

Quarley War Memorial



An early photograph of the War Memorial
(without Fred Davis' name.)

The Men Behind the Names

World War One

Harry ALEXANDER

Rifleman 7298 Harry Alexander, 3rd Battalion, Rifle Brigade, killed in action on 25 September 1914 (1st Battle of the Aisne). Commemorated on La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial, France.

Harry was born in Wallop, but it is unclear which one; several records show this as his birthplace, none is more specific. His father, Henry ALEXANDER and mother, Martha (née GREEN) moved with Henry's job, and their children were born in Wallop (1882), Quarley (1884) and Amport (1890). The most likely is Over Wallop, where Henry was living with his parents in 1881 before he married Martha. By 1901 they were back in Quarley and Henry had found work as a farm foreman (a step up from earlier labouring jobs). Another move followed – to Fox Farm, Amport where Henry was farm bailiff in 1911. By 1911 Harry had started his own family having married Agnes BRADBURY in 1909 and their first child, Harry Charles, was born in November 1910. In 1911 Harry was working as a farm labourer at Thrupton Down Farm and was living in a cottage there. A second child, Nellie Agnes, arrived in 1912.

Harry was not always a farm labourer. In March 1900 he enlisted into the Rifle Brigade, at a time when the call was out for men to expand the army as it was fighting the 2nd Boer War (1899-1902). He probably didn't serve during that war, but he would have served for several years. Regular service was for 12 years, but only the earlier years had to be spent in uniform full time. The remainder of service could be spent in the Reserve attending occasional training, but otherwise living as a civilian. This is almost certainly what Harry did. At the end of the 12 years it was possible to extend one's service in the Reserve, which gave a small wage for very little effort, making it quite an attractive proposition - unless war broke out. It seems that Harry made this fateful choice.

In August 1914 war was declared on Germany and all Reservists were called up to the colours – Harry was back in the Army full time. He was posted to the 3rd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade which was rapidly recalled from Cork to billets in Cambridgeshire. There Harry would have joined them along with many other reservists who would bring the battalion up to fighting strength (just over 1,000 men). On 12 September the battalion landed at St Nazaire in France and moved to join up with the British Expeditionary Force under General John French as part of 17th Brigade, 6th Division. The last 55 miles were on foot, at the end of which they went straight into the trenches near Soupir on 21 September.

Four days later C Company and part of D Company carried out an attack on the German positions. Four riflemen were killed and 27 officers and men were wounded, but a further 35 officers and men were declared 'missing' – including Harry. All too often, missing men would later be declared to have died, but there was always hope that the Red Cross would get news that the missing man was in a Prisoner of War camp or German Hospital. Relatives were left with hope that was usually dashed, a desperate situation, but sadly unavoidable. Harry was eventually declared 'killed in action' – his war comprised a long march and four days in the trenches.

Harry's remains were never identified. He is remembered on the Memorial to the Missing at La Ferte-sous-Jouarre which holds the names of men lost during the Battles of the Marne (6-10 September 1914) and the Aisne (13-28 September 1914).

Fred DAVIS

Lancer 7559 Fred Davis, 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers, died of wounds 4 April 1918 (German Spring Offensive). Buried Picquigny British Cemetery, France.

Fred was born in Ansty, Wiltshire in 1895, the fourth son and tenth child of James Henry DAVIS and his wife, Emma Ann, née VINCENT. The family moved to Quarley between 1901 and 1911 when James' father obtained a post as carter on Quarley Down Farm. They lived at 2 Quarley Down Cottages. As the boys grew, they too found employment on the farm.

Fred enlisted in August 1914, one of the many thousands who rushed to join up in the patriotic fervour that gripped the Country at the time. He opted to serve in the cavalry, an elite unit with the perceived advantage of travel on horseback rather than on foot. In reality Fred would have spent a lot of time on foot leading his horse, or in trenches where horses could not go. Nevertheless, although the cavalry was largely obsolete in the new form of warfare developed in the trenches of the Western Front, they remained useful as troops who could be rapidly deployed in emergencies to fill a hole in the line, essentially fighting as mounted infantry.

Fred did not reach the front until 1916 at the earliest (he did not qualify for the 1914-15 Star award to men with earlier frontline service) and remained with the regiment until he was wounded.

If a soldier's service record has not survived (most were destroyed in a fire in 1940) it is not possible to determine accurately where or when he was wounded. However, some assumptions can be made from his burial place. Picquigny is a few miles west of Amiens. For most of the war it was well away from any action. The German Spring Offensive in March/April 1918 brought the war much closer and two Casualty Clearing Stations, moving back from the German's advance, settled in Picquigny in late March. They moved on again in late April leaving behind a small cemetery holding the remains of the men, like Fred, they had been unable to save. A soldier dying at a Casualty Clearing Station usually did so within a few days of being wounded, any longer and they would usually have been moved further along the evacuation route to a main hospital further from the front in France or back in the UK. The 9th Lancers suffered a number of casualties in late March and early April, unnamed in the unit war diary - one was almost certainly Fred.

There is a little mystery about Fred's name on the war memorial. An early photograph of the memorial shows that he was not recorded on the memorial when it was erected, but at some point his name was added – why? Many memorials omit the names of local casualties, there was no source a memorial committee could use to gather names and many, especially those in large urban areas, failed to identify numerous candidates. Other names were omitted because their families did not want their lad recorded on a memorial they saw as a glorification of the dreadful war that had taken away their loved one. Sometimes the family persisted in the belief that a missing son/brother/husband was still alive somewhere, sometimes there was some stigma attached (eg suicide). None of these explanations seem to apply in Fred's case – if his brother's death was known, surely his should have been?

James Henry DAVIS

Guardsman 29052 James Henry Davis, 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, killed in action 9 October 1917 (Battle of Poelcappelle). Commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium

James was born in Ansty, Wiltshire in 1890, an elder brother of Fred (above). Like his father and brothers, he worked on a local farm, probably Quarley Down Farm where his father worked and the family lived in a tied cottage.

His army service began in late 1916, early 1917, when he was conscripted. He would have spent six months or more in training in the UK before being sent to the front where he served with the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards.

By the time he reached the front the British Army was engaged in the campaign officially known as the 3rd Battle of Ypres, but more evocatively remembered as Passchendaele. This campaign started well, the Germans were pushed back off the Messines Ridge to the south of Ypres and a series of attacks with limited objectives bit into the German defenses at various points around the Ypres Salient (where the front line wrapped around this little Belgian town that came to mean so much to the British). These tactics, known as 'bite and hold' were a departure from the more ambitious plans in place a year earlier along the Somme front.

The German response to a loss of ground was always to counter-attack as quickly as possible, which was often very successful against tired troops cut off from support by accurate German artillery fire. The new idea was to advance only as far as your artillery could provide support cover, hold against counter-attacks with the help of the artillery and then wait a week or two for the artillery to move forward before taking the next 'bite'. The tactic worked, but it didn't provide the big victory; it was obvious that it would take a very long time to achieve a major, war-winning victory by advancing no more than a mile or so a week. The last of these attacks was around the little village of Poelcappelle.

Conditions behind the British front line were appalling. The low ground across which every man, bullet and meal had to move forward became a sea of mud as traditional drainage channels were disrupted by shellfire. *There had been much rain in the past few days, and the whole area between the front line and the Yser Canal, was a sea of mud (War Diary, 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards.)*

And the Germans were adapting their tactics in response to the British successes ...

James' battalion carried out its part of the attack without too much difficulty, the Germans occupying the positions targeted were caught by surprise and did not offer any serious resistance. However, their artillery was soon in action and caused a number of casualties (44 dead, 11 missing and 126 wounded).

James was one of those killed that day, it is quite possible that it was his first experience of an attack. The battalion had not gone 'over the top' since the beginning of August; he may well have been among the men sent to the battalion to make up for the losses in that period. Inexperience could be the difference between life and death, the man who recognizes the threat earlier has that moment of extra time to hit the ground and feel the high explosive blast of a shell blowing over him rather than through him – not that any reaction can help if the shell burst is very close by.

His remains were never identified and he has no known grave, instead he is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial outside Zonnebeke in Belgium.

Henry Thomas Sandy GOLDING

Private 19968 Henry Thomas Sandy Golding, 5th Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment, killed in action, 8 October 1917. Commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium

Henry was born in Pitton, Wiltshire, in 1889 the son of James Dennis GOLDING and his wife, Ida née PARSONS. James was a farmer at Parsonage Farm in the village where his large family of at least nine children were born and raised until sometime between 1907 and 1911 when they moved to Home Farm, Quarley. This was a larger farm with more accommodation for the family.

Henry did not join the army until late 1916, early 1917, which suggest that he was conscripted and may well have appealed against his conscription. A man of his age would have become liable to conscription early in 1916, but many appealed in an attempt to avoid military service. Local tribunals examined each appeal on a case by case basis and would usually rule against a fit man of military age, however, they would often grant an extension of time so the appellant would have time to set their affairs in order or, if it was an employer appealing, time to find a substitute worker. This process could explain why Henry did not serve earlier. It is also possible that his employment on a

farm delayed conscription for a few months. Such was the surge of volunteers at the outbreak of war that farmers often found themselves struggling to get the 1914 harvest in, and it was soon recognized that farms should not be stripped of their workforce without some time to recruit replacement workers from the older population, or from men invalided out of the armed forces but still able to do useful work. Prisoners of war were also used in this vital work.

Whatever the reason for the delay, Henry ended up as a Private in the Dorsetshire Regiment and was posted to the regiment's 5th battalion in Belgium.

This was 1917, the year of Passchendaele, the campaign in Flanders to improve the Allied position in the small salient around the town of Ypres (Ieper) that has become such an emotive centre for remembrance of the thousands who died fighting there. The 5th Dorsets were involved in the campaign from the opening advance in the Battle of Messines (7-14 June). Henry died on 8 October, the day before the official start of the Battle of Poelcappelle; these dates were decided after the war by the Battle Nomenclature Committee. The problem with the precise dates determined by the committee is that they give the impression that battles had clear start and end dates and that little was happening between them. By this official reckoning the 11th Division, which included the 5th Dorsetshire Battalion, was involved in the Battle of Polygon Wood (26 September – 4 October) and then the Battle of Poelcappelle (9 October), but the 5th Dorsets' main involvement over this period was during 4-7 October when they were simply holding a section of the front. This was not the trench line that one might envisage, but a collection of wet shell holes in ground captured over the preceding days. In makeshift defensive positions the men were more vulnerable to shelling and snipers, and the battalion suffered significant losses both moving forward to the line and while in occupation. Sadly Henry was one of those to die, given the official date of his death he may well have perished as the battalion was withdrawing from the line after being relieved. The battalion's war diary notes that A, B & C Companies extricated themselves without loss, but D Company suffered losses *'owing to enemy snipers giving them a fair amount of trouble.'*

Henry James Victor MAIDMENT

Lance Corporal 24834 Henry James Victor Maidment 1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, killed in action, 4 October 1917 (Battle of Broodseinde). Commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium

Henry was born in Gussage St Michael, Dorset in 1887 the son of Charles MAIDMENT and his wife Fanny née SAUNDERS. He lived in the New Forest area growing up with his parents until his father died in 1906, when, aged 19, he became the main breadwinner. He worked as a carter on a farm in Fawley, Hampshire where the 1911 census found him living with his mother and two younger brothers: Frederick Charles (Fred, born 1893) and Albert Edward (1897). His sisters, Louisa Jane (1892) and Edith May (1895) were both working as live-in servants in households in Fawley and neighbouring Hythe. On 26 October 1912 he married Katherine Florence DOLMAN in Fawley.

Henry did not rush to sign up when the call to arms went out after war was declared in August 1914 but was conscripted in June 1916, soon after the Military Service Act of January 1916 came in to effect making all men aged 18-40 liable to enforced enlistment. He was posted to the Hampshire Regiment. Following training (at least six months but often more) he was sent to the regiment's 1st Battalion on the Western Front. He may have been conscripted but he must have shown some promise since he was promoted to Lance-Corporal; even this lowly rank came with responsibility he would be expected to command a section of five or so men in action.

On 4 October 1917 the battalion was part of a larger multi-Division assault on enemy positions to the west of the village of Poelcappelle in Belgium (the Battle of Broodseinde). The plans for this survive in the battalion's war diary, as does an account of what happened – needless to say the plan did not go perfectly. The main problem seems to have been British shellfire. The idea was that British guns would lay down a barrage on no man's land and the enemy positions, and every few minutes the barrage would move forward to allow the assaulting troops to move forward closely

behind it, effectively protecting the troops with a curtain of high explosive mayhem. However, as the diary states, the barrage was *ragged* – it was not a neat line to be followed and some shells fell short on to the advancing troops. It was friendly fire that caused most of the battalion's casualties – not entirely the artillerymen's fault as their guns had been in action for weeks or months and worn out barrels reduced accuracy dramatically. Enemy action seems to have had relatively little impact and the battalion was able to advance pretty much as planned – though there were problems with the Brigade to the left being unable to keep up, meaning that men from a companion battalion had to cover an extended flank.

Casualties were heavy: 40 killed, 25 missing and 190 wounded. Sadly, Henry was one of the dead. His remains were lost on the battlefield and never recovered and he has no known grave. He is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Zonnebeke.

Nothing in the story so far suggests why his name would appear on the Quarley war memorial, the only hint is that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission record his next of kin as his wife Katherine who was living in Monxton at the time they were in touch. Henry is not listed on the Monxton memorial, perhaps Katherine was living in Quarley at the time the memorial was erected?

Harry MATTHEWS

Private 7751 Harry Matthews, 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment, killed in action, 17 November 1914 (1st Battle of Ypres). Commemorated on Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

Tentative identification; not yet confirmed.

George Michael John SCOATES

Private 7067 George Michael John Scoates, 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment, killed in action 25 October 1914 (Battle of La Bassée). Commemorated on Le Touret Memorial, France.

John, as he was known, was born in Quarley in 1885, the son of John SCOATES, a farm labourer, and his wife Mary Anne née HOLLOWAY. By the age of 15 John had left school and was working as a groom for a household in the village.

In 1904 (or thereabouts) he enlisted into the Wiltshire Regiment for the standard term of 12 years. However, he only had to serve the first years in uniform with the army after which he would have been transferred to the Reserve, still receiving some pay and with few commitments beyond occasional training camps. John's service record has not survived, but that of Percy Bennett, No 7064, survived the fire that destroyed most of the archive in 1940. His service number is so close to John's that it is likely they signed up very close to each other and under similar terms. The default terms printed on the attestation (enlistment) form were three years with the colours before transfer to the Reserve for a further nine years. However, examples exist where the recruiting officer has modified the form to extend the initial terms to 5, 7 or even 9 years. When the initial term was up men could also opt to remain with the colours for the full 12 years.

By 1911 John was back in Quarley, working as a farm labourer and living with his brother Tom and his family. On 19 August that year he married Lucy May CHALKE at Barford St Martin, Wiltshire. The following year, on 11 June, his daughter Mildred Louisa Ruth was born.

When war was declared on 4 August 1914 John was still in the Reserve and was immediately ordered to report to his regiment. Many reserves in his position were on the first boats over to France with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), others followed soon after.

John served in France with the regiment's 1st Battalion and was with it when it crossed to France on 14 August. It was part of 7th Brigade, 3rd Division, 2 Corps and took part in the Battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and the Aisne as the BEF was pushed back almost to Paris before joining a huge French effort to halt the German advance on the Marne and then to push them back towards the

border. The Germans dug in along the Aisne, halting the French advance, and the trench system that would eventually stretch from Switzerland to the sea began to form.

The BEF then moved north towards Belgium, attempting to outflank the German advance. The Germans had the same idea and a string of actions took place during what became known as the 1st Battle of Ypres, each ultimately ending with the opposing forces digging in and extending the nascent trench system towards the North Sea.

By late October the 3rd Division, including the 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment, was holding positions to the west of Neuve Chappelle in France a short distance south of the Belgian Border.

On 25 October the battalion was manning a rudimentary line, working to improve the defences whenever possible (in daylight snipers prevented any effective progress). Enemy shellfire was also a serious problem and was presumably what killed John that day. A problem with the destructive power of high explosive was that men could simply disappear, which meant there were no remains to identify and bury. Such men were reported 'missing', occasionally one would turn up in a hospital bed or his remains would be uncovered, but most would never be found and relatives would be left in limbo, hoping for good news, dreading bad.

Many felt the need to investigate. A query was made of the Red Cross (in case John was being held by the Germans) and John's mother placed an advertisement in the national press:

SCOATES 7067 Pte J, 1st Wilts Reg, D Co. No news since October. His mother would be thankful if a comrade would give her any information. Write, Mrs Scoates, Quarley, near Andover, Hants. (The People, 7 March 1915).

But there was no good news, John was dead. In time, the family would be notified of the presumption of death. As there were no remains to bury, he is commemorated on the memorial to the missing at Le Touret near Neuve Chappelle.

The Men Behind the Names

World War Two

Raymond Currey

Captain 52541 Reginald Francis Raymond Currey, 1 Base Supply Depot, Royal Army Service Corps. Died 17 June 1940. Commemorated at Dunkirk Memorial.

Son of the Revd. Reginald Henry Arthur Currey, M.A., and Elizabeth Currey, of Quarley Rectory, Hampshire; husband of Hilda Isobel Currey, of Finchley, Middlesex.

Reginald Harland

Lance Corporal 5577360 Reginald James Ernest Harland, 5th Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment. Died 2 October 1944. Commemorated at Groesbeek Memorial.

Probable identification; not yet confirmed.

Albert George Poolman

Lance Corporal 1600236 Albert George Poolman, 12th (Airborne) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment. Died 24 March 1945. Commemorated at Reichswald Forest War Cemetery.

Son of Edwin Charles and Elsie Eleanor Poolman, of Quarley, Hampshire.