hidden women's role of all, that of supporting and consoling families experiencing anxiety and loss, is difficult to record. Hopefully this chapter will jog memories in the village, so we can better honour the women's contribution alongside the men's. Millicent Fawcett's comment quoted at the beginning of this article would probably be thought, with hindsight, to be only partially true. Women over 30 gained the vote in 1918, women over 21 in 1928. When the men returned from the front many women gave up their jobs, but they did not return to domestic service in large numbers.

JOHN AVERY

ERNEST BAR

WILLIAM BAR

THE LIST OF WHEATLEY MEN WHO SERVED IN HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES DURING THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

'The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt.

They were a wall unto us both by night and day.' I. SAM. XXV, 15, 16.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| † JOHN AVERY, R.A.S, MT | WILLIAM A. CHIDDINGTON, O.B.L.I. |
| JAMES AVERY, R.A.F. | † GEORGE E. CHIDDINGTON, Glos. Regt. |
| LEONARD AVERY, R.A.F. | CLIFFORD C. CHIDDINGTON, R.F.A. |
| H. HALFORD ADCOCK, D.L.I. | † JAMES CLEMENTS, R.F.A. |
| JOSEPH ALLEN, R.A.S.C. | † WILLIAM CLEMENTS, Hants. Regt. |
| ALBERT ED. ASHFIELD, R.A.S.C. | GEORGE CLARKE, R. Berks. |
| HENRY ALLEN, R.G.A. | LIONEL COLLINSON, R.N. |
| JOHN BALDWIN R.A.S.C. | F. RISBY COOMBS, O.B.L.I. |
| † ERNEST H. BARRETT, 16TH LONDON
REG'T. | E. MONTAGU COOPER, R.N. |
| † WILLIAM A. BARRETT, R. Warwick's. | W. CLAYTON COOPER, R.E. |
| PERCY BATES, R.N.A.C. | † MAURICE CRICK, M.G.C. |
| ANTHONY M. BELL, Tank Corps. | † WALTER E. CRICK, Gloucester Regt. |
| ALLEN BIGNELL, K.O.Y.L.I. | ANDREW CRUICKSHANK, R.A.F. |
| † FREDERICK BIZZELL, Grenadier Guards. | DOUGLAS CURRY, R.N. |
| SIDNEY BIZZELL, Royal Horse Guards. | C. ANGUS CURRY, R.N. |
| ARTHUR BOSSOM, R. Warwick's. | WALTER DAVIS, R.F.A. |
| JOSEPH BRANDUM, R.E. | ALFRED DAVIS, O.B.L.I. |
| ARTHUR BROUGHTON, Gordon Hldrs. | PERCY J. DAVIS, O.B.L.I. |
| † JOSEPH BUSBY, R.F.A. | JAMES DAVIS, Worcester Regt. |
| ALBERT CASTLE, Scots. Fus. | WILLIAM DAVIS, Rifle Brigade. |
| ARTHUR A. CHAPMAN, R.E. | ROTHWELL DOUGLAS, O.B.L.I. |
| HUBERT J. CHAPMAN, R.E. | ROBERT DUNGEY, R.A.O.C. |
| HURRELL G. CHAPMAN, R.A.O.C. | A. CECIL EAST, O.B.L.I. |
| † GERALD CHAPMAN, R.N.D. | WILLIAM EDWARDS, R. Warwick's. |
| | ALFRED FUNGE, Devon Regt. |

- HARRY GALE, K.R.R.
 GEORGE GOATLEY, Cameron Hldrs.
 ERNEST GOATLEY, R.E.
 CHARLES GOMM, R.A.S.C.
 JAMES GOMM, R.A.F.
 GEORGE GOODING, Middlesex Regt.
 HENRY GOODING, Aus. Imp. Forces.
 WALTER GOODING, R.G.A.
 WILLIAM GOULD, O.B.L.I.
 JOHN GOULD, R.A.S.C.
 GEORGE GOULD, R.N.
 WILLIAM GOODLAKE, Gloucester Regt.
 † CHRISTOPHER R. GREEN, M.G.C.
 GEORGE GUNN, O.B.L.I.
 ARTHUR T. HALL, R.A.F.
 G. GEORGE HALL, Hussars.
 † ALBERT VICTOR HARDING, Aus. Imp. F.
 † THOMAS HARDING, O.B.L.I.
 ARCHIBALD HARDING, R. Warwick's.
 GILBERT HARRIS, R.A.F.
 RICHARD T. HARRIS, O.B.L.I.
 CHARLES HEATH, R. Berks.
 WALTER HEATH, R. Irish Fus.
 PERCY HEATH, RE.
 EDWARD HILSDON, R.A.S.C.
 WALTER HILSDON, D.C.L.I.
 CYRIL HILSDON, Devon Regt.
 JOHN HINTON, R.A.S.C.
 REG HILLSDON, Hussars.
 F H. HODGSON, N.Z. Imp. F.
 ROBERT HOLIFIELD, R.E.
 SYDENHAM HOULE, S. Staffs.
 LEONARD HUGHES, R. Warwick's.
 ALFRED HUMMERSTON, R.A.S.C.
 JOHN HUTSON, Berks Yeo.
 FREDERICK ILES, O.B.L.I.
- LLEWELLYN JACKSON, R.G.A.
 GEORGE JAKEMAN, Grenadier Guards
 † CHARLES JENNINGS, R. Berks.
 ALFRED JOESBURY, R. Warwick's.
 THOMAS JOHNSON, R.E.
 WALTER H. JOHNSON, Gloucester Regt.
 † L. SAMUEL JOHNSON, R.A.S.C.
 ALBERT JONES, Bedford Regt.
 † EDGAR F. JONES, Worcester Regt.
 † JAMES JOHNSON, Q.O.O.H.
 FRANK JONES, Bedford Regt.
 WILLIAM JONES, RE.
 † HARRY JONES, O.B.L.I.
 ALFRED JONES, Northants. Regt.
 GEORGE H. JONES, N. Staffs.
 HUBERT KEYES, Q. Westminster's.
 R. GEORGE LIFE, Devon Regt.
 CHARLES LIFE, R.N.
 FREDERICK LIFE, R.N.
 FREDERICK MERRITT, R.G.A.
 WALTER MERRITT, O.B.L.I.
 † A. WILLIAM MILES, H.L.I.
 † W. JOHN MUNT, R Fusiliers
 ISAAC MUNT, R. Warwick's.
 R. JAMES MUNT, R.F.A.
 WILLIAM MUNT, Somerset Regt.
 CHARLES MUNT, Canadian Imp F.
 † THOMAS MUNT, R. Warwick's.
 † ALFRED MUNT, M.G.C.
 ANDREW MUNT, M.G.C.
 CYRIL MUNT, Somerset Regt.
 † WILLIAM NAISH, O.B.L.I.
 BERNARD PERKINS, O.B.L.I.
 ERNEST POLLARD, R.A.F.
 WILLIAM PRICE, O.B.L.I.
 RICHARD PRICE, R.A.S.C.

THOMAS PRICE, O.B.L.I.	CHARLES T. SHORTER, O.B.L.I.
THOMAS PUTT, R.N.	GEORGE SLAYMAKER, Dorset Regt.
DAVID RING, R. Marines.	ARTHUR SMITH, R.E.
† JAMES SANDERS, W. Yorks.	† GEORGE SMITH, Dorset Regt.
† HERBERT SCARSBROOK, O.B.L.I.	† MARK SMITH, O.B.L.I.
ARTHUR SHELDON., R.G.A.	THOMAS SMITH, R.F.A.
† ROBERT SHELDON, Canadian Imp. F.	WILLIAM SMITH, O.B.L.I.
ERNEST SHELDON, R.A.S., M.T.	† ALFRED SMITH, R. Berks.
FRANK W. SHELDON, R.E.	GILBERT SMITH, R.F.A.
† FREDERICK G. SHELDON, R.A.O.C.	† WALTER SPEARING, Aus. Imp. Forces.
ROBERT T. SHELDON, R.E.	REGINALD STAMP, Q.O.O.H.
CHARLES SHEPHERD, A.V.C.	† FREDERICK STEVENS, M.G.C.
WALTER SHEPHERD, Devon Regt.	† RICHARD SUMMERS, Hants Regt.
JAMES SHEPHERD, R.F.A.	L. RICHARD TOMBS, O.B.L.I.
JOHN SHEPHERD, O.B.L.I.	JAMES TOMBS, R.E.
† SIDNEY SHEPHERD, O.B.L.I.	LEWIS TOMLINSON, Hussars.
CHARLES SHEPHERD, W. Surreys.	ARTHUR WATTS (sen.), R.M.A.
WILLIAM SHEPHERD, M.G.C.	ARTHUR WATTS (jun.), R. West Kents.
JOHN SHEPHERD, R.G.A.	FRANK R. WATTS, Hants. Regt.
FREDERICK SHIRLEY, O.B.L.I.	THOMAS WELLER, Grenadier Guards.
WILLIAM SHORTER, A.V.C.	ARTHUR WELLER, R. Fusiliers.
JOHN SHORTER, R.A.S.C.	WILLIAM WHITE, R.A.F.
ARTHUR SHORTER, Leicester Yeo.	EDWARD WHITE, M.G.C.
JAMES SHORTER, R.E.	JAMES WHITE, R.E.
FRANK SHORTER, R.G.A.	† THOMAS WHITE, Gloucester Regt.
FRED SHORTER, R.G.A.	JOHN H. WHITE, R.A.S.C.
WILLIAM H. SHORTER, Grenadier Guards	THOMAS WHITE, M.G.C.
EDWARD SHORTER, R.A.S.C.	GEORGE WHITE, D.C.L.I.
BERTIE SHORTER, R.G.A.	DAVID YATES, R.A.F.
JAMES SHORTER, R.G.A.	WILLIAM YATES, London Regt.

† denotes that the soldier lost his life



THOSE WHO SERVED AND DIED

JOHN AVERY, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS, (MECHANISED TRANSPORT REGIMENT)

M2/268782 Private John Edgar Avery, RASC, died on 16 December 1918 in Palestine. He was buried in the Jerusalem War Cemetery (ref. Q.97). His Corps, the ASC, had recently been granted the prefix 'Royal' to mark the role of vehicles, draft horses and labour battalions in supplying the soldiers and 'feeding the guns'. Within the Corps he was with 980th Mechanical Transport Regiment – tracked and wheeled vehicles, and in the Middle East with a considerable number of water tankers. A year previously, Jerusalem had fallen in the offensive by Britain, France and Arab insurgents against the heart of the Ottoman Empire in Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq). It was the first Allied conquest of the War. Fighting for the city continued from 17 November and beyond the surrender on 9 December until 30 December 1917. It was the final objective of the Southern Palestine Offensive, the first stage in removing the Turkish army from the Middle East completely. Allied forces had advanced from Suez across Sinai, fought the battles for Gaza and laid siege to the area round the Palestine capital. John died a year after Jerusalem was liberated and six weeks after Turkey had agreed to the terms of an Armistice in the Middle East. It is possible he died in a base hospital.



Private John Avery with his vehicle in Egypt and a postcard he sent home (Courtesy Dorothy Avery)

John was born in Hughenden, Buckinghamshire in 1892, the sixth of the eight children born to William Avery, timber merchant and saw mill proprietor, (b. in 1849, Bledlow Ridge, Buckinghamshire), and his second wife, Emma Ruffell, b. in 1859 in Swallowfield, Berkshire. Henry 'Harry' Avery, his oldest brother, b. 1871, Special Constable as of September 1914, later took over the family timber yard by Wheatley Station. His younger brothers, James and Leonard Avery, both served in the war, and returned. In 1891 and right through until 1935, the family were living on High Street, Wheatley, at no. 94, Roberts House. On his death John left his estate to his father.

ERNEST H. BARRETT, LONDON REGIMENT (TERRITORIAL FORCE)

5800 Rifleman Ernest Henry Barrett, 16th Bn. (County of London) London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles), married Ethel Lily Croucher of 69 Holinsdale Road, Reigate, Surrey on 15 July 1916 at Reigate Parish Church, giving his address as Hazeley Down Camp, Twyford near Winchester. He was either on leave from France or on embarkation leave prior to going there. 1/16 Battalion (first line - there was also a 2/16, second line Battalion) was one of many in this unique Regiment of merged Territorial Force battalions. (The term 'Territorial Army' appeared only after the War). Barrett's battalion had been involved in the fighting along the line of the River Somme since it began on 1st July, when it lost 18 dead, 233 wounded and 250 missing from a strength of 1000. Most of the missing were listed later as killed. Ernest died on 18 September.

The families and guests at Ernest Barrett and Ethel Croucher's wedding. Ernest's brother William (standing behind the bride) was Best Man. (Courtesy Mrs Mavis Ramsden)

1/16th Battalion *War Diary* records that on 17 September orders came to attack a German trench on the north side of the sunken road from Bouleaux Wood to Combles at 5.50 a.m. on the 18th. The Battalion suffered heavy casualties, three officers and 34 other ranks dead, 48 wounded and 14 missing, of whom Ernest was apparently one. Later that day the attack was called off. His body was never found, but his name is recorded on the



Thiepval Memorial (ref. Pier and Face 13 C), along with 73,411 others who have no known grave. He had been married for nine weeks. Lily was married again, in November 1918 to another soldier. She died in 1928 at the County Mental Hospital, Northampton.

Ernest Barrett was born in 1893 and baptised with his four brothers at St Mary's on 3 July that year. He was the second son of John William Barrett, stone mason, born in 1861 in Aldershot, Hampshire, and Selina Mary née Cripps, born in the same year in Wheatley. In 1891 the family were living at Crabtree Cottage, Shotover Hill, Littleworth; and in 1901 on Wind Mill Hill, Wheatley where Ernest was living actually at The Mill, the house of his widowed grandmother, Mrs Ellen Cripps, corn miller, and next door to his father's house where his brother William lived. William (see below) was also killed. Ernest had attended Wheatley Elementary school. The 1911 census shows he had been living at Cuddesdon Theological College, where he was working as a servant. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

WILLIAM A. BARRETT, 1ST BN ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Formerly 25301 Private William Alfred Barrett of the Somerset Light Infantry, he was by 1918 serving as Pte 18516 with 1 Bn, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. An Allied offensive began on 8 August 1918, the famous 'Black Day' of the German Army, to turn back the devastating German advance west which was running out of steam. The Hundred Days Offensive, the last of the War, ended with the German request for an Armistice in November, but only after strong resistance.

William died on 30 August 1918. His Battalion was ordered 'to move into an assembly position south-east of Rémy Wood and Village. Companies dribble forward but the movement is observed [by the enemy] and a heavy machine gun and artillery barrage is put down. B and C companies are much disorganised and suffer severe casualties. D company, ably led, get into position with only a few casualties'. (Battalion *War Diary*, 30 August 1918).

Accounted losses were 16 dead, 127 wounded and 24 missing, from a strength of 937. The fighting on the immense area on both sides of the Somme river was nicknamed 'Second Somme', but William died some miles east of where his brother Ernest had been killed in 'first Somme', 1916. William is buried in Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, (ref. VI.E.22).

William Alfred Barrett was born in Wheatley in 1896, the younger brother of Ernest, above. He was John and Selina Barrett's third son. He had attended Wheatley Elementary school and become a farm labourer.

Private William Barrett in 'civvies'



FREDERICK BIZZELL, GRENADIER GUARDS

29817 Guardsman Frederick Bizzell served with 4th Battalion, Grenadier Guards. He died 13 April 1918 in the Battle of Hazebrouck when 4th Battalion was with 4 (Guards) Brigade, 31st Division. The battle, (one of the Battles of the Lys in Belgium), including the defence of Nieppe Forest, was fought from 12 to 15 April. Two divisions, 29th and 31st, defended a line east of the Nieppe Forest against overwhelming forces. Vieux-Berquin village was lost on 13 April, but the rest of the line was held until 1st Australian Division had de-trained and arrived in positions.

The Battalion *War Diary* carries no specific record for 13 April but notes that on 10 April, at Villers-Brûlin, it was ordered to embus that evening, to proceed northwards to take part in the battle around Merville and Armentières. On 14 April the Battalion remnants left Brigade Headquarters at 2.30 a.m., stopping at Grand-le-Sec-Bois and arriving at Borre at 8.15 a.m. It seems that the action had been severe. There is an account of the Battalion's involvement with casualty reports, maps, messages etc attached for the period 12 midnight, 10 to 14 April, and a Casualty list for 12-13 April 1918. Frederick is not named, but besides 17 officers and 30 other ranks dead and 123 wounded, 'huge numbers' were missing. They were counted later and among them was Frederick. His death is recorded on Panel 1 of the Memorial at Ploegsteert, Hainault, known to the soldiers as 'Plug Street'.

Baptised Frederick Arthur, he was born in 1887 in Hornton near Banbury, Oxon., the eldest son of Charles Bizzell, police constable born in Caversham, Oxon. and Eliza Towne, born in Bicester. The family were living on Bell Street, Hornton in 1891. By 1901 the father was a licensed victualler and licensee of The Chequers Public House, Crown Road, Wheatley; in September 1914 he was sworn in as one of 36 village Special Constables. Frederick was a brother of Sidney Bizzell, Royal Horse Guards, who also served, and returned. He had attended Wheatley Elementary school. In the 1911 Census he was enumerated aged 23 at 1 The Embankment, Bedford, a club where he was employed as a billiard marker.

JOSEPH BUSBY, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Joshua Busby's name is on both village memorials. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists three Busbys forenamed John as having died in the First World War while serving with the Royal Field Artillery. 75694 Driver John Busby, son of David and Elizabeth Busby of Greenhithe, died aged 19 on 23 February 1915, and was buried in Swanscombe Cemetery, Dartford (ref. 1983); L/6235 Driver John Leonard Busby died aged 42 on 16 June 1917, and was buried in Achiet-le-Grand Communal Cemetery Extension (ref. I. L. 11); 131463 Gunner John Thomas Busby died aged 26 on 21 October 1917, and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial (ref. Panel 4 to 6 and 162). Wheatley records show John Busby b. 1895, and Joshua Edwin Busby, d. 1927 aged 67. The latter attended a Wheatley wedding, 11 July 1916, of Dora Busby to Charles Heath. One Joshua Busby, carrier, born Headington in 1895, was living at Marsh Baldon with Alfred and Louisa Stone in 1911.

GERALD CHAPMAN, ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION

London Z/461, Petty Officer Gerald Chapman, R.N., died in Belgium aged 28, two weeks before the British secured the village of Passchendaele in the Third Battle of Ypres. The *Oxford Times* (17 November) recorded his enlisting in the Royal Naval Division on 22 September 1914. He came from the Royal Naval Reserve, presumably bringing his senior NCO rank with him. The Royal Naval Division was formed in 1914 from Royal Navy and Royal Marine reservists and volunteers who were not needed for service at sea. He was posted to Benbow Battalion and trained with them at Crystal Palace and Blandford Camp, Dorset. (In 1916, following heavy losses at Antwerp, Gallipoli and Salonika, RND was transferred to the British Army as 63 (Royal Naval) Division, re-using the number of a disbanded Territorial division. It fought as an Army Division in 'France and Flanders' until 1918).



Gerald was still with Benbow Battalion RND, in March 1915, when the Division was ordered to land on the Gallipoli peninsula, Turkey, in late April. Benbow landed with the second wave in May, but took such serious casualties in the fighting under Achi Baba hill that in June it was merged with Anson Battalion until it regrouped in France in September 1916. When the Gallipoli peninsula was evacuated in January 1916, the battalion went on to Salonika to fight in Macedonia in the reluctant campaign against Bulgaria. After sick leave, Gerald re-joined Anson Battalion in France and Flanders on 5 December 1916, serving with it until his death on 26 October 1917. He died at 'Third Ypres' – also known as Passchendaele, but his body was not recovered. His name is commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial, (ref. Panel 2 to 3 and 162 to 162A). The *Oxford Times*, 17 November 1917, cited letters of condolence to Gerald's parents and family, including one from his company commander:

'He was leading his platoon when a shell burst at his feet and killed him at once ... I could not have wished for a better Petty Officer ... a leading sportsman, very popular with everybody. His death is a severe blow to the company and we miss him very much.'

He was granted home leave in February 1917 and on return to the front met his brother Hubert of the Royal Engineers. Gerald had refused a commission, 'not caring to leave his friends in Anson Battalion'.

Born in Wheatley on 30 September 1892 and baptised at St Mary's Church on 4 December, Gerald was the fourth son of John Chapman, plumber and builder, also of Wheatley, born in 1849, and Helen Mary Cousins, born 1856 in Nottingham. In 1901 the family were living on High Street. Gerald was the younger brother of Arthur, Hubert and Hurrell Chapman who all served in the war, and returned. He had attended Wheatley Elementary and Oxford Technical Schools, after which he joined the Railway Clearing House at Euston Station and was helping edit a book when war broke out. At the 1911 Census, he had been listed at 34 Shalstone Road, Kingsway, Mortlake, London, SW, where, as a railway clerk aged 18, he had been residing with his brother Hubert and Hubert's wife Maud. He

was a keen footballer and played centre-forward for Barnes United Football Club. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

GEORGE E. CHIDDINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

14353 Private George E. Chiddington served with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, before joining 10th (Service) Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, with Service No. 15603. 10th (Service) Battalion was formed at Bristol in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army. On 8 August 1915 it was mobilised, landing in France to join 1st Brigade, 1st Division, and in late September was pitched into the three-week long Battle of Loos in September–October 1915. Between September 1915 and March 1916 10th (Service) Battalion sustained 309 men killed, nearly 50% of its fighting strength, most of them in the September battle. George was killed in action on 21 January 1916 and he is commemorated on the Loos Memorial (Panel 60 to 64). He may have been the target of a sniper shot, as no other soldier of the battalion died that month. He is also remembered on a plaque in St Giles' Church, Horspath, and in 10th Battalion Roll of Honour (Loos), published at the time.

Born in 1896 in Horspath, he was the second son of George Chiddington, labourer, born in 1852 in Oxford, and Selina Winney, born in 1863 in East Hanney, Berkshire. In 1901 and 1911 the family was living at Blenheim, Horspath. Two of his brothers, William and Clifford, also served, and returned. George had attended Wheatley Elementary school and gone on to work as a farm labourer.

JAMES CLEMENTS, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

154185 Gunner James Clements served with Royal Field Artillery. During the war the port city of Beirut suffered a blockade by the Allies, intended to starve out the Turks. This, combined with a series of natural disasters, resulted in widespread famine, followed by plague, which killed more than a quarter of the population. The city fell on 8 October 1918 and James died on 23 November 1918, possibly of wounds, possibly of disease in the unhealthy city. He was buried in Beirut War Cemetery (ref. 282).

Born in 1890 in Wheatley, James was a son of Richard Clements, farm labourer and cattleman, and Mary Hayfield, both of them also born in the village, in 1864/5. In 1891 the family were living on Farm Close Lane, and by 1901 at Ivy Hill Cottages, Holton. He had attended Wheatley Elementary school and gone on to be a labourer with threshing machine in 1911, living as a single man on High Street. James married Kate Lee at Tring in Hertfordshire in 1915. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

WILLIAM CLEMENTS, HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

33688 Private William Clements, Wiltshire Regiment, (according to his Commonwealth War Graves Commission gravestone in St Mary's churchyard) was transferred to 605

Agricultural Company of the Labour Corps, with Service No 263037. Formed in January 1917, the Labour Corps grew to some 389,900 men (more than 10% of the total size of the Army) by the Armistice. Some 175,000 of these worked in the United Kingdom, the rest in theatres of war. The Corps was manned by officers and other ranks, many of them previously wounded or medically rated below the 'A1' condition necessary for front-line service. Labour Corps units were often deployed within range of enemy guns, sometimes for long periods. In the crises of March and April 1918 on the Western Front, they became emergency infantry. The Corps suffered from being regarded as a second class organisation: for example, William Clements is commemorated under his original regiment, followed by his Labour Corps details. Researching them is difficult because so few records remain of the daily activities and locations of Corps units. Today they are the fully-fledged Royal Pioneer Corps, until recently based at Bicester Garrison. William died on 11 November 1918 in Aldershot Hospital, 'of pneumonia' as family tradition has it – possibly due to the Spanish 'Flu epidemic of 1918-19.

Born in 1885 In Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire, he was the second son of William Clements, an agricultural labourer born in Wheatley in 1851 and Elizabeth Bowler, born in 1852 in Sandford, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxon. Between 1891 and 1911 the family were living in Littleworth. At 15 William was listed in the 1911 Census as a farm labourer, like his father. Later listed as a groom/gardener ('good with horses', his grandsons remember), he had married Agnes Slaymaker in 1907/8: they lived at the west end of The George in what was a separate house, reopened to the main building in the 1980s. William and Agnes' daughter, Phyllis Claudine Clements, was the mother of Roy, Colin and Vic West, living respectively in Wheatley, Little Milton and Swindon today. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

MAURICE CRICK, MACHINE GUN CORPS

17566 Private Maurice C. L. Crick served first with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry before re-badging with No 1 Company, Machine Gun Corps, Regimental No.



Maurice Crick and men from his unit: (Crick collection, Wheatley Village Archive)

8635. The MGC was formed in October 1915 in response to the need for the British to emulate the Germans and make more use of machine guns on the Western Front. It was disbanded in 1922. Maurice died of wounds on 18 December 1916, probably at the military hospital established in November 1915 at Étretat on the French coast, and was buried in the village Churchyard, Département de la Seine-Maritime, Haute-Normandie (ref. II. A.1A).

Born on 6 June 1896 in Wheatley and baptised 6 June 1897 at St Mary's, he was the elder of two sons of John Crick, born in 1872 in Worminghall, carter on farm, and Margaret Shorter, born 1868 in Oakley. In 1901 the family were living on Westfield Road, Wheatley. He was the brother of Walter E. Crick (below), who also lost his life. In 1911 at the age 14, Maurice had been a domestic gardening boy and the family were still at Westfield Cottages.

WALTER E. CRICK, GLOUCESTER REGIMENT



Private Walter Crick
(*Oxford Journal Illustrated*,
28 August 1918)

207285 Private Walter Ernest Thomas Crick appears to have served with 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, rather than the Gloucestershire as indicated on the List of Wheatley men who served. At the end of May 1918, 3rd Battalion fought on the Aisne river in several battles – St Quentin and Bapaume in late March, Messines, Bailleul and the First Battle of Kemmel Ridge in April, and the Aisne in May-June. Walter lost his life on 27 May 1918, the first day of the Battle of the Aisne, and was buried at Marfaux British Cemetery, Marne (ref. X. D. 6).

He was a younger son of John and Margaret Crick above, brother of Maurice Crick above and of Reuben Leonard Crick. Baptised 6 November 1897 at St Mary's, he was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1911.

CHRISTOPHER R. GREEN, MACHINE GUN CORPS



Private Christopher Green
(*Oxford Journal Illustrated*,
4 December 1918)

26259 Private Christopher Robert Green first enlisted with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry after July 1916 when his appeal against conscription failed. Later he transferred to 9 Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), Regimental No. 66836, Private. The railway station at Vichte, east of Ypres and Courtrai, was captured on 20 October 1918, and the village two days later. German positions across the Selle River had been attacked on 17 October; British forces crossed the river in fog on 20 October and pressed their advantage in the next few days against a disciplined German rearguard and retreat east. Christopher died on 25 October, Day 79 of the 100 Days Offensive. He is buried in Vichte Military Cemetery, Anzegem, West Flanders, Belgium (ref. I. A. 19).

Christopher was born in Headington in 1893, the second son of Henry Green, bricklayer, born also in Headington, in 1857/9, and Elizabeth Court, laundress, born in Oxford in 1855. In 1911 the family was living on Windmill Road, Headington Quarry, and Christopher was following his father as an apprentice bricklayer. He married Emily Alice Smith of Horspath

in 1915 and when appeal was made to the Tribunal in 1916, he was licensee of the Cricketer's Arms, Littleworth. The license was transferred to Emily on 13 January 1919.

ALBERT VICTOR HARDING, AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

Gunner Albert Victor Harding, 1 Divisional Ammunition Column, 7th Reinforcements, Australian Imperial Force, enlisted at Brisbane, three years after leaving Wheatley for Australia. He embarked on 10 August 1915 from Melbourne on ship RMS *Persia* bound for England. He was posted to 11th Trench Mortar Battery, Australian Field Artillery, stating his next of kin as Mrs J. Harding, Bell Lane, Wheatley – his mother. Albert was killed by artillery fire during the days leading up to the start of the Somme offensive.

4752 Corporal Harding 'was killed in action on the afternoon of 25 June [the Commonwealth War Graves Commission say 27 June]. I cannot speak too highly of his manly and soldierly qualities ... the best man in my battery. He died gloriously in action under heavy fire and his name has been forwarded for very gallant behaviour. The officer in charge of the gun on which he was working ... when cease-fire had been given, walked over and was shaking hands with him and congratulating him on his behaviour when an enemy shell, bursting a few feet away, struck Corporal Harding and he fell forward into the officer's arms, dead. He was killed instantaneously ... a gallant man and a good comrade.' (*Oxford Times*, 15 July 1916).

He was buried in Rue-Pétillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix, Béthune, France (ref. I. J. 4). He is also remembered on Panel 20 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Treloar Crescent in Campbell, Australian Capital Territory.

Albert was baptised in Wheatley on 20 June 1887: next to his Register entry is noted 'Jubilee of the Queen's accession'. He was the youngest son of John Harding, farm labourer, born in Great Milton, Oxon., and Jane/Jenny née Davis, both born in Wheatley in 1847. He was brother to Thomas Harding below. In 1891 the family were living on High Street and in 1901 on Bell Lane. At 14, Albert was a farm labourer and in 1911 his father, John, was living alone on Bell Lane. Albert was lodging at 21 Clairville Gardens, Hanwell, Middlesex, employed as a carter. On 30 August 1912 he boarded the Orient Lines ship *Orvieto* from London, bound for Sydney, Australia. The passenger list gave his age as 23 and his occupation as labourer. None of his family emigrated with him. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

THOMAS HARDING, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

8845 Private Thomas Harding, 2nd Battalion, O.B.L.I. enlisted in September 1914. He already had some military training after joining the old Oxfordshire Light Infantry Regiment in September 1897. He bought himself out for £2 in 1898, but stated later on his Attestation

papers that he had served with the Grenadier Guards and left because of a 'mis-statement as to age on enlistment'. 2nd Battalion, OBLI fought through the week-long Battle of Festubert and sustained 400 casualties, over half Battalion strength. Thomas was killed by a sniper in the final heavy fighting at Richebourg l'Avoué on 15–16/17 May 1915 in which the Battalion lost 31 dead, 182 wounded and 68 missing. He is commemorated on the Memorial at Le Touret on the Béthune-Armentières main road, Pas de Calais (ref: Panel 26).

'Poor Tom Harding was killed last Monday (17 May). He was shot in the back, the bullet went right through him and he was in awful pain. He had lain there an hour when I found him, but he was quite conscious. He kept saying 'I wish I could die out of this pain'. I did my best and stayed with him to the last. He was afraid I too should get shot as it was a sniper who shot him, and he continued firing at me. I asked Tom if he would like any message sent home, but he only said there wasn't much to tell only that he had done his best. He passed away as quiet as a lamb.' (Letter from L/Cpl Harry Jones of Wheatley to Harriet Shorter, published in the *Oxford Times*, 19 June 1915).

Born in 1879/80, he was the third of four sons of John and Jane/Jenny Harding above, and an older brother of Albert Victor Harding above. In 1891 he left school, went to Horspath and became a farm labourer. In 1909, aged 29, he had married Florence Munt, widow, daughter of Andrew Gould, deceased: the 1911 Census shows the family living on Bell Lane, with Thomas' stepchildren Joe, Cyril, Richard and Florence Munt. Thomas and Florence had two children of their own: Blanche Lillian was baptised at St Mary's in 1912, and Thomas Reginald on 21 March 1915. See also references to Thomas in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter, and to him and his son Fred in the *War Memorial* chapter.

CHARLES JENNINGS, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT



Private Charles Jennings, from the photograph that hangs at 26 The Avenue. (Courtesy Ray Johnson)

40035 Private Charles Jennings enlisted at Oxford in 1917 with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, but either before sailing for France, or in France, was posted to C Company, 2nd Battalion the Royal Berkshire Regiment, Service number 50620. His nephew and great nephew, Ray Johnson and Steve Morrison, have provided information: a photograph hangs at 26 The Avenue and Steve has visited Crucifix Corner Cemetery three times.

Charles' sister – Steve's grandmother – passed on the family version: Charles had been killed by a sniper, buried with full military honours, but the grave was destroyed by artillery bombardment. Doubtless that version was designed to soften the blow to families back home. In fact, it seems that no-one knew how or when Charles was killed during the British retreat in spring 1918. 2nd Battalion, Berkshire Regiment, was heavily engaged between 20 and 27/28 April 1918 after the advancing Germans took Villers-Bretonneux village between Amiens and St Quentin. Battalion *War Diary* records that four companies of the Battalion relieved Australian troops overnight on 20 April outside the village and on 24/25 April recaptured it with 35 German machine guns and 300 prisoners. Charles is reported to have been killed by shellfire during the taking of the village, 24 April. He was



Crucifix Corner Cemetery, where Charles Jennings is buried (Courtesy the Commonwealth War Graves Commission)

18 years and 10 months old. Battalion casualties (Other Ranks) that month were 55 killed or dead of wounds, 166 wounded, 19 gassed and 10 missing. They came out of the line for recuperation overnight on 27/28 April. Probably buried in a communal grave, he has an individual gravestone in Crucifix Corner Cemetery (ref: plot 111, row A, grave 13), Villers-Bretonneux, which holds more than 650 men and is close to where he died.

'Private Charles Jennings has been killed in action in France. He joined up in June 1917 and went to France on 30 March past and was killed instantly by a shell, 24 April 1917. In writing of his death, his sergeant says "It is a great loss to us. He was such a willing man. Nothing was ever too much for him"' (*Oxford Times*, 8 June 1918).

Charles was born on 8 May 1899. His parents and sister lived on Crown Road and at some point on Bell Lane. His father James Jennings came from Cuddesdon and was a private coachman; his mother Elizabeth Ann Jennings née Langston was from Beckley. The Wheatley Elementary school Log Book reveals that in 1913 the Rev. R. de M. Niven, General Diocesan Inspector of Schools, found the school 'thoroughly satisfactory' on inspection, 23 July: Charles was awarded the Bishop's Prize from the Inspector. He was in the church choir for seven years. Before joining the Army he worked at the Cowley Steam Plough Works.

L. SAMUEL JOHNSON, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

T2/016739 Driver Lawrence Samuel Johnson, Army Service Corps (prefixed Royal in late 1918) enlisted with Kitchener's New Army, 9 August 1914 (*Oxford Times*, 26 September).



Private Samuel Johnson
(*Oxford Times*, 6 October
1916)

He was the first Wheatley man to die on active service, serving with a Labour Company, Army Service Corps. Most of the food, equipment and ammunition for a vast army on widely distant fronts was supplied from Britain. Using horse-drawn and increasingly motorised vehicles, railways and waterways, the ASC managed the logistics of supply and organisation. (Today they form part of the Royal Logistical Corps). In 1914 westerly French ports were safer landing points for supplies and personnel than the Channel ports which faced immediate German threat. Samuel died aged 21 of enteric – typhoid – fever on 21 October 1914 at 9 General Hospital RAMC, Nantes, and was buried in La Bouteillerie Cemetery, Nantes (ref. H. 4. 1).

Born in 1893 in Horspath, he was the youngest of three sons of Thomas Johnson, packer on line and later plate-layer with the Great Western Railway, born in Cowley, Oxford in 1864 and Harriet née Munt, born in Littleworth the same year. In 1901 the family were living on High Street, in 1911 on Farm Close Lane. He was a brother of Thomas Johnson junior and of Walter Johnson, both of whom also served, and returned. Samuel was a farm carter before enlisting. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

JAMES JOHNSON/JOHNSTON, QUEEN'S OWN OXFORDSHIRE HUSSARS

2253 James Johnston, Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars (Oxfordshire Yeomanry, or Territorial Force cavalry), enlisted on 9 October 1914. After a month's training, QOOH on orders from Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, joined the Royal Naval Brigade in Flanders to prevent a German advance on the Channel ports. QOOH were the first Territorials to see action and were Churchill's former regiment; his younger brother, Jack Churchill, was still serving. Disparagingly nicknamed 'Queer Objects On Horseback' or 'agricultural cavalry', the QOOH took part in actions from 'First Ypres', in 1914, to the capture of Amiens and the advance, in 1918. They spent frustrating periods waiting to push through gaps in enemy lines, which never appeared. They brought up supplies, dug defensive positions, suffered appalling discomfort, and frequently dismounted to fight on foot. A number of Wheatley men served with them.

In July 1917, Sergeant Johnston was listed in the *London Gazette* (17 July) with the award of the Military Medal 'for bravery in the field' sometime in the spring. The citations with details of the act of bravery by NCOs and men were not published, perhaps for reasons of sheer space. However, it is fairly certain that he had won the medal at Gillemont Farm outpost on 20 May of that year, when C Squadron QOOH, acting as infantrymen, were shelled heavily, then attacked by infantry, whom they repelled with rifle fire at close range of about 50 yards, taking two prisoners of war. They sustained 6 dead, 4 wounded, one gassed and one shell-shocked, all largely through the sheer ferocity of the barrage. Two of those killed were officers, including Major Valentine Fleming, C Squadron Commander, friend of Churchill and father of the author Ian Fleming. A posthumous DSO was awarded to the Major for his courage.

By 1918 James was at least an acting CQMS, one of the highest senior NCO ranks. He died on 15 April as a result of an action at Rifle Wood on 1 April 1918 mainly by cavalry, mounted and dismounted, to stem the German advance, protect Amiens and remove the Germans from the wood. He was buried at St Sever city cemetery, Rouen, ref. P. IX. P. 14B, in an extension added in 1916 to accommodate the number who died as a result of wounds and disease in Rouen's fifteen British military hospitals. In 2004 a memorial was raised at Rifle Wood to the twenty QOOH men who died in or following the 1 April attack to dislodge the Germans there.

Sergeant A[lfred]. Hawtin, killed 2 April, cousin of Annie Hawtin, Reg Stamp's fiancée and later his wife, is also listed on that new memorial along with 'Sergeant J. Johnston, MM'. James was born in Newton-in-Ayr, Scotland. See also references to him in the chapters on *Pip, Squeak and Wilfred*, and on *Wheatley in a World at War*.

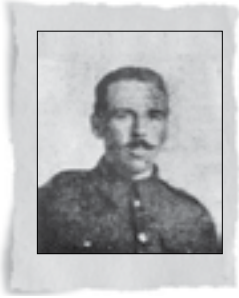
EDGAR F. JONES, WORCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

A Private Edgar Jones, Regimental No. 9736, served with 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. The 3rd Battalion were much involved in the Vimy Ridge fighting of the spring of 1916. The dominant feature of the fighting was mining and countermining on the slopes of the Ridge, with incessant small attacks and counter-attacks. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission shows this Edgar as having died on 22 May 1916 and been buried in Écoivres Military Cemetery at Mont St Éloi, north-west of Arras in the Pas de Calais (ref. II C. 13). However, the Worcestershire Regiment Roll of Honour shows that a 42598 Edgar Chas Jones died of wounds 23 September 1916; and that 24188 Edgar Fred Jones died of wounds 24 April 1918 (he was buried in Arleux en Gohelle (Orchard Dump military cemetery, which only opened in April 1917). We cannot be certain which of the three was the Wheatley man.

The 1901 Census has an Edgar Jones, born in Woodford Bridge, Essex in 1890 (the full name on his birth record being given as Edgar Frederick). He was living with his parents in Littleworth. His father was William Jones, a market gardener, born in Dorchester, Oxon., in 1837, and his mother was Maria, born in Hexton, Hertfordshire in 1850. He died of his wounds on 24th April 1918. The record of his death shows that he had been living at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire and that he had been married – in 1913, to Ivy D. Holmes.

HARRY JONES, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

27910 Private (later Lance Corporal) Harry Jones enlisted with 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry 14 August 1914. The bulk of the Battalion was sent to Belgium within weeks and fought through 'First Ypres' October-November 1914, which established an Allied defence line across Belgium centred on the town of Ypres which resisted German attack until the end of the war. In May 1915 at Festubert, Harry had stayed to accompany Thomas Harding (see above) as he died from a sniper's 'snapshot'. Harry



Private Harry Jones (*Oxford Chronicle*, 18 May 1917)

ended his service with OBLI, Service No 7653, in January 1916. He later enlisted with 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, Regimental No. 40788. The Battalion arrived in France in March 1916, fought through the Somme offensive in which it took severe casualties. In the Arras offensive, April-May 1917, it fought in the Second of three Battles within weeks for the Scarpe River (23-24 April 1917). In the evening of 22 April, the Battalion moved into forward trenches east of Monchy-le-Preux village.

'At 4.45 on the morning of the 23rd the Battalion went over the top and successfully captured the first line German trench. A and B Companies constructed strong points about 300 yards beyond the captured German positions. The covering barrage for the attack fell very short and caused a number of casualties to our own men. After the attack and during the consolidation, hostile sniping was very active'. (*Battalion War Diary*).

Harry Jones died of wounds on 24 April 1917 and was buried in the British Cemetery at Duisans, Étrun, west of Arras, Pas de Calais (ref. IV. A. 24). (Life résumé, *Oxford Times*, 11 May 1917).

He was born in Wheatley in 1890, a son of Wheatley-born Francis George Jones, carpenter, and Angelina née Messenger. They lived on Church Road in 1911. His brothers were Alfred, Frank and William Jones who also served, and returned. He was a labourer. In 1911 he was living with James and Harriett Shorter, his aunt and uncle, at Rock Cottage, Westfield Road. He had married a Miss Gillam of 21 Lillian Road, Barnes, London. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

A. WILLIAM MILES, HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY

The 1911 census lists Arthur William Miles as 'Overseas Military'. At this point he was a Lance Corporal with the Highland Light Infantry, stationed in India at Lucknow, the Regiment's 'honour' posting since it raised the siege there in the Indian Mutiny, 1857. Attested on 2 January he was posted on 18 February 1907. He also served as a regimental ambulance man (medical orderly) at Dum Dum in November 1908. Appointed Lance Corporal on 18 January 1910, he received the Durbar Medal marking George V's Coronation Visit to Delhi in 1911. However, on 19 November 1912 he was reduced to the ranks for disobedience. Transferring to the Army Reserve on 24 January 1914, he rejoined the colours on 7 November of that year. The following year, on 16 August, he was discharged pensioned as no longer fit for war service with a weak heart and a record of typhoid fever.

He appears as William Miles in the 1891 Wheatley census, and as Arthur in that of 1901, the sixth son of Richard Miles, agricultural labourer and Julia Jane Clements, both born in Wheatley, respectively in 1850 and 1849. The family were living on High Street in 1891 and on Church Road ten years later. Arthur William was baptised at St Mary's Church on 7 November 1886. He was listed on his Army papers as a labourer and builder in civilian life. Research has not revealed the date of his death, but judging from his inclusion on the list

of Wheatley men named on the War Memorial as one who had served and died, it may be that he did not live long to enjoy his pension. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ALFRED JAMES MUNT, MACHINE GUN CORPS

133387 Private Alfred James Munt, 32 Battalion (Infantry), Machine Gun Corps, enlisted probably in 1916. The Battalion was formed from the Machine Gun Sections of 32 Brigade, 11th (Northern) Division in March 1916 in Egypt, during their defence of the Canal east of Suez. By 3 July 1916 the entire Division had embarked on urgent orders for France to reinforce Third Army on the Somme. On 27 July, with no acclimatisation, they took up front line positions and fought at Flers-Courcelette and Thiepval through to the end of the offensive. In 1917, after the savage winter of 1916-17, they were in action on the Ancre river and then were moved north to Flanders for the battle of Messines, where the objective was to take German positions on relatively high ground which threatened the planned summer advance to Passchendaele village, an offensive also known as 'Third Ypres'. Alfred died on 7 June 1917, the opening day of the battle of Messines, and was buried in St Hilaire Cemetery, Frévent in the Nord Pas de Calais, west of Arras (ref. F. 16).

He was born in 1899 in Wheatley and was baptised at St. Mary's Church on 14 May, the eldest of five sons of William Munt, labourer also born in Wheatley, in 1870, and Agnes Alice Webb, born in the registration district of Headington in 1874. He is recorded as having attended the school in 1905. In 1911 the family were living in Littleworth. Alfred was the uncle of Thomas Munt, below, who also lost his life in the war. See also a reference to Alfred in the *Wheatley Tribunal* chapter.

THOMAS MUNT, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

5361 Private Thomas Henry Munt served with 1/6 Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. In 1916 the Battalion, along with several others out of the total of thirty raised by the Regiment for the war, fought in the major summer offensive on the River Somme with 143 Brigade, 48th (South Midlands) Division. Thomas died on 23 August aged 33 as a result of wounds sustained in the battle of Delville Wood (15 July - 3 September). He was buried in Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery Extension (ref. II. H. 10), north-west of Albert on the road to Doullens, Somme. A field ambulance station operated at Bouzincourt from early 1916 to February 1917, and moved with the Allied line's shift east from the Ancre river.

Thomas was the sixteenth of seventeen children born to George Munt, railway labourer, ganger and plate-layer, and Martha Shorter of Littleworth, both of them born in Wheatley in 1842 – indeed they had both been baptised on 6 March of that year. Thomas was baptised in St. Mary's Church on 2nd February 1883. In 1891 and 1901 the family were living in Littleworth. By 1901 Thomas had become a labourer. He was a nephew of Alfred James Munt, above, who also lost his life in the war. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

Men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, their rifles stacked nearby, lying exhausted in the grass in a rear area in the course of the Battle of the Somme. (Courtesy, The Warwickshire Regiment)



W. JOHN MUNT, ROYAL FUSILIERS

5336 Private William John Munt served with 11th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (London Regiment). In 1916 the Battalion fought with 54 Brigade, 18th (Eastern) Division, throughout the Somme offensive, at the battles of Delville Wood (July-September), Thiepval Ridge (end of September), and the battles of the Ancre, October and November. John died of wounds on 2 November and was buried in Contay British Cemetery (ref. III. E. 31) on the main road from Amiens to Arras. He must have been buried from either 9th or 49th Casualty Clearing Station, both of which worked at Contay from August 1916 to March 1917.

He was baptised William John Munt in St Mary's on 3 April 1887, the elder of two sons of John Munt, a farm labourer born in Littleworth in 1859, and Fanny née Dover, also Littleworth-born, in 1863: the couple married in Wheatley on 14 September 1885. In 1901 the family were in Littleworth. The 1911 Census names him simply as John, living with his uncle, Richard Dover, ironstone worker, at 65, Great Park Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, where he too worked in the ironstone quarries. On enlistment, he gave Kettering as his town of residence. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

WILLIAM NAISH, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

201573 Private William Thomas Naish served with 1/4 Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He enlisted at Oxford in April 1915 and went to France

early in 1916. The Battalion fought with 143 Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division, on 1 July 1916, the first day of the Somme offensive, and the day when over 57,000 casualties were sustained – the largest number suffered in one day by the British Army. William lost his life on 14 August when 48th Division was engaged in the battle of Pozières. His body was not found, but he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 10A and 10D).

William Thomas Naish was baptised in Wheatley on 4 October 1896, son of Arthur Thomas Naish, painter and glazier, decorator and builder, also born in Wheatley, in 1871, and Catherine Horwood born 1872 in Tingewick, Buckinghamshire. In 1901 and 1911 the family were living in a cottage next to the school on Church Road. William was at school in Wheatley in 1903 and attended the Night School 1910, 1911 and 1912. He had been a sales boy in a general grocery store. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Private William T. Naish
(*Oxford Chronicle*, 1
September 1916)

JAMES SANDERS, WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists him as having died (of his wounds) on 19 February 1917: 41906 Private, 10th (Service) Battalion, The Prince of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regt, 62 Brigade, 21st Division; aged 36, son of Robert Postlethwaite Sanders, gamekeeper, and Hannah of Graythwaite, Lancashire, and husband of Emma Sanders of Westfield Road, Wheatley. He is buried in Béthune Town Cemetery, 30 miles from Arras and the Line. Béthune was still relatively unscathed in 1917, a rail junction and a Corps and Divisional HQ (therefore safe!). 33 Casualty Clearing Station operated there and the cemetery contains over 3,000 Commonwealth graves. The direct cause of his death is unknown – outside the campaigning season, but in a record savage winter across Europe.

James' birthplace was Graythwaite. At the time of joining the Army – with, at first, the Regimental No. 161470 in the Royal Field Artillery – he was living in Pwllheli: the 1911 census finds that the father Robert was then living in Pwllheli and working as a mole catcher; and that James and Emma had also moved to the same area, he too working as a rabbit and mole catcher. The Wheatley Parish Records show that he had married Emma née Hinton on 7 November 1910. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

HERBERT SCARSBROOK, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

16046 Private Herbert William Scarsbrook enlisted with 7th (Service) Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, Kitchener's New Army, in 1914-15. He served in Macedonia, into which Britain was drawn to defend Serbia against an attack by Germany, Austria and Bulgaria combined. Britain had its own developing disaster on Gallipoli and from the outset the Macedonian, Salonika or 'Balkan' campaign, 1915-18, was a low, unwilling priority. 7th Service Battalion OBLI was ordered there early in 1916, with 78

Brigade, 26th Division, landing at and based out from the Greek port city of Salonika (today Thessaloniki). The Bulgarians fought professionally, employing considerable manpower on their own terrain. By 1917, British forces found themselves holding a line which was in deadlock until 1918, on the south shore of Lake Doiran, the frontier between Greece and Bulgarian Macedonia. In the opening offensive of the 1917 campaigning season, British forces fought in two battles near to Doiran village (24-25 April and 8-9 May 1917). Herbert's Battalion held the line in two locations, two companies allocated to each. He died in action on the second day of the First Battle of Doiran, 25 April. His body was not recovered and his name is commemorated on the Doiran Memorial, near the village itself. It marks 2000 soldiers killed in Macedonia who have no known grave. Herbert was one of 2,800 Killed in Action; another 1,400 died of wounds and 4,200 from sickness, most notably malaria. The artist Stanley Spencer, (Sydney of Oxford's brother), caught malaria during his three years as a medic with Salonika Force. Herbert's elder brother Joseph, aged 39, a sub-postmaster, joined the Army in July 1916, served in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and returned.

Herbert Scarsbrook's connection with Wheatley is not clear, but his name appears on both the Wheatley and Stanton St John memorials. He was baptised on 2 December 1889 at Stanton St. John Church, the fourth and youngest son of Joseph Scarsbrook, wheelwright, born in Islip in 1851, and Sarah Hinton born in Stanton St. John in 1855. The family were living there between the 1891 census and 1911, when Herbert, aged 21, was a horseman on an unnamed farm, possibly in Wheatley. A Joseph Scarsbrook was buried in Wheatley churchyard on 20 March 1910, aged 61, and this may have constituted the link with the village. See also references to Herbert in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

FREDERICK G. SHELDON, ROYAL ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS

012128, 2nd Corporal Frederick Sheldon, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, died in or near Baghdad on 18 June 1918, aged 38/39. His rank, peculiar to the Corps but since abolished, was that of a full Corporal, but carrying only one sleeve chevron. He had enlisted in Reading where he was a school teacher, a reserved occupation.

He served in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) in an Advanced (Forward) Munitions Depot. Baghdad fell to British Forces in March 1917 along with three quarters (9,000 men) of its Turkish garrison. British and Imperial forces turned the trophy capture into a new Headquarters and supply base for the next and last phase of pushing the Turkish army back into Turkey. A railway was extended north from Baghdad to Mosul, an assault-boat force was assembled on the Tigris to move north by water, and forces moved out north-east into Mesopotamia and north-west towards the coast during 1917-18. On 30 October 1918, an Armistice was agreed by which Turkish forces had to evacuate what was left of the Ottoman Middle East and retire behind their own border.

Frederick could have been killed anywhere in the forward supplying of this final theatre of war. His body was given decent burial in the safety of Baghdad. 'Killed by a shell explosion'

is inscribed alongside his name on the family grave in St Mary's churchyard (D.367), which may indicate an accidental detonation, an RAOC occupational hazard. His body was buried in Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery (ref. II. H. 14).

Frederick George Sheldon was born in Wheatley in 1879/80, second son of Frederick Sheldon, master blacksmith, born in the village in 1846, and Ellen, née Holyoake, born in Dallington, Northamptonshire in 1851. In 1891 the family were living on High Street. He was brother to Ernest and Robert George Sheldon, who fought in the war, and returned. A schoolmaster at a Council school in Reading, he was lodging as a single man and certified teacher in 1901 at 62, Watlington Street, Reading. In 1906 he married Ada Sherwood Penny of 'Adel', Mortimer Common, Berkshire, born in Kidderminster. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ROBERT SHELDON, CANADIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

C.I.F. 523321 Private Robert Sheldon, an emigrant from Wheatley to Canada, served with the Canadian Army Medical Corps in the Canadian Expeditionary Force which came to Britain from 1914 onwards. By 1918, the CAMC operated sixteen general hospitals, ten stationary hospitals, and four Casualty Clearing Stations. Doctors and medical orderlies (paramedics in today's army) had to prioritise the treatment of wounded men (triage): some could wait for emergency surgery, others could not, some were beyond it and others were injured mentally. At the height of a battle or series of battles, medical units could be overrun as hundreds of wounded were brought in. Robert died on 26 November 1918, age 60, listed as being with a CAMC TD (Training Depot), where personnel unfit for duty were posted, even as a technicality, perhaps covering hospitalisation. The Spanish 'Flu epidemic spread through every army and population fighting in Europe and he may have been shipped 'home' to Canada already declared unfit. He was buried in Calgary Union Cemetery, Alberta (ref. L. 43. B. 14. S. S) and commemorated in the (Canadian) *First World War Book of Remembrance*, p. 499.

He was born in Wheatley, according to Canadian records on 25 December 1871, but this does not match his being 60 in 1918. The Parish Records for St. Mary's, Wheatley have him baptised on 7 February 1858, as the eldest son of Charles Sheldon, farrier, blacksmith and by 1881 widower, born in 1834, and of his wife Ellen/Eleanor, née Munt, born in 1836, both of Wheatley. In 1881 they were living on Friday Lane, and later on High Street (Cromwell House).

When Robert emigrated to Canada, it would be after 1901 when he was listed as a Wheatley blacksmith. He died at Sarcee Camp, Calgary, Alberta on 26 November 1918. He was found dead in bed having died during the night, probably of heart failure. He had nominated Mrs G. Druce as his next of kin: she was his sister Gertrude and was living in Garsington. Robert left his estate to George Druce, retired blacksmith, Gertrude's husband. See also reference to Robert in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Robert Sheldon's gravestone. (Courtesy www.veterans.gc.ca)

SIDNEY SHEPHERD, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

267581 Private Sidney Shepherd, 1st Bucks Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, enlisted at Oxford shortly after the appeal against his conscription was rejected by tribunal in May 1916. He was drafted to 1 (Bucks) Battalion OBLI in 'France and Flanders' with 145 Brigade, 48th Division. It took part in the Somme offensive, July-November 1916. In August 1917, in Flanders, it was ordered to take St Julien, near Langemarck in the opening battles of the 'Third Ypres' offensive to advance the line to Passchendaele village six miles east. Sidney was one of 920 Other Ranks, led by 25 officers, moving up to the Line in mud and water up to their knees, on disintegrating duckboards. Rain and days of artillery shelling created a quagmire in which neither guns, men nor supplies could be shifted. After 24 hours in the Line they were withdrawn for two days, having lost 2 officers and 67 Other Ranks.

At 4.45 a.m., 16 August they were ordered again into attack. They faced abandoned German blockhouses which quickly became their only cover, flooded and contaminated with sewage and corpses. They could not keep up with the 'creeping' barrage (100 yards every five minutes) and for the entire day they were exposed to heavy rifle and machine gun fire while being bogged down in mud, shellholes and filthy pillboxes with entrances facing the wrong way. Casualties were severe: 54 killed, 198 wounded, 14 captured and 71 missing, of whom Sidney Shepherd was one. The Battalion was relieved a day later. Sidney's name is on the Tyne Cot Memorial, 5 miles north east of Ypres.

He was baptised in Wheatley on 25 June 1878 along with his twin sister Mary Ann. He was the third son of Charles Shepherd, agricultural labourer, and Emily Munt, both born in Wheatley in 1844 and 1846 respectively. In 1891 they were living on Main Road, Shifford near Witney. In 1901 they were on High Street back in Wheatley, and in 1911 Emily is listed as a widow on Kiln Lane. Sidney was an agricultural labourer at the time of the 1901 Census and in 1911 a carter for a farmer. He was a brother to Charles and William Shepherd, both of whom also served, and returned. See also references to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* and *Wheatley in a World at War* chapters.

ALFRED SMITH, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT



8557 Lance Corporal Alfred Arthur Edward Smith, 2nd Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, enlisted at the Regimental Depot barracks in Reading and was killed at the end of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 15 March 1915. His body was not recovered for burial, but his name is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial (Panel 30). 'The Royal Berkshires lost 46 killed, 6 dead from wounds, 215 wounded and eight missing. Among the dead is 8557 Acting Corporal A. Smith.' (*Oxford Times*, 17 April 1915, apparently understating the real figures of 75 killed, 223 wounded and 17 missing. Corporal Smith was among the missing).

Baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Headington Quarry on 24 November 1889, he was the son of Reconcile Smith (known as 'Rex'), labourer and later chimney sweeper, born in Baldon, Oxon. (who died in 1944 at the age of 94), and Alice born in Warborough. In 1891 the family were living at Headington Quarry; by 1901 at Chapman's Yard, High Street, Wheatley, and by 1911 in Coombe Wood, Cuddesdon. Alfred was a brother of Gilbert Smith who also fought in the war, and returned.

GEORGE SMITH, DORSET REGIMENT

9974 Private George Smith served with 5th (Service) Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment, which embarked for Gallipoli from Liverpool on 3 July 1915, bound for Mudros, the base facility on the island of Imbros. It took part in the landing at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, on 6 August, engaging with Turkish forces to take Sari Bair and adjoining ridges to link up with the ANZAC beach heads further south. It was a costly failure: many died needlessly including George Smith, and the GOC Gallipoli, Sir Ian Hamilton, himself a mediocre commander, dismissed several generals and brigadiers immediately. George died on 21 August, aged 19, as his Battalion stormed slopes behind Suvla in thick mist. His body was not found, but his name is commemorated on the Cape Helles monument at the southern end of the peninsula (ref: Panel 136-139). On 16 December 1915 the Battalion was evacuated from Gallipoli, among the first away, due to severe casualties.

'Pte G. Smith, son of Mr F. Smith, Farm Close Lane, Wheatley, was reported missing during the Gallipoli campaign and official information has now been received that he was killed. His brother, Pte M. [Mark, below] Smith, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. is reported wounded and missing.'

The records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission state that he was the son of Frederick and Clara Ann Smith née Putt born in Oxford in 1873, who lived on Crown Road. George's birth was registered in Hammersmith in 1894. On his Attestation Form (August 1914) he gave his occupation as kitchen porter. He also stated that he had previously served with the Royal Navy but had been discharged as medically unfit. On 10 October 1914 he was confined to camp for seven days for using obscene language to an NCO. He was reported missing on 22 August 1915; 24 June 1916 was the date of his death as assumed for official purposes. On 1 July 1919 private property, i.e. 22 photographs, were returned to George's father Frederick, who was living in Wheatley. See also reference to George in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

MARK SMITH, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

201729 Private Mark Harold Smith, 1/4 Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, died in the Somme river offensive on 23 July 1916, aged 18 and just three weeks into the campaign. On the first day of the Somme, 1 July 1916, the British Army lost some 57,000 men. Battalions of the Oxford and Bucks suffered heavily. Mark's body was not



Private George Smith
(*Oxford Chronicle*, 29
September 1916)

found, but he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Ref: Pier and Face 10 A and 10 D).

His birth, like that of his brother George Smith above, was registered in Hammersmith, London. He was a son of Frederick and Clara Ann Smith who lived on Crown Road. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

WALTER SPEARING, AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

A.I.F 4314 Private Walter Edgar Spearing enlisted with 13th Infantry Battalion, Australian Army, at Currabubula, New South Wales. He had emigrated from England in 1912. On 15 December 1915 he left for Europe with 13 to 18 Reinforcement Drafts, on ship H.M.A.T.S. *Aeneas*, from Sydney. In June 1916 the Battalion joined II Anzac Corps in France, and for the next two years it served on the Western Front. It saw action at Pozières Ridge in August 1916 during the Somme offensive. Corporal Spearing died of wounds on 4 March 1917 and is buried in the Communal Cemetery Extension at Abbeville, Somme (ref. II. C. 26), where Casualty Clearing took place. He is further commemorated in Australia, in the Commemorative Area of the War Memorial, Capital Territory (ref: panel 71).

Walter Edgar Spearing was the second of six children (five sons) of William Spearing, coachman, job master and publican, born in Wookey, Somersetshire in 1863, and Harriet Lizzie née Wood, born in Stadhampton in 1869. All the couple's children were born in Wheatley, Walter in 1893 when the family lived on High Street. After Wheatley Elementary, he attended Night School in the village in 1909. The 1911 census lists the father as licensed victualler and iron master, running the White Hart public house on High Street, while Walter was a domestic gardener. In a long-standing village tradition, he emigrated, departing for Australia from London on 27 July 1912 on board P. & O. ship *Narrung*, giving his occupation as farmer and his age as 19. At the time of Walter's death his parents' address was 10 William Street in Oxford.

FREDERICK STEVENS, MACHINE GUN CORPS

10280 Private Frederick John Stevens, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) died 31 July 1917 in the opening stage of 'Third Ypres' offensive to advance the line east to the village and slight elevation of Passchendaele. He was buried with 900 others who died of wounds there, in Canada Farm Cemetery (ref. II. B. 22), five miles north-west of Ypres, the site of a Field Dressing Station in a farmhouse.

Frederick had originally joined the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry with the Regimental No. 20740. His place of birth on his death record is Weymouth, Dorset and there is a record of a Frederick John Stevens born in 1899 living there with his father Alfred James Stevens and mother Fanny Emily. We know only that Frederick signed on for his army service in Oxford. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



RICHARD SUMMERS, HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

39021 Private Richard Summers enlisted 1 September, 1914, with 2/4 Battalion Hampshire Regiment, Kitchener's New Army. After 46 days' service he was discharged in October 1914. He re-joined in January 1916, at the commencement of national conscription, Regimental No. 28461, apparently with the Worcestershire Regiment, then transferred to the Warwickshire Regiment and finally back to his old 2/4 Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, with which he served in Egypt from March 1916. His Battalion was drafted from Egypt to 186 Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, to reinforce Allied divisions on the Marne (at Tardenois) holding their ground and no longer retreating, as the April Ludendorff offensive ran out of steam. 62 Division came under temporary French command in support of the French Fifth Army. Richard died on 23 July 1918, aged 23. His body was not found but he is commemorated on the Soissons Memorial near the Aisne and Marne rivers, with 3900 others whose graves are not known. French Fifth Army advanced 4 miles on a 4 mile long front. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Richard's Regimental No. as 39021.

Richard was born in 1894 in Wheatley, the elder son of Hugh Summers, builder's labourer, himself also born in the village in 1864, and Annie Maria Joyner, born in Worminghall in 1861. In 1901 and 1911 the family were living at 7 Bell Lane and in 1911 father and son were general labourers. The casualty report (*Oxford Times*, 7 September 1918), said he was 'a keen cricketer and footballer and played for Wheatley at both games'. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

THOMAS WHITE, GLOUCESTER REGIMENT

15685 Private Thomas White enlisted with 10th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, Kitchener's New Army, in August/September 1914. After training the Battalion went to 'France and Flanders' where it was blooded in the Battle of Loos, 1915. By the summer of 1916 twelve battalions of the Regiment were on the Western Front. Despite the massed Divisions, the Somme offensive continued from July into November, with little ground gained by the Allies, although it did relieve the pressure on the French Army at Verdun.

Thomas's Battalion, with 1 Brigade, 1st Division, was involved in the Battle for Delville Wood, a three-month struggle to straighten out a vulnerable salient or 'wedge' in the British Line. It was one of many stages of the slow campaign of attrition to which the Somme offensive was reduced. British forces took Delville Wood early in August, after two weeks of severe fighting, but at the end of the month, a German counter-attack lasting a week came close to regaining it. Delville Wood was remembered for the number of casualties and the supposed destruction of all but a single tree. Thomas died on 30 August in the defence of Delville against this counterattack. His body was not recovered, but he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 5 A and 5 B).

'Private White ... son of Mrs White, Wheatley, has been killed in action. The Lieutenant commanding his Section writes, 'He was one of my best men and



Private Richard Summers



Private Thomas White
(*Oxford Chronicle*, 15
September 1916)

it will be some consolation to you to know that he died while doing his duty as a man. He went on firing his rifle [after] he was shot through the head'. A comrade-in-arms writes to Mrs White, 'all the sections that he belonged to send their deepest sympathy ... he died a glorious death and [we] would be highly honoured to have more of his sort amongst them.' (*Oxford Chronicle*, 8 September 1916.)

Thomas was born in 1896, second son of Albert Charles White, farm labourer, and his wife Martha, both Wheatley-born in 1858. They were living at Blenheim House, Wheatley in 1911, by which time Thomas had become a builder's carter. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Researches for this book have revealed a number of names of other men who, from hindsight at least, might have merited inclusion in the List of all who served, originally drawn up in late 1919. Several were said by the *Oxford Times* in 1914 to have hailed from Wheatley. Those of them who did not return from the war are as follows:

GEORGE BICKERS, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

681817 Bombardier George Bickers, A Battery, Royal Field Artillery, 276 Brigade, 55th (West Lancashire Division, Territorial), died of wounds 'France and Flanders', 20 May 1918, aged 31, when the 'Kaiser/Ludendorff Offensive' drove the Allies back towards Paris, probably the most serious setback of the war. His Battery was equipped with 18-pounders and 4.5 inch howitzers. The Division fought a rearguard at Hazebrouck (see Frederick Bizzell above) in mid-April. He was buried at Pernes British War Cemetery, Pas de Calais, set up in April 1918 when four Casualty Clearing Stations, two Canadian (1st and 4th) and two British (6th and 22nd) had to fall back on Pernes in the face of the German advance. They buried over one thousand dead in the new cemetery.

According to the Censuses, George was born in Wheatley in 1887. His parents were George Bickers and Emily Eliza Parish who had married at Marylebone Road, Westminster. In 1891 the family were living in St George Hanover Square, London, where George senior was a servant. In 1901 they had moved to Beccles in Suffolk and George senior gave his occupation as 'groom at hotel'. George junior married Minnie Maria Crisp in 1909 in Wangford and the 1911 census shows that he was working as a wood sawyer.

WALTER HENRY HAWKINS, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

He was born in Kintbury, Wiltshire in 1888, the younger of two sons of Samuel Hawkins, market gardener, born in Melksham, Wiltshire and his wife Martha. They were living in Wheatfield near Thame in 1891 and in Littleworth in 1901. Walter is recorded as having

attended the school in Wheatley in 1895, and the Night School between 1901 and 1905 when he was aged 18. He enlisted in Swindon in 1916 and was assigned first to 132 Oxford Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has a W.H. Hawkins who was an Acting Bombardier (the equivalent of Corporal) in the R.G.A., Service No. 605. He died in the home theatre of the war in the year of his enlistment, on 11 December 1916, aged 29, and is buried in Aldershot Military Cemetery, ref. AF.2033.

H. E. HIPPISEY, [HIPPESEY] GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

2nd Lt Harold Edwin Hippisley of Wells, Somerset, died aged 24, at Langemarck, First Battle of Ypres, 23 October 1914. Unburied, he is named on the Menin Gate. He married Ivy Gwendoline Hussey-Cooper of the Wheatley brickyard family just before embarking for Belgium. Ivy died in Wheatley, 1981. Her sister Georgina was buried in Wheatley, 1963, widow of Lt Gerald Hippisley, R.E., (later RAF), Harold's brother.

JAMES MUNT, GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

The name of 15724 Private James Munt does not feature in the original List of Wheatley men who served in the war, but his connection with the village is close. He enlisted with Kitchener's New Army (*Oxford Chronicle* 18 September 1914) and served with 10th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, which landed in France on 8 August 1915. James died less than two months later, on 25 September, the opening day of the Battle of Loos, and is remembered on Panel 60 to 64 of the Memorial at Loos. A book was published by Nick Christian in 1996 entitled *In the Shadow of Lone Tree – The Ordeal of Gloucestershire men at the Battle of Loos – 1915*, which chronicles the Regiment's experience at the time. George Chiddington (see above) of the same battalion died in January 1916.

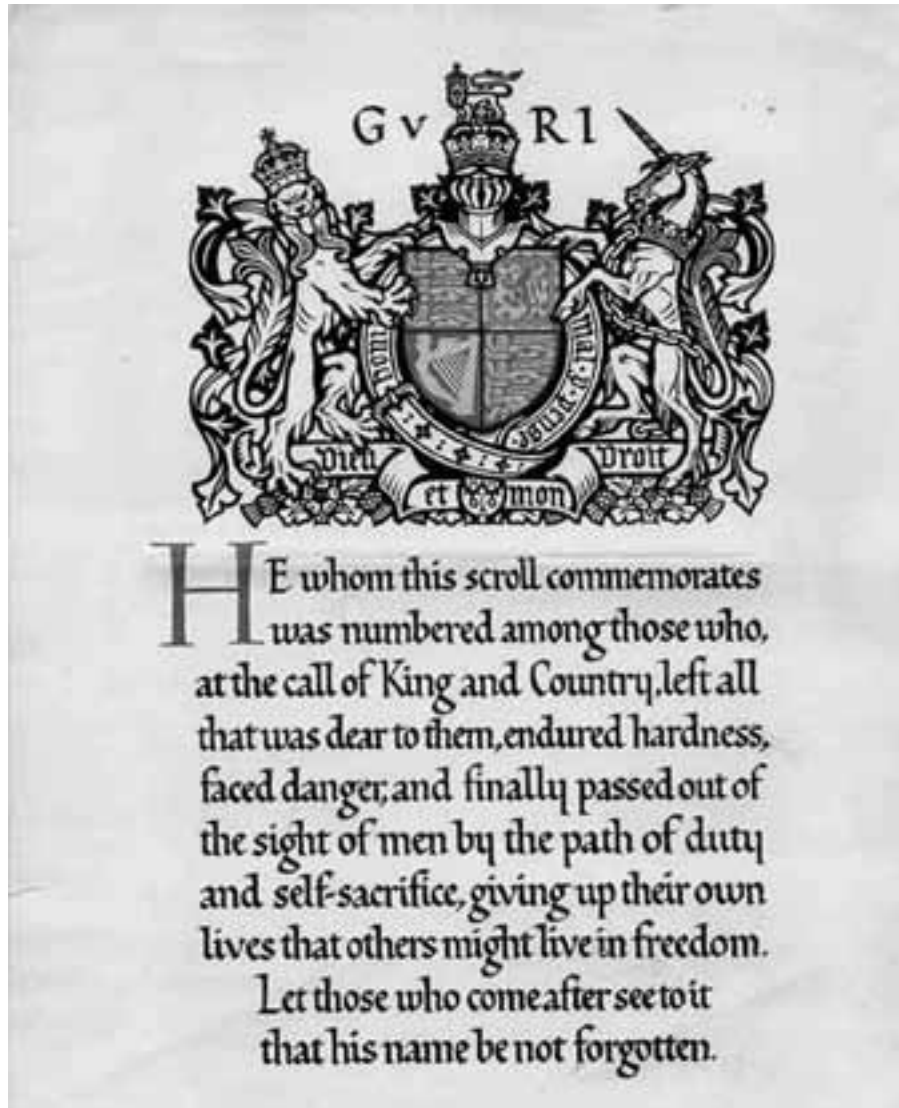
Born in 1893 at Waterperry Common, he was a son of Walter James Munt, born in Wheatley in 1865, a cattleman in 1901 on Cooper's farm in Horspath, and Eliza Jane née Fonge/Funge, born in 1866 in Waterperry. At that time James was living with his Fonge grandparents at Farm House in Waterperry. Ten years later in 1911, aged 18 he was a jobbing gardener, living with his parents, now at Grassendale, Horspath. He was a cousin of Thomas Munt, above, who also died.

GEORGE SMITH, ROYAL NAVY

This George Smith (not to be confused with the Dorsetshire Regiment man above) was among the first to join the Royal Navy in September 1914, along with the other Wheatley man – Gerald Chapman above – who died and those who survived, such as Angus and Douglas Curry and Charles Life. He was listed as a stoker on HMS *Invincible* and was later assigned to HMS *Black Prince*. The *Oxford Times* reported on 26 September 1916 the drowning of a stoker, George Smith, when the latter ship went down at Jutland. It was a Duke of Edinburgh-class armoured cruiser built for the Royal Navy in the mid-1900s. She



was stationed in the Mediterranean when the First World War began and had participated in the pursuit of the German battlecruiser SMS *Goeben* and light cruiser SMS *Breslau*. After the German ships reached Ottoman waters, *Black Prince* was sent to the Red Sea in mid-August to protect troop convoys arriving from India and to search for German merchant ships. After capturing two, it was transferred to the Grand Fleet in December 1914 and was sunk during the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, with all hands lost.



THOSE WHO SERVED AND RETURNED

JAMES AVERY, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Full name Gilbert James Avery, born in 1895 in High Street, Wheatley, son of William Avery, timber merchant and saw mill proprietor, born in Bledlow Ridge, Buckinghamshire, and his second wife Emma née Ruffell, born in Swallowfield, Berkshire; (his first wife, Ellen née Newell, whom he had married in 1869 had died in 1881). In 1901 and 1911 the family were living on High Street, Wheatley. Brother of John E. Avery, who lost his life, and of Leonard Avery below. James attended Wheatley Elementary school. In 1911, he was working with four elder brothers as a sawyer in his father's timber yard close to Wheatley Railway Station. He was sworn in as a Special Constable for Wheatley in September 1914. He served from 1916, first in the Royal Flying Corps/Royal Naval Air Service and then from 1 April 1918 in the new Royal Air Force, the Muster Roll for that year recording Avery G J as having the rank of Air Mechanic 1.

LEONARD AVERY, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Born in 1897 in Wheatley, youngest son of the above William and Emma Avery and brother of James Avery above, and of John E. Avery who lost his life. He attended Wheatley Elementary school and he too may have gone on to work in his father's business. He also served, first in the Royal Flying Corps/Royal Naval Air Service, and then from 1 April 1918 in the new Royal Air Force, with the rank of Air Mechanic.

JOSEPH ALLEN, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Born in Wheatley in 1875, son of Wheatley-born George Allen, agricultural labourer, and Mary Allen née Smith, domestic servant born in Stanton St John. In 1881 they were living in Blenheim, Wheatley. Joseph attended Wheatley Elementary school. By 1901 he was himself a labourer living on Station Road, married to Rose Etta née Munt, also born in Wheatley, whom he had married on 11 July 1897 at Headington Registry Office: they had three children. By 1911 he was a dairyman's labourer and they had moved to Kiln Lane. Several of the name having served in the Royal Army Service Corps, it has not been possible to locate his war record. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* chapter. Joseph signed his Attestation papers on 12 December 1915. His regimental number was 42011810 with the Company Rank of Driver, the equivalent of Private. He left the service on 10 August 1919 and joined the Army Reserve on demobilisation.



ALBERT ED. ASHFIELD, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Albert Edward Ashfield was born in Fulham, London 1874. He served with the RASC as a Driver, with the regimental number T/386734. He had married Fanny Jones in Faringdon, Berkshire in 1900. Albert and Fanny were living at Blenheim, Wheatley, when the 1921 Register of Electors was compiled. He died and was buried in Wheatley in 1957, having lived on Littleworth Road.

HENRY ALLEN, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Henry 'Harry' Allen, born in Reading in 1890/91, son of Edward Allen, waiter at hotels, born in Newbury, and Mary born in Feltham, Middlesex. In 1911 Harry, a domestic gardener, was living at The Lodge, Shotover with his wife Harriet Ada née Parrott, born in Stoke, Oxon. in 1889, and a baby son born in Tiddington. Harry Ernest and Harriet Ada Allen were still living at Shotover Lodge in 1921. Harry died in September 1970 aged 80.

JOHN BALDWIN, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Jonathan Baldwin was living in the Merry Bells in 1921 with his wife Mary Baldwin née Loder. He was born in Worminghall in 1882 and had married Mary in 1910. He joined the RASC on 17 March 1917 giving his occupation as baker. After the Armistice he was posted to Germany with 8th Field Bakery, Ehrenfeld, Cologne. He gave his address as Ye Merry Bells, Wheatley, where he was styled 'Manager, Temperance Hotel'. His rank was as Private and his number S/310215. He had a very bad attack of 'Flu' during the world pandemic of 1918, spending two months in hospital. He was posted to the Army Reserve on demobilisation on 13 March 1919.

PERCY BATES, ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE

Born in 1879 in Oxford, son of Joseph Bates, florist, born in Nettlebed, Berkshire and Emma née Billingham born in Litchborough, Northamptonshire, who in 1891 were living at 1 St John's Villas on St John's Road, Oxford. He is known to have been the proprietor of the Railway Hotel, Wheatley, in 1916. He served as a batman in the Royal Naval Air Service, joining in 1916 and rated as Air Mechanic 2; then Private in the Royal Air Force, service no. 36408, normal rate of pay 1/8d, terms of enlistment 'D. W.' (duration of the war). Percy Bates and his wife Lily were still living at the Railway Hotel according to the 1921 Register of Electors. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* chapter.

ANTHONY M. BELL, TANK CORPS

Full name Anthony Maurice Bell, born in 1899 in Liverpool, eldest child of the Reverend Maurice Frederick Bell, Anglican clergyman, and Margaret Dorothea née Japp, born in Hooton, Cheshire, living at that time at 17 Abercrombie Square, Liverpool. The Reverend Bell was Vicar of Wheatley from 1919 to 1927. Anthony was at school in 1901, based on 36

Regent's Park Road, St Pancras, London. He matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford in 1912, enlisted on 23 April 1917 (Service No. 215346) and was commissioned into the new Tank Corps, formerly known as Heavy Branch, Machine Gun Corps, as from 23 July 1917, joining its 15 Battalion. He was wounded that month, presumably in the opening barrage and tank attack on Zero Day, 31 July at 'Third Ypres', when tanks floundered in water, shell holes and mud. He continued his studies at Oxford after the War. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ALLEN BIGNELL, KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Full name Allen Spencer Bignell, born in Sutton, Surrey in 1898, fifth son of John J. Bignell, coachman domestic born in Sutton and Mary née Forbes, cook domestic, born in Wheatley, who had married in 1891. In 1911 Allen was enumerated c/o his great-aunt Rose Hannah Pym, widow and boarding house keeper on High Street, Wheatley and mother to his aunt Mary Pym of Chippenhurst. He attended Wheatley Elementary school. Allen/Alan Spencer Bignell/Bagnall was in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, with Regimental No. 64095 and also served in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, No. 201588. He was listed in the 1921 Register of Electors as living on the High Street.

SIDNEY BIZZELL, ROYAL HORSE GUARDS

Full name Sidney Charles Bizzell, born in Hornton, Oxon., son of Charles Bizzell, police constable born in Caversham, Oxon. and Eliza born in Bicester; the family were living on Bell Street, Hornton in 1891, *Kelly's Directory* shows that, already in 1899, his father was a licensed victualler and the licensee of The Chequers Public House on Crown Road, Wheatley, at the foot of Friday Lane. In 1914 he was sworn in as a Special Constable in the village. In the 1911 Census Sidney was listed as a Trooper with Royal Horse Guards, stationed at Combermere Barracks, St Leonard's Road, Windsor, i.e. he was a regular soldier before the war. Brother of Frederick Bizzell above who lost his life.

ARTHUR BOSSOM, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Oxford in 1883, David Arthur Bossom was the son of Oxford-born Fred Bossom, waterman, and Ellen née Beckley born in Tubney, Berkshire; in 1891 they were living at 12 Thames Street, Oxford. In 1911 Arthur is living in High Street, Wheatley as a house painter with his wife Nellie née Shepherd, born in Wheatley, both of them Chapel members. He signed his Attestation papers on 11 December 1915 giving his occupation as painter and his address as Crown Road. He seems to have joined the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry for a short time and then transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, 63 Coy, 37th Division, Regimental No. 82736. He embarked at Folkestone on 15 February 1917, and was wounded in action on 28 April. On 1 October 1918 he was transferred to 2 Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment, with the Regimental Number 43790. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 11 May 1917 reported that he had been wounded. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

JOSEPH BRANDUM, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Full name Joseph Mark Brandum, born in 1879 in Waterperry, son of Uriah Brandum, farmer of 23 acres, and Mary née Tubby, both also born in Waterperry and living there in Farm Cottage in 1881, and on Wheatley Road in the same village in 1891. In 1901 Joseph was boarding as a single man, a cabinet maker at 6 Lavender Grove, Hackney, London. In 1911 at the age of 32 he is a carpenter living on Bell, Lane, Wheatley, married to Mary Maretta née Room, born in Towersey, and with two children. He was sworn in as a Special Constable in Wheatley on 6 November 1915. Called up for service on 20 February 1917, his Regimental No. was 258166 and he served in France. He was a Sapper in the Inland Water Transport Corps of the Royal Engineers. In the 1921 Register of Electors Joseph, Mary and Uriah, Joseph's father, were living on Kiln Lane. Joseph died in 1933 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

ARTHUR BROUGHTON, GORDON HIGHLANDERS

Full name Arthur Sims Broughton, born in 1889 in Marston, Oxon., son of Henry William Broughton, farmer born in Stanton St John, and Eliza née Sims born in Marston; in 1891 they were living at Court Place Farm, Marston. Arthur was living there with the family as a 22 year-old auctioneer's clerk in 1911. He stated on his Attestation papers that he was a clerk and had been in the Oxford Territorial Force for 1.5 days, but was discharged as medically unfit. He reported for duty 10 August 1914 at Aldershot. He was discharged from the Army on 17 September of that year as having been convicted by the Civil Powers for a felony, spending a short time in Gloucester Jail. The Register of Electors for 1921 shows that in 1901 a William Broughton of 5 Broadway, Hammersmith, London, owned a house and land in Crown Road, also that in 1911 William, living at 1 Mortlake Road, Kew, still owned the property. Arthur was living at Valentia Road, Headington prior to his death in 1956. He left his estate to Ida Mary Cave, his sister.

ALBERT CASTLE, ROYAL SCOTS FUSILIERS

Born in Wheatley in 1896, eldest child of Wheatley-born William Castle, farm labourer, and Clara Ann née Bedding born in Worminghall. In 1911 the family were living in Blenheim, Wheatley and Albert was also a farm labourer. The Medal Rolls Index shows that he served in the Gloucestershire Regiment with the No. 27578, and in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, No. 54363. In the 1921 Register of Electors a William Castle was living in Farm Close Lane.

ARTHUR A. CHAPMAN, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Arthur Augustus Chapman, baptised in Wheatley in 1881, the eldest son of John Chapman, carpenter, born in Wheatley in 1849 and Helen, born 1856 in Nottingham. Throughout the period 1891 to 1911 the family were living at their builder's yard on High Street, Wheatley. Brother of Hubert and Hurrell Chapman below, both of whom also

fought in the war, and returned, and of Gerald Chapman who lost his life. By 1911 Arthur was styled plumber (importantly a pump specialist) and glazier: by then he was 29, single and still living with his parents. He served from 19 October 1915 to 16 August 1917 with the Royal Engineers Department, Labour Battalions, Regimental No. 124964 and with the rank of Pioneer. He had served abroad but was discharged as sick.

HUBERT J. CHAPMAN, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in 1883 in Wheatley, second son of John and Helen Chapman above. Brother of Arthur and Hurrell Chapman who also fought in the war, and returned, and of Gerald Chapman who lost his life. In the 1901 Census Hubert is listed as 'ex-pupil teacher'. In 1911, at 28, he was an Elementary School master for London County Council, living at 79 Lower Richmond Road, Mortlake, Surrey, married to Maud E. Chapman née Piper, herself an Elementary school mistress but employed by Surrey County Council, who had been born at Kew Gardens, Surrey. The couple were at that time accompanied in the house by Hubert's brother Gerald. The LCC Record of War Service shows that Hubert John Chapman served between 1915 and 1919, including in France, with both the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the Royal Engineers, attaining the rank of Sergeant.



HURRELL G. CHAPMAN, ROYAL ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS

Baptised Hurrell George Chapman in 1888 in Wheatley, third son of John and Helen Chapman above. Brother of Arthur and Hubert Chapman above who also fought in the war and returned, and of Gerald Chapman who lost his life. In 1911 Hurrell was single, a plumber and glazier like his father and living with his parents at Mott House on High Street. In February 1916 he married Margaret Austin, a teacher from the school, who, as the law then required, had to resign from her post, which she did in August: they lived on Westfield Road. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* and *Wheatley Tribunal* chapters.

CLIFFORD C. CHIDDINGTON, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Born in 1899 in Horspath, Clifford Charles Chiddington, the third of four sons of George Chiddington, general labourer, born in 1852 in Oxford, and Selina née Winney, born in 1863 in East Hanney, Berkshire. In 1901 and 1911 the family were living at Blenheim, Horspath. Two of his brothers, William (see below) and George junior, also served in the war: William returned but George lost his life. Clifford was at school in 1911.

WILLIAM A. CHIDDINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in Horspath in 1889, the eldest child of George and Selina Chiddington above. Two of his brothers, Clifford (see above) and George junior, also served in the war: Clifford

returned but George lost his life. At 22 William was working as a farm labourer. He served in 482 Labour Corps in the war, reaching the rank of Lance Corporal. His Regimental No. was 435308. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website also has William Charles Thomas Chiddington, a timberman and sawyer, serving with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1913/14 with No. 5387618, and being discharged in 1919 after five years. Sadly, William drowned in a fishing accident at Wheatley Bridge a few months later, on 4 July. See also a reference to him in the War Memorial chapter.

GEORGE CLARKE, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT



George Clarke in later years

He was born in Magdalen Road, Cowley on 14 April 1899: his mother, Kate Eliza Clarke née Huckin, died giving birth to him, and his father appears to have played no part in bringing him up. At the Census of 1901 he was enumerated at a cottage in Cuddesdon, in the care of Thomas and Sarah Glead. He attended Cowley Industrial School. In 1911 he was a boarder in the house of Garsington-born Mary Ann Putt, widow, employed as a laundress, living on Church Road, Wheatley – affectionately known to him as Granny Putt. He was an apprentice wheelwright.

His discharge papers, dated Warwick, 6 June 1919, show that he had enlisted in the Royal Berkshires, Battalion unknown, 22 (Reserve) Brigade, in Oxford on 24 February 1917, among the first wave of conscripts, as a Private and with the Regimental No. 44799. He had served overseas and after two years and 24 days with the Colours and 79 days in Army Reserve was discharged as no longer physically fit for War Service. He wore the customary vertical, red Wound Stripe on his left sleeve and single (one year) red Active Service chevron on his right. In fact he had been wounded in the legs and had had to have the right leg amputated. We can deduce that he was placed on reserve status after hospitalisation, surgery and probably convalescence and therapy, about 18 March 1919. It may be assumed that he had been seriously wounded either in March-August 1918 (the German advance west) or in the Allied push (eastward) which took the Germans back almost to the German border in August-November 1918. A New Testament has survived which was given to him by the Rev. William Newton, Wheatley's Congregational Chapel minister from 1905 until 1921. It was inscribed 'May God Preserve You, To Geo Clarke with best Wishes from W Newton. Try to read a portion every day. May 13, 1917'. After the War, the 1921 Register of Electors had him living on Church Road. The following year he married Mabel Jenkins from Oxford: they were to have three sons. From 1926 and for the rest of his career he worked for the Morris Motors Ltd. He later lived on The Avenue, and again on Church Road (next to No. 8) in the early 1940s. His National Registration Card showed in 1947 that he had moved back to Cowley. He was one of the first people to own a Morris Mini converted for a disabled driver. He died in 1961 and is buried in Botley Cemetery. A grandson, Nick Clarke, has designed and typeset this book.



Lionel Gomm (né Lionel Harry Weedon Collinson) and Charles Gomm, photo by Norman Taylor, c. 1917, © National Portrait Gallery.

LIONEL COLLINSON, ROYAL NAVY

Full name, according to the 1911 Census, Lionel Harry Gordon Collinson, born 1 April 1896 in Birmingham, son of Harry Collinson and Amelia née Smith. In 1901 he was boarding at the Crown Road, Wheatley home of Charles and Sarah A. Gomm. Ten years later he was still a boarder there, but now employed as a telegraph messenger. It seems that his third forename was Weedon rather than Gordon and that he was later known as Lionel Gomm. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 17 December 1914 reported that he had been accepted into the Royal Navy. He was closely acquainted with Lady Ottoline Morrell and her circle at Garsington: photos of him, including one in Naval uniform (*H.M. S. Minesweepers*) and two taken by her, are in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery. In the 1921 Register of Electors a Lionel Collinson was living at The Chequers, Wheatley. Described as a builder, he died in 1922. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

F. RISBY COOMBS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Frank Risby Coombes was born in Chipping Norton in 1883: the 1891 census gives Samuel Coombes as his father and Martha as his mother. In 1901 he was lodging with a Sophia Smith in Eynsham and in 1911 with another family but still in Eynsham, giving his occupation as postman. He served in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and two Regimental Nos. are given – 5942 and 202340. He appears to have been living on Bell Lane in 1921. He died in September 1951.

E. MONTAGU COOPER, ROYAL NAVY

His full name, at least later in life, was Edward Montagu Hussey-Cooper. He was born in 1873 in Wheatley, third son of Joseph Hussey Cooper, also born in Wheatley, in 1835, and Mary Jane née Sivier, born in Ryde, Isle of Wight in 1848. At the Census in 1881 the Cooper family were living on Westfield Road, the father being a brick maker and farmer of 52 acres, employing thirteen men and four women. Edward, a brother of William Clayton Cooper below, does not appear with his numerous siblings in the 1891 or 1901 Censuses. This may have been because by then he was a merchant seaman. Certainly, in 1904 in Melbourne, Australia, as the Second Officer of RMS *Australia*, he gave evidence at a Court of Marine Enquiry into the wreck of that ship. In that same year he married Violet Coghill, who had been born in New South Wales in 1878. With his wife and children he was living in Woodstock, Oxon. in 1911. He was a Certified Captain in the Mercantile Marine and it seems that he continued in that role until 1949.

W. CLAYTON COOPER, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born on 26 August 1881 in Wheatley, son of Joseph and Mary Jane Cooper above and brother of Edward Montagu Cooper above. In 1911 Clayton was living as a single man with his by now widowed mother and some of his siblings at The Lodge, Park Hill: he was at that point styled brick merchant's salesman, employed at the family brick works. Later he lived at Old House on Kiln Lane and was owner of the works. A C. W. Cooper was a 2nd Corporal with the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1920, but they may not have been one and the same. The Electoral Register shows that in 1921 William Clayton and his mother Mary Jane were still resident in the village. He died in September 1970.

ANDREW CRUICKSHANK, ROYAL AIR FORCE

He was Andrew David Cruickshank, born in Wheatley in 1898, third child and eldest son of Andrew Cruickshank, land steward by occupation, born in Forgue, Aberdeenshire in 1853, and Emilie Hannah Hutchence, born in 1867 in Stokesley, Yorkshire. Andrew the father moved to Wheatley sometime in the 1880s and all of his six children were born in the village. In 1901 the family were living in Hill House, Chalgrove Field, Wheatley. Young

Andrew attended Wheatley Elementary school. 'Cruickshank A.D,' with the Air Force No. 401079, was listed as Fitter (Motor Transport) on the Royal Air Force Muster Roll and with the rank of Air Mechanic 1: he had joined up on 15 February 1915 and was last promoted on 1 October 1917. His normal rate of Air Force pay was four shillings, and his terms of enlistment were for the duration of the war. He was said to have served in France, Belgium and Germany.

C. ANGUS CURRY, ROYAL NAVY

Angus was the second son of the Reverend William Dixon Blatchford Curry, who had been born in Chettle, Blandford, Dorset in 1861, and Amy Isabell née Angus, born in 1862 in Wallsend, Northumberland. The Reverend Curry was appointed Vicar of Wheatley in 1906: previously he had been Vicar of South Hinksey. In 1901 the family were living at 33, Church Street, Oxford, and then in 1911 at The Vicarage in Wheatley. Angus had been born in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1890. He was the brother of Douglas Curry, below. There is a record of someone of the same name and born in the same year as servant-general to an inn-keeper and enumerated at 46 Quarry Row, Houghton Le Spring, Co. Durham, i.e. in the area from which his mother came and his father had ministered earlier. Following graduation from the Royal Naval Engineering College in 1890 Angus joined the Merchant Navy, and then the Royal Navy in 1911. The depot ship HMS *Niobe*, on which he was an Engineering Lieutenant, was handed over, together with a cadre of its officers, to found the Royal Canadian Navy. The *Oxford Chronicle* reported on 26 December 1914 that he was with *Niobe*. He spent the rest of his career with the Royal Canadian Navy, well into World War II, attaining the rank of Commander, Engineering. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

DOUGLAS CURRY, ROYAL NAVY

Douglas was born in Newcastle upon Tyne on 18 January 1888, the elder of two sons of the Reverend William Curry and his wife Amy, above. Thus brother to C. Angus Curry,



From a postcard mailed in 1911, showing HMCS *Niobe*, Canada's first warship. (Courtesy Google freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com)

above. Douglas joined the Royal Navy in 1904. The 1911 census lists him as a Lieutenant, aged 23, in the Civil Parish of Southampton. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 26 September 1914 noted that Lieutenant D. Curry was serving aboard HMS *Superb*, a Dreadnought. Its Captain's account of its involvement in the Battle of Jutland describes how Lieut. Curry (Telegraphy) sketched a sunken battleship at dawn for the ship's report. In November 1918 HMS *Superb* headed a flotilla to occupy Constantinople after the Turkish Armistice. Douglas reached the rank of Lieutenant-Commander, also serving on HMS *Revenge*, a pre-Dreadnought battleship of the Royal Sovereign class which was decommissioned in 1915 and scrapped in 1919. He was probably demobbed in early 1919. He was awarded the three campaign medals, the Victory Medal, the 1914-15 Star and the British War Medal. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ALFRED DAVIS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Full name Alfred Charles Davis, baptised at St Mary's Church Wheatley on 3 May 1891, son of Charles Davis, builder and mason and Fanny Davis née Johnson, both born in Wheatley. The family were living on High Street in 1901 and 1911. Brother of Percy John Davis and Walter Davis below. Alfred was admitted to the Elementary school in 1897 and went on to the Night School, attending there in 1904, 1905 and 1913. In 1911 he was a brick layer improver. He enlisted on 12 October 1914, giving his occupation as stone mason. He served as a Private, Army No. 15619. Awarded the war badge and certificate on 6 September 1918, he was discharged on 12 September as unfit for military service and given a disability pension. When he died on 23 May 1952 at the age of 61 his occupation was stated to be carpenter. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

JAMES DAVIS, WORCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Wheatley, known as Jim, and baptised in St Mary's Church on 2 September 1888, son of Isaac Davis, agricultural labourer born in Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire and Martha née Gould, born in Wheatley. They were living on High Street in 1891, on Crown Road in 1901 and 1911. Jim is recorded as having attended the Chapel Sunday School in 1902. He was working as a carpenter in 1911. He signed his Attestation papers on 11 December 1915 at Cowley Barracks, giving his occupation as sawyer's apprentice. He was a Private and his Regimental No. was 47955. In 1917 the 5 Worcesters were posted to base camp in India. He was discharged in Salonika on 15 December 1918 and posted to 9 Battalion for demobilisation on 3 December 1919. In 1921 he was living on Friday's Lane with his mother Martha.

PERCY J. DAVIS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Percy John Davis, baptised in St Mary's Church, Wheatley on 5 April 1896, son of the above Charles and Fanny Davis. Brother of Alfred Charles Davis above and Walter Davis below. In 1911 Percy was an office boy (junior clerk) at a coal merchant's in the village. His Regimental No. was 4741: however, the Soldiers of Oxfordshire website gives two further Nos. against the name Percy J. Davis, in both cases with the rank of Private in the Oxford and Bucks.: 47332 and 5374117, with service concluding on 31 March 1921. Percy died on 7 November 1973: he had been living at 11 The Avenue. He is buried in Wheatley churchyard.



WALTER DAVIS, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Baptised in St Mary's Church on 2 May 1886, eldest son of the above Charles and Fanny Davis. Brother of Alfred Charles Davis and Percy John Davis above. In 1911 he was a general house builder (employer) and headed the family household on High Street. He had by then married Elsie Wharton from Witney. No detailed record of his war service could readily be found, but his Regimental No. in the Artillery was 15619. In 1921 Walter and Elsie were living on the High Street. He died on 10 February 1927: he had been living at Willowdene, Holton since 1922. See also references to him in the Wheatley Tribunal chapter.

WILLIAM DAVIS, RIFLE BRIGADE

Baptised in St Mary's Church, Wheatley on 1 November 1885, son of William Davis, general labourer, and Eleanor Ann, born in Reading. The family were living on High Street in 1891. In 1911 William J. Davis junior was single, an engine driver (tractor agricultural) and was boarding at the home of Alice Carpenter of Sidwell, Steeple Aston, Oxon. No detailed record of his war service could readily be found: five of this name served with the Rifle Brigade. There was a William Davis living in Chapman's Yard in 1921. William died on 23 February 1971, aged 86, and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

ROTHWELL DOUGLAS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in Oxford in 1897, he was enumerated at the age of four in 1901 as visiting his grandfather Alban Stanley, stone mason, and Emma, both Wheatley-born, at The Wood (Coombe Wood), Cuddesdon. He was attending school in 1903. His Regimental No. was 5538. He enlisted on 24th November 1915 and was discharged as being physically unfit on 19th August 1916. Army records state that his mother was Lizzie Shorter (previously Cannon, née Stanley) and his stepfather Frank Shorter (see below), and that they were living in Station Road, Wheatley in 1915. He died in December 1973.

ROBERT DUNGEY, ROYAL ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS

Full name Robert Clarke Dungey, born in 1892 in Squinton Park, London according to the 1901 Census – in Wormwood Scrubs, London per the 1911 Census. Son of Mary Elizabeth Palmer Dungey née Burgess born in Woodstock, who in 1901 was stated to be a widow and grocer/shopkeeper on Wheatley's High Street: *Kelly's Directory* for 1899 also lists her there. In 1911 at the age of 19 Robert was styled grocer and head of the household, which consisted also of an older and a younger brother, one of whom emigrated to Australia. Robert was also a postmaster. He enlisted on 12 December 1915, Regimental No. 032194. An Army storeman, he was promoted Lance Corporal on 11 June 1917. He received an Army Pension as of 9 October 1919, together with a once-off payment of £30 in respect of a femoral hernia. He was left a sum of money by Frederick Shirley, below. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

A. CECIL EAST, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Full name Cecil Albert East, baptised in St Mary's Church, Wheatley on 6 August 1899, son of Wheatley-born Albert East, butcher's assistant, and Ada née Smith born in Bruern near Chipping Norton, Oxon. They were living on Church Road in 1921. Cecil was admitted to Wheatley Elementary school in 1905 and went on to the Night School in 1913. He first enlisted in the Hampshire Regiment as a Private with Regimental No. 24360 and then, as the Soldiers of Oxfordshire website confirms, served with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry until 31 March 1921, with the Nos. 5373899 and 34675. He was living on Church Road in 1921 and married Elsie M. Millerchip in 1925. He died in 1934 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.



WILLIAM EDWARDS, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Baptised in St Mary's Church, Wheatley on 27 March 1883, youngest child of John Edwards, general labourer, and Emma née Goodin, both born in Wheatley. In 1891 the family were living at Blenheim, Wheatley; at The Manor House in 1911, by which time John Edwards was a widower and William now also a general labourer. In 1913 William married Ethel Chown from Sydenham, Oxon. and in 1921 they were living in Blenheim.

ALFRED FUNGE, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in 1878 in Islington, London, son of Wheatley-born Thomas Funge, at that time plate-layer with the Great Northern Railway, and Elizabeth 'Betsey' Shorter born in Littleworth. In 1881 the family were living at 25 Frederick Street, Islington. By 1891 they were back at The Croft, Littleworth, Shotover Hill Place, with Thomas a general agricultural labourer. In 1901 they were on High Street, Wheatley, son Alfred being a cattle man on farm. The 1911 Census listed father Thomas, by this time a widower and cowman at

Rose's farm in Horspath; and Alfred, now a lime burner, married to Louisa Lucy née Lively from Shabbington and living with three baby daughters in Littleworth. He was attested on 10 December 1915 and mobilised initially on 14 June 1916 with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, Regimental No. 24115; subsequently No. 3766. He was then transferred to 154 Labour Corps, Devonshire Regiment on 24 July 1916, with No. 92070. He was discharged on 25 January 1919 as a quarry man with an advance of £2. Awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal on 13 October 1921. He had a clean discipline sheet. In the 1921 Register of Electors Thomas Funge was living at The Breach and Alfred and Louisa were at The Croft, Wheatley.

HENRY GALE, KING'S ROYAL RIFLES

Researches have not yielded any result which gives a sure link with Wheatley on the part of a Henry Gale. He may have been related to a Joseph Gale from Manor Farm, Garsington and his wife Mary; to a William Henry Gale and Maud Mary Gale living in Wheatley in 1921; or again to a Mrs Gale whom *Kelly's Directory* listed as a resident in Ivy Lodge in the village in 1899. Nor did any of the war records websites confirm service by a Henry or Harry Gale in the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

ERNEST GOATLEY, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in 1898 in Oxford, son of William Robert Goatley, born in Church Hanborough, Oxon., sawyer at saw mills and jobbing gardener, and Eliza/Elise née Hall, born in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. In 1901 the family were living on High Street, Wheatley, in 1911 on Church Road and still there in 1921, according to the Electoral Roll.

GEORGE GOATLEY, CAMERON HIGHLANDERS

Born in 1887, son of William Goatley, carter on farm, from Chaddleworth, Berkshire and Mary Ann from Catmore, Berkshire, who were living in Fernham, Berkshire in 1901. A carter on farm in 1901 and 1911, George attended the Wheatley Night School in 1903. He married Dorothy Booker in 1929. He died in 1942 in the Wallingford Registration District

CHARLES GOMM, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Full name Charles Edward Gomm, born in Wheatley in 1897, son of John Gomm, who gave his occupation in 1901 as a bricklayer's labourer and in 1911 as shepherd; and Priscilla née Sherwood. Both parents were also born in Wheatley, in 1860 and 1871 respectively. The family lived on Crown Road in 1901 & 1911. Charles' Army Service Records also gave Chequers Cottage at the bottom of Friday Lane as his address in 1917 and Farm Close Lane in 1919. He attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. A sister, Mary Ann Gomm, married Albert Edward/Edwin Hilsdon. In 1911 when he was 14, Charles was a newsagent's errand boy. He joined the Army in 1917 and left in 1919, his occupation

being stated as Stoker. He married Violet M. Lively of Shabbington in Thame in 1927. He died in Aylesbury in 1976.

JAMES GOMM, ROYAL AIR FORCE

James junior was born in Wheatley in 1900, the son of James Gomm senior and Annie née Price, both themselves Wheatley-born. They were living on Crown Road in 1911. The RAF Muster Roll for 1914-18 appears to have him as enlisting on 2 January 1918 with the No. 250716. He had the trade classification Engineer, but Fitter (A.E.) on re-mustering. He progressed from Acting Air Mechanic 1 on joining, to 2. Normal Air Force rate of pay 3 shillings, and terms for the duration of the war.

GEORGE GOODING, MIDDLESEX REGIMENT

Full name George Jubilee Gooding, born in 1887, son of Ellis Gooding a labourer on roads, from Marsh Baldon where the family lived, and Annie. George was a gardener on an estate in 1911. He joined the Army in 1916, being attested on 7 February and discharged on 26 May of that same year, on several grounds including defective eyesight. He died in 1917 in Abingdon Registration District.

HENRY GOODING, AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES



Born in 1874, son of Thomas Goodin/Gooding, labourer on railway, from Shotover and Ann from Wheatley, who were living at Blenheim, Wheatley in 1891, when Henry was a farm labourer. He joined the Oxford Light Infantry on 23 January 1893, i.e. as a regular soldier, and was promoted Corporal on 13 August 1900. He served in India and South Africa, the latter including the relief of Kimberley, and the battle of Driefontein, and was awarded the King's South African medal and star. He was discharged from service on 22 January 1909 on completion of a sixteen-year engagement. On 16 February 1911 he left England on the steamship *Themistocles*, travelling to Melbourne, Australia, where he became a sheep farmer. At the outbreak of the war he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces and was wounded, eventually returning to Wheatley, where he lived on Station Road. He died of tuberculosis in 1924 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

WALTER GOODING, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Born in 1872, son of William Goodin, a groom/general labourer and Eliza née Yates, both of Wheatley: they were living at Blenheim, Wheatley in 1881, on Crown Road in 1891 & 1901 and on Bell Lane in 1911. Walter was a labourer on farm in 1891 and later a carter. He married Sarah Mary Slaymaker, born in 1882, in 1900. He was a Private in the Royal Garrison Artillery, Regimental No. 477, 291847. He died in 1939 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

WILLIAM GOODLAKE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Full name William Harold Goodlake, born in 1896, son of William Goodlake, a farm labourer, and his wife Ada, who lived at Blenheim, Wheatley in 1901 and at The Manor House in 1911: they were still there in 1920 when the Manor House was sold. The Wheatley Village Archive has Valmahar as the name of their dwelling. William junior, described as a round, ruddy-faced man, not very tall, helped his father in their market garden and also joined the GWR as a porter. The *Oxford Times* reported on 26 September 1914 that he had enlisted in Kitchener's New Army. He was a Private in the Gloucester Regiment, Rifle Brigade and was wounded. He married Emily M. Butler in 1918. He died in September 1966 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard. See also references to him in the War Memorial chapter.



GEORGE GOULD, ROYAL NAVY

Born in Wheatley, he was baptised on 7 October 1900, the third son of William Gould, brick yard labourer, also Wheatley-born, in 1861, and Henrietta née Mott, born in London in 1874. The family were living on High Street in 1901 and 1911 – by the latter date the father was a widower. Later they lived at 11 Lower Queen Street, Sutton Coldfield. Brother of John Gould and William Gould junior below. Many of the same name served in one or other branch of the Royal Navy. George married Rose Chown in 1920: she came from Sydenham, Oxon. He died in 1964 in the Ploughley, Oxford Registration District.

JOHN GOULD, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Born in 1897 in Hendon, Middlesex, son of the above William and Henrietta Gould. Brother of George Gould above and William Gould junior, below. John was a jobbing gardener in 1911. He married Dorothy Butler in 1919. He died in 1972 in Bullingdon, Oxon. Registration District.

WILLIAM GOULD, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Full name William Richard Gould, born in 1894, son of the above William and Henrietta Gould. Brother of George and John Gould above. William junior was admitted to Wheatley Elementary school in 1900. In 1911 he was a faggot maker of firewood. He joined the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, No. 8411 as a regular soldier, on 10 February 1913. He was posted with 3rd Battalion to France in 1914, and in September was with A Coy of the 2nd Battalion of the OBLI 5 Brigade 2nd Division. He was Wheatley's only documented 'Old Contemptible', having served under fire from 5 August to 22 November 1914: he was thus entitled to the 'Mons' Clasp to his 1914 Star ribbon. He returned to England on 25 December 1914. He then served with 2nd Battalion Hampshire, Regiment, Service No. 17269, and went to Gallipoli in July with their last reinforcement draft there. He returned to France in November 1917 as a Steam Engine Driver with the Royal Army Service Corps (No. M 39375). He was sent home on 11 February 1919 and discharged on



11 March 1920. It is thought that he married Beatrice Hutchison in 1930. He died in 1945 in Sutton Coldfield. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* and the 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' chapters.



Private George Gunn
(Courtesy Miss Amy
Beasley)

GEORGE GUNN, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in 1879, son of George Gunn, groom/gardener, and Eleanor née Clark: they lived at The Mill, Cuddesdon. In 1881 the family were living on Church Road, Wheatley and in 1891 on High Street. George junior attended Wheatley Elementary school and went on to the Night School in 1896. In 1901 he was boarding in the Willesden, London area as a gardener. By 1911 he had moved to Burnham, Buckinghamshire and was a journeyman baker. He married Florence Helena Harris of Burnham at St. Mary's Church in 1911. He signed on with the Army over a Burnham address, but it is not clear whether he served also with the Devonshire Regiment. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website has two references to his serving with the Oxford and Bucks. – as a Private with Regimental Nos. 203658 and 30303. He died in 1949 and is buried in Burnham churchyard.

H. HALFORD-ADCOCK, DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

Herbert Harfield Halford-Adcock was born in Lincoln on 2 April 1881, the son of the Reverend Halford Halford-Adcock, born in Humberstone, Leicester, and his wife Catherine Mary née West, born in Teddington, Middlesex. The father was described in 1911 as a retired prison chaplain living at Penheath House, Longfield Road, Weymouth: he had ministered in Lincoln, Durham, Portland (Dorset) and Holloway prisons. On moving to Wheatley he was sworn in as a Special Constable in September 1914, described as 'gentleman'. A stained glass window in St Mary's Church was created in his memory and church registers witness to his work in the parish.

His son Herbert was gazetted as a Temporary Second Lieutenant in 1918, with seniority dating from 11 September 1918, and the list of those from Wheatley who served has him serving with the Durham Light Infantry. On the Electoral Register of 1921 he was recorded as living on High Street. In 1927 he married Mabel Julia Murray Chalmers. He was buried in Wheatley in 1936 aged 56. See also references to the father in the *Wheatley Tribunal* and the *War Memorial* chapters.

ARTHUR T. HALL, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Full name Arthur Thomas Hall, born in 1872, son of Thomas Hall, a gardener, and Eliza née Cook, a laundress, both from Oxford. The family lived at 1 Abbey Place, St Ebbe's, Oxford in 1881, at 29 Marlborough Road, Oxford in 1891 and 1901, and finally on Westfield Road, Wheatley in 1911. Arthur was a draper's apprentice in 1891 and later a house painter. He married Harriet West in 1895. He died in 1952 in the Henley-on-Thames Registration District.

G. GEORGE HALL, HUSSARS

Full name Geoffrey George Hall, born 7 October 1886 in Oxford, son of Charles Farrant Hall, carver and gilder, and Fanny Elizabeth née Edmonds, both of Oxford. The family lived on Bullingdon Road, Oxford in 1881 and on New College Lane in 1891. In 1901 Geoffrey was working in Little Tingewick, Buckinghamshire as a hall boy domestic. In 1911 he was serving with the 3rd Kings Own Hussars in Pretoria, South Africa and living in Roberts Heights, Transvaal. He married Jane White in Wheatley Church in 1919 and at that time was a ship's steward. At the births of their children he is recorded as the licensee of the King's Arms public house. He later lived in Manor Cottages, Long Hanborough and died on 3 December 1963. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ARCHIBALD HARDING, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in 1882 in Kingston Blount, Oxon, son of Joseph Harding from Kingston Blount and Jane née Fleet from Barnes, Surrey. The family lived in Fingest, Buckinghamshire in 1891 and at The Ship Inn, Cadmore End in 1901. A bricklayer's labourer in 1901 and brickmaker in 1911, Archibald was living at The Manor, Wheatley at the latter date: he had married Emma Munt in 1908 and they were still there in 1920 when the Manor House was sold. They were bought out by the offer of a quarter of an acre of land where they could build, and moved to Old London Road. In September 1916 the Oxford newspapers reported on the appeal of his case to the County Tribunal. He served as a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, No. 24237. See also references to him in the *War Memorial* and *Wheatley in a World at War* chapters: as an elderly man he had difficulty in walking, a result of standing in flooded positions at Passchendaele. He died in 1953 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

GILBERT HARRIS, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Born in 1885, son of Joshua Harris from Wolverton, Buckinghamshire and Louisa Allen from Charlbury, Oxon. The family were living on High Street, Wheatley between 1891 and 1911. Gilbert was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1892. In 1901 he was listed as grocer's assistant: this was in Harris' Shop and General Store of which his father was proprietor. The store sold some medication for people unable to pay for the doctor, and Joshua Harris was also known for his ability to extract teeth. (Sisters of both Charles Jennings below and Archibald Harding above worked in the Harris household.) By 1911 Gilbert was working as an assistant to an ironmonger and was lodging in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. He married that same year.

RICHARD T. HARRIS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born 10 July 1898, son of Caleb Harris from Horspath, milk retailer, and Mary Ann Allen Munt from Deddington, Oxon. The family was living on High Street, Wheatley in 1901 and



at The Breach, Wheatley in 1911. Richard was at school in Wheatley in 1911 and went on to the Night School in 1913. He married Beatrice Ovenden in 1924. His Attestation Paper was dated 14 April 1915 and his Medal Rolls Index Card confirms his regiment. He died in 1936 in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

CHARLES HEATH, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in 1876 in Wheatley, son of Charles Heath from Oxford and Elizabeth Glead from Garsington. The family lived successively on Bell Row(?), Wheatley in 1881, at Lye Hill in Holton in 1891, at a shop on High Street in 1901 and finally at The King & Queen public house, of which Charles senior was the publican in 1911: in fact *Kelly's Directory* has him there already in 1899. Charles junior was the elder brother of Percy and Walter Heath below. He attended Wheatley Infants school in 1879 and left school in 1888. He was an agricultural labourer in 1891 and in 1911 a College servant at Cuddesdon. He married Dora Busby in 1916. The British Army Medal Rolls Index Cards for Charles confirm his having served in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, Labour Corps, Regimental Nos. 39345 and 441785. The *Oxford Times* and the *Oxford Journal Illustrated* mentioned that he had been wounded. He died in 1922. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

PERCY HEATH, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Full name Percival Aubrey Heath, born in Holton in 1893, son of the above Charles Heath and Elizabeth Glead, and thus brother of Charles Heath junior above and Walter Heath below. He was a butcher's assistant in 1911. The *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914 has him joining the then Army Service Corps through Kitchener's New Army. He served later in the Royal Engineers, Regimental No. 16681. It appears that he had signed on at the Technical Schools, Birmingham and that the duration of service was three years from 7 September 1914. He married Margaret Wood in Wellington, Shropshire in 1921. He died in 1963 in Shrewsbury.

WALTER HEATH, ROYAL IRISH FUSILIERS

Full name Walter William Heath, born in 1888 in Holton, son of the above Charles Heath and Elizabeth Glead, and thus brother of Charles junior and Percy Heath above. He was a house boy (domestic) in 1901 and by 1911 had become a traction engine steerer at a stone quarry. He was another mentioned in the *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914 as having enlisted in Kitchener's New Army, being assigned in his case to the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Service records appear to indicate that he also served, at least at some point, with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He married Emma T. Blackwell in the Banbury Registration District in 1933, and he died in that area in 1965. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

CYRIL HILSDON, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT

Full name Cyril Daniel Hilsdon, born 4 July 1900 at Chiselhampton, son of Edward Hilsdon, cattleman on farm, from Denton and Emma Biggs from Bletchingdon. The family were living in Chiselhampton in 1901 and on Friday Lane, Wheatley in 1911. Brother of Edward and Walter Hilsdon below. He was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1910. He married Martha Amelia Ruth Mole in Oxford in 1924. The following year he gave his occupation as 'examiner, motor works'. He died in Swindon, Wiltshire in 1985.

EDWARD HILSDON, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Full name Edward Richard James Hilsdon, born on 4 November 1887 in Woodstock, Oxon. Son of the above Edward Hilsdon and Emma Biggs. Brother of Cyril Hilsdon above and Walter Hilsdon below. They lived on Friday Lane and Edward junior was attending Wheatley Night School in 1911. He was a labourer on farm in 1901 and at a steam sawmills in 1911. He originally enlisted in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment on 11 December 1915 at Oxford. He was transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps. The *Oxford Journal Illustrated* reported on 16 May 1917 that he had been wounded. He became non-effective by 8 November 1918, being no longer fit for active service: Regimental No. on discharge M/353609. In September 1917 he had married Elsie L. Turner in Croydon, Surrey. He died in March 1975 in the Bullingdon Registration District. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Private Edward Hilsdon,
(*Oxford Journal Illustrated*,
13 September 1916)

WALTER HILSDON, DUKE OF CORNWALL'S LIGHT INFANTRY

Full name Walter Herbert Hilsdon, born in 1898 in Denchworth, near Wantage, son of the above Edward Hilsdon and Emma Biggs. Brother of Cyril and Edward Hilsdon above. He was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1910. In 1911 he was employed as a farm boy scaring birds. He joined the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry on 24 June 1916 and was discharged as wounded on 4 March 1918: in May of the previous year the Oxford newspapers had referred to his wounding. He married Agnes M. Blake, in the Headington Registration District in 1925 and died in the same district in 1927. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Private Walter Hilsdon
(*Oxford Journal Illustrated* 16
May 1917)

REG HILLSDON, HUSSARS

Full name Walter Reginald Hillsdon. Born on 28 March 1899 in the Registration District of Thame. Son of Walter William Hillsdon, farm labourer, carter and one time soldier from Garsington, and Ada Elizabeth Slaymaker. The family were living at 23 Denbigh Terrace, Kensington, London in 1901 and on Farm Close Lane, Wheatley in 1911. Reg was admitted to Wheatley Elementary school 1905 and went on to the Night School in 1913. The presence of his medic bag to this day in Wheatley suggests that he may have acted as a regimental medical orderly. He married Edith A. Clarke in the Bury St. Edmunds area of Suffolk in 1926. He died in 1972 in the Bullingdon, Oxon. Registration District. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

JOHN HINTON, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Born in 1885 in Headington Registration District, son of James Hinton, agricultural labourer and later manager of a coal wharf, from Thomley Hall by Worminghall, Oxon., and Ann from Waterperry. The family lived on Westfield Road, Wheatley throughout the period from 1891 to 1911. John was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1894, as well as the Night School after the war, in 1919. He progressed from being a carpenter's apprentice in 1901 to joiner carpenter ten years later. He married Margaret Amy Jones of Littleworth. He died in 1967 in the Oxford Registration District.

F.H. HODGSON, NEW ZEALAND IMPERIAL FORCES

Francis Joseph Hodgson was the fourth son of Joseph William Hodgson, inspector of railway material, born in 1847/9, and his wife Jane, both from Cumberland. In the 1901 Census Francis was listed as aged 13 and a Clerk at the Post Office in Workington where he had been born – home address there 1 Lorne Villas. He was not enumerated in Census ten years later – it seems that he had emigrated to New Zealand and while there was working in a mine. Data from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force War Accounts and Records Office show that he joined the NZEF as a Sapper and was wounded, apparently at Gallipoli. In November 1915 he was recorded as being in Malta. He came to London 19 March 1916, was admitted to Walton Hospital and then transferred to Woodcote Park, Epsom. He married Mary Tomlinson on 12 June 1916 in Forest Hill Church. He was discharged 2 September 1919 with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

On Army forms he gave his wife's name and his address as The Gables, Wheatley. The 1921 Register of Electors confirms this as where they lived after the War. Born in 1887, Francis died in July 1987, just a few days short of his 100th birthday.

ROBERT HOLIFIELD, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Full name Robert John Holifield, born in 1886 in Faringdon, Berkshire, son of Robert Holifield of Shrivenham, Berkshire, a painter and glazier, and Harriet Anne née Davis of Little Coxwell, Berkshire. The family were living in Great Faringdon, Berkshire in 1891, Uffington, Oxon. in 1901 and on Bell Lane, Wheatley in 1911. Robert's Army record also gives Kiln Lane as an address. He attended Wheatley Night School in 1912 and the following year. In 1901 he was a carpenter's apprentice and by 1911 a wheelwright. His attestation was dated 12 March 1917. He left army service, apparently on grounds of poor eyesight. He married Margaret Eleanor Crick in 1917 in Headington Registration District. Kath Hillsdon remembers his being a wheelwright on Bell Lane after the war, with workyard next to his house. His death was registered in Ploughley, Oxon. District in 1963. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* and *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

SYDENHAM HOULE, SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

Full name Sydenham Harry Houle, born in 1899 in the Kensington, London Registration District, son of Henry Walter Houle, jeweller, and Mabel Mary Newton, both of London. The family were living at 39 Colville Terrace, Kensington in 1901 and at 12 Hyde Park Mansions, London in 1911. Sydenham was a regular soldier in the army until at least 1930, the year in which he married Mabel Nona Green. He and his wife embarked on the *Moreton Bay* in Southampton on 3 September 1930, bound for Port Said. A son was born in Cairo in 1931 and a daughter in Bangalore in 1934. His Medal Card gives him the rank of 2nd Lieutenant and shows that he and his wife were by then living near Ludlow in Shropshire. On the journey to Egypt his rank is Captain. Sydenham and his parents were living in the Old House, Wheatley in 1921. His death in 1954 was registered in Oxford.

LEONARD HUGHES, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Full name Leonard Henry Hughes, born in Uxbridge, Middlesex Registration District in 1886, son of Charles F. Hughes from Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire and Mary A. née Norris from Peterborough, Northamptonshire, both certified schoolteachers. The family were living at School House, Stanton St. John in 1891 and 1901; and in 1911 at 35 Wellesley Road, Wanstead, London. Leonard was an assistant schoolmaster in 1901 and a grocery assistant ten years later. There is in the National Archives a record of a medal card for a Leonard Hughes of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment No. 201754 with the rank of Private. After the war, in 1921, he married Elizabeth M. Avery in Thame Registration District; and in that same year was living on Wheatley's High Street.

ALFRED HUMMERSTON, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Full name Alfred James Hummerston, born in 1882 in Lambeth, London, son of Thomas Hummerston, coach painter's labourer, and Jane née Read, both from Lambeth. The family was living on New Kent Road there in 1891. In 1911 Alfred was a groom domestic living at 3 Barlow's Yard, Henley-on-Thames. His name was mentioned, inaccurately as Hammerston, in the *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914. The 1921 Register of electors has him living on Church Road, Wheatley. He married Alice G. Clinkard of Garsington in 1924.

JOHN HUTSON, BERKSHIRE YEOMANRY

Born in 1897 in Shefford, Bedfordshire, to Florence E. Hutson, who afterward married Arthur Francis (a labourer on farm in 1911). John was living with his mother on North Bridge Street, Shefford in 1901, and in 1911 on Friday Lane, Wheatley with his grandmother Mary Ann Hutson. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



FREDERICK ILES, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in 1885, son of Daniel Iles, a carpenter from Coleshill, Berkshire and Eliza née West from Chippenham in Wiltshire. The family were living at 24 Albion Street, Swindon in 1891. Frederick was a regular soldier in Princess Charlotte of Wales's Royal Berkshire Regiment from 21 February 1901 until 20 February 1913. During that time he had served for a year in Gibraltar, four in Egypt and two in India. He was appointed Lance Corporal on 12 January 1907, and the Soldiers of Oxfordshire website indicates that he reached the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant, Regimental No. 8932. In 1911 he was living on High Street at the foot of Station Road, Wheatley and was a postman. He married Alice Tubb, the village postmistress, in 1913. He was Secretary to the Red Triangle (YMCA) men's social club at the Merry Bells in 1919. His death in 1933 was registered in the Ploughley, Oxon District.

LLEWELLYN JACKSON, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Born in Aberdare, Glamorganshire in 1889, son of Thomas/James Jackson, engine driver with the Great Western Railway, and Alice née Jackson. They lived in Fulham, London in 1901. Llewellyn attended the Night School in Wheatley from 1911 – in the Census of that same year, he was enumerated at Station Road: he was a signalman with the GWR. The *Oxford Chronicle* noted that, together with Frederick Merritt below, he had been recruited to Royal Garrison Artillery's Heavy Battery: he rose to the rank of Sergeant, with the Regimental No. 75, 291387. He married Oxford-born Edith Ethel Abraham on 27 December 1919: she was a servant at Wheatley Vicarage. Llewellyn and Edith were living at The Firs in 1921. Llewellyn died in December 1962 at the Cowley Road Hospital and Edith died aged 82 in June 1964. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Llewellyn Jackson (left) at the GWR yard in 1958, with District Inspector Rumble and signalman Bill Cox (Wheatley Village Archive)

GEORGE JAKEMAN, GRENADIER GUARDS

Full name George Edwin Jakeman, born in Baldon, Oxon. in 1883, son of John Jakeman, blacksmith, born in Grendon Underwood, Bucks., and Rose née Turner, a lace maker. In 1891 they lived at Blenheim, Wheatley. George attended school in Wheatley from 1891. Described in Census as an engine driver. He was serving as a Lance Corporal in 1917. Silver War Badge no. 247905.



A George E. Jakeman married Elizabeth M. Coles in June 1915 in Thame; there is a George Edwin Jakeman living in Littleworth in 1921 and George Edwin Jakeman, agricultural engine driver, and Elizabeth Margaret Jakeman of Littleworth had daughters baptised in St. Mary's Church in 1921 and 1923.

ALFRED JOESBURY, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Of Alfred Joesbury we know only that, as a 33 year-old bachelor from Barr Street, Hotley, Birmingham, he married Alice Ethel Tombs of Wheatley in St Mary's Church on Christmas Day 1916. He was stated to be a butcher. Such Alfred Joesburys as can be found in the Medal Rolls Index seem not to have served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. A *William* Joesbury was serving as a Private in the Royal Warwickshires in 1914. However, no Census of those times enumerated, anywhere, an Alfred or a William Joesbury who appears with certainty to be the right man.

THOMAS JOHNSON, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Thomas Johnson (junior) seems to have been born in Littleworth on 9 March 1885, son of Thomas, born in Cowley, packer on line and later railway plate-layer with the Great Western Railway, and Harriet née Munt, born in Littleworth. They lived on High Street in 1901, Farm Close Lane in 1911 and were there still in 1921. Brother of Walter Johnson below and of Samuel Johnson who also served and lost his life. Thomas junior was a carter on a farm. Many of his name served with the Royal Engineers.

WALTER JOHNSON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Littleworth in 1889, son of Thomas Johnson and Harriet above. Brother of Thomas Johnson junior above, and of Samuel Johnson who also served and lost his life. Walter attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. In 1911 he too was a carter on a farm, living with his parents. No record of his war service could readily be found. Walter H. Johnson married an Olive Rose Witney in December 1928. In the Church Register of his burial on 10 February 1958 Walter is referred to as Walter Henry, his address at the time having been Chequers Cottage, Crown Road.

ALBERT JONES, BEDFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

Baptised Albert Thomas in Wheatley on 3 June 1888, son of Wheatley-born Francis George Jones, carpenter, and Angelina née Messenger. They lived on Church Road in 1911. Brother of Alfred, Frank and William Jones below. A general labourer. There are records of an 'A' Jones and of a Thomas Jones serving as non-commissioned officers in the Bedfordshire Regiment – the same regiment as his brother Frank, below. He married Hilda Priscilla Styles in Brentford, Middlesex in September 1916.

ALFRED JONES, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Wheatley in 1900, son of the above Francis George and Angelina Jones. Brother of Albert Jones above and Frank Jones and William Jones below. In the 1911 Census, his full name was given as Alfred William Charles Jones. A Corporal of that name was serving with the Northamptonshire Regiment in 1917.

FRANK JONES, BEDFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

Baptised in Wheatley on 16 October 1881, son of the above Francis George and Angelina Jones. Brother of Albert and Alfred Jones above and of William Jones below. At school in Wheatley in 1891. There are records of an 'F' Jones serving in 1914 as a Lance Corporal in the Bedfordshire Regiment – the same regiment as his brother Albert Thomas Jones.

GEORGE H. JONES, NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

Several George Jones were serving as Privates in 1915, 1917 in 1918, and one as Lance Sergeant in 1918, all with the North Staffordshire Regiment. The 1921 Register of Electors has a George Henry Walter Jones and Elizabeth Mary Jones living in Church Road. The WW1 Pension Record for this man, who had served with the North Staffords, shows that his wife was born Elizabeth Mary Horton and that they had married in Dudley, Staffordshire in 1909. His Regimental No. was 48169; he was a Private and was discharged from the Army in 1917 as 'no longer medically fit for service'. His occupation on his service papers was given as Private Secretary and the address given at the time of his discharge was in New Barnet, Hertfordshire.

WILLIAM JONES, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in Wheatley in 1895, son of the above Francis George and Angelina Jones. Brother of Albert, Alfred and Frank Jones above. Baptised as John William Jones on 6 October 1895. A Post Office telegraph boy. A John William Jones was serving as a Sapper with the Royal Engineers in 1917.

HUBERT KEYES, QUEEN'S WESTMINSTER REGIMENT

Born in 1882 in Finsbury Park, London, son of Richard Clark Keys, captain of a merchant ship, and Isabelle Lucy née Davenport, whom he had married in Southampton. They lived at 31 Truro Road, Wood Green, London in 1901. As Percy Hubert Keys he was living in 1911 at Farmside, Reynolds Road, Beaconsfield. He was an Assistant Architect 2nd Class with His Majesty's Office of Works. He was married to Frances Eleanor Wildgoose Clayton of Wheatley on August 25, 1906. This made him a son-in-law of the Vicar, and this fact may have been the link with Wheatley which led to his inclusion in the list of the Wheatley men who served. He was serving as Temporary and Acting Major and then Captain, in 1918, with the Royal Engineers: ref. WO 339/46261; former reference in original department: 115561.

CHARLES LIFE, ROYAL NAVY

Baptised Charles James Life in Wheatley on 7 November 1886, son of Richard Henry Life, Putney-born grocer, draper, Relieving Officer, School Attendance Officer, Vaccination Officer, Infant Life Inspector and Collector for Poor Law Guardians, and Annie Elizabeth née West, draper and sub-Registrar: they had married in Camberwell. They lived on High Street (now numbered 105) in 1891 and the father is mentioned in *Kelly's Directory* for 1899. They were still living on High Street in 1921. Charles was a brother of Frederick and Richard George Life below. He attended Wheatley school in 1894 and received a Diocesan Prize in 1900. Took up a clerkship at Sutton's of Reading. His name appeared on the Roll of Honour carried in the *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914, with mention 'RNR'. Service number London Z/240: he had been a member of the R.N. Volunteer Reserve for ten months prior to entering the service on 26 September 1912, and re-entry 7 September 1914. In 1918 he was serving as a Leading Telegraphist. Awarded Victory and British War Medals. He married Alice Hopgood on the Isle of Wight in 1918. He died in Brent, London in 1968. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter; and to his mother in the chapter *Oxfordshire Women in World War 1*.

FREDERICK LIFE, ROYAL NAVY

Baptised in Wheatley in on 2 March 1890, son of the above Richard Henry Life and Annie Elizabeth. Brother of Charles James Life above and Richard George Life below. Attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1896. Described as traveller, presumably commercial, in the 1911 Census. Service No. Z5040 with the R.N. Volunteer Reserve: as 'Fred. P. Life', he was an Able Seaman in 1918. Awarded Victory and British War Medals. He married Mary Ann Lofthouse in Haringey, London on 13 April 1915.

RICHARD GEORGE LIFE, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Shepherd's Bush, London in 1884, eldest son of the above Richard Henry Life and Annie Elizabeth. Brother of Charles James and Frederick Life above. Attending Wheatley

Infants school in 1888, he was commended in Group III in 1891 and mentioned in the Diocesan Inspector's report in 1893. Shop assistant with an address in Eastgate Street, Gloucester in 1911, the year in which he married, in Newton Abbott. Richard G. Life is recorded as having been in the Devonshire Regiment, No. 4401 as a Private, and in the Bedfordshire Regiment with No. 205428. He died in hospital in Devon Central in 1964 aged 80.

FREDERICK MERRITT, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Born in Wheatley in 1891, son of Richard William Merritt, agricultural labourer, and Mary née Clements, both born in Wheatley. They lived on High Street in 1901, in Blenheim, Wheatley in 1911 at Cromwell House. Brother of Walter John Merritt below. He attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1896 and the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. Assistant in Harris's grocery shop in 1911. No detailed record of his war service could readily be found, but the *Oxford Chronicle* noted that, together with Llewellyn Jackson above, he had been recruited to the Royal Garrison Artillery's Heavy Battery. He was living on Robin's Row in 1921.

WALTER MERRITT, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in Wheatley in 1897, son of the above Richard William Merritt and Mary née Clements. Baptised Walter John Merritt. Brother of Frederick Merritt above. He attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902 and Wheatley Elementary school in 1909. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website gives him the Regimental No. 201624 in the OBLI. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 15 September 1916 indicated that he had suffered 'shellshock': this was probably in the Somme offensive. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ANDREW MUNT, MACHINE GUN CORPS

Born in Wheatley in 1894, son of Isaac Munt, builder's labourer, and Florence née Gould, both also born in Wheatley; in 1901 the family were living on Bell Lane. Brother of Cyril Munt below. He attended school in Wheatley. He joined the Machine Gun Corps in February 1917 and was drafted to France in March 1918. He was in action throughout the German offensive and Allied advance of 1918, and after the hostilities returned to England, being demobilised in February 1919. He held the General Service and Victory Medals. He had married Harriet Mary Tipping on 10 September 1916. He died on 20 December 1944 aged 51 and is buried in St Mary's churchyard.

CHARLES MUNT, CANADIAN IMPERIAL FORCES

He was born in Wheatley in 1881 and baptised at St. Mary's Church at the same time as three siblings, on 7 August of that same year. His parents were William Munt, an agricultural labourer born in Wheatley in 1849, and Rosina née Southam born in 1848 in Bath, Somerset. In 1902 the family were living at Bell Vue Cottage on High Street. Charles was an agricultural labourer working for a family called Fawcett in Valley Farm, Deighton in Yorkshire in 1901. The following year he joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, enlisting on 28 January at Oxford and proceeding to Fort Rowner, Gosport. Attested as a Gunner, he then moved to Canada and is recorded as in Halifax, Nova Scotia in September 1902. He earned a Canadian Army certificate of education, 3rd class, by February 1904. He deserted in Halifax in December 1904, but claimed the benefit of the King's pardon under Board 5, Army Order 129 dated 1 June 1910, and was granted a Protecting Certificate on 21 June.

CYRIL ISAAC MUNT, SOMERSETSHIRE REGIMENT

Baptised in St Mary's Church on 2 October 1898, a son of the above Isaac and Florence Munt, and so a brother of Andrew Munt above. In 1901 the family were living on Bell Lane; in 1911, still on Bell Lane, Cyril was shown as stepson of the then head of the household, Thomas Harding, age 32, farm labourer, who had married the widowed Florence. Cyril went to school in Wheatley and went on to work for the Council Highways Department, including on the then new A 40 road. He married Margaret Dennis and they lived on London Road. He died on 2 February 1976 and was buried in St Mary's churchyard.

He signed his Attestation papers in Winchester on 8 September 1914. He is said to have lied about his age on enlisting. He joined the Somerset Light Infantry Regiment with the Regimental No. 28689. On 15 January 1915 he was appointed Acting Cpl. and on 27 March was promoted Cpl. Fifteen months later he was promoted Sergeant. He



Cyril and Margaret Munt in later years

fought on the Somme and returned to England with a war pension. He later attended at Buckingham Palace to receive the British Empire Medal, a fact confirmed on his headstone.

ISAAC MUNT, ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

Born in Littleworth in 1895, son of John Munt, farm labourer and Fanny née Dover, both also born in Littleworth and living there in 1901 and 1911. Brother of William John Munt. In 1911 Isaac too was a farm labourer. There is an Isaac Munt listed in the WW1 Medal Rolls Index, a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, No. 34779. When he married Celia Messenger in June 1931, he gave his occupation as engine driver. This was a second marriage for both of them as their previous partners were deceased. Of the thirty-one members of the wider Munt family living in Wheatley and listed in the 1921 Electoral Register, two were Isaac Munts, in Littleworth. He died in 1979 and is buried in St Mary's churchyard.

R. JAMES MUNT, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Baptised Richard James Munt in Wheatley Church on 1 November 1895, son of James Munt, gardener's labourer also born in Wheatley, in 1874, and Annie née Jeffrey, born in Barton, Middlesex in 1869. The family were living at 1 Shotover View, also listed as 11 Littleworth, in 1901 and 1911. Richard was a market gardener, too, working for his parents on the land behind the house (see photo of father and son in the *Origins of the War* chapter). He served as a Private in the Royal Field Artillery and possibly also in the Royal Flying Corps: the WW1 Medal Rolls Index shows him as a Driver, No. 170972. He married Daisy Gertrude Heels in Wheatley: she was an upholstress, born in Hackney, London in

Private Richard James Munt



1893. He was listed on the Register of Electors in 1921 as living in Littleworth. He died on 20 January 1972.

WILLIAM MUNT, SOMERSETSHIRE REGIMENT

There were several William Munts of the same generation in Wheatley at the time of the war, and two William John Munts in the Parish Records. But this was very probably another son of William Munt and Rosina née Southam above, born in Wheatley in 1877, thus a brother of Charles Munt above and one of the three siblings baptised together on 7 August 1881. At the Censuses he was variously labourer and milker on farm. A William J. Munt is on record as having served with 25th (Cyclist, County of London) Battalion, London Regiment as a Private with the No. 2821, and in the Somerset Light Infantry with the No. 275468. He might possibly have chosen the Somerset Regiment as his mother was born in that county. A William Munt died in 1941 and is buried in Wheatley churchyard.

BERNARD PERKINS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

John Bernard Perkins was born in 1895 in Kingsbury, Leicestershire, son of Walter Perkins, heel builder in boot factory, born in Tamworth, Warwickshire, and Eliza Ann née Bott born in Burbage. In 1901 the family were living in Burbage, but by 1911 Eliza Ann and three of their children, including Bernard, were enumerated on High Street, Wheatley – Eliza Ann described as mother-in-law of Edward Charles Sheldon, 27, coal merchant. The father continued in 1911 to work in the footwear industry in Burbage, three others of the children living with him.

The *Oxford Chronicle* reported that Bernard had enlisted with Kitchener's New Army on 18 September 1914. He had joined the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry as a Private, Regimental number 14766, with A Coy, 8th Battalion OBLI, Pioneer Detachment. The address given when he joined was Lutterworth Row, Burbage, Leicester: his trade was carter and his previous employer E. C. Sheldon of High Street, Wheatley. He served in France for two months and in the Balkans for three years and four months. He had malaria three times. He earned the three medals, 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred'. He was living in the High Street in 1921. On 3 August 1927 he married Freda Veronica Esmé Heath, born 1900 in Wheatley, daughter of Charles and Elizabeth Heath of the King and Queen public house on High Street: she was a sister of Charles Heath junior, above. Bernard died on 26 December 1961 at the King and Queen, where he had been the landlord.

ERNEST POLLARD, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Henry Ernest Pollard was born on Brompton Road, London in 1890, son of Ernest Pollard senior, draper's assistant born in South Cerney, Gloucestershire and Alice Fanny née Le Chartreux, born a British subject in Switzerland. In 1901 the family were living at 4 Neville Terrace, South Kensington, London. In 1911 Ernest senior was farming at Wheatley Bridge

Farm (formerly Brooks Cottage) in the hamlet of Chilworth in the parish of St Mary's, Great Milton. Air Force records carry two 'Pollard, H. E.' entries: No. 218792 Trade Classification Carpenter; rating or rank on appointment Carpenter; remustered A. Mech. 1; date of joining 31 July 1916; normal rate of pay 4 shillings; terms for the duration of the war. Also No. 128421, Trade Classification 'Misc. (Aviator) Pilot (Lnr)'; rating or rank on appointment A. Mech. 3; new rank in Air force Private 2; joined 27 February 1918, pay 1/6d.; terms for the duration of the war. Which of the two is our man is uncertain.

RICHARD PRICE, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Baptised on 20 November 1884 at the same time as his brother William below, Richard was living at the time of the 1911 Census with his widowed mother Elizabeth Price on Crown Road. He was a brother also of Thomas Price below. His Attestation Form shows that he enlisted on 18 December 1903 at the age of 19 years and 4 months with the Army Service Corps as a Driver, for '2 years in the Colours and 10 years in the Reserve.' He was transferred to 1st Class A Reserve on 17 December 1905 and was mobilised at Aldershot on 6 August 1914. He seems to have been confined to barracks many times, mostly for dirty harness or for being absent for stable parade. His Service No. was T/21455. In 1921 he applied for the 1914 Star for service in France and it was sent to him. He married Alice Ilbrey from Longworth at Wheatley Church on 30 November 1918. Born in Milton-under-Wychwood in 1880, Alice had been a dormitory maid at Culham College in 1901 and was described in 1911 as a housemaid, living in the Oxford parish of St Giles. Richard died in Oxford in March 1956 at the age of 72.

THOMAS PRICE, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Thomas Price was aged 15 at the time of the 1911 Census, and also living with his widowed mother Elizabeth on Crown Road. He was the younger brother of Richard Price above and William below. He is recorded as having attended the Chapel Sunday School in 1902. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website lists many of this name and surname as having served with the Oxford and Bucks.

WILLIAM PRICE, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

William was born in Wheatley and baptised at St Mary's as a six year-old in 1884. His father was Robert Price and his mother Elizabeth Price née Dover, above. At the 1911 Census, William Price was head of household. He was a labourer in the brickyard. He had married Wheatley-born Eliza Mary Jane Tombs in St Mary's Church on New Year's Day, 1899. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website has 'Price W.' with Regimental Nos. 1490 and 15060 in the OBLI, but also with the rank of Sergeant 204583, 16213 and 12509. His Attestation papers had been signed on 10 December 1915 and he returned to civilian life on 12 February 1919.

THOMAS PUTT, ROYAL NAVY

This appears to be the son of Ernest Putt, post messenger, and Mary Ann, both born in Wheatley. Thomas was born in the village in 1900. The family were living in Blenheim, Wheatley in 1901 and in 1911. Thomas attended the Chapel Sunday School. He became a telegraphist in the R.N. Volunteer Reserve, No. Z/7913, earning the Victory and British War medals.

DAVID RING, ROYAL MARINES

Son of William Ring, born 1845, bricklayer's labourer, and Hannah née Putt, born 1846, both of Wheatley. He was enumerated in the 1901 Census as born in Wheatley in 1884, thus 16 years of age and a general labourer, boarding at the house of William and Ada Goodlake in Blenheim, Wheatley, the family having moved to London. The 1911 Census shows him as already enlisted as a Private in the Royal Marine Light Infantry, with the Service No. CH/14294. He may have served in Belgium in 1914 and Gallipoli the following year. He was discharged as wounded on 11 August 1917, having earned the 1914-15 Star, Victory & British War Medals. In 1911 David married Mabel Eveline Pearce in Southwark. He died there in March 1930. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



ARTHUR SHELDON, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Born Arthur Samuel Sheldon in Wheatley in 1876, eldest child of Samuel Sheldon, born at Shotover Grove, and Charlotte née Randle. They lived on Church Road in 1901. Arthur attended Wheatley Elementary school and was awarded the Diocesan Inspector's Prize for Standard VI in 1887. He left school in 1889, but it is noted that 'an ex-Standard VII boy



Arthur Sheldon (standing, left) and pupils at the school in 1893: the Headmaster, Rees Leyshon, is seated, right. (Wheatley Village Archive)

has been engaged as Monitor' and he was listed as Monitor in the Inspector's May 1890 report. In September 1891 he was a Pupil Teacher of the first year at the school. Musician (church organist) in 1911. He was a Rate Collector, and a Special Constable in 1914. The *Oxford Times* of 26 May 1917 reported his appeal against conscription. He was serving as a Second Lieutenant in 1917. He lived in Applecroft Cottage, close to St Mary's Church. The reredos in the church was erected 'In memory of Arthur Sheldon, died 18 October 1947, for 17 years organist of this church'. He was buried at the church at the age of 71. His wife Constance Emily Sheldon née Tash survived him until 1976. See also references to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* and *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

ERNEST SHELDON, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS, MOTOR TRANSPORT

Ernest Sheldon was born in Wheatley in 1873, the eldest child of Wheatley-born Frederick Sheldon, master blacksmith, and Ellen née Holyoake. In the Parish Register of Ernest's birth the Rev. Elton stated that his second name was intended to be Frederick. In 1891 they were living at the Old Forge house on High Street. Brother of Frank Sheldon and Robert Sheldon below. Blacksmith's assistant in 1891; in 1911 a cycle agent living on Church Road, and later a motor agent. He was a Special Constable in September 1914. He married Mary Ann 'Mildred' Crozier, born in Headington. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 12 November 1914 reported that he had enlisted under Lord Derby's Scheme, by which a volunteer could sign on but defer the service until called upon. He was 40 years old when he was enlisted in the Army Service Corps in 1915, as Ernest Frederick Sheldon of Crown Road. His Regimental No. was 137748. In April 1917 Ernest's garden was dug (as an 'absent soldier') and vegetable seeds were planted by Wheatley Elementary school's Gardening Class. His son remembered that Ernest had 'served in Greece', i.e. in Salonika, the Allied base for the war against Bulgaria, which was allied to Turkey and Central Powers. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

FRANK W. SHELDON, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in Wheatley in 1876, baptised Frank William Sheldon on 31 December of that year, the second son of the above Frederick and Ellen Sheldon. Brother of Ernest Sheldon and Robert Sheldon. He attended Wheatley Elementary school in November 1887, leaving school in 1889 under the Exemption Clause, whereby the parents of a boy who had reached Standard 4 by the age of 10 could apply for a Labour Certificate to allow him to leave and get a job on a farm. Clerk in the Civil Service in 1911.

ROBERT T. SHELDON, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Correctly Robert James Sheldon, born in Wheatley in 1881, son of the above Frederick and Ellen Sheldon. Youngest brother of Ernest and Frank W. Sheldon above, and of Frederick G. Sheldon who lost his life in the war. By 1911, married to Elizabeth Gertrude Rimbault and

living at 108 Murray Road, Rugby, Warwickshire. Clerk in the Post Office. There is a record of an R.J Sheldon serving as a Sapper with the Royal Engineers in 1919.

CHARLES SHEPHERD, ARMY VETERINARY CORPS

Of the two Charles Shepherds on the Wheatley list of those serving, this was the one born in the village in 1860, son of Oxfordshire-born Joseph and Sarah née Nutt. They lived in 1871 in the White Hart public house. An agricultural labourer in Elsfield in 1881; ten years later a carter living on Westfield Road, Wheatley married to Wheatley-born Sophia Munt. In 1921 they were living on Crown Road. He is thought to have served in the Special Reserve of Kitchener's New Army. He died in 1937.

CHARLES SHEPHERD, QUEEN'S (ROYAL WEST SURREY) REGIMENT

The other of the two Charles Shepherds on the Wheatley list of those serving was probably the one born in Wheatley and baptised on 7 January 1883, son of Charles Shepherd, agricultural labourer, and Emily, both also born in Wheatley. Brother of Sidney Shepherd who lost his life in the war. In 1891 they lived on Main Road, Shifford near Witney. In 1901 they were on High Street, Wheatley and in 1911 Emily is listed as a widow living on Kiln Lane. Charles junior attended Wheatley Infants school in 1887 and the Elementary school in 1894 and became a farm labourer. Serving as a Lance Corporal in 1918. The Wheatley Village Archive records that, born in 1883, he died [on 25 June] 1921, having been resident at Barton Cottage at the west end of High Street.

JAMES SHEPHERD, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Born in Wheatley in 1899, son of Charles Shepherd, farmer in Stanton St John, and Sophia Shepherd, both born in Wheatley. In 1911 they lived at Ambrose Farm. Brother of Walter Shepherd below. Admitted from the Infant School in 1904 and attended the Night School in 1911. Several James Shepherds served with the Royal Field Artillery. The 1921 Electoral Roll shows James Shepherd living in Crown Road. In 1923 James married Alice Grace Trafford at St Mary's Church.

JOHN SHEPHERD, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Of the two John Shepherds on the Wheatley list of those serving, this was John Herbert Shepherd born in Wheatley in 1898, second son of William R. Shepherd, coal carter, and Polly née Knight, both Wheatley-born and living on Church Road. In 1911 Polly was listed as a widow and charwoman, still living on Church Road, and her son John was at that time a general labourer. He attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. The Medal Rolls Index Cards show him as having enlisted with the Machine Gun Corps, No.

15414 and then the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. In 1921 John was living on his own in Church Road.

JOHN SHEPHERD, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

The other of the two John Shepherds on the 1919 Wheatley list was John Henry Shepherd born in St Clement's Parish, Oxford in 1899, son of Henry Walter Shepherd, bricklayer and house builder, and Ada Louisa née Jones. They lived at 26 Caroline Street, Oxford and there is no indication of a connection with Wheatley. There is a record of a plain John Shepherd serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Bombardier (Corporal) in 1917.

WALTER SHEPHERD, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT

Probably born in Wheatley in 1900, fourth son of the above Charles and Sophia Shepherd of Ambrose Farm. Brother of James Shepherd above. At school in 1911. There is a record of a Walter Shepherd serving in 8th Battalion Devonshire Regiment, Regimental No. 10542 and 2nd Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment, No. 15940. By 1921 Walter appears to have taken over Ambrose Farm from his father.

WILLIAM SHEPHERD, MACHINE GUN CORPS

Born in Wheatley in 1891, son of Charles and Emily Shepherd above. Brother of Charles Shepherd above. In 1911 he was an under carter for a farmer. He may have been serving as a Private in the Machine Gun Corps in 1918. In 1921 he was living on Bell Lane. He may have married Frances N. Barson in 1937 in Oxford.

FREDERICK SHIRLEY, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Fred Shirley's birth in September 1888 was registered in Headington District: he was the eldest son of Cuddesdon-born George Shirley, waggoner on farm, and Rose, born in Wheatley. In 1911 they lived in Littleworth. Fred attended Night School in Wheatley in 1901. Bricklayer, labourer and tree feller with Messrs Cullum. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website attaches three separate Service Nos., all with the OBLI: to plain Frederick Shirley 12480, and to Frederick G. Shirley 285907 and 204420. He had been wounded in the war, probably on the Somme. His service ended 30 July 1921. Born in 1888 according to his gravestone, he died in September 1946 and was buried in Wheatley churchyard in 1946, the husband of Jenny also buried there in 1954. He left a sum of money to Robert Clarke Dungey, see above. See also references to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* and the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapters.

ARTHUR SHORTER, LEICESTER YEOMANRY

Baptised at Wheatley Church on 3 September 1893, but listed in the 1911 Census as born the following year. Son of Wheatley-born James Shorter, cowman on farm in 1901 and general labourer in 1911, and Harriet Messenger born in Garsington but said to be of Littleworth. They lived at Rock Cottage, Wheatley. Brother of John and Frederick Shorter below. A houseboy (domestic). The Silver War Badge Roll Transcription has him serving as a private in the Leicester Yeomanry from 27 October 1914 until 15 March 1918. His Regimental No. was 255412 and he served overseas. He may have married a Dorothy née Shorter in 1920 and have died in Chatham, Kent in 1959.

BERTIE SHORTER, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Born in Wheatley 1885 and baptised on 29 May 1887, son of Littleworth-born Thomas Shorter, labourer, and Mary Ann Clements, born in Wheatley. In the 1891 Census Thomas was described as having a form of paralysis. Bertie, also known as Bert, attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1895 and the Night School in 1901. A general labourer.

CHARLES SHORTER, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Baptised Charles Thomas Shorter on 5 November 1893 at St Mary's Church but listed in Censuses as born the following year. Eldest child of Wheatley-born Charles Shorter (senior), general labourer, and Elizabeth Ann née Cherry, born in Deddington, Oxon. They lived in Blenheim, Wheatley in 1901. He attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. He was a butcher's errand boy in 1911. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website attributes the Regimental No. 45223 to him as Private Charles T. Shorter. He had enlisted on 10 October 1914, embarking for France on 8 September 1915. He appears to have been gassed, consequently being admitted to the General Hospital in Rouen with gas poisoning, bronchitis and neurasthenia. He was transferred to Salonika on 20 November. He had a few disciplinary problems, once being late returning from a pass – the punishment being three days confined to barracks – and another time failing to salute an officer (the Provost Marshal), for which he received seven days. Charles married Dorothy E. Hott in December 1919, the marriage being registered in Headington. His parents were living in the Manor House, Wheatley in 1921. He died in December 1976.

EDWARD SHORTER, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Born in Wheatley in 1881 according to the 1911 Census: earlier Censuses do not appear to show him and his parents. The Wheatley Village Archive has his attending Standard 1 at Wheatley Elementary school in 1889, and continuing in the school in 1893 and 1894. A general labourer in 1911, married to Gertrude Florence Webb, born in Garsington. They lived in Great Milton. There was an Edward Shorter living in Littleworth in 1921.

FRANK SHORTER, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

Baptised on 4 September 1881 but listed in Censuses as born in Wheatley the following year: son of James Shorter, agricultural labourer, and Ellen/Eleanor Messenger, both born in Wheatley. In 1891 they lived on Bell Lane, later on Church Road. Brother of Frederick, George and James 'Jim' Shorter below. A saw mill labourer in 1911, living in Blenheim, Wheatley, with Jim as then head of household. He appears to have joined the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Gunner several years before the War, being posted to Singapore for three years and Ceylon for two and being discharged in 1909. He had become an acting unpaid Bombardier but later requested to revert to Gunner. Having signed up again, his name appeared on the Roll of Honour carried by the *Oxford Times* on 26 September 1914. He had married a widow, Lizzie Cannon, on 13 January 1913 at St. Mary's Church. Her maiden name was Stanley and she had lived in 1901 with her parents in Coombe Wood: see also mention of her under Rothwell Douglas above.

FRED SHORTER, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

It is difficult to determine which of three contemporaneous Fred Shorters this was, all, like their fathers born in Wheatley. It seems most likely to be the one baptised on 2 November 1890 as Frederick Henney (Henry?) Shorter. He was listed in the 1901 Census as born in 1891, son of James Shorter, cowman on farm in 1901 and Harriet born in Garsington but said to be of Littleworth, living on Bell Alley in 1891 and at Rock Cottage in 1911. He was cousin to Harry Jones who wrote to Harriet Shorter, his aunt, about the death of Thomas Harding, in 1915. He was listed in the 1911 Census as a garden labourer and was probably the one who was recorded as attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1896 and the Night School in 1901. Frederick Henry Shorter, born 1891, was buried in Wheatley Church in 1964, his wife Sarah having predeceased him in 1952. Records show that a Frederick Shorter served with the Royal Garrison Artillery with the Service nos. 848 and 292552.

The two alternative possibilities are: (1) the Fred Shorter born in 1884, son of the above James and Ellen/Eleanor, who was living in 1911 at 4 Bossom's Yard, St Ebbe's, Oxford, working as a lamplighter and married to Elizabeth born in Fringingford, Oxon.; and (2) the one born in 1887, son of John Shorter, agricultural labourer, and Esther, who were living on Westfield Road.

JAMES SHORTER, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Of the two James Shorters on the Wheatley list of those serving, this may have been a son, baptised on 7 July 1879 but listed in Censuses as born in Wheatley the following year, of the above James and Ellen/Eleanor Shorter. If so, a brother of Frank and Frederick above. This James left Wheatley Elementary school in 1887 and went to London, only to be re-admitted in 1888; he attended Wheatley Evening Institute in 1896 and the Night School in 1910. A 'J. Shorter' is listed as serving as a Sapper with the Royal Engineers in

1918, but whether it was this James Shorter or the one described immediately below is not clear.

JAMES SHORTER, ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY

The other of the two James Shorters on the 1919 Wheatley list may have been a son, baptised on 5 August 1894 and listed in the 1901 Census as born in Wheatley, of the above Thomas Shorter and Mary Ann. Therefore a brother of Bertie Shorter above. He appears to have attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902. No evidence was found that a James Shorter had served with the Royal Garrison Artillery.

JOHN SHORTER, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Born in 1887 in Forest Hill, son of the above James and Harriet Shorter. Brother of Arthur and Frederick Shorter above. John attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1895. A telegraph boy in 1901; in 1911 labourer in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, boarding at 14 Newcomen Road with his wife Matilda, born in Oakley, who was undertaking house duties.

WILLIAM SHORTER, ARMY VETERINARY CORPS

It is difficult to determine which of four contemporaneous William Shorters this one – and the one immediately below – was. Was it the one born in Wheatley in 1880, an agricultural labourer, son of John Shorter, agricultural labourer and Esther, both born in Wheatley and living on Westfield Road? (In 1901 this William was working as a general labourer boarding at 13 Saville Road, Acton, Middlesex and in 1911 was resident at 12 Wolseley Road, Acton, with his wife Emily Jane, born in Headington Quarry). Or the one baptised on 5 September 1880 but listed in Censuses as born in Wheatley the following year, son of the above James and Harriet Shorter – and working as a groom (domestic) and residing as a ‘fellow servant’ in Shillingford? This would make him a brother of Frederick Henney (Henry?) Shorter and Arthur Shorter. Or again the one born in Bacon Hill, Leicestershire in 1887, grandson of the above John and Esther, and residing with them on Westfield Road, Wheatley, his parents being Thomas Shorter, born in Wheatley in 1863, and Eliza Ann, born in Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire? (In 1891 this William was working as a mill hand drayman and residing with his parents in Albion Street, Syston, Leicestershire). Or, finally, William Shorter, farm labourer, also born in 1874 but in New Hinksey, married to Annie, born 1883 in Sunningwell, Berkshire? (Their three children were born in Abingdon, South Hinksey and Stanton St John. In 1901 this family was residing in Holton).

Medal cards for a William Shorter in the Army Veterinary Corps carry the Regimental No. SE/5496 and indicate that he was successively Private, Acting Corporal and Staff Sergeant.

WILLIAM SHORTER, GRENADIER GUARDS

Probably William Henry Shorter, builder's foreman born in 1873/4 in Wheatley, son of Thomas and Mary Ann, which would make him a brother of Bertie and a James Shorter. He attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1883. In 1901 he was living at 43 Oxford Gardens, Chiswick, London with his wife Annie Emily. There is a record of service in the Grenadier Guards by a William Henry Shorter as a Private in 1917, aged 44.

GEORGE SLAYMAKER, DORSET REGIMENT

A George Henry Slaymaker is listed in the 1911 Census as born in Holton in 1900. His parents were possibly George Henry Slaymaker, groom, gardener, domestic born in Holton and Mary née Ring, born in Wheatley. They lived at Rectory Cottage, Holton. There seems to be no record of a George Slaymaker serving with the Dorset Regiment; but there is of a G.T. Slaymaker as a Private with the Leicestershire Regiment in 1916, and of an A.W. Slaymaker, Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant with the Dorset *Yeomanry* in 1919. The Electoral Register for 1921 gives the parents and George Henry (junior) as then living on the High Street. He died on 25 January 1961 in the Cowley Road Hospital, having been living at 8 London Road. Probate was granted to a Brenda Titchener.

ARTHUR SMITH, ROYAL ENGINEERS

The most likely Arthur Smith was born in Wheatley in 1882, the birth being registered in September in Headington District, son of Fanny Smith born in Waterperry, a domestic servant, residing at Blenheim, Wheatley in 1891. She was the widow of Mark Smith, born in Forest Hill, an unemployed mason in 1881. In 1901 Arthur was a general farm labourer, at the Blenheim address; in 1911 a bricklayer, single and still there. He enlisted in the Royal Engineers on 25 July 1916, Regimental No. 27029 and was posted as a Driver. In December 1912 Arthur married Mary Jane Messenger and they were living in Kiln Lane according to the Electoral Roll in 1921.

GILBERT SMITH, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

Full name Gilbert Samuel Smith, born at Headington Quarry in 1892, son of Reconcile Smith (known as 'Rex'), labourer and, later, chimney sweeper, born in Baldon, Oxon., and Alice born in Warborough. In 1891 and 1901 the family were living at Chapman's Yard, High Street, Wheatley, by 1911 in Littleworth. Gilbert was then a general labourer also, but he had served in the Army earlier, as had brothers Alfred Edward, and Thomas (Royal Field Artillery). When attested on 19 August 1907 in Oxford, he was stated to be a brickmaker, his 'master' being Mr J. W. Cooper of Wheatley, and he was assigned to the Oxfordshire Light Infantry with Regimental No. 7001. Discharged, he was again attested on 6 May 1908 in Reading and seems to have denied his previous service. He was assigned on this occasion as a Private to the Royal Berkshire Regiment with No. 8875. In late 1909 and early 1910 he was subjected to detention on three occasions for absence

without leave and 'deficiency of kit'. Tried for the felony by the Civil Power in February 1910, he was sentenced to six months in jail, but was discharged on 30 May of that year. Doubtless he enlisted again for the Great War.

THOMAS SMITH, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

He was baptised Alfred Thomas Smith at Wheatley Church on 1 August 1886 having been born in Wheatley, son of John/George Smith, agricultural labourer, and Annie née Currell of Littleworth, both also born in Wheatley. In 1891 they lived at Cumberland Lodge, Cowley Road, Oxford, the father's name being given as John; in 1901 and 1911 the father is listed as George and the family are in Littleworth. In 1901 Thomas is a market gardener and so also in 1911 and residing with the family in Littleworth. In the latter year Thomas married Ellen Florence Woodley. The Roll of Honour carried in the *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914 has Thomas Smith for the Royal Field Artillery: the Medal Rolls Index Cards confirm the RFA and his rank as Gunner, with Regimental No. L/6478; another number in the name Alfred T. Smith is 43611. He and Ellen were recorded in the Electoral Register of 1921 as living in Littleworth.

WILLIAM SMITH, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in Wheatley in 1880, the civil registration being in Headington District in June of that year. Son of Wheatley-born Annie Smith, dressmaker, living on High Street in 1891. A farm labourer. The family had moved to Walthamstow in Essex by 1901 and William was working as a plasterer's labourer. There is a record of a William Smith serving as a Private in 1915, and then Lance Corporal in 1916, with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. In the 1921 Register of Electors a William and Charlotte Smith are living at the Red Lion but it is not certain that it is one and the same William.

REGINALD STAMP, QUEEN'S OWN OXFORDSHIRE HUSSARS

Full name Reginald Weller Stamp, born in Wheatley in 1884 (there is a civil registration in December 1884 in Headington District); son of Charles Frederick Stamp, grocer, born in Cheltenham, and Sarah Anne Harriet née Weller, born in Woodstock. The family were living on High Street in 1891. In 1901 Reginald was a butcher's apprentice, boarding at 30 South Street in Oxford's St Thomas' parish. The *Oxford Chronicle* of 18 June 1915 shows that he enlisted in the Hussars, also known as the Oxfordshire Yeomanry. According to the Medal Rolls Index Cards his Regimental Nos. were 2815 and 285730. He trained at Tidworth Cavalry Depot from July to December of that year and was assigned to France in January 1916.

Uniquely, of the nearly two hundred Wheatley men who served, Reginald Stamp's active service correspondence survives and is held in the Wheatley Village Archive. It consists mainly of letters from 1915 to 1919 to his fiancée Annie Hawtin, whom he married in June



1919 in Chipping Norton. Reginald was buried in Wheatley Churchyard in 1944 and at the time had been living at 60 High Street, Wheatley. See also references to him, in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

JAMES TOMBS, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in Wheatley in 1872, son of Edwin Tombs, farm labourer, and Sarah, both born in Wheatley: they lived in Blenheim, Wheatley. The 1901 Census gives his birth year as 1874, when he was a general farm labourer and married to Kezia née Cooper, born in Headington Quarry, resident at Old London Road, Forest Hill with Shotover. The 1911 Census revises his birth year once again, to 1873: then a bricklayer's labourer and living in The Manor House, Wheatley, with his wife described as laundress. James is said to have worked at Chiselhurst Camp, Kent during the war and to have died after the war from gas gangrene when working in a well.

L.R. TOMBS, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Llewellyn Richard Tombs, born in Wheatley in 1888 and baptised on 1 July 1888 of that year; son of Wheatley-born William Tombs, postman and gasman, and Annie née Kinch, born in Denton, Oxon. In 1891 they were living on High Street, in 1901 on Crown Road with William listed as a builder's labourer, and in 1911 at The Crown. He had attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1905. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website records his Regimental No. as a Private in 1918 with the OBLI, as 267607; other numbers he had were 6214 and 20825. Richard Llewellyn Tombs is listed as living at the Crown Inn again in 1921. He married Olive M Adkins in 1925 in Chipping Norton.

LEWIS TOMLINSON, HUSSARS

None of the Censuses of the time revealed a Lewis Tomlinson resident in Oxfordshire. A Buckinghamshire man of the name married Alice M. Baylis in September 1921 at Winslow: his father was the Vicar of Denchworth. There was a Lewis Tomlinson in *Kelly's Directory* for 1924 and for some years after this, working as a Land Agent for Lord Cottesloe of Swanbourne, Winslow. Research revealed only one of the name in the Services, and he was a Private, not in the Hussars but the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, with the No. 28156. Nor was any record found of a connection with Wheatley.

ARTHUR WATTS, SENIOR, ROYAL MARINE ARTILLERY

Possibly Arthur Joseph Watts born in 1896 in Littlewick, Berkshire, son of William Henry Watts, gamekeeper, born in Holton in 1862 and Louise; in 1911 they lived at South Weston, Wallingford. An under-gamekeeper, an Arthur Watts is recorded as serving as a Corporal in the Royal Marine Artillery in 1918. With its howitzer batteries the RMA, formed in October 1914, served only in France and Flanders (Belgium) and from February 1915.

ARTHUR WATTS, JUNIOR, ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT

Research of the Censuses has not revealed an Arthur Watts, son of or otherwise related to an Arthur Watts with any Wheatley connection. An Arthur Alexander Watts, born in 1889 in Rangoon, Burma and boarding at Clarendon Cottage, Park Town, Oxford in 1911, is recorded as serving as a Lieutenant in the Royal West Kent Regiment in 1920, but there is no apparent link with the village. We speculate that he and his brother Frank, below, might have been former students billeted in Wheatley – the 1911 Census shows several Rhodes Scholars from the Empire lodging in the village.

FRANK R. WATTS, HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

Similarly, the 1911 Census has a Frank Walter Watts, born in 1892 in Canterbury, Kent, brother of the above Arthur Alexander Watts and an engineering student boarding at Clarendon Cottage, Park Town, Oxford. There is a record of a Frederick Leonard Watts serving as a Private in the Hampshire Regiment in 1916. But in this case there may be a link with the village: in the 1921 Electoral Roll an Arthur Watts, Alice Maud Mary and Frank R. Watts were all living at the Plough Inn.

ARTHUR WELLER, ROYAL FUSILIERS

Born in Wheatley in 1897 and baptised Arthur Charles Weller, son of Thomas Weller, carter on farm, born in Coombe near Woodstock, and Caroline née Jacobs, born in New Headington. They lived in 1891 on Shotover Hill Place, Forest Hill and in 1901 on Westfield Road, Wheatley. Brother of Thomas Walter Weller below. Arthur attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902, and Wheatley Elementary school and Night School in 1910. In 1911 he was a house boy domestic, resident with his parents in 'Westfield Cottages'. A 'C.' or 'C. A.' Weller was serving as a Corporal in the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) in 1917, No. PS/9571. In 1921 the Electoral Roll shows Charles Arthur, and Thomas Walter Weller and their parents all living still in Westfield. Arthur married Gladys M. Boulter in 1922.

THOMAS WELLER, GRENADIER GUARDS

Born in Shotover, Forest Hill, in 1893, Thomas Walter Weller, son of the above Thomas and Caroline Weller. Brother of Arthur Charles Weller above. He attended the Congregational Chapel Sunday School in 1902, Wheatley Elementary school in 1900 and Night School in 1905. An under cowman on farm in 1911, also resident with the family in Westfield Cottages. There is a record of a Thomas John Weller serving as a Lance Corporal in the Grenadier Guards in 1916, but they may not be one and the same. Thomas's marriage to Mildred M. Cherry in 1924 was registered in Headington District.

EDWARD WHITE, MACHINE GUN CORPS

Born in Lincoln in 1898, son of Wheatley-born James White, dairy farmer and milkman, and Clara née Scarfe. They lived on Crown Road in 1901. Brother of William James White below. At school in 1911. Several Edward Whites served in the Machine Gun Corps. An Edward White was living on Church Road in 1921.

GEORGE WHITE, DUKE OF CORNWALL'S LIGHT INFANTRY

Born in Wheatley in 1883, son of Shabbington-born Albert Charles White, farm labourer, and Martha née Curchin. They lived in 1891 and 1911 at Blenheim, Wheatley. Brother of James White below. Serving as a Private in 1916. His parents were still living in Blenheim in 1921.

JAMES WHITE, ROYAL ENGINEERS

Born in Wheatley in 1892, son of the above Albert Charles and Martha White. Brother of George White above. A builder's carter. Serving as a Sapper in 1918. A James White, Rate Collector, was sworn in as a Special Constable in the village in September 1914.

JOHN WHITE, ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

Full name John Henry White, probably born in 1869, son of Wheatley-born Elizabeth White, widow, charwoman, living in 1871 with four sons at the King and Queen *Inn*, High Street, and on High Street, opposite the Merry Bells, in 1891. Brother of Thomas White below. John was a butcher or butcher's assistant in 1901 and 1911. He married Florence and they lived on Church Road. Several John Whites served in the Royal Army Service Corps. See also a reference to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* chapter.

THOMAS WHITE, MACHINE GUN CORPS

Probably born in 1863, son of the above Elizabeth White. Brother of John White above. In 1881 Thomas was a groom, living with his mother and John at Breach Yard. By 1891 he was married to Ann, born in Thame. They continued to live on High Street in 1901 and 1911. His name appeared on the Roll of Honour carried in the *Oxford Chronicle* of 18 September 1914 as having enlisted in Kitchener's Army. As we have seen, the Machine Gun Corps was formed in October 1915, from battalion machine gun and motorised machine gun companies. See also a reference to him in the *Wheatley Tribunal* chapter.

WILLIAM JAMES WHITE, ROYAL AIR FORCE

Born in Lincoln in 1892, son of the above James White and Clara. Brother of Edward White above. He attended Night School in Wheatley from 1905. A carpenter in 1911. He joined the Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Naval Air Squadron on 18 October 1915, the same

day as David Yates below. RAF number 10526, trade classification Carpenter, rank of Air Mechanic. 1, date of date of last promotion 1 April 1916, normal rate of Air Force pay 4 shillings, and terms of enlistment for the duration of the war. See also reference to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.

DAVID YATES, ROYAL AIR FORCE

David Charles Yates, born in Wheatley on 20 September and baptised on 2 December 1888, son of Wheatley-born William Yates, carpenter, and Emma née Trinder. They lived on Church Road in 1891 and 1911. Elder brother of William Yates below. David attended Wheatley Elementary school in 1895 and went on to the Night School in 1903, 1905 and 1909. In 1911 he was a wheelwright, living with his parents. As 'D.' or 'D.C.' Yates, he was serving as Corporal Mechanic with the Royal Air Force in 1918, Service No. 10527 (consecutive to William White's number above, 10526: they joined the Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Naval Air Squadron on the same day, 18 October 1915, probably in line together). His trade classification was Rigger, re-mustered to RAF trade classification Rigger (Aero), new rank in Air Force Corporal Mechanic, date of last promotion 1 May 1917, normal rate of Air Force pay 5 shillings, and terms of enlistment for the duration of the war. In September 1919 he married Nellie M. Bradshaw, who had been born in Ditchley, Oxon., in 1888. During the war she had worked as a servant and cook for Dr. Barns at The Elms (now Mulberry Court), Crown Road. (Her younger brother Harold frequently sent postcards to her at that address: purchased in Italy, it seems, they carried the Censor No. 227.) Nellie died in 1933 and David was married again two years later, to Harriet Blanche Rose Kerry, daughter of Charles Kerry, bricklayer, of Littleworth Road, where the couple then lived. David Yates died in 1975, his death being registered in Banbury.

WILLIAM YATES, LONDON REGIMENT

Born in Wheatley and baptised on 5 October 1891, son of the above William and Emma Yates. He was attending Wheatley Elementary school in 1904 and went on to the Night School in 1905. Brother of David Yates above. His name appeared on the Roll of Honour carried in the *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914 as having enlisted in Kitchener's New Army. Serving as a Private in 1916. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* chapter.



Researches for this book have revealed a number of names of other men who, from hindsight at least, might have merited inclusion in the List of all who served, originally drawn up in late 1919. Several were said by the *Oxford Times* in 1914 to have hailed from Wheatley. Those who served and appear to have returned are as follows:

CYRIL GEORGE MUNT, RIFLE BRIGADE

Born in Wheatley and baptised Cyril George on 2 July 1893 at St Mary's Church, son of George Munt, labourer, and Rosanna, who were living in Stoke Mandeville in 1901. In 1911 Cyril was working as a butcher's shop assistant in Princes Risborough. On his Army papers he gave George and Rosa as his parents, still living in Stoke Mandeville. He also gave details of his marriage to Mabel Agnes Bluff there in March 1918. His regiment was 10th (Service) Battalion, Rifle Brigade.



Private Thomas Ray

THOMAS RAY, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

He was baptised in Holton Church on 20 November 1887, the son of George Ray, woodman and labourer born in Headington, and Sarah born in Forest Hill. In 1891 the family were living at Holton Lodge. At the 1901 Census, Thomas was living at the Missionary College, Dorchester-on-Thames, working there as a servant. Ten years later he was the sole occupant of an un-named house in Holton, employed as a groom on a farm. He married Amelia Ellen Nutt of Great Milton on 24 June 1911, his occupation being described as labourer.



Thomas Ray's Certificate of Honourable Discharge (Courtesy Lawrence Ray)

He served with 4th Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Regimental no. 204617) and was later transferred to the Royal Berkshire Regiment (No. 220378). His Attestation Certificate shows his address as The Green, Wheatley. The date on the document is not clear, apart from the year which is 1915, but his Silver War Badge citation gives his enlistment date as 30 October of that year. He was discharged from the Army on 29 March 1919 having been wounded, for which he received a scroll signed by King George V. He later moved to live in Great Milton and was the licensee of The Bull public house. He died in June 1970, the death being registered at the Wallingford Register Office.

JOHN P. SCULLARD, ROYAL NAVY

The Royal Navy Officers Medal Roll 1914-1920 lists him as a Paymaster Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Naval Reserve who was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the Victory and the British War Medal. He is known to have served as an Engineer Lieutenant on HMS *Derwent* in 1908. He was gazetted (17 November 1917, page 11924) for the Légion d'honneur when HMS *Falmouth* was attacked on two successive days by two U Boats, on 19 and 20 August 1917. And he was awarded the Italian *Medaglia al Valore Militare* for gallantry in the same action.

A John P. Scullard was listed in the 1901 Census as having been born in Belfast, Ireland in 1880. Aged 21, single and employed as a bank clerk, he was living with his brother at 136, Adelaide Road, Lewisham, London. His connection with Wheatley is not clear.

RICHARD STANLEY, ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

He and his family had been living in Oxford where his work as a master builder lay and where his home was, so that his name did not appear on the 1919 list. He was born in Wheatley on 19 February 1860, son of Edwin Stanley (who built the house on Church Road which was later *The Rose & Lily*) and Eliza née Tombs, both also born in Wheatley. In 1881 the family were living on Church Road and Richard was listed as a stone mason/bricklayer. He was later in the employ of Holton Park and then, mainly to follow employment, went to build and to live at 47 Warwick Street, Iffley (now Iffley Fields). He enlisted in the Territorial Force aged 55, on 14 October 1915. Too old to be sent abroad, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served with 3 Southern General Hospital, RAMC (Territorial Force), Oxford, which was spread across Colleges, the Exam Schools, the Town Hall and Littlemore. He served until at least 1918. He died in 1940 and is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. See also references to him in the *Wheatley in a World at War* and *Oxfordshire Women* chapters. Members of the family returned to live in the village between 1913 and 1930, and again in the mid-1950s.



Richard Stanley at the Exam Schools (Courtesy the Misses Eileen and Mildred Stanley)

CHRISTOPHER JOHN WHITE, NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS

The Register of St Mary's Church records the baptism on 4 January 1918 of Dennis White,

son of Christopher John White from Littleworth, who was stated to be a valet (probably batman) with the Northumberland Fusiliers, and his wife Phoebe.

THOMAS WINFIELD, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

The *Oxford Times* of 26 September 1914 reported that Tom Winfield had enlisted with Kitchener's New Army. The Soldiers of Oxfordshire website gives him the Service No. 14520 with the OBLI, and mentions Salonika. He would have served in either 7th or 8th (Service) Battalion, which was stationed in Salonika, Greece, for much of the war. He was gazetted (page 528) on 9 January 1920 as having been Mentioned in Despatches.

A New Testament which was given by the Rev. William Newton, Wheatley's Congregational Chapel minister from 1905 until 1921. It was inscribed 'May God Preserve You, To Geo Clarke with best Wishes from W Newton. Try to read a portion every day. May 13, 1917.'



'PIP, SQUEAK, WILFRED' AND THE 'OTHER BEGGARS'

JOHN FOX

Centuries ago, commanders received fine jewels and money for a victory while soldiers and sailors shared prize-money (and loot) according to rank. Today, these are formalised into campaign and service medals, usually in simulated silver, and decorations for exceptional service or for courage. The Victoria Cross is worthless Russian cannon bronze from the Crimean War, but all ranks have to salute the man or woman wearing it. Queen Victoria awarded medals sparingly to her small Army, but what she did issue was solid silver, solidly earned. In 1914-19, so many servicemen fought in so many campaigns, it was decided to limit medals to three, two of bronze and one of solid silver. Campaign medals (unlike bravery awards) could not be justified for the disaster at Gallipoli, the surrender in Mesopotamia or the indecisive battle of Jutland. It would be unfair, too, to give four medals for varied postings, but only one for four years in 'France and Flanders'. (In 1945, no medal marked Dunkirk, a range of campaign stars and clasps were issued, yet Arctic Convoy and Bomber Command crews still felt left out).

New decorations appeared after 1914 – the five-rank Order of the British Empire for exceptional service, the Military Cross (to regimental officers and WOs 'for gallantry in the face of the enemy') and the Military Medal (to Other Ranks and to women 'for bravery in the field'). An MM was awarded to James Johnston, a Wheatley Scotsman, in 1917. It was abolished in the 1990s: the MC is now awarded to all 'for gallantry' regardless of rank or gender.

Etiquette demands that a decorated soldier says nothing of his bravery, although it is published for all to see in the London *Gazette*. 'My *rooti gong*', (bread-ration medal) became a routine reply to an inappropriate question. 'I was there. That's what mattered. Not the medal', is another modesty (Ted Molloy of Wheatley, ex-Black Watch, never opened his WW2 medal package). The lawcourts and the services deal severely with those who wear unentitled medals and decorations. After serious criminal conviction a soldier also forfeits all decorations and medals. In 1919, George V tried to change this, but generals objected, and only the Victoria Cross is exempt from the forfeit.

The three medals awarded 1914-19, worn in order, are: (1) *either* the August-November 1914 Star *or* the 1914-15 Star, given to the volunteers, (2) the solid silver British War Medal 1914-18 and (3) the bronze Victory Medal 1914-19, both given to all who served, volunteer or conscript. In the economic crises of the 1920s, medals were pawned or sold for the silver and British Legion local funds helped redeem them for return to the named recipient.

The three British War Medals; 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-18 and the Victory Medal 1914-19



A 1914 Iron Cross - Second Class, with President Hindenburg's Cross of Honour 1914-1918

Germans faced crippling post-War economic crises: the *Reichsmark* hyper-inflated and reparations were owed. The Iron Cross Order was re-created for wartime only, 1813, 1870 and 1914, (as well as in 1939). Its silver-framed black iron was awarded in different classes for heroism or outstanding service. Iron was chosen to commemorate the generosity of Prussian women who donated their jewellery to help fight Napoleon and wore iron 'jewellery' instead. After 1919 it was the nearest the German veteran might have to a 1914-19 medal, if it had survived pawning, souvenir hunters or British PoW guards. Belatedly, in 1934, President Hindenburg issued an *Honour Cross 1914-18*, in bronze-plated base metal.

Humour keeps the hard edge of life in perspective. British soldiers called the OBE 'Other Beggars' Efforts'; junior officers called the MC 'the Knighthood'; the three War medals were dubbed 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' from *Daily Mirror* cartoons, and the two basic ones 'Mutt and Jeff' from *San Francisco Chronicle* cartoons. German soldiers nicknamed the *Pour le Mérite* (a French-named Prussian award with a many-pointed cross) the 'Sore Throat', the Iron Cross 1st Class the 'Heart Attack', and 2nd Class the 'Shrapnel Piece'.

British Expeditionary Force veterans of 1914 formed the 'Old Contemptibles Association' (1925), proud to believe that Kaiser Wilhelm had dismissed them as a 'contemptible small' or 'contemptibly small' Army. (The evidence is lacking.) London issued a clasp (1919) to those who came under fire in August-November, when the Expeditionary Force suffered 70% casualties. Thomas Harding and Harry Jones seem to have been eligible for it, but posthumously. It earned 'Contemptibles' who did survive, like William Gould, an annual free pint after parade on 11 November.

17th Oct 32

To Officer i/c RASC Records

Sir as an ex-Soldier of your Regiment and holding the Mons Star with Bar [Clasp] and other medals I have thought of joining the Old Contempables Association. To do this I must have verification that I possess such qualification. I have got my discharge Certificate, AFB 2079 showing what Regiments I served in, medals etc, but they desire verification as regards the Star, because on my papers it only says 1914 Star, not Star and Bar [Clasp]. I joined the Army in 10th February 1913, 3rd Battalion OBLI. After war broke out I went to France early in September 14, being posted A Coy 2nd Battalion OBLI, 5th Brigade, 2nd Division, returning to England 25 Dec 1914. After that I served with the 2nd Battalion Hampshires in Gallipoly 1915, again in France 1916-17 then I got a transfer to your Regt as a Steam Engine Driver until I was sent home in 1919 discharged on 31st March 1920. I done 5 Years 8 days with the Colours, 1 year 330 days on Reserve, this terminating my engagement ... trusting this will meet with consideration [etc etc] . . .

William R Gould
Late Private.

THE WAR MEMORIAL

JOHN PREST

A word about words: during the war 'Remembrance Day' was 4 August, the day the war began; after the war, Armistice Day became Remembrance Day. In 1914-15 'Roll of Honour' meant the lists (published in the local newspapers) of those who were serving or had volunteered, including several who felt they were at risk of being handed a 'white feather' and wished people to know that they had come forward but had not been accepted. As the war went on 'Roll of Honour' was increasingly used to refer to those who had been killed on active service. 'Roll of Service' then became a better term for all those who had worn the King's uniform.

The village War Memorial committee evolved out of the Peace Celebration committee. In Western Europe the fighting stopped on 11 November 1918, but the warring states would not be at Peace until the Germans accepted the Allies' terms set out in the Treaty of Versailles, which they did (under protest) on June 28 1919. Saturday 19 July was then nominated Peace Day – nationwide. Holton joined Wheatley for the occasion, and General Miller contributed £10 towards the expenditure. On the evening before the celebration the schoolchildren, trained by Mr and Mrs Leyshon and Miss Ellison, performed a Victory Pageant on the vicarage lawn. The following morning, at 11.15, the returned soldiers, sailors and airmen assembled at the Merry Bells. Headed by a Boy Scouts drum and fife band from High Wycombe, they paraded round the village before returning to the Merry Bells. A communal kitchen and canteen had been opened there in June 1917, and ninety men now sat down to lunch. When it came to the loyal toast, one wonders what was poured, for, famously, the Merry Bells was dry. Forty or so men were still serving and were unable to attend, and each was sent a postal order for five shillings, to spend in his own way. After lunch there was cricket in Shotover Park and a second performance of the children's pageant in the vicarage garden. Rain fell, tea was taken indoors in the schoolroom, and the open air dance was moved to the Merry Bells. Eventually the skies cleared, darkness fell, and just before eleven o'clock people made their way up Ladder Hill to Windmill Lane to admire the sight of the village illuminated by Brock flares, and to watch the fireworks.

The day's celebrations cost £48 16s 7d, and afterwards the Peace Celebration Committee and its Financial Committee amalgamated with the War Memorial committee, bringing with them a dowry of £128 17s 4d. The vicar, Rev. M.F. Bell, and Rev. W. Newton, Minister of the congregational church (which now boasted a bath chair presented by Reginald Stamp's father), were co-opted. The vicar, whose son had served in the Tank Corps, was invited to take the chair. A third clergyman, Rev. H. Halford Adcock, joined the committee. The lay members were recorded as Miss Antrobus, A. Brown, F. Cullum, Mrs F. Fowler,

H. Halford Adcock [the younger], C. Heath, J. Hughes, F. Iles, R. Leyshon, C. Shepherd, E. Shepherd, and F. Stamp. Halford-Adcock (D.L.I.), Charles Heath (Royal Berks), F. Iles (O.B.L.I.), and Charles Shepherd (A.V.C.) had all seen service, and Frederick Stamp was the father of Reginald Stamp (Q.O.O.H.). Frederick Cullum was the village contractor, Mrs Fowler was the wife of the farmer who had served on the Tribunal together with Edward Shepherd, and Mr. Leyshon was the Headmaster at the village school. Miss Dorothy Antrobus was a founder member and leading light of the Women's Institute. The single initial makes it difficult to be sure about A. Brown, and J. Hughes.

When they started work in September, committee members will have known that the most important decisions had already been taken. The British Empire (at a recent estimate) had lost 1,115,597 dead, 886,939 of whom had come from the United Kingdom. The government had established an Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. The war had been fought overseas, and there were to be no repatriations. For officers' families, who could afford it, this would have been a privilege too far, and would have had a disastrous effect upon the morale of the rank and file. The bodies which could be retrieved from the places where they had been hastily buried behind the lines, or in shell holes and collapsed trenches, were to be gathered together into cemeteries close to the scene of action. There would be no distinctions of rank, and officers would be reinterred among those whom they had led, with identical headstones. Body parts which could not be identified, would be reburied in the same way, and the headstone would refer to "A Soldier of the Great War", "Known unto God" (the words suggested by Rudyard Kipling). This work was well-advanced before it was decided what to do about those who had disappeared without trace – a huge number for there was often nothing left of men killed by artillery fire on ground that was repeatedly fought over. Their names were to be inscribed on monuments, the best known of which today are the Menin Gate at Ypres with 54,986 names (architect Reginald Blomfield), and the Thiepval Memorial with 72,085 names on the Somme (designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens). More than one in three of Wheatley's thirty-six dead came into this category, just above the national average.

A feeling spread, during the war that the conflict ought to be followed, as the King urged, by the building of a better Britain. As early as September 1916, in the middle of the battle of the Somme, the *Oxford Chronicle* reported the words of a lecturer, Mr. J.G. Sinclair, who spoke of replacing deference based on inherited status, by a new deference "due to the common soldier, or, in other words, the ordinary man of England". After the war Mr Higham of the Y.M.C.A., whose canteens had offered tired, frightened and lonely men a few minutes rest from military discipline, and a place where they could undo the top buttons of their tunics without being put on a charge, explained that amid the battles "our heroes have caught a vision of a new, finer, and happier social existence, and are coming back with a passionate desire to turn the vision into a concrete reality". In the towns that would lead to more cooperative industrial relations. In the counties, where the owners of estates were being ruined by death duties, and were disposing of farmland to anyone who could be found to buy it, it meant, as Mrs Stuart Wortley put it, that the squire and

the parson should take a back seat, and let the working man and the working woman run things on their own lines. The men coming back from the front were not going to be content with "a place that offers little or no social life", and they would want a village hall for meetings, entertainments, concerts, and lectures.

There was little in all this which Wheatley did not have already. The village acknowledged a 'big' landed family, the Millers, and the two were linked historically by the exchange of the old common land on Shotover Hill for the Howe. But Shotover House lay in Forest Hill, and the Millers did not 'rule' in Wheatley, which elected its own Urban District Council and was in effect self-governing. Much the most significant feature in the relations between Shotover House and Wheatley was the provision of the Merry Bells. The building itself did not belong to the village; it was Mrs Miller's strongpoint in her war against the drinking culture of the public houses. But even with its peculiar restriction it met the need for a village hall, and all sorts of meetings, recreational, musical, and educational, took place there. The people of Wheatley were not likely, then, to wish to construct a war memorial hall, though they might perhaps have built cottages for the disabled, or commissioned the services of a village nurse, or paid for the training and skilling of war orphans, all things which were done elsewhere.

With every village going its own way, Wheatley, like most places in Oxfordshire, opted for a permanent memorial in stone. The committee then had to decide whose names should be recorded on it – all those who had been in uniform, or those who had not come back. In this dilemma they drew up one list of 181 men who had gone to war (Roll of Service) and another of the 34 (later brought up to 36) who had been killed (Roll of Honour). We do not know how they resolved odd or difficult cases, but even these two lists must have raised problems, with families which had left the village during the war, and others which had moved in during or after it. Did they, so to speak, take, or bring, their servicemen with them? The original idea was to have two copies of each of these lists printed on vellum and place them in St. Mary's church and the Congregational chapel. This does not seem to have happened, and in the event the two lists were combined, and printed at the University Press, with the names of the dead in red. This list, which was put on sale in the village, cleared the way for the monument itself to be confined to the fallen. Since their remains lay overseas, this was, strictly speaking, to be a cenotaph (dictionary definition, a monument to those whose bodies lie elsewhere). And every name which was recorded on this cenotaph would, when the work of the War Graves Commission was completed, appear again on a headstone or monumental wall in France, Belgium, Turkey, Iraq, or wherever a soldier from Wheatley had died. There was little talk yet, of regimental or family trips to the battlefields, which would have been beyond the means of most villagers, and the physical memorial grieving relatives needed had to be close at hand, where they could lay a flower, and stand in silence or in prayer.

Next the memorial committee had to decide where to site their monument. In a small village like Holton, Cuddesdon or Horspath, it might be appropriate just to place a tablet on a wall in the parish church. In a place with a more complicated pattern of church,

chapel and non-attendance, this would never do. But everyone agreed that it should be erected in a prominent position as at Garsington, and in Thame where the monument in Upper High Street was unveiled by the wartime prime minister, Lloyd George. Fortunately for the committee in Wheatley the site where the church had stood until it was demolished in 1856, and known in the twentieth century as the old burial ground, was agreed to be sufficiently neutral, and it was decided to build the monument just a few paces back from the High Street where people would pass it every day.

The committee invited F.E. Howard, architect, of Polstead Road, Oxford, to design a monument with a solid base of stone surmounted by a simple cross. His drawings were exhibited and approved in November 1919, and the chairman was empowered to approach an Oxford stonemason, Mr W. Axtell to build it. In May 1920, the words suggested by Rev. Halford Adcock for the inscription were accepted: "Praise God, and remember the men who died for us in the Great War 1914–1918". There followed a pause, presumably because the committee needed to find more money. Two Oxford colleges, All Souls and Magdalen with property in the village had already contributed £5 and £2 respectively, and two breweries with pubs, Morrells and Halls had given £1 each. More would have to be raised from traditional sources like house to house collections, dances and sales of work. In 1921 things speeded up. In March, as the frosts eased, the builders started work. The completed monument, with its octagonal base and cross, fifteen feet high, was railed off, the surroundings were tidied up and planted by volunteers, and Bishop Burge of Oxford agreed to dedicate the memorial. The committee invited Wheatley's surviving Crimean War and Indian 'mutiny' veteran, William White, to unveil it, assisted by Fred Harding, the youngest war orphan, whose father was killed by a German sniper on 16 May 1915.



The original Memorial is unveiled by William White (*Oxford Journal Illustrated*, 15 June 1921)

On Sunday 12 June, after brief services in church and chapel, processions made their way towards the memorial. Access to the old burial ground was restricted to the bishop and clergy, two members of each of the bereaved families, Mr White (supported by Mrs William Putt), Master Harding (prompted by Miss Christian), and a bugler. Seventy of the Wheatley 'Comrades of the Great War' (largest and most politically moderate of the three ex-servicemen's associations open to other ranks which had recently agreed to amalgamate to form the British Legion) assembled in front of the memorial in the High Street - the core of a large crowd. Two verses of the National Anthem and the solemn reading of the memorial roll, led to the moment when the Union Jack (borrowed, like the bugler, from Cowley Barracks) was lifted away from the monument, and the choir sang, unaccompanied, an anthem for the dead. Finally, the Bishop performed the dedication. He had prepared a simple speech, and avoided the embarrassment Dr. Blakiston (the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University) had caused nine months earlier at Garsington, where he picked the wrong occasion to remind his audience that the village's dead had been fighting enemies who were "quite as honest, as good as they". At a cost of £261 3s 6d Wheatley now had the memorial it needed, a focus for the school's lessons in patriotism, empire and sacrifice, and a meeting point where old soldiers could rally and lay wreaths emblazoned with the poppies the children bought at school on Armistice Day, signed, and sewed onto the laurel.

Four months before Wheatley's memorial was ready, the Prince of Wales came to Oxford to unveil a cross, designed by Mr. A.B. Yeates of London, cut from Clipsham stone with a base of York stone, and erected by Messrs Benfield and Loxley in the St. John's quadrangle of Magdalen College. Hopes for a better Britain were fading fast, and the prince was met in silence, as he was driven down the High Street, by five hundred unemployed men standing outside the Queen's College, among whom were many ex-soldiers who came to the salute as he passed. Edward had been an undergraduate at Magdalen before the war, and must have been a familiar figure in Wheatley, where he would come to the Crown Inn for a drink before going hunting. During the war he had taken a keen interest in the lot of the ordinary soldier, and became honorary President of the original National Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves, and later the Imperial War Graves Commission. In 1932 he unveiled the Somme memorial at Thiepval.

By the early 1970s Wheatley's war memorial was flaking badly. The village had lost its Urban District status, and the chairman of what was now the Parish Council, Peter Audley Miller, and the Officer Commanding the British Legion, Colonel John Ashton, heard that Magdalen College had a cross to spare. Their memorial had been taken down during the second war – for safety's sake it was said. Post-1945, there was a feeling that the cross, which had been the first thing undergraduates and visitors came upon after passing through the Porters Lodge, had been too prominent – too in your face. The college had recorded the names of their dead from both world wars at eye level on the walls of the passage to the cloisters where they were sheltered from the weather, and they were content with that. The cross had never been restored, but the pieces lay in good condition in the college stonemasons' yard. Peter Audley-Miller and Colonel Ashton

asked if Wheatley might have them. As a matter of etiquette, one doesn't normally dispose of a monument unveiled by a member of the royal family, not while they are alive anyway. The Duke of Windsor (as the Prince had become) died on 28 May 1972. The cross was offered on permanent loan. Colonel Ashton persuaded the church authorities to grant the necessary faculty, and in 1974 the Magdalen College cross was erected in a new position towards the top of the burial ground, and Wheatley's crumbling monument beside the High Street was removed.

The names of the fallen, carved into the stones of the original memorial, were taken down and re-erected on the west-facing wall of the porch at St. Mary's church, and new slate tablets placed round the base of the reincarnated monument from Magdalen College. Whether one chooses to honour the village's war dead in the old burial ground or outside the church, it may be worth recalling that these names do not bring to mind all the victims of the war. The list does not include the thirty-eight year old labourer from Littleworth who received his call-up papers on a Saturday and the following Wednesday ran along the railway line and threw himself into the river Thames. Neither does it mention William Arthur Chiddington, O.B.L.I., who served throughout the war, was demobbed in January 1919, went fishing, and fell into the river six months later suffering, probably, from depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Nor does it, of course, feature cruelly injured men like William Goodlake, Gloucestershire Regiment, a victim of 'mental algebraisitis' (shellshock), or Archibald Harding, Royal Warwicks, who emerged limping from the mud at Passchendaele and walked for the rest of his life with twisted, painful legs. These men too, who did not die abroad, and whose bodies were buried in customary ways, should not be forgotten.



A view of the old War Memorial, looking up to Ladder Hill (Courtesy Oxfordshire County Archive)



Wheatley's War Memorial as it stands today (Courtesy Peter Jackson)



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Remembrance in 2014: pupils of Wheatley Park School visit the memorial at Vimy Ridge



Every village in Britain was caught up in the 'First World War', as was virtually every family. A century on, one thinks – hopes and prays – that the scale of its carnage would simply be unacceptable in the Europe of today. However, if that is to hold true, it may help to recall the horrifying impact of war on what was an unexceptional village in rural Oxfordshire. Some forty Wheatley men perished – 4% of its total population; nearly four times that number served and returned, several damaged in body or mind.

This book, conceived, written, illustrated, designed by Wheatley people, aims to place on permanent record, albeit with the hindsight of one hundred years, some impressions of the village at that time, of the effects of the war on its daily life and especially of the individual men and women caught up in the maelstrom. Most served as Privates in the Army's infantry in France and Belgium, but some scattered as far afield as Bulgaria or the Middle East; others in the Royal Navy and the then new Royal Air Force; others again on the home front as essential teachers, farmers, proprietors of local firms; and mothers, sweethearts, wives, sisters serving in new and challenging roles.

Part history and part biography, *They Were a Wall* is above all a work of remembrance and of homage. In 2014, the best that Wheatley had to give in 1914-1919 are not forgotten.



£4.99 RRP

