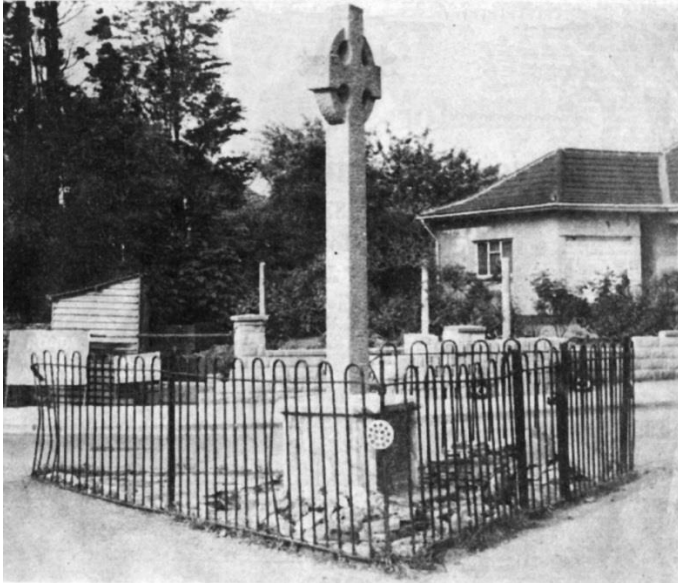


**AROUND
KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD
PAST
AND
PRESENT**



The Journal of the
Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society
Series 2. No. 14. 2014

SPECIAL CENTENNIAL EDITION

Aspects of WW1 - Part 2.

AROUND
KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD
PAST & PRESENT
SPECIAL CENTENNIAL EDITION
Aspects of the First World War in Keynsham & Salford
Part 2

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Journal Production; Brian Vowles.

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Cover illustration;

The Salford War Memorial in its original position.

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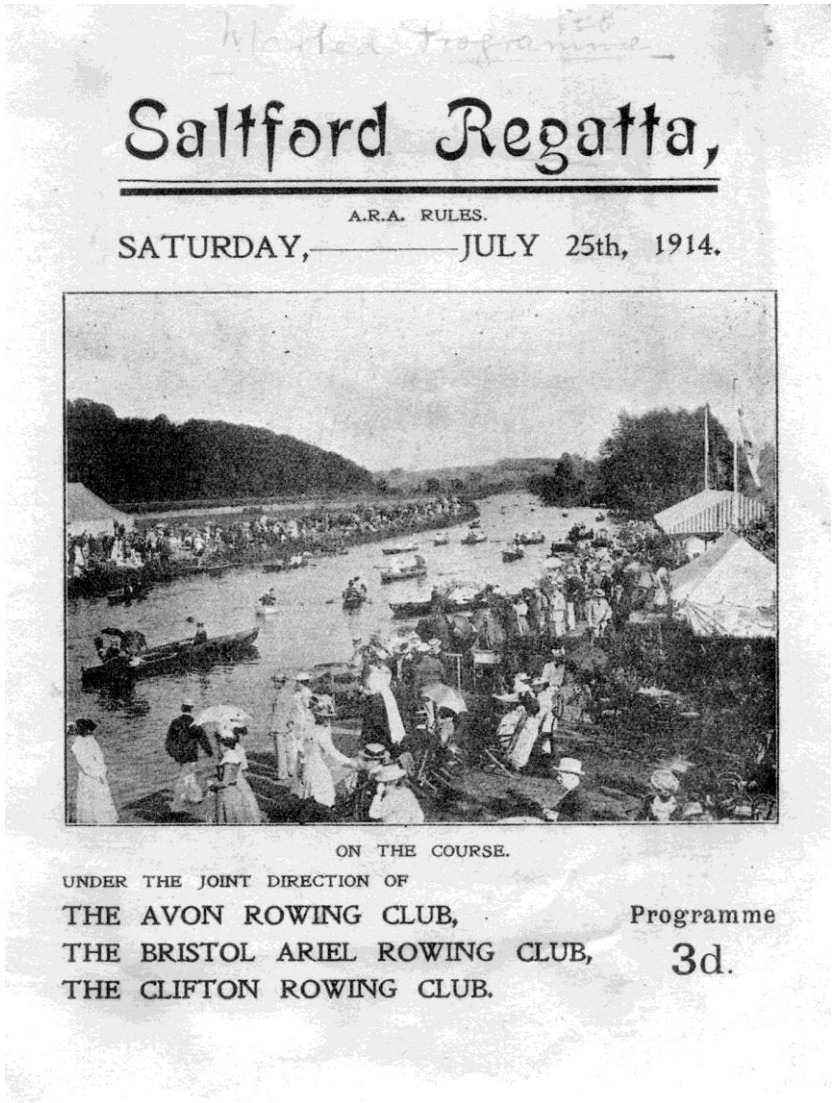
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The Saltford Regatta 1914 by Tim Martin



The programme of events at the Saltford Regatta 1914

1914 was often remembered nostalgically as ‘the last golden Edwardian summer’ being typified by such events as the annual Salford Regatta held on the banks of the River Avon. As tensions continued to mount throughout Europe following the assassination of the heir to the Austrian Empire Franz Ferdinand and his wife on 28 June, four weeks later on Saturday 25 July three local rowing clubs, the Avon, the Bristol Ariel and the Clifton combined to organise the ‘Henley of the West’ at Salford. A total of fifteen clubs, including four from Wales, took to the water to compete against each other and on Monday 27 July the Western Daily Press described the scene *...There was a very satisfactory attendance in spite of the strong wind and threatening rain and although thick coats were needed instead of summer dresses, there were some daintily attired ladies whose presence made the scene on the river banks quite in keeping with previous regattas. The lawns of the Clifton Rowing Club house were used as the enclosure and the Anglo-Viennese Band played selections of popular music. On the Kelston bank the committee, competitors’ and other tents were pitched and the edge of the river was lined with flagpoles from which were flying the flags of the clubs completing.*

There was keen competition between the clubs but for many of the participants an epoch ended that day as a week later on 4 August the armies of Kaiser Wilhelm II marched into Belgium and England was at war. Most of those oarsmen belonged to that class of society that expected them to do their duty to serve King and Country and sadly many were not to survive the conflict. Amongst them was the captain of the Ariel Club Henry Hosegood who left England on 21 January 1915 as 2nd lieutenant in the 8th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers and was killed near Ypres a month later on 24 February 1915. Another was Lieutenant Leslie Harrington Fry of the Clifton Club who had been gazetted to the North Somerset Yeomanry

in 1913. He joined his regiment at the outbreak of war and went with them to the front on 1 November 1914. In October 1915 he obtained a permanent commission in a Hussar regiment but was killed in action on 9 August 1918.



Above left – 2nd Lieut. Henry Hosegood , Royal Fusiliers Killed 24th February 1915. Above right - Lieutenant Leslie Harrington Fry, 19th Hussars, Killed in action on 9th August 1918.

For the next four and a half years the members of the local clubs ceased their activities; their members being elsewhere in uniforms that they could not imagine they would be wearing as that day's competition came to an end and the shorts, vests and comfortable old rowing shoes were left in the club houses. From time to time one or other of the members would return to don his togs, take a sculler and in the tranquillity of the river forget for a few short hours the horrors of the trenches.

Following the death of Hosegood a suggestion was put to the Regatta Committee in April 1915 - that wounded soldiers should be entertained at the boathouses and this was put into effect that summer by a group of members, their wives and

other ladies. Until the end of the war parties were organized, taken out to the boathouses on the river, given tea and in every way possible helped back to health; it has been estimated that some five thousand were made welcome in this way. In the Ariel Rowing Club Archives is a letter which had been written in the summer of 1916 by Douglas Henry McPherson who was a member of the Ariel Club for over fifty years. He was one of the founders of the Salford Regatta and, until his death in 1935 aged 79, 'Old Mac' continued as an official at every regatta. These words tell not only of the devoted work of those who looked after the men but reflect the spirit of both hosts and guests... *I have talked to the wounded heroes from Flanders, France, the High Seas, Gallipoli's shores and Palestine's deserts, and have been proud to meet the flower of our Colonies and Dominions as well as those of our own dear Country and from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa. It is but a few hours since I was with the bravest of the brave and I would fain to say something of what I feel and of what I and others in the home country are doing. But I will speak only of one act, one in which I can take a part. They say I am too old to fight and like many more I chafe and fret at the thought: I do not feel too old, though on the fatal Fourth of August I shall reach my sixtieth year, but my arm is strong and my heart is sound and I can do my little bit which somehow compensates me for having to stay at home.*

My youngest brother and my only son amongst them to the ranks of the brave in France, or Egypt, or at Salonika, and few of us are left, not six out of sixty, but though we have to stay, our boats are not quite idle and our grounds are not quite deserted, for every Saturday afternoon we have the happy privilege of doing just a little to help the wounded.

In motor car or bus we fetch them, some thirty or forty, from Southmead or other hospitals, and willing and gentle ladies spread the tea, and when the guests arrive chat with

them and otherwise entertain them with croquet, smokes and so on. And we men and the ladies too, row the heroes on the beautiful river, and whilst we row we have many pleasant talks with wounded warriors.

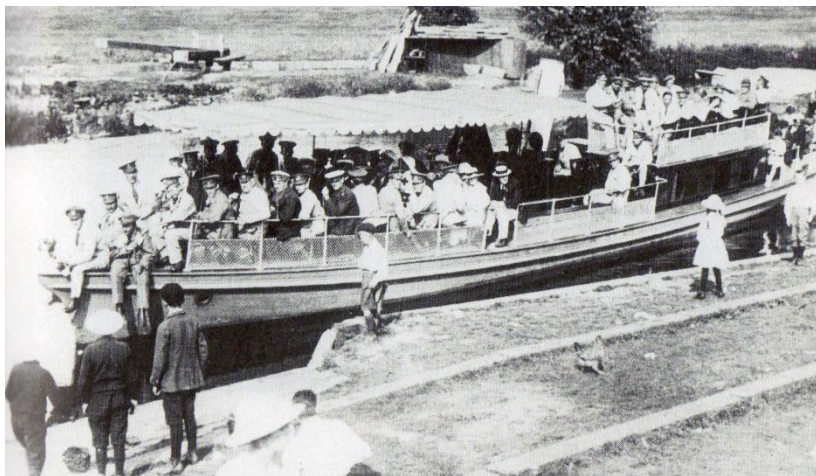
Let me tell you of one or two. Last autumn when rowing with a niece and four maimed and disabled sons of Empire, one of them a lad of only eighteen from a Canadian regiment told me that only two years before he had rowed at an annual regatta, and you may guess how happy he was to be again on friendly water amongst those with whom he had in peace competed in friendly rivalry.

Yesterday I had a little boat to myself, with a splendid specimen of a man on the steering seat, and reclining in the bow a very badly wounded lad with eyes of blue and a smiling, boyish face: both of them had come from Canada to fight for Empire, the older man was a true Canadian native born, and he told me his mother was also Colonial born. I don't think I have often seen a finer or more handsome man, strong as a horse; he had been badly wounded and was not nearly well again; splendid in build and strength he was equally splendid in heart and nature, kind as a nurse three times he went up and down the steep zigzag path of the wood leading from the road above the grounds, both on arriving and leaving carrying a wounded brother on his back, and so gentle was he and so strong.

One little trip I made in the same light boat I had one passenger only, a charming boy not nineteen, but without both legs, they had been carried away by shellfire, dear lad. It is so sad to see these glorious sufferers, and yet I have never heard one complaint, they are so brave, so generous in their thanks for anything we can do. This little legless hero told me with gratitude that now after the happy hours in the open and on the river he should sleep happily and soundly.

And this is how we spend our Saturday afternoon with the wounded heroes, a turn on the river for some, a quiet time on the lawn for others, the a cup of tea in the open, after tea another paddle on the river, and then a climb up through the woods, and a last cigarette, lots of goodbyes, and they are off in the motors, cheered by sympathy and kindness, and though it is not much we can do, it is something to look forward to through the week, and we love the work and we love the brave men.

In 1922 the event, shorn of much of its former glory and display, started again with the Redcliffe Rowing Club as the fourth promoting club, an arrangement that still prevails.



Convalescing servicemen at Salford Lock

Keynsham & Saltford Horticultural Society 1914-1919

By Sue Trude

At the start of 1914 nobody could ever have imagined the devastation or the distress that was to involve everyone by the end of that year. The townsfolk were busy planning events for the forthcoming summer as normal and amongst them were the committee of the local gardening association who looked forward to one of the most important events on the town's calendar. On January 10 1914 the first committee of the above society met in Mr Wilkin's Tea Room in the High Street to begin the task of organising the Annual Horticultural Show. The date was set for the A G M to be held in the Old School or Mr. Wilkin's Room on January 22 and the first item on the agenda was the election or re-election of the committee. Then it was agreed to hold the Annual Show, as was customary, on August Bank Holiday Monday. Various tasks were then assigned to members and progress was to be reported at the next meeting.



Mr Wilkin's Tea Room, High Street, Keynsham

By the time of the February meeting arrangements had been made with Mr Clothier to hire the Hams on the same terms as the previous year. A letter had been sent to the town band that for £6.10s. there would be not less than 18 players. The band would assemble at 1.30pm. and play around the town entering the show ground at 2.00pm. continuing to play until 9.00pm with one or two intervals in between. Mr Bishop and Mr Gully had agreed to put on a firework display for the sum of £12 and special prizes were to be purchased for the sporting events. Judges were to be approached, adverts were to be made and distributed around the town, police were to be engaged as before and the staging and electricity had been organised. Finally it was decided that the parishes of Northstoke and Kelston be added to the Horticultural Society; both parishes being in the Keynsham Union and the County of Somerset.

On July 12 the committee met in the Old School. A letter of acceptance was read from the Town Band, another from Mr Osborne of the Fox and Hounds offering £3 for the right to supply the Beer Tent. The sports programme presented to the committee was accepted and a grant of £15 was made towards the purchase of prizes. It was resolved to advertise in the North Somerset Gazette, the Bristol Times and Mirror, the Western Daily Press and the Bath Herald. The usual flags were to be fixed at Mr Wilcox's yard and Mr Watts would arrange for the other flag to be on show in Brislington. Finally it was agreed to invite the inmates of the Workhouse and the Almshouses as before.

Final decisions were taken on July 29. Within the next few days Judges would visit the gardens / allotments of those persons who had entered the competition One exhibitor was found to have brought his petunias on in another person's greenhouse (tut, tut! definitely not allowed). Everything seemed to be in order for the opening of the Show on August 3. Even insurance had been taken out in case of bad weather.

The day previous to the declaration of war however more attention was being paid in Keynsham as to whether the heavy rain would affect the attendance. As it happened the stormy weather did interrupt the lengthy sports tournament conducted by Mr J. Manley. He also conducted the Town Band which provided the dance music and in addition to a number of travelling shows, there was the display of naval fireworks by Mr. Bishop.

For the first time a silver cup was to be awarded to the exhibitor earning the highest number of points in the cottagers' section and the trophy was won by Thomas Shortman, a married man living in Dapps Hill, who later at the age of 44 was to die on the first day of the disastrous Somme Offensive on July 1 1916.

On Friday, 7 August in the Old School the prizes were distributed with the Rev. Hatchard making the presentations. Then a week later the committee met to tie up all the loose ends. The treasurer reported that the expenditure on the show amounted to £180 whilst the receipts only came to £140 (probably due to the inclement weather) and despite the loss of £40 on the event it was proposed by Mr Cox and seconded by Mr Godfrey that £20 be paid to the local branch of the Prince of Wales War Relief Fund. This resolution was put to the full committee at the Annual Meeting on 30 November 1914 when it was passed unanimously. A long debate ensued regarding the show in 1915. A vote was finally taken that the show should go ahead as usual subject to the committee being able to abandon all arrangements if they thought it necessary owing to any serious turn in the war.

However in the following February it was decided to cancel the show for 1915 and no other meetings of the society were held until 1917. At that meeting the secretary reported on the association's finances as follows: - deposit £10, War Loan £50, balance £5.13s.5d. Next on the agenda was the idea of offering

inducements to encourage allotment growers to produce more food and the suggestion was made to talk to Brislington and find out what they had planned.

This was the last meeting until 1919 when on the 10 February the committee met in Mr. Wilkin's Tea Room when it was resolved that the show would be revived on August Bank Holiday Monday 1919.

Notes:

The Old School (later the church hall) was in Station Road opposite the Parish Church.

War Relief Fund was set up by the Prince of Wales to "deal with the distress caused by the war, such as unemployment, loss of earnings by seaside landladies and damage, injury or loss of life through air raids".

War Loans/Bonds - the first interest-bearing War Loan was issued in November 1914 at an interest rate of 3.5% to be redeemed at par in 1925 – 1928. In April 1916 this advertisement appeared for 5% Exchequer Bonds... *“Lend your money to your country. The soldier does not grudge offering his life to his country. He offers it freely, for his life may be the price of victory. But victory cannot be won without money as well as men, and your money is needed.”* In 1917 Keynsham Council invested £1,500 in the scheme.



Advertisement for National war bonds

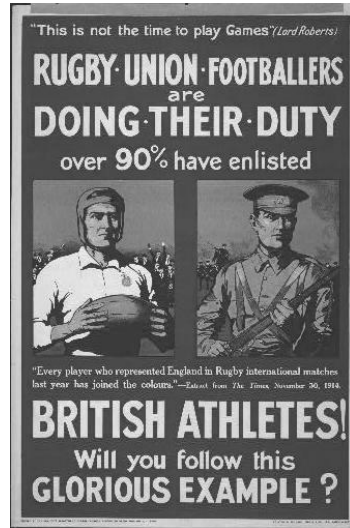
Some Soldiers' Stories

By Brian Vowles

Captain Ronald Rogers

At the start of the war the old axiom that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton still held sway. As one reads through the lists of casualties of the Great War one is struck by the large numbers of young officers who seem to share a very similar background. Most were the product of public schools which were deemed to be the best source of recruits to the officer class.

Their life expectancy on the battle lines was to be counted in just a few weeks and it was much later in the war that due to the demise of so many of these young men that reluctantly other social classes were considered to be capable of leadership. Most of them had excelled at sports and it was their involvement in these activities that made them ideal candidates for the army. One such young man was Ronald Rogers who was the son of Mr and Mrs Rogers of Rivermead in Keynsham. He was born in Weston in February 1883 and attended Blundells School in Tiverton, Devon. He joined the army as a regular and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 4th Bn, Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 16 January 1901, and promoted to captain in that regiment on 21 June 1908. He was transferred to the 14th Bn, Rifle Brigade as a captain with effect from 20th March 1915. He played rugby for Bath and Somerset although he wasn't capped by England. However he toured with the 1904 British & Irish Lions in Australia and New Zealand where he played in seven matches.





The British Lions Rugby Team that toured Australia and New Zealand in 1904 with Ronald Rogers fifth from the left in the back row.

The tourists marched through Australia unbeaten, conceding just three points in as many games in the Test series itself, winning 17-0, 17-3 and 16-0. The tourists had scraped victories against Canterbury and Otago, but were outplayed at forward in the international, with the dominance of the New Zealand pack - based on a 2-3-2 formation that allowed a 'rover' to stand off the scrum among the backs - starving the visiting halves and three-quarters of possession. The hosts won 9-3 and the penalty that put the tourists level at half-time proved the last points they would score on tour.

When the disastrous Dardanelles campaign was launched he was killed aged 32, on 28 June 1915 at Krithia in Gallipoli, Turkey.

Four months later another Keynsham man who played rugby for Clifton and Bristol, 2nd Lieutenant Ernest Byrde of the 173rd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers won the Military Cross for conspicuous bravery and skill in France

where he was engaged in burrowing under the enemy lines. At the other end of the social scale were the rank and file.

A Seaman From a nearby village

An early death in the war was that of Benjamin Harding, a Compton Dando seaman on HMS Pegasus. On 18 December 1914 his ship put into Zanzibar from Dar-es-Salaam for supplies but unknown to them nosing around off the coast was the German cruiser Konigsberg. Two days later acting on intelligence the vessel steamed into the South Channel and caught the Pegasus at anchor. At a range of 1000 yards it pounded the old British ship which did not have the range on its own guns to reach its attacker. The engagement was all over in 17 minutes and the Konigsberg made off mining the channel behind it. The survivors tried to beach the stricken vessel but as a result of the incoming tide it slipped to the bottom. Casualties were 25 killed and 80 wounded from a total crew of 234. The British Navy sought revenge and trapped the cruiser in the Rufiji River and sank it. Her guns nevertheless continued to see action as converted artillery pieces for the German Army in German East Africa and a Keynsham man was to experience the effects of those guns.

A Return to the Colours

Kate Exon appeared to be destined to remain a spinster but on 21 September 1912, at the age of 34, she finally got married to Albert Rayson. In 1895 he had joined the 2nd Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's Own) and spent the first few of those years defending Alderney (1896) and Guernsey (1897) against the French who, prior to the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904, were still considered to be the main threat from Europe. In 1897 the battalion was sent to the Northwest Frontier of India where it served in campaigns against various rebel groups. Four years later, on 1 November 1902, he completed his service at

Peshawar and returned home at the age of 26. He remained in the reserve until he was discharged at Exeter on 13 May 1907.

When the First World War broke out the veteran soldier now aged 38 could not resist Kitchener's patriotic appeals and volunteered once again for the army in Bristol on 6 November 1915; this time for service as a driver in the motor transport section of the Army Service Corps. A month later he found himself at the Motor Transport Depot at Osterley Park where he was tested on his driving skills. As driving was not considered by many to be a combat role this must have appeared to be a soft posting but it was to be anything but!



Albert Rayson on board ship bound for German East Africa, now Tanzania.

At first he was transported by ship to the Abbasiah barracks in Cairo and when on 21 April 1916 he embarked on another vessel at Suez he discovered that his destination was to be a rather nasty sideshow of the war, German East Africa.

On 7 May he and his fellow drivers disembarked at Kilindini, the port of Mombasa. The heat was unbearable but all bathing was banned between 7.00am and 5.00pm due to the dangers of severe sunburn.

In the day lizards, centipedes, ants and millions of flies swarmed everywhere but there was no respite when darkness fell as they were replaced by clouds of biting mosquitoes. Chirping crickets and whelping monkeys made the night a

noisier time than the day and sleep was impossible. Almost as soon as they arrived, fever and dysentery attacked the men. Soon the troops set off to seek battle but the well-armed and swift moving enemy, led by a very capable commander Col. Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, escaped through the wild bush country within sight of the snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro on the equator. Conditions were terrible. All water was in short supply as initially it had to be transported over land by a light railway that was often sabotaged and then stored in tanks of dubious sterility. The daily ration was just 4 pints, a small proportion of what was deemed necessary in that climate. Albert's job was to drive one of the supply lorries and these had to be manhandled through swamps and up one-in-four inclines in temperatures of over 100°. Blackwater fever, dysentery and tropical ulcers (as well as attacks by lions and crocodiles) abounded.

On 15 November 1916 Albert was stricken with his first bout of malaria. His temperature soared to above 104° and he was muffled in blankets and given up to 30 grams of the precious quinine. He struggled on against the disease but on 13 February 1917 it struck again so badly that he had to be evacuated. He was carried to the nearest railhead and after a fourteen-hour jolting journey he arrived at the port of Dar-es-Salaam to be evacuated to Cape Town where he was transferred on to a train to travel the eight miles to the Wynberg Hospital. After his recovery he returned to German East Africa but it was not long before the malaria reoccurred. His condition deteriorated further and on 26 September he was invalided back out to South Africa where he was readmitted to Wynberg Hospital on 1 October and there he stayed recuperating until 31 October 1917.

By now the inevitable decision had been made to withdraw all the European soldiers as their susceptibility to these tropical conditions and diseases was decimating whole

regiments and they were replaced by native troops. On 1 November 1917 he embarked for England, arriving home on 29th November. He must have still been in a bad way as nine days later he was admitted to the 2nd Southern General Hospital in Bristol (now Southmead Hospital) where he spent the next 84 days. He was then deemed fit enough to re-join the war and on 1 May 1918 he embarked for Le Havre.

Then fortunately, rather than being swept into the hell of the Western front, he found himself bound for Italy (where presumably there was no malaria!) and by 12 July he had become part of the G.H.Q. Reserve Motor Transport Corps. When the war in Europe finally came to an end, Albert was still there but seems to have been temporarily attached to the fledgling R.A.F. On 19 April 1919 it was decided that he would qualify for a small pension as his disability had resulted from active service and on 3 June he was transferred to class Z reserve and discharged from the army at Woolwich.

Although he would suffer reoccurring bouts of malaria which would debilitate him for the rest of his life, he had been luckier than his brother Frank Rayson a regular in the 1st/6th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment who was killed on Pilkem Ridge during the ill-fated Passchendaele offensive on 9 October 1917. His body was never found having been sucked down in the sea of liquid mud that passed for a battlefield, (he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the missing). Earlier that year his other brother William's son, another Albert Rayson who had enlisted in the 1st/4th Battn.Hampshire Regiment, died aged just 20 on 24 February 1917 near Basra, Iraq (scene of battles in the more recent Gulf Wars). Both are recorded on the plaques on the Keynsham Park Memorial Gates and in the parish church.

After this second release from the army, he returned to 15 Temple Street and his wife Kate. Using his motoring skills

he started driving a solid wheeled lorry for a tool firm but that occupation lasted just a few years. When Fry's, the chocolate manufacturers, moved from their cramped premises in Bristol to their huge new factory at Keynsham (which they called 'Somerdale') in 1924, Albert joined the hundreds of local inhabitants who were taken on. He continued to work for them until his early death in 1932 aged 55 (probably from malaria picked up on active service)

In 1914 Kate's sister Lillian married a grocer's assistant from Bath named Albert Portnall but a few months later their child was still-born. Albert was conscripted into the Royal Artillery but on 17 July 1916 he was killed at Vermelles. Lillian remained a widow until 1922 when she remarried but by then she was 40 and her chance of motherhood had passed her by.

A Tale of two Husbands

In 1911 when she was 17, Ethel Exon, Kate's cousin, had gone into service and was living at 2 Lansdown Villas, Keynsham the home of the Newell family (mentioned later). In 1914 she married a Joshua Payne who had been recorded in the same census as a "*Sausage Skin Cleaner*". The couple had a child, Percival in 1916 but sadly he only survived a few months. Inevitably Joshua was conscripted into the army and he joined the ranks of 2/4th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. After months of training, the battalion landed at Le Havre on 27 May 1916 to become part of the 61st (or 'sixty worst' as some wag called it) Division. Joshua survived the carnage of the Passchendaele and Cambrai battles of 1917 but in the spring of 1918 came Operation Michael. The Germans had realised that their only remaining chance of victory was to defeat the Allies before the overwhelming human and materiel resources of the United States could be deployed. They also had the temporary advantage in numbers afforded by nearly 50

divisions freed by the Russian surrender. The artillery bombardment began at 4.40 am on 21 March and hit targets over an area of 150 square miles, the biggest barrage of the entire war with over 1,100,000 shells fired in five hours. As no casualties were sustained on 3 April and the unit was recovering kilometres to the west of Amiens, it is tempting to presume that Joshua was hit on 1st April but died two days later from his wounds.

With him was a good friend, Joseph Smart, a lad from Ballance Street in Bath. In 1911 he had been working as a labourer above ground at the Cambrian Colliery in the Rhondda Valley but, like Joshua, had been conscripted into the army. They soldiered together throughout the campaign and family stories say that when Joshua died in his arms his last words were for Joseph to “*look after Ethel*”.



Left - Ethel Exon’s second husband Joseph Smart in 1917.

Right - Joseph and Ethel Smart with their children about 1928

Joseph survived the war and when he returned home he kept his promise. The couple married on 30 May 1921 and they had four children, Clara (b.1921), Joseph Joshua (b.1922), Gwendoline (b.1925) and Iris (b.1928). At the start of WW2 their son Joseph Joshua Smart joined the Keynsham Home Guard and as a private, was officially commended for his efforts during enemy air raids. The family lived in a small cottage up a passage from Temple Street but when the area was redeveloped, the couple moved to Winscombe Close on the Charlton Road Estate where Joseph died in 1961 and Ethel in 1988.

A Death at Home

Another to answer the call was Thomas William Newman who had been a regular in the army for many years. His service included a period in India and the whole of the South African War. Then on leaving the army he became the 'mine host' at the Lamb and Lark Hotel in Keynsham.

When the war came the Bristol Citizens Recruiting Committee were empowered by the War Office to raise a unit of artillery which was given the designation 'the 127th Heavy Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery'

On 9 March 1915 to fill the ranks the Committee started to promote an advertising campaign in the local press. At first recruits came in slowly but stirred by the use of gas on the Canadians and the subsequent desperate defence of Ypres as well as the sinking of the Lusitania by U-boats, recruiting became very active.



A Recruiting Advertisement in a local newspaper March 1915

The old soldier promptly offered his services and was attached to the unit as quartermaster. The value of his work in helping the Committee to raise and equip this unit in its early days was invaluable but whilst in training with the battery he was taken ill and was treated at Romsey Hospital.

After being discharged as convalescent he returned home to Keynsham where he died at the beginning of May 1916 still only 48 and the Lamb and Lark had to find a new landlord.

The Tailor's Son

Private Thomas Newport was the son of Joseph Edwin and Ellen Newport who kept a tailor's shop at 55, High St., Keynsham, Bristol. He joined the Gloucestershire Regiment's cycle corps in 1914 but was blown up by a shell on 26 August 1916. He is buried in the Military cemetery at Pont-du- Hem on the main road from La Bassee to Estaires. He was just 19 years of age.



The tailor's son, Private Thomas Newport photographed in the uniform of the Cycle Corps of the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1914

A Seaman serving ashore

Sub-Lieut. Frederick John Newell of the Royal Naval Division (Hood Battalion), who was killed in France on the morning of October 12 1917, was the youngest son of Mr and Mrs Newell of 2 Lansdown Villas, Avon Road, Keynsham. He was born on 22 March 1890 and attended the Merchant Venturers' School. He enlisted in the Bristol Naval Volunteers on 24 March 1913 whilst he was secretary of Lawson's Non-Conducting Composition Ltd, Bristol and later he was made

one of the directors of the company. In June 1917 he was gazetted sub-lieutenant and he expected to join a ship but instead he found himself allotted to the Royal Naval Division which had been formed in August 1914 from naval reserve forces when warships of the fleet were fully crewed. The tradition of naval personnel serving on land had been long established and a shortfall in infantry divisions in the army led to the formation of the RND to supplement the army. The RND was retained under Admiralty control even though they were fighting on land alongside the army. Reserve personnel from the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Fleet Reserve and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve with a brigade of Marines formed the RND. Retaining their independence, the RND kept their naval traditions, even while on land. They flew the White Ensign, used bells to signal time, used naval language (including "going ashore" and "coming on board"), continued to use naval ranks rather than army equivalents and sat during the toast for the King's health! Attempts to convert the RND to conform to conventional army practices were tried but were generally unsuccessful.



Frederick John Newell

Frederick formed part of the draft for the BEF on 9 October 1916 and joined the 'Nelson Battalion' on 9 December 1916. He returned to UK for a commission on 28 December 1916 when he achieved the rank of Temporary Sub Lieutenant RNVR on 29 May 1917. Drafted again for the BEF on 7

September 1917, he joined the 'Hood Battalion' on 18 September 1917. He survived just twenty four days before he was killed on 12 October, the opening day of the first battle of Passchendaele, north of Ypres. A brother officer wrote "*He died as an officer should cheering his men.*" He was buried in Plot I, Row O, Gr.15 La Brique Military Cemetery No.2 which is now situated next to the Ypres Golf Course.

Many others did return

Some were more fortunate. Harold Hurley was born in Bristol in 1896. He was a gardener before he joined the army on 17 September 1915 and was drafted as a groom into the Army Service Corps (transport was still largely by horse or mule) There he served in that capacity for a year until August 1916 when he became a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery firing a 13 pounder and in that capacity he stayed until April 1918 when he was transferred to the Royal Garrison Artillery.

In the autumn of 1917 he married a Keynsham girl, Mabel Roadnight (b. 1891) who lived in Albert Road. At some point he was at the army's base camp at Etaples and from there he sent a number of post cards (undated) of local views to Mabel.

Etaples was a particularly notorious base camp known as "The Bull Ring" to those on their way to the front. Under atrocious conditions, both raw recruits and battle-weary veterans were subjected to intensive training in gas warfare and bayonet drill, and long sessions of marching at the double across the dunes.

After two weeks, many of the wounded would rather return to the front with unhealed wounds than remain at Etaples. The officers and NCOs in charge of the training, the "canaries", also had a reputation of never having been at the front, which inevitably created a certain amount of tension and contempt and a mutiny broke out there in September 1917.

When Harold was demobbed he was issued with the attached document testifying to his good behaviour to enable him to find civilian work. He died in 1960.

His wife's brother Stanley (b.1899) also served in the army and fortunately came safe home. He was still only 19 at the war's end.

(# 17 5) W925—GD1389 5,000,000 10/18 HWY(P248) Army Form Z. 18.

CERTIFICATE OF EMPLOYMENT DURING THE WAR.

(To be completed for, and handed to, each soldier.)

A soldier is advised to send a copy rather than the original when corresponding with a prospective employer.

It is particularly important that an apprentice whose apprenticeship has been interrupted by Military Service should have received, on this form, any employment in a trade similar to his own on which he has been engaged during such Military Service.

Regtl. No. 211933 Rank Private

Surname (with initials) HURLEY HARRON

Christian Names in full HAROLD

Regt. R. P. A. Unit C. O. A. Battery

1. Regimental Employment.

Nature of	Period.
(a) <u>Pls. P.S.C. (Room)</u>	<u>From Sept. 7, 1917 to Aug. 1918</u>
(b) <u>Mr. R.F.A.</u>	<u>Aug. 1916 - April 1918</u>
(c) <u>Mr. R.F.A.</u>	<u>April 1918 - Oct. 1919</u>
(d)	

***2. Trade or calling before Enlistment** (as shown in A. E. 84).
Apprentice

3. Courses of Instruction and Courses in Active Service Army Schools, and certificates, if any.

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

*The trade or calling must be filled in by the O.C. Units from the Appendix to Special Army Order No. 6, of 22nd October, 1918 (228 of November, 1918). (P.T.O.)



Above left -The certificate issued to Harold Hurley to enable him to get work after the war and right Harold's brother-in-law, Stanley Roadnight who was still only 19 when the war ended.

Market Gardener and shop keeper Fred Veale joined the Army Service Corps in 1915 to serve with the Remounts Division training replacement horses for those killed or wounded in battle. After the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry suffered heavy casualties in France he was sent to the island in 1917 and after the war he returned to Guernsey to set up a thriving tomato growing business.



A German postcard sent home by Harold Hurley inscribed "*What a wounded Frenchman gave me*".



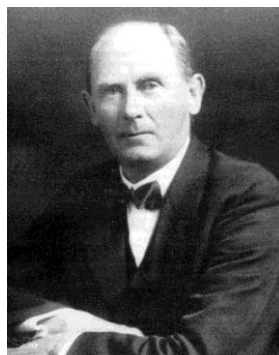
Fred Veale with his son Fred Jnr and wife Elizabeth in 1915

Not all served in the Trenches

Many of those conscripted were employed in support roles far from the front lines. Sidney Fairclough, the father of well-respected local historian and a founder member of the

society, Mary Fairclough, worked in the leaf department of the Imperial Tobacco Company in Bristol. On 22 May 1916 he received his call-up papers and was ordered to report to the Recruiting Office at Clevedon. He was drafted into the Royal Garrison Artillery and was sent to Pendennis Castle at Falmouth where his family joined him. There at first he was attached to an anti-aircraft unit but suffered a strain whilst lifting a shell and was assigned clerical work for the battery. He served out the war without firing a shot.

Of course many of those too old to fight still felt they had to do their 'bit' and John Scott Parker, a fruit farmer at Pipley Valley, Upton Cheney was amongst these. It had been policy to bury soldiers where they fell but actions in WW1 caused deaths on a previously unimaginable scale. Fabian Ware, a 45 year-old former journalist born in Clifton, Bristol, realised that there was no system or official organisation in charge of marking and recording the graves of those killed. To resolve this he set up the Red Cross Graves registration unit which was transferred to army control in 1915.



John Scott Parker in
1922

When in 1916 the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries was created, John Scott Parker applied for and was given the role of Chief Horticultural Officer for War Graves. His work took him all over the Western Front organising the concentration of burials from field graves to the beautifully manicured cemeteries that are still run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission today. At first he was given the rank of Lieutenant before being promoted to Captain and his letters home provide a fascinating view of the terrible devastation suffered by men and terrain. His efforts

meant that twelve years after the end of the war almost everyone who fell on the Western Front had been recorded on a tomb or memorial. For his efforts he was given an inscribed silver cigarette case by King George V when he visited the cemeteries in 1922 and was awarded the O.B.E.in 1924. His daughter, Mrs Susan James, who was a regular member of the society until her death in 2002, remembered going to live in St Omer whilst her father worked on the cemeteries.



A royal visit to the Louvencourt war cemetery in 1922. Left to right – Gen. Fabian Ware, King George V and Captain Parker

Honours for the Keynsham Men

It is difficult to discover all the honours earned by local men but some were recorded in local papers. Amongst them was Bombardier George Coombes of Compton Dando who was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry and conspicuous bravery in the field in September 1917. There was a military cross for 2nd Lieut. F Morton son of Major A Norton of Keynsham “for conspicuous gallantry on August 30 near Maurepas” and on 15 March 1918 the Military Medal was awarded to Cpl. Fray of the R.F.A. The Meritorious Service Medal was awarded to Cpl (acting Sgt) Ashbee in June 1918

and Sir Douglas Haig mentioned in his dispatch of December 31 1918 Lieut. Wills eldest son of Mr F Wills of Rookhill, Keynsham. Many, many others were awarded but have yet to be found.

The Baker Boys, One family's Sacrifice

By Rose Storkey

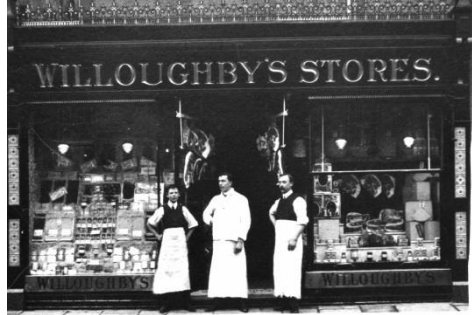
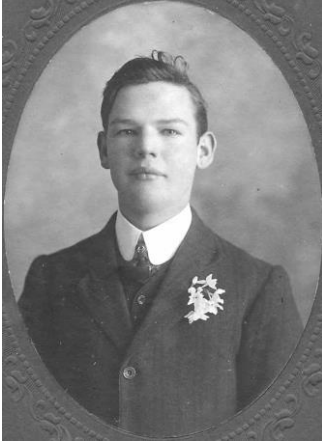
Some families felt the impact of the war more than others. Three great uncles of mine, the brothers Reginald, Charles and Stanley Baker, fought in the so called 'Great War'. They had lived in a cottage on the western edge of Keynsham at Durley Hill beyond the cemetery and I regret not asking their sister Elsie Fussell (nee Baker) more about them before her death in 1985 - particularly as she had an incredible memory for dates and events. The week before she died, I talked with her about her brothers.

Reginald Baker, known as Reg, was born at Compton Pauncefoot in south Somerset on 31 October 1891, the eldest son of John and Caroline Baker and the family moved to Keynsham at age 11 He started work a year later as an errand boy for 1/6d per week at Willoughby Brothers the grocers in Temple Street.

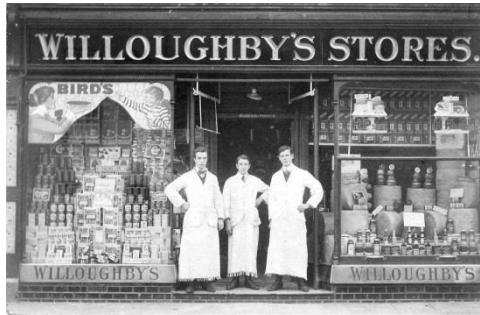
The second, Charles known as Chaw, was born in 1894 at Hicks Gate Farm near Keynsham (which was then in Somerset) as their father John was the farm bailiff there and as a teenager he worked on Fox's Farm at Brislington.

Charles' younger brother Ernest Stanley Baker was born in December 1896 at Hicks Gate Farm. He was known as Stan, had pneumonia as a boy, he was a choir boy at the Parish Church and later delivered letters. He was then employed to do plumbing for Hickling's, who had a shop in Keynsham High Street. He was 5' 11"

All three of the Baker boys served in the army



Above – Reg Baker and top right – Reg Baker, on the left in 1912 working at Willoughby's grocery shop. Below right – Reg on the right, back at Willoughby's post war.



Reg

It appears that Reg remained at work at Willoughby Bros after Charles signed up but on 26 November 1915 he joined the army. There is an undated photo of Reg in the uniform of the Somerset Light Infantry but I have been unable to trace any evidence of his service. It seems likely that at some stage in 1916 he was transferred for some reason from the Somersets to 7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment (Private Number 25872). His sister told me that Reg went from Plymouth to Gravesend to Mesopotamia (which the troops called 'Messpot' and is now Iraq) and he was in Baghdad at some stage. A postcard to Bert Cantle from Reg, dated 1 August 1917, shows that he was then in Quetta, India (Quetta is now capital of the province of Baluchistan in Pakistan and is

an area in conflict since independence): “arrived here after an interesting 5 days ride.”

At Belgaum, the home city of the Maratha Light Infantry Regiment and a well-established ‘British India’ base of imperialism (Belgaum is now in Karnataka province, south western India), Reg and friend Private E Rudge were photographed at the studio of S.Mahadeo & Son.

With the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917 a new battle area opened up and a British force was sent to protect the Caucasian oil fields from the Bolsheviks. Amongst those despatched were a unit from the Glosters and from 31 October 1918 until 1919, Reg was based in Baku (now the capital of Azerbaijan) with the 9th Platoon, C Company, 7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, 39th Infantry Brigade, with NORPERFORCE (the North Persia force). From there on 1 December he wrote to a letter to Bert Cattle (husband-to-be of Reg’s oldest sister, Flo)...

Dear Bert

‘We were at a place in Persia during Oct. Towards the end of the month we commenced to march to a town where huts were specially built for us for winter quarters a distance of



August 1917 Reg Baker (left) and friend Private E Rudge taken at the photographic studio of S.Mahadeo & Son of Belgaum, India.

about 140 miles. We arrived here on my birthday' (31 October).

The Colonel said marching had finished for at least some months. Anyhow after being there two days, off we went again on another 150 'miler' which took us to the shores of the Caspian sea...we soon forgot our miscomforts on arriving in the town of Resht (now Rasht, then known as the 'Gate of Europe' on the Caspian – fought over by Britain and Russia 1917-20) and hearing that Germany had surrendered (11 November 1918), we had a day's rest, drew a good pay & celebrated the glorious news to the best of our ability.'

They went on to a port and... 'embarked for Baku. It was a 30 hour voyage & we arrived on Sunday Nov 17th. There were thousands of people waiting to welcome us outside the dock gates. We are very comfortable being billeted in a Naval College. This town is as large as Bristol. It is like a new life to be amongst Europeans once more after so long in the deserts of Meso and Persia.'

In a second letter dated 15 December he dwelt on the possibilities of staying in the army. *"We have already had the terms etc with regard to signing on for 2-3 or 4 yrs; it would be alright for anyone about 20 or 22 yrs of age but I am anxious to get away. I think I should be doing greater service to the old people after losing Chal and Stan, our Stan should never have been sent to France after sickness like he had, I trust our luck will change now that the war is over."*

It is possible that Reg went from Baku to Belgaum, then in India, with 7th Battalion to be 'demobbed'. His demobilisation financial record was stamped India and dated May 1919.

Reg returned to Keynsham and married Blanche Billing ('Ciss') from Temple Street on 14 April 1923 but they were not to have any children. He became a partner with Norman Down

in Willoughby Bros and Reg and Ciss lived above the shop in Temple Street. Later they moved to a newly built bungalow, 9 Park Road, which was demolished years later in order for the now-demolished Health Centre to be built on the site.

Charles

The second son 'Chaw' volunteered in 1914 and joined 1st Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry (SLI) as private No. 11019. That August he went to Plymouth and was still there in December (they had no uniforms). He did not go home for Christmas that year as several of the Baker family had scarlet fever.



Charles Baker

In May 1915 Charles went to the continent to join his fellow soldiers. The diary of A.H. Cook DCM, MM, 1st Battalion SLI shows that the Battalion was involved at St Julien, part of the second battle of Ypres, 22 April – 22 May 1915. On 26 April they were ordered to dig themselves in and there gas shells were used against them for the first time.

Cook's entry for 2 May recorded the gas peril: *'Early in the afternoon I saw a German walking along behind his trenches with a large flat container. A dense green mass began to roll along the ground slowly towards us. I suddenly realised this must be the gas we had heard so much about. I hurriedly went round and warned the men .Only a few of us had been given some sort of protection, which was a piece of flat cotton-wool with tapes attached, to secure the pad after it had been placed over the mouth. I ordered all who had got them to put them on, and those without to scoop a hole in the ground,*

which would immediately fill with water, soak their handkerchiefs and ram them into their mouths. The little pads of cotton wool were soaked in some chemical and undoubtedly saved some of us.'

These SLI diary entries shows what the conditions were like for troops like Charles: his personal experience of gas was in early July. His last, brief postcard, written the day before he died, was kept by his mother:

*H Company, 1 Som.L.I.
July 1915*

Dear Mother & all

Just a pc hoping to find you all in the best of health. I have been back for 3 days with bad eyes, but am going back to the Reg. again tonight. They put the gas on us, but as it happens it was not very bad. Thanks very much for the photo it is very good of you all.

From your Loving son, Charles

Charles was returning to the front line and Cook's diary states that their Brigadier lectured them on the attack, to take place next day, by 1st SLI and 1st Rifle Brigade, on International Trench, Boesinghe.

'July 6... an 18 pounder field gun was brought up with the object of destroying the enemy sap and entanglements. I am pleased to say it got away with it! At 6 a.m. we assaulted the German lines which had been smashed to pieces and took them without difficulty.'

The editor of Cook's diary, Lieut Gen Molesworth added: *'This tough action was fought within 500 yards of Yser Canal Bank and gained only 75 yards of ground – a very limited local operation. Men were lost: 'so it was not quite as easy as Cook implies.'*

Cook described how the men had to dig a communication trench from the captured line back to their front line: *'Our positions were shelled all day up to 4.30pm when the men were dead beat with strain, heat, thirst and lack of food. This day Lieut H. Webber and 27 men were killed'*.

Charles was one of those 27. His sister Elsie, who would have had no knowledge of Cook's diary, told me in 1985 that the family heard afterwards from a Sgt Bingham (my father noted that Charles was said to have died at 11pm on 6 July 1915) that Charles had volunteered to fetch provisions and was blown up just as he arrived back at the trench with the food.

In the Western Daily Press 6 July 1917, two years after Charles' death, the simple and still touching message from his family at Durley Hill was: *'We miss him most who loved him best'*. Charles was buried at Talana Farm Cemetery, Boesinghe, Belgium (Talana was named by the army after an episode in the South African war).

Stan

Elsie told me that people used to make remarks to Ernest during the war, such as "What's a big strong boy like you doing at home?" and he was under conflicting pressures - to go or to stay? His mother Caroline was weighed down with sadness and anxiety, as her eldest son Reginald was overseas (with the 7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment); Charles had been killed in July 1915, and one of their three sisters Alice (Allie) was almost blind and had learning disabilities, caused by illness or injury, from the age of 4. She had epilepsy from 1914 onwards. I imagine that Caroline and her husband John would have been extremely apprehensive about another son going to war. However, Stan volunteered and joined the 10th Platoon, C Com, of the 6th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry as private No.19983. In November 1915, aged 18 he

was sent to Plymouth, where he was later in hospital with pneumonia and then contracted German measles.

There are several photographs of him in uniform: one taken in Bristol, tall and lean, two in Plymouth, in one of which he was with a friend. It would be exciting if the identity of the young man could be established.

I have a souvenir letter card postmarked Winchester in July 1916, from Stan to his family, which ends *'I cannot leave camp till after I have been tried'*. He explains on the card: *'I have to go before the Officer in the morning'*. No alleged offence is given, but he added that his friend Shattock *'arrived back at twelve o'clock last night so he will be sure to cop it. I think I shall get off, will write tomorrow night.'* Stan added that the Staff Sergeant had written to Romsey for news of whether they would pass out there or at the camp. Stan left on 17 August 1916 for the continent and on 22nd sent a carte postale issued by the Church Army (Recreation Huts)... *'we have heard nothing about moving from here yet, will write letter later. Love to all from your loving son Stan.'*



Stan Baker standing with
a fellow soldier taken at
Plymouth

Presumably Stan and his fellow soldiers had heard about the dreadful carnage on the Somme battlefields since 1st July including the destruction of homes and land, opposing armies' troops, horses and machinery, a devastated landscape changed forever and a huge death toll. The 6th Battalion men were in trenches by the end of August and the records indicate

that 28 and 29 were days of great discomfort, with rain falling heavily. There was some relief from 30 and 'all ranks enjoyed a complete rest' until 12 September.

Stan's last letter written to his family at home on 13 September 1916 mentioned...

"Dear Mother, Dad & all,

I hope this will find you all in the best of health as it leaves me AI at present. I hope you received my letters sent last week, I wrote nearly every day, but you don't seem to be getting them according to your letters received today. Well Mother, I have had everything I should say now, I had your parcel with salts etc + Flo's fags last week...quite a big mail today, R letter from you & one Reg...paper Daily Press...two papers from Flo 4th, 6th one from you...a box of fags from Bert with letter, & Sports Time & a packet of fags & letter from Mrs B. I hope you will get this letter, you don't seem to be getting mine as I have written a dozen or more lately, well Mother, Reg's letter is very nice & I hope he will be coming back soon. I have had all letters now I am sure, so you need not worry...fancy Herb Rawlings home for good, glad you have design from Syd & glad you like it...Well dear Mother we are moved up again but still behind the line & hope to be here a few days. R.Harding and Shattock are still with me, hope Alice is keeping well, I was pleased to hear from Flo that you have been out (Blackberrying) it will do you good to get out, hope D...is alright, can't stop for more now will write again tomorrow fondest love to you all from your loving son Stan".

Stan was part of a close knit family, as this letter shows. It is touching that he was so pleased that his mother had gone blackberrying; doubtless she went to the hedgerows and bushes around Durley in Keynsham where my sister and family go blackberrying still.

On 12 September, 6th Battalion SLI and Stan marched for four miles and then went by train to bivouac south of Albert in Picardie, northern France; perhaps Stan wrote that last letter there. On 14 they began to move up towards the front line: the Battalion diary for 15 somewhat bitterly states that they marched off *'to occupy trenches that did not exist'* between Delville Wood and Switch Trench. For the first time in history, tanks were used in this battle (Flers – Courcellette) on 15 September 1916.

The Somerset men had to go into the trenches without food. The Battalion diary - 1.30a.m. on 16 September: *'No rations had arrived so we moved to the front line and relieved the 42nd brigade which had attacked in the morning (of 15th) and suffered heavy losses.'* Some rations arrived but drinking water was *'very scarce'*. The attack was to take place at 9.25 a.m. on 16. Stan's C Company held the left of A-A Trench: the objective was Gird Trench. No time was given for reconnaissance and the right side of B Company went into the partially dug X-X Trench thinking they had captured Gird Trench. That evening the Colonel realised the mistake and C Company pushed forward and dug in some 50 yards from Gird Trench. At 6.20p.m on 16 September, orders were received for the remainder of the Battalion and the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) to attack Gird Trench 25 minutes later – but it was impossible to get instructions out to the companies in time and the KOYLI, being formed up, went forward at zero hour with just a proportion of the Somersets who had received orders. Their barrage could only be inadequate and was described in the diary as *'very feeble'*. Heavy machine-gun fire met the advance and the attack broke down, with heavy losses. Casualties of 6th Battalion under this fire were truly terrible: the 17 officers who went over the parapet were killed, wounded or missing

In other ranks the Battalion lost 41 killed, 203 wounded and 143 missing. The ridge between A-A and X-X Trenches had been ‘a veritable death trap and the Somerset men, as they advanced, were shot down by the German machine gunners.’

Stan was listed as ‘missing’. Presumably he died in or near one of those trenches, engaged in perhaps his first – and certainly his last - experience of warfare. The only remotely comforting thought is that neither he nor his brother Charles



Stan Baker

had to endure months or years of bombardment and injuries before their deaths. A local newspaper announced his fate... *“Official information has been received that Private Ernest Stanley Baker of the Somerset Light Infantry has been missing since September 16 1916. He is 19 years of age. This is the second son the family have lost, the other aged 21 years having been killed on July 6 1916”*

After the war the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was unable to locate his last resting place and so he is commemorated by name on the Memorial to the missing at Thiepval on the Somme.



The Thiepval Monument to the Missing designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens

James Brookman Godfrey

Somerset L. I, No. 2418, Wiltshires No. 203813.

by his granddaughter, Robina Howliston



James Godfrey, probably in his days with the North Somerset Yeomanry

He was born on 22 November 1881 the son of Jonas Godfrey and when war broke out in August 1914, he was living at 49 Rock Road with his wife May and a five month old daughter Mary, (my mother). At the time May was pregnant with her second daughter Elsie. James was already in the Territorial Army, (North Somerset Yeomanry) and he was immediately mobilised when war was declared into the Somerset L.I. on 24 August 1914 aged 31. As I was brought up during the Second World War I was used to people being called up. I remember my grandfather's indignation when I asked as to when he had been called up. I was informed that, "I had not needed to be called up to serve my country. I was a VOLUNTEER!"

He served in India and Palestine. In India he contracted malaria and was very ill. He was so weak and thin that when his wedding ring fell off his finger and rolled away, he was powerless to do anything about it and so lost the ring. At one point he heard the doctors at the end of his bed saying that, "He would be the next to die", at which point he thought to himself, "not likely". However, I do remember him having recurring bouts of malaria.

His job in the army was to look after the mules and the only injury he received was from a mule that kicked him under one eye. When the wound was stitched up, the tear duct was damaged and ever after that his eye used to weep. He served with General Allenby in Palestine and he used to tell me that they had captured Jerusalem from the Turks. He died in November 1953 when people didn't travel much, so to me it was amazing that he had been to the Holy Land.

I didn't then believe that he had helped capture Jerusalem from the Turks as I thought Richard the Lionheart had done that and I didn't realize that it had been subsequently recaptured. I thought that this was but one of his "stories", but after I married John, he and I went to see "Lawrence of Arabia" at the Odeon



James Brookman Godfrey, a studio portrait with a skilfully added inset of, on the left his wife May Ellen holding his oldest daughter Mary and right, her friend Mrs Elsie Freckleton holding her god daughter and his youngest, Elsie.

cinema in Hounslow. When I saw how Allenby and his troops marched into Jerusalem, I whispered to myself, "*Sorry Grampy*".

He was discharged as an Acting Corporal on the 24 February 1919 at the No. 2 Dispersal Unit in Fovant, having been transferred to the 1/4th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment aged 36. He would have been home for my mother's fifth birthday (26 February). The family story is that when he got home and came round the back in uniform, Granny ran out of the kitchen and they hugged and kissed. My mother was supposed to have cried out, "*My mummy is kissing a German*", because she hadn't seen her father since she was a baby. When James returned home he joined his brother Thomas operating a dairy and haulage business from Temple Street trading as Godfrey Brothers of Keynsham. James died in 1953 aged 72.

Victory at Last

By Brian Vowles

At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 the guns at last fell silent. The signing of the Armistice brought an initial wave of joyful celebration and relief to the inhabitants of Keynsham after the sorrows, privations and war weariness suffered by almost all. When the news broke crowds thronged the streets and scaffolding was erected on the church tower on which to hoist the Union Jack. It was also a day of sadness for the many wives, mothers and children who were to live the rest of their lives mourning their missing men and many of those that did return were to suffer terribly from mental and physical wounds from the war for many years to come. Post-traumatic stress was little understood then and many ex-soldiers continued to live for years with the horrors they had seen without any treatment. William Headington for example served with the Somerset Light Infantry. He survived being blown up and half buried. Suffering from shell-shock he returned home in 1918 and

managed to resume work for the next six years but he then deteriorated mentally and, with his legs continually shaking, his wife and son had to do everything for him until his death in 1941. Many other men experienced reoccurring bouts of the malaria picked up in foreign climes which would blight them for the rest of their lives.

A New Peril

Just when the dangers of war seemed to be over that autumn a new threat to life emerged. In the months that led up to the November 11 Armistice of 1918, the world's armies and navies had begun to disperse but on their way home, the demobilised took with them a virulent virus that was thought to have originated in chickens and mutated in pigs before emerging in humans in the spring of 1918. Opinions are divided as to its origins but regardless of its origin it has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. World War I had claimed an estimated 16 million lives but the influenza epidemic that swept the world in 1918 killed an estimated 50 million people. At the Keynsham District Council meeting on 5 November, the Medical Officer (Dr Heaven) dealing with the influenza epidemic stated that the outbreak started in October and affected the whole area. Up to November 2 there had been 10 deaths. The youngest who had died was 16, the eldest 52 and seven were between the ages of 21 and 45. Dr Heaven suggested the Council should distribute leaflets setting out desirable precautions.

Celebrations at the Workhouse

An outbreak of flu infecting some of the patients and the ill health of the master meant a postponement of some of the early Christmas arrangements at the Keynsham Workhouse which was brightly adorned for Christmas. The Entrance Hall, Board Room and the wards were decked with holly and other evergreens with the flags of the Allied nations intersecting. The

Christmas dinner comprised boiled ham and seasonable vegetables followed by Christmas pudding, and for liquid refreshment was beer or cocoa as the inmates preferred. On Christmas Eve the Chaplain (Rev. C H Cropper) ‘manipulated a series of dissolving views’ (*projected slides*) and a number of carols were sung. On Boxing Day the menu was cold beef, hot vegetables and Christmas pudding.

A Dry Easter

After a sporting event on Easter Monday 1919 catastrophe struck. It was reported that... *“by 7.00pm only three licensed premises out of a total of thirteen in Keynsham were open. No spirits were obtainable anywhere. So as can be ascertained beer was sale at only two houses, and a third public-house had nothing but mineral waters to offer the thirsty traveller.”*

The ‘Terriers’ Homecoming

On 2 May 1919 the 1/4th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry, which included Pte A Brimble from Keynsham, returned to Plymouth on the troopship ‘Port Lyttleton’. After an uneventful voyage from Mesopotamia to Bombay and through the Mediterranean, they left by train for Bath where they were received with speeches of welcome before leaving for their demobilisation centres.

Preparations for the peace

These were discussed but it would appear that the Keynsham Council was rather reluctant to join in the National Peace Day Celebrations scheduled for 19 July 1919. So incensed by their apathetic attitude, a letter was sent to them by the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers on 16 July stating that...

“They (the N.F.D.S.S) protest against the decision arrived at by the Keynsham Council, re the Peace Celebrations, and trust you will see the advisability of giving

the following your consideration and prompt action. That we demand that the Keynsham Council shall immediately make preparations to celebrate Peace Day and ex-servicemen together with the war widows and the dependants of sailors and soldiers shall be given an afternoon's procession, followed by sports or other suitable amusements and refreshments for all. Also we urge that the men of Keynsham and districts who have brought about this peace for us should be provided with free drinks of beer.

If you cannot make arrangements for the 19th we suggest an alternative date August 4th, 1919.

After a brief discussion it was decided that the Clerk to the Council reply stating that the Council was quite satisfied with the arrangements the Parish Council were making and the letter would be forwarded to them. However it was decided to give council workmen a holiday with pay on Peace Day.

Peace Day 19th July 1919

The actual Peace Day Celebrations took place over the weekend starting on Saturday 19 July and continued on into Monday evening. A thanksgiving service in the parish church was conducted by the Rev. Cropper (vicar) assisted by Revs. Walter Mann and J Frederick Lewis and after the service a welcome was extended to ex-servicemen by Major Norton and the priests. A procession of ex-servicemen, the Red Cross detachment, Boy Scouts, Sunday Schools and general public was headed by the Town Crier and Keynsham Town Band then set off around the town.

A tea arranged by Mrs Thwaites, was given to all the children and old people over 65 in the Pits field (off present day St Ladoc Road), owned by Mrs Godfrey although the majority of the sports took place on the Monday.



The Peace Day Parade marching past the Ship Inn in Temple Street.

For the actual Peace Day the Keynsham Workhouse Master killed one of the institution's pigs and gave the inmates a dinner of roast pork, broad beans and new potatoes grown in the grounds with jam roly-poly to finish off. Some of the inmates had a drink of "good old" beer but the majority celebrated with lemonade.

The Chairman of the House Committee, Mr Sidney Fry, Mrs Fry and Mr and Mrs Andrew went through the establishment acquainting the inmates with the significance of the event. The men were given an extra allowance of tobacco whilst the women and children had chocolate and tea. On the next day, Sunday, a special tea was provided with cake and home-made jam.

A similar situation had arisen in Luton with devastating results. When the authority there set up a Peace Committee to celebrate victory in the First World War that committee myopically did not involve any of the ex-servicemen's bodies in the town. The council totally misjudged the mood of the

people when it was then announced that the level of celebrations would be limited due to the lack of funds available, although a halfpenny rate was raised to help pay for them. Feelings were exacerbated by a Mayor's Banquet at which no women were allowed and insult was added to injury when it was announced that only guests personally invited by the mayor were allowed in for nothing and everyone else had to pay fifteen shillings. Few ex-servicemen could afford such lavish expenditure and no wonder they felt excluded. A flashpoint on the day seems to have been a decision about a service in Wardown Park. On 7 July 1919 the National Discharged Sailors & Soldiers Association put in a request to hold a drumhead service in the park, which was rejected by Tolls and Municipal Buildings Committee and the decision ratified by the Watch Committee because the NFDSSA only represented a fraction of ex-servicemen and it was felt that a service purely for NFDSSA members in the town's major park was exclusive; alternative venues were offered, however. The request was never put before the full council and the NFDSSA members felt very embittered.

The Peace Day riot started after members of Luton Council arrived to read out the King's proclamation and many in the crowd expressed their disapproval. Tension boiled over into violence and a number of protesters broke through the police line and forcibly entered the town hall. Shortly after, a number of violent clashes took place, with the town hall being stormed by the crowd and eventually set on fire. Firemen's hoses were cut and the building totally destroyed but the Mayor escaped by being smuggled out by another entrance.

Bearing in mind the events at Luton and the criticism that had been forthcoming from the same NFDSSA an additional Keynsham celebration was hurriedly arranged for Saturday, 9 August.

The Parish Committee, having charge of the Peace celebrations at Keynsham, arranged for a meat tea to be given to the ex-servicemen of Keynsham with their wives and sweethearts. This took place in a large marquee erected in the Parks Field, and over 500 guests were invited. Mr R Willoughby, the chairman of the Parish Committee presided over the gathering, supported by the vicar, Rev. Cropper, the Rev. Lewis and Walter Mann. The marquee was beautifully decorated with tables laden with flowers arranged by members of the Red Cross Detachment and the meal was organised by a ladies' committee presided over by Mrs Thwaites.

The Chairman, in the name of the Parish Council, and the inhabitants of Keynsham, welcomed the ex-servicemen and said that the meal had not taken place on Peace Day itself as "*it needed a longer time for the preparations to be made*". He stated that that many men had gone from Keynsham in some capacity to the various battlefronts or on the sea; 10 of the officers had gained the M.C. but he had been unable to find how many men had won the M.M. owing to the men's modesty. Forty had made the supreme sacrifice, and he extended his sympathies to all their relatives. As a tribute to their memory the whole assembly then stood for a few moments in silence. The Chairman also referred to the noble part the women had played in keeping the home fires burning during the absence of the boys, and in conclusion urged all who had responded to the call of King and Country to rise to the occasion to do their bit for the restoration and rebuilding the welfare of a nation.

Mr Harry Willcox, of Keynsham, responded on behalf of the guests, and he was followed by Mr Noble (President of the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers which had sent the prompting letter.)

Entertainment followed in the Drill Hall (which had also been decorated by Dr Harrison, Mr Hawker, and Mr Griffiths, and consisted of some songs by Master Kenneth Saunders, Mr Alfred Parkman, Miss Amy Richards, humorous contributions by Mr Stanley Strange, and a sketch by Mr Fred Vallance. The accompanist was Mr Steer and Dr Harrison presided.

Post war dissatisfaction.

Although this went some way to dissipate the immediate resentment not all was sweetness and light however as the joy and relief that the war was over was rapidly replaced with growing cynicism. People were still remembering the fine rhetoric of the politicians when recruitment was high on the agenda and were now questioning the sacrifices that had been made - whilst at home many had profiteered through the conflict. Unemployment was high as thousands of servicemen were suddenly released on to the labour market and the economy had to be rapidly readjusted as the production of war materials suddenly dried up. Industry had found new ways to reduce man-power and the introduction of machinery such as tractors to increase food production had resulted in fewer agricultural workers being needed on farms. In addition not all the women who had been doing men's work were prepared to relinquish their wages and return to the status quo. Were the men coming back to "*a home fit for heroes*" as Lloyd George had promised?

Blame for the poor conduct of the war was put at the door of the Liberal party whose stock went into steep decline. In the elections held in December 1918 the Frome Division, which included Keynsham, voted in a Unionist candidate Percy Hurd who represented a return to law and order and who narrowly pipped the Labour candidate, Captain Gill M.C. who campaigned on the rights of the working class and justice for

the returning ex-servicemen. The once-powerful Liberals ignominiously polled only 8% of the vote.

On Saturday 23 August 1919 a procession was held in Keynsham under the auspices of the local Labour party. At 2.45pm a procession with bands and banners was marshalled in Church Square and a tour of the village principal streets was made. Very prominent in the procession were members of the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers with their president Mr J Noble who had spoken at the celebration on 9 August. The Federation band under Mr G Milton also gave their services; the Federation banner was borne in procession and there were four other banners bearing their phrases such as “Work not Doles”, “Industry not Idleness”, “1914 wanted, 1919 query”. There was a fairly representative turnout of ex-servicemen and the Keynsham Band took it in turns with the Federation Band to play along the route. The N.U.R. with the banner of the Bath branch, the Bristol Dockers with the banner of their Union and the Agricultural Workers took part. Among those in the procession were Mr Weeks (chairman), Mr W Jones (secretary) of the Keynsham Labour Party and Mr. James Tanning (Bath) the organiser of the agricultural workers. That passive resister of 1915, Mr Sidney Cox and his daughter Miss Lucy Cox were also in attendance. The procession returned to Hams Field near the railway station where tea was provided and a series of sports events were held.

Whilst the sports were held, Captain Gill accompanied by Ernest Bevin (then the organiser of the National Dockers Union and later to become Minister of Labour in Churchill’s wartime coalition government and Foreign Secretary in the post-war Labour government 1945-51) arrived on the field and an address was soon in progress with Mr Noble as Chairman. He said that gathering was representative of the best in the ranks of labour and they had a very strong muster of ex-servicemen whose valour had made that gathering possible.

It was then proposed by Mr. J Harding of Bath and seconded by Mr Weeks of Bitton, that *“this meeting believing that the true happiness and well-being of the nation can only be secured by the adoption of the principles and policy of the National Labour Party, hereby pledges itself to render all possible assistance to secure the election to Parliament of Captain Edward Gill M.C. the prospective Labour candidate at the next election.”*

Gill in turn addressed the assembly. He said he was inclined to think that if the election had been put off another week Keynsham might have given him those 350 votes which would have made Frome a Labour constituency. As an ex-serviceman and having held a commission in the army, he was still a worker like themselves: he came from a working class home and he had returned to one. He attacked the broken pledges of the government and went on to deprecate the endowment of well-remunerated generals whilst 300,000 ex-servicemen did not know where to find next day's food.

In a vigorous speech Bevin drew attention to the profiteering and the inequalities in the class system. *“The actual producer was the one that got least out of industry, less even than ‘the Flunkey’. ‘Lady Do-nothing’ gave a ball whilst the soldier’s mother lived in a cowshed.”*

Fortunately the gathering then dispersed peacefully allaying the fears of the villagers of a repeat of the much publicised ‘Bolshevik Revolution’ that had occurred in Russia two years previously.

A Welcome Home by Saltford Women.

On Thursday evening 8 January 1920 at the Saltford Women's Institute Hall, ex-soldiers of the village, with their wives and friends, were the guests of the Institute members. Upon their arrival Mrs Golledge (president) and Mrs Beavan (vice-president) gave them a hearty welcome. The tables were laid for over 100 guests, and a substantial meat supper was followed by sweets etc. Mrs Golledge expressed the great pleasure it gave them to welcome the guests, and Capt. A Gardiner responded on behalf of the men.

A War Memorial

By 1920 thoughts had turned to the most fitting way to remember the dead of the war. Corston had already dedicated its memorial on 22 May but Keynsham had been rather slower to inaugurate theirs. On 10 May a meeting was held in the Parochial School, Keynsham, to consider the question of a war memorial for the parish and to finally decide on the form it would take. Mr C R Willoughby, chairman of the parish council, presided supported by the Revs. C H Cropper (vicar), Walter Mann and others. He explained the action of the committee since the last parish meeting was held dealing with the memorial. Mr J Bevan, the buildings surveyor to the Keynsham R D C, at the request of the committee attended the meeting and submitted sketches etc. The matter was fully discussed and on the proposition of Mr Henry Kinnersley, seconded by Mr Chantrell, the following resolution was passed. *"That a monument of Portland stone be erected in the Church Square, treated in a manner approved by the surveyor at a cost of £500 to £600. A sketch was approved and a copy be directed to be made and exhibited in the parish, and the committee were authorised to obtain promises for subscriptions and to proceed with the necessary arrangements as soon as possible"*

However when the matter was raised again at a meeting in March 1922 it was decided to let the matter drop.

Although memorial tablets were unveiled in the Parish Church and the Methodist Chapel, it was not until 10 August 1952 that the Memorial Gates to the park incorporating the names of the fallen from the Second World War were dedicated.



The Dedication of the Memorial Gates 1952

By February 1920 plans were being discussed for the erection of a memorial for Saltford. Mr Radcliffe, chairman of the Saltford War Memorial Committee stated that amongst other suggestions as to the form of the memorial was the erection of a stone cross, and the ideal spot for such a memorial was at the top of the village at the junction of three roads opposite Tunnel House. He wanted to know whether the Council would raise any objection to the proposal. The council decided to defer the matter and in the meantime to ask for plans to be submitted as to the nature of the proposed monument. As mentioned in Part 1 it was dedicated on 14 November 1920.

In the surrounding area, Queen Charlton dedicated theirs, a pair of stained glass windows, on 21 July 1921 but

Compton Dando had to wait until 21 September 1929 to dedicate the cross in the centre of their village.

A memorial dedicated to the fallen of Timsbury and Camerton was later erected by the British Legion and carries seventeen names.

No such memorial was required at nearby Stanton Prior as it had the good fortune to be one of Somerset's eight "Thankful Villages" (from a total of thirty two villages in England) from which all the men who served in WW1 came safely home.

As if there had not been enough bloodletting, sadly just twenty five years later new lists were being added to those memorials as a new conflict proved that this had not been the "war to end all wars" as Lloyd George had once assured the British public.

In 1914 the United Kingdom was the richest country in the world but by 1918 it was bankrupt. However the war did bring about some dramatic and positive changes in society. There was a growing sense that it had involved civilians in ways that previous wars had not. All had contributed to the war effort and a move to a more equal society began as a result. Women started to gain the vote and workers more rights as the government began to realise that it had a greater responsibility for the safety and welfare of its citizens.

However, hard times were still to come with the depression and more heartaches to be endured as war broke out once again in 1939. This time there was no "mafficking", no triumphal crowds, no flag waving and no young men marching up and down as there had been in August 1914. Instead there was a bitter heart-breaking sense of despair that the whole bloody business was starting all over again.