



**WEST WICKHAM
WAR MEMORIAL**

**THE MEN WHO
GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN THE
FIRST WORLD WAR
1914-1918**



WEST WICKHAM WAR MEMORIAL St Mary's Churchyard

The exact numbers of men from West Wickham who served in the armed forces in the First World War is not known. It was at least fifty, maybe more. Fourteen who came from the village or had family connections with it and who gave their lives are remembered on the War Memorial.

After the War it was very much left up to individual villages whether and how this was to be commemorated and the criteria to be used. For example, should it be just to those who had lost their lives or to all who had served in the conflict? In the belief that the dead should be treated equally regardless of rank or wealth there was a ban on the repatriation of bodies, so war memorials became a focus at home for the expression of grief as well as for remembrance.

In March 1920 West Wickham Parish Council minutes record that a public meeting had been held at which it was decided to erect a granite memorial in the churchyard to those who had lost their lives in the War. A committee was formed to raise the money and organise its erection. It was made up of the Parish Council Chairman, S Owen Webb, farmer of Streetly Hall, William W Ewin, builder and Parish Council Clerk, blacksmith John Simkin who had lost his brother Frank, John Woollard, R Mynott (probably Russell whose brother George had been killed) and A Barker (possibly Albert). Money was raised quickly although, unfortunately, no record seems to have survived as to the final cost or of any details of the stone mason who made the memorial cross.

The War Memorial was unveiled by S O Webb on 24 October 1920 with a dedication service in the church and a sermon preached by a previous incumbent, the Rev R P Moline, Rector of Cottenham.



TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN HONOURED MEMORY OF
THE MEN OF THIS PARISH
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR.
1914 — 1918.

H. E. BEAVIS	J. K. MADDEVER
C. BENTLEY	A. MANSFIELD
A. E. BRADNAM	W. MOSS
B. BRADNAM	E. C. MYNOTT
B. BROWN	W. C. PAGE
C. FLACK	F. SIMKIN
D. LUCAS	A. STEED

THEIR NAME SHALL LIVE FOR EVERMORE.

The unveiling of the War Memorial on 24 October 1920.

H E BEAVIS

Harold Edward Beavis was born in London on 28 October 1896, the son of Mary Beavis, and was baptised in St Mary's church, West Wickham, on 20 December. It appears that Harold was brought up by her parents, William and Rebecca Beavis. Rebecca died in 1900 and in 1901 Harold was living with his grandfather, William, a shepherd, and his 22 year old aunt, Elizabeth. Elizabeth married in 1908 and in 1911, William and Harold, a farm labourer, were living on their own (in a cottage now part of Maltings House, 1 Burton End) but near Harold's uncle and aunt, Charles and Alice Beavis and their children. As Alice Beavis filled out the census form for them, it seems likely that she was looking after them as well.



Harold Beavis lived in one of the three cottages on the right. Albert Mansfield (see later) lived in another one.

Harold enlisted in Linton and joined the 8th Suffolk Regiment as Private 14111. He arrived in France on 25 July 1915. At some point he transferred to the 15th (Suffolk Yeomanry) Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment as Private 320537. The Battalion formally became an infantry battalion in Egypt in January 1917 and was involved in the defence of the Suez Canal and the campaign to re-take Jerusalem from the Ottoman Turks. Harold died of wounds on 13 November 1917, aged 21, and is buried in the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt (section F, grave 334).

C BENTLEY

Charles Alfred Bentley was born in Debden, Essex in 1886 and was the second son of Alfred and Betsy Bentley. The family arrived in West Wickham some time between 1902 and 1908 when Alfred became farm bailiff at Streetly End Farm. In 1911, Charles was living with his parents and five of his brothers and sisters and was working as a shepherd. His elder brother, James, was married with two small children and also living in Streetly End. Alfred died in 1915 but members of the family stayed on in the village for a while, although Betsy was living in Lolworth at the time of Charles's death.

Charles enlisted in Haverhill as Private 17206 in the 11th Suffolk (Cambridgeshire) Regiment, one of the 'Cambs Kitcheners' as they were known locally. He was wounded on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 and sent home to a hospital in Stockport, Lancashire. He returned to France and served in the 9th Suffolk Regiment. He was home on leave in early March 1918 and as a report in the *Cambridge Independent Press* put it:

Having been through some fierce engagements they [also on leave was George Gordon] were naturally welcomed by everyone who knew them.

Charles returned to the front and was serving with the 9th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment when he died of his wounds on 6 June 1918, aged 32. He is buried in La Cheppe (Mont-Frenet) French National Cemetery, Marne, France (grave 635 - one of only 13 Commonwealth graves in this cemetery).



The grave of Charles Bentley is in the centre front. La Cheppe (Mont-Frenet) French National Cemetery.

A E BRADNAM

Albert Edward Bradnam was born in West Wickham on the 25 January 1895, the youngest son of Charles and Mary Bradnam, and was baptised in St Mary's church on the 31 March. In 1911, Albert and his elder brother, Bennett, both farm labourers, were the only children still living with their parents in a cottage, since demolished, which was between numbers 23 and 25 High Street. Mary Bradnam died in 1912.

Albert and Bennett enlisted together in Linton on 29 September 1914. They joined (as Privates 15471 and 15472 respectively) the newly formed 11th Battalion (Cambridgeshire) Suffolk Regiment in Cambridge as two of the Battalion's first 290 recruits. The Battalion was initially billeted in the Corn Exchange, then Melbourne Place School (now Parkside College) and finally in temporary, purpose built barracks at Cherry Hinton before leaving for further training in Ripon and elsewhere in England. The Battalion embarked for France on 7 January 1916.

Albert was batman (an officer's servant) to Lieutenant Robert Gilson. Robert, who was a close school friend of JRR Tolkien, was a third year Classics undergraduate at Trinity College when he enlisted in the 11th Suffolks in November 1914 (most of the officers were Cambridge University graduate or undergraduate students). The Battalion spent the night of the 30 June 1916 in Bécourt Wood in preparation for the major offensive the following day (now known as the Battle of the Somme). The plan was for a massive British artillery attack plus a vast explosion from mines underneath which would take out the German defence and allow the infantry to advance across No Man's Land onto a considerably weakened enemy front line. Robert's platoon, including Albert, was to attack La Boisselle. The plan went wrong, the artillery bombardment failed and when the men went 'over the top' they were simply mown down by German shells and machine gun fire - 'just like corn in front of the farmer's reaper', as one of Robert's men later recalled. Robert, bravely advancing, was killed by a shell and Albert badly injured. Robert was 23 and Albert 26 years of age. In total, 190 men of the 11th Battalion were killed that day and 337 were wounded.

Albert was sent home to a military hospital in Chorlton upon Medlock, Lancashire. He was able to write a letter of condolence to Robert's parents saying that Robert 'had been loved by all the men in his platoon and, I may say, company, as he was a very good officer and a good leader' but Albert

did not survive amputations of parts of his legs and died on 30 July. Robert left £50 to Albert in his will and the Gilson family sent this on without realising that Albert had since died. The story of Robert and Albert is recounted in John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War*.



B BRADNAM

Bennett Bradnam was born in West Wickham on 15 March 1890 and baptised in St Mary's church on 18 May. He was the second youngest son of Charles and Mary Bradnam and the elder brother of Albert.



Bennett & Albert Bradnam lived in the cottage second left.

Bennett enlisted, along with Albert, in Linton on 29 September 1914 and together they joined the 'Cambs Kitcheners', the 11th Battalion (Cambridgeshire) Suffolk Regiment – Bennett as Private 15472. Like Albert, Bennett was also wounded on the

1 July 1916 but survived to be sent back to the front in September 1916. He took part in the Arras offensive and was killed by a shell on 13 September 1917.

On 12 October 1917, the *Cambridge Independent Press* printed a letter that Bennett's father had received from his officer:

It is with the deepest sympathy that I write to inform you of the death of your son, Corporal B Bradnam, who was killed in action by a shell on the night of the 13th September. He was a fine lad, always willing to do anything that was asked of him in the most cheerful way and I can assure you that I am most grieved to lose such a valuable NCO. Everybody loved him in the platoon, and I am sure all join me in sending you our heartfelt sympathy in the sad loss of your dear son. He was buried by our clergyman in the British cemetery just behind the British lines. All his personal property will be forwarded to you as soon as possible. If there is anything further I can tell you concerning your son I shall only be too pleased to do so if possible.

Bennett is buried in Jeancourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Aisne, France (plot 1, row D, grave 1).

B BROWN

Thomas Bertie Brown was born in 1892 in Barking, Essex where he was registered under his mother's maiden name of Twitchett. In 1911 he was living with his parents John and Kate Brown and 8 of his brothers and sisters in a 4-roomed cottage which is now part of 21 High Street. He was working as a farm labourer. He enlisted in Haverhill as Private 8470 in the 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment.



Bertie Brown lived with his parents and 8 brothers and sisters in the four room cottage at the back of the cottage in the centre.

Bertie (as he was known) left for France on 16 January 1915 and the Battalion moved to Ypres for 'months of mud and blood, glamourless but never-to-be-forgotten'. He died of his wounds on 26 March 1915 and is buried in Dranouter Churchyard, West-Viaanderen, Belgium (plot II, row B, grave 20). Bertie's younger brother, Samuel Leonard Brown, served in the Royal Navy.

G FLACK *

George Flack was born on the 4 April 1888, one of the 12 children of Elijah & Elizabeth Flack. George was a regular soldier and in 1911 was in India serving with the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade. However, by 1913 he had left the army and was working as a farm labourer in Duxford when in May he married his first cousin, Emily Flack. Two of George's brothers, Shadrach and Reuben, were married to Emily's sisters and also living in Duxford at that time.

George must have been a reservist and therefore called up immediately war was declared on 4 August 1914 to serve in the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade (the 2nd Battalion was still in India) as Rifleman 747. The Battalion landed in France on the 23 August and saw action immediately. George was killed at Le Cateau, where the British Expeditionary Force turned to face the German army after the retreat from Mons, three days later on the 26 August. George was one of the first men from the area to be killed in the war. He has no



known grave and is commemorated on La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial, Seine-et-Marne, France and also on Duxford war memorial.

In October 1914, George's elder brother, Reuben, joined the 11th (Cambridgeshire) Suffolks where he eventually became Quarter Master Sergeant. In January 1915, George's widow, Emily, gave

birth to a son, Arthur John, and in 1922 she married George's younger brother, Albert.

(* The initial appears as 'C' on the war memorial today but is confirmed as 'G' on the county memorial in Ely Cathedral)

D LUCAS

Dennis Lucas was born on the 20 June 1880, the eldest son of Charles & Mary Anne Lucas. By 1901 he had left the village for the West Ham area of London. He married Elizabeth Baker in 1909 and a daughter, Edith, was born in 1912 followed by a son, Dennis, in 1913. Dennis, a tram conductor, and Elizabeth brought young Dennis back to West Wickham to be baptised. Charles & Mary Anne were then living in Whitehall Cottages, since demolished, between 'Cobwebs' and the 'Old Chapel'.

In June 1916, Dennis was still working as a tram conductor and must have been one of the men conscripted following the Military Service Act of 1916 (up until then enlistment had been voluntary). Initially, conscription was of single men or widowers aged between 19 and 41 years of age but married men were included from May 1916. Dennis enlisted in Stratford as a Rifleman (No 6872 then 373750) in the 8th (City of London) Battalion (Post Office Rifles), London Regiment in 1916 and by the end of the year was in France. In 1917 the Battalion was in action in the Ypres area and then at Cambrai. Dennis died of his wounds, aged 38, on the 2 December 1917. The *Cambridge Independent Press* for the 11 January 1918 reported:

Mr & Mrs Charles Lucas of Whitehall Cottages have received news that their eldest son, Rifleman Dennis Lucas, City of London Regiment, was killed in action on December 2nd 1917. He leaves a wife and two little children. He had been living in London for several years before joining the Army. Their youngest son, Pte H[arry] J [ohn] Lucas of the Suffolks, was wounded severely on October 13th 1917. His left leg has been amputated, but he is now progressing favourably in hospital in Brighton.

Dennis is buried in Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery, Manancourt, Somme, France (plot VI, row E. grave 6). He is commemorated on a family grave in St Mary's churchyard, West Wickham.



J H MADDEVER

James Howard Maddever was born on the 10 October 1887 in Muchlarnick, Pelynt, Cornwall and was the youngest son of John & Elizabeth Maddever. The Maddever family came to West Wickham sometime between 1896 and 1900 when John Maddever took on the tenancy of the farm at Yen Hall. In the spring of 1913, James married Florence Kerr in Lincoln. Later in that year, a daughter, Valerie, was born but by that time James had left for Canada. He arrived in Quebec on the 23 June 1913.

On the 1 September 1915 James enlisted in Vernon, British Columbia, as part of the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. He was a bank clerk by occupation and gave his next of kin as Florence at a Lincolnshire address back in England. James (Private 629140) served in the 2nd Battalion Canadian Machine Gun Corps and was killed on 27 September 1916 aged 29. He is buried in Contay British Cemetery, Contay, Somme, France (plot II, row D, grave 1).



A MANSFIELD

Albert Mansfield was baptised as a Primitive Methodist on 15 October 1894 and was the oldest son of William & Elizabeth Mansfield (William's parents were also Primitive Methodists). In 1911, aged 16, he was living at home (a cottage now part of Maltings House, 1 Burton End – in the same block as Harold Beavis) with his parents, younger brother, William, and two nephews. William Snr died in 1911; he and his sons were all agricultural labourers.

Albert enlisted in Haverhill in early September 1914 as Private 2923 in the Suffolk Yeomanry. This was a Territorial unit originally intended for home service and it is possible he was already a 'part-time soldier'. The Suffolk Yeomanry did see action in Gallipoli and Egypt so, as Albert was entitled to both the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, it seems he served overseas. When Albert died on 16 November 1916 he was with the 2nd/1st Battalion based at Woodbridge, Suffolk. He died there from injuries received through the accidental discharge of a machine gun bullet. He was 22 years of age and is buried in St Mary's churchyard, West Wickham, with a standard military headstone.

Albert's brother, William, also enlisted in September 1914. Initially, he was in the 11th (Cams) Suffolks but later transferred to the Royal Field Artillery. He served in France and Salonika.



W MOSS

William Moss was born in Bardwell, Suffolk, the youngest of the six sons of Richard & Susanna (Susan) Moss. Richard was from Chippenham, Cambridgeshire and Susan from Bardwell. In 1881 the family were living in Great Barton, Suffolk, but by 1891 they had moved to a cottage at Yen Hall, where Richard and his sons (except the young William) were all agricultural labourers. By 1901, Richard and Susan had moved to one of the cottages at Bottle Hall with William and his elder brother, Henry. Another brother, Alfred, with his wife and young son were living next door. Richard died in 1905 and in 1911 William and his widowed mother were still living in the same cottage at Bottle Hall next to Alfred and his family. Susan died in 1916.

It is not known when William enlisted in Sudbury in the Royal Army Medical Corps (no 98913) or when he transferred to the 6th Battalion, Alexander, Princess of Wales's Own, Yorkshire Regiment as Private 41284. The Battalion had been in Gallipoli in 1915 before moving back to France and then in 1917 to Flanders. William was killed in action on 27 September 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres, possibly in the offensive to take Polygon Wood. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, West Viaanderen, Belgium (panel 53A).



Alfred & Sarah Moss and children Alice & Charlie, c.1905. William Moss lived next door to his brother at Bottle Hall.

E G MYNOTT

George Edward Mynott (his first names are only reversed in his army records) was born in West Wickham on 19 March 1894 and privately baptised six days later on the 25 March. At the time his mother, Lucy Ann, had been widowed for two years. Her husband, Thomas, died in 1892 leaving her with nine children, the youngest of whom was just two years old. In 1911, George was living with his mother and two older half-brothers in Old Farm Cottages (now part of 49 High Street) and working as a stockman.

George enlisted in Linton as Private 28844 in the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. He was killed in action on 11 April 1917, the third day of the Battle of Arras – an offensive which saw very heavy casualties. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France (bay 4).

According to a family member, Lucy Ann asked to be buried as close as possible to the West Wickham War Memorial and her grave is just behind.

An article by Roger Minot mentioning George appears in the Cambridgeshire Family History Society *Journal* Vol 16 No 8 November 2008.



Lucy Ann Mynott outside Old Farm Cottages.

W G PAGE

William George Page was born on 27 January 1884 and baptised in St Mary's church on 9 March. He was one of the nine children of George and Eliza Page. In 1911 he was living with his parents, two younger brothers and a sister in the cottage which is now 111 High Street (April Cottage) and was working as a stockman.



William Page's home.
Photograph taken in
August 1927.

He enlisted on 6 February 1915 and was discharged on 26 October 1918 on health grounds (goitre). He died at home in West Wickham on the 13 November 1919, aged 36. The death certificate states that he died of Graves Disease which is an autoimmune disease, often resulting in an enlarged thyroid (goitre), and thought to be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. The death certificate also records that he was an army pensioner and had served as Private 242539 in the 1/5th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. His army records show he served overseas – the 1/5th Suffolks served in Gallipoli, Egypt and Palestine.

William was buried in an unmarked grave in St Mary's churchyard on 18 November 1919. Although his illness may not have been related to his war service, it was obviously thought entirely appropriate for his name to be included on the War Memorial. However, his name does not appear on the county memorial in Ely Cathedral.

William's older brother, John, enlisted in the 11th (Cambs) Suffolks on 7 December 1914 and was discharged on 19 December 1918 as a result of wounds received. He was awarded the Military Medal.

F SIMKIN

(William) Frank Simkin was born in 1875, one of the thirteen children of



Edward & Louisa Simkin outside 1 High Street.

Edward and Louisa Simkin. Edward was a blacksmith and the family lived at 1 High Street next to the forge. The Simkin family were non-conformist. Surviving records show that many of their younger children were baptised as Primitive Methodists. Later the Simkins were stalwart members of the West Wickham Salvation

Army Corps. By 1901, Frank had left the village to work as a resident gardener at the Rectory in Heyshott, West Sussex. He was still working as a groom/gardener but living in a cottage in Heyshott in 1911.

Frank had already enlisted when he married Mary Frances Lewenden at St Luke's church, Richmond, Surrey on 27 September 1916. His occupation was recorded as soldier and his address was Rushmoor Camp, Aldershot. Frank was a Driver (no 130230) in the Royal Field Artillery and was serving in 'D' Battery, 63rd Brigade when he was killed in action in France, aged 42, on the 3 December 1917. Frank has no known grave and is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louveral, Nord, France (panel 1).



A STEED

It has not been possible to identify this individual so far. A 'Mr A Steed' appeared in a report in the *Cambridge Independent Press* for 8 January 1915 where he was listed as donor of a wedding present to Daisy Pearson and William Pryke. The wedding had been on 27 December in St Mary's church. Daisy Pearson was the daughter of farmer, William Henry Pearson. A Steed may perhaps have worked for him or been a family friend. If he lived in the village he had not been there long as he is not in the 1911 census for West Wickham.





In 1948 the stone supporting the memorial cross was refaced so that the names of the 4 men who lost their lives in the Second World War could be added.

If there are any errors or if you have further information about any of the men on the War Memorial please contact:

Janet Morris

West Wickham & District Local History Club

21 High Street, West Wickham, Cambridge CB21 4RY

or via the village website www.westwickham.org

This booklet has been produced by West Wickham & District Local History Club with financial support from West Wickham Parish Council.

Photograph acknowledgements:

West Wickham & District Local History Club Archive

Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society photographs in the
Cambridgeshire Collection

The Cowell family for photographs in Flanders cemeteries

The Mynott family

Janet Morris

Andrew Morris

www.dengrootenoorlog.nl