

## ***The Men Who Gave Their Lives – Some Statistics***

The First World War records are not complete, nor one hundred percent accurate. The statistics that follow are gleaned from the information we have collected and are as accurate as can be, but not guaranteed.

**Theatres of War** – Of the 94 servicemen who could be traced, the overwhelming majority, 73, fought and died on the Western Front in France or Flanders. Three fought in Gallipoli and the Dardanelles, five died in Mesopotamia/Persian Gulf, two in Salonika, one in Egypt, and one in Rangoon, Burma. In addition seven men died in the United Kingdom, mostly at home. Strangely, two seem to have survived the war and died in old age (Frank Birch and Albert John Redding) and it begs the question as to why these names are commemorated on the Roll of Honour.

**Worst Year of the War** – Most Amersham men died in 1917 (29), followed by 1916 (24), 1918 (20) and 1915 (16). None lost their lives in the first year of the war 1914.

**Regiment losing most Amersham men** – The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry lost 17 men, the Kings Royal Rifle Corps 7 and the London Regiments 6. The OBLI Regiment was the county regiment and recruited locally throughout the war.

**Battalion losing most Amersham men** – The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry lost five soldiers. These were the five who fought and died in Mesopotamia/Persian Gulf. The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the OBLI also lost five men.

**Youngest to give their lives in the war** – George Percy Lane, Robert Wall and Harold John Robert Whike were all 18 years old.

**The oldest to die on the battlefields** - Thomas Henry Lacey, aged 43, died from gunshot wounds to the head at Beaumont Hamel, on 4 September 1916.

**First to give his life in the war** – Private Edward James Crook of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Royal Fusiliers was killed in action on 14 February 1915 in Flanders, only a month after arriving in France.

**Last to die in battle before the armistice** – Frank Percy Caudery and John Brill who died on 7 November 1918, just four days before the conclusion of hostilities. John Brill was buried on Armistice Day in the Platt Cemetery, in Amersham.

**Died after the armistice** – Mostly those who were in the Labour Corps or Royal Engineers and who were demobilised only after clearing up operations were completed. These include John Bentley, who was a prisoner of war for a period, George Henry Willis (who arrived home from Egypt and died of influenza a few days later), James Wellings and James Williams. The latter had served 3 years 7 months in a PoW camp in Germany and died on his way home.

**Brothers who died** – The family losing three sons was that of the **Boltons**. Francis died first, on 3 July 1916 in the battles of the Somme, Henry Thomas died at Givenchy on 1 January 1917 and Edward died on the first day of the Battle of Arras on 9 April 1917.

The **Clarke** brothers – Albert Victor Clarke was killed near Hamelincourt on the Western Front on 23 March 1918 aged 22. Two months later the younger brother Geoffrey died near Forceville on 25 May aged just 19.

The **Cox** brothers – Stanley Robert Cox was killed in the Ancre Valley on 18 November 1916. His brother William George Cox was injured in the same battle. He later returned to the front, was gassed, and died on 29 July 1917.

The **Lane** brothers – George Percy Lane was killed on 9 April 1917, the first day of the Battle of Arras, aged 19 or 20 and his much older brother Charles William was killed during the last month of the war on 5 October 1918, during the advance to victory. He was 34 years old. There was a third brother, Albert, who also fought, but survived the war.

The **Wingrove** brothers – Frank was killed on 18 August 1916 at Guillemont on the Somme and Ernest was killed on 20 September 1917 near Ypres, Flanders.

**Brothers killed on the same day** – this must be one of the most tragic events. Frank **Rogers**, whose name is engraved on the Amersham memorial, and brother Sidney (whose name does not appear on the memorial) were killed in action at Festubert on 16 May 1915. They were both in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the OBLI. They are both commemorated on the Tylers Green memorial.

**Step-brothers who died** – Thomas George Irons and William John Slade joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion OBLI before the war, in 1909. They appear to have enlisted at High Wycombe at the same time. They went to India (Ahmednager) and, when war broke out, were sent to the Persian Gulf. William was killed in action at the battle of Ctesiphon and George died as a prisoner of war after Kut el Armana fell to the Turks.

**How Amersham soldiers died** – the majority of those who lost their lives were either “killed in action” or “died of wounds”. Not all died in battle, but some as a result of random sniper fire or shelling behind the front in the relentless war of attrition. William Dumbarton was wounded by shrapnel when his lorry convoy was hit by a shell. Robert Wall was shot by a sniper while on sentry duty. In war, as in periods of normal life, accidents happen. Lt N.E.S. Croager of the Royal Flying Corps was killed in a flying accident over Lilbourne in Warwickshire and Lt Guy Godfrey Glyn of the Royal Engineers was involved in a motor-cycle accident near Abbeville and died of his injuries. Frederick George Parslow accidentally drowned in the River Tigris while transferring from one boat to another. Roland Hazell was killed while trying to save a child who had been left in the upper storey of a house in France which was under heavy shellfire and in doing so, left his own children fatherless. Disease also killed some men. Herbert William Tyrwhitt-Drake succumbed to pneumonia whilst serving in France and John Redding died after an operation for appendicitis while serving in Salonika. Three soldiers who were captured by the Turks at Kut el Amarna died of dysentery which was common in the unsanitary conditions. Edward George Grace died of broncho-pneumonia in Egypt.

**Gallantry Medals won – The Military Medal**, M.M, was awarded to Arthur Darvell and Albert John Redding for conspicuous bravery while serving on the Western Front in France.

John Frederick Bunce was awarded the **Military Cross** posthumously. Sub-Lieutenant Bunce died during the action in which he exhibited ‘conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty’ on 17 February 1917 near Albert, Somme.

The highest medal for gallantry awarded to our soldiers was, the **Distinguished Conduct Medal**, earned by Sgt Henry Grace during action in Mesopotamia. On 28 September 1915 he sent messages to the artillery by heliograph under heavy fire, although he had to stand in full view of the enemy’s redoubts to do so. The D.C.M was second only to the Victoria Cross as a reward for gallantry in action and was greatly prized.

**Soldier who did not see active service abroad** – Although Walter Charles Scott was passed as fit for the army on enlistment on 1 September 1914, his health rapidly deteriorated. He served only 156 days to 2 February 1915, all in this country. He did not see active service abroad and was discharged on medical grounds. Walter died on 17 January 1918 at home in Amersham.

**Ranks of Amersham men lost** – Among the officers lost were: Lieutenant 5; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant 6; Sub-Lieutenant (RNVR) 1. NCOs: Company Sergeant Major 1; Sergeant 2; Corporal 5; Lance Corporal 7.

Other Ranks: Private 46; Rifleman 8; Gunner 3; Guardsman 1; Trooper 1; Sapper 3; Driver 2; Able Seaman 1.

**Amersham emigrants who joined the fight** – John Bates fought with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Alberta Regiment)/ B Coy, 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion and died at Passchendaele on 3 November 1917, and Percy Walter Peach left his home in Winnipeg and served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Manitoba Regiment) 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. He was injured and died in a hospital in Camberwell on 12 October 1916.

George Stephenson Podbury had gone to live in Canada in March 1913, but returned to London in November 1914 to enlist there.

George Thomas Matthews served with the Australian Imperial Force 51<sup>st</sup> Division, which he joined in Perth, Western Australia. He was killed at Polygon Wood, Flanders on 26 September 1917.

**Oddities** – some servicemen do not seem to have an obvious connection with Amersham. Guy Godfrey Glyn lived in Northwood and worked on a railway south of London, so the question is: why was he commemorated on the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church in Amersham? The answer is probably that his sister Edith Grace Glyn was married to a clergyman, Charles Edward Briggs, who was the Rector of St Mary's from 1904 to 1946 and led the service of dedication of the war memorial there.

