

WHITFIELD
CASUALTIES OF WAR

1914-1919
&
1939-1945

By J.M. Steeples

The Author

J.M. Steeples was born near Wakefield, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He initially attended the local village school, where he passed the examination to attend Rothwell Grammar School, near Leeds. On completing his full time education, he obtained a post in the Electrical Department of the local colliery. He continued his education, on a part time basis, attending technical colleges at Whitwood and Wakefield.

After his marriage in 1963, he moved to the South Yorkshire area, where he continued his employment with the National Coal Board. In 1967, when working and living in the Doncaster area, he obtained his final qualifications in Electrical Engineering, at Doncaster Technical College.

In 1971, the author moved to Dover, having obtained a position with the National Coal Board, working in the Kent Coalfield. The author was employed in the Kent Coalfield until 1986, when the colliery closure programme resulted in its demise.

At this time the author obtained employment with H.M. Customs and Excise and continued to be based in Dover. He remained with Customs and Excise until 1997, when ill health brought an early retirement. Shortly after retirement, the author moved back to Yorkshire and settled in York.

The interest in military history developed over time, when the family was living near Dover, a town surrounded by the archaeology of war. In addition, holidays on the continent always commenced with a drive through the battlefields of northern France and Belgium. Here, the author was able to visit some of the major sites, such as the Menin Gate at Ypres, Thiepval on the Somme, Vimy Ridge and the Normandy beaches.

The author has a keen interest in most team sports, especially football, rugby league and cricket. He was a playing member of River Woodpeckers Cricket Club during the late 70's and early 80's. However, his activities are now confined to that of a spectator. He has been researching his family history for a number of years, but now often attempts to combine his interest in family history, with his interest in military history.

Hence, he was able to combine these two interests, to produce the short pen-pictures of the Whitfield servicemen, found in these pages.

J. M. Steeples

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INTRODUCTION

The Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, was unveiled in 1920 as a memorial to all those servicemen and woman of Great Britain and the Empire, who had lost their lives in the Great War of 1914 -1919. Throughout the country, cities, towns and villages followed suit and subscribed to erect Memorials to their own dead. At Whitfield, once a small village on the outskirts of Dover, there are four memorial tablets which commemorate the men of the surrounding district, who lost their lives in the two world wars.

Inside the Whitfield Congregational Church, now the United Reform Church situated on Chapel Lane, the memorial tablet remembers the names of twelve men who gave their lives in the Great War. At the Parish Church of St Peter, at Church Whitfield, there are two memorial tablets commemorating each of the two world wars. In addition there is an individual tablet to remember Sgt. Edward Kelsey Richards, who was killed in action in 1916. The 1914 -1919 Memorial contains two additional names to those remembered on the memorial at the United Reform Church, with the inclusion of Wallace James Davies and a second Henry William Lawrence. The name shown as Reginald Sheppard at the United Reform Church, is shown as Reginald Shepherd, at St Peter's Church.

The Second World War memorial contains the names of five men from Whitfield, who died serving their country.

In addition, due to the efforts of what is now known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, all these men are commemorated by gravestones, or on Monuments to the Missing, in cemeteries and public places throughout the world, near to where they died.

The following chapters give a brief resume of the nineteen men of Whitfield, who lost their lives, particularly during the time they met their death. The accounts have been mainly compiled from records kept by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; from Battalion War Diaries, Operational Orders, Medal Rolls and some individual Service Records available through the National Archives; from Regimental and other Military Museums; from published Regimental Histories, Newspapers and websites.

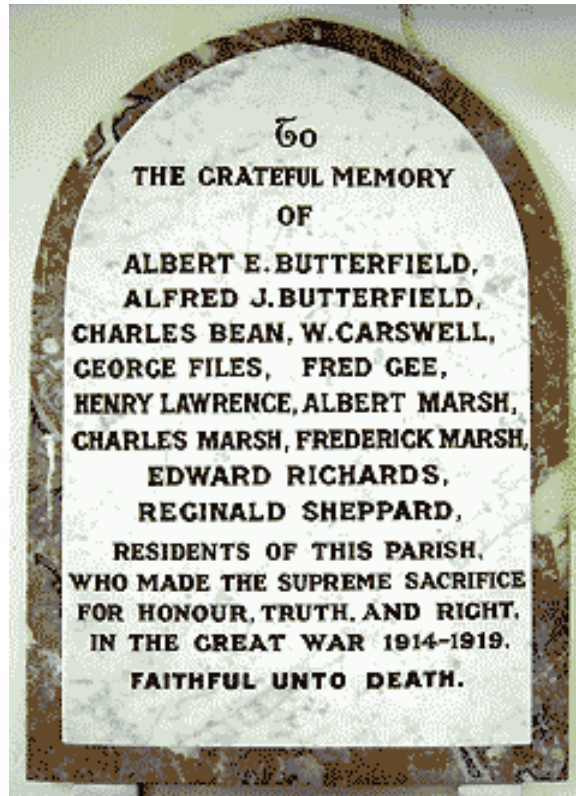
Unfortunately, over 60% of the Service Records of men who served in the First World War were destroyed by fire, during the London Blitz of the Second World War. In addition, the records of men who served in the Second World War are still classified and can only be accessed by their immediate next of kin.

I have attempted to accurately identify each individual, often with some difficulty when there is a common surname. However, I have been unable to successfully identify the casualty named as Reginald Shepherd/Sheppard, with a connection to the Whitfield/Dover area.

J.M. Steeples
Author.

WHITFIELD UNITED REFORM CHURCH

The War Memorial at the United Reform Church, formerly the Congregational Church, Whitfield, was unveiled on Wednesday 9th June 1920, by the Mayor of Dover, Councillor C.E. Beaufoy. The memorial plaque, erected on the left wall of the building, commemorates twelve men of the parish who lost their lives in the First World War. The masons were Messrs. E. Whitnall and Sons, of Dover



Photograph: Dover War Memorial Project

The service was conducted by the Rev. D.L. Nichol, Congregational Minister at Dover, who, speaking before the unveiling ceremony, reminded the congregation how these men laid down their lives in a great cause. They had made the supreme sacrifice and their names should be held in loving memory by all who follow.

This was followed by the Dover Congregational Choir, under the direction of the choirmaster, Mr J. Hunt, singing the anthem "Evening and Morning"

The Mayor, before drawing aside the Union Jack, which covered the tablet, said that on the tablet were the names of twelve residents of that parish. They had no particular anxiety to go and fight, certainly no desire to lay down their lives in that place, yet at the call they went, not because they were going to get anything out of it, but because they felt it was their duty. There was nothing wrong with this country or with the world, but it was the people in it, and all the time avarice and selfishness ruled the world, as it did today, all sacrifices would be in vain. They must see to it that ideals were not lost sight of. If they applied "honour, truth and right" to their actions the sacrifices would not have been in vain.

The memorial tablet was then unveiled by the Mayor, whilst the audience stood in silence and the Girl Guides troop, recently formed at Whitfield saluted.

Before the close of the service, the Rev. D.L. Nichol made an earnest appeal on behalf of the League of Nations. The choir of the Congregational Church gave the anthem "Nearer my God to Thee" with Miss D. Southey taking the solo. Miss Janet Capel was the organist at the ceremony.

WHITFIELD ST PETER'S CHURCH

It is not known when the memorial was unveiled at St Peter's Church, but it contains the names of Henry William Lawrence junior and Wallace James Davies. These men are not remembered on the memorial at the United Reform Church

However, it is probable that the name Henry Lawrence shown at the United Reform Church, is in fact the younger of the two with the same name, as he was born in the village. Henry William Lawrence, the elder, his uncle, was born at Northbourne and lived at Eastry, before joining the navy.

In addition the name of Reginald Shepherd is shown as Reginald Sheppard, at the United Reform Church.



*Memorial Plaque - World War One
Photograph - JMS 15/10/2010*

1.

CHARLES BEAN

Army

Rank/number:	Private	G/2789
Regiment:	8 th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)	
First Theatre of War:	France.	
Date of Entry:	1 st September 1915.	
Date of Death:	29 th September 1915. Died of Wounds.	
Age:	20.	
Cemetery Reference:	Carvin Communal Cemetery, France. II. A. 1.	
Medal Entitlement:	1915 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of George and Elizabeth Bean of the Royal Oak, Whitfield	



Private George Bean
Dover & East Kent News – Friday, 17th December, 1915

Charles Bean was born during the summer of 1895, the second son of George Bean and his wife, Elizabeth. His father was the licensed victualler at the Perseverance Inn, Dover Road, Folkestone. Shortly afterwards the family moved to the Dover area, his father becoming licensee of the Royal Oak public house, at Sandwich Road, Whitfield.

After war against Germany was declared on 4th August 1914, Lord Kitchener called for 100,000 volunteers to form a new army. The response was overwhelming and enough volunteers enlisted to form three new armies. These new battalions, attached to established Regiments, became known as "Service Battalions". The 8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) was formed at Canterbury, in September 1914, part of K3, the third batch of 100,000 volunteers, which included Charles Bean. The 8th Battalion, The Buffs, was attached to 72nd Brigade, 24th Division.

During the month of September, all the units of the 24th Division began to assemble in the Shoreham area of Sussex. The early days were chaotic as there were insufficient Officers and trained NCOs. In addition, there were no organised billets, no issue of uniforms or any other equipment. It was not until March 1915, that the men received their uniforms and a further four months before rifles were issued. Shortly after which the 8th Buffs moved, in Division, to Aldershot for final training. On the 19th August 1915, the 24th Division was inspected by Lord Kitchener and the following day by King George the Fifth. The same day orders were received for the division to move to France.

On 21st August, at their camp at Blackdown, the 8th Buffs were ordered to prepare for embarkation and mobilisation commenced. On 30th August, all transport, accompanied by 3 officers and 106 other ranks, left Farnborough for Southampton. The remainder of the battalion left Frimley the following evening, for Folkestone and, at 23.15 hrs, sailed for France.

At 01.30 hrs on 1st September 1915, the 8th Buffs arrived in Boulogne and, after disembarkation, proceeded by route march to a large rest camp at Ostrohave, where they were accommodated in tents.

The following day the battalion travelled by train to Montreuil, where they were joined by the battalion transport, which had arrived by rail from Le Havre. The 8th Buffs then marched on good roads, in heavy rain, to billets at Maninghem. By the 4th September, the assembly of the 24th Division was complete and concentrated in the Etaples - St Pol area of France.

The next three weeks was occupied in forming the troops into functional units, with parades, route marches, weekly divisional exercises and practice attacks. On the 9th September, the 8th Buffs were involved in digging two special trenches to allow experiments with gas. In addition, the battalion constructed a musketry range, so that practice firing could be undertaken at Maninghem.

On the evening of 21st September, the 24th Division began their advance towards the battle-front, they were to be in reserve for the British Army assault at Loos. There followed a series of night-time forced marches, the 8th Buffs, leaving their camp at Maninghem and arriving at Bethune, early on the 25th September.

The infantry assault at the Battle of Loos commenced at 06.30 hrs, on 25th September 1915, having been preceded by a gas attack. By noon the town of Loos had been captured, the 7th Division was on the outskirts of Hulloch and the 9th Division approaching the Hohenzollern Redoubt. However, General French was slow in releasing the 21st and 24th Divisions from their reserve position and it was not until the afternoon, that these divisions started to move forward.

During the evening of 25th September, the 8th Buffs moved forward, approaching the firing line via Vermelles, to attack the village of Vendin-Le-Vieil. At 00.30 hrs, the battalion came under heavy fire from the German artillery using shrapnel shells and orders were given to withdraw. The 8th Buffs spent the rest of the very cold night, in the trenches.

At 10.30 hrs on Sunday 26th September, prior to the battalions renewed attack, the enemy commenced a heavy bombardment on the trenches. At 11.00 hrs, the attack commenced across open country, the objective being a German position about a mile away. The 8th Buffs adopted Artillery formation on leaving the trenches, but long distance rifle fire caused them to extend their lines almost immediately. The advance was carried forward rapidly and by 11.30 am, the leading lines of the Buffs were within 25 yards of the German barbed wire, but no gaps could be found in the wire. With heavy machine gun fire being encountered on both the flanks, at 11.55 hrs, the 8th Buffs were ordered to withdraw. During the withdrawal the enemy's fire, especially on the battalions left flank, became heavier and considerable losses occurred.

On being relieved, the 8th Buffs rested in a field near Sailly-La-Bourse until 19.00 hrs, on the 27th September, when they marched back to Noeux-Les-Mines, south of Bethune. The 8th Buffs spent the 28th September in bivouacs, before travelling by train to Molinghem. At noon on the 29th September, the 8th Buffs were known to have incurred 554 casualties, of which 24 were officers.

One of these casualties was Private Charles Bean of the 8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), who died from his wounds on the 29th September 1915. He is buried in the Communal Cemetery at Carvin, a town which was in German occupation until near the end of the war and is the site of the German National Military Cemetery. It is therefore likely that Charles Bean was one of those who reached the German wire, as it is known that German medics attended to these wounded men.

2.

ALBERT EDWARD GEORGE BUTTERFIELD

Army

Rank/number:	Gunner	169047
Regiment:	"Z" 30 th TM Battery, Royal Field Artillery	
Date of Death:	7 th June 1917	Killed in Action.
Age:	21	
Cemetery Reference:	Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, Belgium. VII. M. 13.	
Medal Entitlement:	Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of Alfred and Harriet Jane Butterfield of Whitfield.	



*Gunner Albert Edward George Butterfield
Dover & East Kent News – Friday, 22nd March 1918*

Albert Edward George Butterfield was born in the spring of 1896. He was the eldest son of Alfred and Harriet Jane Butterfield of New Brompton near Gillingham, Kent. His father, who was born at Ewell near Dover, was employed as a Dairyman. His mother, Harriet Jane, daughter of John Robertson, a shipwright, was also born in Dover, but at the time of their marriage, was living at No.101 King Street, Gillingham. Shortly after the birth of their son, Alfred and Harriet Jane returned to Dover. Three more sons were born and in 1901, the family was living at Myrtle Cottages, Whitfield. On completing his education, Albert Edward George found employment as a cowman on a local farm. In 1911, the family was living at Archers Court Cottages, Whitfield.

War was declared on the 4th August 1914 and shortly afterwards Lord Kitchener called for his 100,000 volunteers. During the next few months thousands of men volunteered to serve their country. Later, in 1916, conscription was introduced. Due to absence of his service record, it is not certain whether Albert Butterfield was a volunteer, or a conscript. However, he was eventually posted to the 30th Division, Trench Mortar Battery, Royal Field Artillery.

At the start of the First World War, trench mortars did not exist in the British Army. In December 1914, experimental types were introduced, with the light mortar units being manned by Infantry and heavy mortar units, manned by the Royal Field Artillery personnel. By mid-1915, the 3 inch Stokes mortar came into use with the British Army and was first used in September, at the Battle of Loos.

In March 1916, the medium mortars came under Divisional artillery control and the light mortars, under Brigade control. Mortars were used in both a defensive and offensive role, from suppressing enemy machine gun post to co-ordinated firing of barrages. At this time most divisions had three medium batteries, designated, "X", "Y" and "Z", with the heavy battery designated "V" battery.

The 30th Division was formed in April 1915 and initially based in the Grantham area. At this time there was a serious shortage of arms, ammunition and equipment. It was not until October 1915, when the Division moved to Salisbury Plain, that live firing practice commenced. On 6th November

1915, the 30th Division began to cross the channel to France and by 12th November was assembled near Amiens.

During 1916, the 30th Division was involved in the capture of Montauban and fighting in Trones Wood, during the first phase of the Battle of the Somme. Later they were involved in the battle at Transloy Ridge. In 1917 the Division was involved in the pursuit of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and in both Battles of the Scarpe, during the Arras offensive

On 1st June 1917, Albert Edward George Butterfield, attached to "Z" Battery of the 30th Trench Mortar Battery, was based at Watou, in Flanders. At this time the British Artillery was bombarding the Messines - Wytschaete Ridge, in the adjacent sector, in preparation for an infantry attack

On 2nd June, instructions were received for the 30th Division to put two Medium TM batteries in the line and the officers commanding the batteries went forward, to reconnoitre for suitable positions. They found the trench system in very bad condition and owing to water, considered it would be impossible to dig emplacements to any depth.

Nevertheless, on 4th June all 30th Division Trench Mortar batteries moved forward to Busseboom. The following day "Y" and "Z" Batteries advanced to the front line at Zillebeke, some 2.4 km south-east of Ypres. Here they commenced work on digging the emplacements for the medium trench mortars

Throughout this time the British bombardment of the Messines - Wytschaete Ridge continued unabated. However, at 02.50 hrs on Thursday 7th June, the bombardment stopped and for twenty minutes there was silence. At 03.10 hrs, nineteen huge mines were exploded under the German front line. Two of these mines, at Hill 60, were only a short distance from "Y" and "Z" Battery positions.

In answer to the Allied attack, the German artillery shelled the British positions along the Salient front line. The positions occupied by "Y" and "Z" Batteries were heavily shelled with High Explosive and Gas shells and unfortunately casualties were incurred. The officers of both "Y" and "Z" Batteries were killed, as were seven other ranks. One of whom was Gunner Albert Edward George Butterfield.

He is buried, alongside his colleagues, in the Railway Dugouts Burial Ground, near Zillebeke. The cemetery is where a railway embankment overlooks a small farmstead, known to the troops as Transport Farm. Many burials occurred in 1916-17, when Advanced Dressing Stations occupied the farm and the surrounding dugouts. At the armistice, in November 1918, there were 1700 marked graves in the cemetery. Afterwards this number greatly increased, as graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefield. There are now 2459 Commonwealth graves in the cemetery, of which 261 are unidentified.

His younger brother Alfred John Butterfield was killed in action on 3rd May 1917, when serving in the Household Battalion, Household Cavalry.

3.

ALFRED JOHN BUTTERFIELD

Army

Rank/number:	Trooper	1409
Regiment:	Household Battalion, Household Cavalry	
Date of Death:	3 rd May 1917	Killed in Action.
Age:	19.	
Memorial Reference:	Arras Memorial, France. Bay 1.	
Medal Entitlement:	Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of Mr A. and Mrs H. Butterfield of Archers Court, Whitfield, Dover.	



*Arras Memorial
Photograph: JMS - 12/06/2008*

Alfred John Butterfield was born in 1898, the second son of Alfred and Harriet Jane Butterfield, of Whitfield near Dover. His father, a cowman employed on a local farm, had recently moved back to Whitfield, from New Brompton near Gillingham, where he had married. The family continued to reside at Whitfield and at the time of the 1911 Census, were living at Archers Court Cottages. At this time Alfred John was employed at a local plant nursery.

Due to the absence of his service record, it is not known when Alfred John Butterfield joined the army. However, it is known that during the First World War he served in the Household Battalion, of the Household Cavalry.

This battalion was formed at Knightsbridge Barracks, London, on 1st September 1916, by troops drawn from the reserve units of the Household Cavalry (the 1st and 2nd Life Guards and Royal Horse Guards). All troops had to be retrained and re-equipped, to fight as an infantry battalion. All the men received the cavalry rate of pay, which was a few pence more than the infantry. They also wore cavalry service dress when on furlough.

Initially, training was undertaken in Hyde Park, but later moved to Richmond Park. On the 9th November 1916, the battalion joined the British Expeditionary Force in France, attached to the 10th Brigade, 4th Division, which was an experienced formation of the regular army.

At this time the reserve of the Battalion moved from London to Combermere Barracks, Windsor and from here, drafts of men were sent out to the Western Front to replace casualties, during its 14 month of combat service.

The Household Battalion was very inexperienced when, on 8th December 1916, they manned the front line for the first time. Moving into the trenches at Sailly Sailiesel, east of Combles, in the Somme Valley. The Battle of the Somme had ended, but the German artillery was still fairly active and the ground was a morass of thick, sticky mud. The Battalion remained in this area until late January 1917,

when they moved to the trenches at Bouchavesne. Later, in mid-February, the battalion moved to a rest area near the town of Arras.

On Easter Monday, 9th April 1917, the British Army launched a major attack east of Arras, towards the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. There was to be a general advance of infantry, both north and south of the River Scarpe. The objective of the 10th Infantry Brigade was to capture the village of Fampoux. The Household Battalion, part of the 10th Brigade, was to advance along the swampy north bank of the river, towards the village. The Brigade's initial advance towards Fampoux, was undertaken through a snow storm, but there was eleven days hard fighting before the village was taken. The Household Battalion incurred 9 officer and 166 other rank casualties, during this period of fighting.

At the beginning of May, the Household Battalion was in the front line, building new forward post and repairing the trenches. On 3rd May, the 10th Brigade was to take part in a general attack by the 4th Division, against the village of Roeux and the nearby cemetery. Roeux Cemetery, 50 yards north-west of the village, was heavily defended by well en-trenched German infantry.

The Household Battalion was to attack towards the cemetery on a two company front, with No.3 Coy. on the left and No.1 Coy. on the right. No.2 Coy. was to provide two platoons for mopping up and two platoons to form a defensive flank on the right, in case the village of Roeux was not taken. No.4 Coy. in reserve, was to act as carrying company.

The attack initially succeeded on the left, but on the right was immediately halted by heavy machine gun fire. The battalion was compelled to retire to their original front line positions, having incurred over 230 casualties. Later in the day, the battalion took part in a bombing attack against Parona Trench. But it was not until the 12th May that the enemy was forced out of the Roeux and the cemetery.

One of the Household Battalion's many casualties on the 3rd May 1917 was Trooper Alfred John Butterfield, killed in action. His body was never identified and consequently his name is inscribed on the Arras Memorial to the Missing. The Arras Memorial was constructed on the site of a former French Military Cemetery and commemorates the 35000 servicemen of the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand, who lost their lives between the spring of 1916 and August 1918 and who have no known grave.

His older brother, Albert Edward George Butterfield was killed in action on 7th June 1917, when serving in the Royal Field Artillery

4.

WILLIAM CARSWELL

Army

Rank/number:	Private	73515
Regiment:	15 th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby Regiment)	
First Theatre of War	France.	
Date of Entry:	30 th October 1917.	
Date of Death:	28 th March 1918 Killed in Action.	
Age:	22	
Memorial Reference:	Pozières Memorial, France. Panel 52 - 54..	
Medal Entitlement:	Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of Kate Carswell of Mill Cottage, Whitfield, Dover and the late Hubert Carswell	



*Pozières Memorial, France
Photograph: JMS - 12/06/2008*

William Carswell was born in Hastings, Sussex during the month of September 1898. He was the first son and second child of Henry Hubert Carswell, bootmaker and his wife Kate. His father's employment as bootmaker involved some travel around the south-east; the birth of their first child, Hilda, being registered in Maidstone, whilst the 1911 census shows the family living at Foord Road, Folkestone. In late 1909, his father, Henry Hubert Carswell died, the death being registered at Dover. After the death of his father, the family fell upon hard times. Their mother obtained work as a domestic servant, boarding at the home of Mrs Ada Wilmot, at Mill Lane. However, the children had to be put into the care of the Dover Union Workhouse, later to become Buckland Hospital.

When old enough, William obtained a job as a cowman for a local farmer. He was employed in this work when, on 17th February 1917, he enlisted in the Army, at Whitfield. The family address at this time was given as Mill Cottage, Whitfield. After his medical at Canterbury, on 26th February, he was classed fit for general service. Being of slight build, his weight was only 104 lbs, the Medical Officer made the comment that his physical development was "fair" and he was "2½ ins. under standard for chest measurement, but will improve". William was called up on the 3rd March 1917 and three days later he was posted to the 28th Training Reserve, 245th Infantry Battalion, based at Maidstone. At this time, men posted to a Training Reserve Battalion were not allocated to any particular regiment.

On the 30th October 1917, William Carswell was posted to the British Expeditionary Force, in France. A few days later, on 5th November, he was drafted to the 15th Battalion, Notts and Derby Regiment, the Sherwood Foresters.

The 15th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters was formed in Nottingham, in February 1915, as a Bantam Battalion. Bantam Battalions were formed by men who were under the regulation height of 5ft

3ins., but otherwise fit for service. There were many miners in their ranks. The battalion was part of 105th Brigade, 35th Division, which after initially training in Yorkshire and later on Salisbury Plain, joined the British Expeditionary Force on 1st February 1916.

The 35th Division was deployed at Bazentin Ridge, Arrowhead Copse, Maltz Horn Farm and Faifmont Farm during the battles on the Somme, in 1916. During February 1917, the 35th Division moved to an area south of the Somme, previously held by the French Army. Here they were involved in the pursuit of the enemy, during his withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line. Towards the end of May 1917, the 15th Sherwood Foresters were near Peronne. In August they were engaged in attacks against the enemy at The Knoll and Gillemont Farm, incurring 148 casualties.

During October 1917, the 15th Sherwood Foresters, in Division, moved to the Ypres Salient in Flanders, the 2nd Battle of Passchendaele was still raging. On the 22nd October, the 15th Battalion was engaged south of Houlhuldt, where they incurred 198 casualties. The battalion was relieved on the 1st November, but suffered further casualties from enemy artillery, as they withdrew along the boarded walkways.

By the 5th November the battalion was in Paddington Camp, at Proven. It was here that Private William Carswell, one of a draft of replacements, joined the 15th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters. During the remaining weeks of 1917, the 15th Battalion remained out of the front line. On the 30th December, the men of "W" Company were moved out, due to an outbreak of Diphtheria and the following day the rest of the battalion was deloused. The 15th Sherwood Foresters resumed duty tours in the front line, but in mid-March 1918, went into GHQ Reserve, to allow re-fitting and training.

On 21st March 1918, the German Army, reinforced by thousands of troops from the Russian Front, launched a major offensive in the Somme Region, with the aim of capturing the city of Amiens. On 23rd March, the 35th Division was ordered south. Moving first by train, a twelve hour journey and then by route march, the 15th Sherwood Foresters reached Maricourt at 06.00 hrs, on 24th March.

At noon, that day, the 15th Sherwood Foresters were ordered to counter-attack. The battalion moved forward, with the 15th Cheshire's on the right and held the advancing enemy. However, there was no contact with the troops on the left of the battalion. The enemy moved into this gap, out-flanking the Sherwood Foresters two front companies and inflicting heavy casualties. At 18.00 hrs, the battalion was ordered to withdraw to new positions on the Curlu-Maurepas road.

The next day, 25th March, the troops on either side of the 15th Sherwood Foresters retired under heavy enemy shell-fire. The 15th Battalion was forced to comply with their movements and moved to a defensive line in front of Maricourt. At 20.30 hrs, with the enemy once again moving around the Sherwood Foresters left flank, the battalion was relieved by the 18th Lancashire Fusiliers. The troops moved by parties to a position east of the Bray-Albert road.

The 26th March was a similar day for the 15th Sherwood Foresters, who this time withdrew to positions west of the River Ancre, in front of Buire. The 27th March was comparatively quiet day for the battalion and, at 16.00 hrs, they were relieved and moved to support positions in a quarry behind Buire.

The next few days were quiet for the 15th Sherwood Foresters and on 31st March the battalion was relived by Australian troops and moved to billets at La Houssoye. Since going into action on the 24th March, the 15th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters had lost 12 officers and 458 other ranks.

Private William Carswell was one of these soldiers reported missing, believed killed, during this period. His body was never identified and his name is inscribed, alongside others of the 15th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters, on the Pozieres Memorial. The Pozieres Memorial encloses the Pozieres British Cemetery and commemorates over 14000 United Kingdom and 300 South African casualties, who died on the Somme between March and August 1918, and who have no known grave.

5.

WALLACE JAMES DAVIES

Army

Rank/number:	Private	171864
Regiment:	50 th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)	
Date of Death:	4 th November 1918	Killed in Action.
Age:	21	
Cemetery Reference:	Cross Roads Cemetery, Fontaine-au-Bois, France. I. A. 22.	
Medal Entitlement:	Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Husband of Florence Mary Davies of 259 Old Road West, Gravesend. Born in Pelsall, Staffordshire. Enlisted at Dover.	



*Cross Roads cemetery, Fontaine au Bois, France.
Photograph: C.W.G.C. (Debt of Honour website)*

Wallace James Davies was born on 5th July 1897, the youngest son of Thomas and Sarah Ann Davies of Pelsall, near Walsall, Staffordshire. He was baptised on 13th August 1897, at Parish Church at Pelsall. His father was a coal miner, working at the local colliery. In 1911, Wallace James Davies was living with his parents and two siblings at Walsall Road, Great Wyrley. His father was now shown to be employed as an underground colliery deputy.

At this time, Arthur Burr was developing the Kent Coalfield, between Canterbury and Dover. In 1912 Snowdown Colliery opened for production and in the following year, in 1913, Tilmanstone Colliery also started producing coal. As a result, hundreds of miners and their families, migrated from all parts of the country to work in the Kent coal mines. One such worker was Thomas Davies and his family, who settled in Elvington, Eythorne.

In June 1918, Wallace James Davies married Florence Mary Parsons at St Peter's Church, Whitfield near Dover. Florence Mary Parsons, born in 1898 at Portsmouth, was the daughter of Daniel and Florence Parsons of "Ivanhoe", Whitfield. Her father, Daniel Parsons was a former sergeant in the Royal Garrison Artillery.

In the absence of his service record, it is not known when Wallace James Davies joined the army, nor whether he was a volunteer, or a conscript. However, at the time of his death, he was serving in the Machine Gun Corps, attached to the 50th (Northumberland Division).

On 4th August 1914, when war was declared against Germany, all infantry battalions in the British Army had a machine gun section, consisting of two Maxim guns. It was soon established that machine guns required special tactics and organisation and consequently, a specialist training school was established in France. Soon the Maxim gun was replaced by the Vickers machine-gun, which required two men to carry the equipment and two to carry the ammunition.

The two man, light Lewis machine-gun, was also extensively used by the British Army. In October 1915, an Army Order was issued, for the formation of a single Machine Gun Corps to be

attached to each Infantry Brigade. The task of re-organising the various battalions was completed, prior to the Battle of the Somme, in July 1916.

At the Battle of the Somme, the enemy used multiple machine guns, with inter-locking fields of fire, with devastating effect against the advancing British Infantry. This tactic was later copied by the British Army. In addition, the Machine Gun Corps began to fire in co-ordinated barrages, copying artillery methods in firing over the heads of their own attacking troops, to sweep the area behind the enemy trenches. This tactic was to prevent the enemy from reinforcing their front line positions. They later adopted the artillery method of the creeping barrage, to catch enemy troops moving to the rear, when their front line was under attack.

The 50th (Northumberland) Division, a Territorial Unit, began to move to France, to join the British Expeditionary Force, on 16th April 1915. By the 24th April, the Division, which including three infantry brigades, was concentrated in the Steenvoorde area. The Division was immediately moved to the front, to join the second Battle of Ypres, which had begun on the 22nd April. The battle continued until 25th May 1915 and it was here that the 50th Division had its baptism of fire.

The Battle of the Somme began on 1st July 1916 and continued, in three phases, until 18th November 1916. The 50th Division was involved in battles at Flers-Courcelette, Morval and Transloy Ridge, during this period.

In 1917, the 50th Division participated in the two Battles of the Scarpe, during the Arras offensive. Later in the year they were involved the 2nd Battle of Passchendaele, during the third Battle of Ypres.

On 1st March 1918, the 149th, 150th and 151st Brigade machine gun companies, of the 50th (Northumberland) Division, became the 50th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps. Five weeks later, on 7th April 1918, the Division was involved in heavy fighting, during the German offensive on the Lys. After the enemy attacks on the Lys had been halted, the 50th Division moved south to a quiet area. Almost as soon as they arrived on the Aisne, another German offensive drove the Allied troops to the Marne, before it was contained. By this time the 50th Division had suffered heavy casualties and a decision was made to rebuild the division. On 15th July 1918, new infantry units arrived to replace the original units, however, the 50th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps remained with the 50th Division.

During October, the Division was involved in battles against the Hindenburg Line, at St Quentin Canal, the Beaurevoir Line and at Cambrai. This was followed by the advance across Picardy, with the 50th Division being engaged in the battles at Selle and Valenciennes, as the enemy retreated. On 11th November 1918, at the time of the armistice, the 50th Division had been relieved and was resting at Soire le Chateau.

At the beginning of November 1918, the 50th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps was in the line, manning defensive positions. At night, barrages were fired at intervals, across the enemy lines. At 06.15 hrs. on 4th November, all Companies of the 50th Battalion carried out "barrage fire" during a successful attack by the 151st Brigade, against the enemy Green Line. Retaliatory enemy fire during this attack, resulted in the 50th Battalion MGC incurring twelve casualties. One of these casualties was Private Wallace James Davies.

Wallace James Davies was buried at the Cross Roads Cemetery, on the outskirts of the village of Fontaine-au-Bois, in north-east France. The cemetery was started by the 1/1st Northumbrian Field Ambulance, at the beginning of November 1918 and at the armistice contained the graves of 61 British soldiers. The cemetery was later enlarged to accommodate graves brought in from the area between the Rivers Escaut and Sambre. The cemetery now contains 750 graves, over 100 of which are unidentified.

In addition to having his name commemorated on the war memorial tablet at St Peter's Church, Whitfield, Wallace James Davies is also named on the Eythorne village war memorial.

6.

GEORGE FILES

Royal Navy

Rank/number: Able Seaman 203471
Vessel: H.M. Drifter "Frons Olivae"
Date of Death: 12th October 1915
Age: 32
Memorial Reference: Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 9.
Remarks: Son of George and Annie Elizabeth Files of 2 Myrtle Cottage, Whitfield, Dover.



*Chatham Naval Memorial
Photograph: JMS - 26/06/2010*

George Files was born in September 1884, the youngest son of George Files, an agricultural labourer and his wife Annie Elizabeth Files of Whitfield near Dover. On 6th February 1899, George Files joined the Royal Navy as a boy entrant, second class, based at the training ship, HMS St Vincent. At his medical he was found to be 5 ft 5½ ins tall and gave his occupation as that of labourer. At this time George gave his date of birth as, 8th September 1882, two years earlier than the actual date.

After nine months service, George was re-graded to Boy Entrant, Class 1. On the 8th September 1900, his "eighteenth" birthday, George signed on for twelve years service in the Royal Navy and was posted to HMS Colossus, as an Ordinary Seaman. HMS Colossus was the coastguard ship, based at Holyhead. When the ship was paid-off at Portsmouth in 1901, George returned to his home base at HMS Pembroke, the Royal Navy's shore establishment at Chatham.

On 25th June 1901, Ordinary Seaman Files was posted to HMS Albion, a pre-dreadnought battleship, the day it was commissioned into the Royal Navy. HMS Albion was built on the Thames at Leamouth, London and launched in 1898. HMS Albion was commissioned on the 25th June 1901 and shortly afterwards sailed for the China Station, where she was based until 1905. However, George Files returned to his home base, HMS Pembroke at Chatham, in August 1904.

In January 1905 George Files was posted to HMS King Alfred, an armoured cruiser. A month later, on the 5th February 1905, he was re-graded to Able Seaman. As an Able Seaman, George Files served on several Royal Navy ships, mainly battleships and cruisers; but retained HMS Pembroke at Chatham, as his home base. George served on the following ships: HMS Antrim, HMS Blenheim, HMS Sapphire, HMS Magnificent, HMS Irresistible and HMS King Edward III.

On 1st August 1911, George joined his last ship, HMS King Edward III, flagship to the Vice Admiral of the Third and Fourth Divisions of the Home Fleet. Able Seaman Files returned to HMS Pembroke in August 1912 and on 8th September, completed his twelve years service in the Royal Navy. He was immediately enrolled into the Royal Fleet Reserve and given Number B8996.



Able Seaman George Files
(From Dover Memorial Project)

As a member of the Royal Fleet Reserve, George Files would have been expected to attend HMS Pembroke, at Chatham, for annual training. On 2nd August 1914, with war imminent, all reservist were re-called to their allocated shore bases. With all warships fully manned, there was found to be a large surplus naval reservists. Some were drafted into the newly formed Royal Naval Division, to fight as infantry, others were drafted to ships and fishing vessels seconded to the Royal Navy. These vessels were known as Defensively Armed Merchant Ships.

On the 19th February Able Seaman George Files was re-called to HMS Pembroke at Chatham. After a period of training, he was posted to the *Frons Olivae*, a Yarmouth registered Drifter, on 18th May 1915. The *Frons Olivae* had been hired by the Royal Navy for use as a patrol boat. She had been fitted out with a 3 pounder gun and was manned by an Anglo-Canadian crew, operating in the Dover Straits, part of the Dover Patrol.

At the outbreak of the war, the Dover Flotilla was part of the East Coast Command, with headquarters in Harwich. However, it soon became apparent that the Dover Straits was of strategic importance to the British Expeditionary Force. In April 1915, the Dover Patrol became a separate command, performing duties in and around the Dover Straits. The aim was to secure safe passage for troops and supplies, and prevent the German shipping from accessing the English Channel. The Dover Patrol fleet included near obsolete naval vessels, paddle mine-sweepers, yachts, armed trawlers and armed drifters. Its duties included anti-submarine patrols, escorting merchant ships, hospital and troops ships, mine sweeping, laying sea mines and attacking German U boats.

On the 12th October 1915, the *Frons Olivae*, commanded by Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, was on patrol off the Kent coast at North Foreland. At 04.50 hrs, she struck a mine ¼ miles south-east of Elbow Bay. The mine had been laid by the German submarine UC5, commanded by Herbert Purtuchen. The *Frons Olivae* sank almost immediately with the loss of Lt. Rogers, the skipper and all nine crew members, including Able Seaman George Files.

The body of Able Seaman George Files was never recovered and his name is inscribed on Panel 9 of the Chatham Naval Memorial. The Memorial, which overlooks the town of Chatham, was erected after the war to the naval personnel based at Chatham, who had no known grave, the majority having been lost at sea. The memorial now contains the names of 8517 Royal Navy personnel, who died during the First World War.

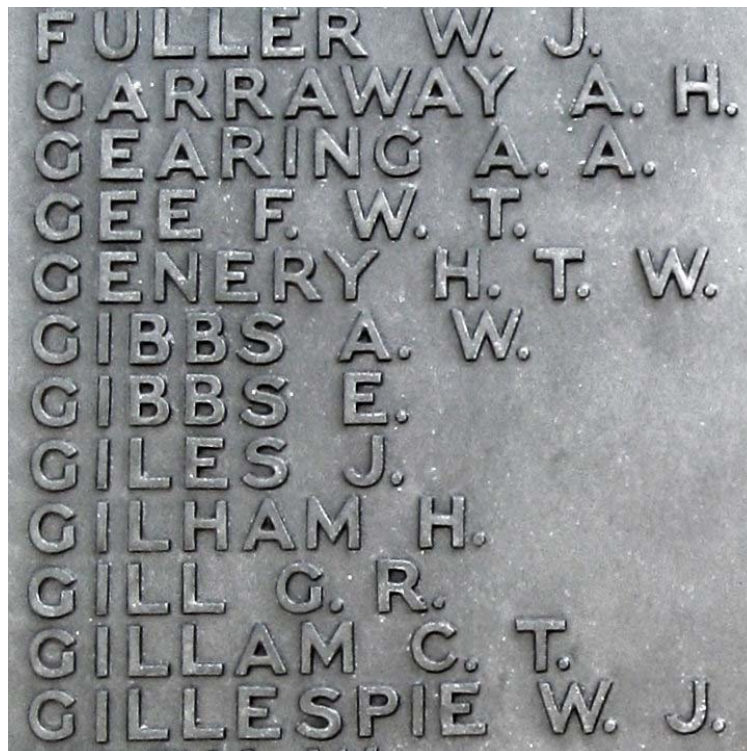
The death of George Files is also recorded in the Dover Patrol Book of Remembrance.

7.

FREDERICK WILLIAM THOMAS GEE

Royal Navy

Rank/number:	Stoker 1 st Class.	K/838
Vessel:	H.M.S. Hawke	
Date of Death:	15 th October 1914	
Age:	29	
Memorial Reference:	Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 5.	
Remarks:	Son of Charles Frederick and the late Clara Gee of Whitfield, Dover	



*Panel 5. - Chatham Naval Memorial
Photograph - JMS 26/06/2010*

The birth of Frederick William Thomas Gee was registered at Dover in the March Quarter 1885. He was the eldest son of Charles Frederick Gee and Clara Gee, formerly Youden. At this time his father was employed as a carpenter. After the birth of their third child, Charles Frederick moved his family to Thornaby, near Stockton upon Tees, Yorkshire, where he had obtained employment as a foreman joiner. Later, a fourth child was born at Newcastle and a fifth child at Chorley, in Lancashire, before the family moved back to Kent.. At the time of the 1901 census, the family was living at 5 Montrose Terrace, Buckland, Dover. Charles Frederick Gee was employed as a builder's foreman and his eldest son, Frederick, aged 16, was an apprentice builder.

In the spring of 1906, Clara Gee, wife of Charles Frederick and mother of Frederick William Thomas Gee died, aged 47 years. His father re-married at Dover, early in 1908, to Marian Alice Moore.

Shortly after his father's marriage, Frederick William Thomas Gee joined the Royal Navy. After a medical, he was passed fit to serve and, on 15th June 1908, he agreed an engagement of twelve years. He was allocated the service number K338, with HMS Pembroke at Chatham, his home base.

After almost six months service, he was posted to HMS Lord Nelson as a Stoker, Second Class. HMS Lord Nelson was the last of the pre-dreadnought battleships. She was laid down at Palmers Shipbuilding and Iron Company at Jarrow, in 1905, launched in 1906 and completed in October 1908. Frederick William Thomas Gee joined the ship on the 1st December 1908, the day it was commissioned at Chatham. She was fully commissioned on the 5th January 1909, to flagship Nore Division and in April 1909, joined the First Division, Home Fleet.

On the 15th June 1909, when serving on HMS Lord Nelson, Frederick William Thomas Gee, was regraded to Stoker First Class. After spending over two years as a crew member of HMS Lord Nelson, he was transferred to HMS Vulcan, on 19th January 1911.

HMS Vulcan was launched at Portsmouth Dockyard on 13th June 1889. Though she had been designed as a Torpedo Boat Depot Ship, she had the same protective deck armour as a cruiser. Fitted with eight 4.7 inch guns and a displacement of 6600 tons. To facilitate the deployment of small torpedo boats, HMS Vulcan was also fitted with two large cranes. With a ship's complement of 432, HMS Vulcan was also equipped with all the machinery thought necessary for repairing the smaller craft. She was in effect, a floating dockyard. Stoker F.W.T. Gee served on the ship for two years, before returning to HMS Pembroke, the shore base at Chatham.

After two weeks at HMS Pembroke, Frederick William Thomas Gee, on the 4th February 1913, was posted to HMS Hawke. HMS Hawke was an "Edgar" Class, 12-gun, twin-screw cruiser, with a top speed of 20 knots. She was laid down at Chatham in June 1889 and completed in May 1893. In 1897-98, the ship was engaged in operations in the Mediterranean, which led to the pacification of the island of Crete



HMS Hawke

Reference: battleship-cruisers.co.uk (website)

. On the 20th September 1911, whilst in the Solent, HMS Hawke was in collision with the White Star Liner, "Olympic" captained by E.J. Smith, who later was to captain the "Titanic". Both ships were damaged and subsequent repairs to HMS Hawke, led to the fitting of an ordinary straight bow.

At the beginning of the First World War, the ship was part of the 10th Cruiser Squadron, Northern Patrol. Under the command of Captain Hugh Williams, HMS Hawke was engaged in various operations against the enemy in the North Sea, being primarily used as a Depot Ship for destroyers and submarines. On the 15th October she was torpedoed by the German submarine U-9, and sank within a few minutes. The captain, 27 officers and 500 men lost their lives, there being only about 70 survivors.

The body of Stoker First Class, Frederick William Thomas Gee was never recovered and his name is inscribed on Panel 5 of the Chatham Naval Memorial. The Memorial was erected after the war to the naval personnel based at Chatham, who had no known grave, the majority having been lost at sea. The memorial now contains the names of 8517 Royal Navy personnel, who died during the First World War.

8.

HENRY WILLIAM LAWRENCE

Royal Navy

Rank/number:	Chief Gunner
Vessel:	H.M.S. Dido
Date of Death	8 th February 1917
Age:	53
Cemetery Reference:	Hasler Royal Naval Cemetery, Gosport. G. 15. 27.
Remarks:	Born 15 th January 1864, at Northbourne, Kent. Son of William and Elizabeth Lawrence, of Whitfield near Dover.



*Hasler Royal Naval Cemetery, Gosport
Photograph: C.W.G.C. (Debt of Honour website)*

Henry William Lawrence was born on the 15th January 1864, the son of William and Elizabeth Lawrence of Northbourne, Kent. His father, William Lawrence, was employed as an agricultural labourer. Later, the family moved to Buttsole, Eastry, where the children went to school. At the time of the 1881 census, the Lawrence family was living at Whitfield near Dover. However, their son Henry William Lawrence, was at this time in the Royal Navy, based at HMS St Vincent, at Portsea Island, Hampshire.

Henry William Lawrence entered the Royal Navy as a Boy Entrant 2nd Class, on 26th February 1880. After almost twelve months service at HMS St Vincent, the naval training ship, he was re-graded to Boy Entrant 1st Class and later joined HMS Hercules, the flagship of the Fleet Reserve. On 15th February 1882, his eighteenth birthday, he signed for ten years service in the Royal Navy and was rated as Ordinary Seaman.

On 1st April 1883, when serving on HMS Sapphire, the last wooden cruiser built for the Royal Navy, he was re-graded to Able Seaman. Three months later he joined HMS Duke of Wellington, the flagship of the Port Admiral at Portsmouth, where he served for three and half years. This was followed by service at both HMS Excellent, the Royal Naval Gunnery School and at HMS Vernon, home of the Royal Navy Torpedo Branch, at Portsmouth. On 11th May 1888, he was re-graded to Leading Seaman and postings to HMS President and HMS Duke of Wellington followed.

Further promotions followed, becoming Petty Officer 2nd Class when he was posted to HMS Hecla, a torpedo boat carrier and depot ship. When he left to join HMS Vulcan, having extended his service in the Royal Navy, Henry William Lawrence was acting Chief Petty Officer. HMS Vulcan was a torpedo boat depot ship, fitted out as a floating dockyard, equipped with all the facilities for maintenance and repair of these boats.

On 29th March 1894, nine months after joining HMS Vulcan, Henry William Lawrence was appointed Chief Petty Officer. It is believed, that later in 1894, he married Alice Elizabeth Bridger, at Portsea Island, Hampshire. Having previously been made Leading Torpedo Operator, on 21st March 1896, he was appointed Torpedo Instructor at HMS Vernon. In 1898, he had a short period at HMS Excellent, before returning to HMS Vernon in April 1899, where he was promoted to Acting Gunner.

Shortly afterwards, he was posted to the Royal Navy's China Station, at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. The responsibilities of the China Station included patrolling the coast of China, the west part of the Pacific Ocean and the waters around the Dutch East Indies. The station had bases at Singapore, HMS Tamar, Hongkong and Wei Hai Wei. The British naval squadron on the China Station, usually consisted of the older type light cruiser and destroyers, with shallow draft gun-boats for river patrols.

The Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1901, was fought between Chinese forces and various countries with a trade interest within China, the Eight Nation Alliance. One battle during this conflict led to the occupation of the Taku Forts, a Chinese held stronghold near Tientsin. On 31st March 1901, Gunner (T) Henry William Lawrence was part of the Royal Naval garrison at the North West Taku Fort. The Royal Naval personnel having been landed from the sloop HMS Phoenix, which was moored near the forts, on the Peiho River.

The Boxer Rebellion came to a conclusion on 18th September 1901. He remained on the China Station and on 18th April 1902, was transferred to HMS Ocean. He was with HMS Ocean when the ship was badly damaged during a typhoon and had to undergo a refit during 1903. At this time he was posted back to the United Kingdom, serving for some time on the staff at HMS Vernon, as a specialist in torpedo armament equipment operation.

On 29th August 1908, he was posted to HMS Exmouth, a battleship serving with the Atlantic Fleet. However, in November 1908, HMS Exmouth was transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet. At 05.22 hrs on 28th December 1908, there was a major earthquake in the Sicily and Calabria region of Italy. The earthquake, of 7.5 magnitude on the Richter Scale, caused extensive damage and major loss of life. Messina, on the island of Sicily, was the worst affected population centre and a number of Royal Navy vessels were deployed to offer assistance. HMS Exmouth was one of these vessels, landing men to dig for survivors and assist in the evacuation of the injured and homeless. On 20th February 1910, the Italian Royal Family announced that a commemorative medal would be produced and awarded to everyone who came to the aid of the Italian people, at the time of the earthquake. Named the Messina Earthquake Medal 1908, 598 members of the ship's company of HMS Exmouth, received the medal, one of whom was Gunner Henry William Lawrence.

Returning to home waters in 1911, he had several postings, before on 20th November 1913, he joined HMS Dido. HMS Dido was a cruiser, launched at Glasgow in 1896, which had seen service on the China Station, before becoming a Royal Navy Depot Ship. On 13th June 1914, when serving on HMS Dido, as a torpedo specialist, Henry William Lawrence was promoted to Chief Gunner (T). Throughout the First World War, HMS Dido was used as a Depot Ship for various Destroyer Flotillas, in home waters. He remained at HMS Dido until 25th January 1917, when he was posted to the battleship HMS Centurion, for sea duty. However, this posting was cancelled when he became ill.

On 6th February 1917, Henry William Lawrence was admitted to the Hasler Royal Naval Hospital, at Gosport. He died from pneumonia two days later, on 8th February, and was buried in the adjacent Hasler Royal Naval Cemetery.

HENRY WILLIAM LAWRENCE JNR**Royal Navy****LAWRENCE****Henry
William.**

Rank/number:	Ordinary Seaman	J/29598
Vessel:	H.M.S. Russell	
Date of Death:	27 th April 1916	
Age:	18.	
Memorial Reference:	Chatham Naval Memorial.	Panel 16.
Remarks:	Born 13 th April 1898, son of Alfred Edwin Frederick and Helen Lawrence, of Whitfield, Dover, Kent.	

*Panel 16. - Chatham Naval Memorial**Photograph - JMS 26/06/2010*

Henry William Lawrence was born on 13th April 1898, the son of Alfred Edwin and Helen Lawrence of Linden Cottage, Whitfield near Dover. At this time his father was employed as a bricklayers labourer, but was later employed as a gardener. On leaving school, William Henry Lawrence was employed as a jobbing gardener. However, on 24th February 1914, when nearly sixteen years of age, he joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Entrant, Class 2. Thus following in the footsteps of his uncle, also named Henry William Lawrence, who at this time was a Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy

Henry William Lawrence was initially at HMS Ganges, the Royal Navies shore establishment at Shotley, in Suffolk. At HMS Ganges the boy entrants received instruction on seamanship, signal training and wireless/ telegraphy operation. He was based at HMS Ganges on 4th August 1914, when war was declared against Germany. He was re-graded to Boy Entrant Class 1, on 16th October 1914 and two weeks later transferred to HMS Pembroke, the Royal Navy shore establishment at Chatham. On 31st December 1914, sixteen year old Henry William Lawrence joined his first ship, HMS Russell, a Duncan Class battleship, based at Sheerness.



HMS Russell

Reference: battleships-cruisers.co.uk (website)

Built by Palmer Shipbuilding and Ironworks at Jarrow, on the River Tyne. She was heavily armed, with a displacement of 14000 tons and a top speed of 19 knots. The ship was commissioned at Chatham dockyard on 19th February 1903, to join the Mediterranean Fleet. After service with the Home Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet, in 1913 she joined the 2nd Fleet, at the Nore.

When war was declared, the 6th Battle Squadron was assigned to serve in the Channel Fleet, to cover the movement of the British Expeditionary Force to France. However, HMS Russell and other ships of the same class, moved to the 3rd Battle Squadron, to cover for a shortage of cruisers, joining the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow.

On 2nd November 1914, HMS Russell and her sister ships were temporarily transferred to the Channel Fleet, due to increased German naval activity in that area. The reconstituted 6th Battle Squadron was initially based at Dover, but due to the absence of anti-submarine defences, moved to Portland on the 19th November. After bombarding the German submarine pens at Zeebrugge, on 23rd November, the squadron returned to Dover. However, during the month of December, HMS Russell moved to Sheerness, to guard against a German invasion. It was at this time that Henry William Lawrence joined the ship.

HMS Russell returned to the 3rd Battle Squadron of the Grand Fleet, in April 1915 and was based at Rosyth. On 6th November 1915, after a refit in Belfast, HMS Russell was assigned to reinforce the Dardanelles Squadron, based at Mudros. Between the 7th and 9th January 1916, the ship was involved in the evacuation of Allied troops at Cape Helles, on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

On 13th April 1916, his eighteenth birthday, Henry William Lawrence signed to serve twelve years in the Royal Navy and was rated Ordinary Seaman.

On the morning of 27th April 1916, HMS Russell was steaming off the coast of Malta, when she struck two mines laid by the German submarine U-73. Fire broke out in the after part of the ship and the order was given to abandon ship. Shortly afterwards, an explosion near the after gun turret caused the ship to list. HMS Russell sank slowly, which allowed the majority of crew members to escape, however 27 officers and 98 ratings, including Henry William Lawrence, lost their lives.

The name of Henry William Lawrence and his fellow crew members of HMS Russell, who lost their lives on 27th April 1916, are commemorated on the Royal Naval Memorial at Chatham. The memorial overlooks the town of Chatham and was erected after the First World War, to remember the naval personnel based at Chatham, who have no known grave, the majority having been lost at sea. The memorial now contains the names of 8517 Royal Navy personnel, who died during the First World War.

10.

ALBERT MARSH

Army

Rank/number:	Private	G/8168
Regiment:	"A" Coy. 8 th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)	
First Theatre of War:	France.	
Date of Entry:	1 st September 1915.	
Date of Death:	30 th September 1915. Died of Wounds.	
Age:	24	
Cemetery Reference:	Etaples Military Cemetery, France. IV. H. 8A.	
Medal Entitlement:	1915 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of the late George and Mrs Marsh of Whitfield, near Dover.	



*Etaples Military Cemetery, France.
Photograph: C.W.G.C. (Debt of Honour website)*

Albert Marsh was born in 1891, the fourth child of George and Ann Marsh of the Parish of St Andrews, Dover. His father was employed as a thatcher and hay-cutter, with the family living at Bone House, Green Lane, Buckland. Later the family moved to Pineham Cottages at Whitfield, where, on the 19th December 1907, his father George Marsh died. At the time of the 1911 census, Albert was employed as a waggoner, on William Castle's farm at Pineham.

Albert Marsh, was employed as a gardener when he enlisted in the armed services, on 27th November 1914, at the age of 23 years 11 months. Having attested at Dover into the Royal Garrison Artillery, he was posted to the Depot at Newhaven, Sussex. Having attained the rank of Gunner, on 9th June 1915, he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, based at Felixstowe. Within six weeks, he was transferred to the 8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) and joined them on 23rd July, at their camp at Blackdown near Aldershot.

The 8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) was formed at Canterbury, in September 1914, part of K3, the third batch of 100,000 volunteers called for by Lord Kitchener. The 8th Battalion, The Buffs, was attached to 72nd Brigade, 24th Division. After their initial training near Shoreham, the 8th Buffs had moved, in Division, to Aldershot for their final training. On the 19th August 1915, the 24th Division was inspected by Lord Kitchener and the following day by King George the Fifth. The same day orders were received for the division to move to France.

On 21st August, at their camp at Blackdown, the 8th Buffs were ordered to prepare for embarkation and mobilisation commenced. On 30th August, all transport, accompanied by 3 officers and 106 other ranks, left Farnborough for Southampton. The remainder of the battalion left Frimley the following evening, for Folkestone and, at 23.15 hrs, sailed for France.

At 01.30 hrs on 1st September 1915, the 8th Buffs arrived in Boulogne and, after disembarkation, proceeded by route march to a large rest camp at Ostrohave, where they were accommodated in tents.

The following day the battalion travelled by train to Montreuil, where they were joined by the battalion transport, which had arrived by rail from Le Havre. The 8th Buffs then marched on good roads, in heavy rain, to billets at Maningham. By the 4th September, the assembly of the 24th Division was complete and concentrated in the Etaples - St Pol area of France.

The next three weeks was occupied in forming the troops into functional units, with parades, route marches, weekly divisional exercises and practice attacks. On the 9th September, the 8th Buffs were involved in digging two special trenches to allow experiments with gas. In addition, the battalion constructed a musketry range, so that practice firing could be undertaken at Maningham.

On the evening of 21st September, the 24th Division began their advance towards the battle-front, they were to be in reserve for the British Army assault at Loos. There followed a series of night-time forced marches, the 8th Buffs, leaving their camp at Maningham and arriving at Bethune, early on the 25th September.

The infantry assault at the Battle of Loos commenced at 06.30 hrs, on 25th September 1915, having been preceded by a gas attack. By noon the town of Loos had been captured, the 7th Division was on the outskirts of Hulloch and the 9th Division approaching the Hohenzollern Redoubt. However, General French was slow in releasing the 21st and 24th Divisions from their reserve position and it was not until the afternoon, that these divisions started to move forward.

During the evening of 25th September, the 8th Buffs moved forward, approaching the firing line via Vermelles, to attack the village of Vendin-Le-Vieil. At 00.30 hrs, the battalion came under heavy fire from the German artillery, using shrapnel shells and orders were given to withdraw. The 8th Buffs spent the rest of the very cold night, in the trenches.

At 10.30 hrs on Sunday 26th September, prior to the battalions renewed attack, the enemy commenced a heavy bombardment on the trenches. At 11.00 hrs, the attack commenced across open country, the objective being a German position about a mile away. The 8th Buffs adopted Artillery formation on leaving the trenches, but long distance rifle fire caused them to extend their lines almost immediately. The advance was carried forward rapidly and by 11.30 am, the leading lines of the Buffs were within 25 yards of the German barbed wire, but no gaps could be found in the wire. With heavy machine gun fire being encountered on both the flanks, at 11.55 hrs, the 8th Buffs were ordered to withdraw. During the withdrawal the enemy's fire, especially on the battalions left flank, became heavier and considerable losses occurred.

On being relieved, the 8th Buffs rested in a field near Sailly-La-Bourse until 19.00 hrs, on the 27th September, when they marched back to Noeux-Les-Mines, south of Bethune. The 8th Buffs spent the 28th September in bivouacs, before travelling by train to Molingham. At noon on the 29th September, the 8th Buffs were known to have incurred 554 casualties, of which 24 were officers.

Private Albert Marsh received a serious gun shot wound to the abdomen during the attack at Loos. He was recovered from the field and passed down the casualty evacuation chain to the base hospital at Etaples, a coastal town 27 km. south of Boulogne. At 02.40 hrs, on the 30th September 1915, Private Albert Marsh died from his wounds at the No.6 Red Cross Hospital at Etaples. He is buried at the Etaples Military Cemetery, which now contains 10771 burials from the First World War, 35 of whom are unidentified.

His older brother, Private Charles Marsh of the 8th Battalion, The Buffs, also died from wounds received at the Battle of Loos.

11.

CHARLES MARSH

Army

Rank/number:	Private	G/5206
Regiment:	8 th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)	
First Theatre of War:	France.	
Date of Entry:	31 st August 1915.	
Date of Death:	28 th September 1915. Died of Wounds.	
Age:	27	
Cemetery Reference:	Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, France. I. C. 29.	
Medal Entitlement:	1915 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of the late George and Mrs. Marsh of Whitfield, near Dover.	



*Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, France.
Photograph: C.W.G.C. (Debt of Honour website)*

Charles Marsh was born in 1888, the third child of George and Ann Marsh of Pineham, Whitfield. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Green Lane, Buckland, but later returned to Pineham to live at Pineham Cottages. George Marsh, his father, was employed as a thatcher and hay cutter. At the time of the 1911 census, Charles was employed as a hay trusser and was living with his widowed mother at No.2 Pineham Cottages. His father had died on the 19th December 1907.

Shortly after war against Germany was declared on 4th August 1914, Lord Kitchener called for 100,000 volunteers to form a new army. The response was overwhelming and enough volunteers enlisted to form three new armies. These new battalions, attached to established Regiments, became known as "Service Battalions". The 8th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) was formed at Canterbury, in September 1914, part of K3, the third batch of 100,000 volunteers, which included Charles Marsh. The 8th Battalion, The Buffs, was attached to 72nd Brigade, 24th Division.

During the month of September, all the units of the 24th Division began to assemble in the Shoreham area of Sussex. The early days were chaotic as there were insufficient Officers and trained NCO's. In addition, there were no organised billets, no issue of uniforms or any other equipment. It was not until March 1915, that the men received their uniforms and a further four months before rifles were issued. Shortly after which the 8th Buffs moved, in Division, to Aldershot for final training. On the 19th August 1915, the 24th Division was inspected by Lord Kitchener and the following day by King George the Fifth. The same day orders were received for the division to move to France.

On 21st August, at their camp at Blackdown, the 8th Buffs were ordered to prepare for embarkation and mobilisation commenced. On 30th August, all transport, accompanied by 3 officers and 106 other ranks, left Farnborough for Southampton. The remainder of the battalion left Frimley the following evening, for Folkestone and, at 23.15 hrs, sailed for France.

At 01.30 hrs on 1st September 1915, the 8th Buffs arrived in Boulogne and, after disembarkation,

proceeded by route march to a large rest camp at Ostrohove, where they were accommodated in tents. The following day the battalion travelled by train to Montreuil, where they were joined by the battalion transport, which had arrived by rail from Le Havre. The 8th Buffs then marched on good roads, in heavy rain, to billets at Maningham. By the 4th September, the assembly of the 24th Division was complete and concentrated in the Etaples - St Pol area of France.

The next three weeks was occupied in forming the troops into functional units, with parades, route marches, weekly divisional exercises and practice attacks. On the 9th September, the 8th Buffs were involved in digging two special trenches to allow experiments with gas. In addition, the battalion constructed a musketry range, so that practice firing could be undertaken at Maningham.

On the evening of 21st September, the 24th Division began their advance towards the battle-front, they were to be in reserve for the British Army assault at Loos. There followed a series of night-time forced marches, the 8th Buffs, leaving their camp at Maningham and arriving at Bethune, early on the 25th September.

The infantry assault at the Battle of Loos commenced at 06.30 hrs, on 25th September 1915, having been preceded by a gas attack. By noon the town of Loos had been captured, the 7th Division was on the outskirts of Hulloch and the 9th Division approaching the Hohenzollern Redoubt. However, General French was slow in releasing the 21st and 24th Divisions from their reserve position and it was not until the afternoon, that these divisions started to move forward.

During the evening of 25th September, the 8th Buffs moved forward, approaching the firing line via Vermelles, to attack the village of Vendin-Le-Vieil. At 00.30 hrs, the battalion came under heavy fire from the German artillery using shrapnel shells and orders were given to withdraw. The 8th Buffs spent the rest of the very cold night, in the trenches.

At 10.30 hrs on Sunday 26th September, prior to the battalions renewed attack, the enemy commenced a heavy bombardment on the trenches. At 11.00 hrs, the attack commenced across open country, the objective being a German position about a mile away. The 8th Buffs adopted Artillery formation on leaving the trenches, but long distance rifle fire caused them to extend their lines almost immediately. The advance was carried forward rapidly and by 11.30 am, the leading lines of the Buffs were within 25 yards of the German barbed wire, but no gaps could be found in the wire. With heavy machine gun fire being encountered on both the flanks, at 11.55 hrs, the 8th Buffs were ordered to withdraw. During the withdrawal the enemy's fire, especially on the battalions left flank, became heavier and considerable losses occurred.

On being relieved, the 8th Buffs rested in a field near Saily-La-Bourse until 19.00 hrs, on the 27th September, when they marched back to Noeux-Les-Mines, south of Bethune. The 8th Buffs spent the 28th September in bivouacs, before travelling by train to Molinghem. At noon on the 29th September, the 8th Buffs were known to have incurred 554 casualties, of which 24 were officers.

Private Charles Marsh was one of those casualties. Having being wounded in the attack, he was evacuated to either, the 18th Casualty Clearing Station at Lapugnoy or, the 23rd Casualty Clearing Station at Lozinghem. However, on the 28th September 1915, he died from his wounds and was buried at the Military Cemetery at Lapugnoy. This cemetery was used by both the 18th and 23rd Casualty Clearing Stations and contains 1324 burials from the First World War.

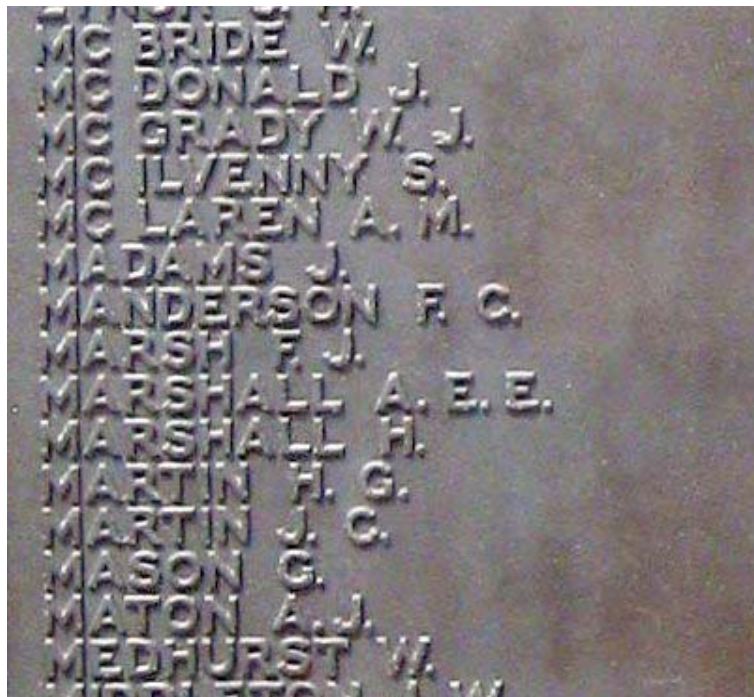
His younger brother Private Albert Marsh, of the 8th Battalion, The Buffs, also died from wounds received at the Battle of Loos.

12.

FREDERICK JAMES MARSH

Royal Navy

Rank/number:	Stoker	K25507
Vessel:	H.M.S. Torrent	
Date of Death:	23 rd December 1917.	
Age:	23	
Memorial Reference:	Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 24.	
Remarks:	Son of Selina Jane Marsh of Swing Gate Cottages, Dover and the late Alfred Marsh.	



*Panel 24. - Chatham Naval Memorial
Photograph - JMS 26/06/2010.*

Frederick James Marsh was born on the 21st July 1894, the third son of Alfred and Selina Jane Marsh, of West Cliffe Cottages, Dover. His parents, Alfred and Selina Jane had married in 1890, when Alfred was a farm labourer. In 1911, his father Alfred Marsh, died aged 43 years, leaving his widow to support the very large family. The ages of their twelve children, ranging from 19 years to one year old.

When war against Germany was declared on 4th August 1914, Frederick James Marsh was working as a farm labourer. However, on 19th April 1915, he joined the Royal Navy, signing for a twelve year period of engagement. He was allocated the service number of K25507, with Chatham as his home base. That same day he reported to HMS Pembroke, at Chatham, where he was rated as Stoker II Class.

HMS Pembroke was the Royal Naval shore establishment at Chatham. Here accommodation and training facilities were provided for men of the fleet reserve and men who were awaiting deployment to ships of the fleet. Stoker II Class Frederick James Marsh was based here for five months, at the start of his career in the Royal Navy. On 27th September 1915, he was appointed to HMS Myngs, at the Royal Navy Depot Ship, HMS Dido, based at Harwich. As small ships did not carry paymasters, their crews were carried on the books of the depot ship, a system known as a "pier head jump".

HMS Dido was an Eclipse Class Protected Cruiser, laid down in 1894 and completed in May 1898. HMS Dido served on the China Station, but was later converted to a Depot Ship. Original Depot Ship for the 3rd Submarine Flotilla, when war was declared in August 1914, she became Depot Ship for the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, based at Harwich. In 1915, HMS Dido became Depot Ship for the 9th Destroyer Flotilla.

Stoker II Class Frederick James Marsh joined HMS Myngs, at Harwich, on 28th September

1915. HMS Myngs was an M-Class destroyer, built by Palmers Shipbuilding & Iron Company at Hebburn on Tyne. The ship was one of six, built as part of a pre-war shipbuilding programme, she was launched in September 1914 and completed in February 1915. With a ships complement of 80 and a maximum speed of 34.5 knots, HMS Myngs was engaged on patrol work in the North Sea.

On 12th February 1916, when serving on HMS Myngs, Frederick James Marsh was promoted to Stoker 1st Class. On 31st May/1st June 1916, ships of the 9th Destroyer Flotilla took part in the Battle of Jutland, but HMS Myngs was not involved.

A year after his promotion, on 17th February 1917, Frederick James Marsh was transferred to HMS Torrent, within the 9th Destroyer Flotilla. HMS Torrent was a "R" Class Destroyer, launched on 26th November 1916 at the Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Limited yard, at Newcastle on Tyne. With a complement of 82 men, she had a displacement of 975 Tons and a top speed of 36 knots.



*HMS Skate a "R" Class Destroyer of the Royal Navy
Reference: battleships-cruisers.co.uk (website)*

On the night of 22nd-23rd December 1917, HMS Torrent was sailing to meet a convey, in the North Sea, along with three other "R" Class destroyers of the Royal Navy. When off the Dutch coast, near to the Maas light buoy, they ran into a recently laid minefield. HMS Torrent was first to be hit, HMS Surprise, which went to assist her, was also mined. HMS Tornado tried to get clear, but detonated two mines and sank with only one survivor. Only HMS Radiant managed to return home. The total loss of life in this incident was 252 men, one of whom was Frederick James Marsh.

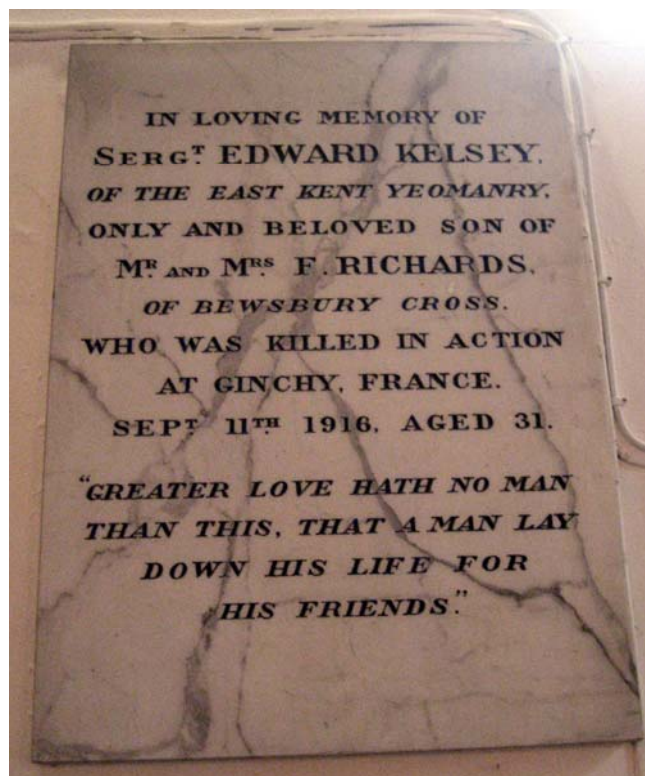
Stoker 1st Class, Frederick James Marsh was lost at sea and his name is inscribed on Panel 24, of the Chatham Naval Memorial. The Memorial, which overlooks the town of Chatham, was erected after the war to the naval personnel based at Chatham, who had no known grave, the majority having been lost at sea. The memorial now contains the names of 8517 Royal Navy personnel, who died during the First World War.

13.

EDWARD KELSEY RICHARDS

Army

Rank/number:	Lance Sergeant	G/17552
Regiment:	2 nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.	
Other Rank/number:	Private	750
Regiment;	Royal East Kent Yeomanry.	
Date of Death:	11 th September 1916. Died of Wounds.	
Age:	31	
Cemetery Reference:	Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt - L'Abbe, France. IV. C. 26.	
Medal Entitlement:	Victory Medal and British War Medal.	
Remarks:	Son of Frederick and Jane Richards of Whitfield.	



*Memorial Plaque at St Peter's Church, Whitfield
Photograph - JMS 15/10/2010*

Edward Kelsey Richards was born during the summer of 1885, the son of Frederick and Jane Richards of Coldred. His father was a farmer, living at Newsole Farm, which had previously being farmed by his grandfather, Kelsey Richards. At the time of the 1901 census, the family had moved to Bewsbury Cross, at Whitfield and Edward Kelsey Richards was attending Sandwich School, as a student boarder. On completing his education, Edward Kelsey assisted his father at Bewsbury Cross Farm, Whitfield.

During the First World War, Edward Kelsey Richards was initially in the Royal East Kent Yeomanry. The Yeomanry was formed for local defence and its members were not obliged to serve overseas, although they had the individual right to do so, if they wished. During the First World War, there were three East Kent Yeomanry units formed. In August 1914, the 1/1st Royal East Kent Yeomanry was mobilised and in 1915 was posted to the Gallipoli Peninsular. In 1917, the 1/1st unit amalgamated with the West Kent Yeomanry to form the 10th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). The 2/1st unit, also formed in 1914, remained in England until 1918, when the unit moved to Ireland. The third unit, the 3/1st East Kent Yeomanry, was formed in 1915 and disbanded in 1917.

In the absence of official records, it is not known when Edward Kelsey Richards enlisted in the

Royal East Kent Yeomanry, or when he was posted to the British Expeditionary Force, in France. However, at the time of his death, in September 1916, he was serving in the 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, with the rank of Lance Sergeant.

The 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment was a regular army battalion, attached to 2nd Brigade, 1st Division. The battalion joined the British Expeditionary Force in August 1914 and after the Battle of Mons, was engaged in the rearguard action at Etreaux. The 2nd Sussex, along with the rest of the British Expeditionary Force, was forced to withdraw to beyond the River Marne, before being able to re-group and re-organise. On the 6th September, the British Expeditionary Force re-crossed the Marne and attacked the enemy on the River Aisne. The 2nd Sussex was deployed against the enemy at Priez and again at Troyons, where, on the 14th September, they lost 264 men during the morning attack. During the next few weeks the position on the Aisne stagnated and the British Army was withdrawn and transferred to Flanders, a more appropriate area to defend the channel ports.

On 21st October 1914, the 1st Division was east of the town of Ypres, with the 2nd Sussex, in Brigade, on the line of the Zonnebeke-Langemarck road. There followed a series of German attacks, both north and south of the town, which lasted until 22nd November. These attacks, during what was the 1st Battle of Ypres, led to the formation of the Ypres Salient.

On 9th May 1915, the 2nd Sussex led the attack against the enemy on Aubers Ridge, in the Artois region of France. The battle was a disaster for the British Army, with no ground or tactical advantage gained. The 2nd Royal Sussex Regiment lost 551 men during the attack, many cut down by the crossfire from the German machine guns..

On 25th September 1915, the 2nd Sussex was in the forefront of the 1st Division attack near Hulloch, during the battle of Loos. The initial advance was preceded by a gas attack, the first such attack by the British Army. Unfortunately there was insufficient wind for the gas to be very effective. Consequently the forward formations were attacking the enemy, through their own gas. With heavy enemy shelling and the forward troops unable to see in their gas protectors, they were forced to return to their own lines. The 2nd Sussex lost 481 men during the Battle of Loos.

On 23rd July 1916, the 2nd Sussex, were deployed at the Battle of the Somme, being involved in an attack against the enemy at Munster Alley, where 116 casualties were incurred. Between the 14th and 21st August, the battalion was involved in attacks near High Wood, resulting in a further 480 casualties.

When relieved the battalion withdrew to Albert, where, on 23rd August, a draft of 128 men joined the 2nd Sussex. This draft included 97 men from the Royal East Kent Reserve Yeomanry, one of whom may have been L/Sgt. Edward Kelsey Richards. After a period of training and drill, the battalion went into the front line, to the right of High Wood. For two days they were under constant enemy shelling, sustaining 68 casualties, before being relieved.

On 7th September, the 2nd Sussex again moved into the trenches to the right of High Wood. The following day the battalion suffered a further 20 casualties from enemy shellfire. However, carrying parties remained active, taking ammunition to the front line, in preparation for the forthcoming attack. At 4.45 pm, on 9th September, the 2nd Sussex, in the centre of the Brigade attack, advanced towards their objective, a portion of the trench Wood Lane. "C" and "D" Company's led the attack, made under heavy artillery and machine gun fire. "C" Company suffered heavily from the machine-gun fire from High Wood. Nevertheless the objective was achieved, allowing "A" Company to push on beyond the captured line. However, the battalion on the left of the attack was driven back by the intense fire, thus the 2nd Sussex left flank was exposed. A defensive flank was dug, connecting the captured line with the original front line and, as darkness fell, consolidation was well under way. The 2nd Sussex defended their new position until relieved on the night of 10th September, having incurred 262 casualties.

One of these casualties was Lance Sergeant Edward Kelsey Richards. On being wounded, L/Sgt Richards was transferred from the front line to a Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly, 12 km south-west of Albert, near the village of Mericourt l'Abbe. However, on 11th September 1916, L/Sgt Edward Kelsey Richards died from his wounds. He was buried at the Heilly Station Cemetery, which now contains 2890 Commonwealth burials, or commemorations, from the First World War..

After the war, the parents of Edward Kelsey Richards had a memorial plaque placed in St Peters Church at Whitfield, in memory of their son.

14.

REGINALD SHEPHERD/SHEPPARD

There are some Shepherd/Sheppard families and service personnel, resident in the Dover area at the time of the 1911 census. However I have been unable to identify, with any certainty, the casualty named as Reginald Shepherd/Sheppard on the Whitfield war memorials. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission list fourteen casualties with that name, who died during the First World War. However, injured or sick servicemen, who died after being discharged, are not shown as war casualties by the Commission.

The following list is a list of casualties, compiled from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, with some further details from "Soldiers Who died in the Great War". All these casualties served in the Army, but none appear to have a connection to the Whitfield, or Dover areas.

Name: Reginald Shepherd
 Rank/Number: Private 12820
 Regiment: 14th Bn. Hampshire Regiment.
 Date of Death: 03/09/1916 Killed in Action.
 Remarks: Born Landport and Resident of Buckland, Portsmouth.

Name: Reginald Stanley Shepherd (21)
 Rank/Number: Gunner. 87681
 Regiment: 56th Battery, 34th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery.
 Date of Death: 15/08/1917 Died of Wounds.
 Remarks: Son of Samuel John and Sophia Shepherd of 24 Wells Road, Bath.

Name: Reginald Walter Shepherd (26)
 Rank/Number: Sergeant 16208
 Regiment: 7th Bn. Bedfordshire Regiment
 Date of Death: 28/09/1916. Killed in Action.
 Remarks: Son of Robert and Blanche Shepherd of 12 Fredericks Road, Beccles, Suffolk.

Name: Reginald A. William Shepherd
 Rank/Number: Private 40904
 Regiment: 14th Bn. Worcestershire Regiment.
 Date of Death: 12/08/1917 Killed in Action.
 Remarks: Born and Resident of Rockland, Norfolk.

Name: Reginald Sheppard
 Rank/Number: Private 6124
 Regiment: 3rd Bn. Coldstream Guards.
 Date of Death: 20/11/1914 Killed in Action.
 Remarks: Son of Thomas and Martha Sheppard of Salisbury, Wiltshire.

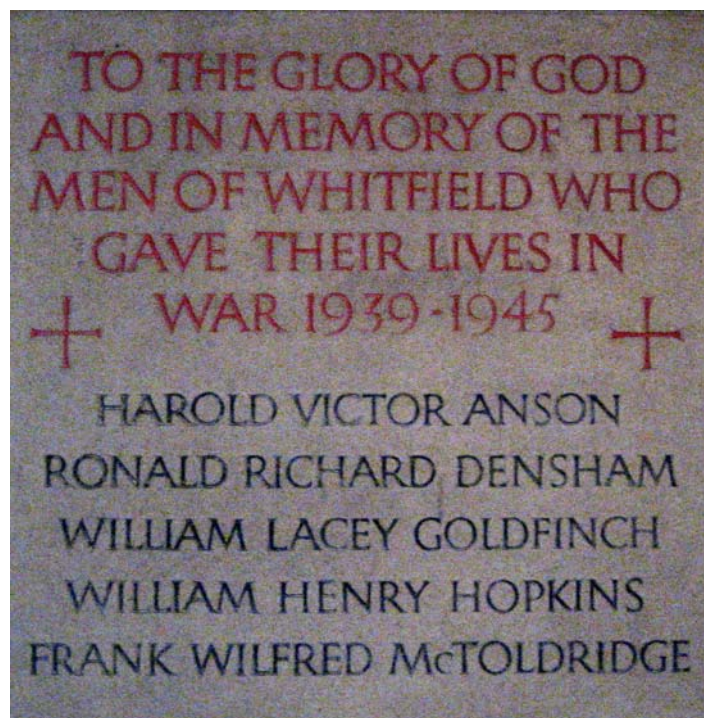
Name: Reginald Sheppard
 Rank/Number: Private 26281
 Regiment: 17th Bn. Welsh Regiment.
 Date of Death: 12/06/1916 Died of Wounds.
 Remarks: Son of Thomas and L. Sheppard of 36 Bridgend Road, Llanharan, Glamorgan.

Name: Reginald Bracy G. Sheppard (30)
 Rank/Number: Corporal 44501
 Regiment: 78th Field Company, Royal Engineers.
 Date of Death: 20/09/1918 Killed in Action.
 Remarks: Son of Thomas W. and Jane Elizabeth Sheppard of Belvedere Cottage, College Town, Camberley. Husband of Avis May Sheppard of Beira Villa, Blackwater, Camberley.

Name:	Reginald Edward Sheppard (25)
Rank/Number:	Private 235687
Regiment:	1/4 th Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers.
Date of Death:	14/02/1918 Died of Wounds.
Remarks:	Son of Samuel Sheppard of 1 Springfield Buildings, Chippenham.
Name:	Reginald Henry Sheppard (23)
Rank/Number:	Private 33882
Regiment:	10 th Bn. The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.
Date of Death:	13/04/1917 Died.
Remarks:	Son of Frank and Emily Sheppard of 80 Barrow Road, Barton Hill, Bristol.
Name:	Reginald Herbert Percy Sheppard.
Rank/Number:	L/Corporal 8678
Regiment:	1 st Bn. Wiltshire Regiment.
Date of Death:	14/07/1917 Killed in Action.
Remarks:	Born Aldbourne, Wiltshire and Resident of Reading.
Name:	Reginald James Sheppard
Rank/Number:	L/Corporal 24574
Regiment:	10 th Bn. Essex Regiment.
Date of Death;	20/07/1916 Killed in Action.
Remarks:	Born and Resident of Woodford Green, Essex.
Name:	Reginald Joseph Sheppard (27)
Rank/Number:	L/Corporal 15116
Regiment:	2 nd Bn. Royal Irish Regiment.
Date of Death:	21/03/1918 Killed in Action.
Remarks:	Son of Enoch and Emma Jane Sheppard of Manor Road, Mere, Wiltshire
Name:	Reginald Oscar Sheppard (30)
Rank/Number:	Private 33195
Regiment:	10 th Bn. Yorkshire Regiment.
Date of Death:	04/10/1917 Killed in Action.
Remarks:	Son of John Thomas Sheppard of High Street, Kelvedon, Essex.
Name:	Reginald Thomas Sheppard (22)
Rank/Number:	2 nd Lieutenant.
Regiment:	13 th Bn. London Regiment.
Date of Death:	13/05/1917 Killed in Action.
Remarks:	Husband of Ruby May Sheppard of 59 Winsham Grove, West Side, Clapham Common, London.

The only serviceman found with a Dover connection is Reginald Charles Shepherd, born at Dover on 6th October 1892. He was the son of Philip Shepherd, a Sergeant Major in the Army Service Corps based at Archcliffe, Dover. On his eighteenth birthday he enlisted in the Royal Navy, for a period of twelve years. At the start of the war he was serving on HMS Blake, the Depot ship for the 11th Destroyer Flotilla of the Grand Fleet. He later served on the cruiser, HMS Highflyer, on convey patrols in the North Atlantic. In March 1918, he was posted to HMS Defiance, the naval torpedo and mining school at Devonport. This was his last posting, as he was awarded the Silver War Badge and invalided out of the Royal Navy, on 9th April 1919. It is believed he died at Plymouth in 1927, aged 36 years and is therefore unlikely to be the person named on the Whitfield War Memorials.

WHITFIELD ST PETER'S CHURCH – SECOND WORLD WAR MEMORIAL



*Memorial Plaque - World War Two
Photograph - JMS 15/10/2010*

Named casualties of the Second World War

Harold Victor Anson	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
Ronald Richard Densham	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
William Lacey Goldfinch	Royal Artillery
William Henry Hopkins	Trinity House Service
Frank Wilfred McToldridge	Royal Corps of Signals

15.

HAROLD VICTOR ANSON

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Rank/number:	Sergeant	1257553
Service:	51 st Squadron	R.A.F.V.R.
Date of Death:	3 rd August 1942	
Age:	34	
Memorial Reference:	Runnymede Memorial, England.	Panel 77
Remarks:	Son of Howard and Helen Anson. Husband of Esther Anson of Whitfield, Kent	



Runnymede Memorial, England
(*Photograph - JMS 16/11/2008*)

Harold Victor Anson was born in 1908, the second son of Howard Anson and his wife Nellie, formerly Beddow, of Walsall. His father, Howard Anson worked in the local leather industry, making collars for horses. At the time of the 1911 census, the family was living at 77 West Bromwich Street, Walsall. During the spring of 1934, Harold Victor Anson married Esther Brookes in the borough of Lewisham, London. At the time of her husband's death in 1942, Esther Anson was living at Whitfield near Dover.

During the Second World War, Harold Victor Anson was a sergeant in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was posted to 51 Squadron, which had been re-formed in 1937, from B Flight of 58 Squadron. The squadron, part of No.4 Group, Bomber Command, was equipped with the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bomber.

The Armstrong Whitley bomber, first entered service in 1937 and along with the Hampden and Wellington bomber, bore the brunt of the early fighting, being used as a night bomber. Whitley aircraft were used on long range bombing raids, such as on the Skoda factory in Czechoslovakia and for maritime reconnaissance. However, the Whitley was retired from front line bombing duties in 1942, but continued to operate as a troop and freight transport aircraft.

In the early years of the war, 51 Squadron was used on leaflet raids over enemy held territory. However, on the night of 25th/26th August 1940 Whitley's Mk.V's of 51 and 78 Squadrons took part in the first bomber raid on Berlin. In February 1942 the squadron was used to carry British paratroops on their first raid on occupied France.

Leaving RAF Thruxton during the evening of 27th February, the Whitley's of 51 Squadron carried troops of "C" Company, 2nd Parachute Regiment. With clear skies and a full moon, and despite heavy anti-aircraft fire on reaching the French coast, 51 Squadron delivered the troops to the designated drop zone. Their target was the German Freya Early Warning Radar Station at Bruenval, which proved to be a very successful raid.

Between May and October 1942 the squadron was loaned to Coastal Command and was based at RAF Chivenor, near Barnstaple in Devon, a former civil airfield. At this time, the range of the Whitworth Whitley was increased to 2300 miles, by installing fuel tanks in the bomb-bay and fuselage. In addition, the installation of air to surface radar, gave the aircraft the capability to operate long range maritime reconnaissance patrols.

On 3rd August 1942, the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bomber No.Z9119, of 51Squadron, Coastal Command, left RAF Chivenor on a routine maritime reconnaissance patrol. During the flight the aircraft was attacked by a German Arado 196, over the Bay of Biscay. The Arado 196 was a land based maritime reconnaissance aircraft with a maximum speed of 190 mph and range of 670 miles. The Whitley bomber No.Z9119, was hit by the enemy machine guns and came down in the sea. Sergeant Harold Victor Anson was one of the six man crew of this aircraft, whose bodies were never found and therefore have no known grave.

Consequently their names are inscribed on the Royal Air Force Memorial, overlooking the River Thames at Runnymede, near Windsor. This memorial commemorates 20337 Royal Air Force airmen from Great Britain, the Commonwealth and occupied European countries, who were lost in the Second World War and have no known grave.

RONALD RICHARD DENSHAM**Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**

Rank/number:	Flight Lieutenant (Pilot) 121088
Service:	29 Squadron R.A.F.V.R.
Date of Death:	7 th June 1944
Age:	25
Cemetery Reference:	Bayeux War Cemetery, France. XXVI. B. 15. (Joint Grave)
Remarks:	Son of William Richard and Edith Maria Densham. Husband of Beatrice Elizabeth Densham of Whitfield, Kent.



(Photograph - C.W.G.C. Debt of Honour)

Ronald Richard Densham was born in 1918, the fourth child of William Richard Densham and his wife Edith Maria, formerly Ellicot. His parents came to Kent shortly after their marriage at South Molton, Devon, in 1909. His father was a farmer, who in 1911 occupied Studdale Farm, at Studdale near Dover. The births of all four of their children, Phyllis Mary, Cyril W., Mildred E. and Ronald Richard were registered at Eastry. On 9th August 1940, Ronald Richard Densham became engaged to Beatrice Elizabeth Carter of Townwall Street, Dover and they were married early in 1941. His wife Beatrice later went to live at "Three Gables" Archers Court, Whitfield.

During the Second World War, Ronald Richard Densham was a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was given the service number 904423 and soon appointed to the rank of Flight Sergeant. On 28th April 1942, he was commissioned to the General Duties Branch, on qualifying as a pilot and given the service number 121088. At this time he joined 29 Squadron, which was based at RAF West Malling, near Maidstone. Six months later, on 28th October 1942, he was promoted to Flying Officer.

29 Squadron was formed at Gosport in 1915 and served on the western front, during the First World War. On returning to the United Kingdom in 1919, the squadron was disbanded, but in 1923, reformed at Duxford.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1939, the squadron was equipped with Blenheims, which were used as day fighters, engaged on shipping patrols and convoy protection. In June 1940, 29 Squadron became involved in night fighting. Between November 1940 and February 1941, the squadron was re-equipped with the Beaufighter and engaged in air defence, in addition to being involved in the early trials of airborne radar. In April 1941 the squadron moved to the Royal Air Force base at West Malling, near Maidstone, where they remained until February 1945. The satellite bases of RAF Bradwell Bay and RAF Ford, were also used by the squadron's aircraft.

On 4th January 1943, when on routine patrol from West Malling, Ronald Richard Densham and his radio officer, Henry William Ellis, encountered a Dornier 217, about 25 miles north-east of Foreness. They gave chase for fifteen minutes on a general N.E. course, before getting the enemy in their gun-sights. The enemy plane was given a two second burst with all guns at about 150 yards range, from dead astern and cannon was seen to strike the port nacelle and fuselage. The enemy aircraft caught fire, but contact was lost in the cloud layer. By this time the Beaufighter was close to the enemy coast and was recalled, landing at Bradwell Bay, the Squadron satellite base.

In May 1943, 29 Squadron was equipped with the Mosquito aircraft. The Mosquito, which was mainly constructed from laminated plywood, was original conceived as a two-seater unarmed fast bomber. Having first entered service in January 1942, the Mosquito was adapted for many roles during the war, including pathfinder, photo and aerial reconnaissance and tactical strikes, in support of ground troops.

At 18.35 hrs on 12th February 1944, Flying Officers Densham and Ellis took off from the squadron's satellite base at Ford, in their Mosquito Mk.VIII. They were flying a routine patrol over the channel when, a few miles north of Dieppe, they encountered a German ME. 410 at 16000 ft. At a range of about 4000 feet, they were given permission to open fire and saw their second burst strike the enemy aircraft, which went down and exploded at sea level. After completing their patrol they landed at RAF Tangmere at 21.52 hrs.

On the 28th April 1944, Ronald Richard Densham was promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant, but remained with 29 Squadron. At this time, planning for the Normandy invasion was at an advanced stage. Fighter Command had reverted back to its pre-war title of Air Defence of Great Britain (ADGB) and home defence elements had been allocated tasks within Operation Overlord. . Part of ADGB was No.11 Group, based at West Malling, in Kent and consisting of Nos. 96, 29 and 409 Squadrons. These squadrons were equipped with the Mosquito Mk.XIII.

Missions flown by the ADGB on 6th June 1944 included attacks on enemy airfields, gun positions, searchlight sites, bridges and any train or convoy encountered. Aircraft of the ADGB flew on 912 sorties between 21.00 hrs on 5th June and sunrise on 7th June, with 8 aircraft being lost during this three day period.

One of these aircraft was the Mosquito NF Mk.XII, Number HK-413, flown by Ft/Lt R.R. Densham and F/O Ellis. Their aircraft failed to return after flying a defensive patrol over Normandy on D-Day. It was later reported that they were involved in a dog-fight, when their plane caught fire and came to ground on a farmer's field in La Bigne, near Caen. The farmer was said to have buried the aircraft and the two bodies, to hide them from the Germans.

The bodies of Ft/Lt Ronald Richard Densham and F/O Henry William Ellis, DFM were later recovered and buried side by side, in Bayeux War Cemetery. The cemetery was established after the war, when burials were brought in from the surrounding district and nearby hospitals. There are now 4144 Commonwealth burials, of which 338 are unidentified. There are also 500 burials of other nationalities in the cemetery, the majority of which are German.

The name of Ronald Richard Densham is also remembered on the memorial plaque at the Church of St Peter and Paul, at Sutton-by-Dover.

17.

WILLIAM LACEY GOLDFINCH

Army

Rank/number:	Sergeant	954859
Regiment:	76 th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.	
Date of Death:	26 th July 1944	
Age:	26	
Cemetery Reference:	La Delivrande War Cemetery, Douvres, France. IV. E. 7.	
Remarks:	Son of William Lacey Goldfinch and Ellen Charlotte Goldfinch of Whitfield. Husband of Gladys Eileen Goldfinch of Dover.	



(Photograph - C.W.G.C. Debt of Honour)

William Lacey Goldfinch was born in 1918, the son of William Lacey Goldfinch and his wife Ellen Charlotte, formerly Wright. His father, William Lacey Goldfinch senior, was a butcher, with premises at 32/33 Tower Hamlets Street, Dover. He had taken over these premises when his father, Walter Pascall Goldfinch, had retired and moved to Shepherdswell. Members of the Goldfinch family also had butchers shops in Townwall Street and Buckland Avenue, Dover.

William Lacey junior was the only son of William Lacey and Ellen Charlotte Goldfinch, who also had two daughters, Phyllis and Ruby. Between the years 1929 and 1933, William Lacey Goldfinch was a pupil at Dover Grammar School. On leaving school and working for his father, he met Gladys Eileen Hartley of Longfield Road, Dover. On 27th July 1940 they were married at the Church of St James the Apostle, in Maison Dieu Road, Dover.

At this time the country was at war with Germany and the Battle of Britain was being fought in the skies over Kent. William Lacey Goldfinch was now in the army, a member of the Royal Artillery. Dover was now on the front line and being regularly shelled by the enemy guns on the French coast. This resulted in most of the civilian population being evacuated to other parts of the country. Gladys Eileen Goldfinch was evacuated from Dover, to her sister's home at Dartford and it was here that, in 1943, their son Trevor was born.

In 1944 preparations were being made for the Allied invasion of Europe. At this time, William Lacey Goldfinch was a sergeant with the 76th (Highland) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, who were divisional troops with the 3rd Infantry Division. Prior to D-Day, the 76th Field Regiment had been issued with American 105 mm guns mounted on a Sherman tank chassis. The Regiment had trained in the use of landing craft on the Moray Firth, loading at Rosemarkie and landing on the beach at Burghead Bay.

The Regiments guns were loaded onto landing craft at Portsmouth on the 2nd June 1944. At the time of loading, two guns had been placed on the well-deck at the front of the craft and two guns to the

rear of the craft. Two Sherman tanks were placed between the pairs of guns, with the space between the two pairs taken up by ammunition. On Monday the 5th June 1944, the order to sail was issued.

At 06.50 hrs on 6th June, the Divisional artillery started firing in support of the infantry, landing on Sword Beach. The 76th Field Regiment landed about an hour after the infantry and commenced firing from the beach, covering the troops attacking the two bridges over the Caen Canal and River Orne, between Benouville and Ranville. The Regiment left the beach during the afternoon, after the mine fields had been cleared. On the first day, the 3rd Division penetrated as far as Lebissey village and wood, just north of Caen. In the days that followed, the 76th Field Regiment was deployed to provide artillery support for infantry, in a number of engagements against German positions. By the end of the month the Regiment was based near the Chateau de la Londe, where they remained for the next six weeks.

At the beginning of July, the British and Canadian forces were still engaged in the assault in and around, the city of Caen, which finally fell on the 18th July. However, some of the heavily defended villages on its perimeter, were still occupied by German troops. On 19th July, the 3rd Infantry Division, on the eastern flank, attacked eastwards through the swampy bocage, towards Troarn, where they met fierce German opposition. However, by the 20th July, the armoured divisions had advanced seven miles, to halt in front of Bourguebus Ridge. The ridge was captured on 23rd July and the 3rd Division moved on towards Mont Pincon, one week later.

Unfortunately Sergeant William Lacey Goldfinch, aged 26 years, died on the 26th July 1944. He is buried in the La Delivrande War Cemetery, about 14 km north of Caen, on the road to Langrune-sur-Mer, Normandy. The Allied burials date mainly from the landings on Sword Beach on the 6th June 1944, but other burials were later brought into the cemetery from the battlefields between the coast and Caen. There are now 942 Commonwealth burials and commemorations, of which 63 are unknown.

WILLIAM HENRY HOPKINS**Trinity House Service**

Rank/number:	Pilot
Service:	Lighthouse and Pilotage Authorities, Trinity House Service M.V. Arinia (London).
Date of Death:	19 th December 1940.
Age:	67
Memorial Reference:	Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 122
Remarks:	Son of Thomas Hopkins and of Jane Hopkins (nee Payton). Husband of Fanny Edith Hopkins of Whitfield, Kent.



(Photograph - C.W.G.C. Debt of Honour)

William Henry Hopkins was born in 1873, the son of Thomas Hopkins, a mariner and his wife Jane, formerly Payton, of Whitstable, Kent. His father, Thomas Hopkins, later qualified as a Master Mariner and the family moved from Albert Street to larger premises in Norfolk Street, at Whitstable. At the time of the 1891 census, the family was living at Blean Common, on the outskirts of Whitstable. His father, Thomas Hopkins, had left the life at sea and was now a coal merchant and carrier. However, William Henry Hopkins, now 17 years of age, was employed as a mariner.

In 1899, William Henry Hopkins married Fanny Edith Anderson of Faversham. Shortly afterwards, when they were living at Sea View Cottage in the Parish of St Alphege, Seasalter, their daughter Ena Doris, was born. William Henry Hopkins was now employed as a Second Mate, in the Mercantile Marine. He later qualified as a Trinity House Pilot and was employed within the London Division, based at Dover. The 1911 census shows William Henry, his wife and their four children living at Godmersham Villa, on Crabble Hill.

During the First World War, the Cinque Port Pilots continued to assist shipping navigate through the Straits of Dover, round to the Thames Estuary and nearby ports. At this time their job was particularly hazardous, as German submarines were active in the area, laying mines and attacking Allied shipping. Five Cinque Port Pilots lost their lives during the conflict. However, William Henry Hopkins survived and was later awarded the Mercantile Marine Medal and British War Medal.

After the war William Henry Hopkins continued in his role as Trinity House Pilot, working out of Dover. The family moved from Crabble Hill to live at "The Knoll" on Archer's Court, Whitfield. On 3rd September 1939, just after his 65th birthday, war was declared and William Henry found his navigational skills once more in demand at the time of war.

As in the First World War, the enemy laid mines in the Straits of Dover and in the Thames Estuary. On the night of 12th December 1940, a large force of German bombers laid over 180 acoustic mines in the estuary. In the weeks to come, as a result of this mine-laying operation, sixteen vessels were lost, including the 8024 ton tanker, MV Arinia.

MV Arinia was a London registered vessel, owned by the Anglo Saxon Petroleum Company. Captained by 48 year old Benjamin Bannister, of Southsea, the vessel was carrying oil from the Caribbean island of Aruba. On the 19th December 1940, William Henry Hopkins was assigned to pilot the vessel through the Straits, to the Isle of Grain. Having successfully negotiated the Straits, the vessel dropped anchor off Southend, to await the opening of the gates. At this time, the 1st Officer instructed the engines be shut down, an instruction with disastrous consequences.

With the engines off, the vessels anti-magnetic system which protected the ship from mines, was simultaneously turned off. Unfortunately the ship had dropped anchor directly adjacent to a mine, which was one of the many acoustic mines dropped a week earlier. When the tankers engines turned off, the mine exploded and the tanker was soon ablaze from stem to stern. William Henry Hopkins was killed, along with 54 merchant seamen and 5 DEMS Gunners.

William Henry Hopkins is one of the thousands of Mercantile Marine casualties from both world wars, who were lost at sea and have no known grave. These men and women are remembered on the Tower Hill Memorial, which is situated on the south side of the garden of Trinity Square, London. The memorial was unveiled by Queen Mary, on 12th December 1928, to commemorate the casualties of the First World War. Later, an extension was added to commemorate almost 24000 casualties, from the 4786 vessels, lost at sea during the Second World War.

19.

FRANK WILFRED McTOLDRIDGE

Army

Rank/number:	Signalman	2337392
Regiment:	Royal Corps of Signals	
	7 th Armoured Division Signals.	
Date of Death:	29 th November 1941.	
Age:	25.	
Cemetery Reference:	Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt.	20. B. 5.
Remarks:	Son of Arthur Charles and Edith Annie McToldridge of Whitfield, Kent. (B.A. Lond.)	



(Photograph: C.W.G.C. Debt of Honour website)

Arthur Charles McToldridge and Edith Annie Sedgwick had married on 8th February 1900, at the Zion Chapel, Last Lane, Dover, when Arthur Charles was an Armament Sergeant, in the Army Ordnance Corps. In December 1902, Arthur Charles McToldridge was posted to South Africa, where he remained for five years. His wife, Edith Annie joined him in Bloemfontein, shortly after the birth of their second child. Arthur Charles and Edith Annie had two further children when living in Bloemfontein, one of whom sadly died. In December 1906 the family returned to the United Kingdom and after a short time in Scotland, returned to Dover, where their fifth child was born in March 1908. In November 1909, Arthur Charles McToldridge, now a Staff Sergeant, was posted to India and accompanied by his family, spent some time in Nowshera. On 11th March 1914 they returned to the United Kingdom, when Staff Sergeant McToldridge was discharged from the Army, after over 14 years service. Their sixth child, Frank Wilfred McToldridge was born in 1916, at Dover.

Between 1927 and 1931, Frank Wilfred McToldridge was a pupil at the Dover County School for Boys (Dover Grammar School). He later obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, from University of London. On completion of his education, Frank Wilfred McToldridge, became an Officer of Customs and Excise. In 1939, when war was declared, he was living and working in Scotland, but his parents were living in Whitfield, where his father was a market gardener. It was in Scotland that Frank Wilfred joined the Army, becoming a signalman, in the Royal Corps of Signals.

The Royal Corps of Signals was formed on 28th June 1920, as a combat support arm of the British Army. Its role was to provide battlefield communication and was responsible for maintaining and operating all types of telecommunication equipment. It was in this role that Signalman Frank Wilfred McToldridge was posted to Egypt, to join the 7th Armoured Division.

After the First World War, the British Army had retained a mobile force in Egypt, to protect the Suez Canal. On 3rd September 1939, when war was declared, this Mobile Division moved up to the Egypt-Libyan frontier as the Italian Army, allied to Germany, was the occupying force in Libya. This

mobile division was later renamed the 7th Armoured Division and adopted the Jerboa (desert rat) as its divisional sign.

At the beginning of 1941, British and Commonwealth forces launched an attack against the Italian Army in Libya. Attacking along the coastal strip, the ports of Bardia, Tobruk and Benghazi were soon occupied by the Allied forces. On 6th February, the attack was stopped and the 7th Armoured Division returned to Egypt for a refit. Shortly afterwards, Rommel and his panzer divisions arrived in North Africa and, on 2nd April 1941, the German advance began. Within a few days the Allied forces were pushed out of Libya, back across the border into Egypt. However, the perimeter defending the port of Tobruk held out against German attacks. In May and June 1941, two further German attempts to breakthrough to the Tobruk garrison, both failed.

On 18th November 1941, the 8th Army launched Operation Crusader, an attack into Libya from its base at Mersa Matruh. In a two pronged attack, XIII Corps was to attack along the coastal strip and XXX Corps, which included the three Armoured Brigades of the 7th Armoured Division, was to cross the border to the south, in three columns, then wheel right towards Tobruk.

The 7th Armoured Brigade crossed the border near Fort Maddalena and soon captured the airfield at Sidi Rezegh, only 12 miles from Tobruk. However, the rest of the brigade and divisional support did not arrive until the 20th November, by which time the enemy had occupied the ridge overlooking the airfield. The following day, German troops, supported by a large number of tanks, attacked the airfield. There was heavy fighting over the next two days, before the British forces withdrew, to await reinforcements.

On the 24th November, with the immediate threat to Tobruk having receded, Rommel turned northwards, to relieve the Axis garrison at the frontier. However due to lack of fuel and harassment from Allied aircraft, the attack lost momentum and, on 26th November, a general withdrawal was ordered, back towards Tobruk.

The remnants of 7th Armoured Brigade shadowed the enemy columns until 27th November, then left for Cairo. On 29th November, the 4th and 22nd Brigades moved forward to protect the New Zealanders from an attack at el Duda. However, on the way they were attacked on the left and from the rear and movement halted. When the action was over, the tank losses of the two armoured brigades was so heavy, they could no longer fight as separate formations. The weakened 7th Armoured Division was at this time reduced to one armoured brigade.

Frank Wilfred McToldridge died on 29th November 1941 and is now buried in Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, in Egypt, some 12 kms from the Libyan border. The war cemetery is adjacent to the Halfaya Pass, which the scene of heavy fighting in 1941 and 1942. All the graves were brought in from the surrounding area, including military cemeteries at Sidi-Berrani, Buq Buq, Fort Capuzzo, Bordie, Minquor el Zannan and Niberwa. The cemetery now contains 2046 Commonwealth burials of which 238 are unidentified.

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