

THE MEN OF OLDBURY WHO DIED
IN THE 1914 - 1918 WAR

VOLUME 1:

THE MEN ON LANGLEY PARISH
WAR MEMORIAL WINDOW



At Zion United Reformed Church, Langley Green

Langley Local History Society
2015

Preface

The research on these soldiers was carried out in 2015 by Roy Bates, Chris Cooper, Cathy Cooper, Malcolm Darby, Alan Daniels, Joyce Daniels, Terry Daniels, Suzie Drew, Lynn Paynter and Janet Seward.

This booklet was compiled as part of a project in 2014-15 to restore and relocate two Langley War Memorials, a cross and a stained glass window. These were formerly at the closed church of St Michael and All Angels, Langley Green. It records the history of the window and the life stories of the sixty-four men who lost their lives in the war and whose names feature on the window. All these men had connections to Langley Parish, but not all the men of Langley Parish who died in the war are included on the window.

This is intended as the first volume of a series to be issued during the centenary period of the First World War, 2014 to 2018 relating the stories of Oldbury men who were killed.

The project was partly funded by a public appeal, and partly by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, specifically for restoring and framing the window. Langley Local History Society is grateful to the many individuals who made donations to the Langley Memorials Appeal Fund, and to the following organisations who staged events or made contributions: Heritage Lottery Fund, Langley Community First Fund, Diocese of Birmingham, Zion United Reformed Church, Langley Conservative Club, Western Front Association (Wolverhampton), Oldbury Branch of the Royal British Legion, Bristnall Hall Academy, Oldbury Academy, Brian Dakin and friends for a concert.

The booklet will be made available for consultation at Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Langley Public Library and Oldbury Public Library. It will also be available to read it on, and download it from, the website: historyofoldbury.co.uk.

To contact Langley Local History Society with information or comments on the Oldbury men who died in the 1914 - 18 war please e-mail: general@historyofoldbury.co.uk or ring: 0121 558 9100.

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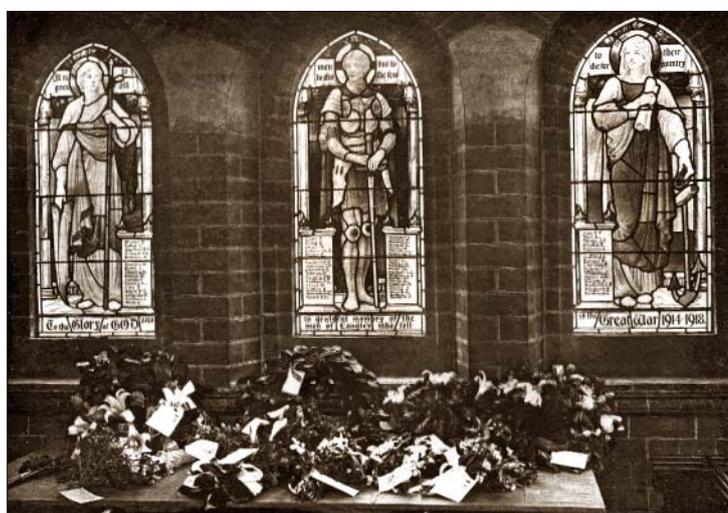
Sixty-four Names

Name on window	Soldier	Page
Baker, C	Clifford Baker	1
Barnsley, A	Albert Barnsley	2
Barnsley, W	William Barnsley	3
Bayliss, W R	Walter Herbert Bayliss	4
Bennett, P F	Percival Frederick Bennett	5
Berry, J	James Berry	6
Blewitt, G H	George Henry Blewitt	7
Branch, W	William James Branch	8
Brown, B	Bertram Brown	9
Comley, E	Ernest Comley	10
Cowley, F	Frank Cowley	11
Cox, E	Edward Cox	12
Doyle, W T	Thomas Walter Doyle	13
Edwards, W	William Edwards	14
Fanthom, T	Thomas Fanthom	15
Frith, C	Charles Frith	16
Gilbert, G W	George William Gilbert	17
Gould, H	Henry Gould	18
Gould, T	Thomas Walter Gould	19
Grove, J	Joseph Grove	20
Hackwood, W	William Hackwood	21
Heeley, T	Thomas Walter Heeley	22
Holmes, J C H	John Charles Holland Holmes	23
Jennings, J H	Joseph Henry Jennings	24
Johnson, G J	Joseph Johnson	25
<i>Johnson, W</i>	<i>William Johnson (1)</i>	26
	<i>or William Johnson (2)</i>	27
Lawton, T	Thomas Lawlor	28
Lloyd, C P W	Cecil Percy William Lloyd	29
Lloyd, W	William Lloyd	30
Ludlow, J E	John Edwin Ludlow	31
<i>Marshall, G W</i>	<i>G W Marshall</i>	32
Maskell, L	Lewis Maskell	33
Mobberley, W	William Mobberley	34
Moore, D G	Denis Garrett Moore	35
Mordan, E	Edward Mordan	36
Mortimer, J	John Mortimer	37
Murray, E	Edward Murray	38

Neale, T	Thomas Neale	39
Oakley, C	Cyril Oakley	40
Parkes, T L	Thomas Leonard Parkes	41
Perry, J	Joseph Perry	42
Pickering, F	Frank Pickering	43
Plant, A	Albert Edward Plant	44
<i>Ricketts, J</i>	<i>John Ricketts</i>	45
Rigg, H T	Herbert Farrer Rigg	46
Robbins, H	Harold Robbins	47
Round, J	Joseph Round	48
Sadler, J J	John Jordan Sadler	49
Siddaway, F	Frederick Sidaway	50
Slim, L	Leonard Slim	51
Slim, T F	Thomas Frederick Slim	52
Smart, A E	Alfred Edward Smart	53
Smart, A	Arthur Smart	54
Stevens, A	Arthur Stevens	55
Stride, J J	John James Stride	56
Thornloe, A	Arthur Thorneloe	57
Turner, W	William Turner	58
Vickers, E	Ernest Vickers	59
<i>Walker, J W</i>	<i>George William Walker</i>	60
Walters, J	Joseph Walters	61
Williams, J	James Robbins Williams	62
Winterton, C P	Charles Pattison Winterton	63
Woodcock, R	Robert Woodcock	64
Yardley, S F	Samuel Frederick Yardley	65

Note: names in *italics* are unidentified or uncertain

A very early photograph of the window, probably taken at the original dedication in April 1921 showing only sixty-one names. The three right-hand names panels have a space at the bottom. These spaces were later filled by G W Gilbert, A E Smart and A Smart completing the current sixty-four names.



A PARISH AND ITS WAR DEAD

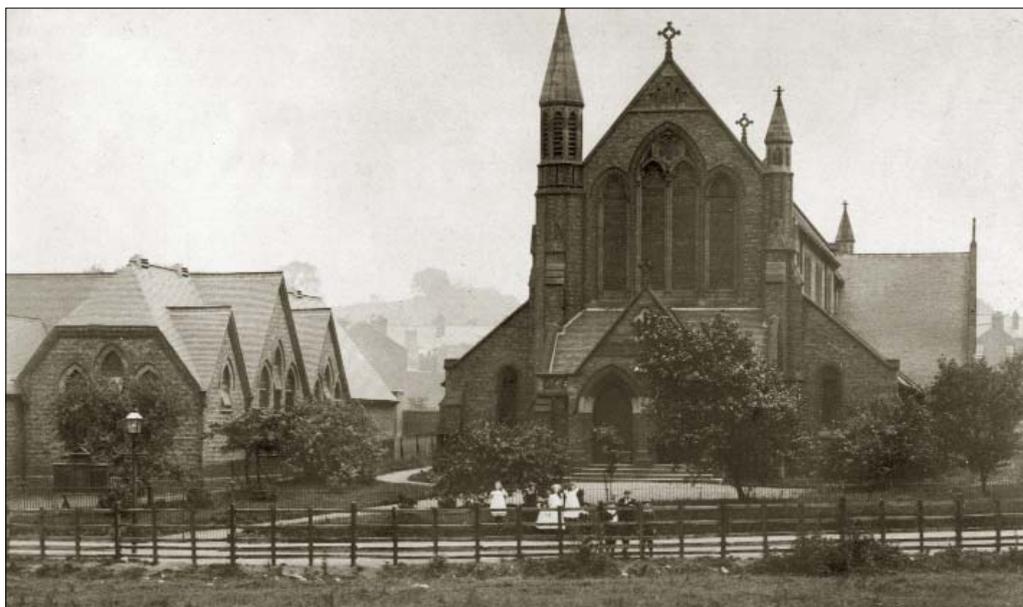
Langley parish and its churches

For a thousand years Oldbury was in the Parish of St John's, Halesowen. Then, in 1843, the large parish of Halesowen was split into five parishes, one of which was 'Oldbury-cum-Langley'. The newly-built Christ Church, consecrated in 1841, made an ideal parish church. The intention was to split the new parish further, but Langley did not have an Anglican church of its own, and without a suitable church could not be a parish.

The first step was to open a temporary church in a room in Langley and appoint Revd William Laing as curate. The division occurred in 1848 to create Oldbury Parish and Langley District, which covered Langley, Langley Green, Causeway Green, Titford, and Round's Green. In 1851 'Trinity Church, Langley' was dedicated, and this enabled Langley to become a full parish with Revd Laing as its vicar. Thus, Trinity Church, popularly known as 'Holy Trinity', became the first parish church for Langley. This was a stone building capable of holding four hundred worshippers, quite large enough for the population of Langley in 1851 with room for the congregation to grow.

Over the next thirty years, however, Langley expanded rapidly as people arrived to find work in the mines, iron works, chemical factories and brickyards that dominated the area. By the 1880s Holy Trinity was no longer big enough. A plan to expand the church in stone in keeping with the original and expanding its capacity to six hundred seats was considered too costly. Instead, it was decided that a new church would be built in brick with a capacity of six hundred people, costing £5 to £6 per sitting. £3621 was quickly raised with donations from church sources, local industry and individuals.

Suggested designs were submitted, and two firms of architect commissioned to work together on the final plan. The cost was more realistically estimated at £5000, £1400 over their funds, so an appeal was made for the extra money. Mrs Mary Barrs gave a site in Causeway Green Road, and the building was completed in eighteen months from the first meeting of the Appeal Committee. It was dedicated on 30th September 1889 by the Bishop of Worcester, Revd Henry Philpott, in his last act before retiring. Shortly after, St Michael's became the parish church for Langley Parish, and Holy Trinity was reduced in status to a 'chapel of ease'.



St Michael's Church and Schools in 1904 faced across open fields, and had yet to darken with the soot and pollution of Oldbury's chimneys.

The name of the new church was not disclosed until service sheets were distributed at the dedication: it was to be 'St Michael and All Angels, Langley Green'.

The windows of the new church were glazed with clear glass, apart from the east window. This was a large stained glass crucifixion window made by Samuel Evans of Smethwick. It was given in honour of Bishop Philpott by Sir Alexander Macomb Chance, chairman of the building committee.

This was not the end of building in the parish. A new church for the Round's Green side of the parish was promised at the opening of St Michael's, and in 1892 the Church of St James was opened. Schools too were provided. St Michael's School was opened in 1893 on the remainder of the plot next to the church, and had to be extended twice before 1900. A second school was opened in 1899 in Old Park Lane to serve the area around Holy Trinity. In that year also the Church of the Good Shepherd was opened in Birchfield Lane.



The interior of St Michael's church just before the first world war, with the east window emphasised.

The vicar overseeing the building of St Michael's was Revd Michael Pryor, who had succeeded William Laing in 1888. In 1901 his twelve year old daughter, Gladys, died, and a single-light stained glass window was dedicated in her memory. This showed Jesus with children around him and included the face of Gladys Pryor as one of the children. The window was made by Thomas Camm of Smethwick.

The two Round's Green churches were built with the intention of splitting of the parish again. In 1905 the District Chapelry of St James, Round's Green, was created, and this included the Church of the Good Shepherd. This 'district' would later become a full parish, St James, Round's Green.

In 1905 Langley was one of the parishes to be taken into the new Birmingham Diocese, and the thousand year connection of Oldbury with the Diocese of Worcester was broken.

The 1914-18 War

Revd Michael Pryor left the parish in 1902, to be replaced by the Revd Walter Wale. He had the task of offering spiritual guidance for the people of Langley throughout the First World War. At the declaration of war by Britain on 4th August 1914, the regular soldiers and reservists from Langley were immediately mobilised to go to France and Belgium with the British Expeditionary Force.

There was also a rush of young men volunteering to join Lord Kitchener's 'New Army', that swamped the recruiting office in Oldbury. Some were single, some were married with families, and a few who were under-age slipped into the army. John Edwin Ludlow was only seventeen years and five months old when he died in 1916. The volunteers all needed training, and did not see action until 1915 or 16. The first losses of local men were reported in October 1914: on 22nd Gunner Joseph Henry Jennings became the first man on the window to be killed in action. Although those who died abroad were buried where they fell, the church was still involved in supporting the grieving families.

Support came too from local groups set up to send 'comforts' to the soldiers, cigarettes, tobacco, and sweets. In Langley the 'Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund' was set up through local public houses, and run from the Royal Oak at Langley Green. Their records of soldiers' addresses and regiments from mid-1915 to the end of the war are still in existence, and have been invaluable in helping to identify the Langley men for this project.

When the war ended on Armistice Day, 11th November 1918, there was an desire throughout the nation to commemorate the fallen in permanent ways. Various suggestions for a suitable memorial in Langley Parish were put forward, from a memorial hall to new choir stalls, but the final choice was a stained glass window. Originally, in June 1920, this was to carry the names of the men associated with St Michael's Church who had died, but this was soon extended to include all the men of Langley parish. The church knew those of its own congregation who had been killed, and an appeal was sent out to all the families of Langley parish to submit names to the vicar, who verified them. The list finally grew to sixty-four names. Langley Local History Society believes this to be just over half of the Langley men who died.

The window, comprising three lights, was designed by Thomas Stokes, who lived in Langley, and had been art master at Oldbury Secondary School. Samuel Evans and Co of Smethwick was commissioned to make the window. It was dedicated on 3rd April 1921 by the Lord Bishop of Birmingham.



The Langley War Memorial Window showing the figures of Faith (fides) on the left, Hope (spes) on the right, and St George (Sanctus Georgius) in the centre, with the four panels of names. The top banner reads, 'It is given to all men to die, but to the few to die for their country'. Across the base, 'To the Glory of God and in grateful memory of the men of Langley who fell in the Great War 1914 - 1918'.

A second three-light window was given by the parents of Cecil William Percy Lloyd, whose name also appears on the main window. It was designed and made by the same people, and dedicated with the main memorial window. Private Lloyd had been a choirboy at St Michael's and was deeply involved in the life of the church before he volunteered at the outbreak of the war. He was killed on the Somme in 1916.

There were sufficient funds left from the window appeal to commemorate the fallen at Holy Trinity as well. A rough granite memorial cross was erected in the churchyard, but this did not carry the names of

individuals, just the general dedication: 'The glorious dead. Their name liveth for evermore'. The cross was dedicated in November 1924 by the Archdeacon of Birmingham, and became a focus for services of remembrance in Langley.

Memorials endangered and saved



The Memorial Cross at St Michael's Church in 2005.

Holy Trinity church was closed on Remembrance Sunday 13th November 1960. The building was demolished in 1968, and the memorial cross was moved to the left side of the entrance at St Michael's.

St Michael's itself was closed on 2007, and it remained empty until 2014, during which time the windows were under threat from vandalism. Of particular concern was the war memorial window since this was the only public memorial to carry any names of the fallen. When the building was finally sold to Iglesia Ni Cristo, the threat increased because that church that does not allow images in its buildings. The windows would have to be removed! Working with the Birmingham Diocese, Langley Local History Society was able to find homes for all the stained glass windows and the cross, but its principal concern was for the two memorials.

The society started an appeal for funds to restore the memorial window and cross, and relocate them within the Langley area. This was readily supported by individuals and local organisations, and a Heritage Lottery Fund grant was obtained to cover the large cost of restoring the window.

The Ebenezer Wesleyan Reform Church agreed to place the memorial cross in its grounds on High Street Langley. This was restored and moved by W H Tinsley Ltd of Rood End in the autumn of 2014, and re-dedicated on Saturday 8th November, the eve of Remembrance Day. It now stands at the heart of Langley, and provides a point of focus on the High Street.



Re-dedication of the Memorial Cross at Ebenezer Wesleyan Reform Church on Saturday 8th November.

Zion United Reformed Church offered to place the window in their worship area. Although the window was set into the wall at St Michael's church, the three lights of the window have been separately framed and mounted on the wall at Zion church. They are backlit for illumination. Restoration and framing was carried out by the specialist company IWF Ltd of Wooler, Northumberland.

As part of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant regulations, the history society was required to 'interpret' the heritage to the people of Langley. The society has tried to identify all the men named on the window and tell their stories. The result is this booklet to permanently accompany the window and provide a guide for future generations.

Names on a window

Some of the men named on the window had a strong connection with St Michael's Church and its work, and the vicar and parish council would know of these men. Some taught at the school, others worked with the Sunday School and young people, and some were regular attenders at worship. For those who

were not closely associated with the church the vicar depended on the names submitted to him, and here the window is far from complete. Langley Local History Society estimates that around one hundred 'Langley' men died in the war.

The sixty-four names are shown on four panels on the window, each as a surname and initial(s). They are mainly grouped by the initial letter of the surname, but not alphabetically within the group. Three names were added at the bottom of three of the panels after they were installed in the church and dedicated.



The names on the four panels of the Memorial Window.

The picture on page iii clearly shows a gap at the bottom of the three right-hand panels where G W Gilbert, A E Smart and A Smart were added. For George William Gilbert, the family story is that his name was when his widow had finally saved enough to pay for it to be added. Other families also have stories of paying for names on the window. No newspaper report or document confirming this has been traced, but it explains the omission of many eligible names when widows and families were struggling to survive.

Sixty-one of the sixty-four names have been identified with reasonable certainty. One name, 'Lawton, T' should almost certainly be Thomas Lawlor from Causeway Green. 'Private T Lawlor' was supported by the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund, and no-one called 'Lawton' has been traced in the Langley area at that time. There are two possible soldiers from Langley fitting the name 'Johnson, W', but neither has a complete history enabling a choice to be made between them. The three names with uncertain attributions are 'Marshall G W', who cannot be traced on war records or living locally, 'Ricketts J', where only a Dudley man with no known Langley connection has been traced, and 'Walker J W', who has not been identified locally either. Possibly the initials on the window are incorrect in these cases. The analysis that follows is based on the sixty-one identified men.

Where they served

One man, John Charles Holland Holmes, served with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), which had become the Royal Air Force by the time he was killed. He was a clerk, who was conscripted in 1917, and expressed a wish to join the RFC. Initially he was drafted into the 51st Leicestershire Regiment, but was transferred to the RFC as a Lieutenant in December 1917. He was the last Langley man to die in action, shot down in aerial combat with a German plane on 9th November 1911, two days before the Armistice came into force.

There are no naval personnel on the window, and all the other men served in the army.

Some of the men moved regiments in the course of the war, and the listed regiments are those they were in at the time of their death. As might be expected for men from this area, twenty-three served in Worcestershire regiments, including one in the Yeomanry. Four were in the Warwickshire regiment, including two in the 15th Battalion, one of the 'Birmingham Pals' battalions. Surprisingly, none served in the South Staffordshire regiment. One was a guardsman in the Coldstream Guards, five were in Artillery Regiments, one in the Medical Corps and one in the Service Corps. The full analysis of regiments is given in Table 1.

For the Worcestershire regiments, the breakdown was:

Regular regiments	16	1st - 4; 2nd - 2; 3rd - 7; 4th - 3
Territorial regiments	1	1/7th
New Army regiments	5	9th - 2; 10th - 1; 11th - 1; 13th - 1
Yeomanry	1	

Table 1: Regimental affiliations

Regiment	Number
Worcestershire (inc. 1 Yeomanry)	23
King's Royal Rifles	5
Royal Warwickshire Rifle Brigade	4
Royal Berkshire	3
Lancashire Fusiliers	2
Royal Garrison Artillery	2
Royal Horse and Field Artillery	2
Machine Gun Corps	1
Coldstream Guards	1
Royal Army Medical Corps	1
Royal Army Service Corps	1
County Regiments*	12

* One each in Devonshire, Dorsetshire, East Surrey, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, King's Liverpool, North Staffordshire, Northamptonshire, Oxford and Buckingham Light Infantry, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, South Wales Borderers, and Wiltshire regiments.

How they served

The men were a mixture of regular soldiers and reservists (with experience and career training), volunteers, and conscripts. The men who joined the British Expeditionary Force in the first few months of the war were all regular soldiers, reservists or men who were no longer reservists but who volunteered and were already trained. These tended to be older men.

The volunteers who responded to Lord Kitchener's appeal in the autumn of 1914 were untrained, and did not reach the front until the middle of 1915 at the earliest when their training was complete. This was the 'New Army', made up mainly of younger men eager to take part.

To try to avoid having conscription, which had never been used before in Britain, Lord Darby introduced a scheme in 1915 to encourage men to 'attest' to serve, and then return to their normal life until called upon to join up. How soon they would be called up depended on the 'group' in they were assigned, and this was determined by principally by age and marital status. This scheme did not produce enough new recruits, however, so in April 1916 compulsory conscription was introduced.

Few of the men on the window have army records that have survived, so it is often difficult to tell whether a man had volunteered under the Darby scheme or been conscripted. Given these difficulties, the approximate breakdown for the sixty-one men is

Regulars and reservists	14
Volunteers including Derby Scheme	39
Compulsory Conscripts	8

Most of the men served in the lowest rank of their regiment, a Private, Guardsman, Gunner, or Rifleman. Some achieved promotion to Acting Bombardier, Lance Corporal or Corporal, but only regular soldier made Sergeant or Company Sergeant Major. Two volunteers were army officers, Captain Bertram Brown and Second Lieutenant Thomas Walter Doyle, and one conscript became a lieutenant in the RAF. The full breakdown is shown in Table 2.

Rank	Number	Regular or Reserve	Volunteer	Conscript
Captain	1		1	
Lieutenant [RAF]	1			1
Second Lieutenant	1		1	
Company Sergeant Major	1	1		
Sergeant	2	2		
Corporal	1	1	1	
Lance-Corporal, Acting Bombardier	6	2	4	
Private, Gunner, Rifleman, etc	48	9	32	7
Total	61	14	39	8

How they died

Of the sixty-one identified men, forty were killed in action and fifteen died of wounds received in action. However, for six the stated cause of death is 'died', and these are men who became ill while on service from causes not attributable to combat. Three died in England, and three on service in France.

As expected, most men died in France or Flanders, but the other main theatres of war also claimed Langley men, as shown in Table 3. Both deaths in Salonika occurred on the 25th April 1917, although the men were from different regiments. The three deaths in Gallipoli were in August and October 1915.

Table 3: Place of death

Place of Death	Number
France and Flanders	48
Britain	5
Gallipoli	3
Egypt	2
Salonika	2
Mesopotamia	1

The average age of all the men at death is 25.6 years, but this hides a wide discrepancy. The youngest, John Edwin Ludlow, was only seventeen and five months when he was killed in June 1916. The oldest man is Joseph Perry, aged 42 when he died of illness at Wareham Camp while training. The oldest to have died overseas were aged 38, Private Henry Gould of the Royal Army Service Corps and Acting Bombardier John Mortimer of the Royal Garrison Artillery.

Regular soldiers and reservists were generally older than the volunteers or conscripted men, with an average age of 28.5 years, against 25.5 for volunteers and 25.1 for conscripts. The distribution of ages between regulars, volunteers and conscripts is summarised in Table 4.

Age at Death	Regulars	Volunteers	Conscripts	Total
Under 21	0	6	5	11
21 - 25	3	18	0	21
26 - 30	5	6	1	12
31 - 35	4	5	0	9
36 - 40	1	1	2	4
Over 40	0	1	0	1
Average	28.5	25.5	25.1	25.6

The first man on the widow to die was Gunner Joseph Henry Jennings of the Royal Horse and Field Artillery. As a regular soldier he had served in South Africa before leaving the army and becoming a reservist. Either he was mobilised as a reservist at the very start of the war or he immediately

volunteered. He landed in France on 16th August 1914 and was killed near Ypres on 22nd October 1914.

As the allies advanced into Belgium in the autumn of 1918, there was an increase in casualties, and three Langley men died in the last week before the Armistice. Twenty year old William Lloyd is reported to have 'died', on 4th November, and this was probably through illness rather than injury. Arthur Stevens, also twenty, from Titford Road was the last Langley soldier to die in action. He was with the 12th Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment, driving the advance forward near Herrines in Belgium when he was killed on 8th November. However, the last man to die, John Charles Holland Holmes, was the only airman on the window, and he was shot down in aerial combat over France on 9th November 1918 at the age of nineteen.

The biggest concentration of deaths occurred from July to October 1916 in the action on the Somme and the Ancre. Nearly a third of the men named on the window, twenty of them, died in these four months. Nine died at a similar time in 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres, 'Passchendaele', and three died at Gallipoli in the summer of 1915. The monthly death toll throughout the war is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Month of death for the men on the window

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1914								0	0	3	1	0
1915	0 + 1db	1	2	1	0	1	0	0 + 2g	0	0 + 1g	0	0 + 1db
1916	0	1	0	0 + 1e	1	1	8	2	6 + 1df	2	1	0
1917	0 + 1m	0	0	2 + 2s	0	0	2	2	1	2	0 + 1e	0
1918	0	1	0	1 + 1df	1	0	0	1	2	0	2 + 1df	

Legend: Main figures for France and Flanders, killed in action or died of wounds; g = in Gallipoli; e = in Egypt; m = in Mesopotamia; s = in Salonika, db = 'died' in Britain; df = 'died' in France and Flanders.

The families

There are four pairs of brothers on the window, Barnsley, Gould, Slim and Smart. What a terrible impact it must have made on their families when two sons were killed, sometimes in a short period of time!

Private Leonard Slim and CSM Thomas Frederick Slim, DCM, died six days, and only four miles apart, despite their army careers being very different. Thomas was a professional soldier with the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, one of the first to land in France on 12th August 1914. He won the DCM for saving a wounded officer in October 1914. Leonard was an architect's draughtsman who volunteered for the 1/6th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, one of the 'Birmingham Pals' battalions. Both were at the front for the start of the action on the Somme in 1916. Leonard was killed on the opening day, the 1st July, and Thomas on the 7th, both close to Thiepval. Their parents kept an ironmonger's shop on Langley High Street, and were well known in the area.

Alfred Edward Smart and his younger brother Arthur from Causeway Green Road also died on the Somme three miles apart, Alfred in early September and Arthur on 31st October 1916.

Albert and William Barnsley probably enlisted together and fought together in the 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. They were due to 'go over the top' together on the first day of the Somme, but Albert was injured just before, and hospitalised. William was killed that day. Albert recovered and returned, to be killed himself in April 1917 near Arras.

Henry and Thomas Gould were sons of the caretaker of St Michael's School. Both were in their thirties, Thomas single, but Henry married with children. Either they volunteered under the Derby scheme or were conscripted late in the war. Henry was killed in action in April 1917 after only a couple of months at the front in the Service Corps, and Thomas died of wounds in February 1918.

In remembering the sacrifice of the soldiers, we should not forget the circumstances of the families they

left behind. We try to reflect this in the following stories. Many of the soldiers, particularly the regulars, reservists and former soldiers at the start of the war, were married men with families when they went off to war. At least twenty of the sixty-one men were married. The family income was considerably reduced by the husband's departure and wives of soldiers struggled to keep the family.

Some soldiers married sweethearts before they set off, and may not have seen their new wives again. Others married on a brief leave, and some left with unborn children they never saw. Private James Berry had married Sarah Jane Turner at Holy Trinity shortly before he went abroad in September 1915, and they would hardly have met again before he died in Salonika eighteen months later. His widow married his younger brother six years later.

Some men left sweethearts or fiancées behind them and did not return. Sometimes the *'In Memoriam'* columns of the Weekly News give us clues. Gunner Leonard Parkes died in November 1916, and the next year an *'In Memoriam'* appeared from 'Em' and another from 'Mr & Mrs Jaques and Lucy'. The unusual surname allowed 'Em' to be identified as Emily Jaques, an Oldbury schoolteacher, who continued to teach at Rood End School for many years, but never married.

The loss of the bread-winner initially through service, or permanently through death, placed the families in great difficulties. Most widows would eventually get a small pension, but the 'war gratuity' of 1919 was meagre, and the soldiers usually only had a few pounds in 'effects' to be returned to the family.

No wonder that half of the war widows remarried after a few years, trying to provide a better future for themselves and their children. Charlotte Mortimer was the widow of John Mortimer, a reservist who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916. In 1918 Charlotte married Oliver Wood, who had been discharged from the army because he had been wounded. He died six months later, but, unlike John, is not commemorated on the window. Charlotte was widowed twice by the age of 33 and lived to be 89, but did not marry a third time.

Some, however, could not overcome the memory of their lost husbands and chose not to remarry. George William Gilbert died on the Somme a few days after John Mortimer. Kitty Gilbert, his widow, lived in Henry Street and struggled to raise their four children by taking in washing and whatever work she could find. She lived to be 81, but did not marry again.

Some cases had a happier outcome. Elizabeth Frith, the widow of Charles Frith, who was killed at Passchendaele in 1917, had to take a job as a barmaid to supplement her war pension of 12s 9d per week. When a demobilised soldier, Frederick Redding, came into the bar at the Old Cross, Elizabeth fainted because he looked so much like her dead husband. They were married in 1921.

Other moving situations are contained in the following stories of each of the men on the window.



The Memorial Window at St Michael's Church after Remembrance Day 2005 (top) and installed at Zion United Reformed Church ready for the re-dedication service (bottom).

SIXTY-FOUR NAMES

Private Clifford BAKER

31407

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

11th August 1917, aged 21



Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, panel 34

Clifford Baker was born in 1895 in Langley, the fifth son of Samuel and Martha Baker. Samuel was a labourer, and the family moved in the 1890s from 48 Titford Road to a newly built house, 19 Farm Road, Langley. Clifford was probably a pupil at St Michael's School, and by 1911 had become a messenger boy aged 15. On 20th April 1916 he married the 20 year old Ethel Goodridge at St Matthew's Church, Tipton. A few months later their only son, also called Clifford, was born. His occupation when he married was 'private soldier at camp at Dorset', probably Wareham Camp, the first address recorded by Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund for him.

He was next recorded by the fund as being in France, but he was probably wounded since he was then at Rusthall Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment hospital in Tunbridge Wells. He returned to France, again with 'C' Company, 11th Platoon of 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. The battalion was part of the 74th Brigade, 25th Division, which was close to Ypres in the summer of 1917.

In August an attack was planned on machine gun positions on Westhoek Ridge and Glencorse Wood, with the 74th Division leading the attack on the ridge. The attack was made by 13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, with 'A' and 'C' Companies of 3rd Worcestershire Regiment in support. On the night of 9/10 August the Worcestershire companies took up position in the support trenches. A simultaneous artillery bombardment and attack by the Cheshire Regiment enabled them to take the ridge, but the response bombardment hit the support trenches, and there were casualties among the Worcestershire battalions. The attack was halted by blockhouses over the ridge, and 'A' and 'C' companies were called forward. A blockhouse was taken, but the German shells and machine gun enfilade took a heavy toll. Defence of the ridge continued on the 11th August, in course of which Clifford Baker of 'C' Company was killed.

It is not known what happened to his widow and their son, but she may have remarried. There are two separate marriages of an 'Ethel Baker' in the September Quarter of 1920 in Dudley registration district, one to Edward Castle and one to William Sidaway.

Private Albert BARNESLEY

12540

5th Battalion, Royal Berkshire, Princess Charlotte of Wales's, Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

28th April 1917, aged 21



Arras Memorial, bay 7

Albert Barnesley was born in 1896 in Langley, the second son of James Barnesley and Mary Ann, née Griffin. His elder brother, William (*qv*), was with him in the 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died on the first day of the Somme. James, a blacksmith's striker at the Carriage Works, came from Langley, but Mary Ann was born in Tipton. They were married at St Michael's in 1893, and living at 77 Station Road in 1901. They moved to 22 Arden Grove by 1911, and then back to 14 Station Road, the address given in newspaper reports of his death.

Albert was a fifteen year old errand boy in a pattern stores in 1911. He would have been old enough to enlist at the outbreak of the war, and may have decided on this with his brother William. Both were initially in the 'A' Company, 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, but Albert was later moved to the 5th Battalion. The 6th Battalion was raised in Reading in September 1914, and reached France in July 1915 as part of 53rd Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division.

On 20th July 1916 the Weekly News published three letters from Albert from St Helen's Hospital, Lancashire, where he was recuperating. The first was dated 6th July: *"I am a little better than when I got my wounds. I had no sleep for a night with them, but they are going on well now ... I shall soon be able to get up, but I shall only be able to see out of one eye, but that will get well. My knee is going on fine since I had the piece of shell taken out. I hope not to get another wound. I did think of going over the top with the boys, but it made one less to get at them. I suppose that Will got over there, and I hope that he has not been put out of action as I hope to be with him again ..."* In his second letter he said he had left the family photos with Will, and in the third letter: *"I left Will in the second line of the trenches waiting for the word of advance. I wish I had been able to go with him for he will be lost without me, but he will be all right."* This suggests that Albert was injured by shell fire in the build up to the attack on 1st July in the Battle of the Somme, when the 6th Battalion took part in the offensive to take the town of Albert. William was killed that day, the 1st July.

Albert's return to the front in late 1916 or early 1917 is probably when he moved to the 5th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, part of the 35th Brigade of the 12th (Eastern) Division. In spring 1917 the division was near Arras, and on 28th April was part of the operation to capture Roeux in the Battle of Arleux. Their objective was the 'Rifle and Bayonet Trench'. However, they met intense shell and machine gun fire as they attacked, taking heavy casualties, and they were forced to withdraw. Albert Barnesley was killed on 28th April 1917, as described in a letter to his parents from Albert's comrades: *"He was killed instantly by a shell at five o'clock on the morning of 28th. Your son was carried back to a little cemetery that had been made just behind our lines and properly buried. He was an expert bomber, always a hard worker, and he seemed to have no fear. He is a very great loss to us all."* However, his body does not seem to have been recovered from that field cemetery, for he is commemorated on the memorial at Arras. His death was reported in the Weekly News and the Midland Chronicle, both stressing that he was the second son of James and Mary Ann to pay the supreme sacrifice.

Lance Corporal William BARNESLEY

12297

6th Battalion, Royal Berkshire, Princess Charlotte of Wales's, Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

1st July 1916, aged 22



Thiepval Memorial, pier & face 11D

William Barnesley was born in 1894 in Langley, the eldest son of James Barnesley and Mary Ann, née Griffin. His brother, Albert (*qv*), was with him in the 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died in 1917. James, a blacksmith's striker at the Carriage Works, came from Langley, but Mary Ann was born in Tipton. They were married at St Michael's in 1893, and living at 77 Station Road in 1901. They moved to 22 Arden Grove by 1911, and then back to 14 Station Road, the address given in newspaper reports of his death.

William worked for Chance Brothers glass works at Smethwick before the war. He may have decided with his brother Albert to enlist. Both were initially in the 'A' Company, 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. The Battalion was raised in Reading in September 1914, and reached France in July 1915 as part of 53rd Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division.

By July 1916 William had been promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal. Letters written by Albert make it clear that he and William served together and were expecting to 'go over the top' together on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916. However, Albert was injured by a shell before they were due to leave the trench, so William was left to make that fateful journey himself. The 18th Division had moved up to Baizieux on 30th June, and reached Hencourt and Millencourt at 10.00 am on 1st July, immediately going into the reserve. They were part of XIII Corps at the southern end of the British Army, whose objective, capturing Montauban, was fully achieved.

In the course of this action William Barnesley was killed, one of the 57,000 British to die that day. His body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the monument at Thiepval.

His brother Albert returned to the front and was killed in April 1917.

Private Walter Herbert BAYLISS

14313

10th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

3rd July 1916, aged 30



Thiepval Monument, pier and face 5A and 6C

Walter Herbert Bayliss was born in 1885 and baptised in Oldbury on 27th January 1886. He was one of seven children born to Charles Richard Gill Bayliss and Ellen, née Roberts. His father was a police constable from Derby, and Ellen was from Worcester. The family moved from Worcester, where their first child had been born, to Pit Lane (High Street), Langley, in the mid-1870s. They moved from there to 31 Titford Road and then to 3 Broadwell Road by 1901, when Walter was a riveter at a boiler works, probably Edwin Danks. His father had retired from the police by 1911 to become caretaker of Langley Public Library, living opposite at 6 Cross Street.

In 1908 Walter married Annie Evelyn Hadley at Holy Trinity, Langley, and by 1911 moved to Selly Oak, where he was working as an iron moulder. Walter and Annie had moved back to Langley to 108 Pool Lane when he enlisted, and they had three children. He joined the army early in the war, and the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund has an address with 5th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment at Plymouth. This was a special reserve battalion which trained men for the fighting battalions. His medal record shows he first entered the war in the Balkans on 22nd June 1915, and he received the 1915 star, but his regiment at that time is not known. He then moved to the 10th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, and was at the Somme in spring 1916.

The 10th Battalion, in the 57th Brigade of the 19th Division, was held in reserve on 1st July 1916, the opening day of the battle of the Somme. From their position near to La Boiselle they would have witnessed the massive underground explosions of Lochnagar and Y Sap that triggered the battle. La Boiselle was an important objective since the village straddled the main road from Albert to Bapaume, opening the way to Pozières and beyond, but the opening attacks on the first day failed to take it. The 19th Division fought for the next three days in taking the village, including repulsing a counterattack to regain the village by the Germans. Walter Bayliss was killed in hand to hand fighting in the village on 3rd July, which was secured that evening. A fellow private of his battalion, Thomas George Turrall, from Small Heath received the Victoria Cross that day. Walter's body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Two '*In Memoria*' appeared in the Weekly News of 21st July 1916, one from his wife and children, and the other from parents, sisters and brothers. It is not known what happened to Annie and the children: there is a marriage between Annie E Bayliss and Albert E Skeldon at West Bromwich Register Office in December 1920, which is probably that of Walter's widow.

Rifleman Percival Frederick BENNETT

10797

4th Battalion, King's Royal Rifles
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
28th April 1915, aged 22



Bailleul Community Cemetery (Nord), I A 145

Percival Bennett was born in Blackheath in 1893, the only son of Frederick William John Bennett from Rowley and Sarah, née Crompton, from Dudley. They had married in 1890 at St Giles, Rowley, and by 1897 Percival had two sisters, Vera and Elsie. In spring of that year Sarah died, leaving her husband with the children aged from a few months to four years. By 1901 Frederick was at High Street, Blackheath, and had given up his factory work making bolts to become a self-employed stationer, assisted by his younger sister and a domestic servant. In the summer of 1901 he married Agnes Cecilia Cadman of Pensax, Worcestershire, at Tenbury Wells, and they had a further child Edith May. Percival Bennett went to Causeway Green School in Pound Road, and is on their Roll of Honour. By 1911 he was living with his father and stepmother in Penn cricket Lane, and was working as a junior clerk in a nut and bolt factory. By then his father had also returned to the factory making bolts.

The newspaper report of his death in May 1915 says that he had been in the army for about two years, so he must have joined as a regular soldier in 1913. This is supported by his medal card, which shows that he entered France with the 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifles on 13th August 1914, qualifying for the 1914 Star. The battalion was part of the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division, and one of the first to reach France. Percival Bennett went with the division to Mons, and was involved in the withdrawal as far as the Aisne, slowing the German advance into France. He also took part in the Battles of the Marne and the Ancre. Action continued until late December, when there was a respite until the end of January.

The 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles had landed in France in December. During the quiet period Percival Bennett probably transferred to this battalion, which was part of the 80th Brigade of the 27th Division. They were in action near St Eloi south east of Ypres in some of the first trenches to have been dug, and in the Second Battle of Ypres. The battle had started on 22nd April, the day when the Germans first used chlorine gas in the war in an attempt to take Ypres. His regiment was not exposed to the chlorine, but a gap resulted in the allied line, and the brigade was sent to hold the line in the area around Hill 60. The action continued into late May, and was the inspiration for Colonel John McCrae to write the most famous of Great War poems, 'In Flanders Fields'.

At some point in this battle Percival Bennett was severely wounded and moved to Bailleul Military Hospital, where he died on 28th April. He is buried at the Communal Cemetery at Bailleul. His death was reported in the Weekly News of 14th May 1915, which gave 30th April as his date of death.

Private James BERRY

18032

11th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in Salonika

25th April 1917, aged 24



Doiran Memorial

James Berry was the son of Ellen Green, who was widowed and remarried. He appeared on the 1901 census as 'James Green', aged 8, living with James and Ellen Berry at Summer Row, Oldbury. By 1911 the family was at 54 Newbury Lane, and James, now 17, was recorded as 'Berry', not 'Green'. His birthplace was West Bromwich, and births are registered there for 'James Green' in the March quarters of 1893 and 1894. By 1911 he was working as a hammer maker's assistant at a steel works. His grandfather, James Green, was living with the family, and, as an army pensioner, brought a military tradition to the family. Perhaps that is why James enlisted as soon as the war started, joining the 11th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, which was raised in September 1914 as part of Lord Kitchener's New Army. The battalion trained in England until 21st September 1915, and they left for France the next day. With imminent service abroad, James had married 21 year old Sarah Jane Turner of Station Road at Holy Trinity, Langley, on his last leave in the late summer. They are unlikely to have met again.

The 11th Battalion was part of the 78th Brigade of the 26th Division, which saw no action in France, but was redeployed to the Balkans soon after its arrival. They reached Salonika on 24th November 1915. Throughout 1916 they were involved in only small skirmishes, taking light casualties. In the spring of 1917, however, the British were ready for stronger action on the Greek-Serbian border in the mountainous country just south west of Doiran. After four days of mutual shelling, the British attacked the Bulgarian positions on the night of 24/25th April. The 11th Battalion was part of the force tasked with taking 'Hill O6', on top of which was a well defended and deeply entrenched Bulgarian position. This involved descending from the British lines into a deep valley, the Jumeaux Ravine, crossing it and scaling the hill, all under continuous bombardment. The 11th Worcestershire Regiment succeeded in taking part of the Bulgarian trenches, but at great cost. The whole operation was unsuccessful, and the British had to withdraw to their original positions on 27th April. Private Berry's death was on the 25th April, when the opening attack on the trenches was made.

The widowed Sarah Jane Berry continued to live at 2, back of 27, Station Road with, or close to, her parents, Samuel and Elizabeth Turner. On the first anniversary of James's death, she placed a poignant '*In Memoriam*' in the Weekly News of 25 April 1918:

"I think I see his smiling face, As he bade his last good-bye; He left his home for ever, In a distant land to die; The hardest part is yet to come, When the other lads return, And I miss among the cheering crowd, The face of my loved one. -- Ever remembered by his true and loving Wife"

The next year another appeared:

"It is lonesome here without you, dear, And sad the weary way; Nor is the world the same to me Since you were called away. But peaceful be thy rest, dear one, 'Tis sweet to breathe thy name; In life I loved you very dear, In death I'll do the same.

-- Never will be forgotten by his loving Wife, Mother, Dad, Sisters and Brother (Jack)"

'Brother (Jack)' was John Berry, two years younger than James. There is a marriage between Sarah Jane Berry and John Berry at West Bromwich in late 1923: it seems Sarah Jane married her brother-in-law after a decent period of mourning.

Guardsman George Henry BLEWITT

10275
1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards
Killed in action in France and Flanders
29th October 1914, aged 21



Harlebeke New British Cemetery, XVII D 12

George Henry Blewitt was born in 1893 in Rounds Green to George Henry Blewitt from Tipton, a coal miner, and Jane, née Hodgetts, from Dudley. He was their fifth child. In 1901 the family lived at 15 Brades Road in Rounds Green. By 1911 they had moved to 33, Dingle Street, with his father was still working at the coal face, and his mother running a grocer's shop. The family moved to 94 Old Park Lane; this is the address given by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. George was a mill hand in an iron works on the 1911 census, but gave this up to join the Coldstream Guards well before the outbreak of the war.

The 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards were one of six guards battalions sent to France as part of the original British Expeditionary Force (BEF). They arrived on 13th August 1914, as part of the 1st (Guards) Brigade of the 1st Division, and immediately went to the defence of Mons. The long retreat as far as the Aisne followed, and the division was involved as part of the rearguard force to hold up the German army near Etreux as the BEF withdrew southwards.

By October the battalion was close to Ypres, and involved in action at Langemarck from the 21st to the 24th. This was followed by the defence of Gheluvelt, near Ypres, in what was later called the 'race to the sea.' This was the end of the open combat phase of the war by the 'Old Contemptibles' of the BEF, to be followed by the stalemate of the trenches. The 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards faced an attack along both sides of the Menin Road in the village of Gheluvelt in the early morning on the 29th October. George Blewitt was killed in action that day. He was not alone, for only eighty of his regiment survived the battle and all of his officers died. It was the day that the 2nd Worcestershire Regiment made history for their heroic counterattack to retake the village.

He is buried at Harbeke New British Cemetery, which was created after the armistice and many remains transferred from surrounding battlefields. His body would have been moved from its original burial place at Gheluvelt.

The Weekly News of 25th October 1918 carried an 'In Memoriam' from his parents, sisters and brother,

*"We never knew what pain he had,
We never saw him die;
We only know he passed away
Without a last goodbye;
He sleeps not in his native land,
But 'neath some foreign skies,*

*And far from those who love him best
In a hero's grave he lies.
Duty called him, he was there,
To do his best and take his share;
His heart was good, his spirit brave
His resting place a soldier's grave."*

Lance Corporal William James BRANCH

25121

2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France & Flanders

17th April 1918, aged 32



Ploegsteert Memorial, panel 5

William James Branch was born in 1886 at Shoreditch to William James Branch senior, a chemist's assistant, and his wife Annie. The family moved from the east end of London to Langley at the turn of the century, and were living at 14 Jackson Street in 1901. William senior was employed as a foreman cyanide maker at the newly-established British Cyanides in Tat Bank. William junior was a brewer's labourer. By 1911, the 25 year old William James Branch was also working at British Cyanides as a furnaceman, and the family had moved to 5 Jackson Street.

He volunteered for service in October 1915, joining the 2nd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, 'C' Company, 12th Platoon, and went to France in November 1916. The battalion was part of the 100th Brigade of the 33rd Division. By this time William Branch had been promoted to Lance Corporal. The battalion was involved in fighting in Flanders throughout 1917 before the winter set in. In April 1918 the Germans launched their Spring Offensive along the River Lys. The 33rd Division fought at Messines, Hazebrouk, Balleuil, Neuve Eglise, and at Kemmel Ridge between the 10th and 19th April as the Germans advanced to the south and east of Ypres. On 17th April the British repulsed the first German attempt to seize the strategic high point of Kemmel Ridge. William Branch was reported missing during this action. His body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the memorial at Ploegsteert in Belgium.

No information seems to have reached his parents after hearing that he was missing, and the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund simply records him as 'Missing' not 'Killed'. In the Weekly News of 31st January 1919 his parents made an appeal for information about their son who had been reported missing nine months earlier.

Captain Bertram BROWN

16th Rifle Brigade, the Prince Consort's Own
Killed in action in France and Flanders
3rd September 1916, aged 24



Thiepval Memorial, pier & face 16B & 16C

Bertram Brown was born in Erdington in 1891, the eldest of three sons of Charles and Mary Maria Nightingale Brown, née Lancaster. His father came from Wednesbury, but his mother was the daughter of the Oldbury saddler Samuel Lancaster. The family moved to Warley in the mid-1890s, where Charles was the licensee of the George Inn. By 1904 they had moved to the Old Boat Inn, Canalside, Oldbury, with Mary as the licensee, possibly because Charles was ill: he died in 1905. She kept the pub on after his death, and in early 1908 married Charles Frederick Lowe. Mary died a few months later.

By 1911 Bertram, aged 19, was lodging with Reuben and Ellen Willetts at 9 Langley Road. His brother Arthur was a boarder with the Taylor family in Whyley Street. At this time he was involved with the work of St Michael's Church, for the Vicar described him as '*prominently associated with the religious work in the parish prior to his enlisting*', so he seems to have risen above a very turbulent childhood. He must have been a capable, well educated man, for he was chief clerk to the West Bromwich Gas Engineer before he volunteered for the army.

His service records have not survived, but he rose to the rank of Captain in the 16th Rifle Brigade by September 1916. As such, he would have been first 'over the top' when his unit took the offensive in the trenches. The 16th Rifle Brigade was raised at St Pancras, London, in April 1915, going to France on 8th March 1916 as part of the 117th Brigade of the 39th Division. The battalion was involved in the Battle of the Somme, and on 3rd September 1916 was in action on the Ancre, a tributary of the Somme. As part of the 5th Army, their division had the objective of capturing three lines of German trenches at the top of rising ground just north of the village of Beaumont Hamel. It is likely that Bertram was killed leading his men in this attack. His body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the nearby memorial at Thiepval.

With his parents dead, his effects were returned to his executor, Frank Caleb Taylor, who was the Borough Librarian for Oldbury. His whole estate amounted to £511, a considerable sum for a young man at that time. A memorial service was held at St Michael's a fortnight after his death, with tributes from Rev Walter Wale. Two '*In Memoria*' appeared, one from his two brothers, '*sadly missed by Arthur, Walter and his many friends*', and one from the family with whom he had lodged up to the time he enlisted, '*Fondly remembered by Mrs Willetts, Nance and Nell*'.

Acting Bombardier Ernest COMLEY

11905

15th Reserve Battalion, Royal Horse and Field Artillery

Died in England

14th January 1915, aged 35



Portsmouth (Christ Church) Military Cemetery, Hampshire, D 17

Ernest Comley was born in Oldbury in late 1880 to William Comley and Mary, née Johnson. William was a boatman, and the family lived at the New Inn in Birchfield Lane. By 1891 his father had become the licensee of the Navigation Inn in Titford Road. In 1899 Ernest enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery for two years, and was at Fulwood Barracks, Preston, in 1901. In 1903, when he married Charlotte Wainwright at St Mark's, Birmingham, he had left the army and was working as a coal haulier. By 1911, he was a boatman living with Charlotte and four children at 162 Titford Road, and they had a fifth child soon after.

When war broke out, Ernest quickly volunteered and joined the 15th Reserve Battalion of the Field Artillery. In early 1915 he was stationed at Hillsea Barracks, Portsmouth, when he caught a severe cold, which developed into pneumonia. He died at Alexander Hospital in Portsmouth on 14th January 1915, and is buried at a military cemetery at Portsmouth.

Because Ernest did not serve abroad in the war, he was not eligible for any war medals, and Charlotte did not receive the war gratuity because he had insufficient service to qualify. His effects, which were paid to her, amounted to 16s 5d. Her situation with five children must have been desperate, and she married Benjamin Cooper at St Andrews, Birmingham, on Christmas Eve 1916.

Private Frank COWLEY

11960

1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

10th March 1915, aged 24



Le Touret Memorial, panel 17 & 18

Frank Cowley was born in 1890, the eldest son of Albert Cowley, a carter at Albright & Wilson's phosphorus works. Albert's parents, Henry and Annie, both came from the West Country, but had moved to Langley in the 1860s. In 1896 Albert married Lucy Williams, so it is likely that Albert and his sisters, Lucy and Ann, were children of a former marriage. This is probably the marriage in 1887 at St Paul's, Blackheath to Martha Williams, who was Lucy's younger sister! At this time the Williams family were living in Hobicus Lane, Langley, and the Cowleys were close by at Langley Green Road. The Cowleys moved to 148 Vicarage Road by 1901, and 32 Henry Street by 1911, so they were firmly established in the Langley Green area.

By 1911, the twenty-one year old Frank had joined the army, and was a private in the 1st Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, stationed at Carisbrooke on the Isle of Wight. He saw service at Jhansie in central India. At the start of the war the Battalion was stationed in Egypt, but was recalled in September 1914 to join the British Expeditionary Force, and, according to the Oldbury Weekly News of 23rd October, was on a short furlough back home. The battalion arrived in France in November 1914, and reached the front near Le Bassée on 15th. They spent the winter at the front opposite Neuve Chapelle, taking casualties from time to time.

On 10th March 1915 the 8th Division, including the 1st Worcestershire Regiment, made a large-scale attack on the salient around Neuve Chapelle. In the afternoon two companies were sent forward, but cut down by German fire, and many men lost. Fighting continued until 13th March, and there is some doubt exactly when Private Cowley was killed: one of his medal records indicates 13th March and another record says 'presumed dead'. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the memorial at Le Touret.

His effects, amounting to £14-16-2, were returned to his father as next of kin, and a war gratuity of £5 paid later.

His cousin Ernest Vickers (*qv*) is also commemorated on the window.

Private Edward COX

204233

4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died at home of wounds received in France and Flanders

5th August 1918, aged 37



Oldbury Cemetery, F 'U' 3865

Edward Cox was born in Rounds Green in 1880 to Edward Cox and Mary Ann, née Taylor. His father was a puddler at an iron works, but he died in 1890, leaving Mary Ann with six children. The family was at 11 Junction Street, Brades Village, in 1891, but Mary probably died in the 1890s, and the family split up. In 1901 Edward was boarding with William Probert and his family at 7 Junction Street, and working as a bricklayer's labourer. Three years later he married Polly Cutler at St Michael's, and by 1911 they were at 13 Broad Street, Langley, with one son, William Henry aged 5. Edward was still working as a bricklayer. 'Polly' Cutler does not appear on any census, but Mary Cutler does, living with parents William and Amplias at 24 High Street in 1901, at Pound Lane in Causeway Green in 1891, and as a one month old child at Causeway Green in 1881. Her birth and marriage were registered under the name 'Polly'.

Little is known about Edward's service in the army. He was not given a 1915 star, so he was probably a conscript who was called up in 1917 and went to France in 1918. He appears quite late in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund, which has addresses for him with 7th Reserve Battalion of Worcestershire Regiment at Catterick, then Kensham in England. The next entry is for 'C' Company 29th Divisional Battery with the BEF in France, followed by 4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, at No 4 General Hospital in France. In the final entry he is in Kensington and Fulham Hospital, London, and this is endorsed 'Died of Wounds'. The 4th Battalion was part of the 88th Brigade, 29th Division, and it appears that Edward Cox was in one of the division's trench mortar batteries, first formed in April 1916.

The 29th Division was active in area of the River Lys, north-west of Armentières, throughout 1918 defending against the German spring offensive. The 88th Brigade saw action at Messines, Balleuil and Kemmel Ridge in April. Edward Cox was wounded in one of these battles, or a smaller action, in the summer of 1918. He was sent to No 4 General Hospital, one of several base hospitals at Carnières near Cambrai, and then moved to England. He died in Kensington and Fulham Hospital on 5th August 1918. By this time Polly had moved to 54 Farm Road.

He was buried in Rood End Cemetery. The grave has a Commonwealth War Graves headstone set inside a marble grave curb. The curb also commemorates 'Mary Cox, his wife, who died 12th February 1966, aged 84', and their son, 'John Henry, who died 31st December 1969, aged 64.' Clearly, Mary, or 'Polly,' did not remarry, and was a widow for 48 years.

Second Lieutenant Thomas Walter DOYLE

17th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
9th August 1916, aged 28



Lijssehoek Military Cemetery, IX A 20

Thomas Walter Doyle was born at Kidderminster in 1888 to Thomas Joseph Doyle, from Liverpool, and Ann Maria, née Carter, from Langley. In 1891 they were living at 14 Spring Street, Langley. By 1896 they had moved to 38 Farm Road, where Ann was running a small general and grocery shop and Thomas worked as a brewer's cooper. By 1911, however, there seems to have been a split in the family. Thomas senior was a boarder with Ellen Smith at Lion Hill, Stourport, while Ann, with Thomas Walter and his younger sister, Adina, remained at Farm Road. The census records him as married, but the census for Ann has 'married' crossed out and 'widow' entered, although Thomas senior did not die until the end of 1911 at Stourport.

In 1911, Thomas Walter Doyle had a job as a 'clerk at an ironworks'. He was heavily involved in the activities at St Michael and All Angels, and was studying in his spare time. He matriculated in 1915, and soon afterwards enrolled as a student for Holy Orders of St John's College, Durham, aiming to become an Anglican priest.

He probably enlisted in the Officers Training Corps while at college, and received his commission in January 1916 in the 17th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade. He sent a letter home dated 8th August 1916 stating that after a month in France, they had just reached the front line. He was badly affected by phosgene gas the next day, 9th August 1916, and died shortly afterwards. He is buried at Lijssehoek Military Cemetery between Ypres and Poperinge in Flanders.

A memorial service was held at St Michael's, conducted by Rev Walter Wale, who wrote in the parish magazine: *"He will ever be remembered by us as a trusty companion, a robust Christian, and an ever ready and willing worker. Since his departure from the parish he has been greatly missed in our Sunday Schools, and his place has never been filled."* He added this verse:

*"Not spilt like water on the ground,
Not wrapp'd in dreamless sleep profound,
Not wandering in unknown despair
Beyond Thy voice, Thine arm, Thy care;
Not left to lie like fallen tree;
Not dead, but living unto Thee."*

His mother and sister presented a communion chalice and patten to the church in his honour.

Private William EDWARDS

14313

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

9th October 1916, aged 34



Pozières British Cemetery, Ovilliers-la Boisselle, IV Q 4

William Edwards was the second son of Joseph, a Rowley coalminer, and Phoebe, née Sheldon. He was born in 1882 at Whiteheath. His father was a local man from Whiteheath, and his mother came from the Warley Wigorn section of Causeway Green. William grew up in Causeway Green, working as a bricklayer's labourer. In 1905 he married Rose Alice James at Stoke on Trent, and by 1911 they were living in a two-roomed house at No 1, back of 208 Causeway Green Road with their three children Lily, Arthur and Rose.

According to the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund, William was first in the 6th Worcestershire Regiment at Raglan Barracks, Devonport, Plymouth. This was a Reserve Battalion which trained men for the fighting regiments but never went abroad. He is next recorded in the 3rd Battalion in France. This battalion had landed in Rouen on 16th August 1914, and seen action at Mons, on the retreat and into the static entrenched warfare from late 1914 and 1915. William Edwards must have joined the battalion in early 1916 since he did not qualify for a 1915 star. He may have been a volunteer, or drafted under the Darby scheme.

The battalion was part of the 25th Battalion of the 74th Division by July 1916, and saw action at the Somme. William was in France by now, and it is in the latter phase of this campaign that he was killed in the battle for Ancre Heights. On 26th September the 74th Division took over a sector of trench south of the Aisne, and was involved in various operations and raids. On 9th October it was involved in a major offensive to seize the high ground above the Ancre north of Pozières.

He died during bombardment of the trenches by the German artillery, in circumstances described in a letter from the chaplain to his widow, Rose. It was published in the Weekly News of 27th October 1916, "*Your husband was in the trenches when he was killed by the explosion of a shell. His death was instantaneous, and he can have suffered no pain. I buried him next day in a little cemetery just behind the trenches. A handsome wooden cross is being erected over the grave, which will always be tended. ... The commanding officer, his company officer and comrades all send you their sincerest sympathy. I know what a terrible blow this must be to you, but I pray that God may give you the strength to bear it ...*". He is buried in Pozières British Cemetery, which is hardly 'a little cemetery', and he was probably moved from his original resting place to the cemetery at Pozières after the war.

His effects of £3-0-9 were paid to his widow, Rose, in 1917, together with a war gratuity of £4-10-0 in 1919. Rose did not remarry, and died in 1939 at the age of 58 in Rowley Regis.

Private Thomas FANTHOM

32634
1/4th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment
Died of wounds in Egypt
25th November 1917, aged 22



Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, D 233

Thomas Fanthom was born at 12 Langley Road on the 3rd December 1894 to Thomas and Annie Elizabeth Fanthom. Thomas was one of eleven children and probably a pupil at St Michael's School. By 1911 he was living with his parents and five siblings at 44 Edward Street and working in a local foundry as a labourer with two of his brothers. Thomas' brother, Joseph William, also enlisted and fought in France, but survived the war.

Thomas enlisted with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as number 13191. Once trained, he joined their 1st Garrison Battalion, formed in Weymouth in August 1915. The battalion went to Egypt in August 1915, and were based in Khartoum in the Sudan during 1916. 'Garrison' battalions were generally made up of men who were unsuitable for front line service. They mainly garrisoned towns and forts, thereby releasing the first line regiments. In Egypt they would have been in the Suez Canal area until the front line moved forward, and then they followed the British column as it advanced into Palestine.

His medal cards show that Thomas first entered a theatre of war on 20 August 1915. The first entry recorded by the Langley Soldiers' and Sailors' Fund shows him in Khartoum, with a later entry showing Thomas had been transferred to 'A' Company of the Northamptonshire Regiment, part of the 54th Division in Egypt. The 'Weekly News' of 25th August 1916 includes a letter from Thomas sent from Khartoum to the secretary of the Langley Fund thanking them for their gift of cigarettes, and reporting, "... *The heat here is simply terrible, at present 115 in the shade is nothing, and we have just had some terrible sand and thunder storms! ...*"

He probably transferred to the 1/4th Northamptonshire Regiment in January 1917, and this may have been preceded by a move to the 1st Garrison Battalion of that regiment, which was in Egypt at the time. The 1/4th Battalion was preparing to move north with the rest of the force heading for the Palestine border.

During late 1917, the 1/4th Battalion only took significant casualties on two days: 2nd November 1917 at the Third Battle of Gaza against the Turkish Army, and the 27th November. At 7.30 am on 2nd November the Battalion went over the top to take Lion Trench, but after twenty minutes without artillery support they were surrounded and had to retreat to Sheikh Hasan on the coast. Thomas Fanthom's death on 25th, before the later battle, makes it likely that he was wounded in this action at Gaza. Casualties from the battle were taken to Alexandria for treatment.

On 18th May 1918 his effects were returned to his mother, Annie, and totalled £9.19s.6. Later, a war gratuity of 10 guineas was paid to her.

Private Charles FRITH

203464

1/5th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers
Killed in action in France and Flanders
6th September 1917, aged 29



Tyne Cot Memorial, panels 54 to 60 & 163A

Charles Frith was born in 1889 at Droylesden, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire. In 1911 he was working as a railway locomotive cleaner, but had become a railway porter by 1915 when he attested for the army. He was mobilised into the 3/9th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment. In June 1916 he was married at West Bromwich Register Office to Elizabeth May Perkins. She was the daughter of an Oldbury coalminer, although her family was living in Cannock by 1911. What brought Charles Frith to Langley, and how he came to be married here, is not known. Their home was at 5 Henry Street, Langley Green, and their only child, Frances May, was born in October 1916.

In July 1916 he was transferred to the 1/5th Reserve Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers, 'A' company, number 6596, and was sent to Egypt in September. He was involved in the advanced guard as the British built a railway across Sinai in preparation for clearing the Turks from Palestine. The army in the Middle East was re-structured, and the battalion was withdrawn to France in February 1917. Charles Frith was given a new service number, 203464. The 1/5th Lancashire Regiment saw action in spring 1917 in the front line at Epehy and Havrincourt. After a period of rest in July and August, they moved north to join the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele).

The 1/5th Battalion made an unsuccessful attempt on German pillboxes at three farms, Iberian, Borry and Beck House, on 6th September, in preparation for the Battle of Menin Road. Some ground was gained, but had to be given up next day. In the course of this action Charles Frith was killed. His body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, near Ypres, Belgium.

Elizabeth and her daughter continued to live at 5 Henry Street, and she took a job as barmaid at The Old Cross Inn at Langley Green to supplement her war widow's pension of 12s 9d per week. After the war a local ex-soldier, Frederick William Redding, visited the Old Cross, whereupon Elizabeth fainted because he looked so much like Charles. Elizabeth and Frederick were married in 1921.

Private George William GILBERT

21457

1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

6th to 10th July 1916, aged 37



Thiepval Memorial, pier & face 5A & 6C

George William Gilbert was born in 1878 at Bromsgrove, the eldest child of an agricultural labourer, James Gilbert, and his wife Elizabeth, née Westbury. The family moved to Northfield, still mainly as agricultural workers. George married an Oldbury girl, Catherine 'Kitty' Oliver, in 1900 at St Michael's Church, Langley. Kitty Oliver's parents walked from Leicestershire in the late 1870s to settle in Oldbury, where Kitty was born in 1880. In 1901 George was a carter at a brick works, living at 113 King's Road, King's Norton, with their first child, Elizabeth Louisa. Shortly afterwards they moved to Langley, and were at 40 Henry Street in 1911. George was a farm labourer.

He volunteered for the army soon after the outbreak of war, was posted to the 1st Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, and went to France on 1st June 1915. George Gilbert's single entry in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund suggests that he was attached to 1 section, 15th Field Company of the Royal Engineers, but at what point in his service is not clear. The 1st Battalion transferred from the 24th Division to the 23rd Division in October 1915.

The battalion was in the trenches during the spring of 1916, and moved to the Somme in June in preparation for the big offensive. They were in reserve for the first few days of July when the battle started, but called up on 4th July for the attack on Contalmaison. This was a costly operation for the Worcestershire Regiment, and lasted until 9th July. George Gilbert was presumed killed in action between the 6th and 10th July, according to the Register of Soldiers' Effects. He has no known grave, and is commemorated on the monument at Thiepval.

George Gilbert's 'effects' amounted to £1-7-6, which was sent to his widow, Kitty, a year later, followed by a war gratuity of £6 in 1919. Kitty did not marry again, and continued to live in Henry Street. With six children to support she had to take in washing and do cleaning to raise enough money to feed the children. On many occasions the children had no breakfast until she had earned enough to buy them food, which she would take into the school for them. Kitty Gilbert died in 1961 at the age of 81.

The family believe George's name is out of sequence on the window because it was added late when Kitty had managed to save enough money to pay for it. His name is missing from the window in the early photograph on page iii; therefore, it was added after the window had been installed and dedicated.

Private Henry GOULD

T/254787

37th Railhead Supply Department, Royal Army Service Corps

Killed in action in France and Flanders

8th April 1917, aged 38



Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun, 1 K 2

Henry Gould, known as 'Harry', was the son of William and Amelia Gould and elder brother to Thomas Gould (*qv*), who died in France a year earlier.

William Gould, his father, was born at Lickey End and became a nail maker at Catshill. Amelia was born at Langley Green in 1853, but by 1861 was in West Bromwich Workhouse. She moved to Bromsgrove, and in 1870 married William Gould. Both were working there as nail makers in 1871, but soon afterwards they moved to Oldbury, where William worked at a stone quarry. William and Amelia had fourteen children, seven of whom died in infancy, leaving seven brothers. Henry was born in 1880, when they were living at Park Street. In the 1890s William gave up work at the quarry to become caretaker at St Michael's Schools, so the family moved to 17 Causeway Green Road, Langley Green.

Henry followed his father into the quarry, and was a 'stone breaker' in 1901. He married Pamela Allen at the Good Shepherd Church in late 1902, and they had four children, two of whom survived infancy, Ernest, six in 1911, and 'Harry', 6 months. They had moved to Heath Town, near Wolverhampton, by 1911, where Henry still worked breaking stones for road construction.

He joined the forces on 2nd January 1917 at the age of 38. After just a month's training, he went to France as a private in the Royal Army Service Corps, 37th Railhead Supply Detachment. This was part of the 5th Division, tasked with the important job of supplying the troops. The detachment was working in the forward positions in March and April, transporting materials in preparation for the Battle of Arras, which started at Vimy Ridge on 9th April. Henry Gould was struck by shrapnel the day before the battle and killed, just two months after arriving in France.

On 4th May the Weekly News reported his death and gave his wife's address as Causeway Green Road, so the family may have moved back to Langley to live with William and Amelia. He was described as "*well-known in the Langley district, being the son of the late caretaker of Langley St Michael's Day Schools*". The report also refers to his brother Thomas, who was killed a year later in France.

Pamela and the family probably moved after his death to 8 Mona Avenue, Smethwick, for this is the address given in 'The National Roll of the Great War'.

Private Thomas GOULD

40834

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

21st February 1918, aged 30



Grévillers British Cemetery, X E 16

Thomas Gould was the son of William and Amelia Gould and brother to Henry Gould (*qv*), who died in France a year earlier.

William Gould, his father, was born at Lickey End and became a nail maker at Catshill. Amelia was born at Langley Green in 1853, but by 1861 was in West Bromwich Workhouse. She moved to Bromsgrove, and in 1870 married William Gould. Both were working there as nail makers in 1871, but soon afterwards they moved to Oldbury, where William worked at a stone quarry. William and Amelia had fourteen children, seven of whom died in infancy, leaving seven brothers. Thomas was born in 1888, when they were living at Park Street. In the 1890s William gave up work at the quarry to become caretaker at St Michael's Schools, so the family moved to 17 Causeway Green Road, Langley Green. Thomas was employed at the Brades Steel Works as a blacksmith's striker in 1911, unmarried and at living at home.

He enlisted in July 1916, and joined the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, going to France in October that year. As part of the 74th Brigade, 25th Division, the regiment was in the front line attack at the Battle of Messines in July 1917, took part in the Battle of Pilken in July, and defended the Givenchy sector in October and November. From December 1917 to mid-February 1918 they dug front line trenches just south of Bullecourt. During this work on 30th January 1918 Thomas Gould was hit by a bullet that penetrated his lung. He died three weeks later on 21st February at a casualty clearing station, and was buried at Grévillers British Cemetery just west of Bapaume, about 8 miles from Bullecourt.

His effects of £6-9-7 and a war gratuity of £6-10-0 were paid to his mother as sole legatee, so his father may have died by 1918.

Sergeant Joseph GROVE

202388

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

1st May 1918, aged 33



Arneke British Cemetery, I E 27

Joseph Grove was born at Oldbury in 1883, the son of Joseph and Betsy Grove. The family had moved to Langley from Northfield, where his parents and elder brothers and sisters were born. They were living in Arden Grove in 1891, and his father was a furnaceman at a chemical works. Joseph became a house painter. The family also ran a greengrocer's shop at 14 Cross Street from the early 1900s, but by 1911 this had moved to 59 Farm Road. The shop, in the name of Joseph Grove (presumably the father), is not listed in the directories after 1916.

Joseph Grove joined the Oldbury Volunteers at the age of 15 around 1898. When they became the Oldbury Territorials in 1908, he remained with them, rising to the rank of sergeant by the outbreak of war. They were part of the 1/7th Brigade of the Worcestershire Regiment. The battalion went to France on 31st March 1915, becoming part of the 144th Brigade, 48th Division, in May that year. In April 1916, his service term expired and he returned home. This gave him the opportunity to get married; twenty-one year old Daisy May Booton became his wife at Christ Church, Oldbury in the late summer of 1916. Daisy was born in 1895 at Halesowen, the daughter of Walter and Merab Booton. In 1901 the family was at Smethwick, but by 1911 Merab was at 10 Wesley Street, Oldbury with her children and Walter was lodging at Weston-super-Mare, working as a general labourer.

In September 1916, Joseph enlisted again, and acted as an instructor at various military schools in England. He volunteered to go to France, arriving in April 1918 to join the 3rd Worcestershire regiment, part of the 74th Brigade, 25th Division. They were engaged in the Battle of the Lys, around Bailleul and Kemmel Hill. He was wounded on 28th April, probably in the Second Battle of Kemmel, and died on 1st May, only eleven days after going back to France.

The Weekly News reported his death on 31st May, quoting a letter received by his widow from a comrade, Second Lieutenant Donald Russell: *".. He was a magnificent soldier and in every sense a man. From what he told me he was very, very attached to you and I am sure the blow will be overwhelming. Try to look on the heroic side of the tragedy. A life given for the finest country under Heaven will not be without its reward, but I can understand how terribly hard it all is, for I have lost a friend whose comradeship I valued more than I care to think. May God in his mercy give you the strength that I know you'll require."*

A year later, two 'In Memoriam' appeared in the Weekly News, one from his elder sister Eliza and her husband, and one from his parents and other sister Jenny and brother William, both giving 30th April as his date of death. They paid tribute to Joseph, as expected, but also to Daisy who had died on 3rd July 1918, only two months after Joseph, although official records of her death have not been found. Perhaps she found the blow too overwhelming, and she could not find the strength that Donald Russell had wished her.

Private William HACKWOOD

Y370

10th Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

16th September 1916, aged 22



St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, B 19 16

William Hackwood was born in 1893 in Langley, the son of a hewer at a colliery, William Hackwood, and his wife Jane, née Pennington. They lived in Titford Road, as did his grandparents and two of his uncles, and were a longstanding Langley family. His parents moved from Langley to Sheffield, probably for his father to find work as a miner, as the coal industry rapidly contracted in the Oldbury area around 1900. William, however, remained in Langley and in 1911 was living with his grandparents William and Kezia at 214 Titford Road. His grandfather and three of his uncles were employed at Albright and Wilson's phosphorus works in 1911, and William too got a job there just before the outbreak of war. He is commemorated on the Albright and Wilson memorial board.

He volunteered for the army on 25th August 1914 at Handsworth Town Hall, being posted to the 10th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles on 31st October. He was still living at 214 Titford Road, and gave his occupation as 'labourer'. After training, he was sent to France arriving to join the battalion on 3rd September 1915. They were part of the 59th Brigade of the 20th (Light) Division. The division was at the Somme in 1916, where they saw action at Delville Wood and led the assault in the taking of Guillemont (3rd to 6th September). His medical record of 5th September indicates that he received a gunshot wound which fractured his leg, and that he was 'dangerously ill'. William Hackwood died on the 16th September, by which time he had probably been transferred to one of the many hospitals in Rouen. He is buried at St Sever Cemetery in Rouen, which was used by these hospitals.

William was not married, and his effects, £4-9-6, were sent to his mother, Jane, in Sheffield in February 1917.

His cousin, Alfred Hackwood, of 36 Henry Street, was conscripted in June 1917 at the age of 18 into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, service number 40015, and was transferred later the Royal Berkshire Regiment, number 50603. He was taken a prisoner of war, and survived to be released.

Private Thomas HEELEY

8046

1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers
Killed in action in France and Flanders
3rd October 1915, aged 30



Cambrin Church Yard Extension, K 31

Thomas Heeley was born at Smethwick in 1885 to Josiah Heeley, a puddler at an iron works, and Mary Ann, née Gibbs. This was his father's second marriage, and they had three children Harry, Josiah and Thomas while living in Smethwick. His father died in 1886, and his mother married James Hayes the next year. The family then moved to Rotton Park, Birmingham. More half brothers and sisters were added from this marriage, including James who saw service in the Worcestershire Regiment. The family moved to 3 Court 1, Trinity Street, Langley by 1901, and Thomas was working as a labourer at a glass works. By 1911 James Hayes had died, and Mary Ann and family were lodging with George French in Bell Fold, Rood End. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records a later address for Mary Ann at 20 Mill Lane, Langley.

Thomas was not with the family on the 1911 census. Only one 'Thomas Heeley' has been traced, an unmarried infantryman in an unspecified regiment in India; he was the correct age, 25, but born in Walsall. It is possible, therefore, that Thomas was in the army before the outbreak of war. His medal record indicates that he served in the war with the 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, before moving to the 1st Battalion. The 2nd Battalion had been in India from 1902 until it returned to England in March 1914, so this may have been his regiment. It went to France arriving on the 11th August 1914. The 1st Battalion had been in Malta at the outbreak of war, and reached France on 7th October. It was almost wiped out in the First Battle of Ypres, and had to rebuild over the winter. This may be when Thomas Heeley moved from the 2nd to the 1st Battalion.

The 1st Battalion saw action in 1915 at Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Festhubert, and Givenchy, the major offensive of the Battle of Loos in September. The aim was to remove the German forces from several strong points, including slag heaps and pit head towers. It was the first time Kitchener's 'New Army' was used in battle, and the first time the British army used gas after its introduction by the Germans in April. Their objective was to flush the Germans from a series of quarries guarded by strongpoints on the Vermelles to Hulluch Road. The job was made more difficult because the British released the gas in a very light wind and it dispersed slowly; the British troops had to pass through it as they attacked. Nevertheless, the quarries were taken late in the day. At some point in this operation on 3rd October, Thomas Heeley was killed. He is buried in the cemetery at Cambrin, just east of Béthune.

His effects of £6-9-7 plus £6 war gratuity were paid to his mother, Mary Ann Hayes.

His brother Josiah Heeley was a driver and saddler with the Royal Field Artillery. He was a regular soldier who went to France in August 1914, and was killed in July 1917. He was a married man living at 219 Tat Bank Road in 1911, and is commemorated on the Rood End Memorial. His brother William Heeley was also a regular soldier with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment who went to France in October 1914, but was injured and discharged from service in August 1916.

Lieutenant John Charles Holland HOLMES

15th Squadron, Royal Air Force
Killed in action in France and Flanders
9th November 1918, aged 19



Solre-le-Chateau Communal Cemetery

John Charles Holland Holmes was born on 26th February 1899, the eldest of three sons of John Henry Holmes and Elizabeth, née Holland. Both parents came from Wednesbury, and married at St James Church there on Christmas Eve 1896. They moved to West Smethwick soon after their marriage and all their children were born there. In 1901 the family was at 167 St Pauls Road, and John Henry was employed as a commercial clerk.

By 1911 the family had moved to 13 Bloxidge Street, Langley Green. John's father died two years later at the early age of 41, leaving Elizabeth a widow for over forty years. She took the family back to Smethwick, first to 37 South Road, and then to 41 Holly Lane, where she remained for the rest of her life. Their contact with Langley was brief, therefore, but they must have felt an affinity for John to be remembered on the window at St Michael's Church. Perhaps they were involved in the work of the church in that period before the start of the war.

John Charles Holmes reached eighteen in February 1917, and was conscripted. His attestation on 11th April 1917 gives his address as 35 South Road, his occupation as 'clerk', and his preference for service in the Royal Flying Corps. He was drafted into the Training Reserve, and sent to Rugeley Camp. He progressed through various training battalions, and finally entered the 51st Leicestershire (Graduated) Regiment with regimental number 39360. His army records end with the entry '*Discharged to a commission in the RFC, 19/12/17*'. He had succeeded in his wish to fly, and this is quite an achievement for a conscripted man.

He joined the 15th Squadron as a Second Lieutenant, and was made up to Lieutenant in March 1918. The Squadron had been formed in Farnborough in March 1915, and had been in France since December that year. They were mainly tasked with reconnaissance support to the army, but their RE8 two-seater biplanes could also be used for bombing raids. From time to time they were involved in aerial combat with German pilots.

Not all went smoothly in his flying, and on 7th October he overturned his aircraft on landing at Marquise Airport near Boulogne, probably on a flight from England. On 9th November 1918 he left Selvigny airfield, south of Cambrai, at 11.00 am on a counter offensive patrol with Second Lieutenant E E Richardson MM as his observer in RE 8 number C2963. They were shot down just south of Masny, a small village near Douai, and both were killed. They lie in adjacent graves in Solre-le-Chateau Communal Cemetery close to the French-Belgian border and near the line established at the Armistice just two days after his death.

Gunner Joseph Henry JENNINGS

9446

41st Brigade, Royal Horse and Field Artillery

Killed in action in France and Flanders

22nd October 1914, aged 32



Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, panels 5 & 9

Joseph Henry was born in 1882 at Wolverhampton to Joseph Jennings, a railway porter, and Fanny. The family remained in Wolverhampton, and Joseph Henry started work as a key maker. He enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery when he reached eighteen, and in 1901 was in training at Seaforth Military Barracks at Liverpool. He served in South Africa before leaving the military and becoming a reservist. In 1903 he married Elizabeth Southwood at Wolverhampton. By 1911 they had three children, and had moved to 39 High Street, Langley. Joseph was a postman, and Elizabeth ran a confectionery business at 9 High Street, although this went under Joseph Henry's name in the Post Office Directories of 1912 and 1916.

At the start of the war he was either mobilised as a reservist or he volunteered immediately and joined the 41st Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery. The brigade was part of the 2nd Division of the British Expeditionary Force, landing at Le Havre on 16th August 1914, and immediately going into action at Mons in Belgium. The brigade was on the retreat from Mons, providing cover for the infantry, and involved in rearguard actions at Le Grand Fayt and Villers-Cotterets. They were engaged at the Marne and the Aisne in the mobile phase of the war before the two sides became entrenched.

The Weekly News of 11th December 1914 reported that he had died on the Aisne. In the middle of September the brigade was near Tilleul on the Aisne, not involved in major action, but taking occasional losses. According to Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, Joseph was killed on 22nd September. However, his medal roll gives 22nd October, and the later date is more likely since the British and French forces had reached Ypres by the second half of October, and Joseph is commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres, some distance from the Aisne. Whichever date is correct, he was one of the first Langley men to die in the war, and the first named on the window.

His effects amounted to £5-14-3, which was paid to Elizabeth, together with a £5 war gratuity. Elizabeth does not seem to have married again, but the family was in a better position than many others in Langley because she had the confectionery business. She continued to run the shop until around 1930, by which time the children had grown up.

Sergeant Joseph JOHNSON

7829

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

7th November 1914, aged 30



Perth Cemetery (China Wall), VIII C 10

Joseph Johnson was born in 1884 at Oldbury to William and Hannah Johnson, the sixth of eleven children. His father was an iron moulder from Bilston who had moved to Oldbury in the 1870s. The family lived at Park Lane initially, moving to 47 Old Park Lane, Langley, in the 1900s. In 1901 the sixteen year old Joseph was employed as a file cutter, but shortly afterwards he enlisted and joined the 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. This had been formed in 1900, so he would have been an early member. The regiment spent two years at Tipperary (1902-5), and a year in Cape Town (1907-8), but was otherwise based in England and saw no action. They did gain a reputation as the best regiment in the country for marksmanship. By 1911 they were at Norton Barracks, Worcester; Joseph had reached the rank of Corporal, and was a gymnastics instructor. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission citation, he was also a Wesleyan Methodist Local Preacher.

At the end of 1911, Joseph married Esther Hunting, in the Worcester area, probably at Norton. She was the daughter of a Worcester coal merchant, William Hunting, who had moved by then from the city of Worcester to 'The Poplars' at Norton. They had a son, Hubert G Johnson, two years later, when they were living in married quarters at Tidsworth Barracks on the east side of Salisbury Plain.

At the start of the war the battalion was mobilised and proceeded via Southampton to France, arriving on the 14th August as part of the 3rd Brigade, 7th Division. They began a long trek by train and foot to reach Ciplu on 22nd, and, tired and hungry, went next day to Mons to stop the German advance through Belgium. The battalion was at the front of the defence to meet the overwhelming force of the German army. A long slow withdrawal southwards followed, digging in and withdrawing repeatedly. In the course of this Joseph was mentioned in despatches by Sir John French for his action in saving two wounded comrades who would otherwise have fallen into German hands.

Resistance continued throughout September and October with little respite, and the battalion was engaged in battles at the Marne, the Aisne, La Bassée and Armentières. At the start of November the battalion moved northwards in buses to the Belgian village of Nieuwkerke. They advanced towards Ploegsteert, and took over positions on the east side of Ploegsteert Wood. On 7th November they were attacked by German forces, and many of their trenches overrun. The survivors fell back into the wood and held the enemy at the edge of it. Joseph Johnson was killed this action on the 7th November, and was buried at the Perth Cemetery near Ypres.

Esther returned to her family at Norton with their son, Hubert. They probably stayed in the Worcester area, for Hubert was married there in 1934. It is not known whether Esther remarried, but there is one Worcestershire marriage involving an Esther Johnson and William Reading at Bromsgrove in 1929.

Private William JOHNSON*

25639

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

3rd August 1917, aged ?



Bedford House Cemetery, Enclosure 2, II B 10

** There are two fallen soldiers from Langley named William Johnson who could be the 'W Johnson' on the window. Both are included in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund. Because it has not been possible to distinguish between them, both soldiers' stories are included.*

William has not been traced in census records. The only known connection to Langley is his name in the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records. These show that he was in the 14th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment at Leicester General Hospital, and later at Whittington Barracks. They also list him as a Lance-Corporal. The battalion was a 'pioneer' battalion, raised in 1915, and, as such, contained men specially trained in construction work on trenches and other defences. Much of their work was done under enemy fire, and they took a steady stream of casualties, killed or wounded. They went to France in June 1916 and worked on the trench system around Vimy Ridge near Arras. They were also expected to fight when required, and took part in the Battle of Ancre on 13th November 1916, supporting the main battalions of 63rd Division. It is possible that he was injured, and then returned to England.

When he went back to the front he joined the 3rd Battalion. The battalion was near Ypres from early July preparing for the Battle of Pilken, which began on 31st July. From 1st to 5th August they held positions east of Ypres in continuous rain and intense shelling. William Johnson died of wounds on 3rd August 1917, probably from injuries received in this action. He is buried in Bedford House Cemetery in the south of Ypres.

After his death his effects, amounting to £5-9-2 plus £7-10-0 war gratuity, were passed to his widow, Margaret, as sole legatee. He is probably the William Johnson that had married Margaret Harding at West Bromwich Register Office in the late summer of 1914, perhaps a rushed wedding when he knew he was going to war.

Private William JOHNSON*

11173

1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

26th June 1916, aged 24



Bertrancourt Military Cemetery, I D 17

** There are two fallen soldiers from Langley named William Johnson who could be the 'W Johnson' on the window. Both are included in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund. Because it has not been possible to distinguish between them, both soldiers' stories are included.*

William was the son of Maria Johnson of Stourbridge, who was left widow at the age of around thirty with three small children. The family was living at West Bromwich in 1901, and that is where William had been born. By 1911, however, they had moved to Court 4, Park Lane, and William was working as a labourer at a local iron foundry.

He enlisted early in the war, and joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. This regular battalion was in England at the start of the war, and went to France in August 1914. After training, William reached France in July 1915 and joined the battalion. He died of wounds on 26th June 1916, shortly before the commencement of operations on the Somme. The circumstances under which he was wounded have not been established. He was buried at Bertrancourt Military Cemetery, twenty miles south of Arras, which was used by field ambulances at the that time.

His effects, a mere 11s 1d, plus a war gratuity of £5, were paid to his mother as sole legatee.

Private Thomas LAWLOR*

285214

2/1st Battalion, Oxford and Buckingham Light Infantry

Killed in action in France and Flanders

22nd August 1917, aged 21



Tyne Cot Memorial, Panel 96 to 98

** The name on the memorial window is 'Lawton, T', but no-one of that name appears on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site, in army records, or in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund, and there is no 'Lawton' family in Langley on the 1911 census. 'T Sawlor' of the Oxford and Buckingham Light Infantry is listed in the Oldbury Book of Memory, but no 'Lawlor' or 'Lawton'. Thomas Lawlor is listed on the 1911 census, although in 1901 the family is listed as 'Lawley'. There is clearly great confusion about the name of the family, but this soldier is the only one identified to date who is likely to have featured on the window.*

Thomas Lawlor was born in Oldbury in late 1895, the eldest son of Thomas Lawlor and Cecelia, née Skidmore, who were married at Holy Trinity, Langley, in 1890. His father, Thomas 'Lawley', was born in Oldbury in 1864, and his mother in 1865. On the 1901 census the 'Lawley' family were at 90 Birchfield Lane, with Thomas listed as a 'general dealer (shop)'; local directories confirm he was a 'marine stores dealer', trading as Thomas Lawley. By 1911 he had given up the shop and was working as a fitter for a chemical manufacturer, and the family had moved to 99 Ashes Road, Causeway Green. Thomas junior was employed as a driller at the railway carriage works in 1911. He may have moved before the war to Albright and Wilson's phosphorus works because there is a 'T Lawlor' on their war memorial plaque.

Thomas Lawlor served as a private, number 203666, in the 4th Devonshire Regiment, and his membership of this regiment is recorded in the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records, first at Warminster Camp, and then in France. These records are endorsed 'Missing'. His army records show that he had moved from the Devonshire Regiment to the 2/1st Oxford and Buckingham Light Infantry by the time he died. Since he did not qualify for the 1915 star, he will not have gone to France until 1916 at the earliest.

The 2/1st Battalion was part of the 61st (South Midland) Division, involved in attempts to push the front line forwards to the east of Ypres. From the date Thomas went missing, presumed dead, on 22nd August 1917, and his commemoration on the Tyne Cot memorial near Ypres, it is most likely that he fell in subsequent actions following the Battle of Langemarck six days earlier. They suffered very heavy losses on the 22nd and 23rd August.

His effects, sent to his father, were £2-5-0, and he qualified for a war gratuity of £3. The family were still living in Causeway Green, but had moved to 182 Pool Lane by the 1920s, according to the Commonwealth War Grave Commission records.

Private Cecil Percy William LLOYD

R/943

1st Battalion, King's Royal Rifles
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
25th July 1916, aged 20



Thiepval Memorial, pier and face 13A & 13 B

Cecil Lloyd was born in 1897 at 12 Causeway Green Road, the only child of Thomas Lloyd, a brewer who came from St. Helens, Lancashire, and Agnes, née Hadley, from Langley. The family lived at Causeway Green Road, first at 14, then at 'Stonecroft', no 54. Cecil's first job was as an office boy at the Municipal Engineering Works, the trade name of Ham Baker Ltd. By the time of his attestation for the army in 1914 he was an electrician fitter at the Electric Power Company.

Cecil Lloyd volunteered at Smethwick on 2nd September 1914, and joined the King's Royal Rifles. He transferred in December to Army Cyclists Corps of the 20th Division Company. In May 1915 he moved briefly to a training battalion of the King's Royal Rifles, before his final posting in July 1915 to the 1st Battalion. This battalion was part of the 2nd Division, in the 6th Brigade until December 1915 and then the 99th Brigade. He went to France on 13th July 1915, but would have seen little action that year, mainly trench familiarisation and training.

He seems to have been a somewhat rebellious soldier, undergoing two periods of confinement to barracks in January 1916 for 'obscene language and insolence to an NCO' and for arriving on parade unshaved. A further use of bad language to an NCO when on active service followed on 3rd July 1916, resulting in fourteen days Field Punishment No 1. This involved being tied to a fence post or gun carriage immobile for several hours a day. Two days later he was charged with not having full equipment, the value of which was to be docked from his pay.

The 99th Brigade, 2nd Division, joined the battle of the Somme at Longueval, in operations around Delville Wood from 17th July. The Battalion was engaged alongside the South African forces on the outskirts of the wood on the 25th, the morning that Rifleman Lloyd was posted missing. His battalion attacked from the west leaving a trench called Pont Street, and it was reported after the war that he had probably drowned in the mud, such were the awful conditions at the time of his death. His date of death is uncertain, but was probably the 24th or 25th July. A war office note on his records states, "*Unofficially reported killed at Delville Wood on or about 25/7/16 on a statement made by 4813 Rfm W Jackson 1/KRRC*". The British did eventually take the wood, but the battle of Delville Wood raged until 4th September with the German forces making no less than seventy counterattacks. In these circumstances his body was never found, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Monument.

His register of effects shows he owed a sum of £2-15-3, probably the balance for the lost equipment. Unusually for a soldier, therefore, there was no back pay and so no 'effects' to send to his mother. However, she did receive the normal war gratuity of £8-10-0 in 1919. Cecil Lloyd's name appears on the Langley Memorial Window, but his parents also gave the church a similar three-light window, dedicated in 1921 "*To the glory of God and in loving memory of Cecil William Percy Lloyd (K R R), formerly a choirboy of this church, who died in the battle of the Somme, July 24th 1916*". After the window was removed during the restoration of St Michael's in 2014, it was handed back to the family.

Private William LLOYD

29219
8th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment
Died in France and Flanders
4th November 1918, aged 20



Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, VII N 65

William Lloyd was born into a canal family around 1898, but it is unclear where the birth occurred, Birmingham on the 1901 census or Wolverhampton on the 1911 census. The family lived on a canal boat and at the 1901 census, they were moored in Birmingham at the Crescent Wharf on the Shropshire Union Canal. By 1911 the family had come ashore and settled at 23 Station Road, Langley, where the children could attend school regularly, although William senior was still at work as a boatman.

William would have reached the age when he was liable for conscription in 1916 or 17. He went first into the Somerset Light Infantry as Private 40772, probably into a training battalion, before joining a fighting regiment, the 8th East Surrey Regiment in 1917 or 18. The regiment was formed in September 1914 as part of the New Army, and had been in France since July 1915. In 1918 the regiment was involved in resistance to the German spring offensive, and the advance of the Allies into Flanders in the autumn. They took part in the Battle of St Quentin from 29th September 1918, and continued to advance throughout October. William Lloyd contracted pneumonia, and was moved to Treport, a large hospital centre, where he died on 4th November, just a week before the Armistice. He was buried at Mont Huon Cemetery near Treport, on the French Coast north of Dieppe.

His effects of £15-17-0 and a war gratuity of £9 were paid to his father.

Private John Edwin LUDLOW

15/902

15th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

4th June 1916, aged 17



Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery, I C 58

John Edwin was born in Langley in 1899 to Ernest Horatio Ludlow and Mary Ethel, née Rodgers. His father came from Nechells, Birmingham, and was the son of an ammunition manufacturer, who was so successful he had retired by the age of forty. His mother came from Walton in Lancashire. His father was a brewer by trade and was lodging in Bloxcidge Street in 1891. He married Mary Rodgers at Edgbaston in November 1897, and they set up house at 51 Bloxcidge Street, affording a domestic servant, a housemaid and a nurse. Early in 1900 they moved to 'Bankside', a large house on the corner of Joinings Bank and Bloxcidge Street. John Edwin and a nurse were with his uncle and aunt in Edgbaston in 1901

In 1911 John Edwin and his younger brother, Donald Ernest, were at a preparatory school in Norfolk, The Glebe House, Hunstanton. The family left Langley around 1914, and were at Mortlake, Surrey, in 1920. John was only fifteen and seven months when the war started, and must have enlisted underage. He joined the 15th Royal Warwickshire Battalion, the second 'Birmingham Pals' regiment. This was formed in September 1914, and, after training, landed at Boulogne in November 1915, so John qualified for the 1915 Star.

In January 1916 the battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 5th Division. They moved to the front in March, and occupied trenches just north of Arras between St Laurent Blagny and the south of Vimy Ridge. This was a lively section of trenches with much mutual shelling, sniping and trench raids. It was probably in such action that John Edwin Ludlow was killed on 4th June, a month before the launch of the Somme offensive. The circumstances must have allowed his body to be recovered, and he is buried in the cemetery at Faubourg d'Amiens in Arras. He was seventeen years and five months old, officially still too young to join the army, and the youngest man on the window.

His effects amounted to £5-10-4, together with a war gratuity of £7-10-0, and this was paid to his father at Mortlake,.

Private G W MARSHALL*

38194

52nd (Graduated) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment

Death not known



** The soldier with this name has not been definitely identified. Details are those of one possible local man.*

There is a soldier on the window with the name 'Marshall, G W'. The Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records include one very late entry for 'Pte G W Marshall' of B Company, 52nd (Graduated) Battalion Devonshire Regiment. The address was given as 'Merton Camp, Roughton S O, Norfolk', altered to 'Cromer, Norfolk'. The entry is endorsed with three dates in 1918, 22nd September, 2nd November and 15th December, suggesting that he was contacted by the fund after the end of the war, and did not die during the conflict, but by illness, accident or natural causes.

Until 27th October 1917, the 52nd Battalion was known as the 210th Graduated Battalion, without any regimental affiliation, and was a training battalion. It was based at Norwich by late 1917, and moved to Cromer by May 1918. On 26th February 1918 it joined the 192nd Brigade of the 64th Division, which was a home service division, mainly constituted from second line Scottish regiments. It never went abroad, and was demobilised and disbanded in early 1919.

Since all the names proposed for the window were verified by the vicar at the time it was being planned, we may assume that such a person with a local connection did exist. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to trace any other details recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the 'Soldiers who died in the Great War', or any military list, and no-one with that name has been traced on local census records or in the newspapers. It would appear that he was conscripted into the army late in 1918. He did not go abroad and died around or after the armistice, and, therefore, his death does not appear in official war records.

Lance Corporal Lewis MASKELL

9889

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died in England of wounds received in France and Flanders

26th October 1914, aged 26



Glasgow Western Necropolis, H 1467 E

Lewis Maskell was born in 1888, the son of William Maskell, a blacksmith's striker at an engineering works, and Ann, née Moss. He was registered as 'Louis', but both forenames are used on different documents relating to him. His father was born in Bromsgrove but his mother in Oldbury. The family lived first in Oldbury then in Langley at Hobicus Lane (next door to Edward Mordan *qv*), in Titford Road, and at 14 Station Road by 1911. It was a large family with two married sisters at home in 1911, making fourteen people living in a five room house. Perhaps this is why Lewis left his labouring job to join the army in April 1906. He served for seven years with the 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, being stationed in Malta and Bareilly in India. He took part in the last great military show in India, the Durbar, in Delhi in 1911 to mark the visit of the George V and his proclamation as Emperor of India.

When he left the army he worked at the Oldbury Carriage Works, and then Chance and Hunt's chemical factory. He remained a reservist, and at the outbreak of war was mobilised, rejoining the Worcestershire Regiment, but this time in the 3rd Battalion since the 4th Battalion was in Burma. The 3rd Battalion arrived in France on 14th August 1914 and the British Expeditionary Force set out for Mons. This was followed by intense action on the long retreat as far as the Aisne. In mid-September the 3rd Battalion was entrenched at Vailly-sur-Aisne, just east of Soissons. They came under heavy shelling and repeated attack, and it is likely that this is when Lewis was wounded. He described the incident to his brother, saying that the order to advance was received and as he started out his right leg was struck by shrapnel splinters from a shell.

He was repatriated to Glasgow Royal Infirmary, where the leg was amputated. The Weekly News of 16th October reported that the operation was a success, and he had been visited by his brother. However, his recovery was short-lived, and he died of shock on 26th October. He is buried at Glasgow Western Necropolis.

Most of the documents, including the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site and the Weekly News articles, refer to Lewis Maskell as a 'private'. However, his entry in the Register of Soldiers' Effect has been altered from 'Pte' to 'L-Corp', and the entry in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour lists him as a Lance Corporal. It is likely, therefore, that he was promoted in the field shortly before he was wounded.

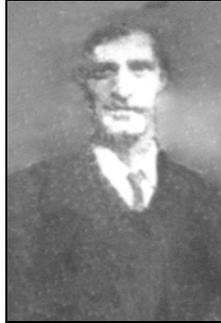
Private William MOBBERLEY

7283

1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

13th February 1915, aged 32



Le Touret Memorial, near Béthune, panel 17 & 18

William Mobberley was born in West Bromwich in 1883 to Thomas Mobberley, an iron moulder, and Mary Ann. He was the youngest of three surviving sons, all born in West Bromwich. About 1890 the family moved to 5 Broad Street, Langley, and were still there in 1911 at number 19. William was working as a file cutter's labourer in 1901, probably for the file maker Silas Round whose business was nearby in Titford Road. In 1908 William married Jane Truby at St John's, West Bromwich, and they had one child, Doris May, in 1910. By 1911 they had moved to 12 Chapel Street, Lyng, and he was a labourer in a brickyard.

William Mobberley mobilised at the start of the war, and went to France with the 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment on 12th August 1914. Therefore, he must have been a trained soldier, either a member of the battalion, having joined after the date of the census in 1911, or a reservist, having served in the army between 1901 and 1911. The 2nd Battalion, part of the 5th Brigade, 2nd Division, went immediately to Mons. They were involved in the long retreat to the Aisne in early September. By late October they were at the Battle of Langemark, just north east of Ypres, and on 31st October the five hundred or so remaining men of the battalion made a bayonet charge under shelling into the grounds of the chateau at Gheluvelt, joining the remnants of the South Wales Borderers. This plugged a potential gap in the British line and prevented a German breakthrough.

In the winter months William Mobberley transferred to the 1st Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, which was at about half strength because of combat and frostbite. In early 1915 they were in the trenches facing Neuve Chapelle. On 13th February William Mobberley was in the front trench when he was killed by a sniper in a bizarre incident, described in a letter to Jane Mobberley by William's platoon commander, Lieutenant Rock, "... at nine o'clock in the morning he was looking through a periscope towards the German lines when a bullet came straight through the periscope and hit him in the head. Death was quite instantaneous. We buried him that night in the orchard beneath the trench. My trench is only eighty yards from the Germans, so I am sorry to say that casualties are fairly frequent. Private Mobberley had not been with me very long, but I thought a lot of him as he was always willing and cheerful, and was a good soldier in every sense of the word."

The location of the burial must have been lost in the subsequent fighting in the area, because William Mobberley is commemorated on the memorial at Le Touret, which bears the names of soldiers who died in that area with no known grave.

His effects, amounting to £3-18-6 were paid to Jane Mobberley and her child in July 1915, followed by a £5 war gratuity in 1919. His daughter Doris married William Butler in 1933, but Jane did not remarry and died in 1970 at the age of 86. An 'In Memoriam' was placed in the Weekly News of 15th February 1918 by his parents and his brothers, Sam and Jack, but with no reference to Jane.

Lance Corporal Denis Garrett MOORE

22179

20th Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment

Died in France and Flanders

6th September 1916, aged 29



Point 110 Old Military Cemetery, Fricourt, K 6

Denis Garrett Moore was born in 1887, the son of Henry Richard Vernon Moore and Emily Mary, née Fripp, of Clapham, London. Henry died when Denis was only three, and the family continued to live in London with Emily's unmarried brother and sister. In 1900 Emily Moore married Frederick Ingham Spinks at Lymington, Hants, where she had been christened. Frederick took a job as a mechanical engineer at an iron works in the Oldbury area, acting as works manager, and they were living at 13 Moat Road by 1901. By 1911 the family were still at Moat Road, but Frederick was a patient at Stratford Hospital. Denis had become an analyst for West Bromwich Corporation. In November 1914 he gave his job as 'Assistant Factory Inspector' on his attestation form when he volunteered at Liverpool at the age of 27.

He joined the 20th Liverpool Regiment, and remained in England for a year, before going to France in November 1915. He was wounded in the left knee in May 1916, and returned to England for three months to recover. He was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal, and Denis Moore started his second period in France in September 1916, now attached to the 1/8th Liverpool Regiment. Shortly after his return, he died in a strange accident which triggered a court of enquiry in the field. This concluded that one of the soldiers in a group of four men, including Denis Moore, had picked up a shell. This was then thrown away and exploded on hitting the ground. The four men were all seriously wounded, and died within the hour. A verdict of accidental death was recorded. He is commemorated on the Oldbury, St Michael's, and Christ Church Rolls of Honour, suggesting a close association with the Anglican Church in the area.

His effects were paid to an uncle and grantee, Walter G Fripp in January 1917.

Private Edward MORDAN

16594
58th Company, Machine Gun Corps
Killed in action in France and Flanders
10th September 1918, aged 31



Vis-en-Artois Memorial, panel 10

Edwin Mordan was born at Worcester in 1887/8, the son of Edwin Mordan of Swindon, Wiltshire, and Caroline, née Smith. He is registered as 'Edwin' on census records to 1901, but he used the name 'Edward' for his army career and when he married. The family left Worcester soon after Edwin's birth, and by 1891 were settled at 31 Hobicus Lane, Langley, (next door to Lewis Maskell, qv), and were still in Station Road in 1911. In 1901 the fourteen year old Edwin was working as a boat lad on the canal, but he must have decided to opt for the soldier's life when old enough to enlist.

By 1911 he was in India as an infantryman under the name 'Edward'. His regiment is not stated on the census, but is probably the 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Regiment. This had moved from India to Burma at the end of 1907, but returned to India at the start of 1911 by the time the census was taken. He may have left the army by August 1914 and been a reservist, but it is more likely that he was still serving. The 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers had returned to England in March 1914, and were at Portland when the war broke out. They immediately mobilised, and landed at Rouen on 11th August 1914, initially acting as 'Line of Communication' troops supporting the army's supply and logistics functions. His regimental number at this time was 9987.

The battalion transferred to the 19th Infantry Brigade on 22nd August, successively moving from the 6th Division to the 27th, 2nd and 33rd Divisions by November 1915, and seeing action during the year. Edward Mordan may have been a machine gunner with the 19th Brigade, for he moved to the 58th Machine Gun Corps when this was formed in February 1916. It became part of the 19th (Western) Division, and was involved in the Battle of the Somme that year at Albert, High Wood, Pozières and the Ancre. In 1917 they were at Messines, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle and Passchendaele. In 1918 they became part of the 19th Battalion of the Machine Gun Corps and saw action in the final push into Picardy. It was in the advance in pursuit of the fleeing German forces that he was killed on 10th September 1918. He was one of the first soldiers to go to France in August 1914, and had seen much action and survived until just two months before the Armistice.

His effects amounted to £47-8-8, including £35 war gratuity, and this was paid to his widow and sole legatee, Ethel Mordan. He had married Ethel Parnham at Mansfield in late 1917 during a leave, and she must have seen very little of him. She married Vasilios Tamas at Tynemouth in the spring of 1919.

Edward's younger brother, Ernest, enlisted in the 2/5th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, which went to France in 1916, but he survived the war.

Acting Bombardier John MORTIMER

583

114th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Killed in action in France and Flanders

1st July 1916, aged 38



Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery Extension, I A 10

John Mortimer, the son of George and Martha, was born in 1878 and baptised at Blackheath. His father came from Buckinghamshire, but his mother from Causeway Green, where the family lived. His father was a general labourer working in a brickyard and as a bricklayer's labourer. He died in 1902. In the 1890s John Mortimer joined the army and served with the Royal Garrison Artillery, leaving at the end of his time and being placed on the reserve.

In 1909 John married Charlotte Snade, seven years his junior, at St Paul's Church. She was the daughter of Samuel and Obedience Snade from Mill Lane, Langley. In 1911 John and Charlotte were lodging in Lower Holt Road, Cakemore, and John was a hewer at a coal mine. They had two children, John Thomas and Obedience in 1911, and Arthur was born in 1912. Obedience died at the age of two in 1913. Later they moved to 14 Edward Street.

John was mobilised from the special reserve and rejoined the Royal Garrison Artillery on 24th August 1914. He had changed his job, giving 'steam presser' as his occupation when he attested, and agreeing that one third of his wages be paid to his wife and children. He was appointed Acting Bombardier, and was qualified as a signaller and telephonist. His unit was the 114th Heavy Battery, which went to France on 3rd October 1914 as part of the 25th Brigade of the 1st Division. The unit was involved at Mons in 1914, and in the subsequent retreat, moving 60lb (five inch) guns with horses. The battery's progress through the war is difficult to trace, but they were at the Battle of the Somme, where John was killed in action on the first day, 1st July 1916. He is buried in the Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery, near Albert, but this may be a re-location from his original grave site. His effects, £9-18-6, were paid to Charlotte and the children, with a war gratuity of £8-10-0 in 1919.

Charlotte was well acquainted with the military, having two brothers, John and Samuel, who had served as regular soldiers and gained the 1914 star in the war. Both served with Worcestershire Regiment. Samuel enlisted in 1900, and transferred to the Reserve in 1908 after service in South Africa and India. He was mobilised at the start of the war, but was wounded in the hip in 1915, and discharged from the army at the end of 1916. Arthur Mortimer, John's cousin, from 14 Pound Road, was a Prisoner of War, but survived, and lived until 1963.

In 1918 Charlotte married another serving soldier, Oliver Foley Wood, born in Oldbury in 1887. He was living at Spring Street in 1901 with his widowed mother, but by 1911 was at Alverstoke, Hampshire, working as a riveter. He enlisted and served as a private, 16044, with the 11th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. He went to Salonika, where he was wounded or became ill, and discharged from service. Charlotte and Oliver were married in the spring of 1918, and he died on Armistice Day, 11th November 1918, so their marriage lasted only six months. Oliver Wood is buried in Oldbury Cemetery with a War Grave headstone. Charlotte lived to the age of 89 and did not marry again. Hers is a story of repeated tragedies, losing both parents early and a daughter aged 2, being widowed twice by the age of 33, and finally outliving her other two children.

Private Edward MURRAY

9084
1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment
Killed in action in France and Flanders
10th March 1915, aged 33



Le Touret Memorial, panel 17 & 18

Edward Murray was born in 1883 in Tividale to Edward Murray, a coal miner from Oldbury, and Elizabeth, née Fiddler, from Birmingham. He had two older brothers, Thomas and Alfred, four younger sisters and two younger brothers. By 1901 the family was living at 57 Titford Road, but 19 year old Edward was already at Whittington Barracks, having joined the Staffordshire Regiment. By 1911 the family was at 180, Poole Lane, and Edward had left the army and was boarding with his brother Alfred in Pontypridd. Both were working underground as coal miners. By the time of his death his parents had moved to 195 Titford Road. His mother replied to an enquiry from his regiment about his pay that she had four sons in the army. [Their surname is sometimes given as 'Murrey'.]

Edward Murray was no longer a reservist at the outbreak of war, but volunteered at Birmingham Town Hall on 11th August 1914. He was drafted into the 6th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. As a former soldier, he was quickly transferred from this training regiment to the 1st Battalion, and was sent to France on 12th December.

Throughout in the winter of 1914-15 the British Army was bogged down in wet trenches, and the first large scale offensive planned by the British was at Neuve Chapelle. It was supposed to be part of a much larger push towards Lille. However, the Gallipoli landings had taken so many resources, the operation was scaled back with an overall objective to take Aubers village and ridge. The day dawned with a snowstorm and after a thirty minute artillery bombardment, where it is estimated that more shells were fired than in the whole of the Boer War, the Battalion went over the top in poor weather conditions on the outskirts of the village towards Aubers Ridge. After bloody hand-to-hand fighting the village was taken, but over 370 of the battalion were casualties that morning.

A statement in Edward's service records suggests the confusion in the battalion following the engagement: *"the soldier went into action on the morning of 10th March 1915; on the night of the same day when the Roll of his company was called he was found to be missing, enquiries were made and no trace of him could be found. Proceedings were taken to hold a board of enquiry, and evidence collected from non-commissioned officers and men belonging to the said soldier's company who went into action at the same time. On such evidence the Army Council have been regretfully constrained to conclude that he is dead, and that his death took place between the 10th and 13th March 1915. Next of kin duly notified to this effect on the 25/5/1915."* Naturally, his body was never recovered, and he is commemorated on the memorial at Le Touret, about four miles from where he fell.

His brother Alfred ('Murrey'), in the 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, was killed in 1916 on the Somme, but is not named on the Langley Memorial Window, perhaps because he had moved much earlier to South Wales to work as a miner.

Private Thomas NEALE

13579
12th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment
Killed in action in Salonika
25th April 1917, aged 22



Doiran Memorial

Thomas was the son of Thomas Neale, a chemical worker, and Myra (or Maria). Young Thomas was born in Penncricket Lane, Causeway Green, in 1895, one of eight children. He attended Causeway Green School in Pound Road, and is commemorated on their Roll of Honour. On leaving school he became a grocer's assistant at John Sleeman's shop in Causeway Green Road. By 1911, however, his father had died, and Thomas had left Sleeman's to work at Chance and Hunt, according to the family, although the census implies he was at the phosphorus works.

He enlisted at the beginning of the war, and was drafted into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as a private, 7886, but was transferred very quickly to the 12th Hampshire Regiment. They were billeted at Basingstoke from November 1915 to March 1915, when they went to Bathwick (Bath) and then Sutton Veny. The time in Basingstoke was significant, for there he met seventeen year old Ellen Ivy Randall and fell in love. In September 1915 they were mobilised for France, and arrived at Le Havre on 29th. Thomas and Ellen probably became engaged before his departure. The battalion assembled near Amiens, but saw no action there, and were transferred to Salonika in November.

In Salonika, the battalion still saw little action throughout 1916, just a few skirmishes with light casualties. On 24th and 25th April 1917, however, they prepared for action at Jumeaux Ravine close to Doiran on the border of Greece and Serbia. To capture the enemy positions, the battalion had to cross this deep ravine, which was heavily defended by the Bulgarian forces on the opposite side. They lost some men in an enemy barrage as they approached the assembly point, and then came under two further heavy barrages as they pressed forward. Only a handful of men reached their objective, and these were either killed or taken prisoner. The regiment lost 15 officers and 249 men on the 24th and 25th April, including Thomas Neale.

Ellen Randall remained with her family in Basingstoke, but must have maintained contact with the Neale family since she married William Neale, Thomas's younger brother, at Basingstoke in 1928, and they set up home at Langley.

Private Cyril OAKLEY

200298

1/7th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

26th April 1917, aged 23



Peronne Communal Cemetery Extension, I B 8

Cyril Oakley was born in 1895 at Causeway Green shortly after the family had moved there from Priestfield, near Wolverhampton. His father, John, came from Darlaston, and his mother, Clara, née Blakemore, from Priestfield. They moved to 46 Mill Lane by 1901, and 65 Parsonage Street by 1911. His father was a bricklayer at a chemical works at this time, and Cyril was a 'labourer driller'. Cyril's effects were paid to his mother as sole legatee in 1917, so his father had probably died by then, and the address on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site is 90 Old Park Lane.

Cyril enlisted at Oldbury soon after the war started and joined the 1/7th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. After training in England, the battalion went to France, landing at Boulogne on 31st March 1915 as part of the 144th Brigade of the 48th Division. They saw action on the Somme in 1916 in the battles of Albert, Pozières and the Ancre.

In March 1917 the division was first to occupy Peronne as the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg line. The next few weeks were taken up removing the remaining pockets of German forces forward of the Hindenburg line. On the 24th April the division was ordered to take Guillemont Farm, and, after hand to hand fighting with bayonets, the German unit was driven out. On 25th April the division was fired upon and counterattacked by the Germans, but they held on until they were relieved and could return to their camp at Villers Faucon. Cyril Oakley was probably wounded in the course of this period of fighting, and died of his injuries on the 26th April. He is buried at Peronne Communal Cemetery, started by the 48th Division in March 1917. His effects were paid to his mother, Clara, as sole legatee.

His elder brother, Edward, was a stoker in the Royal Navy in 1911, and presumably served in the war, but survived since there is no record of his death.

Gunner Thomas Leonard PARKES

65283

115th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Died of wounds in France and Flanders

15th November 1916, aged 25



Carnoy Military Cemetery, near Albert, X 15

Thomas Leonard Parkes was born in 1891 to Frank Parkes and Alice, née Butler. His mother came from Small Heath, and his father from West Bromwich. They had eight living children, George Alfred, Frank Hubert, Stanley, Minnie, Mabel, Roland and Gladys. His father was a travelling salesman selling paint and wallpaper, and in 1891 they were living above a paint shop in West Bromwich. By 1901 had moved to Birch Street, Rood End, and in 1911 were at 16 Richmond Hill. By then Thomas was at work as an assistant at a corn merchant's shop.

He volunteered, and joined the Royal Garrison Artillery. As a gunner in the 115th Heavy Battery, Thomas Parkes would have been part of a team firing very large calibre guns or howitzers from well behind the front line. The heavy battery usually had 60 pound (5 inch) guns that could fire a shell almost six miles. With winter approaching in late 1916 and the massive casualties during the summer, the generals thought a victory was essential for morale, both of the troops and nation at home. There was a victory of sorts in that three villages which the army had failed to take earlier, Beaumont Hamel, St. Pierre Divion and Beaucourt, were all captured. The final act on the Somme came when Allied troops attacked at the Battle of the Ancre. Thomas was killed on 15th November 1916, the opening day of the action. The German heavy artillery would have responded to the initial opening salvos from the British and targeted the artillery, and Thomas was probably injured by incoming fire. He died soon after in the main Dressing Station of 14th Corps.

His effects were paid to his mother as sole legatee in 1917. Thomas left a will giving his address as The Limes, Joinings Bank, leaving £274-11-11 and the administration to his brother George Alfred. Newspaper reports of his death record that two brothers, Stanley and Frank Hubert, had served for many years with the 20th Hussars, and were at the front.

As well as being on the Langley Memorial Window, Thomas Parkes is commemorated on memorials at Christ Church, at Rood End, and at St Augustine's Church, Edgbaston, where his widowed mother was living at the time of his death. The Vicar of Langley reported his death in the Parish Magazine, stating that Thomas was formerly a member of the choir at St Michael's.

A year later, the Weekly News of 16th November 1917 carried two *'In Memoria'*. One from his fiancé, 'Em', reads, *"Only those who have lost a loved one know the bitterness of 'Gone'. Sadly missed."* The other is from 'his friends Mr and Mrs Jacques and Lucy', *"Death divides, but memory ever clings."* In 1911 the Jacques family were at West Bromwich Street, Oldbury, William and Lucy Jacques, sons Herbert and Frank, and daughters Lucy and Emily. Emily, aged 23, was a teacher for Oldbury Education Committee. 'Miss Jacques' taught for many years at Rood End School between the wars, and is probably 'Em'. Her brother Frank Jacques was killed in action in October 1916.

Private Joseph PERRY

21403
13th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment
Died in England
22nd December 1915, aged 42



Wareham Cemetery, B B 3

Joseph Perry was a Worcester man, born there around 1873 to Alfred and Elizabeth Perry. He was employed in the iron industry at Worcester, and in 1896 he married Jane Walker, a brush maker. They had two children who died very young, and adopted a son, Percy Powell Perry, born in 1900 at 'Langley near Birmingham', according to the 1911 census. The most likely candidate for the adopted child is Percy Bunn Powell, born in West Bromwich registration area in March quarter of 1900. Joseph and Jane could have retained Percy's birth name 'Powell' as a second given name. The family does not appear on the 1901 census.

Joseph Perry was a volunteer who enlisted at Worcester, and joined the 13th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment. This was formed at Plymouth in November 1914 as a reserve battalion, but it soon became a training battalion to supply troops to make up the fighting battalions. In April 1915 they moved to Wareham. The battalion never went overseas, and there are no army records for Joseph Perry to indicate his role in it. The only reference to him is the record of his death, 'Died' on 22nd December 1915. This suggests he died from illness while serving, not from wounds in battle, and he was buried at Wareham Cemetery in Dorset. Another local man Private Frederick Moss of Beech Lanes of the same battalion is buried there having 'died of sickness'.

Joseph Perry's effects were paid to his widow, Jane. In spring 1918, Jane married George A Griffiths at Holy Trinity Church, Langley. Their address is given on the Commonwealth War Grave Site as 32 Henry Street, Langley Green. We do not know whether Jane came to live in Langley with Joseph or whether she moved when she married George Griffiths, but her living in the parish is doubtless part of the reason that Joseph Perry was commemorated on the Langley window. No other connection with Langley is known, apart from it being the birthplace of their adopted son. George Griffiths has not been identified, although there was a 19 year old of that name at Newbury Lane on the 1911 census.

Corporal Frank PICKERING

14886

17th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
28th August 1916, aged 22



Cote 80 French National Cemetery, Etinehem, A 6

Frank Pickering was the younger son of Wade Westran Pickering and Anne Jane, née Lawrence. He was born in 1894 at Bolsover, near Chesterfield in Derbyshire, where his father was a grocer. His mother died in 1897 leaving his father with two small boys. By 1901 the family had moved to Highgate Street, Aston, with Elizabeth Godley, also from Bolsover, as their 'domestic servant'. The next year, his father married Elizabeth, who was thirteen years his junior. The family moved to 20 Edward Road, Smethwick, near to Old Church, and by 1911 Elizabeth and Wade had two daughters. Wade was still a grocer, and in 1913 he bought one of the shops of F E Gadd at 3 Causeway Green Road, Langley Green, and would occupy it until his death in the 1940s. He continued to live at Edward Road until the early 1920s. Wade was well known locally, and his shop across the road from St Michael's Church establishes the connection with the Langley area, although Frank himself seems never to have lived there.

Frank Pickering was working in 1911 as a silversmith's 'maker-up'. He volunteered early in the war, and joined the 17th Battalion of the Lancashire Regiment. This had been formed in December 1914 as a 'bantam' regiment, which meant it took soldiers under the regulation height of 5ft 3in. It became part of the 104th Brigade of the 35th Division and went to France at the end of January 1916. Hence, its members, including Frank, did not qualify for the 1914-15 Star.

The division was in the trenches near Festubert in March 1916 in very bad weather, and continued in the area until mid-July, when it saw action during the Battle of the Somme in the attempt to take Bazentin Ridge, just north-east of Mametz Wood. This operation was quickly successful, and led on to further actions around High Wood in the following days. After a period of rest, the division moved to Talus Boise to hold the extreme right of the British line next to the French forces. By 24th August they were occupying the Talus Trench in anticipation of an attack on Maurepas with the French. They moved forward over the next few days, advancing the front line beyond Angle Wood and cutting new trenches under heavy shelling and hostile fire. Frank Pickering died of wounds on 28th August, presumably received during these actions. He is buried at Cote 80 French National Cemetery, five miles south of Albert on the Somme.

His effects of £12-12-3 and war gratuity of £8 were paid to his father.

Rifleman Albert Edward PLANT

R/3156

10th Battalion, King's Royal Rifles
Killed in action in France and Flanders
13th February 1916, aged 22



Essex Farm Cemetery, I D 3

Albert Edward Plant was born in 1894 to Warwick and Sarah Ann Plant (née Grainger). His mother, Sarah Ann, was the daughter of Esther Grainger who was widowed at the age of twenty-four, but later married John Francis and settled at 26 Langley Road, Langley Green. Sarah Ann married Warwick Plant at Dudley in early 1890, and Albert was born there four years later. By 1901, Albert was living with his grandparents at Langley Green, although the reason for this is not known. He was still there in 1911, and working as a 'tube machinist at a tube works'. After his death in 1916, his effects, £1-11-0, were sent to his 'mother, Sarah A', but the £3 war gratuity was paid to his 'brother Fred' in 1919 since Sarah died, aged 47 in late 1918.

Albert Plant volunteered early in the war and joined the 10th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles. Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records show that he was in 'A' Company. This battalion was formed in September 1914 as part of the 'new army', and went to France on 21st July 1915, which is the date shown on Albert's medal card for first entry into a theatre of war. The battalion was part of the 20th (Light) Division, stationed at the front just north of Ypres near Brielen in February 1916. He was killed in action on 13th February, but the circumstances of his death are not known. He is buried at Essex Farm Cemetery next to the Yser Canal near Brielen.

Private John RICKETTS*

19611
9th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment
Killed in action at Gallipoli
10th August 1915, aged 39



Helles Memorial, panel 104 to 114

**No man named 'J Ricketts' with a Langley connection has been identified in the lists of war dead or local census and birth records. There are families called Ricketts in the area on the 1911 census, for example John Ansell Ricketts of Crosswells Road, but he is 51. No family with a 'J Ricketts' of suitable age appears on the 1901 or 1911 census. The Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund has no address recorded for this man, but this name is crossed out on a loose list of 'casualties' inserted into the record book. It is possible that he moved into Langley after 1911. This John Ricketts is included as the soldier living nearest to Langley in the Commonwealth War Graves records.*

The only fallen soldier recorded by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission in the Midland area is John Ricketts, a vice-maker living in Dudley. He was born in 1876 in Dudley, the son of John and Mary Ricketts. In 1899, at the age of 23, he married 24 year old Emma Rollinson at Dudley, and by 1911 they had four children.

John Ricketts enlisted in the 9th Worcestershire Regiment. According to his medal record, he went to Gallipoli in July 1915 when the regiment was first deployed there. They landed at Gully Beach on 13th July, and held trenches close to the beach from 16th to the 29th July. After a period of rest, they marched under cover of darkness on 6/7 August as part of a surprise attack on the Sari Bair Ridge. By 9th July they had gained ground, but not seized the crests. A further attempt to take Sari Bair on the 10th August was repulsed and a strong counterattack made by the Ottoman Turks. John Ricketts was killed in this last phase of the unsuccessful operation.

It has not been possible to establish what happened to Emma and the children, nor any Langley connection.

Private Herbert Farrer RIGG

28087

1st Battalion, Wiltshire, Duke of Edinburgh's, Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

1st September 1918, aged 19



Vis-en-Artois Memorial, panel 9

Herbert Farrer Rigg was the son of George Farrer Rigg and Eliza Jane, and the youngest of four children. He was born in Kendal, Westmorland, in 1900, but the family had moved to Skelmersdale, Lancashire, by 1901. In 1911 his father was managing a chemists shop at 32 Hagley Street, Halesowen. His elder brother, George Farrer Rigg also served in WW1, but survived to be demobilised, and the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund gives his address as 'Titford Road'. Thus, it is likely that the family moved to Titford Road, Langley, soon after 1911, thereby enabling Herbert to attend the Secondary School at Oldbury. The school had a strong cadet force, of which he was probably a member. Herbert is commemorated on the memorial for Oldbury Secondary School, Flash Road, which became the County High School in Moat Road in 1926.

Herbert would not have been of age to serve in the army until 1917. He joined the 8th Battalion, the Somerset Light Infantry, number 4064, and was transferred to the 7th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, number 38951. He then joined the 1st Wiltshire Battalion, which was part of the 110th Brigade, 21st Division in the final advance into Flanders in July and August 1918. In August the Third Army advanced eastwards across the Ancre towards Bapaume, driving the Germans back. Private Rigg was killed on 1st September, the day that Beaulencourt, just south of Bapaume, was finally taken. His body was not recovered, and his name appears on the memorial at Vis-en-Artois to the men who died in the final advance, August to November 1918.

In April 1919 his effects were paid to his father, but he died at the end of 1919, and therefore in August 1920 the war gratuity was paid to Herbert's brother, George Farrer Rigg, junior.

Rifleman Harold ROBBINS

S/486
11th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
11th July 1916, aged 20



Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery, IV A 4

Harold Robbins was born in Langley in 1896, the son Joseph and Emma Robbins of Old Park Lane. Joseph was a furnaceman at one of the local chemical works. In 1911, at the age of fourteen, Harold was employed as a driller at the Carriage Works in Oldbury. However, by the start of the war he was working at Accles and Pollock, and appears on their Roll of Honour for employees who answered the call in the 'National Emergency of 1914'. This implies that he enlisted at the start of the war.

He joined the 11th Battalion of The Rifle Brigade, which was formed in September 1914 as part of the New Army. It became part of the 59th Brigade of the 20th (Light) Division. The division arrived in France in July 1915, and by June 1916 they were in Flanders to the east of Ypres. They fought alongside the Canadians at Mount Sorrel, and succeeded in driving the Germans off the hill. The 20th Division then moved south to the Somme and their next major action was around Delville Wood in August. However, around the 10 and 11th July Harold Robbins was in the forward trenches when there was a gas attack, and he died in a clearing station shortly afterwards. It is not clear whether this was on the Somme or in Flanders, but his burial at Vlamertinghe, two miles east of Ypres seems to confirm that it was in Flanders. The note in the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records 'Killed Battle of the Somme 1st July 1916' is certainly wrong about the date, and probably about the location.

The Weekly News published a letter received from Second Lieutenant H Wheeler, his platoon commander, which included the tribute, *"For the last seven months in and out of the trenches, I have been constantly with him, and he was always one of the most cheery and willing workers at any task he was set. He was a great favourite amongst his comrades in No 9 Platoon and, indeed, liked by the whole company, and it was a great shock when we heard he had died, but he died bravely doing his duty and like a British soldier facing the enemy. He suffered very little pain, being gassed in the front trench and dying shortly after we got him down to a dressing station on a stretcher."*

His brother Bertie, six years older, who was serving in France with 9th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, was wounded the day after Harold's death and brought back to England. He was treated in Alderhay Hospital, Liverpool. There is no later address for him in the records of the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund, so he is unlikely to have returned to the front.

Private Joseph ROUND

104167

9th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment
Died of wounds in France and Flanders
30th October 1917, aged 29



Dozinghem Military Cemetery, XI B 8

Joseph Round was born in 1888, the son of Isaac and Annie, née Meddings, and the eldest of ten children. In 1891 the family was living at Eel Street, Oldbury. They moved to Langley in the 1890s, living first at 29 Whyley Street, and then at 28 Trinity Street, by which time his father was employed in the chemical industry. Joseph was a labourer at a rolling mill in 1911, and gave his occupation as a 'machine attendant' on his enlistment papers in 1915. He never married.

His attestation, dating from 12th December 1915, was probably made under 'the Derby scheme'. This encouraged young men to make an attestation to serve when called upon, but to return to their normal work until their group was required. He was called up in March 1916, when his medical records note a 'poor physique', including flat feet and a hammer toe. This gave him a low classification, and he was drafted into the 9th Labour Company of the Devonshire Regiment, number 55573. He remained in England until March 1917, when the unit was sent to France. On 14th May he was transferred to the 174th Labour Company, and his number changed to 104167. The 9th Devonshire Regiment was part of the 20th Brigade, 7th Division and was involved in the Flanders offensive in the late summer and autumn of 1917. Whether the 174th Labour Company was combatant or in support is not clear.

In preparation for the offensive of Third Ypres (Passchendaele) several new casualty clearing stations had been established just north of Ypres, including No 47 Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem. Joseph was wounded in late October 1917, probably during the Second Battle of Passchendaele, which started on 26th. His military records show that on 27th October Joseph was taken to the YMCA at Boesinghe, a short distance from Dozinghem, and that he died of wounds at Casualty Clearing Station No 47 on 30th October. He is buried in the military cemetery at Dozinghem.

Private John Jordan SADLER

982

15th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

23rd May 1916, aged 30



Arras Memorial, bay 3

John Jordan Sadler was born in 1886 in Oldbury, the son of Nathaniel and Ann Sadler, née Jordan. Both parents were from long-established Oldbury families with brewing connections. His father started as a licensed victualler at the Windsor Castle in Brades Road, Rounds Green, and later became a brewer and spirit maker, creating Sadler's Ales. His mother was the daughter of John Jordan, who ran the British Queen Breweries in Crosswells Road, Langley, and the British Queen pub in Birmingham Road. His grandfather, Benjamin Thomas Sadler, ran the White Swan music hall and museum, known as the 'Bird Show'.

John was educated at Handsworth Grammar School and St Luke's College, Exeter, and was employed as an Assistant Schoolmaster at St Michael's Schools, Langley Green, at the outbreak of war. This explains his name being on the memorial window, although he lived at Rounds Green. He volunteered on 9th September 1914 at Birmingham, and joined the 15th Royal Warwickshire Regiment. This was one of the 'Birmingham Pals' regiments, a choice which may have reflected his time at Handsworth Grammar School in Birmingham. He was one of the original members of the battalion, and is commemorated on the Birmingham Palls Roll of Honour. The battalion started training at Sutton Park, but did not reach France until November 1915.

In January 1916 the battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 5th Division. In March the division was sent to hold a stretch of the front line north of Arras between St Laurent Blangy and the south edge of Vimy Ridge. The Germans held the high ground of the ridge and were easily able to bombard the British trenches. From early May there was a marked increase in German aggression in the sector around Vimy. On 21st May the offensive began in earnest with an unprecedented level of bombardment on the allied lines and the detonation of a mine. The infantry then advanced and took the British front line. On 23rd May there was a British counter-offensive, but this was met with shells and machine gun fire, and soon stalled. During this counter-offensive John Jordan Sadler was seen to scale the parapet of a German trench.

He did not return, and was reported missing to his parents. It was another eight months before they were formally advised of his death. In these circumstances his body was not recovered, and he is commemorated on the memorial at Arras.

Private Frederick SIDAWAY

200420

4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

9th October 1917, aged 25



Cement House Cemetery, Langemarck, XIV E 11

John Henry Sidaway, a music teacher, and Rebecca Tromans were married at St John the Baptist, Halesowen, in 1882. They lived at Halesowen, and then Whiteheath, where their tenth child, Frederick, was born in 1892. Shortly afterwards, the family moved to 51 Titford Road, Langley. In 1911 Frederick was employed at a 'tube works', but had moved by the outbreak of war to Edwin Danks and Co, Oldbury Boiler Works. He was single and living with the family in Titford Road, now at number 213.

He enlisted as soon as the war started, joining the 1/7th Battalion of the Worcester Regiment which was formed in August 1914 at Kidderminster. His regimental number was 2169. They went to France on 31st March 1915, as part of the 144th Brigade of the 48th (South Midland) Division. In 1916 they were involved in several actions on the Somme, including Albert, Bezantin Ridge and Ancre Heights. He may have been wounded, because the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records him, still in the 1/7th Battalion, at the Welsh Metropolitan War Hospital at Cardiff. He must have recovered to return to the front, but transferred to the 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment with a new regimental number, 200420.

The 4th Battalion, part of the 88th Brigade of 29th Division, reached France in March 1916 from Gallipoli. In 1917 it saw action at the Battle of the Scarpe, near Arras, and by late summer and autumn was further north close to Ypres. By October the land around Poelcappelle was covered in deep mud and the weather very wet, making movement difficult for men and artillery. On 9th October an attack was staged near Poellcappelle on two spurs of land leading to Passchendaele. The 4th Worcestershire Battalion met strong resistance, including machine gun enfilades, and took very heavy casualties. Frederick Sidaway was reported as killed in action on 10th October, and is likely to have died in this attack. He is buried at Cement House Cemetery at Langemarck.

Private Leonard SLIM

4811

1/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

1st July 1916, aged 26



Thiepval Memorial, pier and face 9A, 9B & 10B

Leonard Slim, born in 1890 at Langley, was the youngest of five surviving sons of Thomas and Hannah Slim, née Timms, and the brother of Thomas Frederick (*qv*). His father was a nail and rivet maker in Spring Street from about 1870, and also ran an ironmonger's shop at 13 High Street from about 1890. He died in 1908, and the ironmonger's business was continued by Hannah with the help of her children. Leonard did not become involved in the business, however, instead becoming an architect's draftsman.

At the outbreak of the war, according to the military records, he was living at Bournbrook, and he joined the 1/6th Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment, the 'Birmingham Pals', formed in August 1914. The battalion, together with the 1/8th Battalion, went to France in March 1915 as part of the 143rd Brigade of the 48th (South Midland) Division. In 1916 the division was part of the 4th Army in the front lines near Serre, north of the Bapaume to Albert road on the Ancre, a tributary of the Somme.

The attack along a fourteen-mile front on 1st July 1916 was preceded by an eight-day barrage of German positions intended to destroy the wire and the German forward positions. Unknown to the British, however, the Germans replaced the wire each night after the barrage, and could shelter in 30ft deep bunkers cut into the chalk ridge. Although 1st July was a fine day, it followed a week of very heavy rain, and the terrain was muddy and difficult.

The 1/6th and 1/8th had the objective of taking the Quadrilateral (or Heidenkopf) Redoubt, an area of old trenches which gave the German Army a strong position to control no man's land. When the barrage lifted the 1/8th went over the top into a hail of machine gun fire and shells, but the survivors did succeed in reaching the German trenches. Seven minutes later the 1/6th followed them. By this time the German counter barrage was concentrating on no man's land, and the advance by the 1/6th Battalion was difficult and costly. Together the two battalions took and held the Quadrilateral Redoubt, the only gain of any significance in the northern half of the attack. No advance was made to their right or left, leaving them facing attack on three sides. They held out for the day, but under cover of darkness withdrew to the British front line.

The day became the worst disaster in the history of the British army, with 57,000 casualties, dead, wounded or missing. Out of 850 from the 1/6th in the attack, only 95 returned to British lines, of whom only 25 were not wounded. Among those reported missing was Private Leonard Slim, but his death was not confirmed to his family for about a year. His elder brother, CSM Thomas Frederick Slim, was killed six days later and four miles away at Thiepval. Both are commemorated on the memorial at Thiepval and on their parents' grave at Uplands Cemetery, Smethwick.

Company Sergeant Major Thomas Frederick SLIM, DCM

7284

3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

7th July 1916, aged 34



Thiepval Memorial, pier & face 5A & 6C

Thomas Frederick Slim, born in 1882 at Langley, was the second of five surviving sons of Thomas and Hannah, née Timms, and the brother of Leonard (*qv*). His father was a nail and rivet maker in Spring Street from about 1870, and also ran an ironmonger's shop at 13 High Street from about 1890. He died in 1908, and the ironmonger's business was continued by Hannah with the help of her children. In 1901 Thomas Frederick was a carpenter living at the shop, but shortly afterwards he joined the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. By 1911 he had risen to the rank of Sergeant, and was at Dover Barracks, Kent. Further promotion ensued to Company Sergeant Major, a rank of Warrant Officer II.

The regiment was still in England at the start of the war, and immediately mobilised as part of the British Expeditionary Force, arriving in France on 12th August, as part of the 7th Brigade of the 3rd Division. They first saw action at Mons and during the retreat south westwards. On the second day, 23rd August the brigade came under heavy attack near Ciplu as they covered the withdrawal. At Le Cateau the BEF turned to resist the advance, with the 3rd Worcestershire battalion in the front line. The withdrawal continued as far as the River Aisne by 1st September, where the British made a determined stand, crossing the Aisne northwards in mid-September.

By mid-October the 3rd Battalion was in the trenches at Richebourg-St-Vaast, between Béthune and Armentières. They were subject to periodic shelling, and took several casualties, including an officer, Captain Thomas Hughes. CSM Slim rushed out to the officer, who was severely injured, and brought him in. For his actions that day, Thomas Slim became the first Oldbury man to win the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The citation in the London Gazette of 30th June 1915 reads: "*For conspicuous gallantry during the campaign, notably on 15th October near Richebourg St Vaast, when he brought in a severely wounded officer under very heavy fire, being himself wounded in doing so.*" The wound was to his shoulder, and he returned home for two months to recuperate. He went back to France in February and remained at the front with the regiment, by then part of the 25th Division, 74th Brigade.

In May 1916 the battalion defended Vimy Ridge against a German attack, and they were then moved south in preparation for the offensive on the Somme. The 25th Division was part of the 4th Army Reserve on 1st July when the battle started. They were called from reserve on 4th July. In fierce fighting at the Leipzig Salient near Thiepval on the 6th and 7th July, the battalion took nearly two hundred casualties, before they were relieved after two days. One of the casualties was Thomas Slim, killed on 7th July. His brother Leonard had died six days earlier and about four miles to the north. Both are commemorated on the Thiepval monument, and on their parents' grave in Uplands Cemetery, Smethwick.

Private Alfred Edward SMART

30045
2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment
Killed in action in France and Flanders
3rd September 1916, aged 24



Thiepval Memorial, pier and face 9A, 9B & 10B

Alfred Edward Smart was born in Oldbury in 1891, the son of Joseph Smart, a timber merchant's clerk, and Susannah, née Powell. Both of his parents were born in Oldbury in the 1860s, shortly after their families settled in the town. Joseph and Susannah were married at Holy Trinity in 1890, and had four children, Alfred being the eldest. Alfred's brother, Arthur (*qv*), also served in the war, and was killed on the Somme a month after Alfred.

In 1911 Alfred was 19 and a 'bookseller and stationer on his own account'. He was living at home with his parents at 74 Causeway Green Road, and did not marry. He joined the 2/5th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, which was a 'second line' territorial battalion, whose members opted only for home duties when given the choice at the outbreak of war. They were starved of equipment at first, and training was delayed for the battalion. By 1916 they were expected to serve overseas, however, and went to France on 21st May as part of the 182nd Brigade of the 61st Division.

Although inexperienced in battle, the 61st Division, with equally raw Australian divisions, were sent to attack the German lines at Fromelles on 19th July in an operation to divert forces from the main attack on the Somme. It was a pointless operation that took no ground and diverted no German forces, but was heavy in casualties. After that action the division was confined to holding trench lines. Alfred Smart was moved to reinforce the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, probably after the attack at Fromelles.

Alfred would have joined the 2nd Battalion on the Somme where they had been fighting since the beginning of July in the 22nd Brigade of the 7th Division. In August they were involved in a long operation to clear the German forces from Delville Wood and hold it, and this was not achieved until 3rd September. Alfred Smart probably joined the battalion during this operation. He was killed in action on the 3rd September as the 22nd Brigade led the attack on the village of Ginchy just east of Delville Wood.

The two brothers, Albert and Arthur, followed separate paths through the war, joining different regiments at different times, but they died within three miles of each other eight weeks apart in the autumn of 1916. Neither of their bodies was recovered, and they are commemorated on the memorial at Thiepval. It is hard to imagine the impact of the double tragedy on their parents, brother, and sister left behind at Causeway Green Road.

Alfred's name was not on the memorial window when it was installed and dedicated, but added later, together with that of his brother.

Private Arthur SMART

29836

2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

31st October 1916, aged 19



Thiepval Memorial, pier and face 5A and 6C

Arthur Smart was born in Rowley Regis in 1897, the son of Joseph Smart, a timber merchant's clerk, and Susannah, née Powell. Both of his parents were born in Oldbury in the 1860s, shortly after their families settled in the town. Joseph and Susannah were married at Holy Trinity in 1890, and had four children, Arthur being the second. Arthur's brother, Alfred (*qv*), also served in the war, and was killed on the Somme a month before Alfred.

Arthur did not become eighteen until the spring of 1915, when he joined the 6th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, as recorded by the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund. This was a 'Special Reserve' based at Plymouth and acted as a training battalion, sending drafts overseas to join fighting regiments. He probably went to France in early 1916 since he did not qualify for the 1915 star, and once there was transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment.

The battalion took part in the Battle of the Somme from 1st July, and Arthur Smart would have been involved at Delville Wood before resting up in billets. They returned to the front line for a spell in mid-September. By 25th October they were near Montauban beyond Ginchy, where Albert's brother had been killed eight weeks earlier. On 30th October they took over the wet muddy front line at Frost Trench between Les Boeffs and Le Transloy, and this is where Arthur was killed next day.

The two brothers, Albert and Arthur, followed separate paths through the war, joining different regiments at different times, but they died within three miles of each other eight weeks apart in the autumn of 1916. Neither of their bodies was recovered, and they are commemorated on the memorial at Thiepval. It is hard to imagine the impact of the double tragedy on their parents, brother, and sister left behind at Causeway Green Road.

Arthur's name was not on the memorial window when it was installed and dedicated, but added later, together with that of his brother.

Private Arthur STEVENS

57227

12th Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment

Killed in action in France and Flanders

8th November 1918, aged 20



Herinnes Communal Cemetery, A 5

Arthur Stevens, born in 1898, was the second son of William Henry Stevens and Kate, née Feeney, both from Oldbury families. William and Kate Stevens were living at 70 Titford Road in 1911, and William worked as a puddler at a local iron works. Kate died in 1916, leaving with William with eight children from the age of two.

Arthur Stevens was working as a horse driver at the time of his conscription on the 19th February 1917 at the age of 18 years and 6 months. Perhaps this led to him being conscripted initially into the Worcestershire Yeomanry, albeit the 2/1st Cyclist Battalion. He spent the first year in England, although the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund does record one of his addresses as Richmond Barracks, Dublin.

The battalion went to France in April 1918, and he was immediately transferred to the 1st Battalion Worcestershire Yeomanry. On 16th September he was moved again 'permanently, for the benefit of the services' to the 12th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. This battalion had been formed a few months earlier as a 'Garrison' battalion, but shortly after became a 'Service' battalion. On 29th September, in the final advance into Flanders, they attacked along a four mile front, penetrating six miles east of Ypres. The ground conditions were so difficult that food had to be dropped to them by aeroplane. Although the Germans brought in reinforcements in early October, the advance was rapid and successful. Kortrijk (Courtrai) was captured on 19th, and they reached the River Scheldt on 22nd October.

Arthur was treated for inflammation of the jaw on 23rd October, but this did not keep him from the field. In the push to extend the front as far into Belgium as possible, his battalion must have been involved in further fighting in early November east of the Scheldt near Herrines, just north of Tournai. Four of the ten British soldiers buried in the Herrines Communal Cemetery are from the 12th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. All of them, including Arthur Stevens, died on the 8th November 1918, three days before the armistice. The battalion was relieved shortly afterwards.

His death in action was reported in the Midland Chronicle on 22nd November, and they cited his place of work as Accles and Pollock, so presumably he was a horse driver for that company. The family had moved from Titford Road to 8 Edward Street before Arthur's conscription, and his brothers and sisters were there with his father at the time Arthur was killed. William Stevens expressed himself 'very grateful' for the death plaque and effects (£13-7-1, including £9-10-0 death gratuity) received by him. How closely the family was associated with St Michael's Church is not known, but Arthur's 'declaration of living relatives', completed by his father, was countersigned by the Vicar, Revd Walter Wale.

Private John James STRIDE

12581

6th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, Princess Charlotte of Wales's

Died of wounds at home

14th September 1916, aged 23



Oldbury Cemetery, F 'U' 3711

John James Stride, usually called James, was born at Tipton in 1893, the illegitimate son of Emily, or 'Emma', Stride. The next year she married Benjamin Instone, who was probably his father. They had two children, Benjamin and Minnie, before his mother died in 1901. James may have gone to live with his grandparents, James and Selina Stride, at Factory Road, Tipton, for he was registered with them on the 1901 census. When his aunt, Charlotte Stride, married widower Samuel Whitehouse in 1907, James and his grandparents went to live with them at 4 Old Hobicus Lane, Langley. His grandmother died in 1910, and the 1911 census shows grandfather James aged 81, James 'Inston' aged 18, and the Whitehouses all living at Old Hobicus Lane. The use of the name 'Inston' seems to confirm Benjamin as his father. John James was working as a 'fitter's labourer' at Langley Forge. He also attended Spring Street Methodist Church, Langley, and may have been involved with the Sunday school there. His grandfather died in 1913, and when called upon to make a will in the army James nominated his aunt Charlotte as his sole legatee.

James Stride volunteered for service and joined the 6th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, one of the 'new army' battalions raised in September 1914. It was part of the 53rd Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division, and went to France on 25th July 1915. The battalion was engaged in the battle of the Somme in 1916, and in action in the capture and defence of Montauban. The battalion was involved in fighting on the first day, achieving major success by advancing with flamethrower support and overrunning the heavily fortified Pommiers Trench near to Montauban in just twenty minutes. By 5.00 pm all was relatively quiet and they settled down in occupied enemy trenches for a nervous night. Later in the battle the battalion attacked Caterpillar, Mametz and Delville Woods, but without the same success they had had on day one. It then went into a rest period. It is likely that James was severely wounded in the course of these actions, because he was returned to England to Tooting Hospital, where he died on 14th September.

He was buried at Oldbury Cemetery with full military honours and a Guard of Honour formed by Defence Corps that guarded Chance and Hunt's Works. A service was held at Spring Street Methodist Church, and the wreaths listed in the Weekly News are headed by one from Charlotte and Samuel Whitehouse, uncles and aunts, father and brother, teachers and scholars at Langley Spring Street, workmates at Langley Forge, and various friends. His grave has a marble curb with no dedication to anyone other than that to 'Signaller James Stride'. It does not have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. A year later Charlotte and Samuel Whitehouse placed an 'In Memoriam' in the Weekly News:

*"One year has passed and still we miss him,
Friends may think the wound has healed;
But they little know the sorrow
Deep within our hearts concealed.
Never forgotten by his uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Whitehouse."*

Private Arthur THORNELOE

20282
5th Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment
Died in France and Flanders
3rd April 1918, aged 19



Lillers Communal Cemetery V E 41

Arthur Thorneloe was born in Burton on Trent to John Thorneloe, a tailor, and Ellen. John came from in Lichfield, and Ellen from Oldbury, but they have proved rather elusive! They were married about 1881, but the wedding has not been traced. Their first three children were born in Smethwick and the next two in Oldbury, but not all their births have been found. The family then moved to Lichfield by 1891, and Burton on Trent by 1894. The last child to be born at Oldbury was called Arthur, but he died in 1898, and the new baby born in Burton a few months later was called Arthur as well. The second Arthur is the man on the memorial window.

The address for the family quoted by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, dating to 1917 or 1918, is 3 High Street, Langley. These were shop premises with accommodation over, occupied by a greengrocer up to 1914, and a china dealer after 1921. There was no trader listed in the 1916 directory, the time when the family was likely to be in residence. It is possible that Arthur's father was working for Charles Cook & Son, the Langley tailor at 7 High Street. The family remained in the area, because the deaths of both his parents are registered in West Bromwich district, John in 1933 and Ellen in 1945.

Arthur would not have been of age for conscription until early 1917, when he enlisted at Worcester. He may have been drafted into a training battalion, but the remaining records only show him as a member of 'D' Company, 5th (Service) Battalion of the Dorset Regiment. They were part of the 34th Brigade of 11th (Northern) Division. Arthur may have reached the front in time for action at the Third Battle of Ypres from August (when Langemarck was taken) to early October 1917 (the Battle of Poelcapelle). They then retired to the area around Lens until early spring, which was much quieter without any major engagements.

Arthur was reported to have 'died' on 3rd April 1918, and the 'Record of Soldiers' Effects' has 'died wounds'. He is buried at Lillers Communal Cemetery, just west of Béthune, which was used by a large military hospital at Lillers and Casualty Clearing Stations 18 and 58 based in the town in April 1918.

Arthur's elder brother Albert, born in Oldbury in 1888, was a regular soldier in India in 1911 with the 1st Battalion Sherwood Foresters, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment. There is no evidence of his death in the war.

Private William TURNER

27984

9th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in action in Mesopotamia

25th January 1917, aged 27



Amara War Cemetery, XIX L 13

William was born in 1890 to Samuel and Elizabeth Turner at Spon Lane, West Bromwich, although his father came from a Langley family. By 1901 the family, with three boys and four girls, was at 17 Station Road, Langley, with Samuel working at Albright and Wilson's phosphorus plant. Ten years later the family were at 27 Station Road. William was a labourer at a 'chemical plant'; this too was Albright and Wilson since he is named on their war memorial plaque. William married Emily Elizabeth Littleton in 1911 at West Bromwich Register Office, and their first child, Lilian May, was born the next year. Their son, William, was born in the late summer of 1916, and it is doubtful if his father ever saw him.

William joined the 9th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, which was formed in 1914, but since he did not qualify for the 1915 star, he must have joined the unit in 1916, long after the original contingent went abroad to Gallipoli. He may have joined the regiment in Mesopotamia to replenish their number after losses at the Dardanelles. The regiment was part of the 39th Brigade of the 13th Division fighting the Turkish army north of the Persian Gulf.

The advance to Baghdad started in December 1916 with a mixed force of about 50,000 men, largely Indian, but with some British units. The first stage in the advance was the capture of Kut, nestling in a bend on the River Tigris, well defended and entrenched by the Turks. It took two months to slowly clear the west bank. On 25th January they reached the Turkish defences on the west bank of the Hai River, which joins the Tigris at Kut, and prepared British trenches. Over the next three days of heavy fighting they overcame Turkish resistance and captured Kut itself on the 29th January 1917. William Turner was killed in this action on 25th January.

His widow, Emily, received his effects amounting to £2-12-11 and a war gratuity of £3. She never married again, and brought up the two children herself. Their son William fought in the Second World War and survived unharmed.

Rifleman Ernest VICKERS

R2064

12th Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps

Killed in action in France and Flanders

18th September 1916, aged 22



Thiepval Memorial, pier and face 13A & 13B

Ernest was born in 1894, the second son of William Vickers and Annie, née Cowley, both from Oldbury families. The family moved to Sheffield for a few years in the late 1890s, possibly to find work. Their three-year old daughter Annie died there in December 1903, and soon afterwards they returned home, because their son John Clarence was born in Oldbury in 1904. Annie died in 1907, leaving William with a young family. In 1911 they were at 22 Henry Street, five doors from Annie's father and family. Ernest and his father were both working on the canal, with Ernest loading and weighing coal at a coal wharf.

He enlisted at Smethwick on 4th September 1914 and joined the 12th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, which was formed at Winchester on 21st September. He went to France in July 1915 with the battalion as part of the 60th Brigade of the 20th Division, and they were involved in further training there. On 22nd October 1915, the Weekly News published a letter from Ernest Vickers to the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund thanking them for a gift of cigarettes, "*... the boys and myself often run short of cigarettes when in the trenches. I can assure you we always feel comfortable and happy in the trenches when we have the irresistible cigarette to cheer us up – they help us to forget we feel cold through the night ...*".

The 20th Division was in action at Mount Sorrel, east of Ypres, in June 1916, and then moved to the Somme. The 20th Division took heavy losses in attacks on Guillemont and Ginchy in early September 1916. However, Ernest was probably killed during the following Battle of Flers-Courcelette between 15th and 22nd September, which saw the first use of tanks in the war. He was killed in action on 18th September, and his body not recovered. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, a few miles from the place where he fell.

His cousin Frank Cowley (qv) is also commemorated on the window.

J W WALKER*



**The soldier named as J W Walker on the window has not been identified.*

The Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records have entries for 'G W Walker', also 'J W Walker' (the earliest entry for the same man), and a third entry with the 'J' changed to 'G'. There are also addresses for 'J Walker' and two different soldiers 'W Walker'. None of these is marked in the fund records as being 'killed' or 'wounded'. No G W Walker living near Langley appears on the Commonwealth War Graves lists. The only G W Walker of suitable age (27) in Langley on the 1911 census was George William Walker, married to Lucy (née Cooper) and living at 71 Park Lane, but he was not killed in the war.

The most likely man to be named on the window is the G/J W Walker in the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records. He was S/6519 of the Rifle Brigade, serving in the 1st Battalion, and later the 3rd Battalion. His addresses in sequence are France (8th Platoon, 14th Section), then Camp 7, Perton Down, Andoversford, and finally with A company, No 3 Platoon with the BEF in France. A spell at Perham Down might indicate that he was wounded, transferred to one of the nearby military hospitals, and convalesced at Perham Downs camp. The medal records for S/6519 show him to be George William Walker, who entered France on 7th April 1915 and qualified for the 1915 Star. It also records that he was moved to 'Class Z' on demobilisation, which meant he could be recalled if hostilities started again after the armistice, so this man did survive the war apparently fit enough for recall. Nevertheless, he must have died before 1921 to be included on the window.

Private Joseph WALTERS

11310
7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment
Died of wounds in Gallipoli
29th August 1915, aged 20



Helles Memorial, panel 101 to 104

Joseph Walters was born at Whiteheath in 1895 to Samuel Walters, a coal miner from Mincing Lane, Blackheath, and Mary, née Hadley, from Whiteheath. He was their second child to be called Joseph, after the first Joseph had died in infancy. He had two elder sisters, Sarah and Clara, and a younger brother, Samuel. His mother died in 1900, leaving her husband with young children. By 1901 Samuel had given up mining to be a labourer at Albright and Wilson. In 1906 he married Mary Ann Mallard, a widow, and they had a son, Wilfred, in 1908. By 1911 the family was at 191, Titford Road, and 15 year old Joseph was employed as a core pattern maker.

Joseph volunteered at Smethwick early in the war, probably as soon as he was eighteen, and joined the 7th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, raised at Bristol in 1914 as part of the New Army. After training at home, they sailed for Gallipoli in June 1915 as part of the 39th Brigade of the 13th (Western) Division.

The regiment landed at Anzac Cove and went ashore between the 3th and 5th of August, and the battalion took over front line trenches at Suvla Bay. They saw action shortly after they arrived at the battles of Sari Bair and Russells Top. Joseph Walters was wounded as they tried to take Hill 60 in support of the New Zealand forces under General Birdwood: the General called off the attack when casualties reached 2,500! Hill 60 was 60 metres high and the only useful high point in the region. This was the last major assault of the Gallipoli campaign, and was designed to take the high ground and secure a link between the Anzac and Suvla landings. Joseph Walters was moved to the hospital ship 'Devanha', a converted P & O liner, and died there on 29th August 1915. It is likely, therefore, that he was buried at sea and has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Memorial at Helles.

His effects of £3-11-6 and a war gratuity of £3-10-0 were paid to his father, Samuel.

His younger brother, Samuel, also served with the 7th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment and the two brothers may have joined up together, although Samuel would hardly be old enough to join at the start of the war. He also went to Gallipoli in June 1915, but survived that operation. On withdrawal from Gallipoli in early 1916 the 7th Battalion went to Egypt, but he did not go with it, instead transferring to the 8th Battalion in France. This may indicate he was wounded and needed a period of recovery at the time of the withdrawal. He was killed at the Somme on 30th July 1916, so Samuel Walters lost both his grown up sons in the course of a year. Unlike Joseph, Samuel is not named on the Langley War Memorial Window, but the reason the two brothers were treated differently is not known.

Private James Robbins WILLIAMS

11533
4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment
Killed in action at Gallipoli
4th June 1915, aged 27



Helles Memorial, panels 104 to 113

James Robbins Williams was born in 1889, the third child of John Henry Williams and Elizabeth, née Cowley. He was registered as 'Robbins', but may have used 'Robin' as a second given name. His mother came from Greet's Green, West Bromwich, and his father was a Langley man. They were living in Edward Street, Langley, at the time of his birth. His father was employed at Albright and Wilson's phosphorus works, and was described in 1911 as a 'pipe fitter'.

James was not at home for the 1911 census. He may have been the 23 year old boarder 'James Williams', an iron factory moulder, listed with the Dugmore family at Cuthbert Street, Birmingham. Alternatively, he could have been serving abroad with the army in 1911.

The Weekly News gave some details of his service at the time of his death. In 1906, sixteen year old James had joined the Oldbury Volunteers, forerunners to the Oldbury Territorials, and part of the Worcestershire Regiment. He joined the Special Reserve in 1907, and later became a regular soldier with the Worcestershire Regiment, hence the uncertainty about his location for the 1911 census. He served in India, where he was promoted to Lance-Corporal. In November 1914 he would have returned with the 4th Battalion from Burma, where they had been stationed. His medal records show that he landed with the regiment at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915, as part of the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division.

The 29th Division was one of those involved in the Third Battle of Krithia on 4th June 1915. This was the final, and still unsuccessful, attempt to take Achi Baba Heights, which commanded views of the whole peninsula, and was one of the first objectives of the invasion. By this stage the British and Turkish forces were well entrenched, but the night before the attack the British advanced their front line, bringing it close to the Turkish positions. After a long but ineffectual barrage, the attack started at noon. The Worcestershire men were on the left of the British contingent of troops with Indian regiments further to their left. They advanced out of the trenches into a hail of gunfire from the Ottoman trenches, and were able to make little progress. Losses on both sides were very high, and James Williams was killed on the first day of the battle, 4th June. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial.

His effects of £9-15-0 were paid to his mother as sole legatee in November 1915, but his War Gratuity of £5 was paid in December 1919 to his elder brother, John Henry Williams, suggesting both parents were dead by then. An Elizabeth Williams of the correct age, 59, was registered in West Bromwich in 1917, but the death of his father has not been traced.

Private Charles Pattison WINTERTON

325693

1/1st Battalion, Worcestershire Yeomanry (Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars)

Killed in action in Egypt

23rd April 1916, aged 19



Jerusalem Memorial, panel 3 & 5

Charles Pattison Winterton was the elder son of Charles and Fanny Steventon Winterton, née Darby. His father was born at Chatham. The Winterton family had lived in London and Kent for several generations, and his great-grandfather had been a master mariner at Rochester. He probably moved to Langley to find work in the 1890s, and met Fanny Darby here. She came from an Oldbury family, and lived in Causeway Green Road prior to their marriage at St Michael's in November 1896. The family lived at 42 Thompson Road after their marriage. His father worked as a 'brewer's caske filler' in 1901, but had become a 'brewery foreman' by 1911. This is likely to have been at nearby Crosswell's Brewery. Charles was born in 1897, and his brother Arthur Leslie two years later.

Charles would have become eighteen in 1915, and may have volunteered or attested under the Derby scheme. He joined the Worcestershire Yeomanry, a mounted regiment, which was formed at the time the Territorial Army was established in April 1908. It was part of the Household Cavalry and Cavalry of the Line. The 1/1st Battalion, Worcestershire Yeomanry was sent to Egypt in April 1915, and thence to Gallipoli, landing as a 'dismounted' unit at Suvla Bay in August. They were evacuated to Mudros on 31st October and thence to Egypt. It is unlikely that Charles served at Gallipoli, being just eighteen at that time, but he probably joined them in Egypt to restore the strength of the unit. His medal record does not include a 1915 star, so he is likely to have arrived in early 1916. By this time the 1/1st Worcestershire Yeomanry was part of the 5th Mounted Brigade.

The main rôle of the yeomanry in Egypt was to provide garrisons and to protect the engineers at work on desert projects. In the spring of 1916 the 5th Mounted Brigade was dispersed at various sites in the Sinai Desert just east of the Suez Canal protecting the railway and pipeline workers as the British sought to extend these services to Qatia and make it their forward base. On 23rd April most of the Worcestershire Yeomanry formed a small garrison at Oghratine protecting the engineers digging wells. At 5.30 that morning they were attacked and outnumbered by a large force of Ottoman Turks, including a machine gun battery. Eleven officers and one hundred and thirty-five men became casualties before the small remainder surrendered. Charles was reported missing that day, and his body never recovered. The area was retaken from the Turks by ANZAC forces in the next few days, and they testified to the stout defence of the garrison by the yeomanry. Charles Winterton is commemorated on the memorial at Jerusalem.

His total effects, sent to his father, amounted to £2-18-5, with a later war gratuity of £3.

Private Robert WOODCOCK

41038

5th Battalion, South Wales Borderers

Killed in action in France and Flanders

31st July 1917, aged 27



Ypres Reservoir Cemetery, West Vlaanderen, Belgium, V C 7

Robert was the youngest child of William Thomas and Mary A Woodcock, born in late 1899 at Lapworth, Warwickshire, the area in which his mother had been born. By 1891 the family was at Yardley, and remained there into the 1900s. In 1911 Robert was living with his elder brother James and his family at Church Road, Yardley, and working as a glass beveller. In the spring of 1902, however, his marriage to Alice E Ashby was registered at Kings Norton. Robert and Alice probably moved to the Langley area shortly afterwards, and they had a son, Reginald, whose birth was registered at West Bromwich in 1916.

Robert may have been conscripted into the army, but probably volunteered at Smethwick. His service papers were destroyed, but the Langley Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund records show that he moved around in training units with the 13th Royal Warwickshire Regiment which became a reserve battalion in April 1915, and was designated the 33rd Training Reserve Battalion in the 8th Brigade in September 1916. Later, he transferred to the 36th Training Battalion in the same brigade. Finally, he left England, to go to France with the 26th Training Reserve Battalion of the 8th Brigade at Rouen. He was then posted to A Company, 1st Platoon, 5th (Pioneer) Battalion of the South Wales Borderers, part of the 58th Brigade, 19th Division.

The 19th Division took part in the Battle of Messines, south of Ypres, from 7th to 14th June which captured the Messines Ridge, prior to the larger attack on 31st July to press on to Passchendaele. On the 31st July, after a ten-day artillery bombardment, the attack began, with the 19th Brigade advancing under a creeping barrage. In the course of the day Robert Woodcock was killed. His body must have been recovered because he is buried in the Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

His effects of £2-12-4 and a war gratuity of £13-10-0 were paid to his widow Alice for 'self and children'. In 1920 she married Harry Rickers, an electrician, whose family had moved from Oakengates, Shropshire, to 6 Causeway Green Road in the around 1900. Alice and Harry lived at 22 Causeway Green Road according to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, and it is likely that Robert and Alice had lived there, or in the Langley area, before he enlisted.

Private Samuel Frederick YARDLEY

74820

11th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps

Killed in action in France and Flanders

4th September 1916, aged 21



Bernafay Wood British Cemetery, Montaugban, M 55

Samuel Frederick was born in Rowley Regis in 1895, the son of John Yardley of Lye and Mary, née Field, of Langley. His father was a coachman for a pottery works, and in 1911 they lived at Springfield, Dudley. Samuel was a clever boy, who won a scholarship to Dudley Grammar School, completed his London Matriculation at seventeen and gained his Inter-BSc at London at nineteen. He then worked as a teacher at Blackheath Council School for a year before he volunteered for service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1915. He is commemorated on the Knowle Methodist Chapel Roll of Honour, and was involved in both Sunday School and Adult School work.

He went to France on 19th December 1915, and so qualified for the 1915 star. There he joined the 111th Field Ambulance, which was attached to the 16th Brigade at the time. Field Ambulances were the mobile front line medical units, comprising ten officers and 225 men, organised in three units. They established Advanced Dressing Stations and Main Dressing Stations to deal with the wounded. The 16th Brigade was involved in the seizure of Guillemont Farm on the Somme in September 1916, and Samuel was hit by shrapnel as he tended the wounded.

The Weekly News published the letter received by his parents from his commanding Officer, outlining how he was killed, *"He was with me when it happened in a very big battle, the taking of Guillemont. We were only about an hour in action when it happened. He was hit by a bit of shrapnel in the middle of the forehead, and died instantly. He was one of my best men, and is universally regretted by all. He had been doing splendid work bringing wounded out of action through the thick of the fighting, and was going towards the German line for another case when he was unluckily hit. He was brought back by us and we buried him in a little British Soldiers' Cemetery near Bernafay Wood..."*

The address given by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for him and his family is 28 Thompson Road, so the family must have moved from Springfield after April 1911. His father John died in the spring of 1911, and it may be that Mary returned to Langley to be closer to her family. Samuel's effects, amounting £5-12-8 and a war gratuity of £3 were paid to his mother, Mary.