

LITTLE MILTON REMEMBERS

1914 - 1918

LITTLE MILTON'S WORLD WAR ONE DEAD REMEMBERED

WW1 ended one hundred years ago, at 11.00 am on 11TH November 1918, known from then on as Armistice Day. 887,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers lost their lives in the conflict. Many bodies were never recovered—they have no known burial place.

Little Milton lost ten men in WW1. Eight of them are remembered on the war memorial tablet inside our Church. Unlike Great Haseley and Great Milton, we have no external war memorial.

Jane and I have visited the graves or memorials of nine of the ten known dead over the last few years and with information gleaned from the 1911 census and school records would like to tell you a little about them.

Corporal E J Adams, No 19706



Edwin Joseph Adams was the eldest son of Mary Jane Adams, a widow, living in Little Milton. He was an "under carter" on a farm; his brother Jack, a farm labourer was five years younger, and they had an older sister, who was a housemaid. Edwin took part in the Somme Offensive which began on 1st July 1916. On the first day alone, 19,000 men were killed. After six months, the Allies had advanced six miles, sustaining 400,000 casualties.

Edwin was killed on 26th August 1916, aged 26 years, and is buried in Sucrerie Cemetery alongside his comrades from the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

Lance Corporal Frank Chown, No 60728

Frank joined the Royal Engineers in 1914. The 1911 Census shows that he lived at Hill Top House on what is now the A329, with his older sister Edith and younger brother William. His occupation was recorded as a farmer, so perhaps he was a little wealthier than the average person in Little Milton. Frank had no children.

Frank served for four years, and was 40 years of age when he was killed, on 27th September 1918, just six weeks before the end of the war. He is buried in the Sanders Keep Cemetery, which is close to the Canal du Nord, a wide stretch of water which formed part of the German defensive Hindenburg line, and which the British Army had to cross.

Corporal Charles George Colton, No 202284

The 1911 census shows Charles, a single man of 21, living at 26 Field Street, Bicester with his parents. He was a carpenter and had a younger sister, Ethel. Between 1911 and the start of the war in 1914, he married Elizabeth Clarke of Winslow Bucks, and it appears they moved to Little Milton. School records show that Phyllis Mabel Colton, born 27th July 1914, started at Little Milton School on 23rd September 1918. We have presumed that Phyllis is their daughter.

Charles died on 13th January 1918, aged 28, and is buried in Epehey Wood Farm Cemetery near Cambrai. He was commemorated on a wooden plaque which hung in the Methodist Chapel and which has now been relocated to Great Milton Methodist Chapel.



School records show that Phyllis left Little Milton School in April 1923, and moved to Wootton, returning a few months later. Life must have been very difficult for widows.

Private Alexander Abraham Harris, No 20895



Alexander Harris is not named on the memorial tablet in the church. A Thame resident recently passed on information about him. Alexander's birth was registered in Thame in 1897 and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) reports that he died on 3rd September 1916, aged 19.

Alexander's gravestone states that he was the son of Sarah Harris of Little Milton and the late Abraham Harris; but they were not reflected on the 1911 census.

Alexander was killed during the Somme offensive and joins the 72,336 British and South African soldiers who have no known resting places and whose names are inscribed on the Theipval Memorial.

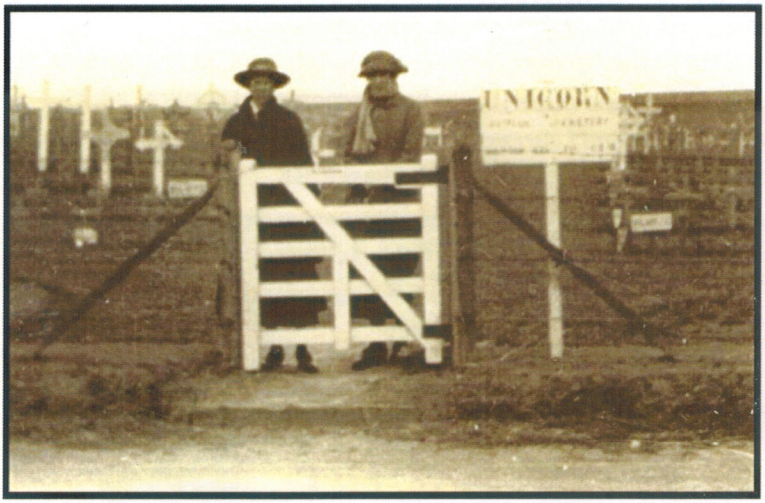
Lance Corporal Albert John Money, No 92782

Albert was also a carpenter and joiner and enlisted with the Royal Engineers. Again, like quite a few of the Little Milton war dead, he was middle-aged. He had been married to Amelia for at least twelve years, and the 1911 census reveals that he left two sons, Albert and Ronald, aged 11 and 7.

In March 1918, the Germans launched their biggest attack of the war (Operation Michael). This was eventually repulsed by the Allies, the Germans were defeated and sued for peace. Albert was killed on 30th March 1918. His body was never found and he is remembered on the Pozieres Memorial, above the town of Albert.

Private Thomas George Stevens, No 285604

The 1911 Census describes Thomas and his younger brother William as "scholars", the sons of Tom (occupation Cowman) and Harriet Stevens. Thomas was born in 1899, and died on 21st June 1917, at the age of 19. It is possible that he was one of the 2,277,623 conscripted into the army in WW1. Thomas is buried in Unicorn Cemetery, a name taken from the emblem of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, and rests a few kilometres from Charles Colton.



The family of a casualty visiting Unicorn Cemetery in the 1920s. https://greatwarphotos.com/2012/01/29/unicorn-cemetery-vendhuile-a-family-returns-

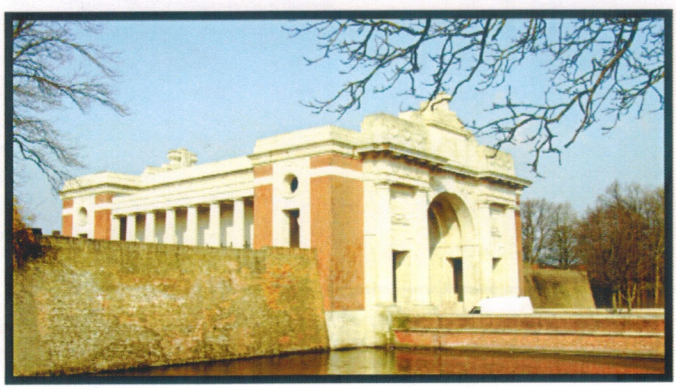
Sergeant Cecil Ralph Swanborough, GS/12923

This entry on our memorial is puzzling because the CWGC entry refers to his parents as living in Newbury. Cecil was born in Devizes, Wiltshire, and died on 1st September 1917, aged 19. He is buried in Dar Es Salam, Tanzania. The British and South African forces were fighting the Germans in German East Africa (now Tanzania). Many soldiers died from tropical diseases rather than in combat. If anybody is holidaying in Tanzania/ Zanzibar, please spare the time to visit his grave.

Sergeant George Wood, No 6147

George Wood is the only Little Milton soldier to be killed in Flanders, Belgium. The 1901 census shows the Wood family living in Rofford. His mother and father were older parents, being 53 when he was 16. George had older and younger brothers, who perhaps also went to war but survived.

George was killed on 31st October 1914, just three months after the beginning of the war. His body was never found, and he joins 55,000 Allied Soldiers with no known resting place, who are memorialised on the walls of the Menin Gate in the town of Ieper (Ypres), Belgium. Every evening at 8.00 pm, the Belgian firemen of the town hold a memorial service, which includes an extract from Laurence Binyon's poem "For the Fallen" and the Bugle player's poignant rendition of the Last Post.



Private Victor Henry James Woodard, No TR7/28185

Victor's grave is in Cuddesdon Church, but he is not named on either the Cuddesdon or Little Milton War Memorials. CWGC records show that he was the son of Edward and Minnie Woodward of Little Milton. The 1911 census showed Victor living in Basingstoke with his parents. Minnie was born in Wheatley so perhaps the family moved to Little Milton after 1911. Victor was their only child at the time of the census, and he died in October 1918 aged 18. Forces Records suggest that he joined up as a boy soldier, and was never posted to the frontline.

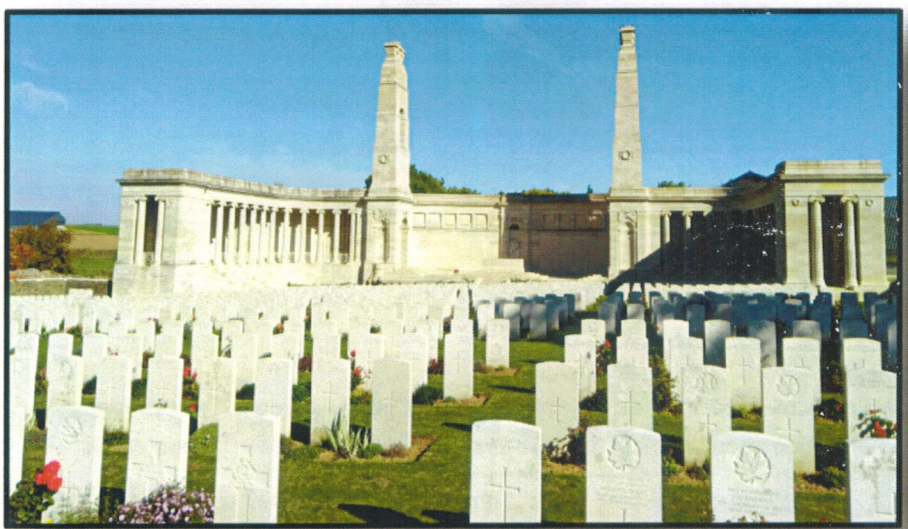
Private James Woodwards, No 96281

There is an additional poignancy surrounding the death of 37 year old James Woodwards.

James was born in Chalgrove, the son of James and Emily Woodwards, and was married to Elizabeth, who was originally from Brill. In 1911, James is recorded as a Farm Labourer, and father of two young children, Jesse and Dorothy. The admissions register of Little Milton School shows their enrolment, together with a third child, another daughter, Sybil who was born in 1913.

James joined the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1914, and fought with them in Salonica, Greece, against the Bulgarians. After four years service, he was killed on 4th November 1918, just one week before the end of the war. James is remembered on the beautiful Vis-En-Artois Memorial, near to Arras.

James is mistakenly listed as Woodward on the Little Milton Memorial tablet.





We hope to put a small display into St James Church. If you have any more information about our lost soldiers and their families, please do contact us.

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