

MEAVY WAR MEMORIAL

short biographies of those who lost their lives in WWI
compiled by Peter Hamilton-Leggett
November 2014



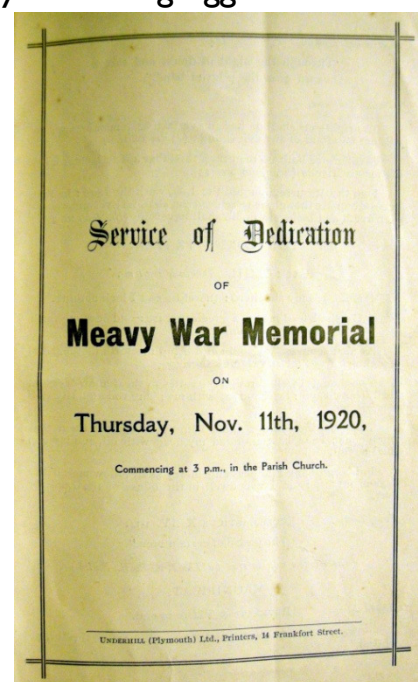
In this, the centenary year of the Great War, it is a fitting tribute we owe to those who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we so cherish today. There was a "naivety and innocence" among the men who signed up for the First World War. They had no idea of what they were going into. They didn't just 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 good 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 287 inhabitants from Meavy parish, about 25 went off to fight. This was about the national average. 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 18 and 41 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.



In 1920, at the Annual Meavy Parish Meeting, it was proposed that a memorial stone be erected on the village green. Money was collected from public subscription, a stone chosen and a small oak tree planted. The Archdeacon of Plymouth gave the address at the service held on Thursday 11th November 1920. The following three First World War names were remembered:-

Frederick Thomas Cecil HILL

Born in Tavistock in 1874, the son of Arthur Manley Hill and Alice Hill. He married Marie de Foresta in Marylebone in 1900. In 1911 they were living in Crediton with their two young children. In the First World War, Frederick, a professional soldier, was a member of "B" Company, 6th Battalion, of the York and Lancaster Regiment. He was 41 years of age when he was killed in action on 7 August 1915 leading his men at Suvla Bay in the Gallipoli Peninsula. He is buried at Lala Baba Cemetery, Turkey. He had been awarded the Victory Medal, The British War Medal and the 1914-15 Star. The Hill family lived at Goodameavy House and a granite cross was erected in the garden in memory of 'Freddy'. Members of the family, including Frederick, have memorials in the south transept of St Peter's Church.



177156 Private Alfred George NORTHCOTT

Alfred was born 19 September 1880 in Northlew, mid-Devon. He entered Meavy School on 29 August 1887. In 1901 he was a clay worker, aged 20, living with his parents, Thomas and Selina, at Lower Goodameavy. He moved to Shaugh and at the outbreak of war he joined the 1/7 Battalion Durham Light Infantry. He was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. Alfred became a prisoner of war and died in hospital in Bavaria on 11 August 1918, aged 37. He is buried in the British section of Chauny Communal Cemetery, Aisne, France.



Henry Beresford SPENCER



He was born 5 July 1881 to Captain Henry Montagu Spencer and Ethel Louisa. In 1908 he married Dorothy Acter Ferrer. They had two children. On September 2nd, 1918, the 16th battalion, "Canadian Scottish", attacked near Cagnicourt, France. For such an important attack, the Canadian Scottish received the support of a company four "Mark 5" tanks.

Henry, the tank commander, ordered his tank to turn in the direction of a Scottish signaller who was waving his flags. The tank turned, following the signals and then became the favourite target of the German machine gunners - in fact no less than seventeen machine guns! Lance-Corporal Metcalfe continued to

walk beside the tank pointing with his signalling flags. Captain Spencer's tank kept going firing continuously until it caught fire, and the crew frantically evacuated the tank through the escape hatches. The entire crew was badly burned. Lt. Henry Spencer probably made it out but died shortly after his escape. For his bravery under fire Lance-Corporal Metcalfe received the VC – Henry Spencer received nothing! In a report it was noted that the tank accounted for several machine gun nests and made life easier for the advance.

Lt. Spencer was buried near the tank in a shell hole. His remains were later moved to Queant Road cemetery, near Buissey, France, after the war. He was 37 years old. There is a plaque to his memory just inside Meavy church door.



Meavy men that are remembered on other memorials

Leslie Hyde Atwill - Walkhampton Memorial

Percy Gerard Atwill - Walkhampton Memorial

Thomas Alfred Atwill - Walkhampton Memorial

William John Cann - Walkhampton Memorial

Private Ernest Densham - Broadclyst Memorial

Rowland Naylor - Leighton Memorial, Powys

Gunner James R Wilson - Crapstone Memorial



ONE PERSON DOES NOT APPEAR ON ANY MEMORIAL!

It would be good to see her name carved onto the Meavy Memorial Stone so that all the 'fallen' that fought for King, Country and Meavy should be finally recognized.

Armored Katherine (Kitty) TREVELYAN

Kitty was born in 1898, the daughter of Captain Walter Raleigh Trevelyan and Georgina Trevelyan of Furry Park, Raheny, County Dublin. By 1901 three year-old Kitty was living with her 22 year old cousin Miss Ricarda Wolfe at Hoo Meavy House. Also there were her elder brother, Walter, and Wolfe's niece, Flora Deacon. They were taught by Annie Peal the live-in governess. The reason for her move can perhaps be explained from divorce proceedings against Captain Trevelyan taken by her mother Georgina Alice in 1903. After their marriage they had lived in Dublin, Dover & Blaby in Leicestershire. Records of the proceedings state: - *"that in or about the month of January 1902 at Hoo-Meavy near Yelverton in the county of Devon the said Walter Raliegh Trevelyan used threats towards your petitioner and twisted her arms and shook her violently and bruised and otherwise hurt your petitioner"*. She was in daily fear of her husband and refused to cohabit with him. Captain Walter, of Blaby, was then accused of committing adultery with numerous women and that on the 12th April 1903 committed adultery with Alice Woolf. The divorce was granted 22nd February 1904. Within weeks Georgina married Herman Sinclair Kruger in Bristol. They both changed their names – she dropped Georgina and became just Alice and Herman dropped his surname and became Herman Sinclair Sinclair. The Sinclair's then moved to The Parsonage, Meavy (now Meavy House). In 1911 Kitty was living there with her mother (now 38) and step-father (now 40) along with a cook and parlour maid. It is to the background of all this that young Kitty Trevelyan grew up. A note on the Meavy Memorial Roll mentions that 16-year old Kitty was confirmed at Meavy on the 22 May 1914 otherwise nothing is known of her until WWI when she went to France to work in an Army Service Corps canteen as a civilian. She died in hospital at Wimereux on 27 February 1917 and was buried in Wimereux Communal Cemetery. She was 19 years of age. She is remembered on the British Legion website. Interestingly BBC television produced *The Crimson Field* set in a WWI field hospital in Wimereux on the French coast. One of the three nurses is Kitty Trevelyan – could this be coincidence or is it our Kitty? Richardson, in his book *Through War to Peace*, notes, *"Her name is on the Roll of Honour of Meavy Church and will, doubtless, be found on the Memorial when erected."* The Memorial was erected on Meavy Green in 1920 but Kitty's name was sadly omitted. It would be good to see her name added as she is the only one on the Memorial Roll who is not commemorated on a memorial stone somewhere else.

