

In Remembrance of a Call To Arms

28th July 2014 sees the centenary of the outbreak of World War I, a global conflict centred in Europe which lasted until 11th November 1918. Until the approach of World War II in 1939, it was called simply the World War or the Great War and is also often referred to as 'the war to end all wars'.

WWI was a turning point in world history. It claimed the lives of over 16 million people across the globe and impacted on the lives of everyone. Almost 887,000 UK military personnel were killed plus another 109,000 civilians as a result of direct military action, famine, disease or accident; 2.19% of the UK population died during the war.

Is there an interesting or unusual memorial, monument or individual headstone in your cemetery or garden of remembrance (or for which you have responsibility but is sited elsewhere) that commemorates and honours those who lost their life, military or civilian, as a direct result of the hostilities?

The editor hopes to feature a selection of images in the Summer issue of The Journal which will be published in June prior to the anniversary of the outbreak of this horrendous conflict. Please send your image with details of the name of the site where it stands, brief details of the inscription if not legible on the image and any interesting facts that you may know about the memorial by Friday 28th March to rncodes@aol.com

This is the war memorial at St John's Church in the Wiltshire village of West Grimstead – where the editor, a volunteer cemetery grass mower during the growing season, lives with around 300 other residents.

The population of the village is recorded as 199 in the 1911 census. Below and on the following page a little about the lives, and deaths, of five brave men who never had the opportunity to return.

With acknowledgment to: <http://www.westgrimsteadfamilyhistory.co.uk/>



The simple inscription on the War Memorial reads;

IN MEMORY OF
 Pte R. BEAUCHAMP
 " H. BUNDY
 " W. COOMBS
 " W. GUMBLETON
 " F. LIGHT
 WHO FELL IN THE
 GREAT WAR 1914 – 1918
 R.I.P.

Private Fred Light, 88292. 14th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) was born on the 20th April 1888, the 10th of 13 children. He had originally been part of the Dorset Regiment, Machine Gun Corp (Infantry) but became part of the 14th Battalion in March 1918 when it was first formed. The 14th Battalion was part of the 14th (Light) Division. Sadly the massive German assault which commenced on 21 March 1918 pushed back the British lines some 30 miles and the 14th Battalion, Machine Gun Corp took such heavy casualties that it had to be disbanded. Private Fred Light was one of those casualties. His name was placed on a Red Cross Enquiry list; he may well have been recorded as missing in the first instant but later his body was found.

Pte Fred Light is remembered with honour at the Grand-Seraucourt British Cemetery, Aisne, France.



PRIVATE RALPH BEAUCHAMP 9207, 1st Battalion. Wiltshire Regiment was born 1896 and killed in action in 1915. The following comes from the records of the Wiltshire Regiment;

7th August 1914 enlisted in 5th Battalion: 7th April 1915 embarked: 11th April joined Battalion: 3rd September 1915 Shell wound to the head admitted 7 Field Ambulance. ED/1523: 8th September 1915 back to Duty ED/1716: 26th October 1915 Shrapnell wound VI admitted 76 Field Ambulance ED/3262: 27th October 1915 Gunshot wound in the back admitted NM Casualty Clearing Station. ED/3258: 2nd November 1915 back to Duty. ED/3507: 28th November 1915 Killed in Action.

This extract from the 1st Wiltshire regiment War Diaries;

Sunday 28th November 1915 Belgium, Ploegsteert. In trenches. Useful patrol work done during past 3 nights by 2nd Lieuts Brown, Sharpe and Cordon. The exact strength of enemy's wire ascertained. The Germans relieved last night, and are active with sniping. Pte Beauchamp Machine Gun Det. was shot through head at 8.30a.m. looking over the parapet. Men working in trenches, no church service held.

Pte Beauchamp is remembered with honour at Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery, Warnton, Hainault, Belgium

SERGEANT HARRY BUNDY, 47384. Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died 31 December 1916. Harry was born in West Grimstead in 1884. He joined the Regular Army enlisting in the Royal Garrison Artillery and was involved in the coastal defences at Portsmouth. By 1911 he'd left the army, married and went to live in Spennymoor, County Durham. It was from there that Harry went to Darlington and enlisted for a second time. He would have been a useful member of the armed forces, experienced as he already was. He became part of the 117th Heavy Battery, RGA and was involved with the heavy guns in Flanders and France. Although the inscription on the West Grimstead War Memorial commemorates Pte Bundy he was, at the time of his death, Sergeant Bundy and was killed in action on 31st December 1916.

His grave is in the Hem Farm Military Cemetery, Hem-Monacu, Somme, France and is listed on the Roll of Honour on the War Memorial in Spennymoor.

PRIVATE WALTER COOMBS "has proved very difficult to research", writes village historian Malcolm Read. "I have spent many hours trying to put together a picture of this Great War soldier.

"At birth he was registered as Walter Henry Coombs but possibly preferred to be known as Henry as, at least twice, he wrote his name officially as Henry Walter Coombs, once on a census return and once in 1914 when he enlisted in the Dorset regiment. It is my belief that Walter Henry Coombs joined the Wiltshire Regiment and was recorded as Henry William Coombs either as a clerical error or as a deliberate action on his part and therefore is listed as H.W. Coombs by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as being killed in action on the 4th July 1916 with no known grave but remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. It is sad that it seems absolute written proof of these facts is beyond research. Many WW1 records did not survive the bombing of WW2."

PRIVATE WILLIAM GEORGE GUMBLETON, 23662, 2nd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment was born 1891. He enlisted in Salisbury. On 23rd July 1916 he embarked from Southampton, on 30th July 1916 he joined the battalion as re-enforcements from Rouen, on 18th October 1916 he was killed in action. Private Gumbleton died just 81 days after joining his unit.

An extract from the 2nd Wiltshire Regiment War Diaries on that day and from the French trenches where he died reads; *The artillery shelled heavily the enemy positions until 2.40am when the bombardment was intense. Previous to this hour C & D coys [companies] were formed up in waves, each company having two platoons in the first wave and two in the second wave. Both of these were in advance of the front line. A coy formed the third wave, lying behind the parapets of our front line, and B coy were ready to move up from support line. At 3.40am the 21st Brigade attacked, the 2nd Wilts on the left, the 18th Kings L'pools in the centre and the 2nd Yorks on the right, with the 19th Manchesters in support. Very little information forthcoming. Apparently C & D coys reached their objectives but failed to take them. A coy advanced but were held up by wire and were eventually driven back. B coy advanced but lost direction and part of the coy...crossed the SUNKEN ROAD and got into the first German lines.*

Pte William Gumbleton is remembered with honour on the Thiepval Memorial, northern France.

Read 'Dunstable War Graves', a very interesting presentation by Kate Dimmock to the ICCM Learning Convention 2013, in the Spring 2014 Journal mailing on Monday 3rd March.

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