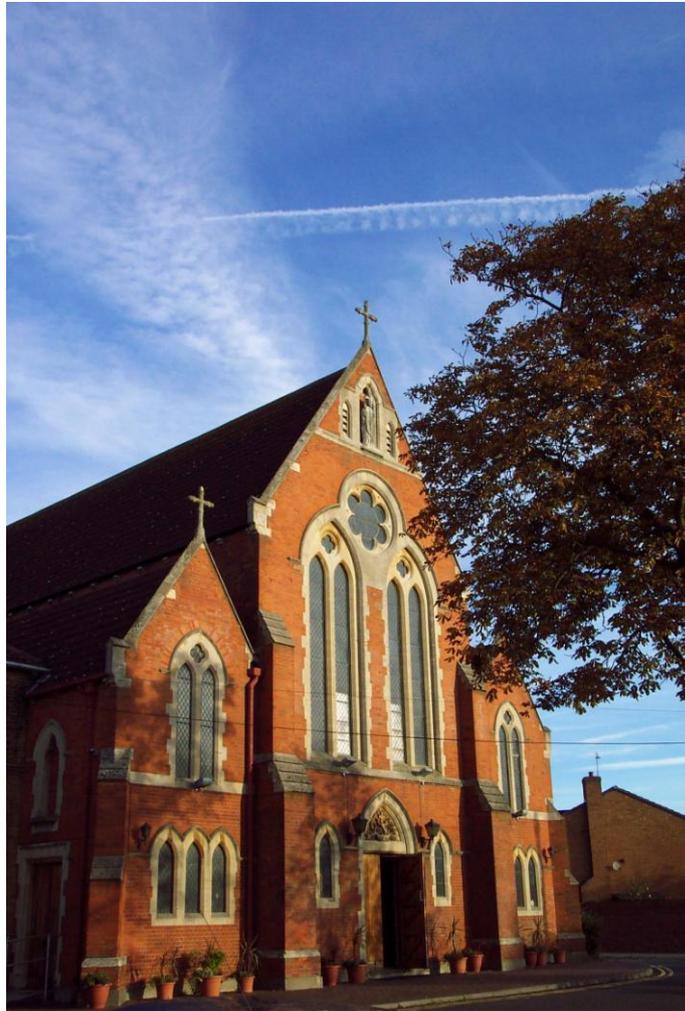


ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CHURCH



ROLL OF HONOUR 1914-1918 & 1939-1945

(Version 2 05-11-18: Compiled in 2018 by Adrian Lee©)



Uniquely among local churches, no memorial or Roll of Honour was erected in St Thomas of Canterbury when the Great War ended. No newsletters or parish magazines were produced. The names of the dead which may have been known to members of the congregation after each world war, have simply faded away with them over the intervening years.

This compilation is primarily extracted from my Index to the War Dead of Woodford 1914-1921. It involved trawling through assorted surviving records over some eight years. Official records, war diaries, newspapers, magazines and war memorials all produced over 600 local names, some of whom would reveal links to our Parish, St Antony's School or Chigwell Convent. In some instances the case for a man's inclusion is admittedly tenuous. A few have clearly established connections - Patrick Fitzgerald was married here, and news of the death of George Bennett was read out during Intercession Sunday in 1915 when fortunately a Woodford Times reporter happened to be present. Other details in paperwork could be overlooked; Fr Raymond Briscoe OFM supported the pension claim for a widow, and some of her children went to a Catholic orphanage; the Reverend Mother of Chigwell Convent was named Next of Kin for an orphan; a rosary was listed among a dead mans possessions and the brother of another casualty became a Friar.

What follows is a short account of each man, his life and how he met his end. Sadly photographs are scarce. It is likely that some of our casualties still remain unknown, but they too have their page. Possibly more names will emerge in time and be added to the list, for example in 2018 the service files for Second World War casualties remain closed.

In 1919 the Rector of St Mary's Church South Woodford, Rev Henry Sanders and his Churchwardens, decided that the stone cross of sacrifice next to the High Road should be inscribed "In Memory of Woodford Men". That would make clear that although within the church grounds, it commemorated all those who had been lost, whether they attended the parish church, other churches or none at all. A short wreath laying ceremony is held there each year at 08.45 on the Saturday of Remembrance Weekend. In 2018, and I believe for the first time, this included a cross from our church placed in the field of remembrance.

At 10.00 mass here on Remembrance Sunday, our church is crowded as each of the different Scout and Guide Units parade with their flags. The names of our parish war dead are read out during Bidding Prayers at the various masses.

These are the men they are remembering.





ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

ROLL OF HONOUR

THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

BENNETT, GEORGE WILLIAM

BRIGHT, CHARLES JOSEPH

COYNE, JAMES

CROFT, GEORGE EDWARD JOSEPH

CROFT, THOMAS CHARLES

FITZGERALD, PATRICK

GILBEY, HENRY ERNEST CHARLES

GRUGEON, ARTHUR SYDNEY

JOTCHAM, WILLIAM

KEEFE, RICHARD

LOWE, FREDERICK JAMES

REID, KEITH DUNCAN

SIMPSON, JAMES

THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945

CROSSMAN, THOMAS JAMES

HURLEY, DENNIS JAMES

IVES, JOHN ANTHONY GERARD



BENNETT, GEORGE
Otherwise
BENNETT, GEORGE WILLIAM

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	586
Date of Death:	30/11/1915
Age:	N/K
Regiment/Service:	Royal Fusiliers 2nd Bn
Grave Reference:	I. B. 24.
CWGC Cemetery:	AZMAK CEMETERY, SUVLA
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

At the beginning of 1916, our local paper the "Woodford Times" published reports concerning church services held during "Intercession Sunday" in December 1915. It is fortunate that when either Fr Wilfred or Fr Cyril was preaching, a reporter was in church to hear that Parishioner Mr. G W Bennett had lost his life in the Dardanelles. It has proved difficult to establish just who this casualty was, but entries for both him and a sister in our Confirmation Register, the name of his mother in the Soldiers Effects Records, and details from his father's surviving Army file have all provided vital corroboration.

George Bennett was born in the Walworth area of Southwark during 1893, and his birth was registered with just that one name.

He was the son of John William Bennett, a Groom/Coachman, from Ropley Hampshire, and Charlotte Bennett, a Domestic Servant from Great Malvern Worcestershire. They met while in the service of Richard Vangelder, a Wine Merchant of North Hill, Chertsey Surrey.

When rejoining the Army after the war, John had declared himself a member of the Church of England, adding that the couple were married on 29th July 1892 by Rev. Fr Lutz at St George's Cathedral in Southwark.

His previous declaration giving the place of marriage as "St Saviours SE" and the Minister as C.J. Lutz was unhelpful. This was not only the name of the Anglican Church in Southwark which later became Southwark Cathedral, but also the old style

name for the district itself. However, the Clergyman C.J. Lutz was Fr Caspar Lutz, and St Georges is the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Southwark.

The 1901 Census records John as a Coachman living with Charlotte in The Lodge of "The Willows", over at Chigwell Row. Also present were children George aged 8, Amelia (6), born in Ascot, Margaret (4), born in Woodford and baby May, (11 months) also born in Woodford.

Margaret had been Baptised here at St Thomas of Canterbury on 28th December 1896, so establishing the family had connections to this church during the earliest years of the Parish.

Quite where 18 year old George was on the evening of the 1911 Census is unclear, but he was not at home. The family had left Chigwell Row to live at 3, Aldeburgh Place Woodford Green, just across the way from the church. John was now employed as a Cab Driver. Some more children were listed as being born in Woodford including Dorothy aged 6, showing they had moved back here during or before 1905.

Further checks revealed the name of George Bennett in our Confirmation Register for 1904 when he would have been 11. His sister Margaret followed in 1908.

We do know he was resident in Woodford (most likely at Aldeburgh Place) during 1914, because that is what the Army recorded when he enlisted for service at Stratford. At some stage, and certainly during his time in the Army, George appears to have taken to using his father's second name. Hence the Military Records refer confusingly to a George William Bennett; this is not his Confirmation name which was Edward.

It now becomes easier to account for George, who having joined the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) began weeks of intensive training. Perhaps contrary to expectations he was destined not for the Western Front in Europe, but for the stumbling and costly campaign at Gallipoli in the Balkans. He was part of a replacement draft allocated to the Royal Fusiliers 2nd Battalion, so helping to offset their rising number of casualties. He arrived in that operational area on 10th September 1915, and thus qualified for the 1914/15 Star medal. This allied campaign was intended to open a direct sea route to Russia, capture Constantinople, and force Ottoman Turkey out of the war, thereby facilitating progress on the Western Front.

Contrary to the usual perceptions of baking heat at Gallipoli, November 26th 1915 was a more comfortable and bright day. That changed rapidly at about 17.00 with the onset of thunder and rain, which during the evening became torrential almost to biblical proportions. This is illustrated by an account in the Regimental History of floodwater washing a mule, pony and three dead Turkish soldiers down the hill and dumping them into a British trench.

Unfortunately the trenches of 2 Royal Fusiliers were located in what was a natural funnel for water pouring off the hills, so very soon many of them were filled with water. Men were soaked; some drowned, including a rations party. A Northerly wind then began blowing with increasing force and the temperature dropped below freezing.

During 27th November the bitter wind increased to gale force and snow began falling in the afternoon. The wind became colder still with blizzard conditions from about 02.00 on 28th. During that day the Battalion Commander and his Adjutant found themselves the only two men left in the reserve line. The biting wind continued on 29th; it was freezing hard but no more snow had fallen. However the impact on the trenches, with so many men now suffering from exposure and frostbite, meant the Battalion had essentially ceased to function. Some men had frozen to death in situ as they defended the front lines.

The order was given to pull back and those who were left struggled to make the journey, some almost crawling. Others were killed by Turkish snipers, their slow progress making them easy targets. It was a stark fact that these few days of attrition from Mother Nature were causing more casualties to the Fusiliers than any offensive operations by Turkish forces.

On 25th November, 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers had mustered 22 Officers and 661 Other Ranks. The Roll Call at 16.00 on 30th showed 10 Officers and 84 Other Ranks, 70 of whom were considered "effective". Next day when Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng inspected the Battalion, "W" Company consisted of its Company Commander Captain Robert Gee, Sergeant Major Paschall and one "ineffective" man, such were the devastating effects of the elements.

Our Parishioner George Bennett Died on Active Service from "Exposure" as a direct result of this period of bitterly cold weather.

Over the months several attempts had been made to break out of the beach head area of Gallipoli, but in reality the situation had slipped into a trench warfare stalemate similar to that being experienced in the Western Front. It was officially conceded that there was no chance of a successful outcome, so by 9th January 1916 the campaign had been abandoned and the entire Force evacuated. It is a sad truth that the evacuation was planned and implemented with such skill that it proved the most successful part of the campaign.

Robert Gee would survive his tour of Gallipoli, and later be awarded a Victoria Cross for his actions on the Western Front.

Unlike many soldiers of this Expeditionary Force who died in heavy fighting over several months, George Bennett rests today in a marked grave, 1.B.24 within the Azmak Cemetery at Suvla.



BRIGHT, CHARLES JOSEPH

Rank:	Corporal
Service Number:	941
Date of Death:	07/07/1916
Age:	24
Regiment/Service:	Royal Fusiliers 8th Bn.
Panel Reference:	Pier and Face 8 C 9 A and 16 A
CWGC Memorial:	THIEPVAL MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Charles was born on 17th February 1893 at Burton on Trent, the son of George Ignatius (Commercial Clerk to Beer Bottler) and Mary Catherine Bright. The 1901 Census shows him to be an 8 year old scholar with his family at 16 Hutt Street, Sculcoates, Kingston upon Hull. He and his family moved to "Rydal Mount", later 71 Grove Hill South Woodford, having arrived here in about 1903. Charles was Confirmed in this church on 12th July 1905.

Having worked as a Cellar Boy he joined the Royal Navy on 22nd September 1910 as a Boy, and they noted that the young man had a scar on his right knee from a fractured patella.

In 1911 he was an Officers Steward at HMS Excellent, the Royal Navy Gunnery School at Whale Island in Portsmouth. He later became an Ordinary Seaman, serving on HMS Exmouth before going to the Battleship HMS Dreadnought from 17th December 1912 to 1st July 1914. Charles left the Navy on 9th July 1914.

He was living in Woodford when unusually he opted to join the Army after war broke out. This may be because once the Royal Navy had considered its ranks of Reservists, it found there were more men available than it had ships to put them on. As a result some sailors were used on land as infantry soldiers in the Royal Naval Divisions. Having completed Army training Charles was found to be a good shot, so he served as a Sniper.

He went to France with the Battalion as part of 12(Eastern) Division during 30th/31st May 1915. After local instruction they went into the line at Ploegsteert Wood on 2nd/3rd June, fought in the Battle of Loos during late September, and participated in the actions around the Hohenzollern Redoubt from 13th October. The latter assault

failed completely, at a cost of over three and a half thousand casualties. There followed several months spent in the front lines, in reserve or undergoing training.

During the first morning of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916, 8 Royal Fusiliers and the rest of 12 (Eastern) Division were moved into the reserve positions at Hencourt and Millencourt. During the night they moved forward towards Ovillers, relieving 8 Division which had seen action during the day.

8 Royal Fusiliers then participated in a further attack on Ovillers at 03.15 on 2nd July which, though falling short of (perhaps optimistic) expectations, did result in some further progress.

Their next major engagement would come on 7th July. Following an artillery barrage which began at 04.30, the Battalion, with 9 Royal Fusiliers and 7 Royal Sussex attacked Ovillers again from the South West.

When A and D Companies crawled out into no-man's-land at 08.26, hollows in the ground still contained a residue from poison gas shells. Standing up and waving his stick, Lt Col. Annesley led their assault, but the battalion immediately ran into heavy machine gun fire from the defending Prussian Guards. Annesley was hit in the wrist, ankle, and finally above the heart before falling into a shell hole. He died of wounds later that night. All the other officers were either killed or wounded, but by noon there was some success; the first and second line German trenches had been taken, and around half of Ovillers was in British hands.

When this attack began, 8 Royal Fusiliers had mustered 800 men. By the evening they numbered 160, the rest being killed wounded or missing. However they held their newly won positions until relieved next day.

Among the missing was Charles Bright. He was never accounted for, and later his death was officially presumed to have occurred on 7th July while in action. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. Enquiries were made of the International Committee of the Red Cross by his mother and a friend, Mlle Suzanne Lachartroul in Bethune, but the result was "Negatif envoye"; they too had no information to provide.

Four of his brothers were also in the Forces, but they all survived the war.

At the time of writing (2017), a later family member through marriage, Mrs. Monica Bright regularly attends Mass in our church.



COYNE, JAMES

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	35186
Date of Death:	17/10/1918
Age:	18
Regiment/Service:	East Surrey Regiment 9th Bn
Grave Reference:	111.A.33
CWGC Cemetery:	ST. AUBERT BRITISH CEMETERY
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Born in 1900 at Birkenhead, James was the son of William (Corporation Labourer) and Alice Bennett Coyne. By 1901 he was living with his parents and brother Thomas at 1, Lowther Street, Birkenhead. The family experienced upheaval during the first decade of the Century. The 1911 Census shows James (11) and his older brother Thomas (13) as inmates at St Mary's Orphanage for Roman Catholic Boys, Southall Lane, North Hyde near Southall Middlesex. Ironically, the premises were former Army Barracks dating from the Napoleonic period.

When he enlisted in the Army at Stratford he was shown as living at Woodford Bridge.

After a fairly uneventful start to October 1918, 9th Battalion East Surrey Regiment was moved to Haussy South of Valenciennes where in the early hours of 16th, they crossed the river and prepared to advance behind a creeping artillery barrage. Their objective was the capture of the village and a sunken road which followed a ridge further along. This had been achieved with minimal casualties by about 07.00. However heavy German shelling soon began, and at around 14.00 other troops were falling back, reporting an enemy counter attack and breakthrough. It was found that German forces had taken ground between 9 East Surreys and the river, and proceeded to open a hail of machine gun and rifle fire on them. There was no option but to withdraw through the water a little further down from the bridgehead, while still under heavy machine gun fire. Some managed to reach the British side, but a large number were lost. The Germans were however prevented from crossing the river.

During the night of 16th/17th October the Battalion was relieved by 7 Northamptonshires, by which time only about one quarter of their original fighting strength remained.

The Battalion War Diary shows that James Coyne was originally listed as Missing. It was later confirmed that he had Died of Wounds sustained during the action that day. His brother Thomas was sole beneficiary.

His gravestone bears the words "He Died for Freedom and Liberty. May his Soul Rest in Peace", as stipulated by Thomas who, after the war, was living in Ontario Canada.

Being a Catholic, James Coyne is acknowledged as a member of our Parish.



CROFT, GEORGE EDWARD JOSEPH

Rank:	Sergeant
Service Number:	22058
Date of Death:	02/11/1918
Age:	N/K
Regiment/Service:	Royal Welsh Fusiliers
Panel Reference:	B. 17. 211A
CWGC Memorial:	LEYTONSTONE (ST. PATRICK'S) ROMAN CATHOLIC CEMETERY
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Born in 1896 at Woodford, son of Joseph (house painter) and Charlotte Croft. In 1901 he was with his family at 4 Milton Villas, (later 26) Carnarvon Road South Woodford. The 1911 Census found him still with his family at Milton Villas, a Printing Apprentice with William Potter & Sons Aldersgate Street (ticket printers, publishers etc.) His mother worked as a Laundress, owning the Milton Laundry in Carnarvon Road, a venture which probably also involved his grandparents John and Amelia. They lived around the corner in Peel Road.

He joined the 15th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers having enlisted at Holborn on 14th November 1914. After training around Llandudno, including mock attacks on Great Ormes Head, he arrived in France with the Battalion on 3rd December 1915. He successfully completed a machine gun course.

He fought with the Welsh Fusiliers through many of the battles of the Western Front, including Mametz Wood on the Somme in 1916. Here, casualties to the Division he was with were so severe it would be some 12 months before it was once again battle ready for a major engagement. He was present during the 3rd Battle of Ypres in 1917, and survived a gas attack in late July.

There was a reorganisation of the Army in early 1918; 15 Royal Welsh Fusiliers were disbanded on 27th February 1918, and the soldiers transferred to other units. George was sent to 14 Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Early in 1918 he was selected for Officer Training, and posted to No.2 Officer Cadet Battalion at Emmanuel College Cambridge in May. He was a good sportsman in both cricket and swimming, but excelled at Football.

It is a great irony that, having survived the horrors of the Western Front and nine days before the war ended, George Croft should die from Influenza and Double Pneumonia at 1st Eastern General Hospital at Cambridge during the "Spanish Flu" pandemic.

His funeral, with full military honours, was held at St Patrick's Cemetery on Monday 11th November 1918. One wreath came from his fiancé.

An uncle, Corporal Thomas Charles Croft was also lost while serving in Gallipoli with 10th Battalion London Regiment.

His brother in law (husband of his sister Agnes), Lance Corporal William Jotcham of 12th Battalion East Surrey Regiment was killed while resisting the German Spring Offensive in 1918.



CROFT, THOMAS CHARLES

Rank:	Corporal
Service Number:	344
Date of Death:	14/08/1915
Age:	36
Regiment/Service:	London Regiment - 1st/10th Bn
Panel Reference:	Panel 196 and 197
CWGC Memorial:	HELLES MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Born in 1879 at Woodford, the son of John, a Carpenter from Warwickshire, and Amelia Croft who had been born in Normandy. The 1891 Census shows the family living at 8 Forest Villas Peel Road. His father and mother were then working in the laundry trade. Thomas joined the Army, the Census of 1901 locating him as a Private Soldier with the 18th Hussars at Canterbury Barracks in Kent. In 1903 he married Bertha Dupas, a French national. Having left the Army, in 1911 he was employed as a Postman, living with his wife and children Andree and Thomas at 3 Elizabeth Villas Walpole Road South Woodford. Two more children followed Marie (1912) and Denis (1914). The family address was later recorded as 66 Peel Road.

Thomas had joined the 10th (Hackney) Battalion of the Territorial London Regiment on its formation in 1912, perhaps transferring from 7 Essex Regiment which had Headquarters at Walthamstow. In any event, when war broke out in August 1914 he was mobilised with the Battalion, and volunteered for overseas service.

1/10 London left Liverpool at the end of July 1915, and landed at Suvla Gallipoli during the night of 10th/11th August. The earlier landings were costly in terms of casualties, and the Force again failed to make any headway from the beachhead during an assault on 12th August. A further attack involving 1/10 London was planned for 15th, intending to move inland and capture highland positions at Kiretch Tepe Sirt and Kidney Hill, so allowing Turkish forces to be attacked from the rear.

Thomas Croft would not take part in that operation. He was the only fatality in the Battalion the day before, when he was Killed in Action on 14th August. The circumstances of his death are not known, but it is possible he fell victim to a Turkish sniper or shell. He has no known grave.

His name was read aloud with others at a memorial service for the fallen held at St Mary's Church South Woodford one Sunday in December 1917, but he does not appear on their war memorial.

He is recorded as a member of this Parish because it is known that his child Denis was Baptised here, and his nephew George was also associated with the church. Sadly, there is also an entry in these pages for Sergeant George Edward Joseph Croft.

Lance Corporal William Jotcham of 12th Battalion East Surrey Regiment, (husband of his neice Agnes), was Killed in Action in 1918 while defending trenches between Mory and Sapinges South of Arras against the German Spring Offensive.



FITZGERALD, PATRICK

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	41313
Date of Death:	26/08/1917
Age:	N/K
Regiment/Service:	Worcestershire Regiment - 1st/7th Bn
Panel Reference:	Panel 75 to 77
CWGC Memorial:	TYNE COT MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	Woodford Bridge Roll of Honour, The Chigwell Memorial Cross, The Memorial Oak Rood Screen in St Mary's Anglican Church Chigwell
Decorations:	None

Patrick was born during 1885 in Co. Clare Ireland, son of Charles Fitzgerald (General Labourer) and his wife Margaret. The 1901 Irish Census shows him as a 15 year old Scholar in the family home, House 3, Knockdrumleague, Tulla Co Clare. Also present when Royal Irish Constabulary Constable 53681 James Carlos enumerated the census were his parents and younger siblings, Thomas (13) Lena (11) and James (9).

By 1911 he had left Ireland and was employed as a Stores Porter at the large modern London County Council Asylum at Claybury. The census of that year shows him boarding with fellow Stores Porter William Robert Johnson and his wife Lillian in their home at 7, Stoneycroft Road Woodford Bridge.

At some stage he encountered Gladys Billet from Wiltshire who was a Nurse at the Asylum, and on 9th November 1914 they were married in this church by Fr Robert Heywood OFM. Two children followed, Grace (1916) and Charles on 25th August 1917, which considering the events of 26th was a bitter irony. It meant that Patrick was unaware he had a son, and at the Baptism in September Gladys was uncertain whether she still had a husband. The family home is recorded as 1, Brunel Terrace Woodford Bridge, and in 1916 1, Belgrave Terrace Woodford Bridge which was just across the local authority boundary in Chigwell.

During May of 1916 Patrick enlisted in the Army at Woodford and in due course began training as an infantryman. Although living in Essex his initial posting was to the 8th Battalion Norfolk Regiment as Private 32108, because when his turn for allocation came, that was where replacement manpower was required. At the start of the war men could opt to serve in a particular Regiment or Corps, but by 1916, the

ever increasing casualty lists had rendered such niceties totally impractical. In a similar "needs must" decision, he would later be transferred from the Norfolk Regiment to 1st/7th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment where he served as Private 41313. This was a pre war Territorial Battalion which had been serving on the continent since arriving at Boulogne on 31st March 1915.

And so in August 1917 some two months after arriving in France, Patrick Fitzgerald found himself in the front line during the Battle of Langemark, fought in Belgium during 16th and 17th August as part of the ongoing 3rd Battle of Ypres. This is better known by the less formal sounding name of "Passchendaele".

The Battle of Langemark followed the earlier Battle of Pilckem Ridge which began on 31st July. The British campaign was intended to break through the German lines, neutralise the "U" Boat bases on the Belgian coast which were assailing British supply convoys, and effectively drain then push back a demoralised German Army. Although there had been much detailed planning and some early success, the Germans were not as demoralised as reports suggested. What was unexpected was the very wet weather in August which combined with clay soil, the effects of shelling and damaged drainage systems, soon turned the cratered ground into a deadly muddy obstacle. Against this backdrop Patrick Fitzgerald and the rest of 1/7 Worcesters were preparing to fight.

Before dawn on 16th August the Battalion crossed the Yser canal and proceeded to Kultur Farm. They were to act in support of 145 Brigade, attacking near to what was left of the village of St Julien. Ironically the mud then became rather kinder to the attackers; large shells fell in deeply and so caused fewer casualties.

The Battalion was used in a number of ways to support and reinforce the main attackers, in particular undertaking the night assault on the well fortified "Maison de Hibou" during 16th/17th. They managed to gain control of this objective at their second attempt but with too few men, and so they were driven out again by a ferocious German counter attack. By midnight on 17th, the Battalion was returning to the British rear positions having been relieved by 1/8 Worcesters.

In keeping with the policy of rotation, on 25/26 August both 1/7 and 1/8 Worcesters were returned to the front line, where they manned positions at Canal Bank, from Hillocks Farm to beyond The Triangle. An attack on Langemarck to break through the German line was planned for 25th, but increasingly bad weather led to a postponement. Some men had moved to assembly trenches during the night of 26/27th, but if anything the weather became worse on the night of 26th. To add to the troops discomfort and apprehension, German artillery were maintaining a steady bombardment of their front line positions. The Battalion Aid Post would be established at location "Alberta" to process casualties.

The attack began at 13.55 on 27th, with men moving forward behind a protective creeping artillery barrage. But some accounts reveal that having advanced some 50 feet the soldiers were up to their waists in water, such was the state of the sodden crater filled landscape. As their progress slowed the German machine gun and small arms fire, plus artillery shells began taking a toll. By 23.00 the British line had moved forward a little and 1/7 Worcesters were ordered to be relieved. For 78 unfortunate others, their action was not yet over; they would remain out in the battlefield until the

night of 28th/29th, not joining their colleagues in camp Dambre near Ypres until 04.00.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission records suggest that it was during the period of preparation on 26th August that Patrick Fitzgerald was struck in the arm by shrapnel from a German shell. He was brought into a dugout with other wounded men and left there for a time while the more serious cases were taken back first. However, when the medical team returned, there was no sign of him nor any of the other wounded men who had been left there. He was formally reported initially as "Wounded" and finally "Missing Presumed Killed." He remains unaccounted for to this day.

But heed a word of caution. We must accept the official date and account of Patrick's (literal) loss is 26th August. However, the unusual circumstances of him going missing with others are more suggestive of a fluid and chaotic battlefield scenario than a period of preparation. It may be that Patrick indeed went over the top on 27th August and was wounded while in action during the fierce fighting of that day, but we do not know. The subsequent war diary entry only speaks of seven men missing in the action. Officially, Patrick Fitzgerald was missing by the afternoon of 27th when that attack began, but still the suspicion remains.

For Gladys, her new life began in 1922 when she married Herbert Greaves, and she died at "Linwood" High Road Woodford Bridge on 10th August 1963.



GILBEY, HENRY ERNEST CHARLES

Rank:	Rifleman
Service Number:	R/6276
Date of Death:	28/03/1916
Age:	N/K
Regiment/Service:	Kings Royal Rifle Corps 8th Bn
Grave Reference:	A.18.36
CWGC Memorial:	ST SEVER CEMETERY ROUEN
Local Memorial:	All Saints Church, United Free Church, Woodford Postal Sorting Office. (now at Debden)
Decorations:	None

Henry Gilbey came from Kent, born in 1886 at Ramsgate, the son of William (General Labourer) and Mary Gilbey. The 1891 Census shows him with his family at York Hill Loughton. By 1901 he was working as a Fish Shop Boy, and living with his family at Monkshams Cottage Woodford Green; his Father was now a Domestic Gardener. On 22nd July 1906 at West Ham Register Office he married Nellie Cushing, who came originally from Nottingham. He was a Window Cleaner in 1911, living with his wife and three children at 6 Avenue Road, High Road Woodford Green. Their home would later move to 1, Mill Lane Woodford Green, and he had also taken a job as an Auxiliary Postman.

He enlisted at Stratford on 2nd November 1914, and was allocated to the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. After training he left for France with the third draft of reinforcements for their 8th Battalion on 11th August 1915. He participated in the Second Attack on Bellwaard on 25th September 1915, part of the Battle of Loos.

During the Spring of 1916 there were no major actions in the general Arras Sector where his Battalion was located, but it remained an active front line. The War Diary records daily duels with the Germans involving bombs and rifle grenades. Just such activity was occurring on 21st March which caused "several casualties". It may be that it was a shrapnel rather than a gunshot wound to his abdomen (as the record states), which necessitated evacuation to 1 Stationary Hospital at Rouen.

His condition worsened, and Nellie was given the opportunity of travelling to France at public expense to see him if she could not afford the fare. She wanted to go and gladly accepted the offer. It is tragic that on 28th March at 14.35 her telegram of

acceptance was being processed at Woodford Post Office, while at 14.34 a telegram from France had arrived in the Rifle Depot at Winchester informing them of his death.

Her claim for a Military pension shows five children; Agnes, Sissie, Nellie, Mary and Henry. It was countersigned by Fr Raymond Briscoe OFM, a Catholic Priest here at the Friary.

A further sadness is disclosed by this Army Form 5080, frustratingly damaged at an important part. Not only had Nellie lost her husband, but it is clear that at least Agnes and perhaps Sissie could no longer be looked after at home. The address in the column adjoining their names shows The Convent Orphanage, Central Hill, Upper Norwood. This was the first Catholic Orphanage opened since the Reformation, and today houses the Virgo Fidelis Secondary School.

Henry Gilbey had a tattoo on his left wrist, the initials ILNC, believed to mean "I Love Nellie Cushing". Nellie did not re-marry, and died in Woodford during 1944.

On Sunday afternoon 18th July 1920 at Woodford Green Sorting Office, the name of Henry Gilbey appeared on the Roll of Honour which was unveiled by Brigadier General Richard Colvin C.B. M.P., and dedicated by the Vicar of All Saints. It has now been removed to the new centralised Sorting Office at Debden.

The records also show that Henry's brother Thomas William Gilbey married Nelly's sister Elizabeth Harriett Cushing. They left for Australia in 1922 on the SS Baltana.

Henry's Service File has partly survived, and contains the clear statement that he was a member of the Church of England. But other records confirm that his wife, and children who received Sacraments here, were most certainly Catholic. He deserves to be remembered in the place where the Gilbey family worshipped.

It also appears he was well known locally; for in addition to the memorial in the former Post Office, his name appears on the Rolls of Honour across the road at All Saints Church and in the United Free Church at High Elms.



GRUGEON, ARTHUR SYDNEY

Rank:	Corporal
Service Number:	2445
Date of Death:	15/09/1916
Age:	21
Regiment/Service:	London Regiment - 1st/15th Bn. (Prince of Wales' Own Civil Service Rifles)
Panel Reference:	Pier and Face 13 C.
CWGC Memorial:	THIEPVAL MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Arthur was born in 1895 at Hornsey, the eldest son of Sydney (Bank Clerk) and Elizabeth Agnes Grugeon. Theirs was a prominent name in the Parish during the earlier part of the last Century. The 1901 Census shows the family living at 24 Brewster Road Leyton. By 1911 Arthur was a Stockbrokers Clerk living with his family at "The Rosary" 52, Ingatestone Road Woodford Green. He was one of the first to join up, and went to France when 1st/15th London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles) was deployed, disembarking on 17th March 1915.

He took part in the Battles of Aubers Ridge, Festubert, Loos, and the actions around the Hoherzollern Redoubt in 1915, plus the German attack on Vimy Ridge earlier in 1916.

High Wood on the Somme was occupied by the Germans and had been attacked several times without success. Now on 15th September 1916 at the beginning of the The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, Battalions of the London Regiment, 18th (London Irish), 17th (Poplar and Stepney Rifles) and two Companies of Civil Service Rifles among others supported by four tanks, were to capture not only the Wood, but The Switch Line trench system beyond it.

Because of the proximity of the British lines, there was no pre bombardment or artillery support for the men when they began their advance at 06.20. This put them at a grave disadvantage. The men had begun taking casualties while they waited in no man's land to advance, and by 06.30 the attack was faltering in the face of intense fire from German rifles, machine guns and shells. As the dead began covering the ground in front of the Wood, the living started taking what shelter they

could in shell holes, or by returning to their trenches. 80% of the Civil Service Rifles Companies had become casualties. The tanks proved ineffective.

Two more Battalions of the London Regiment were used in a second attack; 19th (St Pancras) and 20th (Blackheath & Woolwich), but they too became bogged down in intense fighting. The 6th (Rifles) and 8th (Post Office Rifles) Battalions were also committed, while 7th (City of London) Battalion managed to clear and hold the "Switch Line" trenches.

Only later in the morning when the Trench Mortar Batteries put down a barrage of 750 shells in over 15 minutes did a renewed assault led by the remaining Companies of the Civil Service Rifles manage to reach the High Wood, and take control of it by 13.00.

At Roll Call on 20th September when they were withdrawn from the line, the Battalion was found to have 380 casualties (158 dead), from an already reduced strength of about 450.

Initially posted "Missing", Arthur Grugeon was later presumed to have been "Killed in Action." Like many others his body was not recovered, so he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

His younger brother Joseph would later become Father Camillus, a Franciscan Friar in the Order of Friars Minor which serves our church.



JOTCHAM, WILLIAM

Rank:	Lance Corporal
Service Number:	26447
Date of Death:	25/03/1918
Age:	26
Regiment/Service:	East Surrey Regiment 12th Bn
Panel Reference:	Bay 6
CWGC Memorial:	ARRAS MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

William was born in 1890 at Wotton under Edge Gloucestershire, the son of Frederick (House Painter) and Elizabeth Jotcham. The family home was at Haw Street, Wotton under Edge. Educated at the British & Bluecoat Schools, he later worked at Rogers Grocery Shop in Long Street. For relaxation he raced pigeons and fished at Coombe Lakes. By 1911 he had left rural Gloucestershire and was employed as a Grocers Assistant, boarding with Sarah Spiller and her family at "Lynmouth", Woodville Road, South Woodford.

It was probably in South Woodford that he met local girl Agnes Ellen Croft from Carnarvon Road, and on 4th February 1914 they were married here. Agnes was the sister of George Croft and niece of Thomas Croft, both of whom lost their lives in the war, and whose names appear in these pages.

Records confirm that in 1918 the couple had their home 4, Milton Villas, (later 26) Carnarvon Road, South Woodford. This was the home of Agnes's parents, Joseph and Charlotte Croft, and site of the family business - The Milton Laundry.

When he joined the Army William Jotcham enlisted at Warley, initially serving with the Royal Sussex Regiment before transferring to 12th Battalion East Surrey Regiment. He arrived at Le Havre in May 1916, and was a Signaller. He soon saw action during the Battle of the Somme, and was deployed to Ypres in 1917.

That year saw him repatriated to Aldershot Military Hospital suffering from an attack of cerebro spinal fever from which he recovered and returned to his Battalion.

On 21st March 1918 began the German Spring Offensive - an overwhelming and fast moving assault against British lines, designed to break through and isolate the British from their supply lines and French allies. With Russia no longer participating in the war, the Germans redeployed thousands of troops from the East, and hoped to achieve their objective before the allies could be reinforced by thousands of fresh troops from the United States. It almost worked, producing a disorderly British retreat over the ground won at such cost during the Battle of the Somme in 1917. Ultimately the Germans were resisted and ran out of momentum.

On 24th March the East Surreys were near Arras under shellfire all day, and by 18.00 were withdrawing to a line behind Favreuil and along the the Bapaume to Arras road. So began a fighting retreat as they frantically defended the lines around Sapignies to the South of Arras. On 25th March, most of the Battalion withdrew to the ridge at Sapignies, leaving "C" Company with some machine gunners to make a stand. They held the advancing Germans until 10.30 when, in danger of being surrounded and cut off, they were ordered to retire. Their actions bought time for others to dig in, and prevented the capture of some 60 guns, but only the Commanding Officer and one NCO escaped to join the rest of the Battalion on the ridge. We do not know the Company in which William Jotcham served, but he is recorded as being killed in action during 25th March. His body was never found.

His brother in law Sgt George Edward Joseph Croft saw action in the war, only to die from Influenza in Cambridge while under officer training just days before the war ended. Thomas Croft, his "uncle in law" was killed in Gallipoli while serving with 10th (Hackney) Battalion The London Regiment.

Agnes had lost her husband, brother and uncle; her little girl Olive Agnes lost not only her father, but his two brothers, her uncles Fred and Herbert Jotcham.

It is clear that William was not a Catholic. He was commemorated with his two brothers by a brass plaque in the Old Town Meeting House (Congregational) at Wotton, on the Roll of Honour in the Tabernacle Church, and on his parents gravestone in the Tabernacle Churchyard, as well as the Wotton war memorial. But having been accepted into the Croft family, and married in this church, it is right and proper that he is remembered here along with his relatives George and Thomas Croft.



KEEFE, RICHARD

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	G/17390
Date of Death:	07/10/1916
Age:	19
Regiment/Service:	Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) - 6th Bn
Panel Reference:	Pier and Face 11 C
CWGC Memorial:	THIEPVAL MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

When this young Baker enlisted in the Army at Woodford on 11th December 1915, he said he was born in Fulham, and was aged 18 years and 2 months. This *may* correspond to the birth registration for a Richard Keefe at the end of 1897 in Wandsworth District. In that case, during the 1901 Census he was at 18 Cassie Street Wandsworth with his grandmother Julia Donovan, 62, a widow from Cork, and her married daughter Catherine Hawley aged 31. However, there remains considerable uncertainty about his true background.

He is not located in the 1911 Census, but when he joined up he gave his address as Manor House, Turpins Lane, Woodford Bridge Essex. This was the St John the Baptist Industrial School, Home and Hospital for Boys with Ophthalmic problems. Run by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It provided for 160 boys under the Children's Act 1908 who, but for their eyesight, could have attended a standard Industrial School. At 18 Richard Keefe would have been a staff member. Sadly he appears to have had no family. For his Next of Kin he nominated his Guardian, Sr. Sylvester Halpin, Reverend Mother at nearby Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Convent.

Having enlisted, he was not mobilised until 2nd May 1916, when he was allocated to 14th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, and began training with 31 Training Reserve Battalion on May 4th. He arrived in France on 14 the September 1916, and was promptly transferred to the Queens Royal West Kent Regiment next day, joining their 6th Battalion on 29th September.

On 4th October 1916 this Battalion, already reduced to about 500 all ranks, moved into front line trenches North of Gueudecourt ready for the Battle of Transloy Ridges. After a two day postponement and in worsening weather, they would attack "Ration Trench" at 13.45 on 7th October. During that morning they took casualties through

heavy German shelling, and when the attack began it soon ground to a halt under fire from reinforced German machine guns and small arms fire. "C" Company managed to advance the most to some 150 yards before having to take shelter and retiring under cover of darkness. Of the 500 or so who arrived on 4th October, about 330 were listed as casualties by the end of 7th.

As his remains were never recovered, Richard Keefe was presumed to have been Killed in Action on 7th October 1917. It would also appear that having no family, his war medals and Memorial Plaque went unclaimed.

He is believed to have been a member of this Parish.



LOWE, FREDERICK JAMES

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	76939
Date of Death:	12/05/1918
Age:	18
Regiment/Service:	Royal Fusiliers - 9th Bn.
Grave Reference:	II. K. 7.
CWGC Cemetery:	MAILLY WOOD CEMETERY, MAILLY-MAILLET
Local Memorial:	Roll of Honour: Holy Trinity Church Panelling - Church Lads Cadets
Decorations:	None

Born in 1899 at Harwich, son of Thomas (General Labourer) and Sarah Lowe. In 1901 he was with his family at 3 Hope Terrace, Grove Road South Woodford. By 1911 he and his family had moved to 5 Cowley Cottages, High Road, South Woodford, and his father was now a Domestic Coachman. His parents were later shown as living at "Woodcot", 103, High Rd., South Woodford. The 1911 Census shows two of Frederick's siblings, Harold (14) and Marion (13), as being born at Warley Barracks near Brentwood, suggesting their father Thomas may have had military service.

Frederick was educated at Churchfields School, and St Antony's Roman Catholic School in Mornington Road. He was Confirmed along with siblings Ernest and William in this church on 9th July 1911. He was also a Cadet with the Holy Trinity Church Lads Brigade, Kings Royal Rifle Corps Cadet Unit at Hermon Hill.

His first experience of the Regular Army was with 106 Training Reserve Battalion which was based at Romford and Colchester. During March 1918 at the age of 18 he was sent out to France in a replacement draft of men for 9th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, and March 21st saw the start of the rapid and overwhelming German Spring Offensive. There was a grave danger that the velocity of this offensive, and its success with outflanking maneuvers could break the British and French Armies, and so give Germany victory in the war. British forces were retreating in some confusion, losing the hard won ground gained during the Battle of the Somme in 1917, and a great number of men as POWs.

On 24th March 12 Division, which included 9 Royal Fusiliers was moved to the area of Senlis, Warloy and Bouzencourt, some 20 miles North East of Amiens in the

Somme Department. By 16.00 the 9 Royal Fusiliers and the rest of 36 Brigade were in position along a railway embankment west of the Ancre watching for advancing Germans; they arrived in force soon after midday on 26th. There followed a period of fierce fighting as the Division struggled to slow and then halt the offensive, which due to a number of reasons, eventually ran out of momentum on 29th April. The war then reverted to it's more familiar static nature for a period of time.

Of the members of 12 Division, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle remarked that "it is no exaggeration to say that they had fought the Germans to an absolute standstill."

By 12th May 1918, 9 Royal Fusiliers were facing the enemy in the general area of Auchonvillers and Mailly-Maillett, North of Albert and to the East of Beaumont-Hamel. Manpower deficiencies were being rectified by newly trained soldiers from England, and it was a time for reconstruction. Although this was a much "quieter" phase than that experienced one month previously, there was still ongoing lower level conflict.

It was during 12th May that Privates Hubert Harold Landall and Frederick James Lowe were officially reported Killed in Action, probably victims of a sniper or random shelling. These two 18 year olds now rest next to each other surrounded by the Picardy countryside at the Mailly Wood Cemetery. Landall is in grave II.K.6 and Lowe in grave II.K.7.

Frederick Lowe is believed to be a member of this Parish, because his name appears in the Confirmation Register for 9th July 1911 along with his siblings. That would explain why his name does not appear on the church members war memorial at Holy Trinity Hermon Hill, while he is listed on their memorial panel for the Church Lads Cadets in the Sanctuary. Curiously though, the Church Lads Brigade was an Anglican rather than interdenominational organisation.



REID, KEITH DUNCAN

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	513547
Date of Death:	30/11/1917
Age:	N/K
Regiment/Service:	London Regiment - 1st/14th Bn The London Scottish
Panel Reference:	Panel 11&12
CWGC Memorial:	CAMBRAI MEMORIAL LOUVERVAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Born in 1890 at Battersea, the son of James (Wine, Spirit and Beer Merchant, formerly a Cheesemonger) and Rosina Reid. In 1891 he was with his parents at 515 Battersea Park Road, and by 1901 he was a Scholar with his family at 134 Kingsland Road, Hackney. The 1911 Census records him as a Retail Assistant in a Photographic Shop, living with his widowed mother at 66, Wood Street Walthamstow. His mother was working as a Law Writer for a Law Stationers.

On 22nd June 1914 at Stratford Registry Office he married Evelyn Violet Willmott. They had no children. The address for his Probate was 1, Connaught Villas, Stanley Road South Woodford, and it was from there that he joined the Army.

He enlisted for the duration of the war on 26th April 1916, was embodied and posted immediately to 1st/14th Battalion London Regiment (London Scottish). His father was born in Scotland so that may have influenced his posting. After training he joined the Expeditionary Force in Europe during September 1916, and within a month he was treated at 8 Stationary General Hospital for a barbed wire wound in the leg.

On 20th November 1917 the Battle of Cambrai began, and ten days later the London Scottish were in trenches around the newly won Broulon Wood. On 30th November the Germans launched a strong counter attack, beginning between 07.00 and 08.00 with an artillery barrage. At 09.00 four German divisions attacked the British front line. That portion held by 8th Battalion Middlesex Regiment gave way, leaving the London Scottish left the flank exposed. However a counterattack by a small party of Scots recaptured the line. The Germans attacked in eleven dense waves, but eight British machine guns firing over 70,000 rounds prevented their advance from succeeding. Unfortunately during this engagement Keith Reid was Killed in Action.

There is only one clue among his surviving army papers which supports the idea that he may have been a Roman Catholic. A single Rosary was listed among his personal effects after death. He was not recorded on any of the church memorials in South Woodford, so it is fitting that he should be commemorated here.



SIMPSON, JAMES

Rank:	Private
Service Number:	44860
Date of Death:	25/03/1918
Age:	32
Regiment/Service:	Durham Light Infantry 20th Battalion
Panel Reference:	Bay 8
CWGC Memorial:	ARRAS MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	St Paul's Church Woodford Bridge: Woodford Bridge Roll of Honour
Decorations:	None

James was born in 1886 at Poplar, the son of James (House Painter) and Rebecca Simpson.

By 1891 his Father was dead, and the Census that year shows him, along with his older Brother William, living with the Sisters of Charity in St Agnes Orphanage at Church Road, Leyton. His Sisters Jane and Rebecca were at the Sacred Heart Convent and Orphanage at Hassett Road, Homerton. His widowed Mother and her youngest daughter Frances were boarding with Norah Sullivan, another widow, at 35, Wells Street Poplar.

It is believed that he is the James Simpson who, in 1901 is recorded as a resident of St John the Baptist Ophthalmic School in the Manor House Chigwell.

In 1911 James was a Carpenter, boarding with William Holmwood, an Asylum Attendant, at 4, Havis Cottages, Brunel Road, Woodford Bridge. By 1915 he was a Carpenter and Painter living at 2, Fern Cottages, Brunel Road, which was also the address of his Mother.

He enlisted under the Derby Scheme on 11th December 1915 at Woodford and was placed in the Army Reserve, before being mobilised on 18th April 1917. He was allocated to the Essex Regiment and was serving with their Reserves at Harwich where he became ill. He spent the next five weeks confined to Felixstowe Military Hospital from 20th May to 25th June 1917.

On 23rd September 1917 he travelled from Folkstone to Boulogne and on 25th joined 2 Essex at Swindon Camp 1 mile north of Poperinghe. He then transferred

from the Essex Regiment to the Durham Light Infantry, joining their 20th Battalion in the field at Middlesex Camp on 12th October.

This Battalion, along with 123 Brigade was moved by train to Italy in November 1917, and for three months helped oppose the Austro Hungarian/German advances in the north of the country. They were recalled to France in March 1918, and transferred to 124 Brigade of the 41st Division, marching to join it at Warluzel on 17th March. On arrival two bands "played them" into the new Brigade. They had little time to settle in, because they were caught up in the German Spring Offensive which began on 21st March.

An attack had been expected, but its sheer ferocity and speed of movement led to real fears that the lines would be overrun and the war won by Germany. The frantic events of the next few days are starkly recorded in the measured tones of the Battalion War Diary.

On 21st March at 13.20, carrying additional rations and ammunition, they marched to join a train at Saulty and headed for Albert. They disembarked in the early hours of 22nd, occupying a camp at Favreuil at about 02.00.

Told to "stand by" at 08.00 next morning, at approximately 10.30 they were ordered forward to hold the Yesers line behind Vaulx-Vraucourt. They advanced in artillery formation (spread out in groups to minimise any casualties from shell fire), arriving at 12.30, and worked to improve the trenches at this location. However by 17.00 the Division in front of them was retiring, with the Germans advancing to occupy the town of Vaulx-Vraucourt. The rest of the night was uneventful, with active patrolling being undertaken. The day had seen three other ranks killed and 15 wounded - a portent of things to come.

On 23rd March they were still in the line to the rear of Vaulx when the Germans began attacking the two right hand companies in waves from 08.00, but they were beaten back by rifle and machine gun fire. Their later attacks were also repulsed and the Battalion held their ground that day at a cost of 2 Officers killed, 1 wounded; 18 Other Ranks killed, 60 wounded and 5 missing. There followed a quiet night with active patrolling.

Initially on 24th the Battalion continued to hold its position, but received word during the day that the Division on their right was falling back. At 17.00 the Durhams were ordered to withdraw, so maintaining the line and avoiding being cut off. They undertook a fighting retreat and dug in to form a new line through the town of Favreuil. The day saw 1 Officer wounded, 2 Other Ranks killed, 33 wounded and 15 missing.

At 01.00 on 25th March they received orders to withdraw again, this time to Saignies, and they began marching at 03.30; on arrival they dug in to the right of the village. At 08.00 the Germans attacked the village from the left and seized it. From about 09.00 the Durhams conducted another fighting retreat to the ridge along the Bihucourt-Saignies Road and dug in once again.

By 13.15 Bihucourt was in German Hands, and the Battalion was again on the move, withdrawing to a line across the reverse of the slopes of the ridge, North West of the

road. They were ordered off this line at 14.00 and sent to support 42 Division at a location to the east of Longest Wood.

There a familiar scenario unfolded when at about 19.00 troops in front of the Durhams began to retreat, and the Battalion was ordered to withdraw to Gommecourt, which it did successfully. There the Battalion reorganised, and took a position in the line to the South of the town during 26th March.

By the time the Battalion arrived at Gommecourt during the evening of 25th March, James Simpson had been Killed in Action at some stage during that chaotic days fighting. He has no known grave, and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.



CROSSMAN, THOMAS JAMES

Rank:	Flight Sergeant (Wireless Operator)
Service Number:	1892412
Date of Death:	07/03/1945
Age:	20
Regiment/Service:	Royal Air Force 625 Squadron
Grave Reference:	30.B.1
CWGC Cemetery:	REICHSWALD FOREST
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Thomas James Crossman was born within the Holborn Registration District during 1924, the son of Arthur Henry and Eliza Crossman. He had one brother, Arthur, who was a year older.

The 1939 Register shows the family living at 188 Columbia Square Bethnal Green. Arthur was a Royal Mail van driver, and his son Arthur a Barristers Junior Clerk. Tom does not appear to have been recorded. Having been bombed out, it is thought from Shoreditch, 56 Greenstead Gardens Woodford Green became the family home.

Tom embarked on aircrew training during 1943, his number being allocated by the Aircrew Selection Centre at Euston. His brother Arthur also served in the air force, but as ground crew. Tom was known to walk to mass at St Thomas of Canterbury Church with his parents when home on leave.

Having completed training as a Wireless Operator, he was allocated to 625 Squadron and its Lancaster bombers based at RAF Kelstern in Lincolnshire. He served in the crew of Flight Lieutenant Harry Chapman.

At 17.01 on 7th March 1945 he took off in Lancaster CF-L2, serial number NG324, and with 21 other Lancasters from the Squadron proceeded to the target of Dessau in the eastern part of Germany. This was the home of the Junkers aircraft & engine factory, plus other industrial sites engaged in war work. The first bombs fell at 21.49 from Mosquito aircraft of 8 Group, and the raid almost completely destroyed the town. Although the war was in its closing stages the raiders still faced opposition; 18 Lancasters from various Squadrons were lost, which amounted to 3.4 per cent of the attacking force.

Tom and his colleagues never reached the target. As they passed over the Ruhr east of Dusseldorf, they were intercepted by Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer, Geschwaderkommodore of the NJG4 Night Fighter Unit based at Gütersloh. Schnauffer was the night fighter pilot who would shoot the most allied aircraft (121) during the war. In addition to forward firing guns, his BF110 aircraft had angled upward firing cannon called "Schrage Musik" - "Offline/Jazz Music"; flying discretely below the Lancaster he would be able to direct heavy calibre rounds up into the wing fuel tanks. By 20.41, Tom's aircraft had been engaged and fatally damaged.

Accounts from the ground suggest NG324, exploded in mid air. At 20.45 blazing wreckage fell on the partly built dam and construction office at the Versetalsperre, a large reservoir in a wooded area to the South East of Ludenscheid in North-Rhine Westphalia. For some years afterwards smaller pieces of wreckage could be found in the locality.

Tom Crossman, the Pilot Flight Lieutenant Harry Chapman, Air Bomber Flying Officer Thomas Akenhead and Wireless Operator Flight Sergeant George Lee were killed. The Flight Engineer and both Air Gunners, Sergeants J.R Lyons, S.F. Hessey and F. Walker survived, albeit one with a severe and profusely bleeding head wound. They presented themselves at a private house where the wounded man was attended to before they were taken into custody as Prisoners of War. One of these men would later visit Tom's parents in Woodford.

Initially Tom was buried with his colleagues in the woodland cemetery at the nearby town of Ludenscheid. In 1947 their remains were exhumed and reinterred at the Reichswald Forest Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery where Tom rests today in grave 30.B.1. For the headstone his parents chose the inscription "May perpetual light shine upon our beloved son. Requiescat in Pace. Amen."

After the war, Mr and Mrs Crossman left Woodford, returning to East London.

Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer, "The Night Ghost of St Trond" briefly became a Prisoner of War before going on to manage the family wine business. While on a purchasing trip to France, he died on 15th July 1950 in Bordeaux from injuries sustained in a car crash. After the war his aircraft was taken from Eggebeck Airfield and displayed in London, but this was not the one he flew the night Tom died. A tail fin, recording (among others) the aircraft he shot down on 7th March 1945, is preserved at the Imperial War Museum.

Flight Sergeant Thomas Crossman is commemorated by name in a memorial book for 625 Squadron aircrew, which is housed at St Faith Parish Church at Kelstern. There is also a stone general memorial to the Squadron located near the western corner of the former airfield.



HURLEY, DENNIS JAMES

Rank:	Sergeant (Pilot)
Service Number:	1457547
Date of Death:	23/01/1944
Age:	28
Regiment/Service:	Royal Air Force 20 Operational Training Unit
Grave Reference:	Screen Wall Plot 11a, Row 59, Grave 1.
CWGC Cemetery:	ST PATRICK'S CEMETERY LEYTON
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

28 year old Dennis Hurley, a pre war Civil Servant with the Air Ministry, was the son of James and Alice Hurley, Abbotsford Gardens Woodford Green. His death is registered in Scotland. The Woodford Times of 11th February 1944 states;

“Dennis Hurley, the only son of Mr & Mrs J Hurley of Abbotsford Gardens Woodford Green has been killed on active service. He was educated at Our Lady of the Assumption School E2, and from there won a junior county scholarship to the Salesian College Battersea Park where he remained for six years, matriculating in July 1938. He entered the Civil Service in 1939, being attached to the Air Ministry in Harrogate. He volunteered for the RAF as a pilot and was sent to America where he gained his wings in May 1943.

Mass was said at the church of St Thomas of Canterbury and the interment took place in St Patrick's Cemetery Leytonstone. Many beautiful floral tributes were received from RAF Colleagues at the station where he was serving, from Harrogate and from the Air Ministry in London.”

At 11.16 on Sunday 23rd January 1944, Dennis Hurley took off from RAF Lossimouth with five crewmen in Wellington Mk.10, number HE751. Members of 20 Operational Training Unit, the men were learning the routines of crewing a heavy bomber prior to joining an operational Squadron. That day they were undergoing fighter affiliation training - defending against fighter aircraft by sharply manoeuvring the aircraft around the sky. Their Wellington was not new, it had seen operational service as NA-S with 428 RCAF Squadron, which was based at Dalton and Middleton St. George.

At 11.30 the aircraft dived from 4000 ft and crashed into the Elgin Golf Course, killing all on board. Today it is still possible to detect an indentation to the right of the fairway at the start of the back nine holes.



IVES, JOHN ANTHONY GERARD “Jack”

Rank:	Bombardier
Service Number:	130963
Date of Death:	05/02/1942
Age:	28
Regiment/Service:	Royal Artillery - 52 Coastal Observer Detachment
Panel Reference:	Column 10
CWGC Memorial:	SINGAPORE MEMORIAL
Local Memorial:	None Known
Decorations:	None

Born in 1913, son of Francis Bernard and Johanna Ives, his father worked on the Wall Street Journal before returning and spending most of his career with The (London) Times. The family home was at 24 Nesta Road Woodford Green (Walthamstow). Having attended St Ignatius School Jack worked at the Xylonite Plastic Works at Hale End before entering the seminary at Wonerash and training to become a Roman Catholic Priest. His studies were interrupted when conscripted into the Royal Artillery.

He was serving with 52 Coast Observer Detachment in Singapore when he was Killed in Action. On the day of his death, the island was under aerial bombardment by the Japanese in preparation for the ground assault which began during the evening of 8th February 1942. It is not clear exactly how or where Jack lost his life, but most likely it was as a result of injuries caused by this bombing. He was not among the casualties that day on board the RMS Empress of Asia.

He is commemorated on the Singapore Memorial, because he either had no grave, it was lost, or destroyed by the invasion and subsequent occupation of Singapore by the Japanese.

Only two other members of the Detachment appear to have been killed during the war, both in Burma during November and December 1943 while labouring as slaves for the Japanese.

Jack is also commemorated on the St Ignatius School War Memorial.

In 1903 his father Francis prevented a robbery when persons assaulted two Friars, and tried to steal the Christmas Bazaar proceeds from St Antony's Catholic Church Forest Gate. He could not detain them, but followed one until a Constable could

make an arrest. At the Old Bailey two robbers were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. In acknowledgement of his actions the Parishioners presented him with a watch, suitably engraved to record "The outrage at the monastery". He also received a written commendation from Police for his courage, and an award from the sentencing Judge.

Jack was a member of this church where, at the time of writing in 2017, his nephew Gerard Matthew Ives is serving as a Deacon.



“Unknown to Us, but Known unto God”

We have no memorial to consult and no archived parish magazines to read. The details of our casualties have been gleaned from assorted external sources. There are bound to be some, for St Thomas of Canterbury and Woodford generally who have slipped through my trawl, and so remain unrecognised. This is their page.

There is also a second, perhaps even larger group who should not be overlooked; those who are counted as survivors, but who bore injury and disability to mind or body for the rest of their days. Even less is known about them.

They are represented by the story of Lt Thomas Van Zeller MC, son of Emmeline and Richard Van Zeller once of “Greyfriars” Mornington Road. They were prominent in the early years of the Parish and donated the crucifix which now stands on the Lady Altar. Mrs Van Zeller turns out to be a Countess and aunt of Lord Arundell of Wardour. But in this case Tom, who was confirmed here on 8th July 1896 and later married, is included not due to the status of his parents in society or the parish, not because he was an Officer, and not because of his Military Cross. No, simply the name Van Zeller stood out among the records of that time, and so he was easy to recognise and then cross reference.

Tom was in the Tank Corps. He won his MC under shell fire when he and his crew helped wounded men across a bridge which was about to be destroyed. Told that others seriously injured had been left behind, he and three of his crew set off to recover them. On the return trip Royal Engineers blew the bridge while they were on it, but they survived and casualties were brought across. His war would end through serious head and face wounds, the loss of an eye and compound leg fracture. Having become a “St Dunstaner” in later life, he died aged 86 on 26th March 1971.

To all our unknowns, I am sorry that your story has not been told, but I did do my best.