

Lives From The Haseley War Memorial



1915 - 2008

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Lives from the Haseley War Memorial is
published by
The Haseley Archive

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INTRODUCTION

On November 11th 1920 Canon W. Gilbert Edwards, the Rector of St. Peter's, Great Haseley, conducted a service dedicating the village war memorial to those killed in the First World War. Ninety three men from the Haseleys had served in the war and the names of seventeen of them had been inscribed at the base of the war memorial.

The First World War, 'The Great War', had ended precisely two years earlier. During four years of conflict over 700,000 members of the British armed forces had been killed and a further one and a half million wounded.

Such was the horror of the war that the soldier/poet Siegfried Sassoon, who had served with distinction on the Western Front, wrote with bitter passion his caveat to future generations:

"Pray God that you may never know
The hell where youth and laughter go."

This 'war to end all wars' would never be that: two more names were added to the memorial in 1945, and a further name in 2008.

The purpose of this publication is not to engage in a wider debate about the nature and morality of war but to say something about the brief lives of the young men of the Haseleys who went to war and did not return. They deserve no less than that we will remember them.

John Andrews
Margaret Howlett
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Cover photo: War Memorial in June 2008 by Jane Simcox

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ROGER FREDERICK CHURCHILL GELDERD SOMERVELL



Roger Somervell was born on March 12th 1885 at Reigate, Surrey, one of four children of Frederick Churchill Gelderd Somervell and his second wife Emma, nee Churchill.

Frederick Somervell's first marriage had been to Mary Agnes Airey, but she had died on Christmas Day 1876, just ten days after giving birth to their daughter Maud Mary. Maud seems to have been raised by her paternal grandparents in Reigate, Surrey.

Emma Churchill had been born in India in June 1853 and lived there until 1869, her father John Churchill having been an assistant chaplain with the East India Company. On returning to England the Churchill family settled in Crowell, Oxfordshire, where John Churchill was rector at the parish church of The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary until his death in 1879. Emma and Frederick were married at Reigate in 1881.

The wealth of the Somervell family seems to have originated with Roger's paternal grandfather, Robert Miller Somervell. He had been a successful shoe manufacturer in the Lake District, having founded 'K' shoes in Kendal in 1842.

In the late 1880's Frederick and Emma Somervell and their three children, Margaret, Roger and Irene moved from Reigate to Great Haseley. A further son, Rupert, was born in Great Haseley in 1892. The family lived at Haseley Manor where Frederick, a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge became the headmaster of Haseley Manor Preparatory School.

Frederick and Emma also took an active part in the education of the children attending Great Haseley Village School. Frederick became a manager, and then chairman of the management committee of the school. Emma was a frequent visitor to the school, helping and encouraging the children with their studies. She regarded regular school attendance as an important key to educational attainment. In December 1898 Joseph Bower, school headmaster, wrote in the school log book: 'Mrs. Gelderd Somervell (Haseley Manor) promised to give five shillings to every child making every attendance during the year 1899.'

Both Frederick and Emma were committed Christians and mainstays of St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley. The family attended church regularly and Frederick became a church warden, and a patron of The Village Institute. He was a keen sportsman and appointed captain of the Great Haseley cricket team. Frederick and Emma were also active members of the Church of England Temperance Society, and Emma was secretary to The Mothers' Union.

Roger Somervell went to preparatory school in Oxford and then became a boarder at College House, Eton College. In the summer of 1904 he was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge as an undergraduate.

The London Gazette of 4th September 1914 recorded that Roger Somervell had been commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant (on probation) in the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards, Special Reserve of Officers, on 15th August 1914.

Roger Somervell was mortally wounded during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which took place between the 10th and 12th March 1915, and died of his wounds on 11th March 1915. Neuve Chapelle was the first large scale offensive of the war to be undertaken by the British army against German defensive positions. Over twelve thousand British and Indian soldiers were killed or wounded, as were a similar number of German troops.

The Great Haseley Parish Magazine of June 1915 gave a moving report of his death. 'A special service was held last month at St. Peter's Church in the memory of Lieutenant Roger Gelderd Somervell who has given his life for his King and his Country on the battlefield of Neuve Chapelle. The officer in command of his company had said 'I can't tell you what a help he was to me all day, and a more gallant officer I have never seen. The men would have followed him anywhere.'

Roger Somervell's name is commemorated on Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France, and on the Trinity College Memorial to college members who gave their lives during the First World War. There is an embossed plaque to his memory in St. Peter's. It reads:

*Roger Gelderd-Somervell
2nd Lieut. Grenadier Guards
Elder son of
Frederick Gelderd-Somervell of Haseley Manor
And Emma His Wife
Born March 12th 1885
Killed at Neuve Chapelle
March 11th 1915
Fear God in Life*

Roger was posthumously awarded the 1914/15 Star and the British War and Victory Medals.

Roger's brother Rupert also served with distinction in the war.

Roger's parents moved from Haseley Manor to 111, Woodstock Road, Oxford soon after his death. His father became a Justice of the Peace and then High Sheriff of Oxford in 1918-1919. Emma Somervell died in July 1925 and Frederick in March 1936. Emma and Frederick are buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's, Great Haseley.

CHRISTOPHER JAMES STURCH



Christopher James Sturch was a young man with ambition, seeking a life and world beyond the rural and agricultural confines of the Haseleys. He was born at Great Haseley in 1884, the son of James and Emma Sturch (nee Walker), who had married at Thame in 1883. Christopher had two younger brothers, Francis Jack, born in 1886 and Newton Graham, born in 1890.

On leaving Great Haseley village school Christopher worked as an under gardener and lived at The Plough, Rectory Road, Great Haseley, where his father was the licensee. By 1911 James Sturch had left The Plough and had taken up farming at Glebe Farm, Rectory Road, Great Haseley.

On 29th January 1908 Christopher enlisted at Woolwich Barracks, South London, as a Private (Service no: 2635) in the 2nd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own). On the 16th October of that year, after a period of initial training, Christopher embarked with the battalion for India. He spent the next six years there, serving in Darjeeling and Calcutta, only returning to the U.K. from Bombay in October 1914. Christopher's service in India seems to have been uneventful. He was promoted to Corporal in March 1912, had an exemplary service record and spent four short spells in military hospitals with unspecified illnesses.

In November 1914, after less than a month at home, the 2nd Battalion embarked for France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. On 12th March 1915 Christopher first saw action when he took part in the initial assault at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. For his part in the battle he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Christopher's citation reads: 'For conspicuous gallantry displayed at Neuve Chapelle on 12th March 1915, during the first attack, in advancing in front of his platoon and keeping up a steady fire to help the remainder on.'

Christopher Sturch was killed on 9th May 1915 at the Battle of Aubers, one of twelve thousand British troops killed during an abortive attempt by the British First Army to break the German defensive line at Ypres and capture the high ground of Aubers Ridge. He was thirty years of age. Percival Wharton was killed in the same battle on the same day.

The official announcement of the award of the D.C.M. to Christopher came on 30th June 1915, nearly two months after he had been killed in action.

On May 25th 1915 a service for the life of Christopher was held at St. Peter's, Great Haseley. Canon Edwards spoke of a man who had given his life for his country on the battlefield of France, and who 'had been a choir boy, choir man and a member of the Belfry.'

Christopher's name is inscribed on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

At the beginning of January 1918 James Sturch received Christopher's DCM which came through the post. James sent a gracious letter in reply, addressed to the Commandant of the Rifle Brigade at Winchester:

'I beg to acknowledge receipt of the Distinguished Conduct Medal awarded to my son C.J. Sturch which I am most pleased to receive. Thanking you for the trouble you have kindly taken in the matter. I am, yours respectfully, J. Sturch. January 8th 1918.'

In June 1921 James received Christopher's war service medals, The 1914 Star, The British Medal and The Victory Medal. James was also sent his son's personal effects, including nine photographs, one silk handkerchief, four crochet ties and three pipes.

Emma Sturch died in 1934 and James in 1942.

PERCIVAL CHARLES WHARTON



Percival Charles Wharton was born on 29th December 1887 at 15, York Place, St Clements, Oxford, the youngest of two sons born to Emma Wharton, a domestic servant. Percival's father was William Walton, who worked as a general labourer in Oxford.

In 1892 Emma married James Payne and the couple settled to married life in Great Haseley. By 1904 Emma had given birth to five sons and a daughter, all living together as a family in Great Haseley with Emma's sons George and Percival.

By 1911 Percival had enlisted in the regular army, as a Private (Service no: 8120) in the 2nd Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales (Royal Berkshire Regiment). On the outbreak of war in August 1914 the 2nd Battalion was stationed at Jhansi in India, but immediately embarked for England, arriving at the end of October 1914. By the beginning of November 1914 the 2nd Battalion had arrived in France, at Le Havre, and Percival had been promoted to Sergeant.

Percival Wharton was killed in action at the Battle of Aubers on 9th May 1915. Christopher James Sturch, a corporal in the Rifle Brigade and also of Great Haseley, was killed in the same battle on the same day.

The name of Percival Charles Wharton is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Ypres, France.

ERNEST ATKINS



Ernest Atkins was born on 2nd September 1877 at Great Haseley. His parents were John Atkins, an agricultural labourer from Ickford, and Sarah Atkins (nee Stringer) from Standlake. Sarah was John's second wife, his first wife Clara Rathbourn had died in 1862, and John and Sarah had married in 1866.

The Population Census returns for 1881 show that John and Sarah were living in Brightwell Baldwin with their three children. They were Anne, a general servant, twenty years old and the daughter of John and Clara, George who was fourteen and Ernest three. Ten years later, in 1891, John and Sarah had moved to Lobb, living there with fourteen year old Ernest, the two eldest children having left home. Ernest was working as an agricultural labourer.

In 1900 Ernest married Blanche Katherine Smith, and later the same year Blanche gave birth to a daughter, Annie. The family lived at Chowns Farm, Great Milton, where Ernest worked as a cattleman.

The 1911 census records that Ernest was by now a widower, his wife Blanche having died in the spring of 1905. Ernest was living at Latchford with his retired parents John and Sarah, and his two children Annie (aged 11) and Roland (aged 7). Also living in the household were two lodgers. They were William Atkins, aged 50, a cowman and Charley Culley, aged 19, described as a 'milker.' Ernest was employed as a general farm labourer.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914 Ernest volunteered for war service, enlisting as a Private (Regimental No. 9371) in the 2nd Battalion of The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

On the 15th May 1915 the 2nd Battalion took part in the Battle of Festubert, launched in support of a major French offensive at Vimy Ridge. The British army suffered nearly 17,000 casualties during the Battle, with over 400 of these from The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Ernest was mortally wounded and died of his wounds at the Chocques casualty clearing station on 22nd May 1915.

Ernest was posthumously awarded the 1914/15 Star and the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

There is no specific war memorial in France to those who were killed in the Battle of Festubert. Ernest Atkins is buried in the Chocques Military Cemetery, Bethune, France.

FREDERICK HARRIS



Frederick Harris was born in 1880 at Cowley St. John, Oxford. His father, Archibald Harris, was employed as a gardener, and his mother Eliza Worth was a charwoman. Frederick was one of seven children, four boys and three girls. The family lived at Percy Street, Cowley, Oxford, together with Eliza's widowed mother. By 1891 they had moved to Chapel Yard, St. Clements, Oxford. Archibald was by now employed as a cattle drover.

In 1907 Frederick married Lilian Mary Wharton from Great Haseley. The couple moved to Great Haseley where their five children were born. They were Archibald Victor (1908-1989), Ernest Frederick (1910-1988), Edith May (1912-1999), Percival (1913-31) and Amy Alice (1909-2003). Frederick was employed as a farm labourer.

At the outbreak of war Frederick enlisted as a Private (Service no: 5448) in the 2nd Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales (Royal Berkshire Regiment). He served on the Western Front and was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915, a battle in which over 43,000 British soldiers were killed. Frederick's name is inscribed on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

In 1919 Frederick's widow Lilian married Arthur Cheshire in Aylesbury.

ROBERT ATKINS



Immediately following the outbreak of war in August 1914 the British Government sent a 'formal request' to the Canadian Government asking for 25,000 troops to be sent to Europe. The response of the Canadian Government was to establish the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force, a volunteer force recruited specifically for active service in Europe. The first recruits to enlist did so at the Valcartier Army Camp in Quebec Province. Robert Atkins was one of these, enlisting as a private in the 1st Battalion Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment on 15th September 1914.

Robert is described on his enlistment form as a labourer, unmarried and never having served in any other military force. He was 5 feet 6 inches tall with brown eyes and hair and a 'dark complexion'.

The Canadian Army medical officer who examined Robert for his fitness to serve wrote in his report:

'He can see the required distance in either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him fit for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force.'

Robert Atkins was born at Pyrton on 19th November 1887, the eldest child of Robert Edmund Atkins, a cattleman from Great Haseley, and Elizabeth Hester Woodley from Long Wittenham. In 1889 brother William was born, followed by Emily in 1894 and Alfred in 1896. By 1911 there were nine children in the family, all now living in Little Haseley.

Robert attended Great Haseley School. On leaving school he worked as a 'horseman' for local farmers and landowners and lived at home with his family. Robert was an active churchman and a member of the congregation at St. Peter's. He had been baptised at St. Peter's in 1888 and confirmed there in February 1903.

Robert then made the momentous decision to emigrate and seek a new life in Canada, which was seen as a land of opportunity and promise. On the 13th March 1914 he travelled north from Oxford to Liverpool by train. At Liverpool he boarded the S.S. Alsatian, a passenger liner of the Allan Line Steamship Company, outward bound on its regular service to Halifax, Nova Scotia and Saint John, New Brunswick. After an eight day journey Robert disembarked at Halifax, his port of entry to North America.

For the next six months Robert worked as a general labourer in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. In September 1914 he enlisted at the Valcartier army camp, and then moved to active service overseas with the Canadian army in France and Belgium.

Robert Atkins was killed in action at Mount Sorrel, Ypres on 26th April 1916.

From the outset of the war all Canadian Expeditionary Force units were required to maintain a daily account of their 'actions in the field' in a war diary. Written in terse and understated prose the war diary of the 1st Battalion, The Western Ontario Regiment, describes the action that took place in the front line at Mount Sorrel on the 26th and 27th April 1916:

" 26/4 - Fine and warm. E. wind. Exceptionally quiet all day until about 6:30 pm when heavy bombardment all along our immediate front. Germans tried to occupy our sap [trench] but were driven back. Our casualties for the day about 50.

27/4 - Fine Bright day. E. wind. Rather quiet after last night. Brigade and Division pleased at the way we handled the situation last night."

Lt. Colonel F.A. Creighton, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, later confirmed in his report on the events of the 26th April that 20 men had been killed and 26 wounded.

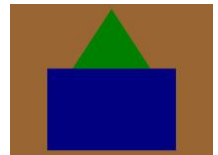
Robert Atkins is buried in The Sanctuary Wood Cemetery, West Vlaaderen, Ypres, Belgium. Robert's death is recorded in the cemetery Book of Remembrance:

"Atkins. Pte. Robert 6765. 1st. Battalion Canadian Infantry (Western Ontario Regiment). 26th April 1916. Age 29. Son of Robert E. and Elizabeth H. Atkins of Little Haseley, Wallingford, Berkshire, England."

In July 1916 Robert and Elizabeth Atkins received a written testimony from Major-General Sam Hughes, Minister of Military Defence for Canada. It read: 'Will you kindly accept my sincere condolences of that worthy citizen and heroic soldier, your son Private Robert Atkins. He did his duty fearlessly and well and gave his life for the cause of liberty.'

William Atkins, a younger brother of Robert, and a Lance Corporal with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, was killed in action at Ypres on 21st March 1918.

GEORGE ELTHAM



George Eltham was born on 3rd March 1889 at Oldbury, Worcestershire to George William Eltham and Sarah Ann Prewitt, who were married at Headington, Oxford in 1883. George's father died in 1890, and his mother subsequently married Thomas Lingard at West Bromwich, Staffordshire. George was then raised by his maternal grandparents, Edwin and Jane Prewitt, with Edwin working as an agricultural labourer in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. By 1911 Edwin had retired and he and Jane were living in Great Haseley together with grandson George, who was employed as an agricultural labourer.

In the years before the First World War it was the policy of the Canadian government to encourage immigration from the United Kingdom, in 1912 alone more than 150,000 UK residents went to live and work in Canada. George Eltham made the decision to be one of these. Nor would George be travelling alone; his good friend and work mate from Great Haseley, Amos Thornton, had also decided to emigrate. It would have taken them both much time and effort to prepare and save for the journey. The average weekly wage of an agricultural labourer in Oxfordshire in 1912 was no more than thirteen shillings (65 pence) a

week; the price of a single third class steam ship ticket between the UK and Canada more than fourteen pounds.

George Eltham and Amos Thornton left Liverpool for Canada on 7th March 1912 aboard the S.S. Corsican, a passenger vessel of the Allan Line Steamship Company, arriving at the port of Halifax, Nova Scotia, just over a week later.

On arriving in Halifax George and Amos went their separate ways. George based himself in Toronto and for the next two and a half years worked as a sailor on the Great Lakes.

On 7th November 1914 George Eltham enlisted as a private in the 20th Battalion Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment) of the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. His enlistment papers show that he was born in West 'Bromage' [sic], Staffs, England, that he was single, and his civilian occupation was that of sailor. He was just over 5 feet 9 inches tall and had a 38 inch chest. He was tattooed on his right arm with 'clasped hands around a heart.'

George Eltham was killed on 5th June 1916 at the Battle of Mount Sorrel, Ypres, a battle in which there were more than six thousand Canadian casualties.

Extracts from the war diary of the 20th Battalion describe the events on the front line at Mount Sorrel from the 4th to 6th June 1916 with a detached and dispassionate clarity, and note the death of George Eltham:

"4th June. The Bluff. Fine and warm. The enemy was alert and indulged in considerable sniping all day. During the early morning and at intervals throughout the day our support trenches were subject to active shelling of various calibre. Some aerial activity. Casualties 7 OR [other ranks] wounded.

5th June. The Bluff. Fine turning cloudy pm with rain at night.

Light shelling of our forward trenches in am with some aerial activity. In the afternoon our front trenches were heavily shelled.

Battalion HQ received some artillery attention which did little damage but the forward trenches were badly smashed in places.

Counter battery work in our rear positions was engaged in during pm.

Casualties - Killed 1 officer + 1 OR. Wounded 2 OR. The Battalion was relieved in the line tonight by the 18th Battalion. The Battalion went to the rear at Bedford House.

6th June. Bedford House. Fine and warm. The Battalion remained under cover today, but was called in for large fatigue duties at night. The forward areas were again shelled. Enemy artillery searching for our guns and for transport."

The war diary does not name George Eltham as the 'other rank' killed on 5th June, but as the only battalion death that day it is certainly him. Nor does the diary describe the circumstances or manner of his death.

A memorial service for the life of George Eltham was held at St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley on 27th June 1916.

George Eltham is buried in the Bedford House Cemetery, Zillebeke, Belgium. His epitaph in the cemetery memorial register reads: "Eltham Pte. George 57626. 20th Battalion Canadian Infantry (1st Central Ontario Regiment) 5th June 1916."

BERTRAM MORIS CHAULK



Bertram Chaulk was the seventh child of Robert Chaulk (1860-1947) and Alice Maria Sturch (1861-1939), both of whom were born, and died, in Great Haseley. Their marriage in October 1884, also in Great Haseley, cemented the strong relationship between these well known and long established Haseley families. Robert Chaulk worked variously as a carter and a waggoner.

Bertram was born in Great Haseley in 1896. On his birth certificate Bertram's name is written as 'Chalk'. It is likely that this was a transcription error on the part of the Registrar of Births as all subsequent references to him use the surname 'Chaulk'.

On leaving Great Haseley village school Bertram, known to his friends as 'Bertie', worked as a farm labourer.

In September 1914 Bertram enlisted as a Private (Service no: 12701) in the 2nd Battalion, a regular army Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment. He was killed in action on the Somme during the battle for La Boisselle between the 7th and 8th July 1916. He is buried in the Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovillers La Boisselle, France. Bertram was posthumously awarded The Victory Medal and The British War Medal.

HAROLD JOSEPH SPICER



Harold Joseph Spicer was one of seven children of William Henry Spicer, a farm labourer and carter from Warpsgrove, and his wife Elizabeth (nee Hawkins), from Cuddington, Bucks.

Born in Great Haseley in 1895 Harold attended Great Haseley Endowed School where he was regarded as a conscientious and diligent pupil, winning prizes for nature study and Diocesan commendations for religious knowledge. Throughout his school career Harold was a close friend and classmate of Arthur Payne, who was killed in action on the Western Front in April 1917.

On leaving school Harold worked as a gentleman's servant. In October 1914 he enlisted as a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Service no: 13830), before transferring to the 12th Service (Pioneer) Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment, where he rose through the ranks to Lance Sergeant.

The Hampshire Regiment was part of the British Salonika Force, sent to Greece to provide an advanced defensive line against the threat of invasion from German and Bulgarian forces. Harold Spicer was severely wounded in a British action to strengthen this defensive line by securing the strategically important town of Serres. He died of his wounds on 9th November 1916.

A memorial service for Harold Spicer was held at St. Peter's, Great Haseley on 6th December 1916. Harold was known to his comrades in the Hampshire Regiment as 'Jack', and it is in this name that a testimony from his Commanding Officer was read to the congregation:

'Jack was a general favourite, always fair and above board. Although he has gone he has left behind an example of the highest character.'

Harold Spicer is buried in the Karasouli Military Cemetery, Polikastro, Greece.

Harold's mother and father are buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's, Great Haseley. Elizabeth died in 1925 at the age of sixty five and Harold in 1939 at the age of seventy nine. Their gravestone bears the following epitaph:

TO THE VERY DEAR MEMORY OF
SERGT. HAROLD JOSEPH SPICER
12TH HAMPSHIRE REGT.
KILLED IN ACTION IN SALONIKA
NOV 9TH 1916 AGE 21 YEARS

ARTHUR JOHN PAYNE



"Payne, Cpl, Arthur John. 451. 42nd Battalion Australian Infantry. Killed in action 27th April 1917. Age 23. Son of James and Emma Payne of Great Haseley, Oxfordshire, England." The memorial register, The Strand Military Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium,

Arthur John Payne was born in Great Haseley on 4th October 1894 to James and Emma Payne (nee Wharton), both of whom had also been born and raised in the village. Arthur was one of eight children, five brothers, two half brothers and a sister. James Payne worked as a farm labourer in the Haseley area, as in time did all the sons.

Arthur attended Great Haseley School. He was an energetic and restless pupil who, nevertheless, won commendations both for nature study and religious education. Arthur and his parents were anxious for him to leave school as soon as possible as work was uncertain, wages low and there were many mouths to feed. However, the family were thwarted in their ambition when Arthur narrowly failed the Oxfordshire 'Labour Certificate Examination.' Passing would have meant that Arthur had reached the required 'standard' in reading, writing and arithmetic and would have been able to leave school a year early.

On leaving school Arthur found seasonal work as an agricultural labourer and then, at the age of sixteen, enlisted as a private in The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Stationed at Cowley Barracks in Oxford, he served for nearly three years before 'purchasing a discharge.'

Following in the footsteps of many young men from rural Oxfordshire Arthur Payne then made the decision to emigrate 'down under' and start a new life in Australia. On 30th January 1913 he set sail from the Port of London on the S.S. Themistocles, a passenger ship of the Aberdeen Line, bound for Sydney via Cape Town. It was in Sydney that Arthur lived and worked as a general labourer for the next two and a half years.

On 8th November 1915, at Lismore, New South Wales, Arthur John Payne enlisted as a private in the 42nd Infantry Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force. His army service record shows that he was 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighed 11 stone 2 pounds and had a chest size of just over 39 inches. He had blue eyes and brown hair and a 'fair complexion'. On his left forearm was tattooed a union jack together with a conjoined rose, thistle and shamrock. He was single, recorded as having had no criminal convictions, and stated that he was a member of the Church of England.

On signing the 'Oath of Allegiance' Arthur swore that "I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from November 8th 1915 until the end of the war. I will resist his Majesty's enemies and cause his Majesty's peace to be kept. I will faithfully discharge my duty according to Law. So help me God."

The 42nd Battalion embarked for the U.K. on the S.S. Borda, a former P&O passenger liner requisitioned by the Australian Government in August 1914 as a troopship. Leaving Sydney on 5th June 1916 and sailing via the Suez Canal the Borda arrived at Southampton on 23rd July 1916.

The Battalion then spent four months undergoing advanced military training at Larkhill army camp on Salisbury Plain. Arthur received specialist training in the operation of the Stokes three inch mortar and was attached to the 11th Light Trench Mortar Battery.

The Battalion left for France on 25th November 1916 and just after Christmas of that year entered the front line at Armentieres. In February 1917 Arthur was promoted to corporal 'in the field'.

Entries in the war diary of the 11th Light Trench Mortar Battery for the first four months of 1917 show that the Battery was in continuous action in the front line at Armentieres, firing up to 200 mortar rounds a day at German trenches and positions.

Arthur Payne was killed in action on 27th April 1917. The Battery war diary makes no mention of Arthur's death but it is likely that he was killed by incoming artillery or mortar fire. Light mortars were a particularly destructive way of disrupting trench life on both sides of the front line and Arthur's Battery would have been specifically targeted by German artillery. Arthur's Australian army statement of service, dated 7th July 1917, simply records that he was 'buried just north of Ploegsteert, three miles north of Armentieres.'

Arthur John Payne now lies in The Strand Military Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium; one of nearly sixty thousand Australian soldiers killed during the First World War.

ROLAND MILTON HARRIS



Roland Harris was born in Little Haseley on February 9th 1898. His parents were Milton Harris, a farmer, and Beatrice Emily Taylor, a farmer's daughter from Cumnor, near Oxford. The family lived at Court Farm, Little Haseley with their three children, Roland, Henry and Isobel. Also living in the household were a governess and two servants.

Roland was educated at Dover College, Kent and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He was then commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion Alexandra, Princess of Wales Own (Yorkshire Regiment). From July 1916 Roland saw action on the Somme at Montauban, Trones Wood and Guillemont. It later emerged that he was 'under age', too young during these engagements for active service on the Western Front. He also took part in the initial stages of the Battle of Arras in April 1917.

Roland was then selected for pilot training and transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. His first posting was as a scout pilot with 60 Squadron, an elite squadron flying Nieuport XVII fighter aircraft.

Roland was killed on 7th June 1917. He was flying a Nieuport over Arras, taking part in ground to air firing practice, when both starboard wings of his biplane came off. The aircraft plunged to the ground, killing him instantly. He was nineteen years old.

A memorial service to Roland was held at St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley on 18th June 1917. Canon Edwards read out tributes to him. For Roland's housemaster at Dover College he was 'a boy who made his influence felt in the right direction from the first time he came to the school.' The Commander of 60 Squadron said of him, 'All the squadron liked him immensely. He was a fine and fearless fighter and a good pilot, and he had already got over the really dangerous stage, his first two flights over the lines.'

Roland Milton Harris is buried in The Avesnes-Le Comte-Communal Cemetery Extension, Arras, Pas de Calais, France.

Roland is remembered on the Roll of Honour of those men of the Yorkshire Regiment who flew with the RFC/RAF during the First World War. His name is also on the 'Memorial Board for the Great War' which is in the school chapel of Dover College. Roland is one of 177 former pupils of Dover College who were killed during the war.

JOHN DEELEY



John Deeley was born in Great Haseley in 1879, the youngest of seven children born to Thomas Deeley (1829-1916) of Great Haseley and Jane Tuck (1841-1923) from Drayton in Berkshire. At the time of John's birth Thomas and his three eldest sons, Thomas 17, Harry, 14 and William, 13, were all working as agricultural labourers.

At the age of five John became a pupil in the infant class at Great Haseley School and clearly had learning difficulties, although there is no evidence to show with any certainty what these difficulties may have been. In the school log book entry of May 1st 1887 Joseph Bower, the Junior School Head Teacher, wrote : "John Deeley - obvious dulness [sic] having been admitted from the Infant School solely on account of age." On 27th June of the same year Joseph Bower recorded that John should be exempt from a religious knowledge examination.

On leaving school John worked as an itinerant agricultural labourer, taking work when and where he could find it. At twenty one he was living with his cousin Thomas Deeley in Surrey and worked as a bricklayer's labourer. Ten years later, in 1911, John was lodging with another cousin, Henry Deeley, who lived with his wife and five children in Upper Wallington, Surrey. The census returns for 1911 record that both Henry and John were employed as casual labourers.

John Deeley enlisted in the army in October 1915 and qualified as a heavy artillery gunner with the Royal Field Artillery. He was killed in action at the 3rd Battle of Ypres, Passchendaele, on 21st August 1917.

John Deeley is buried in the White House Cemetery, St. Jean-Les-Ypres, Belgium. He was posthumously awarded The Victory Medal and The British War Medal. His epitaph in the cemetery book of remembrance reads:

"Deeley. Gnr. John L/30300 36th T.M. Battery, Royal Field Artillery. 21st August 1917. Age 35. Son of Thomas and Jane Deeley of Great Haseley, Wallingford, Berkshire."

AMOS THORNTON



On 11th September 1915 Amos Thornton enlisted at Niagara Camp, Ontario as a private in the 52nd Battalion, Manitoba Regiment, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The CEF was the volunteer army force created by the Canadian government in August 1914 for service overseas in the First World War.

The enlistment record of Amos Thornton shows that he had been working in Canada as a general labourer, was single and had never previously served in any military force. He is described as being five feet five inches tall, with grey eyes and light brown hair and as having a 'fresh complexion'. He had a 36 inch chest and three vaccination marks on his left arm. His religion was given as Church of England.

Amos was born on 19th February 1884 at Little Haseley. His father was William Thornton, an agricultural labourer from Great Haseley and his mother, Mary Ann, came from Tackley. Amos was one of six children, four of whom survived into adulthood.

On leaving Great Haseley School Amos became a ploughboy. Then, at the age of nineteen, he became an employee of the Great Western Railway Company, working as a uniformed porter at Oxford railway station and earning fourteen shillings a week. By his late twenties he had returned to his roots and was working once again as a farm labourer in Little Haseley.

In the late summer of 1911 Amos and his good friend and work mate George Eltham both decided that their futures would be in the 'New World' and laid plans to emigrate to Canada. They eventually did so on 7th March 1912, taking a third class passage from Liverpool to Halifax, Nova Scotia on the S.S. Alsatian.

For the next three and a half years Amos worked as a general labourer in the Eastern provinces of Canada. In September 1915 he enlisted in the Canadian army.

Amos Thornton was killed on 3rd September 1917 at the Third Battle of Ypres, during an allied advance towards the Belgian channel ports. General Haig, the British Expeditionary Force commander, mistakenly believed that the German army was near collapse. It was not. The battle, which was launched on 31st July 1917, continued until the fall of Passchendaele village on 5th November 1917. There were over 300,000 allied casualties and some 260,000 German.

The war diary of the 52nd Battalion of The Manitoba Regiment provides a poignant account of the raid during which Amos Thornton was killed:

"2-9-17 - Companies busy all forenoon completing supplies, bombs, ammonal charges and wire for the raid.

3-9-17 - Fine. At 11:00 am final conference of company commanders before the raid tonight.

Night of 3rd/4th At 1830 am. The battalion attacked and captured Cinabar Trench, Nabob Alley and Nuns Alley. The battalion was unfortunate in having a large number of officer casualties. The total casualties of other ranks was 96.

4-9-17 - Lt. Colonel W.W. Foster and the Brigade Major go round the new line and examine the posts established last night. Upon their return the Brigade Major remarked upon the very cheerful spirits of the men after the heavy shelling to which they had been subjected.

5-9-17 - The Battalion relieved in the line by the 18th Battalion. The following wire received from 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade 'Hearty congratulations. The operation was well planned and carried out and with courage and determination. Hearty Congratulations to all concerned.'

Amos Thornton is one of eleven thousand Canadians whose names are inscribed on the ramparts of the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. At the base of the memorial are inscribed the words: "To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War and in the memory of their sixty thousand dead this monument is raised by the people of Canada."

CHARLES EDWIN BECKINGHAM (STRINGER)



Charles Edwin Beckingham was born on 9th July 1897 at Beechwood, Kilnhurst, Yorkshire to Elizabeth Jane Beckingham Betts who was employed as a domestic servant. At the time of the birth Elizabeth was just seventeen years of age. The name of the father is not recorded on Charles' birth certificate.

Also living at Beechwood at the time were Charles' maternal grandmother Ann Joynes (nee Betts), who had been born and raised in Little Haseley, and Ann's half sister Jane Beckingham (nee Parrott) who came from Great Haseley.

Shortly after the birth both Elizabeth and Charles, together with Jane, left Beechwood and travelled south to the Haseleys.

The census return for 1901 shows that Elizabeth was living at The Old Rectory, Rectory Road, Great Haseley and working for Canon Edwards as a servant. She described herself as a widow, although there is no record of her having been married, and had changed her name to Elizabeth Jane Stringer. Why Elizabeth changed her surname remains a matter of speculation. Stringer may have been the surname of Charles' biological father, or it may have been chosen at random

by Elizabeth as a sign of her determination to establish a new life for herself in Great Haseley.

Jane Beckingham found accommodation in Little Haseley and the 1901 census records Charles as living with her as a 'visitor'. The arrangement was clearly more long term than this. Charles was registered at Great Haseley Endowed School under the name of Charles Edwin Stringer and the school log book shows that in July 1904 he was awarded a Diocesan prize for 'progress in school work (Infants class)'. In May 1907 he was further commended by the Diocese for his knowledge of the bible.

In 1911 Charles was still living with Jane. He had left school and was working as a farm boy. Elizabeth was no longer working for Canon Edwards and had moved to Moulsoford.

Charles Beckingham enlisted as a Private in the Oxfordshire Yeomanry in November 1914 and embarked for France with his regiment on February 12th 1915. He was six months short of his eighteenth birthday. Charles then successfully applied for a transfer to the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, a battalion of The Household Cavalry.

Charles Edwin Beckingham was killed in action at Bourslon Wood on 27th November 1917 during the Battle of Cambrai. The battle, which began on 20th November 1917, was the first in which the British army used a combined force of tanks, a rolling artillery barrage, air support and infantry to break through the German front line, penetrating to a depth of five miles. However, the German army immediately counter attacked and by December 3rd British gains had largely been reversed.

First news of the British breakthrough was greeted with jubilation at home. Great Haseley Parish Magazine reported in December 1917:

'The Victory at Cambrai. The great and glorious victory was well noted in the Parish. Our remaining ringers rang a joyous peal on the bells at night.'

Charles Beckingham was killed defending the British front line against the German counter offensive.

Extracts from the war diary of the Oxfordshire Hussars describe in stark detail the intensity of the German barrage as they moved forward to defend the line.

"25th November 1917 - Cold and stormy during the day. Oxfordshire Hussars marched to dugouts at Flesquieres.

26th November 1917 - 6:30 pm. At Flesquieres. Battalion started for support trenches to relieve 5th West Yorkshire Regiment. Relief completed soon after 10:00 pm.

27th November 1917 - 1:00 pm. Battalion moved to [forward] trenches, heavily shelled on the way. Trenches too full for whole Battalion. Oxfordshire Hussars in shell holes by trenches.

3:00 pm. Battalion ordered to front line trenches in Bourlon Wood to hold the line, with outposts forward. Heavily shelled on the way up.

28th November 1917 - Heavy rifle fire from 00:45 to 01:10. Heavily shelled all day. Battalion relieved in the evening, Oxfordshire Hussars at 6:00 pm. Shelled with gas shells during relief and ordinary shells. Oxfordshire Hussars back at Flesquieres.

Casualties for Oxfordshire Hussars other ranks - One killed, one died of wounds, one missing believed killed, one missing, twelve wounded."

The war diary does not name the 'other rank' casualties so we have no way of knowing whether Charles was killed, died of his wounds or was missing in action, believed killed.

A memorial service for Charles was held at St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley, on 17th January 1918. In his address to the congregation Canon Edwards spoke of 'Charles' act of supreme sacrifice which was made in a strong attack of the enemy at one important part of our line. His efforts were not in vain, as a very critical spot was safeguarded, and the enemy failed in their effort.'

The Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Nord, France, is dedicated to those soldiers killed during the Battle of Cambrai and who have no known grave. Charles is commemorated on this memorial as 'Private Beckingham C.E.' On the Great Haseley war memorial he is commemorated as 'Charles Stringer', the name he was known by in Great and Little Haseley.

Charles Beckingham was posthumously awarded The 1914/15 Star and The British and Victory Medals.

Immediately following the death of Charles, Elizabeth returned to Yorkshire and in 1918 she married a John Lee. The name she gave on the marriage certificate was Elizabeth J. Stringer. Elizabeth died in the 1960's.

Jane Beckingham died on 16th June 1927 at The Lodge, Priest End, Thame.

HAROLD ALFRED SHRIMPTON



Harold Shrimpton was raised by his aunt Harriett Busby (nee Shrimpton), who had been born in Great Haseley in 1862, and her husband Frederick.

Harold was born in Great Haseley in 1884 and spent his formative years living with the Busby family in Oxford. The 1891 census shows that he was living at 62, Abbey Road, St. Thomas, Oxford with the Busby's and their one year old daughter Constance. Frederick's occupation was given as gilder. By 1901 the family had moved to Cardigan Street, Oxford. Sixteen year old Harold was now employed as a grocer's apprentice.

In the spring of 1908 Harold married Selina Holloway from Weston Staffordshire, near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The couple settled to married life in Berkhamsted at 57, Gossams End. In 1911 their baby daughter Lena May Blanche was born. Harold pursued his career as a grocer, initially as a grocer's assistant and then as branch manager of the Co-operative grocery store in Berkhamsted.

Harold Shrimpton enlisted at the army recruitment office in Berkhamsted as a private in The Yorkshire Regiment. He subsequently transferred to the 20th Battalion of The Kings (Liverpool) Regiment (Service no: 235328), a 'pals' battalion of the British army. He served on the Western Front as a Rifleman and died of his wounds on 13th January 1918 at Passchendaele Ridge. Harold is buried in Outtersteene Community Cemetery Extension, Bailleul, Armentieres, France.

Harold is also commemorated on two war memorials in his home town of Berkhamsted; on the Northchurch war memorial which is situated in the churchyard of St. Mary's, and on the High Street war memorial in front of the Church of St. Peter.

RAYMOND PAYNE



Raymond Payne was one of eight children, five brothers, two half brothers and one sister. He was born in Great Haseley in the spring of 1897 to James and Emma Payne (nee Wharton), both of whom had been raised in the village. James Payne worked as a farm labourer in the Haseley area, as in time did all the sons.

Raymond enlisted as a private in the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, a regiment of The Household Cavalry. He served on the Western Front and was killed in action on 21st March 1918 during the first days of 'Operation Michael', the last major offensive by the German army during World War One. William Atkins was killed on the same day in the same offensive.

Strengthened by front line regiments arriving from the Eastern Front following the collapse of the Russian army and fearful of increasing American military power General Ludendorff, Commander in Chief of German forces on the Western Front, launched a broad frontal offensive from the Somme to the River Lys. After initial breakthroughs to a depth of some twenty five miles the offensive faltered and by the end of April 1918 the German army was in retreat.

The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars were in the front line between St. Quentin and Amiens on 21st March when the German offensive began and, after fierce resistance, they were over run, suffering a casualty rate of more than fifty per cent killed or wounded.

Raymond Payne is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Ovillers La Boisselle, Somme, France, erected to the memory of those allied soldiers killed during the German offensive of March and April 1918.

WILLIAM ATKINS



William Atkins was born at Pyrton in 1889, the second son of Robert Edmund Atkins, a cattleman from Great Haseley, and Elizabeth Hester Woodley from Long Wittenham.

By 1901 Robert and Elizabeth had moved to Little Haseley with their four children Robert 14, William 12, Emily 7 and Alfred 5. Eldest son Robert worked as a 'nagman' [horseman] and the three youngest children attended Great Haseley School.

The 1911 census return shows that Elizabeth had given birth to ten children, nine of whom were surviving. Robert and Elizabeth had been married for twenty seven years. William gave his occupation as 'horseman on a farm.'

William was one of the first to volunteer for army service. In August 1914, at the army recruitment office in Oxford, he enlisted as a private in the 5th Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He was promoted to Lance Corporal and then, in September 1915, he was seriously wounded on the front line in France and spent over two months in hospital. He was killed in action on 21st March 1918, the first day of 'Operation Michael', the last major offensive by the German army during World War One, and on the same day as Raymond Payne.

William Atkins is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Ovillers La Boisselle, Somme, France, erected to the memory of those allied soldiers killed during 'Operation Michael'.

William's older brother Robert, of the 1st Battalion Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment, was killed in action on 26th April 1916 at Mount Sorrel, Ypres, Belgium.

VICTOR ALEXANDER PANCOTT



Telegram message from Winston S. Churchill, British Prime Minister, to Harry S. Truman, President of the United States. June 1945.

“With the surrender of Germany the Battle of the Atlantic has ended. Beginning in September 1939 it has been a long and relentless struggle. Germany’s objective was to cut Allied sea communications, upon which the maintenance of the Allied war effort depended. Losses have been heavy, at their peak in 1941 and 1942 the struggle hung in the balance. But success was achieved. Thanks to the sailors and airmen, scientists and technicians, shipbuilders and factory workers the convoys reached their destination, and enabled the soldiers and airmen to fulfil their tasks.”

The six year long Battle of the Atlantic was the one battle Winston Churchill was fearful of losing, a battle in which over thirty thousand sailors and five thousand ships were lost.

Victor Alexander Pancott was born on 25th January 1897, one of eight children of James and Sarah Emma Pancott. James was employed variously as a builder’s labourer and an agricultural worker and Sarah was a confectioner and tobacconist.

Victor attended Great Haseley School, as did the other Pancott children. In the summer of 1933 he and Florence Beatrice Newell were married.

Victor first enlisted as an able seaman in the Royal Navy in October 1915. Demobbed at the end of the First World War he re-enlisted in 1923 and served until 1935. His last ship was H.M.S. Brilliant, a B class destroyer stationed in the Mediterranean. On his retirement Victor was awarded the Royal Navy Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Victor immediately re-enlisted and was posted to H.M.S. Aurania. The S.S. Aurania had been a passenger ship with the Cunard White Star Line before the war but in August 1939 had been commandeered by the Royal Navy and converted to an armed merchant cruiser for service on convoy protection duties with the North Atlantic Protection Force.

On 21st October 1941 H.M.S. Aurania was escorting convoy SL89 from Halifax, Nova Scotia to the Firth of Clyde. At 04:28 a.m. in the early morning darkness, and two hundred miles west of Ireland, the Aurania was hit on the port side by two torpedoes fired from U boat U123. In the confusion following the attack a lifeboat with six men aboard was launched, but was immediately swamped on hitting the water. Three sailors were rescued but two others, including Victor, were lost. A third sailor, Leading Seaman Bertie Shaw, was rescued six hours later by U123. Still clinging to the upturned lifeboat Shaw was taken on board by the U boat crew and became a prisoner of war.

Following the attack the Aurania, although badly holed, limped home under armed escort to Rothesey Bay, Firth of Clyde.

At the time of Victor's death his wife, Florence, was living at Littleholme, Holton, Oxford with their son Roy.

Florence died in November 1994 at the age of eighty two. Their son Roy died in September 1992.

Sarah Emma Pancott died in 1934 and James Pancott in 1949. They are buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's, Great Haseley.

The name of Victor Alexander Pancott is inscribed on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Chatham, Kent. The memorial is dedicated to those who fell in the 1939-45 war and have no other grave than the sea.

Victor Pancott's memorial citation reads:

"Pancott A.B. Victor Alexander C/J 108399 R.N. H.M.S Aurania. 21st October 1941. Son of James Pancott and Sarah Emma Pancott; husband of Florence Beatrice Pancott of Holton, Oxfordshire."

Victor Pancott was posthumously awarded The 1939-45 War Medal and The 1939-45 Star for service on operations.

The epitaph over the Chatham Naval Memorial Gates is taken from Ecclesiasticus; "All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times."

GERALD WILLIAM HINTON



Gerald Hinton was born in December 1924, the only child of William Hinton from Chiselhampton and Lily Gertrude Jones, who came from Woodford Bridge in Essex. By 1911 William and Lily had settled in Great Haseley where William had found work with Stanley Hawken, a local farmer and landowner who lived at Church Farm, Rectory Road. William and Lily lived with Gerald in the first of Mr. Hawken's brick built cottages at the fork of Latchford Lane and the road to Peggs Farm.

Gerald attended Great Haseley Endowed School where he was regarded by his teachers as a well behaved, conscientious and hard working pupil, with a quiet and reserved, but determined manner.

On leaving school Gerald worked as an agricultural labourer both for Mr Hawken and other local farmers. Gerald had a particular interest in pig husbandry, at

one time keeping pigs on 'Captain's Piece', a small field immediately opposite the Thame Road entrance to the Playing Field.

At the age of eighteen Gerald Hinton enlisted as a Private in the 10th Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment (Princess Charlotte of Wales).

The 10th Battalion took part in the invasion of Sicily in July 1943, suffering heavy casualties at Fossa Bottacetto. From October 1943 until the end of January 1944 they were in continuous action on the Italian mainland against German forces defending the Gustav Line which ran from the River Garagliano in the west to the Sangro River on the Adriatic coast.

At the beginning of February 1944 the 10th Battalion took part in the allied seaborne landings at Anzio, a campaign to secure a bridgehead sixty miles behind German lines, from which the allies would break out and capture Rome.

Within days the initial bridgehead had been secured and the 10th Battalion were sent to defend the perimeter at Carroceto, ten miles north of Anzio.

It was at Carroceto, on 16th February 1944, that the German counter attack on the Anzio salient took place.

The correspondent of the American Forces Newspaper, 'The Stars and Stripes', described the intensity and ferocity of the counter attack:

"German armour and infantry, reinforced by a great artillery barrage and Luftwaffe support, made an assault which Berlin Radio said rivalled the heaviest fighting in Europe since the end of World War One.

German sources said that preceding their attacks on the northern part of the bridgehead was the greatest artillery barrage of the Italian campaign.

The German High command admitted that the British were holding on at Carroceto. Allied and German tanks and infantry were locked in a bitter struggle as Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's British forces, after holding violent enemy thrusts, launched a counter attack."

Gerald Hinton was killed in action at Carroceto on 18th February 1944. He was nineteen years of age.

Gerald William Hinton is buried in the Florence War Cemetery, Provincia di Firenze, Toscana, Italy. His memorial citation reads:

"Hinton Pte. Gerald William. 14570266. 10th Battalion The Royal Berkshire Regiment. 18th February 1944. Age 19. Son of William and Lily Gertrude Hinton of Great Haseley, Oxfordshire."

Gerald Hinton was posthumously awarded The War Medal 1939-45, The 1939-45 Star and The Italy Star for operational service.

The allies finally broke out of the Anzio salient on 23rd May 1944 when the German army made an ordered retreat. Rome was liberated on 4th June 1944.

The 10th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment was disbanded in May 1944. After ten months of continuous action on the Italian front Battalion strength had been reduced to just forty men.

DALE EDWARD GOSTICK



'It is with deep sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Marine Dale Gostick, of 3 Troop Armoured Support Company, Royal Marines, in Afghanistan on Sunday 25 May 2008.'

Dale Gostick was serving as a Viking operator when he was killed in action at the Sangin crossing of the Helmand River, southern Helmand province, Afghanistan. His troop were returning to their Forward Operating Base, after providing support to 2 PARA Battle Group, when the Viking he was driving struck a suspected mine. Despite the efforts of the medical team Dale was pronounced dead at the scene. It was his third operational tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Dale Gostick was born on 19th June 1985 to John and Kathryn (Katie) Elizabeth Gostick (nee Smith). John, a builder by profession, had been raised in Garsington and Kathryn, a health and well being practitioner, came from Great Haseley. Dale was their second child, and a brother for their eldest son Ryan.

Dale attended St, Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School in Thame and then Wheatley Park Comprehensive School at Holton near Wheatley. Dale was an outgoing and gregarious boy, always in and out of mischief and usually getting away with it, but also funny, gentle and kind. He had a passion for sports and games, and as a teenager he developed into the fittest of sportsmen. He ran and cycled and took up rugby, playing in the front row for Wheatley Rugby Club. To his friends he was a 'lovely lad', and affectionately known as 'Master Chief General of the Universe.'

Dale matured into a fine young man. On leaving school he decided to follow the same career path as his father and join the Royal Marines. His fitness, strength of will and determination took him through the extreme rigours of selection and training at the Royal Marines Base near Lympstone in Devon, and to wear the coveted 'green beret' of The Royal Marines.

For his tours of duty in Afghanistan Dale was awarded both The Operational Service Medal for Afghanistan and The International Security Assistance Force Medal for Service in Afghanistan.

The funeral of Dale Edward Gostick took place on Thursday 12th June 2008 at St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley. The village was closed for the occasion and one hundred and fifty Royal Marines lined the route from his home in Mill Lane to St Peter's. Dale was carried to the church on a horse drawn hearse, followed by a silent procession of three hundred villagers.

At his funeral service family, friends and comrades from the Marines spoke of his zest for and love of life, of his joy and laughter, and his heightened sense of comradeship and companionship in all things. The Rector, the Reverend Victor Story, reminded all those present that 'We have lost someone precious, and we know it.'

Dale's life is commemorated at the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre in Devon where there is a plaque to his memory.

Dale is also remembered on The Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, Airedale, Staffordshire. His name is one of 16,000 men and women from the armed and merchant services who have lost their lives in conflict since the end of the Second World War.

Dale Edward Gostick is buried in the churchyard of St Peter's, Great Haseley. The epitaph on his gravestone bears the inscription:

*DALE EDWARD GOSTICK
MARINE PO62818X
ROYAL MARINE*

25TH MAY 2008 AGE 22

*NO MAN IS A MAN
UNLESS HE MAKES THE WORLD
A BETTER PLACE*

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS.

Other Lives

There are other Haseley lives whose names are not on the war memorial but were also casualties of war. Their biographies are included here.

JAMES JORDAN



Not all the Haseley men who died in the First World War are commemorated on the war memorial. The name of James Jordan is not there, yet he was one of those who brought most honour to the village, winning the Military Cross in the spring of 1918 after four years of active service. He was killed on the Somme in August of the same year.

The reason his name is absent from the war memorial is that his father had moved away to London before James was born. The family came from Standhill (written phonetically as "Standal" in the parish register), where his grandfather James was born in 1821. This James married Mary Fletcher in 1845, and their second son, another James, was born in 1852. The men in the family were agricultural labourers like most of the population. Grandfather James rose to become a farm bailiff, but the young James decided to try his luck in the city. In the census of 1881 he is shown as married to a London girl, Liza, and living in Mayfair, in the registration district of St. George's, Hanover Square, where he worked as a butler. Two of his sisters, both born in Great Haseley, (although this has been mistranscribed as Hanley in the census), were staying at the time, whether permanently or just for a visit, so they evidently kept in close touch, and indeed James and Elizabeth's four-year-old daughter was staying in Great Haseley with her grandparents.

There were several Jordan families in the area, and this one does not seem to have been related to the Jordans of Latchford, whose best known representatives were Edwin (1825-74), landlord of the Crown Inn, and his wife Elizabeth (Bracey) who succeeded him.

The youngest James was born in London in 1882, and is duly recorded in the census of 1891. Ten years later his parents had moved to Rutland as servants in a big house, but by then the young man had joined the army. He clearly loved horses: he started in the Royal Horse Guards, where he rose to be Corporal of Horse, and then in January 1915 he transferred to the 5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's) Dragoon Guards. His regiment served on the Western front throughout the war, as part of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, at Mons, Ypres, Arras, and finally at the Somme.

In April 1918, by which time he was a Second Lieutenant, he was awarded the Military Cross, with the citation in the Gazette reading: "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in carrying out a most difficult mounted patrol under fire, and bringing back a valuable report." He was killed in action a few months later, and is buried in Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, leaving a widow in Slough.

His father seems to have died before 1911, when his mother is recorded as living alone back at their old London address. His grandmother had died in 1899, and his grandfather in 1908, in the Thame Union Workhouse. His grandparents must have been very proud of him, even though they did not live to see his war service. Some pious and presumably better-off member of the family erected two memorial stones in the churchyard, one large one for Mary and James, and a smaller, matching one for the soldier, which bears this inscription:

*In Ever Loving Memory of
LIEUT JAMES JORDAN MC
5TH DRAGOON GUARDS
FORMERLY ROYAL HORSE GUARDS
GRANDSON OF
JAMES AND MARY JORDAN
KILLED IN ACTION
AUGUST 8TH 1918
AFTER 4 YEARS ACTIVE SERVICE
AGED 37 YEARS
INTERRED IN FRANCE*

ANTHONY JOHN MUIRHEAD



Anthony John Muirhead was born on 4th November 1890 in Henley. His parents, who were married at Waterstock in 1887, were Lionel Boulton Campbell Lockhart Muirhead and Grace Mary Ashurst. Anthony had an elder sister, Charis Elizabeth Fosca Muirhead, who had been born at Folkestone, Kent, in 1888.

The census return of 1891 shows that the Muirhead family were then living at 'The Cottage' in Hambleton together with five servants. By 1901 they had moved to Haseley Court, Little Haseley, with seven servants and Anthony's aunt Annie Boulton. The census of that year records Lionel Muirhead's occupation as 'Living on own means.'

Anthony was educated at Eton College, The Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and then at Magdalen College, Oxford (1912-14).

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Anthony volunteered for war service. The London Gazette of 25th August 1914 shows that he had been gazetted as a Captain in The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars.

Anthony Muirhead served with distinction both in Italy and France. In 1917 he was awarded the Military Cross. At the end of the war, while serving as a Brigade Major of the 119th Infantry Brigade at Armentieres, he was awarded a Bar to his Military Cross. He was also 'Mentioned in Dispatches' on three occasions.

Between 1919 and 1920 Anthony served with the Lithuanian army. On returning home he re-enlisted in the British army as an officer in the Territorial Army. In 1924 he became a Major in the 100th (Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry), Field Brigade, Royal Field Artillery and in 1936 was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. In 1939 he transferred to the 53rd Anti-Tank Regiment of The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars.

Anthony Muirhead was elected as Conservative Member of Parliament for the Wells Division of Somerset in the General Election of May 1929, serving until his death in 1939.

By 1931 Anthony's personal qualities and political acumen had been brought to the attention of Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald who appointed him Personal Private Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Anthony had long been passionate about rural affairs and the countryside, as had his parents and his sister Charis. The Muirhead family owned and farmed land in the Haseleys and were later to endow both the playing fields (recreation ground) and the village hall for the use of the residents of the two villages.

Anthony was a prescient advocate of town and country planning so as to provide 'a balance between measures for protecting the countryside and prescriptions for commercial and industrial development.' In 1931, as chairman of Oxfordshire Regional Planning Committee, he had received the Abercrombie report on town and country planning in Oxfordshire. The authors of the report wrote of him 'We record our gratitude to Major Anthony Muirhead whose help and advice have been an inspiration and encouragement to us.'

In June 1935 Anthony was promoted to Under Secretary of State at The Ministry of Labour. The 'Spectator' magazine of 20th June 1935 observed 'This will be a popular appointment. Muirhead has the strength of character and shrewd common sense combined with a conciliatory manner, qualities most needed when feelings run high. Many regard him as a future leader of the Tory Party.'

In June 1937 Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appointed Anthony as Under Secretary of State at the Air Ministry, a critical post at a time when the threat of war was looming in Europe. In an editorial of 3rd June 1937 the influential 'Flight' magazine expressed its view on his appointment. 'Anthony Muirhead is a stranger to us but in the short term he has made a name for himself in official life and it is a compliment to him to be given a post in a ministry which more

than any other looks to the future and offers opportunities to young men of ability.'

Flight magazine's assessment of Anthony Muirhead was well judged. He proved to be an energetic and effective Minister for Air, driving the modernisation and expansion of The Royal Air Force. This epitaph would be written in the skies over southern England during the summer and autumn of 1940.

In 1938 Anthony was transferred to the post of Under Secretary of State for India and Burma, a position he held until the outbreak of war in September 1939 when he resigned to take up military duties.

Anthony John Muirhead took his own life at Haseley Court on 29th October 1939, purportedly out of a fear that a leg injury would prevent him from seeing active service in World War Two. His funeral service was held at St. Peter's, Great Haseley, on 1st November 1939 and a memorial service for his life two days later at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's in a place recognised as a war grave by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The inscription on his gravestone reads:

Here lyeth the body
of
Anthony John Muirhead M.C. M.P.
Lieutenant Colonel
RA
Born Nov. 4th 1890
Died
Oct. 29th 1939
Suavis est Dominus
In aeternum misericordia
Ejus

(The dedication reads 'The Lord is sweet, his mercy shall be forever.')

WALTER HERBERT CROSS



"The grandson of our village baker is missing. Having flown in more than thirty operational flights he is now posted as missing from our latest attack on Berlin. God send the boy is safe, wherever he may be, for his grandfather loves him dearly, and takes the news philosophically. But we, his friends, know that the news bites deep into him." A.B. Allen 'The Village Schoolmaster' Great Haseley, September 1943.

Pilot Officer Walter Herbert Cross (RAFVR) was killed on 31st August 1943 when his Lancaster bomber was shot down over Germany in a raid on Monchen-Gladbach, then known as Munchen-Gladbach. Walter was an air gunner with 7 Squadron, a pathfinder squadron of the Royal Air Force. He was twenty three years old.

Walter is buried in the Rheinberg war cemetery, Wesel, North Rhine, Westphalia.

Walter Herbert Cross came from a long established Haseley family who owned the bakery and a grocer's shop in Great Haseley. He was the only child of Walter Percival Cross, known as Percy, and Gladys Minnie Cross (nee Short) who came from Abingdon.

Percy Cross was born in 1894 at the bakery in Rectory Road where he lived with his parents, a brother and four sisters. Percy went to Great Haseley School and then joined the Post Office, working in Abingdon and Hemel Hempstead. In 1914 he enlisted in the Signals Section of the Royal Corps of Engineers and served in France throughout World War One.

In July 1918 Walter Percival, on a short home leave from the Western Front, and Gladys Minnie were married at St. Peter's Church, Great Haseley. Percy was demobilised in June 1919 and resumed his pre war career at Hemel Hempstead Post Office and then at Goring village, where their son Walter Herbert was born on 22nd June 1920.

Walter Herbert was known to the family as 'Bubbles', a family name given in recognition of his likeness to the boy in the portrait by Sir John Millais. In all other respects Walter was like his father. He was a keen and enthusiastic sportsman, with a particular aptitude for football, and on leaving school he decided to join the Post Office where he worked for six years. Walter was also a frequent and much loved visitor to the homes of his wider family in Great Haseley, staying often with his aunts, uncles and grandparents.

In the late autumn of 1941 Walter enlisted in the Royal Air Force and commissioned as a Pilot Officer with the Volunteer Reserve. He trained as an air

gunner and was posted to 7 Squadron based at RAF Oakington just north of Cambridge.

On the night of 30th August 1943 Walter flew his 20th operational mission. His Lancaster was intercepted over Munchen-Gladbach by German night fighter aircraft and shot down. Two members of the crew baled out and were taken prisoners of war. The remaining five members of the crew, including Walter Cross, were killed.

Flying Officer Atkinson, one of the two survivors, later gave an account of the events of the night to the International Red Cross and this was sent to the Air Ministry in London. In December 1943 the Air Ministry forwarded this account by letter to Walter's mother and father:

"This officer says that on the night of August 30th he remembers hearing the captain asking the rear gunner how close the enemy were, and then the rear gunner replying that they were closing in on them. In the resulting action the aircraft sustained such severe damage it necessitated the captain giving the order to bail out.

The Air Bomber and Flight Engineer were the first to jump and, as so often happens, they were the only two who escaped with their lives.

F/O Atkinson says that just when he opened the escape hatch, preparatory to jumping, he thinks the wing must have fallen off, as the aircraft fell into a violent lurch, pinning him to the ceiling and then dropping him through the escape hatch.

We feel perhaps the knowledge that your son's death must have been mercifully quick may help to sustain you in your tragic loss."

On 7th September 1943 Walter Cross, together with the other four members of his crew and thirty four members of nine other bomber crews were given a military funeral in Munchen-Gladbach civilian cemetery. They were buried in a communal grave since none of them could be separately identified.

In the autumn of 1948 the remains of all thirty nine aircrew were re-interred in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Rheinberg.

Walter was posthumously awarded The War Medal 1939-45, The 1939-45 Star and the Air Crew Europe Star with Bomber Command Clasp.

Walter's name does not appear on the village war memorial as he was born outside the Haseley Parish boundary and never permanently resided in the Haseleys. His life is commemorated in the church of St. Peter's Great Haseley, where a painting of 'The Last Supper' is dedicated to his name. He is also remembered on the gravestone of his paternal grandparents, Walter Herbert Cross and Millicent Bartlett Cross, who are buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's. His inscription reads 'Walter Herbert Cross P/O RAFVR who died on active service Aug. 31 1943.'

Walter's memorial at the Rheinberg Cemetery reads:

"Cross, Pilot Offr. (Air Gnr.) Walter Herbert, 148485 RAF (VR) 7Sqn. 31st August 1943. Age 23. Son of Walter Percival and Gladys Minnie Cross of Banbury, Oxfordshire.

In March 1995 Ivy Edith Cross, resident of Greystones , Great Haseley, and Walter's last surviving aunt died at the age of ninety one. In her will she bequeathed a field, 'The Cross Field', given to the Haseleys as a play area for the children of the two villages.

"If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."

John McCrae

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Any errors of fact or judgement which remain in the booklet are ours.

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