



The Village of Aston Abbots

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

The Soldier Lads of Aston Abbotts

Introduction

The German army invaded Belgium on August 3rd 1914. The next day, August 4th, Britain declared war on Germany.

The village of Aston Abbotts sent 51 of its men to fight in the Great War. Only 39 survived.

The following describes those men from Aston Abbotts who fought and died for our country in both world wars.

In Flanders' Fields
John McCrae, 1915

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' Fields.

War Memorial

Alfred Castle

George Alfred Castle was born in 1897 in Wasperton, Warwickshire and was baptised in the local parish church, St John the Baptist, on the 8th August of that year.

In 1911 he was still living in Wasperton with his Father Thomas, a Hay Trusser and his mother Caroline (nee Rose). He was 1 of 7 children living in the 3 room property at the time. As at that date Thomas and Caroline had had 9 children, 8 of which were still alive.

Aged 13, Alfred was listed as a Poultry Feeder & Errand boy.

His elder brother, Thomas Henry Castle, also served in WW1 firstly in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment then in the Army Veterinary Corps.

He enlisted in Aylesbury as Private 266612, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, 2nd/1st Bucks Battalion.

The battalion was part of 61st (2nd South Midland) Division. The first major action in which the Division was engaged turned out to be an unmitigated disaster. An attack was made on 19 July 1916 at Fromelles, a subsidiary action to the much larger battle taking place further south on the Somme. The Division suffered very heavy casualties for no significant gain and no enemy reserves were diverted from the Somme. Such was the damage to the Division and its reputation that it was not used again other than for holding trench lines until 1917.

Alfred was killed in action on the 19 July 1916.

He was 19 years old.

His body was never found and he is remembered with honour at the Loos Memorial.

Grave/Memorial Reference: Panel 83 to 85.

William George Clarke

William George Clarke was born in Thornborough, Bucks on the 27 September 1898. He was subsequently baptised 30 October 1898 in St James Aston Abbotts.

The census of 1901 lists him as living in Aston Abbotts the eldest son (of two) of Newman George and Lucy Clarke (nee Kent – they were married in 1897 – Albert T. Kent and William Clarke were in fact 2nd cousins). Newman was a cattleman working for one of the local farms and lived with his family in Church Row, Aston Abbotts.

In 1901 Church Row consisted of 6 houses – ‘all 2 up 2 down’. According to the Census the Clarke family lived in Village House no 7. In the 1960’s houses no 7 & 8 were merged to form 3 Church Row.

Private William George Clarke, 67295 enlisted in Aylesbury and joined the 1/5th (P.O.W.) Battalion (Territorials), Devonshire regiment sometime in late 1915 or early 1916.

William Clark was killed in action on the 8th day of the Battle of the Tardenois 28th July 1918 when he was only 19 years of age.

He is remembered with honour and buried in the Chambrecy British Cemetery, 16 miles south west of Reims, France.

Grave Ref: IV. B. 2.



Ernest H. Harrison

The 1901 census shows Ernest Harrison living in Newington, Southwark. His Father, Robert Birch Harrison, is listed as being a clergyman (born in Liverpool in 1860). Ernest was born in 1892 and his birthplace is listed as Mildenhall, Suffolk but this has replaced a previous entry which reads "Florence, Italy (British Subject)"

Alice Adelaide Parteger was born in 1893 in Dunton. In 1901 she was living with her father & mother - Thomas A & Alice M Parteger and her 2 brothers William & Thomas at Burston Hill Farm. (Along with their governess Ellen Plant)

Alice Parteger married Ernest H Harrison on the 3rd April 1917 in St James Church.

He had enlisted in the 5th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment in 1916 as a Commissioned Officer (2nd Lieutenant) and at sometime transferred over to the 8th Battalion, probably due to their heavy losses during the Battle of the Somme. He entered the war, in France, on 5th December 1916. He was promoted to Lieutenant on the 7th July 1917 and on 24th Sept 1917 was made a temporary Captain whilst employed as a "Brig. Bombing Officer. This temporary arrangement came to an end on 26th Feb 1918. He was finally promoted to full Captain on the 16th September 1918. Two days later, on the 18th September 1918 Captain E H Harrison was killed in action on the first day of The Battle of Épehy.

He is buried in the PERONNE COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION

Grave/Memorial Reference: V. K. 1.

Copy of the notice from The Times 28th September 1918:

*HARRISON – Killed in action on the 18th Sept.
CAPTAIN ERNEST HESKETH HARRISON, East Surrey Regt., younger son of Rev. R.B. and Mrs. Harrison. Purton, Wilts. And dearly loved husband of Alice A. Harrison, Burston Aylesbury, aged 26*

There is a brief mention of him in the History of the East Surrey Regiment, Vol III 1917-19, page 199.

"During the heavy fighting of the previous week the Battalion had suffered the loss of Captains H. S. Todd, M.C. (4th Battn, attd.) and E.H. Harrison (5th Battn. attd).

It therefore seems that he was a 1/5th Battalion officer attached to the 8th Battalion."



Frank Humphreys

Frank Humphreys was born on the 10th April 1894 in Aston Abbots and baptised on the 6th May 1894, in St James.

Frank was the 3rd eldest of 6 children (4 brothers, 1 sister). He was born to John & Emma Humphreys, brother to Ralph (born 1889), Thomas (1891), William (1898) & Albert (1899) who also served in WW1.

Their Father was the Bread maker and Innkeeper of the Bull & Butcher Inn (now Humphreys Close). John Humphreys was born in Wingrave about 1855, his wife Emma Eliza Humphreys was born in 1857 in Islington, London.

The census of 1911 has Frank still living in the Bull & Butcher and his occupation is listed as a 'Journeyman Baker'.

Frank enlisted in Stratford, Essex (he was living in Leytonstone, Essex at the time). He joined the Bedfordshire regiment as a Private - No 18946 possibly into the 8th (Service) Battalion although at the time of his death he is listed as serving in the 6th Battalion.

Frank was awarded the 1914 -1915 star as his battalion was sent to fight in France in October 1915. In April 1917 Frank's battalion was heavily involved in the second phase of the Arras offensive - The second Battle of the Scarpe which ran from April 23rd to April 24th 1917.

Frank died on the 23rd April 1917 two months short of his 23rd birthday.

His body was never found and he is remembered with honour at the Arras memorial his name carved in stone in Bay 5.

Stanley William Jeffs

Stanley William Jeffs was born in December 1888, in Rowsham. The census of 1891 has him living in Aston Abbotts next door to the Blacksmiths in what is now called Horseshoe Cottage, the eldest child of Herbert (Agricultural Labourer, born Wingrave 1866) & Mary Jeffs (born Rowsham 1867).

By 1901 the family (by now extended to 6 children) had moved to New Zealand Cottages. Herbert Jeffs is listed as a Carter on a farm. Stanley's Grandfather, John Jeffs (born 1831), lived two doors away. His brother, Arthur James Jeffs, also joined up and survived, he died in April 1989 a month short of his 102nd birthday.

Stanley was joined by 4 brothers and sisters including Arthur Jeffs who also served.

The 1911 census lists the family living in New Zealand Cottages with Stanley's occupation described as 'Horseman on Farm' he census also states that he was one of 10 children.

Like Alfred Castle, Stanley enlisted in Aylesbury in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, 2nd/1st Battalion. His Medal Index Card (MIC) shows that he did not receive the 1914-1915 star (the medal was awarded for services rendered in the war between the 5th August, 1914 and the 31st December, 1915, both dates inclusive) Therefore he must have joined in early 1916. It's quite possible that Stanley, his brother Arthur and Alfred Castle joined up together.

Unfortunately for Private 4219 Stanley Jeffs he didn't survive the war. He died from wounds received on 24th July 1916 (5 days after Alfred Castle was killed in action at the Battle of Fromelles) in a casualty clearing hospital in Boulogne Sur Mer.

He is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

Grave Reference VIII.A.143

Albert ('Bertie') Thomas Kent

Albert Thomas Kent (known as Bertie) was born on the 2nd December 1882, Aston Abbotts. He was baptised on the 28th March 1888 in the Methodist Chapel.

In the 1891 census he is listed as living in Aston Abbotts, (aged 8) probably in what was one of the cottages belonging to 'The Firs' (now converted offices), with his Grandfather James Kent (aged 60 – Agricultural labourer – incapacitated) and his mother – Emily Jane Kent (aged 34 – Charwoman). She was previously listed as a 'Straw Plaiter' aged 14 in the 1871 census living in Aston Abbotts and as a servant aged 24 in 1881 for William Manning a farmer of 362 acres, West Park Farm, Wing) No father is mentioned or listed.

The Kent family had long been established in Aston Abbotts. Albert's Great Great Great Grandfather, Thomas Elliot, was born in the village on March 9th 1712.–

By 1901 Albert, now aged 18 and an 'Ordinary Labourer on Farm', is listed as living with his Grandmother Maria Kent (a widow aged 69) in a small village house, '2 up 2 down' (no 54) just before the first of the Temperance Cottages which you can still see today. His Grandfather, James had died in January 1893.

He enlisted in Aylesbury initially as Private 4217, 1/4th Bn., Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. The four figure number denoting the fact that he was in a Territorial Battalion. The TF was renumbered from very late 1916 and most battalions were complete by March 1917. Albert then became Private 266613. With the appearance of both numbers on his MIC it would suggest that Albert was already serving overseas prior to these changes.

Albert was killed in action on the last day of the battle - 22nd June 1918 in Asiago Vicenza, Veneto, Italy. He was 35 years old. He is buried with honour in the Boscon British Cemetery, Italy.

Grave Ref: Plot 3. Row B. Grave 12.



Albert Kent (standing) with his half brother Frederick W Kent (born Aston Abbotts 1878).
Fred survived the war.

Amos Paxton

Born December 1892, Aston Abbotts, Baptised 18 December 1892 St James'

In 1901 Amos Jnr. was living with his 7 siblings. According to the 1901 census they resided in Aston Abbotts 'Cottage no 9' (The census did not list the houses by number and street name; rather they started at one end of the village and followed the same route each time a census was collected) Today this house is now 10 Wingrave Road, a house which is a combination of what was then house no's 9 & 10.

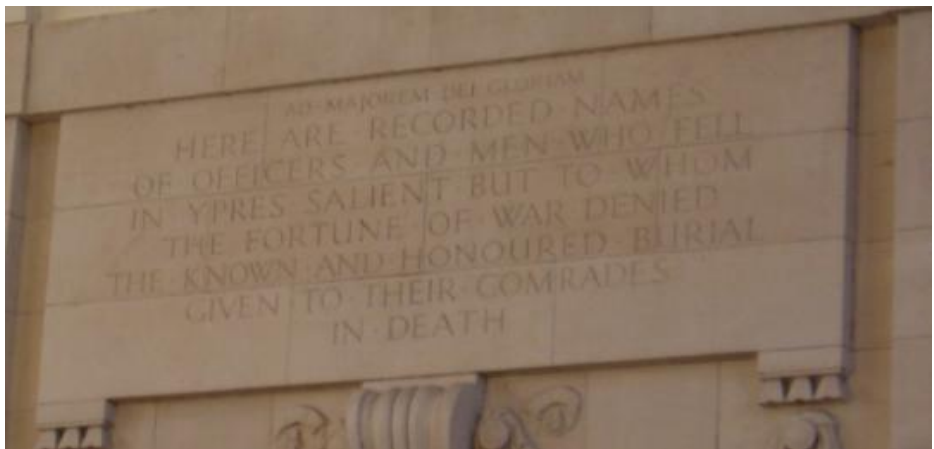
At the outbreak of the war Amos Paxton was in the Grenadier Guards, 2nd Battalion, having enlisted in Bristol.

Rank: Guardsman. Number 15268

Amos Paxton was killed in action on 1st November 1914 in the first battle of Ypres. He was 22 years of age.

His body was never found and as such he is commemorated on the YPRES (MENIN GATE) MEMORIAL.

Memorial Ref: Panel 9 and 11.



Edward John Paxton

Edward John Paxton was born on the 15th November 1897 in Aston Abbotts. He was baptised in St James on Christmas Day 25th December 1897.

Edward was the 10th Child of Amos (Gardener b. Tingewick about 1858) & Harriet Paxton (Nee Mansfield b. Cottisford, Oxon abt 1857). He resided in Aston Abbotts 'Cottage no 9' between 'The Firs' and the village shop. Today this house is now 10 Wingrave Road, a house which is a combination of what was then house no's 9 & 10.

Of the six sons that Amos & Harriet had seen go to war, Edward was the 3rd to be killed. The three other brothers Harry, Albert G and William A also served King and Country and remarkably survived. One can only imagine the tremendous strain, stress and worry that Edward's mother & father must have gone through knowing that all 6 of their sons were fighting in the trenches of World War 1.

Edward joined up in Aylesbury sometime in late 1915, early 1916. He was enlisted as Private 80011 E J Paxton of the 1st Battalion Notts & Derby Regiment also known as the 'Sherwood Foresters'. This battalion was attached to 24th Brigade, 8th Division. In 1918 Edward and the 1st Sherwoods were involved in regular actions at St. Quentin, Rosieres, Villers-Bretonneux and the Aisne.

Edward was killed in action on the 25th August 1918. He was 20 years of age. He died on the day before the start of the Battle of the Scarpe.

Buried La Targette British Cemetery, Neuville-St. Vaast

Grave Ref: III. B. 12.

Walter Paxton

Walter Paxton was the elder brother of Amos Paxton who had died in November 1914.

Walter was born on 28th October 1888 and baptised on 25th November 1888 at St James. He was the 5th child of Amos & Harriet Paxton.

According to the 1891 census they resided in Aston Abbotts 'Cottage no 7' this was between 'The Firs' and the then village shop.

In 1901 the family had grown to include 8 children residing with their parents. His elder brother Harry (born 1884 Hethe, Oxon) was by now working as a Groom in a coach-house near Frimley. His elder sister Ellen (born 1886 in Hethe) was a housemaid at the Vicarage, Aston Abbotts.

Walter enlisted in Bude, Cornwall into the 1st Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He lived in a village called Stratton which was a few miles inland from Bude having married a local Cornish girl, Ellen Woodley in 1912.

Their first child, William A Paxton, was born in 1913 with the second, Edward S Y Paxton, in February 1915 but he unfortunately died soon after. Their third child Edward L Paxton was born about December 1915

Corporal WALTER PAXTON 19352, 1st Bn., Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, was killed in action 7 months later on 23rd July 1916. He was 28 years of age. His regiment at that time was taking part in the second phase of the notorious Battle of the Somme.

His body was never found and he is remembered at the Thiepval Memorial.

Memorial Ref: Pier and Face 6 B.

William 'Wille' Smith

William Walter Smith was born on 12 February, 1895, Aston Abbotts. He was baptised on the 20 March 1895 in the Methodist Chapel.

He was the youngest son (3 brothers, 6 sisters) of Joseph & Eliza Smith (his brothers Ernest & Sydney Smith also served in the Great War). Joseph Smith was born in Wingrave about 1856. Joseph is listed as a cattleman on a farm, living at cottage no 13 (3 houses past the old shop in what is now No. 9, The Green) 7 children were listed as living in Aston Abbotts in 1901. An elder sister, Daisy Annie Smith, is listed as being a servant aged 21 for Baron J Gates a farmer in Aston Abbotts.

Private 22264 'Willie' Smith enlisted in the 6th Battalion, Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry which was part of 60th Brigade, 20th (Light) Division. This Service battalion was formed in 1914 in Oxford but William must have joined it after 1915 as his Medal Index Card does not list the 1914-1915 star.

It was on the first day of this battle, 20th September 1917 that Willie was killed in action. He was 22 years of age.

He is buried in the Poelcapelle British Cemetery which is situated just north of Ypres, Belgium.

Grave Ref: XLVIII. A. 14.



Percy Thompson

Percy John Thompson was born in 1891 in Tring. He was the 4th Child of 6 (4 boys, 2 girls) living in Tring in 1901

He was the son of Samuel Carter & Adelaide Evangeline Thompson (nee Denchfield) they married in 1880. Samuel was listed as a Carpenter & Joiner with his eldest son Harry. At some point between 1901 & 1911 the family had moved to Aston Abbotts.

In the 1911 census Percy is living with his family in Aston Abbotts, his occupation was described as a Horse Dealer.

Adelaide Thompson died on the 2 Sep 1921 in Aston Abbotts

He enlisted in Aylesbury sometime in 1916 initially as Private 5088, 1/1st Bn., Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, Territorial Battalion. When the battalion was renumbered he became Private 5267017.

The regiment was in the same division, 48th (South Midland), as the 1/4th Ox & Bucks in which Albert Kent was fighting. Albert had died in June 1918 in the Battle of Asiago.

During the long pause in serious operations, between the two battles, the French and British Allies carried out sustained raiding and patrol activity. It was during one of these operations on the 18th October 1918 (17 days before the armistice was signed) that Percy Thompson was killed in action.

He was 26 years of age and is buried in the Barenthal Military Cemetery, Italy.

Grave Ref: Plot 2. Row C. Grave 1.

Individual Graves in St James Churchyard

John Richard Higgs

Born December 1881, Aston Abbots

John was the 2nd eldest of 9 children, son of John & Sarah A Higgs. His father John, a coal merchant, was born in Aston Abbots about 1851. His mother Sarah was born in Rowsham in 1851. The eldest child, Sarah A Higgs (b 1873) was by now a servant in Willesden aged 18 listed as a 'Cook/Domestic Servant'

In 1901 John R Higgs was still living at home in what is now 27, The Green and is listed as a 'Groom/Domestic' quite possibly working at either 'The Firs' or 'The Abbey'. By this time his eldest sister had married Joseph Ernest Simmons (b 1871 Aston Abbots) and was living in St Giles, Berkshire. They had a son, Cyril J Simmons, who fought and survived World War 1.

John married Nancy Louisa Crocker in Kintbury, Berkshire in 1905. The 1911 census has them living in Kintbury with 2 children. John is listed as a domestic chauffeur for the local Denford Park Estate.

Private J R HIGGS

M2/148126, Royal Army Service Corps

Died aged 38, 8 October 1919, Aston Abbots

Buried Aston Abbots (St. James) Churchyard

John Humphreys

Born May 1920, Aston Abbotts

Lance Sergeant JOHN WILLIAM HUMPHREYS

5384450, 7th Bn., Parachute Regiment, A.A.C.

Son of Thomas and Christina Humphreys, of Aston Abbotts.

Buried Aston Abbotts (St. James) Churchyard

John's Father, Thomas Humphreys, was born in Wingrave in Dec 1890 the son of John & Emma Humphreys and elder brother to Frank Humphreys (1894 - 1917) whose name appears on the War Memorial having died in WW1. (Frank was John's Uncle)

Lance-Sergeant: appointment originally given to corporals acting in the rank of sergeant

He died on 29 June 1945 aged 25 years of age and is buried in the Churchyard at St James.

With thanks to the East Surrey Museum for permission to use photo of E H Harrison

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