

## BROTHERS IN ARMS

Men who worked together frequently enlisted together in Kitchener's Army. Brothers and cousins, old school friends, and neighbours in the same high street found the journey to the recruiting centre was exciting when they had their Pals with them. There are several examples in the Lingfield area. A sad fact of war is that some families lost their entire male household, many lost their main breadwinner.

Seven young men from Dormansland set off in the early morning of 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1914 to take a train from South Godstone to Guildford to enlist in the Queens (Royal West Surrey Regiment) for the duration of the war. They must have stood in line in a queue as their service numbers are consecutive:

- No. 3490 Raymond EVEREST, age 19 years 5 months
- 3491 Frederick Henry ALLEN, age 19 years 6 months
- 3492 Edwin John SIMMONS, age 19 years 8 months
- 3493 Rochford James WHITEHURST, age 19 years 9 months
- 3494 Walter DIPLOCK, age 19 years 6 months
- 3495 Ernest Edward CAUSH gave his age as 20 to help his brother's enlistment, actual age 19 years and 8 months
- 3496 John Alfred CAUSH (Jack) - brother of Ernest, gave his age as 19 years 6 months actual age 17 years 5 months

They were close friends from school days. They possibly all worked on the Ford Manor estate, all were gardeners or farm labourers. Frederick Allen and the Caush brothers were Boy Scouts. Four of the friends were killed; two on the same day. Of the three who survived one received a gun-shot wound to the chest.

**Raymond Everest** was killed on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the Battle of Loos. **Frederick Allen** served in France, was transferred from the Queens Reg. to the 29<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Reg., transferred again to the Labour Corps after his recovery from a gun-shot wound to his chest. In 1919 he received a pension for 20% disablement, 5/6d per week, conditional, to be reviewed in 39 weeks.

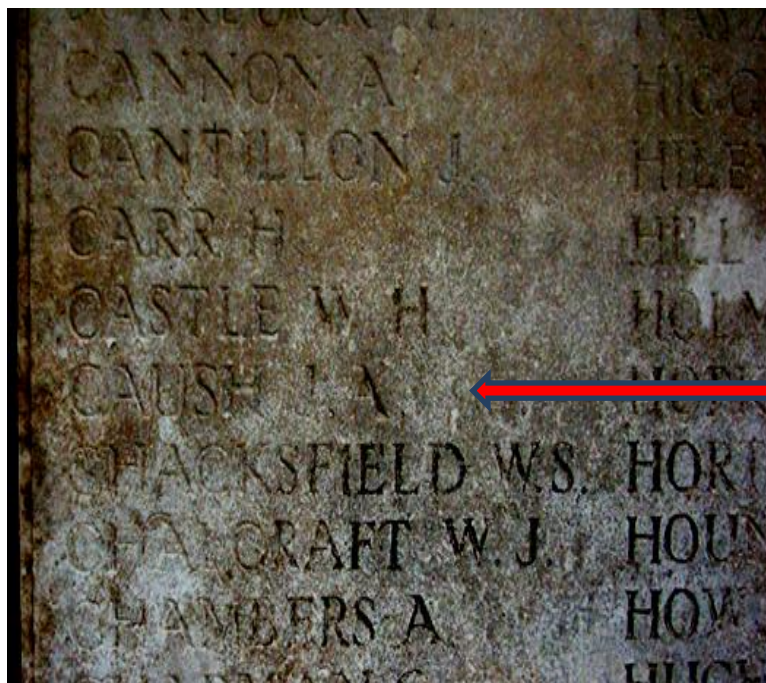
**Edwin Simmons** was killed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1916 in the Battle of the Somme.

**R. James Whitehurst** served in France, was promoted to Lance Corporal and transferred to Gloucestershire Regiment. He survived the war.

**Walter Diplock** served in France, was transferred to the Labour Corps. He survived the war.

**Ernest Caush** was killed on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1916 in the Battle of the Somme.

**John (Jack) Caush** was killed on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the battle of Loos (the same day as his friend Raymond Everest). He has no known grave; his name is inscribed on the Loos Memorial.



25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 was the launch of the Allied autumn offensive against the German line in Artois and Champagne. The Battle of Loos began at first light on 25<sup>th</sup> September. That day the British Army used chlorine gas for the first time. Earlier in that year the Germans had first tested chlorine gas against the French and British in April and May in the Ypres Salient.

The War Diary of the 8<sup>th</sup> Btn. Queens RWS Reg. records their movements for the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September:

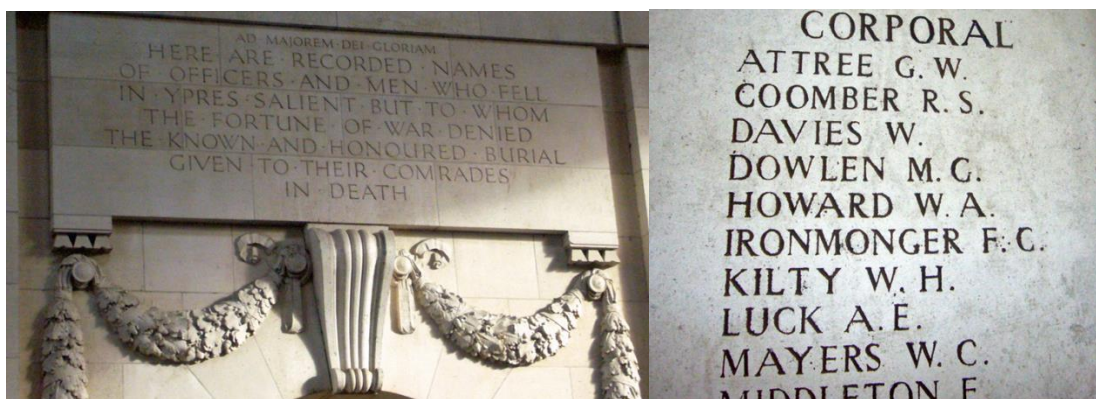
“ Moved out at midday to VERMELLES halt for 3 hours behind our own batteries, firing all the time. Moved on through Vermelles village at 5 and slowly to trenches west of Le RUTOIRE farm. CO then ordered to prepare for an attack on the ground S of Hulluck village, 8<sup>th</sup> W.Kents and 9<sup>th</sup> E Surreys in the attack, 8<sup>th</sup> Queens in support of W Kents and 8<sup>th</sup> Buffs in support of E.Surrey. No written orders and no time for the attack given. For a long time we lose connection with W Kents owing to darkness and difficult nature of the country which has a maze of trenches. Magnetic compass bearing of the attack 112 dwg. Are shelled at 11 pm but no casualties. Reach trenches from which to begin attack at 2 am. These are communication trenches on rear of the German first line trench captured in the morning... Advance under heavy machine gun and shrapnel fire in lines of Platoons in extended order. As the advance continues over the Lene La Bassei road the machine gun fire from the flanks was very heavy. On reaching the enemy trenches it was found to be protected by barbed wire which had not been cut and it being impossible to get through it the brigade retired. There appeared to be no panic and the men walked back still under heavy machine gun and shrapnel fire. 409 Other Ranks were casualties.

A description of the desolate scene was given by Lieutenant Aschenbach, observation officer of the 6th gun Battery of the German 233 Feld-Artillerie-Regiment. By the end of 26<sup>th</sup> September he was in a forward observation post about 1 kilometre north of the wood of Bois Hugo. He said he crawled into No-Mans-Land that evening and was confronted with a shocking sight of about 500 British dead piled up in one small area in front of the German wire. He implied they had simply been mown down.

The **COOMBER BROTHERS**: Herbert, Richard Charles and Robert Sargent Coomber were the three youngest sons of 14 children of Edmund & Fanny Coomber. Edmund and Fanny had 7 daughters and 7 sons. In 1901 they owned Cernes Farm, Robert was a cowman on the farm. The three youngest brothers were baptised on the same day at St John's Church Dormansland. They all enlisted as regular soldiers and left England with the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. They were all killed on the Western Front.

Private Herbert Coomber enlisted as a Regular soldier in 1<sup>st</sup> Btn. The Buffs (East Kent Reg.) He died of wounds on 7 Sept. 1917, age 38, and was buried in Bethune Town Cemetery.

Corporal Robert Sargent Coomber enlisted as a Regular soldier in 2nd Btn. Queen's (Royal West Surrey Reg.) at Tonbridge in 1908. He left England with the British Expeditionary Force on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. He was killed in action on 31 Oct. 1914, age 26. He has no known grave; his name is inscribed on the Ypres, Menin Gate Memorial. Dormansland village Memorial incorrectly records his rank as 'Sergeant' probably in error as his second forename is Sargent,



Private Richard Charles Coomber enlisted as a Regular soldier in 1st Bat. Queen's (Royal West Surrey Reg.) in East Grinstead. He too left England with the British Expeditionary Force on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. He died from wounds on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1914 age 21; four days before the death of his brother Robert. Richard is buried in Ypres Town Cem. Extension.



Records of The Queens Regiment state that “...of the 1,000 odd men who entrained for France on August 12 there remained on the evening of October 31<sup>st</sup> only 50... October 31 will always be remembered in the regiment”. An observer recalled “ I went up in the evening with the cooks. We arrived at some crossroads, where we came upon Major Watson, DSO, Lt. Boyd, a sergeant, a corporal, and 5 men, who told us they were all that was left of the Queens. According to one of the men, a signaller, it seems that after sustaining the brunt of a particularly furious German attack the Queens suddenly woke up to the fact that the remainder of the division had retired, leaving them cut off. They were practically ringed in by the enemy, and were enfiladed on both flanks and in the front by machine guns. The Queens stuck it, and put up a splendid fight against a vastly superior force. Men were falling at every hand, but they couldn’t break the ring...Some of them managed to escape through an unprotected hedge, and they were those we met. Of the fate of the others little seemed to be known... That night all we could muster of the 737 officers and men of the battalion which began that morning was 50 men, including employed men such as transport and cooks.”

The **JOSEPH BROTHERS**: were the three sons of the Pastor of Dormansland Baptist Church, they lived at The Manse, Clinton Hill. All three were killed on the Western Front.

Private Sidney Herbert Joseph [Dormansland Mem: L/Cpl] enlisted in 8th Bat. East Surrey Regt. on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1915. He was Killed in Action on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1917, age 28. He has no known grave, his name is inscribed on the Arras Memorial.

Lance Corporal Albert Edward Joseph in 9th Bat. Royal Sussex Regt. at East Grinstead. He was Killed in Action on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1918. No known grave his name is inscribed on the Pozieres Memorial. The Pozieres Memorial relates to the period of crisis in March and April 1918 when the Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8 August 1918.

Private Archibald Joseph, also enlisted 9th Bat. Royal Sussex Regt. enlisted East Grinstead. He died of Wounds on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1916, age 21 and is buried in Bailleul Community Cem. Ext.

The War Diary of 9th Btn Royal Sussex records the events of 17th June 1916, the day three local men died; Private Archibald Joseph, Sgt. Albert Warriner (Lingfield) and Raymond Staplehurst (Lingfield). The Germans made a GAS attack at about 12.30 am on 17th. There was no infantry attack. Gas lasted about 40 mins in 3 continuous waves. Men wore their gas helmets for 1 hour and 20 mins. A heavy bombardment went on during the gas also heavy machine gun fire. A large number of men were gassed. They were relieved by the 26th Btn 7th Australian Brigade, the battalion moved back in motor lorries to St Jans Cappel.

Private **Raymond Staplehurst** (G/37454) of Lingfield enlisted at Guildford and served in the 11<sup>th</sup> Bat. The Queens (Royal West Surrey) Reg. He also was killed on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1916. His name is inscribed on the Ploegsteert Mem, Belgium.

The **WARRINER BROTHERS:** Albert and George Warriner were the sons of Emily and Charles Warriner of Old Town, Lingfield.

Sergeant Albert Warriner, a married man living at Blindley Heath, enlisted into the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1914. He died of wounds at Baileul on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1916.. He was 35. The local paper reported that he had been gassed and severely wounded by shrapnel. It appears that he was greatly respected by his men and his local community.

George Warriner lived at home with his widowed mother in Old Town. He served in the Royal Navy as Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class on HMS Lancaster. This ship was part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron initially protecting convoys in the West Indies before she was sent to join up with the Grand Fleet based at Scapa Flow in 1915. Just before the Battle of Jutland, the Lancaster was transferred to the Pacific Ocean in April 1916, patrolling North and South America and the Falklands until 1919. It would appear that the ship was badly hit by the Spanish Flu epidemic in December 1918 when up to 300 men on board fell ill out of a ship's complement of 680. As well as the usual medals awarded to servicemen who served in the war, George was also issued with the Silver War Medal which was issued to men discharged due to sickness or injuries sustained in the conflict. It is quite possible that George was one of the men affected by the influenza outbreak, although we have no record of this. Unlike his older brother, George survived the war, returning to Lingfield in 1919.

### **THE KNIGHT FAMILY**

Sergeant William Knight was born in Altar Cottages Crowhurst in 1888. William was the third child, second son, of William and Mary Jane Knight. In 1906, when he was aged 18, William enlisted as a Regular soldier in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Highland Light Infantry (H.L.I.) at a recruiting office in East Grinstead.

On August 9th 1914 the Battalion was inspected by their Majesties the King and Queen. Early on August 13th they left Aldershot and embarked the same day at Southampton, part of the British Expeditionary Force. They landed at Boulogne on 14<sup>th</sup> August. The battalion was engaged in various actions on the Western front; the Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, the Battle of the Marne and the Battle of the Aisne, where Sergeant Knight was killed.

In a dense fog on the night of September 13, most of the British Expeditionary Force and the French Fifth Army crossed the Aisne on pontoons or partially demolished bridges. A mile of low lying ground lay before them. Under the thick cover of the foggy night, the BEF advanced up the narrow paths towards the plateau. When the Germans turned to face the pursuing Allies they held one of the most formidable positions on the Western front; a plateau on high ground with a clear view of the advancing Allies.

When the mist evaporated under a bright morning sun Allied soldiers were cross-raked by enemy fire. Sir John French ordered the entire force to entrench but few digging tools were available. Soldiers scouted nearby farms and villages for pickaxes, spades and other implements. Without training for stationary warfare, the troops merely dug shallow pits in the soil. These were at first intended only to afford cover against enemy observation and shell fire. Soon the trenches were deepened to about seven feet. Other protective measures included camouflage and holes cut into trench walls, then braced with timber. So began Trench warfare.

William Knight was our first local casualty; he was killed in action at Verneuil on 20th September 1914, age 27. He has no known grave. His name is recorded on the Memorial at La Ferte sous Jouarre, 66 km. east of Paris.

William's younger brother, Private Alfred Charles Knight, enlisted in 10th Bat. Queens (Royal West Surrey Reg). He died on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1917, aged 23, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres (today, generally known as Passchendaele). He has no known grave; his name is engraved on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. The battle was launched on 31<sup>st</sup> July and continued until the fall of the village of Passchendaele on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

William and Alfred's cousin, Fred Knight, survived the war. He lived at 20 Saxbys Lane, Lingfield. Fred enlisted in the Army Service Corps (ASC), the unit responsible for keeping the British Army supplied with provisions (It did not receive the Royal prefix until late 1918). Corporal Fred Knight survived the war and remained with the Corps until 1921. His last posting was in Norwich where he met a local girl. They married and made their family home in Norwich. Fred Knight died in March 1967.

Janet H. Bateson / Sue Quelch © May 2014

#### References

Surrey History Centre: QRWS/1/3/3 G Register of recruits; QRWS/18/1: 8<sup>th</sup> Bat The Queens War Diary from 21 8 15 to 30 4 19;  
West Sussex County Record Office: Royal Sussex regt. RSR/MSS/7/17 War Diary of 9th Btn 21 Aug 1915- 31 May 1918