

WALKHAMPTON WAR MEMORIAL

short biographies of those who lost their lives in WW1

compiled by Peter Hamilton-Leggett

October 2014



In this, the centenary year of the Great War, it is a fitting tribute we owe to those who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we so cherish today.

There was a "naivety and innocence" among the men who signed up for the First World War. They had no idea of what they were going into. They didn't just sacrifice their lives, they sacrificed their future and left a sad and depleted generation behind.

Recruitment was intense both in Tavistock & Plymouth - bright uniforms, interesting military equipment, brass bands, local dignitaries, friendly recruiting

officers, enticing leaflets (see Europe for Free) and press coverage. However, the people of Devon were reluctant to come forward especially as war broke out at harvest time. In Devon many stayed at home to farm. The national average who went to war in each village was 11% whereas Devon averaged only 5% but our part of West Devon seems to have kicked this trend. Of the 606 inhabitants from Walkhampton parish, 141 (23%) went off to fight. This was over twice the national average. Of those that went 16 are remembered on our memorial. Others, born or connected with the parish, are remembered on other memorials.

The ATWILL Family

Their parents, Thomas and Sarah Helen Atwill were married in Canada (she was American but had been given British citizenship). They had a total of nine children including the three on our Memorial. Another son, William M.M., emigrated from the UK to Australia prior to the outbreak of World War 1 to try his hand at gold-mining. He took two of his brothers with him – Percy and Thomas. All three joined the Commonwealth Expeditionary Force at the beginning of war in 1914 and were shipped out to the Dardanelles. William survived the war and was shipped back to England after his brothers' deaths to fight in France where he won the Military Medal. The family were living at Upland Cottage, Dousland in 1911.

299 Private Thomas Alfred ATWILL

He was born 5 April 1875 at Dover. Having emigrated he joined the 10th Battalion Australian Field Force. He was killed in action, aged 40, at Gala Tepe, Gallipoli (on 19 May 1915. He is buried at Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, Turkey.

1508a Private Percy Gerrard ATWILL

Percy was born 27 November 1887 in Cardiff. He attended Meavy School from 1 May 1898 with his sister Gwenoline and brother Leslie. At one time he had served in the Royal Garrison Artillery but was discharged with VD of the heart. After emigrating to Australia he enlisted, on 23 December 1914, with the 13th Battalion, 3rd Reinforcements Australian Field Force. He was killed in action, aged 27, at Courtney's Post, Gallipoli, Turkey on 27 August 1915. He is buried at Lone Pine Memorial, Turkey.

57203 Private Leslie Hyde ATWILL

Born 28 May 1892 at Cardiff. He was only eight when his brothers decided to go to Australia to search for gold. He joined the 1/7 Army Cycle Corps attached to the Welsh Regiment. Apparently he suffered from asthma and should never have been drafted into the army. He was wounded and died of pneumonia in hospital on 30 January 1917, aged 24. He is buried at Mendinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium.

24203 Private William John CANN

Son of John and Emma Cann, of Welltown, Walkhampton. He joined the Devonshire Regiment. At the beginning of 1918, the Allied troops in Salonika were prepared for a major offensive intended to end the war in the Balkans. In August that year he was admitted to hospital and died of pneumonia on the 16th. He is buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria.

474170 Rifleman Edwin COOPER,

Born in Walkhampton in 1895, he was the son of William and Sarah Cooper. His father was foreman of a stone quarry. The family lived in Dukes Cottage, Whitchurch. At the outbreak of war he enlisted in the 12th Battalion, the London Regiment. He saw action in France & Flanders. He died of wounds 16 October 1917 aged 22 and is buried Grevillers British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

21662 Private Richard William CREBER

Born in Walkhampton in 1897, the son of Frederick William and Elizabeth Creber. Attended Walkhampton School and then trained as a baker. He enlisted 16 April 1916 into the 9th Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment serving with the Expeditionary Forces in France. Richard was awarded the Military Medal on 9 July 1917 for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire. (After his name on the stone memorial are the initials "RM" it should read "MM"). He was killed in action 26 October 1917 aged 20 and is buried at Hooze Crater Cemetery, Leper, Belgium.

24175 Private Frederick Charles Jake EASTERBROOK

Charles, born in Walkhampton in 1888, was the son of Charles Jake and Charlotte Easterbrook. He was one of 12 children living at Rundlestone, Walkhampton. He enlisted into the 10th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry. Badly injured he returned home but died 2 May 1919 aged 30 and is buried in the churchyard at Princetown. His brother, Richard, survived the war having been discharged from Netley Hospital with loss of his left leg below the knee.

26259 Private Alfred EVA

Born in 1888 he was one of six children to Henry and Rosie Eva of Hill Farm, The Granite Works, Princetown. Alfred married Maria Ann Lillicrap in Devonport in 1906. He became a labourer at the Shaugh Clay works and lived at Ringmoor Cott, Sheepstor where he had one son. He enlisted into the 7th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He died in action 2 April 1918 aged 33 and was buried at Cemetery Pozieres Memorial, Picardy, France.

315062 John Henry FRENCH

The son of Samuel and Elizabeth French, he was born in Walkhampton in 1879. He left Walkhampton Voluntary Primary School in 1893. By 1911 the family were living at Ciptor and John was working in a granite quarry. He enlisted in the 9th Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment and saw action in France & Flanders. He died 26 October 1917, aged 37, and was buried in Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, Belgium

260102 Sergeant Norman GILES

Son of Henry and Sarah Ann Giles of Welltown Cottage, Walkhampton, he was born at Walkhampton in 1891. He attended Walkhampton School leaving to become a general labourer. He joined the 7th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry fighting in France & Flanders. He died in action 2 April 1918 aged 27 and is buried in the Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France. By the time of his death the family had moved to Southside, Walkhampton.

Lieutenant Basil Every GILL

Son of Thomas and Beatrice Husband Gill of Ward House, Walkhampton. He was born in Stoke Damerel in 1893. After enlisting he became adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, the Yorkshire Regiment. Killed in Action 18 October 1916, aged 23, he lies buried in Thiepval Memorial, Department bde la Somme, Picardie, France - listed as a Captain on memorial.

24172 Private William HEXT

William was born in Walkhampton in 1894 to Thomas and Rosina Hext. By 1911 the family had moved to Foggintor Cottages where William was a general labourer. He enlisted in Tavistock joining the 10th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He was killed in action 2 November 1916 aged 22 and was buried in the Euston Road Cemetery, Colincamps, Somme, France.

24815 Private Francis (Frank) Rook HEXT

Brother of William (see above), Francis was also born in Walkhampton in 1888. Both brothers had enlisted into the 10th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry who had been recruiting in Tavistock. He saw action in France and Flanders dying of wounds 2 May 1917 aged 29 and was buried in the Estaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais. (The second initial "H" seems to be a mason's error).

K/23975 Stoker 1st Class Nicholas John STEVENS

Born in Gunnislake in 1891. He signed up for 12 years in 1915 and served on various vessels including the Devonport shore station HMS Vivid II, HMS Gossamer and HMS Victorious. He is described as being 5 feet 3 inches tall with brown eyes and hair, of fresh complexion and of very good character. In 1918 he was on aboard HMS Delphinium off the Shetlands when he developed pneumonia. He died 9 July 1918 aged 25 and is buried in Lerwick New Cemetery, Shetlands. At this time his mother, Polly, was living at Foggintor.

1355 Driver Arthur John WILLIAMS

Born in Middleworth Farm, Walkhampton in 1895 to Arthur and Mary Williams. He started at Sheepstor School but transferred to Walkhampton in 1904 and finally left in August 1909. He was the eldest son of seven children and in 1911 was helping his father on the farm. He enlisted in Tavistock, joining the 1st/3rd Devon Battery, the 4th Wessex Battalion of the Royal Field Artillery. Whilst serving in India he was wounded and taken to the Station Hospital, Barrackpore where he died 3 February 1916 aged 20. Buried in the Madras 1914-1918 War Memorial.

21214 Private Thomas WORTH

Born in Walkhampton in 1898 to John and Mary Jane Worth. He was the youngest of 5 sons. The whole family had been born and lived in two rooms in Hill Cottages, Foggintor. Thomas enlisted in Tavistock, joining the Durham Light Infantry and then joined the XIX Corps Cyclist Battalion, the Army Cyclist Corps. The primary roles of the cyclists were reconnaissance and communications. They were armed as infantry and could provide mobile firepower if required. He saw action in France and Flanders and was killed 29 October 1918 aged 20. He was buried in the Südwestfriedhof der Berliner Synode military cemetery, Brandenburg, Germany.