

HORRABRIDGE WAR MEMORIAL

short biographies of those who lost their lives in WWI
compiled by Peter Hamilton-Leggett
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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 839 inhabitants from Horrabridge parish, 162 (19%) went off to fight. This was almost twice the national average. The area also lead the way in generosity by collecting eggs & sphagnum moss, knitting garments and sending food parcels let alone collecting £1000s. Of those that went 17 are remembered on our memorial. Others, born or connected with the parish, are remembered on other memorials.



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', who saw all their soldiers return.

PLY/4690 Sergeant Alfred Barnett BALDWIN

Born in Southsea, 1871. Son of Alfred & Julia Baldwin. He married Alice Greedy Dyke in East Stonehouse in 1895. He was a professional soldier having enlisted in the Marines in 1888. In 1904 he was awarded the RN Long Service & Good Conduct Medal.

Having completed his 21 years of service he was discharged on 3 August 1910. Six weeks later he enrolled into the Royal Fleet Reserve. At 39 he is described as a Royal Marine Pensioner and also an auxiliary postman. At the beginning of the war colour sergeant Baldwin was called up and chosen for the Royal Naval Division (RND) or Winston's Little Army. He saw service at Dunkirk and the Defence of Antwerp in October 1914. By early 1915 he was part of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. Baldwin was the first RND casualty on the Gallipoli Peninsular and was buried at sea. He was aged 43. He left a 43 year old widow and 3 children aged 18, 15 and 5. His medals are now in a private UK collection.

He is also commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial (panel 7).

28306 Sapper Percy John BRIMBLECOMBE

Born 1 July 1894 to John and Francis Catherine Brimblecombe of North Hill, Plymouth. His parents moved to The Green, Sampford Spiney soon after they were married where his father was the rural postman. He attended Horrabridge School leaving in 1907 to take up an apprenticeship.

In 1914 Percy joined The Royal Engineers 12 Field Company. He saw action in France and Flanders. He was killed in action on 9 August 1915 aged 21. He had been awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the 1914 British War medal and qualified for the Victory medal.

He is remembered on the Thiepval memorial in Picardy, France and also on the Callington War memorial.

6362 Lance Corporal Christopher Alfred CAVE

Christopher was born in Plymouth in 1884. His father, William James Cave, was a plumber in the Dockyard and his mother, Mary Ann, ran the White Lion Inn, Clarence Place, Plymouth. By 1911 the family were living at 7 Maderia Villas Horrabridge. In 1914 he enlisted into The Devonshire Regiment before transferring to the Gloucestershire Regiment where he saw action in France and Flanders. In July 1916 he was wounded and died on 22 July. He was aged 32. He had been awarded the usual 3 medals and was buried in Longuenesse Souvenir Cemetery, Pas de Calais, When his widowed mother, Mary, was informed of his death she had moved to Bibiani, Horrabridge.

Lt Colonel Reginald Wilson FOX

Reginald Fox was born in 1866 in Wellington, Somerset. He was the second eldest son of Charles and Caroline Fox. His father owned the banking firm Fox, Fowler & Co. A branch opened in Tavistock when they took over the Tavistock Bank (Gill & Son) in 1889.

Reginald was educated at Clifton College, Bristol and Clare College, Cambridge where he played cricket for Cambridge University. In 1881 he married Sophia Mabel Pease. By 1902 they were living in Grimstone Manor. He was on the board or treasurer of numerous Tavistock institutions. He also had two major passions - horses and the army. He was a well-known horse judge. On the military front he was commanding officer of the Volunteer Battalion 2nd (Prince of Wales) Devonshire Regiment based in Bedford Square Tavistock. In 1914 he resigned his commission and was appointed to the command of the 6 Devon Regiment, with which he went to India and later to Mesopotamia. He was killed in action during the first relief of Kut, Mesopotamia on the Ujailah Redoubt. He was awarded the Victory Medal, The British War Medal and the Territorial Forces War Medal.

He is also remembered on the Basara War Memorial, Iraq, on a brass plaque inside Wellington Church and in the War List of the University of Cambridge 1914-1918.

74043 Private Frederick William FRISE

Son of Frederick & Jessie Elizabeth Frise of Dostabrook Cottage, Horrbridge. He was born in 1899. He enlisted in Plymouth at the outbreak of war, joining the 2nd Battalion, Devonshire Regiment. He saw action in France & Flanders and almost survived the war. He was awarded the British War medal and the Victory medal. He was captured at Berry au Bac and taken prisoner on 27 May 1918. He was sent to Friedrichsfeld prison camp. His record card lists him a "Schneider" or tailor by occupation. He died of pneumonia and is buried in the St Avold Military Cemetery, Moselle, France.

1364 Gunner William Henry HARDING

William was born in Tavistock in 1892 to Charles and Catherine Harding. By 1911 the family was living at Magpie, Horrbridge and nineteen-year old William was following in his father's footsteps working at harness making. At the initial outbreak of war, William enlisted in the 4th Wessex Battalion of the Royal Horse Artillery. Almost at once he moved to the training camp on Salisbury Plain. It was whilst on initial training and before he could see any action that William died on 9 October 1914. His body was returned to Horrbridge where he was buried with full honours in St John's churchyard. His grave can still be seen today south-east of the church. He was aged 22 years.

Midshipman Malcolm Alfred HARRIS

Malcolm was born in 1900 in Simons Town, South Africa. His father, Rear Admiral Sir Robert Hastings Penruddock Harris (1844-1926) was Commander-in-Chief of the Cape of Good Hope Station. Just before 1908 the family moved to The Brake, Yelverton when Sir Robert retired. Five months before his sixteenth birthday Malcolm enlisted into the Royal Navy (1 January 1916). After a very brief training he was given the rank of Midshipman (14 January 1916) and joined the crew of HMS Defence, celebrating his sixteenth birthday whilst on board. Just over two weeks later he was to see violent action at the Battle of Jutland, the largest sea battle of the war. The Defence was hit by two salvos from the German ships that caused the magazine to explode. The ship exploded and sank almost immediately with all loss of life - 849 men and 59 officers. Only a few bodies were recovered for burial.

He is also remembered on the Crapstone Memorial and The Plymouth Naval Memorial. His parents are buried in Walkhampton churchyard.

346061 Private Lionel Archibald HODGE

Born in 1896, the son of Richard and Thirza Hodge. Lionel enlisted at Plymouth joining the Devonshire Regiment. He was killed in action whilst fighting in Egypt on 3 December 1917 aged 22 years. At that time his parents were living at East Crowndale, Whitchurch. He had won two medals - the Victory and British War medals. He is also remembered on the Jerusalem Memorial.

865589 Driver James LEWIS

James was born in Bermuda, West Indies in 1896 to James and Mary Lewis. By 1911 the family had moved to 3 Station Road, Horrabridge where both father and son were gardeners. James joined the 3rd Devon Battery, Royal Field Artillery. He survived the war but died of wounds on 3 July 1921, ages 25 years, and is buried in St John's churchyard.

Captain Oscar Frederick MUNTZ

Born in 1877. His father, George Muntz of Umberside Hall, Tamworth, died in 1898 leaving an estate valued in excess of one million pounds. Oscar was educated at Clifton College, Bristol and Cirencester Royal Agricultural College. In 1902, aged 25 years, he joined the Imperial Yeomanry (North Devon Hussars) where he was able to indulge in his favourite sport of polo. It was probably around this time that he either rented or purchased property in Goodameay where he formed a stud of polo ponies. By 1910 he was at Heathcot, Yelverton. It was only natural that he should meet up with Imogen Mary Collier whose parents owned Foxhams. She was renowned for her ponies and pony breeding. The couple married on 1 February 1915 in St John's church, Horrabridge. On the 5 October 1915 he joined the British Expeditionary Force (BEF was the force sent to the Western Front at the beginning of the war) . He returned home whenever he could and always stayed at Foxhams.

He was awarded the usual three medals. Whilst away his wife continued breeding and showing horses. Oscar died of wounds received in an assault on the heavily contested Moislains Wood on 4th September 1918. He was buried at Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt-L'Abbe, France (grave VII. B. 7.)

51/114 Corporal William Edward RADMORE

William was born at 8 Wyndhams Street, West Plymouth in 1877 to George and Anna Radmore. After school, William trained to be a junior clerk and had left home by 1901.

Aged 37 he joined the Army Service Corp on 9 October 1914. He saw active service and was awarded the usual three medals - Star, British & Victory. He was soon promoted to corporal and saw some action in France and Flanders. He died in Plymouth on 23 November 1916. When his elderly parents were informed of his death they were living at Haytown, Sampford Spiney. He is buried in Ford Park Cemetery, Plymouth.

Ship's Carpenter Frederick George RIDMORE

Born 25 July 1896 at Cole Cottage, Sampford Spiney to Louise and Amelia Ridmore. Frederick, aged 14, was earning a living as a boy golf caddy on the golf links (probably at Yelverton). He joined the Royal Navy at the outbreak of war as a ship's carpenter. At some point he joined HMS Raglan which, on 20 January 1918, was attacked by a Turkish battlecruiser, a light cruiser and four destroyers. Raglan was sunk with the loss of 127 lives. His body was never recovered. He is also remembered on the Plymouth naval Memorial (plot 28).

K/1723 Stoker Petty 1st Class William (Bill) Henry SMITH

Born in 1891, William was the son of William and Edith Smith. After a brief stay in Tavistock the family moved to No. 1 Magpie Cottages next to the Magpie Bridge. By 1911 the family had grown and young William found himself with six siblings. His father had progressed from a pointsman to a signaller on the GWR at Horrabridge.

At the outbreak of war William, now 23, joined the Royal Navy. He eventually found himself aboard the Plymouth built HMS Indefatigable, a battlecruiser. It was not long before he found himself involved in the largest naval battle of the war - the Battle of Jutland. On 31 May 1916 she was hit several times in the first minutes - the explosion ripping a hole in her hull, and a second explosion hurled large pieces of the ship 200 feet in the air. Only two of the crew of 1,019 survived. William's body was never recovered. He is also remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial.

3/5156 Private George SOPER

George was born in 1887 at Chudleigh to William and Mary Soper. By 1901 the family had moved to Higher Town Cottages in Horrabridge. Young George, now 14, found employment as a Butcher's Boy. By 1911 George had left home and was working as an agricultural labourer in Chudleigh.

At the outbreak of war five of the Soper children enlisted. The eldest, William, and youngest, John survived the war unscathed. Ernest and Frank were wounded and discharged. George, who had joined the Devonshire Regiment, was killed in action on 14 May 1916 aged 30. He was buried in Aveluy Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.

288754 Ernest Walter TREMBATH

Born 27 January 1893 to William and Elizabeth Trembath of The Elms, Sampford Spiney. His father William, was working for himself as a carrier and houseman. By 1912 all the family had emigrated to Canada as farmers. Once Canada entered the war Ernest enlisted. He joined the 78th Manitoba Regiment on 12 June 1916. He saw action in France and died of wounds whilst at the Canadian Clearing Station on 1 February 1918 aged 25 years and is buried at the Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France.

The Woodrow Brothers

Their parents, James and Louisa Woodrow, lived at Eggworthy. James was gamekeeper to Edwin Spurrel of Eggworthy Farm. They had two children, Walter and John.

240684 Lance-Corporal Walter George WOODROW

Walter was born in 1892 at Witham Friary, Somerset. He was educated at Sampford Spiney School. After leaving school he became a domestic gardener. He volunteered for active service and joined 1st Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment in September 1914. He served with the Expeditionary Force in India, Egypt, Palestine as well as France and Flanders. He was killed in action in the Forest of Rheims 20 July 1918 aged 26 years and was buried where he fell in an unmarked grave.

240655 Private (Reginald) John WOODROW

John was born in 1894. He was also educated at Sampford Spiney School. He volunteered for active service and joined the 5th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment in September 1914. He served with the Expeditionary Force in India, Egypt, Palestine as well as France and Flanders. He was killed in action in the Forest of Rheims 20 July 1918 aged 24 years and was buried where he fell in an unmarked grave.

OTHER HORRABRIDGE MEN NOT ON THE MEMORIAL

203113 Private Reginald Leslie John Bird - Horrabridge resident is remembered on Bickleigh memorial. Died 1 August 1917

5160 Private George Creber - born in Horrabridge - he is remembered on the Manaton Memorial. Died 8 March 1916

28384 Private Edgar Davey - born in Horrabridge - Not known on which memorial he is remembered. Died 5 April 1918

M12 Shipwright Second Class John Foot - born in Horrabridge - he is remembered on the Brixham Memorial. Died 13 October 1918. Buried Brixham churchyard

G/29245 Private Leslie John George born in Horrabridge - he may be remembered on the Tiverton memorial where his family lived. Died 21 July 1918.