



Commemorating the World War 1 Fallen

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project



Introduction

The First World War was one of the deadliest conflicts the world has ever seen. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) list 888,246 dead for the UK and Colonies. Many of these men are buried, in large cemeteries, near the battlefield where they died. Those who were 'missing in action' and have no known grave are commemorated on war memorials across the battlefield areas. A few died in the UK and are, therefore, buried on home soil.

We know of over 200 men and boys who were born or lived in Berkhamsted who lost their lives in the war. Of these the CWGC lists 14 that are buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery. Some of the fallen have official military headstones, a few of these have been added in later years - the most recent being in 2003.



The last WW1 soldier to be buried here was Ernest Evans a private who died in 1921. A newspaper report from the time tells how he had a full military funeral 'in the presence of several hundred of the inhabitants. The Berkhamsted St. Peter's Town Band headed the sad procession as it wended its way from Park Street, along the High Street to the Parish Church'. The Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead detachment of the Royal Defence Force were in attendance along with comrades from Ernest's battalion. The coffin was covered with a Union Jack. After the service 'the band played most tenderly the beautiful hymn "For all the saints who from their labour rest". Many people were moved to tears'. There was a firing party who fired three volleys over the grave and then the "Last Post" concluded the service.

**Numbers refer to the gravestone locations –
www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk/**

Serjeant Brian Perry, was born in Enfield in 1897. He was the fourth son of Richard and Rose, who had 7 children. The family lived at Wynnsted, North Road, Berkhamsted. Brian's father was a printer and advertising agent. Brian was educated at Berkhamsted School and Lord Williams Grammer School (Thame), where he won the School Championship Cup. Brian followed his father into the printing business and was a printer's apprentice in 1911. He quickly signed up, in September 1914, after the outbreak of war. A tall, well-developed young man, he was accepted into the Inns of Court O.T.C. when perhaps too young in years. He received rapid promotion and showed promise of becoming a first class cavalry officer. In June 1915 he became seriously ill, and died in the 3rd London General Hospital on 18th August 1915. He was 18 years old and although he had not seen active service was given a military funeral. (292)

Captain Rupert Norman Gould Atkinson, M.C., D.F.C., Croix de Guerre (Belgium), R.A.F., was the elder son of Mr Brenan Atkinson of Shanghai, China and Mrs Atkinson of High Kelton, Berkhamsted. Born in 1896, he was educated at Orley Farm School, Harrow and at Marlborough College (Preshute). He went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in June 1914. In the following September he joined the 16th (Public Schools) Battalion,



Middlesex Regiment and obtained his commission in the 15th Middlesex in December 1914. On July 28, 1915, he proceeded to Cameroon, where he was attached to the West African Regiment, throughout the campaign. Invalided home in April 1916, by August he had joined the R.F.C. and obtained his pilot's certificate. From November 1916 when he was posted to the Western front until the Armistice, he was engaged almost continuously in artillery observation, photography, night-bombing and low-flying machine gun work. Promoted to Captain in July 1917, he became flight commander shortly afterwards. He received the M.C. in 1917 for a

daring and successful attack on enemy observation balloons, the D.F.C. in 1918 and the Belgian Croix de Guerre in 1919 when he was also recommended for a bar to his D.F.C. He returned home on leave from Cologne at the end of February 1919 and died of pneumonia, following influenza, on March 7th 1919. Rupert had announced his engagement to Margaret Hillier the previous month. He was just 22 years old, having survived four and a half years war service. His headstone sits in a prominent position next to the Arch at the centre of the Cemetery. (366)



Second Lieutenant Geoffrey Wynne Bavin, Royal Flying Corp, was the third of 7 children to Captain John Thomas Bavin, the 12th Queen's and Mrs Grace Bavin, of Berkhamsted. He was born on 17th July 1897 and was educated at Westminster Abbey choir school, Berkhamsted School and at Sandhurst. He left the Royal Military College in October 1915, obtained his pilot's certificate in November and his "wings" in early February 1916. He died on 1st April 1916 when his plane crashed at Upavon in Wiltshire. No one witnessed the accident, but he was seen beginning a descent from a

height of 2,000 feet. The machine was a new one which had arrived from Farnborough the day before. A verdict of "Accidental Death" was recorded. His commandant said of him: "He was an extraordinarily fine pilot, and had he lived would undoubtedly have been in the front rank of airmen. On the day of his death he was about to take up a position in the experimental squadron, where his fine flying would make him very useful. He was a clean, straight boy, and is a great loss not only to his family, but to the Service". His father and two elder brothers had been serving in the war since 1914 and at the time of his death both elder brothers were in France. (369)



Private Sydney Eric Pike, was born in 1894 and was the youngest of four sons of David and Mary Jane Pike. His father was a Greengrocer and the family lived at 230 High Street. The greengrocer's shop was located on the corner of the High Street and Lower Kings Road; until very recently there has been a greengrocers on the site. It was known as Pike's corner for years. On leaving school Sydney became a printer's compositor in North Wales. He signed his attestation papers on 5th November 1915 and joined the 3rd battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Wrexham on 11th November 1915. He arrived in France on 28th April 1916 and transferred to the 2nd Battalion just as they were preparing for the Battle of the Somme. His battalion formed part of the 33rd Division who saw action in The Battle of Albert from 1st to 13th July, the Battle of Bazentin from 14th to 17th of July and then the attack on High Wood from 20th July. Sydney received a gun shot wound to his right leg on 20th July and was transferred back to England on 26th July. He was admitted to the 2nd Western General Hospital in Manchester where they tried for 40 days to save his life. The wound to his right knee had turned septic and they amputated above the knee on 31st August. He died on 5th September 1916, at 8.15pm, the cause of death was 'Shrapnel wound of right knee producing Septicaemia.' His relatives were present at his death. He was aged 22 and had been in the army 306 days of which 84 days were in France. **(788)**



Private Arthur Pocock, was born in Berkhamsted in August 1894, one of Arthur and Jane Pocock's 11 children. His father was a bootmaker in the High Street. On leaving school he became a clerk in a local factory. Arthur signed up at Hertford and joined the Hertfordshire regiment on 17th September 1915, aged 21 years. At the time of his medical examination he was signed off as fit. He was posted to the 68th Provisional Battalion on 29th January 1916. While stationed at Lowestoft a medical report was completed which resulted in Arthur being discharged on 22nd March 1916. The discharge claimed he suffered from mental stupor unrelated to his army service. Two years later, on 30th January 1918, a pension appeal tribunal decided otherwise and he was granted a pension. Arthur was not entitled to any medals, which indicates that he did not serve in a theatre of war. Arthur died on 19th October 1918 at the Hertfordshire County Asylum in Hill End, St. Albans. The cause of death was given as "General Paralysis of the Insane. Duration indefinite. No PM certified by A N Boycott MD". He was 24 years old. **(916)**

Private Joseph Albert Ludlow, was the youngest of Thomas and Elizabeth Ludlow's 8 children, born in Berkhamsted in 1888. His father was a Wheelwright and the family lived at 5 Cross Oak Road. Joseph's mother died in 1889 when he was just over a year old. On leaving school he worked as a labourer at Coopers. He married Maud L Pansey in 1912 and they had a son, Albert, the following year. Joseph enlisted with the Hertfordshire Regiment at Bedford (No.157801) and was later transferred to the 164 Protection Coy, Royal Defence Corps. (No. 68588). His service record doesn't survive but it is likely he was transferred to the RDC following injury or illness. He died on Armistice Day 11th November 1918 in Richmond, Yorkshire while serving with the RDC. He was 30 years old. (915)

Corporal Ernest Alfred Reynolds was born in Wigginton on 7th April 1888. He was the only son of 5 children born to Alfred and Rebecca Reynolds. His father was a farm labourer. After leaving school Ernest worked as a motor mechanic for Edwin Southey at 165 High Street, Berkhamsted. Ernest enlisted soon after the outbreak of war, joining the Bedfordshire Regiment at Watford on 7th September 1914. Fully trained, he embarked at Southampton on 25 July 1915, entering the theatre of war the following day. He returned to Berkhamsted and married Ethel Emily Ada Sargent at St Peter's Church on 27th December 1915. Ethel worked at the Mantle Factory and lived at 36 Cross Oak Road. As part of the 7th battalion he was involved in some of the major battles in France and Flanders, including the Battle of the Somme 1916 and the Battle of Albert.



On the 2nd July Ernest was promoted to Corporal, fighting in the Battles of Bazentin, Thiepval and Ancre. On 20th January 1917, Ernest received a gunshot wound to his right shoulder and was transported back to England. In February, while in hospital at the Southern General hospital in Stourbridge, he suffered a bout of Trench Fever. Ernest was transferred to Epsom on 5th May for convalescence until 5th June 1917. He was signed out as having a superficial scar to his right shoulder which had healed leaving no disability. On 14th June 1917 Ernest was posted to the 3rd Bedfordshire Regiment, which was a reserves regiment also used for regulars recovering from wounds on home soil. He received retraining and qualified as a Lewis Gunner. In July he was categorised as B2 and assigned to light duties until demob. On 9th February 1918, Ernest's wife, Ethel gave birth to their first child Ernest Jack. In June Ernest was back in Hospital again, this time with Influenza which lasted 7 days and had no further complications. In August he was transferred to the Army service Corps and was eventually discharged from the army on 9th March 1919. On 13th November 1919 a second child was born to Ernest and Ethel - this time a girl named Barbara Patricia. Unfortunately the attack of Trench Fever had left Arthur with Vascular Disease of the Heart. He was granted a pension based on being 50% incapacitated by the condition. In most cases Trench Fever was only moderately serious with symptoms lasting about five days and full recovery within two to three months. In rare cases it caused permanent damage. Ernest died in Berkhamsted on 28th April 1920. His son would have been two and his daughter just under six months old. Ethel never remarried and died in 1973. **(830)**

Private Ernest Evans was born in Berkhamsted in 1896. He was the youngest son of Williams and Susan, who had 7 children. The family lived at 6 Park Street and William was a Nursery Gardener. By the age of 14, Ernest had left school and was working as an errand boy. He signed up in 1915 and served nearly all his time before the Armistice in France. The only major illness he received was as a result of being gassed. After the Armistice, Ernest was demobilised but re-joined for another 4 years serving with the 1st beds and Herts Battalion and was posted to Ireland. He had been there about 18 months when he was accidentally shot by one of his comrades during the changing of the guard on duty in a village near Sligo. He died there on 10th June 1921 and was 24 years old. He was very well known in Berkhamsted and received a full Military funeral. **(831)**



Lieutenant Ernest George Willmore, was born in Berkhamsted on 28 February 1894. He was the eldest of two sons to George and Leah Maria Willmore. The family lived at 4 Ravens Lane. Ernest's father was employed as a brewer's assistant and later as a General Labourer. The family moved to Cross Oak Road. Ernest was an excellent student being educated at Berkhamsted School and in March 1912 he won an Open Scholarship in Natural Science at Oxford University. Like so many others his education was cut short by the onset of war. He did his initial cadet training with the Officers Training Corps and on 10th April 1915 he was placed on probation as Second Lieutenant with the Royal Garrison Artillery. On 13th November 1915 he married Jesse A Cousins in Berkhamsted. On 4th June 1917 Ernest was awarded the Military Cross. On 15th July 1917 he was severely wounded in the head whilst lifting one of his men on to an ambulance. He returned to England but was partially paralysed. He was issued with a Silver Badge to wear as evidence of war service in May 1918. By this stage he had reached the rank of Lieutenant and was living at 12 Montague Road. Ernest and Jesse had a daughter, Jean, in early 1919. Ernest died at a hospital in Tooting, London on 31st July 1920 following an operation on his brain. He was 26 years old. **(722)**

Corporal Charles Wood, was born in Berkhamsted in 1887. He was one of 4 children to Alfred and Elizabeth Wood. The family lived at 206 High Street where Alfred ran a Tobacconist shop. Charles joined the Army on 10th January 1907, prior to this he had been a chauffeur. He married Rose Grover on 23 January 1912 in Islington. Rose was also born in Berkhamsted. When war broke out in 1914 Charles was quickly mobilised as part of the British Expeditionary Force and went out to France on 10 August that year. His first child Alfred Charles was born a few months later on 31st October, in Berkhamsted. His second son Arthur Vivian Wood was born in Edinburgh on 13 June 1916. The army records for Charles no longer exist but it is likely he was wounded and sent home because he joined the Royal Flying Corp as 2nd class Air Mech on 27th October 1916. The RFC papers state that he had a wound to his left forearm. He worked as an Engine Fitter. On 1 April 1917 he was promoted to 1st class Air Mech and was transferred to the Royal Air Force when it was formed on 1st April 1918. On 25th May 1918 his third child, Alice May was born in Birmingham. Charles died on 11th November 1918, Armistice Day, in Hounslow Military Hospital. He died of pneumonia following Influenza. He left behind a widow and 3 children under the age of 5, they lived at 39 Gossoms End. (693)



Leading Seaman Reginald Charles Elliott, Royal Naval Reserve, was born in Braughing, Hertfordshire on 20th July 1895. He was one of 3 children born to William Thomas and Harriett Elliott but their only surviving son as his elder brother had died in infancy. William's father was an ironmonger. He joined the Navy on 1st March 1911, his rank was Boy 2nd and he was 16 years old. His naval records state that his conduct was very good and his ability was satisfactory. The records show he left the navy on

8th January 1913. The reason given was “Run”; a man who deserted was marked R or RUN. Sometime later, probably when war had broken out, Reginald joined the army. In 1915 the Navy received an application form from Reginald stating that he was now in the Army and wished to purchase his discharge, he was informed that he would need to apply via his CO and that his case would be favourably considered. On 9th June 1915 Reginald joined the Royal Naval Reserves. He gave his name as Reginald Newell, but with his correct date of birth, parents names and place of birth. Although his parents were still both alive and living in Berkhamsted he interestingly gave his next of kin as Mrs Hills who he claimed was his sister. Mrs Hills’ maiden name was Georgina May Newell and she had lived as a boarder with Reginald and his family in 1901. Reginald served on board a number of ships, his last being HMS Royal Scot. The ship landed at Lerwick and Reginald was described as being severely injured. The injury occurred to his leg when a steel hawser which he was working on snapped. He was taken to hospital but died from shock following amputation in hospital. He died on 20th October 1916. He was buried on 26 October 1916. His parents lived at 29 Victoria Road. (594)



Private Wilfred James Short, was born in Kentish Town in about 1896, the eldest son of James and Florence Short. His father was a general labourer for the Grand Junction Canal Company and the family lived in the canal cottage which once stood at lock number 53, next to Lower Kings Road bridge. In May 1913 Wilfred and his younger brother Ernest left Southampton on board the Cunard liner Ausonia. They arrived in Quebec, Canada on 9th June 1913. At this stage the brothers split up, Cecil went to Bowmanville, Ontario to work on a farm while Wilfred went to Victoria, British Columbia to work as an Iron moulder. Wilfred joined the 48th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 31st March 1915. The Battalion sailed on 1st July 1915, arrived in England on 10th July and embarked for France on 9th March 1916. Wilfred was transferred to the Pioneer Battalion and was involved in holding the line from St Eloi to beyond Ypres. During an attack on 6th June 1916 Wilfred received a gun shot wound to his left leg. He was evacuated to No 11 General Hospital Camiers, northern France, from where he was taken through Folkstone and then on to the Edinburgh War Hospital in Bangour. General septicæmia set in and he died of wounds on 15 July 1916, aged 20. (542)

Ordinary Seaman Cyril Leggett, was the second of 7 children born to Benjamin and Alice Leggett. He was born on 13 December 1886 in Hackney London. His father was a civil servant. The family moved from Hackney to Harpenden and from there to St Keverne, Kings Road Berkhamsted. Cyril followed his father into the Civil Service as an assistant clerk. He was also a local Sunday School Teacher. Cyril joined the Royal Navel Volunteer Reserves on 21st June 1917 at the age of 30. He died, as a result of a fall from a hatch ladder while serving on SS Brodvale, on 21st April 1918 at Stanley Hospital in Liverpool. He was 31 years old and left £330 3s 6d to his father Benjamin. **(503)**

Second Lieutenant Leonard Simpson, was born in Darwen Lancashire on 28th April 1886. He was the youngest son of Henry and Margaret Anne Simpson. His father was a Director of a Wallpaper Manufacturing company. He was educated at University School, Southport and Kings College London. He became a clerk, probably in his father's company and later moved on to be Office Manager. On 28th December 1911 he married Margaret Mary Hughes in Paddington, giving his occupation as gentleman. Margaret had previously lived with her family in Shrublands Road, Berkhamsted. He enlisted in December 1914 and joined the Inn of Courts for officer training. His application letter mentioned that he could speak German, Romanian and Polish and that he had considerable experience in Mining Engineering in Austria and Romania. On 12th January 1915 he was appointed as 2nd Lieutenant with the Royal West Surrey Regiment. He never saw active service because he contracted influenza and bronchitis in early April 1915. This led to further gastric and breathing problems; he was discharged on 9 February 1916 and was issued with a Silver Badge (No. 3135) on 11th November 1916. His address was 15 Greenway, Berkhamsted. He died on 6th April 1920. He had one daughter, Marion who was born in late 1915. When Margaret died in 1955, her address was then 11 Greenway, she left £958 to her daughter Marion. **(427)**



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