

YELVERTON MEN ON THE CRAPSTONE WAR MEMORIAL

short biographies of those who lost their lives in WWI
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 1,788 inhabitants in Buckland Monachorum 208 went off to fight. 36 lost their lives of which 10 lived in Yelverton. The area also led the way in generosity by collecting eggs & sphagnum moss, knitting garments and sending food parcels let alone collecting £1000s.

The hotly debated Military Service Act came into force on 2 March 1916. From this date, most single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one years old were considered to be in the military and could be called-up to fight at any time. A second Act in May 1916 included married men and a third, in 1918, raised the upper age limit to 51.

Out of more than 14,000 parishes in the whole of England and Wales, there are only around 50 so called 'thankful parishes', which saw all their soldiers return.

Captain David Humphrey BELLAMY (no service number)

Born in Plymouth. Educated at Blundells School. He joined the Devonshire Regiment at the outbreak of war. Served in France, the Balkans & Salonica. Aged 22, he was killed on 17 April 1917 and is remembered on the Mory-Ecoust memorial near Cambrai. Son of Lt. Colonel Charles Bellamy DSO and Ellen Bellamy, Leigh Holt, Crapstone.

K/22305 Stoker 1st Class Sydney CROCKER

Born in Milton Combe in 1894. Son of the late Samuel & Mary Crocker. Educated locally he went on to become a general labourer. He join the Royal and eventually found himself on the submarine HMS E30. The sub left harbour on 22 November 1916 and hit a mine off Orford Ness sinking with loss of all on board. He was 22 years old.

Lieutenant Henry Mills GOLDSMITH (no service number)

Born in Compton Gifford 22 July 1885. Son of John Philip and Elizabeth Goldsmith. Whilst at Jesus College, Cambridge he partook in the boat race winning in 1906 & 1907. He was also part of the GB Olympic Squad which won a bronze medal. He became an articled clerk to a London solicitor. He married Sybil Perrens in 1913 at Newton Abbot. He joined the Devonshire Regiment in 1909 and became attached to the 2nd Battalion, the Lincolnshire Regiment as ADC. He was killed at Fromelles during the second battle of Ypres on 9 May 1915. He was 29. His remains were never recovered but he is remembered on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Maker Church memorial and at Jesus College, Cambridge. His wife, Sybil was living at Rockmoor, Yelverton.

Midshipman Malcolm Alfred Milner HARRIS (no service number)

The son of Admiral Sir Robert Harris and Lady Florence Harris. He was born in South Africa in 1900. By 1911 his father had retired to The Brake, Yelverton. On the 1st January 1916, before his sixteenth birthday, Malcolm joined the Royal Navy and served on HMS Defence. Five months later he was dead when HMS Defence was sunk at the Battle of Jutland with loss of all 903 lives. He is remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial.

J/1595 Leading Seaman Horace James PALMER

Probably born in Yelverton in 1891. He was brought up by his grandparents who lived in Buckland Monachorum. Joined the Royal Navy and served in submarines based at Devonport. He was aboard HMS E36 who, together with her sister submarine HMS E43, were patrolling an area off Terschelling. The weather was bad and the E43 collided with the E36 which sank immediately with loss of all on board.. He is also remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Aged 25

K8930 Stoker 1st Class John Sampson PRIOR

Son of William & Henry Prior, John was born in 1893 at Milton Combe. Joined the Royal Navy as a stoker. Served on the submarine HMS E16 which hit a mine of Heligoland Bight on 22 August 1916 with loss of all lives. Body never found. Remembered also on Plymouth Naval Memorial. He was aged 23.

Lieutenant Leslie Hicks ROLSTON

Born in Devonport in 1896 to George & Elizabeth Rolston. In 1914 he was studying in London for the Indian Civil Service. He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1916 and saw action at Vimy Ridge and Ypres. Whilst stationed near Villers Bretonneux the mess received a direct hit and Charles was seriously wounded, dying on 1 April 1918. He is buried in Picquigny British Cemetery., aged 21. At the time of his death his parents were living at Glen Maye, Green Bank Terrace, Yelverton.

2029 Private Walter Guy SANSOM

Walter, one of six children, was born in Plymouth to Louis & Emile Sansom in 1885. He followed his father's profession becoming a master tailor. After his father's death in 1907 the family moved to The Shanty, Meavy Lane, Yelverton. In 1911 he emigrated to Australia eventually joining the Australian 13 Light Horse Regiment. He survived the war and returned to Australia in January 1920 where he died 10 February 1921, described as an Orchardist. His reason for being on the Crapstone Memorial is unclear - he may have died of wounds suffered during the war.

8469 Private Frederick WEEKES

Born & baptised in Yealmton to Thomas and Jessie Weekes in 1890. Family moved to Tavistock, then to 3 Moor View, Yelverton & finally to 12 Beechfield Terrace, Yelverton. Frederick joined the 1st Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment. Killed in action 25 September 1916 aged 26.

14591 Gunner James Reginald WILSON

Son of Charles and Caroline Wilson, James was born in 1893 in Plymouth. His father was a wine merchant who purchased the Devon Tors boarding House, Yelverton. Just before the outbreak of War James emigrated to Australia to become a farmer. In Dec 1915 he enlisted in the Australian Field Artillery. The regiment came to England to train before heading to France. He returned to Yelverton on leave but died of influenza on 2 November 1918. He was 25 and was buried in the family grave in Meavy Churchyard.