

Auntie Mim and the Sixteen from Frilsham

Before she died Auntie Mim gave me a small box of documents, how I now wish I had asked her about the contents whilst she was still alive! It included old photographs, but more interestingly, documents relating to her father when he was a London Omnibus Driver before the Great War and his death whilst on active service, still driving his omnibus, in Belgium after the end of the war.

This set me on a quest to find out more and in doing so involved many trips to The National Archives in Kew and two trips to the battlefields and cemeteries including his grave in Coutrai (now Kortrijk). One essential part of a trip to the area is to attend the Last Post Ceremony held every evening at the Menin Gate in Ypres – this is the monument to the 54,406 who died on the Ypres Salient who have no known grave. One may lay a wreath during the Ceremony and I decided to honour those men from Frilsham who lost their lives in the war, this set me on another quest – who were they?

Their names are on the War Memorial in Frilsham Churchyard but that is all, more trips to Kew ensued and revealed:-

Walter Brown

Walter was married to Rhoda Sparks and they moved to Frilsham, her home village, just before war broke out. He served with the Royal Berkshire and the East Kent Regiments and refused to take trips home as he knew that he would not be able to leave his family again. He was finally persuaded to go home for Christmas but was shot by a German sniper as he walked away from the front line on 5th December 1917 and is buried in Fins New British Cemetery near Sorel-Le-Grand.

Henry Charles Cooper

Henry was one of the two sons of Albert and Martha Cooper of The Croft, Wellhouse, Hermitage, he was a Private in The Royal Berkshire Regiment and died on 3rd July 1916 aged 24, he is commemorated on the Thiepval Monument to the Missing – this is the same as the Menin Gate but for the 72,203 killed during the First Battle of The Somme who have no known grave.

William Albert Cooper

William was the younger brother of Henry and was a Private in 'A' Company 8th Battalion when he died on 26th September 1915 aged 21. He is buried in Lapugnoy Cemetery near Bethune, France.

George Cox

George was the son of Joseph and Caroline Cox of Hawkridge he was a Private in the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died on 27th June 1917 aged 22 and is buried in Duisans Cemetery near Arras.

William Charles Cox

Unable to trace William, however, in the 1901 Census Joseph and Caroline Cox (see above) have a son called William who is aged 14 and is a Butchers Boy, they are living in The Square, Yattendon.

Charles Henry Dixon

Charles was a son of George and Alice Dixon from The Glebe Yattendon and may be the person of the same name commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial who was a Private in the Worcestershire Regiment and died on 7th July 1916.

Maurice Edward Fisher

Maurice was a son of George and Susannah Fisher of The Bowers Frilsham, he was a Private in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and died in the First Battle of Ypres on 1st November 1914 aged 25, he is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Harrison Henry Fisher

Harrison was a younger brother of Maurice and was a Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment and died on the fourth day of the Third Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele) on 11th June 1917 aged about 21, he also is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Guy Tyrwhitt Floyd

Guy was a son of George and Louisa Floyd of The Rectory Frilsham and although his father is listed in the 1911 Census as a clergyman born in Frilsham. George is a Canadian national and served as a Private in Saskatchewan Regiment and died at Vimy Ridge on 5th May 1917 aged 41 and is buried in Villiers Station Cemetery

Major Francis W Lindsay Gull

Major Gull of The Rifle Brigade 13th Bn was a son of the late Sir William Cameron Gull 2nd Bart of Frilsham House, and died on 25th August 1918 aged 28 and is buried in Achiet-Le-Grand Cemetery.

John Joseph May

John was the son of John and Henrietta Mary May who lived at Coombe Farm Frilsham. He was a Private in the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died on 24th October 1916 aged 23. He probably died of his wounds as he is buried near Couin Chateaux which was behind the Front and was used throughout the war as a Hospital.

William Albert May

William was the younger brother of John and served as a Private in the Royal Marine Light Infantry. He died on 25th August 1918 aged 23. He is commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois memorial which lists the 9,847 men who died between 8th August 1918 and Armistice in the Advance to Victory in Picardy and Artois who have no known grave. His wife, Emma, lived with his parents at Coombe Farm.

Henry Pusey

Henry, known as Harry, was the son of George and Emma Pusey who was already serving as a Lance Corporal in the 1st Yorks Regiment in 1911 at which time his parents and younger brother lived in The Cottage, Frilsham Manor. He died on 29th September 1916 aged about 32 and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Sydney Victor Pusey

Sydney was the younger brother of Henry and was a Private in the East Surrey Regiment and died on 13th August 1916 aged about 18 near Pozieres in the Somme battlefield.

William Henry Tooley

William was living as a lodger with Frank and Lilly Pusey, brother of the two above, at Manor Cottages, Frilsham in 1911, he is married and working as a domestic Gardener. His wife is living with her parents in Enstone a village north of Kiddlington Oxon. He is a Private in the Lancashire Fusiliers and died near Ypres on 17th November 1917 aged 34 and is buried in the Oxford Road Cemetery near Ypres.

Frederick Thomas Wells

Frederick was one of eight children living in Frilsham Manor Cottages with their parents James and Sarah in 1911 when he is at school aged 12. He became a Private in the Machine Gun Corps and died on 19th April 1918 aged 19, he is buried in Coutrai (now Kortrijk) Cemetery which suggests he was taken prisoner as the town was in German hands until 16th October that year.

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Permission to publish details of Walter Brown given by his daughter Mrs Gertrude Kingston now aged 108.

Of the sixteen who died half were pairs of brothers and some others were the only sons.

There are only three names from World War Two on the Frilsham Monument.

Frederick Wells and my Grandfather are buried in the same small cemetery in Coutrai, my Grandfather having been taken to a Casualty Clearing Station there and dying on 24th December 1918 having sustained a broken pelvis in a motor accident in Zeebrugge the previous day.

Revised 12/08/2017

