

Abbotskerswell During World War 1

The Story of a Devon Village at War



Presented to S. Norton 2/8th Devons

The AbbPast Roll of Honour Project
1914-1920

www.abbpast.co.uk

Introduction

During 2011 I suggested to Nick Nicholson, a fellow member of AbbPast, that the Abbotskerswell 'Roll of Honour' would be an interesting subject for a talk for the group. With the 1911 census due to be released we believed we could find out who the 18 men on the war memorial really were, what their lives had been like and how they died. At that stage Nick and I knew from our previous talk that there were graves and memorials to some of the dead, so there would be concrete evidence as well.

Nick is both an ex soldier and an avid military historian, so he soon began to produce the military background for our fallen. At this stage I had a splendid piece of luck when I had a fortunate conversation with another member, Felicity House, who had just given a talk to AbbPast on researching family history. I mentioned that my next task was to visit the Devon Heritage Centre to start my research and she uttered these splendid words: "oh, I'll do that for you"; and so the research team behind the Project was formed. I have bombarded both Nick and Felicity with hundreds of questions and requests for information and they have nearly always come up with the answers, and for that I am extremely grateful. A big thanks to Trish Turner, our editor, for the hours of reading and amending my grammar, Marilyn Kenyon and Kim at Kingfisher Print. Following a well-received talk in October 2011, we all agreed we wanted to go further and find more.

The 'Roll of Honour Project' is intended to be a permanent record and tribute to those involved so our decision to seek a HLF 'World War 1 Then & Now' grant has proved to be brilliant. The award of £6,600 has meant that we can publish our research and distribute it widely, work with the village school and renovate the graves and memorials of WW1 dead in our churchyard. Our thanks go to Kingfisher Print & Design and William &



Triggs for their help in making our dream come true. I have been helped by many people and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of them. For their village reminiscences, thanks to Tony Bowhay, Ann Wild, Phyllis Ford and Pam Wakeham. To the family members who provided support and material; Jackie Cowell, Hilary Duncan, Monica Sibley, Linda Barnett and Jon Kenn, Beryl Wells, Elsie Shears and Darren Farmer. Thank you to all the families who gave permission for us to renovate the graves of their family members. I would especially like to thank Nigel Canham and the Mid Devon Advertiser for both their help and their permission to reproduce material from the paper, particularly the photographs which they organised for us. Also to Deborah Baume of Cobh Museum who took the photos of Thomas Bond's grave and made the connection that solved the problem of how he died. My thanks go to Eric who accompanied me around the cemeteries of France and Belgium and contributed many ideas and to Cobb for making my rough map of 1918 Abbotskerswell look so good. We are also very grateful to Abbfest for their generous grant that has paid for the booklet addendum sheet and our Roll of Honour banners.

Whilst writing this publication it soon became clear that we could not ignore the men on the Roll of Duty, they too had fought and risked their lives. They were also the brothers, fathers and cousins of the loyal men of Abbotskerswell, the names and outline details of these men are included on the appendix sheet. Whenever I refer to a man on the Roll of Duty in the text I indicate this with a * against his name so that you can look up their record. Also when a regiment is referred to in its shortened form, eg RFA, its full meaning can be seen on the Roll of Duty or in the glossary. What also became clear during our researches was the uncertainty of exact dates, birthdays and ages. Often the birth record is only given as to which quarter of the year it occurred, and there do seem to be quite a few discrepancies in ages. Where possible I have corrected mistakes, but sometimes it is not clear what is right!

We felt it would be a fitting tribute to all those mentioned if we could bring the Project to the village on the 100th anniversary of the declaration of war, so for that to be a Monday when we have our AbbPast meetings was amazing. Our research does not end here. So when you read this if you have something to add please contact us.

Peter Wade

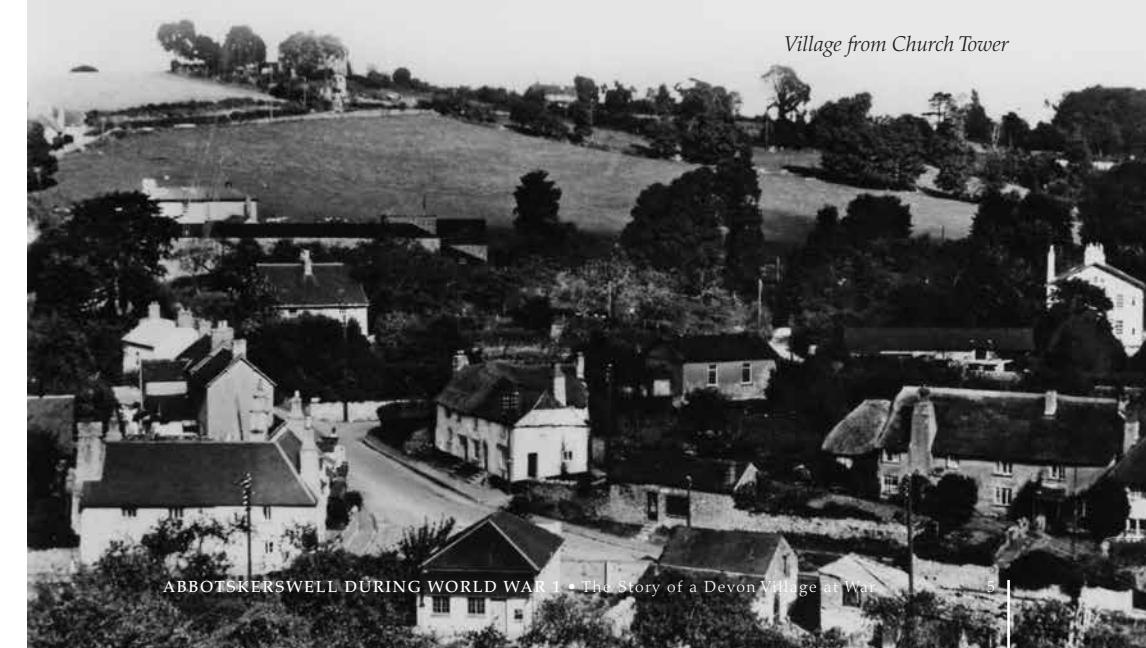
August 2014

Chapter 1

Life In 1914 Abbotskerswell

In 1914 Abbotskerswell was a quiet, rural community with a population of 468¹, it was described as: "a parish and village near the road from Totnes to Newton Abbot"²; so not much to really comment upon. The parish included Aller Vale, Whiddon and Two Mile Oak, but not the Priory of St Augustine which was in Wolborough parish. The central part of the village was much as it is today, with thatched cottages many dating from the 17th century, the church at its core but with a cluster of farms.

Travel writers of the time described a picturesque village, but they tended to focus on the church with its large statue of the Blessed Virgin and its lych gate. The other building usually noted was the "early and interesting church-house"³, in which: "parishioners from a distance spent any rainy time between morning service and vespers"⁴. It seems the men and women were kept on separate floors. However, by the late 19th century it was being used as a bakery, but by 1914 Mrs Hare had bought it from the Feoffees (Trustees) and had it sympathetically restored.



Village from Church Tower

The 'Kelly's Directory' of 1914 gives a good description of the administrative and economic structure of the village. Abbotskerswell was in the Newton Abbot Rural District Council (South), the Mid or Ashburton Parliamentary Constituency, with Charles Buxton Esq of Bovey Tracey the sitting member. There was a post office, a Public Elementary School with 100 children attending, three inns, a bakers, two shops and many farmers. Interestingly there were three religious buildings: The Parish Church, a Wesleyan Chapel and a Baptist Chapel. The Vicar was the Revd. Frank Gordon Campbell, a 52 year old widower with two children, living in the splendid vicarage. Roman Catholics were able to attend services at The Priory, although they entered the church by a separate door and had no contact with the nuns because it was a 'closed order'. *Appendix 1* shows details of The Priory, which as mentioned, was not in the Parish of Abbotskerswell.

Life in Abbotskerswell was very different from today, with only limited transport and most people working locally as a consequence. The 1911 Census gives us a vivid picture of the people, their work and their hardships. The population of 468 (not counting the 6 GPO men who were staying in the village constructing the telegraph system) was made up of almost equal numbers of men and women; *Chart 1* shows the ages and reveals a great deal about the nature of life.



Chart 1: 1911 Census

Age range	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89
% of popul.	19.4	19.2	14.5	15.4	10.5	9.6	5.1	5.6	0.6

The oldest female villager was 85 year old Ann Currell who was the Court Grange butler's mother-in-law and lived with him and his wife in The Lower Lodge. John Jesmond of Church Cottages was the oldest man at 86, whilst John and Anna Partridge of Mount Pleasant Cottages were the oldest couple at 79 and 80. John had been a wheelwright and they had been married for 53 years. However, as the figures show, living beyond 60 was rare. Two interesting elements of life were the size of families and child mortality rates. The largest family was the Honeys of Rose Cottages, with Francis, a 44 year old stone quarryman, May and eight of their eleven children. Mrs Chudleigh of Town Cross Cottages can lay claim to the most children, she and husband Robert had thirteen, but as was often typical of the time, four had died. Perhaps the saddest example of this was William and Susan Perkins of 1 Rose Cottage who had lost five of their eight children.

A study of the local employment is revealing about life in 1914, with the village workforce being 76% male. Of the 24% of working women most were in service, shops and factories, but there were two farmers and a coal merchant! *Chart 2* shows that most jobs were mainly manual and local.

Chart 2: 1911 Census

Employment	% of Village Workers	Examples of Jobs for the Villagers
Farms	17	Horseman, labourer, groom, cowman, dairyman
Domestic service	16	Cook, governess, ladies/parlour maid, coachman, charwoman, footman, butler
Retired	9	Also defined by "living by own means"
Stone quarry	6	Labourer, delver
Cyder works	6	Cooper, carter
Pottery	5	Decorator, fireman, stationary engineman, accountant, manager
Butcher/baker	4	Baker's delivery boy
GWR	2	Platelayer, refreshment car worker
Labourer/mason	3	Wall mason
Blacksmith/Manure workers/claycutters	2	
The rest	23	Innkeeper, carter, teacher, wool and skin workers, dressmakers, servicemen, laundress

Farming was the main industry, with 1 486 acres of land in use: "the soil is loamy the chief crops are wheat, barley and roots"⁵. There were eleven major farms in the parish as *Appendix 2* shows, although because the Church had owned most of the land there were a number of major landowners rather than one estate. In the 19th century the Creed family had been the main landowners, but since the inhabitants of The Manor House and Whiddon House had all died as bachelors, the most significant residents in the village were now Mrs Hare of Court Grange, Commander Robert Jukes-Hughes of Whiddon House and Charles de Chanval Pellier of The Manor House.

The 1911 Census reveals how important these three people were to the village. Mrs Hare employed at least thirteen indoor staff, including a butler, a footman, a cook and six maids; both the Lower and Upper Lodges were in use. She was a great village benefactress who paid for the church to be renovated, in memory of her husband Marcus, a Captain in the Royal Navy who had been lost at sea. She bought and restored Church House, and paid for the building of the village baths (now the Parish Rooms). Charles Pellier, a surgeon, had a governess, a cook and a maid to look after his wife and daughter. Retired RN Commander Jukes-Hughes also had two servants.

The main industries were Henley & Son Cyder Makers, the Aller Vale Pottery Co and the Devon Hide, Skin & Manure Co Ltd of Aller Mills. The



Henleys owned Mallards House, although by 1911 they were also living at The Priory in Ipplepen, and had made good use of the numerous orchards in the village since the 18th century. The schoolmaster, living in the newly built schoolhouse, was Henry Keites, 53, with his wife Amy aged 39 who was also an assistant teacher at the school. Their servant was Mabel Tubb who was related to three of the men who would die in the war.

In 1914 in The Square, the Post Office and shop were run by Charles & Ellen Symons (nee Prowse) under the banner of E PROWSE. Her brother James was the postman. There were two post deliveries a day and three collections. However, this was creating problems it seems, as it was reported by a local farmer and tax collector George Wilton, that since the post was collected at 8am, the same time as the PO opened: "one could not buy a stamp, or postal order and catch the post"⁶. Mr Cann was the baker and there were shops at Model Cottages and in Prospect Place, where Mrs Trethewey was the coal merchant.

At this time Abbotskerswell was in the Devon Parliamentary Constituency of the Ashburton Division which reveals that only men were voters in national elections. However, some women could vote in County elections and there were 13 listed, including the wealthy Misses Carew from Haccombe House as land owners.

Using the Tithe Map of 1839, Ordnance Survey map of 1905 and the Census returns it becomes possible to study the houses in the village and their layout, compared to today. Although no map exists for 1914 it has been possible to construct one using these sources, local knowledge and some drawing of conclusions (see *Appendix A*). The map shows that in 1914 Abbotskerswell village, rather than parish, consisted of a main street stretching from the main road to the Butcher's Arms, with three side streets. One went up Buckpitt (Stoneman's) Hill as far as the Park View Cottages, a second was South View (previously called Burridge Place) and lastly the road to the Parish Church with Church Cottages. If Whiddon and Court Grange are added, this means that there were 122 houses in the village at that time. What is clear is that some of the old thatched cottages had begun to fall into disuse or had been replaced with stone built houses, and much more of the thatch would disappear in the coming years. It was reported in the 'Mid Devon Advertiser' (MDA) that a cottage at Prospect Place had been declared 'unfit to live in' and that a 'closing order' had been made, although: "the difficulty was to get rid of the tenant"⁷. *Appendix A* shows a comparison of the houses in 1914 with those of today.

Contemporary photographs of the village reveal that the roads were mainly a rough surface made from loose limestone chippings, rolled flat. The transport was mainly horse drawn carts (with all the manure that they produced left in the road), although a few cars were beginning to appear:

Mrs Hare is thought to have been the first to own a car though Mr Henley certainly had one by the beginning of 1913, for in that year it 'turned turtle'.⁸

By 1914 there were some elementary paraffin street lights paid for by Mrs Hare to commemorate the coronation of King George V, and lit each day by a village blacksmith, Frederick Prowse. In July 1914, Revd Campbell wrote to Newton Abbot Rural Council to complain of a plague of rats. In reply Dr C. de C. Pellier commented that there were:

a lot of poultry about the village, and their food left about probably bought the rats. I do not believe there were more rats in Abbotskerswell than any other village for miles around.⁹

However, Mr Partridge the carpenter and undertaker thought that "someone had been pulling his leg".¹⁰

So this was Abbotskerswell at the outbreak of what would become known as 'The Great War' and 18 of the men associated with the village, most either brought up or living in the village, would not return alive.



Chapter 2

Village Families

The men whose lives are told in this book were ordinary working men, or boys still at school, at the beginning of 1914, but we can catch glimpses of their lives at the time from the primary historical material available. The 18 men who would die fighting for their country were mainly born and bred Abbotskerswell men, and these are the men on the 'Roll of Honour' but the other men who fought and survived are also remembered on the village 'Roll of Duty'. All of their stories had begun to unfold by 1914; some sadly have still not yet been fully uncovered. Although the main focus of this publication is the Roll of Honour it would be wrong to ignore all those men who risked their lives; the full Roll of Duty is shown in Appendix B.

There was a sports field by the stream at Berry Meadow and the village had both football and cricket teams, which give us some of the photographs of the men who would fight in the war. In 1914 the cricket team was entered in the Newton section of the South Devon Cricket League Division II, and by late July

they had won 4 of the 7 games played, yielding 8 points. On the eve of the war they played Teign Village at home and won by 23 runs.

The team's scorecard makes fascinating reading when the names are compared with the later Rolls of Honour & Duty, as ten of the players appear in them.



Abbotskerswell FC 1904:
L to R – F Manning*, G Webber*, Fred Norton, W Manning*.
G Cowell, W Brooks*, J Coombe*, Read Campbell, G Maddicott*.
W Crook, W Honeywill, J Norton

Walter Hawkins	1	George Stoneman	14
Ernest Stoneman	0	George Webber	35
William Manning	6	Fred Norton	4
Samuel Cowell	6	Albert Daniell	1
Frank Webber	2	John Webber	3
Harry Hawkins	4	Extras	12
Total	87 [sic]		

In reply Teign made 64, with W Manning taking 5 wickets for 26 & the Webbers 3¹

In many ways this team sums up the impact that the war would have on a small community when one group was removed, in this case its young men. In the places where the 'Pals Battalions' were formed whole groups often died together causing terrible community grief. In the case of this Abbotskerswell Cricket XI two would die, but three more would lose a brother and all lost friends.

Many families saw more than one member go to war. In the case of the Webbers of 7 Hillside Cottages it was five brothers. The oldest, George, then John*, William*, Frank* and Sidney* all joined up, and four them were in the 1914 cricket team. They were fortunate as they all returned alive, but the Hawkins family were less fortunate. Harry, Fred and Walter* fought in the war but only Walter survived. The three Marsh boys from Hillside Cottages also joined up with the oldest William* and Jesse becoming sergeants, whilst the youngest John* was a stoker in the RN.



The Cowell families also provided four servicemen, as well as providing some interesting and poignant moments in village history. George and Jane Cowell had four children; William born in 1879, Bessie in 1881, Harry* in 1881 and George* in 1888. Harry and George joined the services as a career, with Harry becoming a leading stoker in the RN, serving on HMS Dublin. During the war Harry was involved in a number of major actions including the Battle of Jutland, which is described in Chapter 4, surviving being torpedoed during the Dardanelles Campaign in 1915 and being bombed by a Zeppelin in 1917. During one of these actions Harry lost the sight in one eye when a piece of flying metal hit his eye. George joined the Royal Field Artillery and was with them in India in 1914. His story will sadly be returned to later. In 1911 the family's fortunes tell something of the time for working class people since George Snr

was living at 1 Well Cottage with Bessie and her son Leslie, although no father is listed in the Census, but his wife Jane was in Newton Abbot Workhouse. Since Jane dies in 1913 she was presumably ill and having to be cared for in the workhouse infirmary. Both Harry and George attended the village school, where they seemed to present the Headteacher with some problems. Firstly in 1893 the school log records: "... a mistake of one year has been made in the age of G Cowell, I have therefore removed him to the 1st class of infants"².

In 1896 another problem was noted with the poor attendance of several older children, especially the 3 Marshes and George Cowell. In 1898 George was involved in an altercation with the Headteacher. It seems that at lunch time his brother Harry and some friends came to the school and became troublesome, George became involved and was sent inside and then: "caned for answering me saucily in the playground"³. He continued to misbehave and then egged on by Harry, he ran out of school.

George Snr's younger brother was William and he and his wife Bessie had six children by 1911. The two oldest were boys and would join their cousins at war: William* became a stoker in the RN and Samuel* became a bombardier in the RFA. For the Cowell families the war must have been a trying time.

An interesting example of how interlinked the village families could be is provided by four more men. The Nortons were a well-known village family, who had moved from Coffinswell and would be the local builders for many years. Up until the 1960s Mabel Norton was living in a cottage attached to the back of the Butcher's Arms before it became the back room of the pub. Stanley* and Frank were two of the four brothers, and again cricketers, who enlisted. Frank had married Elizabeth Tubb and they were living in South Down with their children Hilda and Violet in 1914. Two of Elizabeth's brothers, William* and Charles*, also lived with them and both would join up. Elizabeth would lose a husband and a brother during the war. Frank's brother Fred was also married to Elizabeth's sister Violet and his daughter (also called Violet) would marry Henry* Symons, the brother of Charles, another member of the Roll of Honour. Henry also had three brothers fighting in the war. The Stoneman family provided four soldiers, with Ernest and George* from Prospect Cottages being joined by their cousins Fred* and William* from Sunny Bank.

The family story continues with Joseph* and Fred Coombe* of Rose Cottages and their brothers John from Ipplepen and Thomas*; the Abraham* brothers

* This indicates when a person is listed on the Roll of Duty, for their details see Appendix B

of Mote Hole, also Edwin Cudmore* of Chudleigh and his brother Albert* who lived with his mother in South View and two more Webber brothers of Rose Cottages. The old adage of The Great War was that 'everybody knew somebody who died', this was probably true in Abbotskerswell, but in terms of families involved the figure is amazing. Of the 123 houses in the parish nearly 50 of them had an active serviceman involved, which was 40% of the families.

The village's officers were generally men of substance in the local community and the Jukes-Hughes family of Whiddon House were a very good example. Robert Jukes-Hughes and his family were naval people through and through; born in Shrewsbury, where his father was The Mayor, he joined the 90 gun HMS Caesar as a boy midshipman. By 1871 he had risen to a Lieutenant onboard the sloop HMS Niobe which was on the North American/West Indies station, he had the misfortune to be aboard when she was wrecked in fog off the coast of Miquelon Island, south of Newfoundland in 1874. In 1880 he married Ellen White from Wolborough, whose father was a Captain in the Royal Navy; they do not appear on census documents until 1901 when the now retired Commander RN and his wife were living back in Wolborough. Their first son, Edward Glynn de Styrap was born in 1883 in Lovedale whilst Robert was stationed in the Cape Colony; Evan was born in Newton Abbot in 1885. Around 1903 they purchased Whiddon House from the Creed family and where they would live until they died in the late 1920s.



The two sons both joined the Royal Navy and fought in the war. Edward* Jukes-Hughes (pictured) began his career as midshipman in 1898, became a Lieutenant aboard *HMS Flora* and then a Commander on *HMS Minotaur*; he later rose to be a Captain. Evan* began his military training at a RN school at Lee-on-Sea and in 1905 became a Lieutenant in the RMLI serving on battleships and had reached the rank of Captain by the end of the war.

The Evans family of Moor Park, Aller Vale, was another interesting and significant officer family where four brothers went to war. Their father, Frank, was born in London and became an accountant; later the 1891 Census records the family were living at 'Clevelands' in Babbacombe, together with a governess, a domestic nurse, a parlour maid and a cook. At that time he appears to have joined the local art pottery community as he is described as a 'manufacturer'. By 1901 they had moved to Bridge House in Haccombe with Combe with five of their children and Frank Snr was now living by his own means. The 1911 Census shows he had returned to his professional role as an accountant, this

time at the Aller Vale Art Pottery formerly owned by John Phillips, but now in the hands of the Hexter family. The story of Frank is sadly to be told later.

The oldest son was George William F R Evans who trained as a civil engineer before moving to Canada in 1904. When war broke out he joined the many Canadians who fought for the Empire and in 1915 became a 2nd Lieutenant, and later became a Major, in the Royal Engineers. Reginald Victor was educated at Newton College and joined the 21st Royal Fusiliers as soon as he was able to, he entered the war in France on 11 November 1915. He quickly became a battalion scout and was soon recommended for a commission as an officer. He completed his officers' cadet training, acted as a physical training instructor before joining the 5th Devonshire Regiment in France as a 2nd Lieutenant.

The North American connection was a strong one with the Evans family. Frank and George had moved to Canada prior to the war, whilst Percival* was living in the USA until he, like Frank, became a Lance Corporal in a Canadian regiment. George and Percival emigrated to North America at the end of the war.

Another of the important village families is represented on the 'Roll of Duty' with William H Coulson*, the 'H' in this case stands for Henley. William was the nephew of William Henley who was running the Abbotskerswell cyder-making business at the time. William H's link to Abbotskerswell seems tenuous as he was living in London and working as a bank clerk in 1911, although his parents were living in Decoy. He had spent from 1909 to 1912 as a signaller in the RNVR in Chatham at the shore barracks known as HMS Pembroke. He re-enrolled in August 1914 but had soon moved to the officers section at Bembridge, Isle of Wight, where he became a Paymaster Lieutenant.

Two of the other larger village houses also featured officers; at the Manor House the surgeon Captain Dr Charles de Chanval* and at Heathcot Major Downward Lea Birch*, who was a real product of the Empire. He was born in Nice in France in 1863 and by 1881 he was at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich as a 'Gentleman Cadet' in the RGA. Whilst posted to India he married Mary Sidden who had been born in Madras and their son Cecil was also born there. Downward was posted back to England and by 1911 he was a RGA staff officer in York. Officers were mainly educated, gentlemen of means at the beginning of the war, this would soon change as the horrors of the battlefield developed.

Chapter 3

War Comes To Abbotskerswell

The threat of war must have seemed remote in the quiet Devon world to which Abbotskerswell belonged. The week before war broke out the 'Mid Devon Advertiser' devoted one small story on page 5 under the heading of 'Will the War Spread?' The main front page story was devoted to Mr Lock, a Kingskerswell man, involved in an Ulster Tour and whether he had signed the official report, together with a report on the ongoing and bitter Trusham quarry strike. However, the following week the story that would change the world broke and the headline now read: "ALL EUROPE FIGHTING - Belgium heroically bearing the first brunt"¹. It was a war that would prove to be the greatest bloodbath in history, costing 10 million lives in just over four years. This is the story that the villagers read telling of the outbreak of war:

The march of events during the week has been rapid. Late on Saturday night Germany declared war on Russia, who had ignored a twelve hours' ultimatum to discontinue mobilisation. France also received an ultimatum, the reply to which was unsatisfactory. In her case no declaration of war has been made, although German troops were reported to have crossed the frontier in large numbers. Late on Tuesday evening [4 August] England declared war on Germany.²

Interestingly still only two of the six columns on the front page were devoted to the war, with the other lead stories being 'Betting fines playing'3 card trick', the 'Trusham Quarry Strike' and a story on how local councils and tradesmen had a duty to avoid panic buying caused by the war. Pages 2 to 7 were the usual local material, whilst on page 8 there were reflective pieces on 'Mid Devon and War'; the topics included whether public houses should be closed, the impact on flour prices and Newton Abbot hospital offering beds for wounded servicemen. Life continued as normal in Abbotskerswell that week as it was reported that the annual outing of the Abbotskerswell sub-branch of the Women's Unionist & Tariff Reform Association had been postponed and that Rev J Phillips was covering for Revd Campbell's absence. The Parish Church collection for July was £1.2s.2½d (£1.11).

The 'Mid-Devon and Newton Times' (MDNT) however, devoted 2 of its 8 pages to the war, leading with 'ENGLAND AND GERMANY AT WAR. A Call to Arms. EARL KITCHENER ASKS FOR 100,000 MORE REGULARS'. The paper's owner was Theodore Mortimer and his philosophy was that:

... the town and district could have no more valuable asset than a newspaper recording fully its local occurrences, and not only so, but acting as a medium for extending knowledge of its to other parts of the country.³

For Abbotskerswell's history it is fortunate that both local papers chose to report fully what happened to its citizens rather than take the view of the 'Torquay Times' that it was better not to report unpleasant events in the war.

The view of Britain and its Empire's place in the world is clearly seen from this extract of Revd Campbell's sermon on 9th August:

the great British Empire occupied its position for a purpose; the Christian influence it exercises, and its missionary spirit. Now the test had come, and we will come out in triumph if found faithful to God.⁴

For many people their first sight of war was probably men 'joining up', enlisting in the armed forces, when the local boys answered their country's call. The MDA of 8 August carried a poster under the heading 'A CALL TO ARMS', in which Lord Kitchener, The Secretary of State for War, was asking for 100 000 men to join the army.

To those of us used to a world largely at peace, one of the questions we cannot help asking is why so many men rushed to enlist at the beginning of the war. Any war means danger and the risk of death, even if you believe that you are joining the world's greatest army, that you would be victorious and 'home by Christmas'. The answer may lie within the lives that ordinary Abbotskerswell men led, which were generally far from easy, perhaps best described as dull and drab. As the census figures showed, children died young and life expectancy was around 50; in 1911 33% of the villagers were born and would probably die in the village. The working day was long, hard and often dangerous, with poor wages, bland food and little variation in life. A good example of the dangers is shown when George Hart* had his leg broken when a large lump of clay fell on him whilst he was working at the Devon & Courtenay clay pits at Decoy in October. Entertainment was in the home or the public house for men; in Abbotskerswell there were three pubs for a village of only 468 people.



Mote Hole



So, fuelled by a biased press and fierce propaganda that reminded them that their country needed them and that duty called, men were offered dependable pay, regular food (usually better than at home), clothes and shelter. Add to that the prospect of adventure and foreign travel, then perhaps it is not surprising that they would "... become part of the infectious patriotic surge that was sweeping the land"⁵. Since wives were paid directly, with more money given for each child, they probably did not mind as much as we might think! The Newton Abbot Western Guardian carried an article on this subject in its edition of 3 September 1914 and explained that a soldier earned 1 shilling a day, their wife's 'separation allowance' was 1s 1d per day, with 2d per child. Imagine the impact on village men reading these emotive phrases from another MDA poster in December 1914: "he will be looked to and respected because he answered his country's call ... it is an Honour to belong to such an Army"⁶. By 12 September the MDA was producing a weekly list of those at war, under a 'Roll of Honour' banner, together with a 'NO WHITE FEATHERS PLEASE' list of people rejected/refused for enlistment. The popular message of the time was: 'don't lag – follow the flag'.

To enlist in 1914 the age range was 19 to 38 for fighting men, but by 1918 this had been widened to 18 to 50, but many young men lied to enlist. During WWI many under-age boys enlisted in the British army: "often via the Recruiting Sergeants advice when they volunteered their real age; to go around the corner & come back older - to give a false age."⁷

By 22 August a Recruiting Committee had been appointed in Newton Abbot, and at a Totnes recruiting meeting Major Kendall explained that every man physically fit should join the army to assist his country. In the spirit of the time he added that:

... girls ought to be ashamed to be seen with young fellows who should be at the front. They should persuade them to go and fight enemies of the country, and mothers should do the same.⁸

A popular song of the time went, 'we don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go'. By 12 December 28 Abbotskerswell men had joined up. It became a fashion for men in England not in uniform to be given white feathers by women, suggesting they were too cowardly to enlist. This became such a problem that the 'Silver War Badge' was created in 1916 and was worn by men who had been invalidated out of the forces because of injury. Major Lea Birch* was a recipient of this badge in 1918.

This was how the war came to Abbotskerswell in 1914. There were already local men in the armed forces, the professional servicemen who would be the first in action. The village already had officers, two of them the sons of Commander Robert Jukes-Hughes of Whiddon House. Edward Jukes-Hughes* was also a Commander in the RN, on an Astraea class cruiser, HMS Flora. She was a 4360 ton ship built in 1893, with 2 x 6inch and 8 x 4.7inch guns, with a top speed of 18 knots. His brother, Robert*, was a Captain in RMLI. The village had other men in the RN; Joseph Coombe*, Fred Lee* (See Appendix 4), and Harry Cowell* were all stokers, whilst Leonard Lake* was a gunner on board the pre-dreadnought battleship Lord Nelson. William Bond* was a gunner in the Royal Marine Artillery. Albert Cornish was a Company Quartermaster Sergeant who had served for 18 years in the Devonshire Regiment. He had seen action during the Boer War, including the famous 118 day Siege of Ladysmith, and had spent 11 years in India. George Cowell was a signaller and a sergeant in the Royal Engineers; in 1914 he was in India with his regiment.

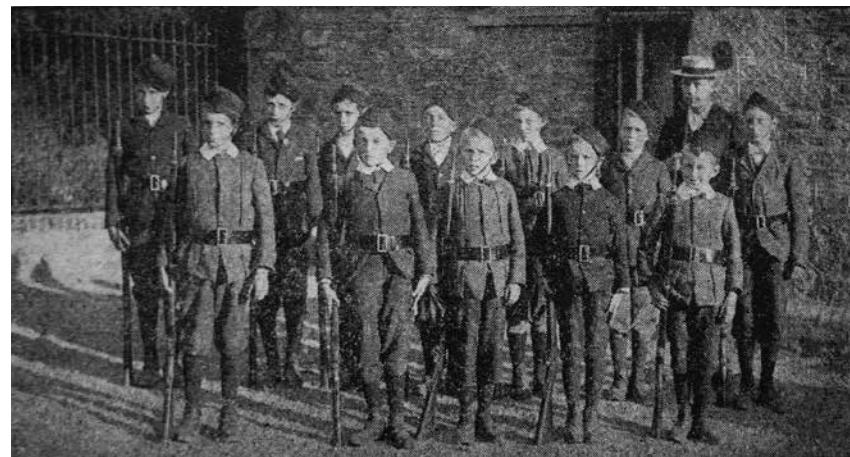


These men would soon be followed by those of the Territorial Army and the Royal Naval Reserve. One such man was Thomas Bond who was the publican at the Two Mile Oak Inn. He had spent 22 years in the RN and after leaving in 1903 joined the RNR, he was quickly mobilised in August 1914. It was to be from this group of men that Abbotskerswell's first two deaths would occur in September.

By September the war was increasingly becoming apparent in the village with men enlisting and war activities beginning. The Defence of the Realm Act was passed on 8 August 1914 and gave the government wide-ranging powers during the war period, which included the power to requisition buildings or land needed for the war effort, or to make regulations creating criminal offences. Which included flying kites, starting bonfires, feeding wild animals bread, and discussing naval and military matters. In the village one impact of the act was that pub opening times were restricted for the first time and alcoholic beverages were watered down. It became an offence to buy a person a drink, even for your wife!

Mrs Hare at Court Grange was soon involved in the war effort; she had already encouraged the school children in militaristic activities: "Mrs M Hare visited the school this afternoon and brought a dozen forage caps, and belts for the boys to wear when drilling. The rifles (2 doz) were also provided by Mrs Hare".⁹

A former pupil, Eric (but known as Mark) Rowe, brother of Bert and Alfred, later recalled the drill practice: "The headmaster used to take us for drill



about twice a week, and we wore pillbox hats."¹⁰ This amazing photograph shows the headmaster, Mr Keites, and the boys in 1906. Incredibly the rifles turned up 50 years later in 1954, when they were discovered in the roof space of the school when plumbing work was being carried out. They turned out to be pre-Boer War single shot .45 calibre 'Martini' rifles which were hastily removed by the local police.

Mrs Hare was a great supporter of the war effort. The MDA grandly announced: 'ABBOTSKERSWELL RANGE OPENED' because she had opened "a splendid out-door rifle range with benches at 25 & 50 yards."¹¹ It seems likely that this range was in the old limekiln quarry near the entrance to the main drive. She also provided rifles and ammunition with rifle club matches becoming a common activity on the range throughout the war. In March 1915 the Abbotskerswell Rifle Club defeated Mr P Major's Team 531 to 515, with 3 of the team destined to join the war; G Lee*, G Stoneman* and F Coombe*. In May Mrs Hare invited the members of Newton Abbot Volunteer Defence Force to the rifle range at Court Grange and it was reported that the Newton Abbot Defence Force was involved in: "a march to the range at Abbotskerswell today, leaving the Butter Market at 3 pm"¹². Mrs Hare also provided four beds for the wounded at Court Grange.

Mrs Hare's daughter Ethel, Lady Perrott, was also involved in war work. In 1901 she had married Sir Herbert Perrott who was the Chief Secretary of the St. John Ambulance Association. By 1914 Ethel was also heavily involved with the Association, acting as both the Superintendent-in-Chief of the Nursing Corps and Lady Commandant-in-Chief of the women's Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD). In these capacities she wrote to the MDA's 'Women's Work in War Time' section to extol the virtues of the role of women in the St Johns Association. She explained how they were shipping goods, such as socks, shirts and scarves, to the front, providing 100 nurses in France, preparing the VAD to look after the returning wounded soldiers and fundraising for their cause.

At a public meeting on 17 August it was reported that the Lord Lieutenant of Devon had requested contributions for a Devonshire Patriotic Fund; Abbotskerswell formed a committee with Mr Wilton from Laburnum Farm elected as Chairman, Mrs Buckpitt of Court Farm and Miss Buckpitt from Manor Farm being the collectors. By 28 November £31.6s.5d (£31.32) had been collected in the parish with the money being used to support families in need in the area.

The MDA began a weekly column naming those who had enlisted and two local lads responded immediately; Walter Hawkins* and Samuel Cowell* enlisted on 24 August. In October it reported that Archie Hole* of 2 Sunny Bank had joined the ASC and that Dr C. de C. Pellier*, a surgeon living in the Manor House: "has offered his services to the War Office, and has been accepted"¹³. He had also been the surgeon to the Abbotskerswell Division of the Newton St John Ambulance Corps and in March 1915 he wrote to the village Corps superintendent Mr Jewell:

Just a line to let you know I am keeping fit and enjoying my work and life generally. We manage to keep merry and bright for twenty-four hours in the day, so have not much to grumble at. We have had a lot of snow and wind today. I hope that Mid-Devon keeps on sending in recruits properly. Please remember me to all the men with kind regards.¹⁴

He was serving aboard the Royal Army Medical Corps' hospital ship *HMHS Salta* which was a converted French passenger liner. Later in the war she would hit a mine off Le Havre and sink with the loss of 130 lives.

By the end of the war nearly a 100 men from Abbotskerswell had served in the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

Chapter 4

A Village At War

The scene was set for a change in life that would touch every person in Abbotskerswell, since around 90 men leaving the village meant change for those left behind. There would be food shortages; women taking on roles traditionally held by men; grief and worry; and of course funerals and memorial services. However, there would also be pride that ordinary village men had served their 'King and Country' with honour and duty; their lives would never be the same.

1914

In the fifth week of the War our first death occurred to a well-known figure in the parish, a publican and ex RN sailor. Thomas Bond was listed as the publican at the Two Mile Oak Inn in Kelly's Directory of 1914, where he lived with his wife Mary, following a career in the Royal Navy. Thomas Honeywill Bond was born in Ipplepen in 1864, the fifth child of the eleven born to Henry and Susan. Born between 1856 and 1874 their other children were William, John, George, Edwin, Emma (who died the same year), Henry, Owen, Susan, Emma and James. In 1871 the family was living in Dainton Village, with Henry working as a railway porter. Henry died in 1877 and by 1881 Susan and four of the children were living in Ipplepen.

Thomas joined the navy in 1881 at the age of 17, his service number was 116205. His RN Record Sheet described him as: "5 feet 2 inches tall, brown hair, blue eyes with a fresh complexion"¹⁵, although he did grow to 5'5". His first base was *HMS Impregnable*, a training establishment at Devonport, where he learned his basic seamanship skills. He then joined his first ship, *HMS Implacable*, which was a training ship for boys under Commander Thomas Jackson. Next he joined *HMS Lion*, an old 80 gun ship of the line, although she did have screw propulsion after 1859. His first major posting on the broadside ironclad, *HMS Achilles* in 1883. During his 22 years of service Thomas served on eighteen ships, including the iron clad battleship *HMS Dreadnought*. He was a stoker who attained the rank of Petty Officer 1st Class, perhaps because

whilst in the RN his conduct was always described as very good. His last ship was the base ship at Devonport, *HMS Vivid*, an iron screw propelled yacht.

Thomas had married Mary Hall in Newton Abbot in September 1899 when he was 35 and Mary 39, they did not have any children. The 1901 Census notes that he and Mary were living in Newton Abbot at 13 Bowden Hill, Wolborough, with Bessie Honeywill (a RN sailor's wife and presumably a relation of Thomas'). He left the navy on 5 December 1903 with a navy pension and joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) at Devonport in February 1904. It was during this period in his life that he became the innkeeper at The Two Mile Oak Inn. However, the RN called him again in August 1914, when the mobilisation of the RNVR began, and Thomas rejoined as a PO 1st Class. He was assigned to *HMS Ocean* which was a Canopus class pre-dreadnought battleship launched in 1898 at Devonport, the first large armoured ship to be built there. *HMS Ocean* was 431 feet in length, 74 feet beam with a draught of 26 feet and weighed 13160 tons. She had a crew of 882 men and a top speed of 18 knots. Being a battleship she had a 1 inch armoured deck, four turret mounted 12 inch calibre guns and twelve 6 inch calibre guns plus four torpedo tubes. In 1914 there was a British naval base at Queenstown, on the southern tip of Ireland. *HMS Ocean* was sent to the base to prepare to tackle the German battlecruisers that were expected to be used as commerce raiders against allied shipping.



Thomas Bond's death was unusual; officially his death is described as: "killed or died by means other than disease, accident or enemy action"². However, scribbled on the bottom corner of his RN record it states: "DD 6 September 1914 at RN Hospital Queenstown from fracture of the skull"³, he was 50 years old. We are indebted to the Local Studies Library in Cork for helping us to understand his death because they trawled the local newspapers to find this explanation:

Accident In Cork Harbour – Stoker Killed

Queenstown, Monday night. Last evening, while engaged in coaling a naval vessel, a stoker accidentally fell down the hold a distance of about 37 feet, fracturing the base of his skull, death occurring very soon afterwards. He grasped a rope when falling and to this is attributed the severity of the accident. It appears he was a reservist named Thomas Bond of the Chatham Division, and had a long length of service to his credit. He was removed to the Naval Hospital at Haulbowline and the police have communicated with the Coroner.⁴



Quartermaster Sergeant in the Devonshire Regiment's 1st Battalion. His photograph shows the pride in his profession and reveals his red sash, which is a particular infantry distinction and has its origins in the slings used to carry the wounded off the field of battle. The crossed rifles surmounted by a crown on each sleeve show him to be a musketry instructor.

Albert was born in Bideford in September 1877; his mother Emily was unmarried, and there is no record of his father. The 1881 Census records that Albert, Emily and a cousin, Annie, were in the Hillhead Workhouse in Stratton near Bude. In 1888 Emily married Robert Hole, a farm labourer, from Stratton; they would have three children Stanley, Archibald and Lilian. By 1891 Albert was an agricultural labourer living in the home of his employer at Launcells in Cornwall and in 1896 he joined the Devons. In the late years

Thomas was buried in Queenstown (now Cobh) Civil Cemetery, County Cork. In his will he left: "to Mary Elizabeth Bond widow. Effects £31"⁵, Mary died in March 1916 aged 58. Interestingly Thomas Bond is one of two Abbotskerswell men who appear on Ipplepen's war memorial, presumably because of his family links there.

The War had arrived in rural Devon. The local press was now carrying many more war stories and the headlines reveal a changing view of the war: "'German Atrocities', 'Germans fire on Red Cross', 'Germans fire on ambulances in Broad daylight'⁶. The same paper also revealed that the total number of recruits sent from Newton Abbot Recruiting Office had reached 293.

The next fatality of an Abbotskerswell man occurred on 19 September, this time it was a highly experienced career soldier. Albert Cornish was an army man; he joined the Devonshire Regiment in his late teens and had 18 years' service behind him when war broke out; his service number was 4878. He had served in the Boer War, and was involved in the Siege of Ladysmith and also spent 11 years in India. By 1914 he was a Company

of the 19th century the Hole family moved to Abbotskerswell with the 1901 census recording them as living at 1 Ellicot's Court (Rose Cottages) with their three children; daughter Lillian died in 1902 aged 8. By 1911 they had moved to Elm Tree Cottage and by September 1914 on to 2 Sunny Bank, with son Archie*, an unemployed baker, and Stanley a shop assistant in outfitting. It was in the village that Albert would meet his future wife, Jessie Hellyer (nee Manning). The Mannings were an Abbotskerswell family and following the death of her first husband after only two years of marriage, Jessie had returned to the village, living at 4 Rose Cottages. Her second marriage, to Albert, was in 1909 in Abbotskerswell and by 1911 they were living in the Lucknow Barracks in Tidworth, Wiltshire. Tidworth was, and still is, an army barracks town:

there are churches, stores of every kind – in fact it is a regular town in itself, with even theatres. There are married men's quarters, and some families still live here, the children going to school right in the barracks. You couldn't imagine such a place – a regular little town.⁷

Their first child Hilda was born whilst Albert was stationed at Tidworth, but by 1914 the Devons 1st Battalion had become the garrison force on Jersey and it was there that Sidney and Edna were born. When Albert went to France his family joined his mother in Abbotskerswell, at 2 Sunny Bank.



In August, when war was declared, the Devons had 450 active service personnel and soon completed their mobilisation and were awaiting their orders to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). On the 21st they embarked on SS *Reindeer* for Le Havre. Here they were joined by the regimental transport together with 5 officers, 10 serving soldiers and 569 reservists under Captain Smyth-Osbourne. They left for the front on 8 September and by 11 were recorded marching across the Marne Battlefield, taking their first German prisoner on 12th. By 14th they could hear heavy firing near the River Aisne as they moved up to Vailly where they dug in on the 14/15th as a reserve force. On 16th they were shelled by the Germans and suffered 40 dead as they continued to improve their trenches. The Germans continued to shell

the trenches daily and their snipers and machine gunners were active, it was during this period, on 19th, that Albert was killed. A letter from a regimental colleague explained to his family that: "Cornish was knocked over by a shell"⁹, he was 36 years old. Albert was buried at Vailly British Cemetery in France and is also commemorated on the gravestone of his half-sister Lilian Hole, in the Abbotskerswell churchyard, with the reminder that 'He died a hero'.

When studying the causes of death of 'The Eighteen' it is necessary to understand the terminology that the army used, because they did not actually explain a death in any detail. The army normally used one of three phrases: "killed in action" for those who died as a direct result of enemy action, "died of wounds" meaning the person died as direct result of being wounded after arriving at a medical unit, and "died" for those who died from a non-military cause such as illness or disease. It is for this reason that letters to the parents from officers and friends explaining the death are so useful, as in Albert's case.



The third casualty of 1914 was 32 year old William Joseph Tubb. William was born in Colchester in late 1881 into an army family, his father William was a Colour Sergeant in the Devonshire Regiment who was married to Mary. They had seven children between 1880 and 1896; Jane, William, Ethel, Violet, Lucy, Mabel and Charles*. In 1891 the family were living at the South Devon Militia Depot (Egg Buckland Fort), Plympton St Mary. Mary died in 1898 and William Snr married a widow, Virtue Burridge, in 1899 when he seems to have left the army and they moved to Abbotskerswell where Virtue's first husband

had died. Like his father, William joined the army with the Devons and since he does not appear on the 1901 Census and he served in South Africa it appears that he had begun service by then. By 1911 he had left the army, although he was a reservist, and was living at South Down with his sister Jane Norton, her husband Frank and his younger brother Charles. William was working at one of the local stone quarries as a labourer, whilst Charles was a jobbing gardener.

At the beginning of the war reservists were recalled to the colours and William re-enlisted in Plymouth with the 1st Battalion of the Devons, his service number was 5036. William's route to the Western Front was the same as Albert Cornish's as they were both in the 1st Battalion. He arrived in France from Jersey and soon had regular contact with the enemy but the Devons quickly began to incur heavy losses. They were involved in the Battle of La

Bassée which became part of the German's 'Race to the Sea', when the two sides were still engaged in mobile warfare on the Western Front. This began in September 1914 in Champagne and ended at the North Sea in November. When the German advance stalled, the opponents attempted to outflank each other through north-eastern France and the nature of operations then changed to trench warfare. The BEF were driven back as the German Army occupied La Bassée and Neuve Chapelle. In mid-October, the British took over the initiative and recaptured Givenchy but not La Bassée. Thanks to the arrival of the Lahore Division of the Indian Corps, the British held off the further German attacks until early November. The 1st Devons' war diary describes an action on 29/30th near Festubert church in which 13 men were killed; William was killed in these exchanges. The official documents, including his Will, record his death as 'killed in action' on 30 October and that he was buried on the battlefield. The consequence of this is that William has no known grave and is listed on the Menin Gate. The 'Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing' is a war memorial in Ypres, Belgium dedicated to the British and Commonwealth soldiers who were killed in the Ypres Salient of World War I and whose graves are unknown. Following the Menin Gate Memorial opening in 1927, the citizens of Ypres wanted to express their gratitude towards those who had given their lives for Belgium's freedom, so every evening at 20:00 buglers from the local fire brigade close the road which passes under the Memorial and sound the *Last Post*. His obituary explained that:

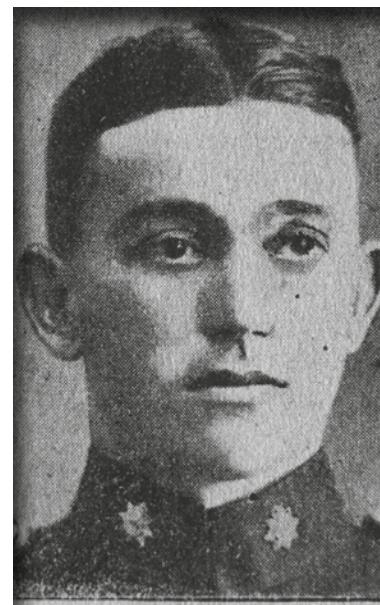
the residents of Abbotskerswell will regret to learn of the death
of Private Wm Tubb he was very popular in the district.⁹

The War had claimed its third village casualty; it was becoming clear that the lads would not be home by Christmas, and that this would be a long and costly war.

OLDS S E	TOMLIN G.	HARDING J. T.	SILICK W. I.	SANSUM G. W.
S W	TOMLINSON G. J.	HARRIS C. T.	SMALLDON T.	SCOTT C.
J.	TONKS M.	HARVEY F. T.	SMITH M.	SHORTER A.
J.	TOON G.	HELLIER O. J.	SMITH R.	SIGGS F. C.
J.	TROLLEY R.	HENLEY W.	STAGEL E.	SKINNER C. H.
W.	TRUE J. W.	HICKS B.	STAPLETON S. J.	TRENTER T. W.
E.	TURNER P.	HODGE S.	STENTIFORD F.	VALIANT H.
W.	TURTON H.	HOLE R. G.	STEVENS J. G.	WILLIAMS W. H.
Z	WADDINGTON J. C.	HOWE W. J.	SULLIVAN R.	
Z	WADE P. R.	HUBBARD C. F.	SUTTON E. C.	
Z	WALKER A. J.	HURFORD F. C.	SWEENEY P.	
Z	WALKER W.	HURRELL P.	TAPSCOTT A. S.	
H. T.	WALLACE W.	HURRELL S.	TINCKELL H.	
	WALTHAM A.	JEWELL W.	TOMS C.	
	WALTON C. W.	JONES F. C.	TOSSELL A. J.	
	WARD G.	KEATES W.	TREAYS J.	
	WARD W.	KEMP W.	TUBB W.	
	WATSON J. H.	KEMP W. J.	TYRELL G. H.	
	WATTAM J.	KENNEDY T.	WILKEY W. R.	
	WAUMSLEY C. E.	LAMBERT E. G.	WILLEY F. C.	
	WEATHERHOG F.	LAWRENCE C. W.	WILLIAMS R. W.	
	WEED R. J.	LEAR W.	WILLS A.	
	WELLS G. W.	MANNING A. C. H.	WOOLFRIES E. C.	

1915

The reality of war was beginning to be seen by the villagers with the return of wounded servicemen. In January, village members of the Newton Ambulance Corps waited until eleven o'clock at night for a train carrying the sick and wounded and transported them to Newton Hall. The villagers then walked home.



It was on the 3 April 1915 that the MDA carried its next obituary, that of Fred Hawkins of 3 Hillside Cottages. Fred was 26 years old and was a born and bred Abbotskerswell man. Edward Frederick Hawkins was born in Abbotskerswell in 1889 the sixth child of the ten that Harry and Harriet produced between 1879 and 1900. The other children were: Ellen, Arthur, Charles, Annie, Harry (who will reappear in the Roll of Honour story), Albert, Walter*, Alice and Ethel. The family had lived in Rock Cottage for many years before moving to the new stone houses on the main Totnes road. In 1911 Harry Snr was a stone quarryman with son Albert, whilst Walter was a labourer at the cider works.

Fred and his brothers attended the village Elementary Council School, but unlike his brothers he eventually moved away from the village. After leaving school he worked for William Buckpitt at Court Farm but then in 1909 he joined the army. Fred was a single man and joined the Devonshire Regiment's 2nd Battalion in which he was a private; he carried the service number of 9009. He served in Malta and Egypt for 4 years but returned to Europe in late 1914, having 4 days leave at home at the time. Although he was in the Devons he was attached to The Royal Engineers as signaller when he died on 10 March 1915. His death was recorded as 'killed in action', but his officer, Quarter Master T Frost, wrote to Fred's parents describing their son's death and this gives an amazing insight into trench life as well as the description of his death. It is produced here in full from the copy that his parents placed in the MDA¹⁰.

Dear Mrs Hawkins,

I have a very difficult letter to write. It is about your son Fred, of the Devon Regiment.

During the recent heavy fighting at Neuve Chapelle he was attached to my company. You have probably been informed by now of what happened. I will try to tell you just how it occurred.

Fred and a friend of his called Shoebridge, of this company, were together in a small shelter, in one of the most shell-swept positions of the battlefield, quietly at work with a telephone instrument. They were doing most important work, keeping the telegraph going between the company, on that part of the field, and the General, who was directing operations. They had been doing that for three days and nights, and were taking it in turn to sleep.

Shoebridge was on duty, and had got some breakfast ready, and was just going to call Fred to come on duty and have some breakfast, when a great shell came right through the shelter, and, without bursting, hit poor Fred on the chest. He was sleeping peacefully and didn't wake again on this earth.

He was a good lad, as good and brave a boy as ever fought for old England. It may be some comfort to you to know that Fred was buried in a little cemetery a little way north-west of Neuve Chapelle, where other Devon men were buried, and where other Devon men who are with us still have planted daffodils and other flowers. No one knows better than a Devon man how to honour the graves of their brave sons.

A neat wooden cross has been put over Fred's grave, and flowers planted there. We miss him tremendously. Devonshire has lost many brave men, and when peace comes I hope Devonshire will remember what it cost, and live up to it –

Yours very truly,

Q.M.T. FROST



This is indeed a moving tribute to Fred Hawkins, and the graphic description of the shell was presumably made so that his parents realised that the shell had not obliterated him. Frederick died on the first day of the Battles of Neuve Chapelle and Artois, a British offensive in the Artois region, on 10 March 1915. The ultimate aim of the battle was to rupture the German lines and then exploit this with a rush on the Aubers Ridge. The Devons broke through at Neuve Chapelle where they lost 24 men killed, including Fred. On 12 March the Germans unsuccessfully counter-attacked but the campaign was abandoned on 13 March. The British succeeded in recapturing just over 2 km of lost ground. An eye witness account described how the British soldiers were eager

to be involved: "those, who owing to the crowded condition of the trenches, could not get room to fire, struggled and pleaded with their more fortunate brethren for a 'place in the sun'"¹¹. The account for the paper also sadly noted: "... we had to pay a heavy price for our victory. The losses, however, have not in any respect lessened the keenness of our troops to have another battle-royal with the foe."¹² Fred was buried with his comrades in Aubers Ridge British Cemetery, Aubers in France.

This must have been a shattering blow for Harry and Harriet, especially since only 13 days later their oldest child, Ellen, died aged 37. Sadly these would not be the only deaths that they would have to bear during the War.

In the village the war continued as more men joined up and the country moved onto a war footing. In May two ex Abbotskerswell choir members who had joined 'The Canadian Contingent' visited home on the way to the front following their training. The return of former Devon Regiment men Arthur Prowse, son of Frederick the blacksmith, and now a member of the Canadian Ambulance Corps and Pte Fred Yeo of the London (Ontario) Canadian Forces were reported in the "Round the Division" section of the MDA. The following week under its Roll of Honour banner it reported:

the following have joined the forces at Newton during the week,
in Kitchener's Army, William Francis Palfrey, Abbotskerswell,
Mechanical Transport Driver ...¹³

An interesting enlistment in July was that of William Webber* of 3 Park View, the brother of Royal Engineer Thomas* from Rose Cottages; he joined the RFA on 14 July, the problem was that he was only 16 years old. On his attestation papers he gave his age as 19 years 10 months and the recruiting officer happily accepted this lie.

Normal life continued for many in the village; this is reflected with the marriage of Louisa Bulley of Lang Bridge Farm to Fred Croydon. It was also reported that William Holmes had joined the Royal Engineers and Miss Lang (probably of Oakleigh) was working hard on collecting the 'Eggs For Wounded' fund; a year later she was credited with having collected 4 830 at an average of 91 per week. The eggs were possibly sent to VAD hospital. Ethel Webber of 5 Rose Cottages was also doing her bit for the war effort by sending eggs and writing to the wounded soldiers. As the War progressed with no hint of success the local mood hardened. At a Newton Abbot Urban District Council meeting Councillor Hearder proposed that on 4 August 1915 at the Tower:

that on the anniversary of our declaration of a righteous war, this meeting of the inhabitants of Newton Abbot records its inflexible determination to continue to a victorious end the struggle in maintenance of those ideals of liberty and justice which are the common and sacred cause of the Allies.¹⁴ (This Resolution was carried)

Seven months after the news of Private Hawkins' death came the next sad news, and a desperately sad story it proved to be. The youngest member of The Roll of Honour was reported to have died in Egypt; this was 17 year old Charles John Symons. He was born in Newton Abbot in 1898, the third of four children to Albert* and Margaret Ellen; the other children being Lily, Horace* and Henry. In 1901 the family were living in Enfield, with Albert working as a cabinet maker. Charles' is a confusing story: his grandfather, also called Charles, married Ellen Prowse the Abbotskerswell postmistress when he was 77 years old and she was 51. He had been married to Cordelia for many years, whilst Ellen was a spinster. Whether the young Charles ever lived in Abbotskerswell is uncertain as he is listed as having been born in Newton Abbot and his appearance on the war memorial is probably linked to his parents. The Symons seemed to suffer marital problems over the following years because the 1911 Census shows Albert* was living in Limehouse, London, with his sister and working as a painter and decorator, whilst Margaret Ellen was living with her mother in Wolborough. Horace* lived and worked on a farm at Starcross, and Lily was in service to a surgeon in Wolborough. Charles Jnr and Henry were living at the St Leonard's

Cottage Home for boys, 64 St Leonard's Terrace (Road as it is today). The Cottage Home was actually an 'outpost' of the Newton Abbot Workhouse run by a widow, Emily Cole, with 11 boys aged 5 - 15. These isolated homes, or 'Scattered Homes' as they became more commonly known, placed small groups of children in ordinary houses scattered around Newton Abbot; in 1914 there were seven such homes. The children in scattered homes attended ordinary local schools and wore a khaki uniform, which made them stand out as scattered home boys, and tended to mean they were shunned and bullied at school. When Charles left St Leonards Terrace he began to learn the confectionary business in Dawlish, but during early 1915 he enlisted.

With a background such as this it is perhaps not surprising that Charles volunteered to join the army; he joined as bugler/drummer boy in the Devonshire Regiment's 2/5th Battalion, his service number being 2940. He would have trained as a drummer at the Regimental Depot in Exeter after enlistment and then be sent out to one of the Battalions from the age of about 16 or 17:

boys between 12 and 17 years of age may, with the authority of the district officer commanding and the consent of parents or guardians, be enrolled as trumpeters, buglers or bandsmen, or for the purpose of being trained as such.¹⁵



St Leonards
Scattered Home



ABBOTSKERSWELL DURING WORLD WAR 1 • The Story of a Devon Village at War

All Drummers were taught to play the bugle and either a drum or a fife. Although they paraded with the regimental band they were not attached to companies in the field. Bugles were used as a means of communication in barracks but rarely in battle by WW1.

The 2/5th Devons were sent to Egypt as part of the Egypt Expeditionary Force in September 1915 and disbanded there in June 1916. As Charles volunteered to go to Egypt it seems likely that he was on attachment from the 1/5th. Illness and disease were major problems for British servicemen in the Middle East and when the MDA carried an obituary to Charles it noted he died of dysentery on 18 October, aged 17 years. He was buried in Cairo War Memorial Cemetery. A later piece in the MDA, included a photograph of his grave taken by Lieutenant-Colonel R E Tucker of the Devons, together with the comment: "the headstone was erected by the men of the regiment"¹⁶. Interestingly it also mentions that his father Albert* had just been invalided out of the army and his brother, Horace, was in the Royal Flying Corps. Albert and Ellen had moved into Abbotskerswell during the war, living at 1 Bridge Cottage, and are buried in the village churchyard; their gravestone carries the inscription to Margaret Ellen of "a devoted mother". All three children also continued to live locally: Horace* married a Wolborough girl but died in India soon after; Lily married Alfred Julyan a Cornish sailor; and his brother Henry married Violet Norton (daughter of Frank).



By late 1915 the numbers of volunteers enlisting was falling and to avoid conscription a National Registration Act created a register of the number of men still available; they were targeted using the skills of advertising with posters, public meetings, tales of German atrocities, and the threat of shame. The Parish Council were asked to: "submit ... the names of persons who they are of the opinion would be willing to distribute and collect, gratuitously, the necessary forms, in the parish."¹⁷

The 'Derby Scheme' used door-to-door visits to gather men to 'attest' to serve if needed, with a promise that bachelors would be called up before married men. In November the Abbotskerswell Parish Council was accused of being unpatriotic by refusing to canvass for recruits under the scheme. Their response was to point out that it simply was not their job and that two non-councillors had completed the task.

Evidence that the country was on a complete war footing was shown in October when in one week eleven men were named as having enlisted. Interestingly Arthur Huggett* was rejected after failing to pass the army test, as nearly 40% of men did. However, standards changed as the war went on and he was eventually allowed to join the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. He would be listed as being in the Labour Corps in the Absent Voters List for 1919 since this had been created during the war to provide the manual labour that such a vast war required. By 1918 Arthur was one of 390 000 men in the Corps, many of them from the outposts of the Empire. As in his case the British soldiers in the Labour Corps were rated below the 'Category A: General Service' requirements and physical standards of the Military service Act that were needed to be a fighting soldier.

1916

There were only to be two deaths in 1915, but 1916 would prove to be much worse as the war intensified. Life during the war had to continue and the marriage in February of Harry Cowell*, who was serving in the RN, to Miss Florence Holmes a domestic servant in Teignmouth, reflected this.

It was the spring offensives of the allies that brought the next victim for an Abbotskerswell family; Frank Evans from Aller Vale. Augustus Francis Ridout Evans, but known as Frank, was born in Babbacombe on 11 August 1891, a son for Frank and Antonia. Frank Evans Snr was born and bred in Kensington, London and he married Antonia Agnes in 1880; they had eight children between George's birth in 1882 and that of Reginald in 1898; the other children were Agnes, Muriel, Percival, Nesta and John. Frank Snr moved to

St Marychurch to become an art pottery manufacturer and by 1911 he was the accountant at the Aller Pottery, living at Moor Park, Aller Vale (which no longer exists). Frank Jnr trained as a surveyor and had decided to take his skills to the 'New World' and like a number of Abbotskerswell young men he went to Canada. By 1914 he had registered as a Canadian citizen.



Canada had responded quickly to the needs of the British Empire, forming the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF). The 2nd Battalion of the CEF was created and comprised of local militia from many regions of Ontario. Frank enlisted into the CEF in Quebec on 20.09.1914, eventually becoming a Lance Corporal in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (Eastern Ontario Regiment), his service number was 6224. On his attestation papers it is noted that he had previous military experience with 8th Royal Rifles of Quebec and the British Columbian Horse.

The PPCLI was a unique regiment in that it was raised and financed by businessman A. Hamilton Gault in August 1914, and was the first Canadian Regiment into the field.

The battalion boarded the S.S. *Cassandra* in Quebec City and left Canada on 3 October as part of a convoy carrying 32,000 Canadian soldiers and initially landed at Plymouth. The CEF was soon involved in some of the heaviest fighting of the war, they were often used in such situations because of their reputation as having fearless qualities. It was in such a battle that Frank died on 14 April 1916 at the age of 24. This was at the Battle of the St Eloi Craters, fought between 27 March and 19 April. The battle began when three huge underground mines were exploded under the German positions which vaporised the unfortunate troops. The intention of such tactics was to both kill the troops in the line but also to disorientate the enemy long enough to allow the allied forces to breakthrough. This was not the first time this tactic had been used at St Eloi: "Berlin reports that south of St Eloi vigorous fighting at close quarters developed in the craters exploded by the British and also in the adjoining lines."¹⁸

However, German reserves countered and it became a confused hand-to-hand fight in a muddy lunar landscape. The Canadians took over the British line on 3 April and soon found themselves under heavy fire with men drowning in the water filled shell and mine craters, bogged down in the quagmire. The regimental war diary showed that on 14 April snipers were active and that shelling caused several casualties. They held on until the 19 April before withdrawing; the Division lost 1,373 casualties. Frank is



recorded as having died 'in trenches near Hooge'¹⁹. He was buried at the Menin Road South Military Cemetery in Belgium.

The Evans family answered their country's call with four sons joining up, they became honoured and decorated soldiers, with both George* and Reginald* being awarded the Military Cross for bravery. The MDA described Reginald's career from private to battalion scout and then to a commission in The Devon Regiment:

He was after a short time invalided home with severe shell-shock and trench fever, but once more went to France when he had recovered. He was wounded twice last October, and gained his M.C. for practically clearing a trench by himself.²⁰

The details of his M.C. award were published later:

The decoration was gained for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, when in command of his platoon. When a pill-box caused many casualties to the advancing troops he immediately organised an attack and captured it against strong opposition.²¹

As with many families the war years would have been filled with fear, sadness, but also with great pride for Frank and Antonia Evans.



Within a week the village was to suffer another death, that of a newcomer to the community, John Quint Hayman, who died on 21 April 1916 at the age of 23. John was born in Uxbridge on 11 May 1892; his family lived in Uxbridge as his father was an Inspector in the Metropolitan Police. His parents were Samuel Quint and Sarah Anne who had four children between 1879 and 1893: William, Annie, Samuel and John. In 1901 the family were living in The Police Station in Norwood together with a general servant to help out. Strangely John was living with his aunt and uncle, Frank and Hannah Dart in Ipplepen, even though he was only eight at the time.

However, by 1911 Sarah had died and Frank, now a police pensioner, and John, together with a housekeeper, had moved into the village at Abbotsvale near to Town Farm.

The 1911 Census shows John to be a single man who was a butcher, which probably explains why he joined the Army Service Corps (ASC), in which he was a sergeant in 232 company, which was part of the 34th Division Train of Supply. His service number was S4/039103. The ASC was responsible for transport, supply of food and everything else an army needs apart from ammunition and military equipment, as well as for army administration. John joined the colours soon after the outbreak of war and at the time of his death was serving in Egypt. The Turks had unsuccessfully attacked the Suez Canal in February 1915, however, concern for the security of the canal meant that over 70,000 troops were stationed in Egypt throughout the war. The Torquay Times commented on this attack in its "Torquay at War" section:

A Turco-German force has made an attempt to cross the Suez Canal. It ended as they must have feared it would end. They were easily repulsed losing 16 killed and wounded and 40 prisoners. Our casualties were 3 wounded.²²

The main ASC supply base for Egypt and the Levant was situated in Alexandria. Officially John was listed as 'died', but it is another MDA obituary that provides the detail to explain his death from pneumonia. The obituary relates the sad story:

He was taken ill with appendicitis in March, but the operation was successful, and he wrote on March 21st saying he was going on well, and looking forward to be in England shortly. On Saturday came a service postcard, dated April 15th, saying he was going on well, but by the same post an official letter came from the War Office notifying his death on April 21st.²³



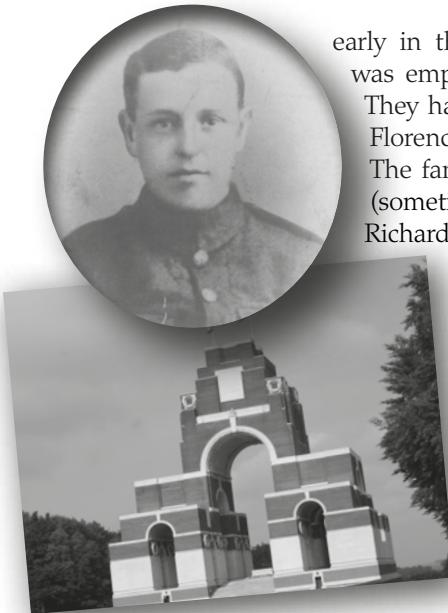
When John was ill his father had received a letter from John's commanding officer who commented that: "he could not speak too highly of him: he had always been his most reliable man."²⁴ John was buried at Ismailia War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt, which is close to the Suez Canal and Port Said where he died. After the war his father commissioned a marble plaque commemorating his service which is hung on the nave wall in Abbotskerswell

Church; it serves to remind generations of villagers that he died 'For King and Country'. There was happier news in June for Mr Hayman when his oldest son William, a Detective Inspector in the CID who was seconded to HM Dockyard Portsmouth, was presented to King George V.

On 31 May and 1 June 1916 the only major sea battle of the War took place in the North Sea, off the Danish coast near to Jutland. In the battle, which was the only time in The Great War that British and German battleships clashed, the British lost 14 ships and the Germans 11. Amazingly Abbotskerswell had six men on duty on those days; officers, stokers and gunners. Captain Evan Jukes-Hughes* was a royal marine aboard the battleship *HMS Revenge* (see Appendix 3 for details on Jutland ships listed here) acting as the turret officer of YTurret. During the battle she became the flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney. *Revenge* was engaged with the enemy for an hour and a half, suffering no casualties or battle damage. His brother, Lieutenant-Commander Edward Jukes-Hughes*, was a gunnery officer on board *HMS Minotaur*. She was an armoured cruiser and flagship of Rear Admiral Herbert Heath, but was not directly involved in the battle and did not fire her guns. William Bond* was also aboard *Minotaur*; he had joined the Royal Marine Artillery as a gunner in the late 1910s. Harry Cowell* was a leading stoker on the light cruiser *HMS Dublin* which sustained 13 hits that killed three and wounded 27 men, (was this when Harry lost his eye?) However, she fired 117 shells in reply and is credited with the sinking of a German deStoryer. Fred Lee* was a chief stoker on the battleship *HMS Royal Oak* which during the battle fired 122 shells but despite being straddled by a German salvo she was not hit. Joseph Coombe* was a career sailor aboard the battleship *HMS Colossus*; he was a stoker. *Colossus* entered the battle 17th in her line and was acting as the flagship of Rear-Admiral Ernest Gaunt. She fired shells on two occasions and was hit twice but suffered little damage with only 6 men injured. Fortunately none of our men were on ships that were lost, where the loss of life was huge; when *HMS Indefatigable* blew up there were 2 survivors from her crew of 1,019.

Sadly the loss of life created by war was not the only cause of anguish in the village as on 9 July Herbert Prowse, the 17 year old son of local blacksmith and publican at the Butchers Arms Fred, was drowned in a swimming accident in the River Dart at Holne. Herbert was an active member of the Abbotskerswell Division of the St John's Ambulance Brigade and a regular volunteer at the Newton VA Hospital.

Later in July it was the turn of another well-known Abbotskerswell family to suffer the anguish of a lost son and it would not be their only sacrifice in the war. Richard and Bessie Rowe moved to Abbotskerswell from Staverton



early in the twentieth century and by 1911 he was employed as a labourer in a stone quarry. They had six children between 1896 and 1909: Florence, Herbert, Eric, Alfred, George and Edna. The family lived at 2 Mount Pleasant Cottage (sometimes known as Odlehill Cottage). It was Richard Herbert John Rowe, but known as Bert, who became the focus in July 1916. He was born in Staverton in early 1897, attended Abbotskerswell village school and was employed as a farm labourer when war broke out. He soon enlisted at Exeter and became a private in the Devonshire Regiment's 8th Battalion having the service number of 10369. He had been wounded in the Devon's action at Loos and had "been on home leave a short while ago"²⁵.

Bert was killed on 20 July at the age of 19 years. At the time the Devons were involved in the Battle of the Somme, in the High Wood area which would be the scene of intense fighting from 14 July to 15 September 1916. On 20 July the 8th and 9th Battalions of the regiment were attempting to clear the wood of Germans. Bert died in this action, along with 36 other men of the Devons. It was at this time that the Regiment's Private Tommy Veal won a Victory Cross. Bert died and was buried on the battlefield and he is listed on the Thiepval Memorial. The 'Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme' records the 72,191 British and South African men who died in the Battles of the Somme; on the Portland stone piers are engraved the names of those missing, or unidentified, soldiers who have no known grave. It is near the village of Thiepval, Picardie in France. A large inscription on the memorial reads:

Here are recorded names of officers and men of the British Armies who fell on the Somme battlefields between July 1915 and March 1918 but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death.²⁶

As the summer wore on the Battles of the Somme continued to rage and by the end of the offensive in November over 95 000 British & Commonwealth troops had perished and one of those was from Abbotskerswell. Jesse Marsh was fighting with



the Somerset Light Infantry's 6th Battalion when he "died of wounds" on 16 September, however, he was only posted as 'missing' at that time. It would not be until August 1917 that he was officially declared dead and his family informed:

Mr Marsh of Hillside, Abbotskerswell, has received official information of the death of his son, Private Jessie Marsh, who has been missing since September, 1916. Mr Marsh has three other sons serving in H.M. Forces.²⁷

Jesse Shepherd Marsh was born in Abbotskerswell in 1889, the son of Edwin and Elizabeth (nee Dyer). Edwin and Elizabeth had six children between 1883 and 1891: Charles, Annie (who died as a baby), William, Sylvia, Jesse, John. They were an Abbotskerswell family living at 4 Prospect Terrace before moving to the new houses on the main road, at 6 Hillside Cottages by 1911. Jesse attended the village school, being admitted on 29 April 1892. The School Log tells something of Jesse: "the attendance of several older children is very bad, the 3 Marshes [William, Sylvia and Jesse] and G Cowell"²⁸. However there was better news when he was due to leave school in 1902: "school was visited and Jesse Marsh was examined and passed in Standard V"²⁹.

What became of Jesse after he left school is unclear as he does not appear on the 1911 Census. His brothers William* and John* went into domestic service, working at Watton House in Watton-on-Stone, Hertfordshire. It is possible that Jesse was in Canada as his brother William was living there. It is more likely that he was living away from the village as he enlisted in the Somerset Light Infantry at Yeovil in 1914 and became a sergeant in the 6th Battalion;



his service number was 16331. At the time of his death The Somersets were involved in The Battle of Flers-Courcelette which had been launched on the 15 September 1916 and continued for one week. It was the last large-scale British offensive during the Battle of the Somme. Although, the strategic objectives were not achieved, some tactical gains were made in the capture of the villages of Courcelette, Martinpuich and Flers. On 16 September, the day Jesse died, the 6th Battalion was engaged in major fighting as they lost 144 men on that day. Jesse's death is recorded as 'died of wounds' which he presumably received during this offensive,

he was 27 years old. There is some confusion over his death as he was listed as 'missing' until August 1917. His medal card notes he was 'assumed killed 16.9.16' and his will states his date of death as 'on-or-since 16-9-16'. However, since Jesse was buried in the Guards Cemetery at Lesboeufs in France, which interestingly was a concentration cemetery used by the forward field ambulances, it is likely Jesse died soon after he was wounded, and the necessary paperwork relating to his death took a long time to be processed and his family informed of his death.

Jesse's mother Elizabeth had died in 1911 and as with a number of the fallen men a memorial was added to his mother's gravestone and contains the epitaph 'Duty nobly done'. Abbotskerswell had lost four men in 1916, and as noted in John Hayman's obituary they would all have been "well known in the district"³⁰. Interestingly, in his will he left his estate to his sister Sylvia.

1917

The new year had hardly begun when the first of its six fatalities was announced, although for a number of reasons this death was unusual. In many ways this account begins earlier in this chapter with the story of Charles Symons' death, with the marriage of Ellen Prowse and Charles Symons in 1908. Ellen was the postmistress and shopkeeper and previously her brother James had been the postman. Charles was 77 years old when they married. He died in 1914, so despite having Mary Pidler to help Ellen, she probably needed more help. It is around this time that Sidney Smith arrived in Abbotskerswell to become the Post Office clerk. He had been born in Brixham on 17 April 1876, the second child of Samuel and Anna. Their other children were Alfred, Olive, Marcus and Cecil. The 1911 Census reveals that Sidney James William was living at 4 Fore Street, Brixham with his parents and his brothers and sisters. His father was a tailor, as were Sidney and Alfred. Olive was a shop assistant in a tobacconists, Marcus was a boot maker and Cecil a hairdresser.

Sidney moved to Abbotskerswell, leaving home and tailoring to help his aunt, Ellen Symons, in the Post Office. Ellen's sister Anna had married Sidney's father Samuel. At the beginning of the war Sidney was already 38, therefore too old to enlist in the army. However, on 2 March 1916 The Military Service Act was passed introducing conscription. The Act specified that men from 18 to 41 years old were liable to be called up for service in the armed forces. The fact that Sidney's attestation papers are dated '1.04.1916' seems to indicate that he was conscripted. However, they were stamped "Territorial Force Record Office Warwick"³¹ which probably indicated that he was not heading for the

Front even though his medical classification was Class 1 for general service. He joined the Worcestershire Regiment's 3rd/7th Battalion as a private with a service number of 4966. His battalions were formed at Worcester as depot/training (third line) units. Based at Weston-Super-Mare when he enlisted they then became reserve battalions on Salisbury Plain. The 7th absorbed 8th and moved to Cheltenham in October 1916. The fact that he was a 40 year old tailor probably meant he would have joined the permanent staff.

Sidney's death was registered in Newton Abbot and recorded with the usual MDA obituary, which reveals why his death was classified by the army as 'died':

THE LATE MR. SMITH.—The death occurred on Sunday, January 14th, after a short but painful illness of Mr. Sidney James Smith.³²



The obituary carries a detailed description of his funeral on 18 January; it was the first serving soldier's burial to take place in Abbotskerswell. The Revd. Campbell officiated and the chief mourners were listed, including his parents, brother and sister, uncles and aunts, including "Mrs Syman"³³ [sic] from the Post Office, cousins and other villagers. Sidney was described as the: "deceased, who was well known and highly respected in Abbotskerswell"³⁴. His coffin was of polished elm with silver fittings with the inscription of 'Sidney J W Smith, died January 14th, 1917, aged 39 [sic] years'. There were many floral tributes sent from family and friends. In his will he left his estate of £123 11s 5d to his father Samuel.

The compulsory conscription of men for the war effort presented a number of problems for the Government: one was health, as we have seen with Sidney Smith and Arthur Huggett, but also an unwillingness to fight on moral grounds soon became another. Conscientious objectors (COs), often rather crudely called 'conchies', were men who were usually pacifists and who had a moral or religious objection to joining the services to fight. The Military Service Act contained a 'conscientious clause' which allowed men to claim exemption because of their views on war. The system had three categories: "absolutists" who were not willing to perform any service that would aid the

war, "alternativists" who would perform tasks as long as it was outside military control which was often as medics, and "non-combatants" who would join the army but would not bear arms. Around 16 000 men claimed conscientious objector status during the war, and Abbotskerswell had at least one of them.

NCC That man was Keith Campbell, the son of the Vicar of Abbotskerswell from 1898 to 1930, F Gordon Campbell. Born in Torquay in 1894 he had lost his mother, Clarice in 1910 when he was still a student. Considering his background it is probably not surprising that Keith would hold moral objections to the war, but interestingly he did join the Non-Combatant Corps, unkindly called the "No-courage Corps" by the war press. The NCC was part of the army and run by regular officers; its men were privates and lance-corporals and wore uniform and obeyed military law, it had 3 000 members. Their work was similar to that of the Labour Corps; building roads, cutting timber, quarrying, sanitation and moving supplies. Keith was a member of the 4th Southern Company and still an active serviceman in the autumn of 1919. It probably tells us a great deal about the general view of COs that Keith does not feature on the village Roll of Duty, even though he was a private in the army. Keith later left the village and became a schoolmaster.

In April came a death that must have shaken the village to its core when Frank Norton's death was announced. The Nortons were part of the fabric of Abbotskerswell, linked by marriage to many other families as explained in Chapter 2. William Francis Norton, but known as Frank, was the oldest child of William and Elizabeth, who had four more children in the following 15 years: Henry, Fred, Mabel and Stanley. Frank was born in Coffinswell in 1880, although the family had moved to Abbotskerswell by 1883; he was admitted into Abbotskerswell School on 5 April 1889. The 1891 Census shows that William and Elizabeth, with four children lived at '2 Whiddon Road' (probably 2 Mote Hole as shown in 1901), William was a wall mason. In the rather more precise 1901 Census it shows the family address as 2 Motehill (Mote Hole to be exact) and the children who were living at home were: Henry who was a carriage painter, Fred a wall mason, Mabel and Stanley* at school; Frank had left home by then.

Life had changed for Frank in 1900 when he had married Jane Tubb, who was also from Abbotskerswell. Married life began in Newton Abbot at 27 Hilton Road. Frank was employed as a mason like his father. In the fourth quarter of 1901 their first daughter, Hilda, was born followed by Violet in 1903. By 1911 the family had moved back to Abbotskerswell and lived at South Down. By 1909 Jane's father and stepmother had both died and consequently Jane's 15 year old brother Charles* lived with them, as well as her older brother William

Abbotskerswell Cricket Club ~ 1908



G.WEBBER. H.HAWKINS. P.PROWSE. F.NORTON. J.MADDICOTT. FRANK NORTON.
G.HART. A.HAWKINS. W.MANNING. J.NORTON. F.BREWER.
S.COWELL. (Scorer). F.HAWKINS.

who had returned from the army. Frank was employed as a stone wall mason and was very much part of village life, playing cricket for the village as the earlier scorecard and the photograph of the 1908 team showed. Frank is shown standing on the far right.

It seems probable that Frank was conscripted into the army as he was not awarded the campaign medal 'The 1914-15 Star' which was for service in a theatre of war in 1914 to 1915. He is recorded as joining in the Royal Engineers but he changed regiment to become a private in the Northumberland Fusiliers' 20th Battalion; they were known as the 'Tyneside Scottish'; his service number was 47331. From 9 April to 16 May 1917 the regiment was involved in the Battle of Arras, an offensive when British and Commonwealth troops attacked German defences near the French city of Arras. The British effort was a broad frontal assault between Vimy and Bullecourt. Canadian troops advanced in the north and were able to capture the Vimy Ridge with British divisions in the centre also able to make significant gains. British forces engaged in a series of small-scale operations to consolidate their positions and although these battles were generally successful, these were gained with large numbers of

casualties. On the 27 April Frank was listed as 'killed in action' and it would seem likely that Frank died in the attacks known as the Battle of Arleux, along with 12 other men of the 20th Battalion. His obituary notes that he died of his wounds on the battlefield, and as a consequence he must have been buried where he fell; he was 36 years old. Later, when his wife Jane died in 1938 a memorial was added on her gravestone for Frank stating 'Killed in Action in France April 28th, 1917, Aged 36'. As with the War Memorial his date of death is noted incorrectly.

As Frank has no known grave he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial at Arras, in France. As was now usual at this stage of the war his death was reported in the MDA:

Mrs Frank Norton has received from the War Office the sad news of the death of her husband the deceased was very popular among the inhabitants of Abbotskerswell, and much sympathy is felt for his widow and family.³⁵



George, Bert, Ethel, Rennie, Wilf, Ernest

1901 they were living at 2 Sunny Bank with their children George*, Ernest, Albert and Amelia. By 1911 three more children had been born, Irena, Wilfred and Ethel; however, Amelia had died in 1906. Ernest John was born in Dawlish in 1897 and by 1911 the family was living at 1 Prospect Cottage. Ernest attended the village school from where we learn that: "several children have been away for several weeks owing to ill health viz Ern. Stoneman"³⁶.



Ernest enlisted at Exeter, and as with Frank Norton his lack of an award of 'The 1914-15 Star' suggested he joined in 1916. He joined the 14th Reserve Regiment of Cavalry with whom he trained and then seems to have transferred to the Machine Gun Corps' Cavalry 14th Squadron, with a service number of 47309. The MGC was formed in 1915 to make more effective use of machine guns on the Western Front. The high casualty rate in the MGC earned it the nickname 'the Suicide Club'. The Cavalry Branch consisted of Machine Gun Squadrons, one per cavalry brigade.



In May 1917 Private Stoneman was on the Western Front with the MGC's 14th Squadron which had been attached to the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division. In March 1917 the German armies on the Somme carried out a strategic withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line. British troops began a cautious pursuit; and Ernest may have been fatally injured in this action. Cavalry was intended to be used against enemy troops in retreat, unfortunately for them the Germans carried out an organised and well-defended withdrawal. Ernest died at Caulaincourt in France on 29 May, aged 20 with his death officially being recorded as 'killed in action'. It is fortunate that a detailed description of the circumstances of his death was sent to his parents from an officer in the MGC.

Dear Madam,

It is my melancholy task to write to inform you of the death of your son, 47309 Pte. E Stoneman, yesterday. He was killed by a large shell at his post of duty. His death was instantaneous. Believe me, no man can die more honourably. He was buried today by the chaplain in the cemetery at ----- The grave is under the north wall amongst others of gallant soldiers. A large number of his comrades attended. All the squadron join me in sending their sympathy to you in your loss.

Believe me, yours faithfully,

E. W. McArthur, Capt., M.G.C. (Cavalry).³⁷

It is interesting to note that the officers naming of the cemetery in his letter was censored. However, this does present a problem as the description of the burial suggests it occurred near the battle, but actually he is buried 50 miles away at Terlincthun British Cemetery at Wimille, near Boulogne. The



problem is that this cemetery was used for the burial of soldiers who died in the many base hospitals in the area and Ernest is not 'under the north wall' in this cemetery. This is something of a mystery, but the most likely explanation is that he was not killed on the battlefield, but wounded and quickly removed to hospital in Boulogne where he died. In the confusion of battle and the carnage created by a shell the officer believed that Ernest had been killed and buried where he fell; he probably wrote letters like the one sent to Ernest's parents many times. Ernest is also commemorated with a memorial on the gravestone of his sister Millie, it carries the epitaph: "HIS DUTY TO HIS COUNTRY DONE"³⁸.

On a Sunday evening in June 1917 the village held a memorial service for Frank Norton and Ernest Stoneman, once again conducted by the Revd F Gordon Campbell:

who gave a very excellent address, choosing for his text the 20th verse of the 1st Chapter of Ruth, 'Call me not Naome, but Mara for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.'³⁹

It must have been a desperately sad occasion when Miss Olive Elliott played the Dead March from 'Saul' at the end of the service.

As the war continued towards its third anniversary some of the fighting men returned home on leave, a brief break from the horrors at 'The Front'. The MDA noted:

Gunner Albert Daniells* of RHA has been spending a few days' well-earned leave at home. He has been serving with his regiment in France since the outbreak of war.⁴⁰

June also brought news that must have had a positive impact on the village, the publication of the awarding of two Military Medals (MM). The MM was a military decoration awarded for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire during battle on land. Sergeant George Cowell was a professional soldier and his ability under fire was clear since he had been "awarded the Military Medal for conspicuous bravery. He had also been previously mentioned in dispatches"⁴¹.

Gunner Harry Hawkins, whose brother Fred had been killed in 1915, was also awarded the MM for his conspicuous bravery on 26 May; such articles in the

press were becoming common place by this stage of the war. It was reported by the Abbotskerswell correspondent that Bombardier George Stoneman* was home "for a few days' well-earned leave after serving 12 months at the Front"⁴². Private William Palfrey*, a motor cyclist despatch rider, Gunner George Maddicott*, Privates George Tucker and Walter Hawkins* were all home on leave, the last two after 1½ years in France. However, other disturbing reminders of the war were also reported: "Pte H Lynn, who has been wounded in France, is home for a ten days' sick leave"⁴³. The villagers would have been able to see his brass 'wound stripe' worn on the left forearm of his uniform, fastened through the uniform cloth. A wound stripe was awarded for each occasion a person was wounded.

But there was still some happy news with two local marriages. Sylvia Marsh, who had lost her brother Jesse in the war, married Charles Swain. The second one was labelled as a 'Khaki Wedding' when Nancy Cann, the baker's daughter, married Australian soldier Peter Lemon. The sobering comment in the MDA was that there was to be a short honeymoon in Torquay as he only had a few days of leave.

The work of the St John Ambulance Brigade was regularly reported in the local press. In July Revd Gordon Campbell welcomed a march of the Brigade to the village where they were met by the Abbotskerswell Division members led by Corporal Prowse. Village members continued to willingly do their share of voluntary work at Newton VA Hospital, transporting wounded soldiers and acting as hospital orderlies; by 1918 the village had 14 brigade members.



1917 would prove to be the worst year in the war for deaths in the village and in August the villagers were to experience one close at hand. Sidney Herbert Lomax was born in Newton Abbot in 1890, his parents being John and Charlotte. They had six children between 1873 and 1890: John, Percy, Albert, Lena, Lottie and Sidney. The 1901 Census reveals John Snr, was a hairdresser and Charlotte was a wash laundress and they lived at 23 Wolborough Street in Newton Abbot with 4 of their children. By 1911 only Sidney is still living at home. In 1912 Sidney married Philippa Coombe of 7 Rose Cottages; she had four brothers, Joseph*, Fred*, Thomas and John, who all joined the forces in WW1. Sidney was employed as a carpenter and they moved into Park View Cottage with their son, Sidney, who was born in 1913.

Sidney enlisted at Newton Abbot at the beginning of the war, joining the Royal Engineers, service number 21648. He was awarded 'The 1914 Star' which means he fought in France in the first months of the campaign. By August 1917 Sidney was a 2nd Corporal in the 55th Field Company of the Royal Engineers; the 55th Company had been attached to the Guards Division since September 1915. In March 1917, the German armies on the Somme carried out a strategic withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line and British troops began a cautious pursuit; soon the Third Battle of Ypres began on 31 July. Between 31 July and 3 August the British lost 8516 killed and 31820 wounded. It seems that Sidney was severely wounded at this time and evacuated to England, he was assigned to a depot 'A Company' in the official records. However, he did not recover and it was noted that he 'died of wounds in the Home Theatre' at the Military Hospital, Western Heights in Dover on 22 August.

This created the unique occasion of an Abbotskerswell man who died in the fighting being buried at home:

The deceased soldier's body is being brought to Abbotskerswell for interment. Much sympathy is felt for the relatives of ... fallen heroes.⁴⁴

Sidney was buried in Abbotskerswell Churchyard on 26 August 1917; he was 26 years old when he died.



Sidney's grave before renovation

It is sometimes said that in rural out of the way places major events slip by unnoticed, but this cannot have been the case with Abbotskerswell in 1917. In a close knit community where most people knew each other the effects of the war must have been obvious. By 1917 conscription was well under way which meant men from all ages up to 41 were being drafted into the war effort, and soon it was both single and married men. Increasingly food production at home became a major issue; the Parish Council was considering providing more allotments so that villagers could grow more potatoes. At a meeting in the village school, under the auspices of the War Agricultural Committee, Mr J Maddicott gave an address with regard to the shortage of food and it was also debated whether Abbotskerswell should have a 'Village Food Production Society'. The Parish Council however decided: "that it would be inadvisable at the present time to form such a society"⁴⁵, without giving the reasons why!

By December Private Arthur Huggett* was home on leave and we learn that RFA Gunner George Ward* was in hospital at Nottingham, suffering from rheumatism having served in France for three years. The dark days of December would now bring two more deaths.



It was to be one of the village heroes and the second fatality for the Hawkins family, who had lost Fred in 1915. It was his older brother Harry who died in the trenches of the Somme. Harry's family background was described earlier in the chapter with Fred's death; he was the fifth child of Harry and Harriet, having been born in Abbotskerswell in 1887. He attended the village school and by 1911 he was a labourer in the goods department at Newton Abbot Railway Station. He soon moved on to work at the clay pits as a miner in the local shaft mines.

Harry married Amelia Bond, who was born in 1888 at Berry Pomeroy, but by 1901 she lived in North Street, Ipplepen; Amelia was the niece of Thomas Bond Abbotskerswell's first war fatality. Following their marriage in the third quarter of 1914 they lived with Amelia's parents at Brook Cottage in Torbryan, which explains why Harry is listed on Torbryan's War Memorial. By 1917 they had moved to 'The Cross' in Ipplepen together with Ronald, their son who had been born in the summer of 1915. This, together with the Bond family's connection with Ipplepen, explains why he is also on Ipplepen's War Memorial.

On 1 November 1915 Harry had enlisted as gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery, the 57th siege battery, with a service number of 61299. These siege batteries were equipped with heavy howitzers sending large calibre high explosive shells in a high trajectory, plunging onto enemy trenches, artillery and strong points such as store dumps, roads and railways behind enemy lines. The RGA 57th siege battery had been fighting in the Somme since the first battles in July 1916, and although the second battles did not take place until August and September 1918 bombardments continued to occur. It was during these engagements that Harry was awarded the Military Medal for bravery on 26 March 1917. Harry "died of wounds received in action"⁴⁶ on 5 December 1917 aged 31. He was buried in the Fins New British Cemetery at Sorel-le-Grand in France.

Once again the MDA's obituary is most illuminating, carrying the letter from his captain to Harry's wife⁴⁷.



Dear Madam,

With great sympathy I write to inform you of the death of your husband, No.61299, Gunner H. Hawkins, from wounds received in action on the 5th instant. I can personally assure you that he had every attention possible up to the time of his death. I feel his loss very much, having been his officer since March last year. Always he has been a striking example of cheerfulness under most arduous conditions, and popular amongst all his fellow comrades. In addition he brought credit to the battery on winning the Military Medal in April of this year; a distinction most worthy of all his splendid work. Closing with deepest sympathy in your sad bereavement.

I would remain, yours truly,

Capt. R.F.A.

Both Harry and Fred are commemorated on their sister Ellen's gravestone in Abbotskerswell Churchyard. Fred's epitaph is that he died 'For King and Country'; whilst Harry's is 'I have fought a good fight'.

The sixth and last casualty of the year came two weeks later with the death of the only Abbotskerswell officer to fall, John Martin. John and his mother Edith had moved to the village in the 1910s from Cambridgeshire. The Martins were wealthy farmers living at Fir Tree Farm in Papworth Everard and his father John had married Edith Ambrose in 1891. John Jnr was born in 1892 at Papworth Everard; he was to be an only child. By 1901 the family had moved to Willow Farm at Horningsea in Cambridgeshire, however, John's father died in 1906 and by 1911 the widowed Edith and son had moved not far away to 'Roseville', New Road in Melbourn. Whilst Edith is described as living by her own means, 19 year old John was listed as a farmer and pupil. During the next few years they seem to have moved to Devon where Edith's father and one of her sisters were living at 'Maristowe' on Priory Road. By 1917 they had moved into "The Beacon", a newly constructed house on Priory Road.



The London Gazette, which listed all officers commissions, noted on 19 June that John had moved from an Officer Cadet Unit to become a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery; his Medal Card states his service began on 31.07.17. In December 1917 John was with the 229 Siege Battery in the Italian theatre of war supporting the Italian army in its struggle against the combined forces of Austria-Hungary and Germany.

In October 1917, following a crushing defeat at the Battle of Caporetto, the Italians had been forced back to the River Piave where they dug in to prevent Austrian advances. Two British Corps joined the defensive line on the River Piave to support the Italians, although the Commonwealth troops in the sector were not to be involved in any large scale operations. Their main tasks were to carry out continuous patrol work across the River Piave, as well as a good deal of successful counter artillery work; these were the actions that John's 229 siege battery would have been involved in. As a result of these actions British men died in defending the River Piave positions from December 1917 to March 1918. John was 'killed in action' on 19 December 1917, he was 25 years old and his battery was defending the positions the allies held. He was buried at Giavera British Cemetery near Arcade in north eastern Italy. It seems probable that John spent little time in Abbotskerswell as most of his family was in Cambridgeshire. His death is commemorated in three places at St Mary's Church in Papworth Everard: on the Roll of Honour board as shown below, on his father's gravestone and also on the rood screen that was erected in 1920s as a memorial to both him and his father. His will showed the family wealth as he left his mother £25,000.



The defense of Piave is still remembered in Italy today with this motto: "*Tutti eroi! O il Piave o tutti accoppati!*", meaning 'everyone a hero, either we hold the Piave, or let all of us get killed'.

1918

The year began with news of soldiers returning on leave, Private George Chudleigh* was home for a fortnight in January. Privates William Eyles* and Harold Taylor* came home on a fortnight's leave and both were in the best of health. However, the unfortunate Mrs Jane Norton:

received news that her brother corporal C Tubb* has been admitted into hospital in Salonica, suffering from septic poisoning, and has had a finger amputated.⁴⁸

In March it was Private 'Jack' Webber's* turn for a fortnight's leave and he too was looking very fit and well. A number of village servicemen were now in the newly formed RAF; Samuel Perryman was based at the Pulham Airship Station near Norwich which was one of the main British airship stations, with more than 3,000 men on the base by 1918.

As the war progressed no fatalities occurred in the early months of the year, however, it was the death of Mrs Hare of Court Grange that provided the next bad news for the village. The MDA announced her death in March and commented that:

Abbotskerswell has sustained a great loss. For many years she has taken the leading part in everything connected with the welfare of the parish and its inhabitants, being particularly interested in the local governing bodies, the children and the church. Besides countless benefactions of a private nature, she has made several notable gifts to the parish. She presented a clock for the Church Tower in 1908 and recently purchased the old Church house and renovated it at great expense for the use of the villagers.⁴⁹

Mrs Hare would indeed be greatly missed in the village, and despite the MDA's hope that her daughter would continue to live in the village, Court Grange was sold in 1920. However, it was grandly announced that Colonel Sir Herbert Perrott CH. CB. and Lady Ethel Perrott RRC (Mrs Hare's oldest daughter) and Miss Hilda Hare had arrived at Court Grange for the summer.

The summer brought some different news of the war when it was reported that two Abbotskerswell men had been taken prisoners of war:

Second Lieutenant Edgar Thomas RFA has sent a postcard to his parents, Mr & Mrs E Thomas, Court Farm, Abbotskerswell stating he is a prisoner of war in Germany.⁵⁰

The 22 year old officer was captured between 27 and 31 May during the successful German spring offensive. There is some confusion as to the identity of the second soldier as it was reported as being Private S Coombs of whom no trace can be found; it seems probable that it was Thomas Coombe, Philippa Lomax's brother, as family records suggest this.

It had been eight months since the last death had been announced and now as the war entered its last phase came the news that George Tucker had been killed in action. George had been born in Coffinswell on 20 December 1895, the only child of William and Jemima (known as Mina). Mina had previously been married to Emanuel Bovey and together they had five children: Laura, Emeline, Ada, Harriet and Alice who was born in 1889, the year after her father had died. William, an ex-sailor, married Jemima in 1895 and in 1901 they were living at '1 Main Street Cottage', Coffinswell, next door to Mina's mother, Harriet.

By 1911 they had moved to Abbotskerswell and were living at 3 Prospect Cottage with George, Mina's daughter Emeline and her two sons Jack 9 and Leslie 7. William was now a labourer at the Aller Vale manure works and Emeline was a picker worker in a skin factory. However, by 1918 George's parents address was given as Aller Mill Cottage. George had attended the village school and left to work for the Palk family who were local butchers. He enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery, service number 113339, on 18 October 1915, which meant he joined soon after his nineteenth birthday, no doubt like many of his friends from the village.



He trained as a gunner/driver in the RFA, joining D Battery of the 17th Brigade. It was their job to provide artillery support for the Army. The horse-drawn RFA was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers which were deployed close to the front line and were reasonably mobile. This explains George's role as a gunner/driver, as shown in the picture. Subsequently he was promoted to the rank of bombardier.

The village church records reveal a sad story about George, but one that must have been common across the country, when in March 1918 his Banns of Marriage to Annie Louisa Bartlett from Kingsteignton were read. However, there was to be no marriage. Presumably because of the success of the German attacks at that time he was recalled to his unit. It appears that Annie later married in Newton Abbot in 1923.

George's recall was as a result of the launch of Germany's 'Spring Offensive' in March 1918 which won back areas of The Somme before the attack was

halted. It is unclear where his D Battery was fighting when George died but events in the area of Maricourt where he was buried give a good idea. On 21 August an allied counter attack began with four armies moving eastwards. The Australians lead the advance of the Fourth Army and was again able to push forward at Amiens to take Peronne and Mont Saint-Quentin by 31 August. Maricourt is eight miles northwest of Peronne, therefore it appears that George and D Battery were supporting this attack when he was 'killed in action' on 30 August; he was 22 years old. E Thorpe, his officer in the RFA, described his death in his letter to George's parents:



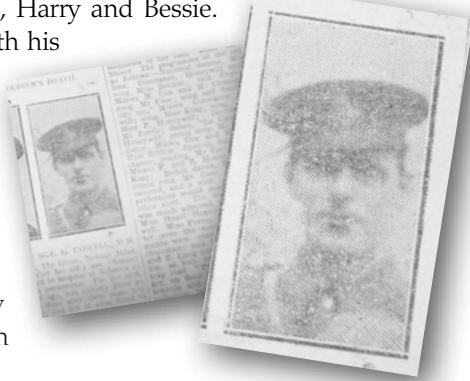
I am very sorry to have to inform you that your son, Bdr. G W Tucker was killed in action on 30th. Aug. The Battery was driving into action under heavy shell-fire when the team in which your son was head driver was hit. Bdr. Tucker was one of the best drivers in my section, a good cheerful soldier, very popular in the Battery and his loss is keenly felt by all. He was buried with military honours and the Chaplain will write you where his grave lives.⁵¹ He was in fact buried at Peronne Road Cemetery at Maricourt in France.

In September a memorial service was held in Abbotskerswell for George, who was known as a bright and genial young man. Many relatives and friends of the deceased soldier were present. After hymns a:

very excellent sermon was preached by the Vicar (the Rev. F. Gordon Campbell), who very feelingly alluded to the many losses the village

has sustained during the present war. Bombardier Tucker is the fourteenth man from Abbotskerswell who have so nobly laid down their lives for King and country.⁵²

In many ways this was just the war continuing, but at least the signs from 'The Front' were good with the Germans being pushed back on The Somme. At Home it was noted that Private G Shapley was home on 14 days leave from France and that 'Council School' children had picked 105lbs of blackberries for the government, indicating that food shortages were still an issue. Then in late September came the death that would prove to be the last of an active serviceman from the village, and that of a man who had fought all the way through the conflict.



George Cowell was every bit an Abbotskerswell man born and bred, with aunts, uncles and cousins in the village. The family's story began in Chapter 2 and there would be Cowells living in the village until the 1960s. George was born in Abbotskerswell in early 1888, to George and Jane: he had two brothers and a sister, William, Harry and Bessie. In 1901 he was living at 1 Well Cottage with his parents, Bessie and an Irish boarder, who was a cider cellar man like George Snr. The 13 year old George had left school and was employed as a stable boy. He was very much part of the sporting scene in the village, playing both football and cricket in the local teams, where he was noted as being good at both: "on many occasions, by his fine bowling, he helped the village eleven out of tight corners to ultimate victory"⁵³

In the mid-1900s he joined the army as a career; no doubt to see the world and seek more excitement than life in Abbotskerswell would ever offer. He enlisted at Exeter into the Royal Field Artillery, service number 310790, and the 1911 Census notes that he was in India with 93rd Battery of the RFA. Being a regular soldier in that regiment would have meant he would have seen action in Flanders immediately the war began; the award of the campaign medal 'The 1914 Star' indicates this indeed happened. It was whilst with the RFA that George was awarded the Military Medal in 1917. He was with the 18th Brigade's signal sub-section when, on 1 September 1917, he transferred from the RFA to the Royal Engineers to become a signaller. He eventually rose to become a sergeant in the REs' 18th Army Field Brigade.

In August 1918 the 'Hundred Days Offensive' had begun to drive the German Army from its defensive positions within the Hindenburg line between Drocourt and Queant in NE France. It is also known as 'Canada's Hundred

Days' as it was the attacks by the Canadian Corps that routed the Germans. The RE was supporting this offensive and it was during this fighting that George 'died from wounds'. His obituary explains how the news was broken:

Sad news has arrived in the village of Abbotskerswell that another of its brave sons has made the great sacrifice, namely Sergt. George Cowell R.E., M.M., youngest son of Mr George Cowell, a highly-respected resident.⁵⁴

Once again the printing of George's officers' letter to his father gives a real insight into his death:

He was the best N.C.O. I have ever met and I do not know what I shall do without him. Every time he had been in action I had mentioned him to the Colonel for the excellent work he had done. The whole of the sub-section, under Sergt. Cowell's command offers you their deepest sympathy.⁵⁵

He was buried at Cagnicourt British Cemetery in France. There is also a commemoration to him on his parent's gravestone that states: "Sgt G. Cowell R.E. WHO DIED IN FRANCE, SEPT. 30TH, 1918, AGED 30 "Duty done"⁵⁶

In October, although victory seemed likely, the MDA was still reporting war news. Private Cecil Hext of Highweek, an old boy of the village school, was killed in action in France in September (see Appendix 4). Privates George Maddicott* and Walter Hawkins* were home on leave from 'The Front'. The wounded were also coming home: Privates William Stoneman* and Samuel Cowell* with arm and foot wounds respectively, and: "Pte Will Manning of Abbotskerswell, has been wounded in France, and is now in hospital in England"⁵⁷. Private Fred Coombe* was home on 21 days leave after spending three years in Salonica and Private George Webber* was on a 14 day leave from France. It was noted at this time that:

the Parish Roll of Honour has now reached the number of 90. Fifteen of these brave men have laid down their lives for King and Country. Two prisoners of war in Germany and the remainder (10 of whom are wearing wounded stripes) are 'doing their bit' in various parts of the world.⁵⁸



An interesting development in the war effort was the deployment of men from the Labour Corps into the village. Thomas Prentice* from the 654th Agricultural Company lived at Court Farm, whilst Francis Treslove was at 1 Mote Hole. Another villager, Henry Harwood, a butler living at Lower Lodge, was also in the Labour Corps.

Another life was about to be lost, but not from the fighting in France. Alfred Rowe was an 18 year old ordinary seaman in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR), service number Bristol Z/2819. He was born at Staverton on 2nd September 1900 and sadly he was the second son of Richard and Bessie to die in the war, after his brother Bert's death in 1916. Alfred was still at the village school when the war began and it is there that he learned about discipline. Having received: "1 cut on the hand for talking in lessons"⁵⁹, he failed to learn the lesson of not concentrating and received another cut in April for talking when the teacher was busy. However, he was later described as: "a bright, intelligent boy, always willing to do his best to help all those around him"⁶⁰

The RNVR was founded in 1903 replacing the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers, with divisions in London, the Clyde and the Mersey. The initial response gave it good quality recruits, with some excellent commanding officers and real enthusiasts in the other ranks; so that when war broke out in 1914 the strength was more than 4,000 officers and men. Thomas Bond had joined after a career in the Royal Navy whilst Alfred joined to begin his training prior to joining the RN, and ironically it was this training that was responsible for his death.

Alfred joined the RNVR on 16 September 1918 and was described as being 5' 4" tall with brown eyes and hair and had a very good character. His training base was the Royal Navy Depot at Crystal Palace from where he sent his father a post card of the Crystal Palace on 1 October, which said;

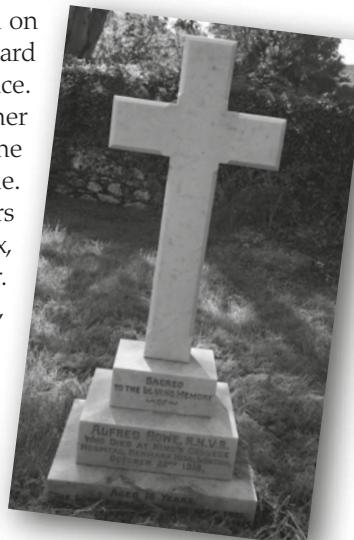
Dear Dad, Just a line as I am getting on alright up to now as we are getting plenty to eat remember me to all from your loving son. Alfred.⁶¹

'HMS Crystal Palace' was the informal name given to the RNs training establishment set up inside the old original Crystal Palace, officially called *HMS Victory VI*. The aim was to produce sailors with perfect health and fitness by providing good food, regular hours, good sleeping quarters, strict cleanliness and varied occupation. It appears that in the short time he was in training Alfred became ill because his father Richard visited him in London and sent home a number of post cards which comment on his progress. On 14 October he noted that: "the boy is doing very well but not quite out of

danger"⁶²; on 15th commented "he will now go on alright", but on 18th he was "much about the same"⁶³. However, Alfred never recovered and he died on 22 October 1918 aged 18. His obituary noted that: "he contracted a chill which brought about the complications which caused his death"⁶⁴. His family understand that he died of the effects of 'Spanish Flu' during the 1918 flu pandemic when most victims were healthy young adults, and troops in barracks were particularly susceptible. His death is recorded as 'disease' whilst at Kings College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London; on his RNVR service record it adds the detail of 'Broncho Pneumonia and Cardiac Failure'.

Alfred was buried in Abbotskerswell churchyard on 31 October with full military honours with a guard of honour of men from the RNVR at Crystal Palace. It was a huge occasion, with 16 mourners plus other relatives, he was deeply mourned throughout the village as he was a great favourite with everyone. There were over 25 others present including Mrs Frank Norton, Mrs H Stoneman and Mrs Lomax, who had lost sons or husbands, and the full choir. There were flowers sent by 35 people and families, many who still had relatives in the war. Alfred was carried to the churchyard in a motor hearse and most of the eight pallbearers were related to men on the Roll of Honour or Duty. Once again it was the Revd. Campbell conducting the service for a funeral that obviously deeply affected the village.

The war continued for two more weeks, but it was becoming clear that the Germans would not be able to continue for much longer. In August, over 100,000 German prisoners had been taken in what became known as "The Black Day of the German Army". General Ludendorff and the German High Command realised that the war was lost and made attempts to reach a satisfactory end, stating: "we cannot win the war any more, but we must not lose it either"⁶⁵. Shortly afterwards the Kaiser replied: "I see that we must strike a balance. We have nearly reached the limit of our powers of resistance. The war must be ended"⁶⁶. On 9 November the Kaiser abdicated and Germany was declared to be a republic. On 11 November, at 5:00 am, an armistice with Germany was signed in a railway carriage at Compiegne. At 11 am on 11 November 1918; the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, a ceasefire came into effect. The Great War was over at last.

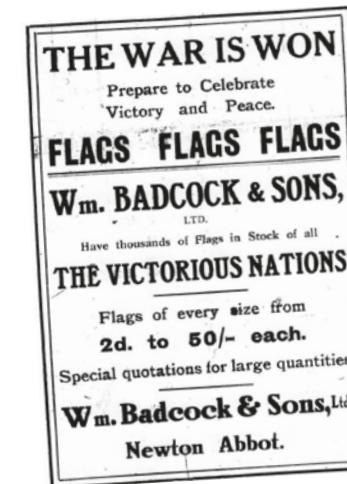


Chapter 5

Life After The War

Just after 9 o'clock on Monday 11 November 1918 the people of Newton Abbot heard the noise of sirens going off; this was followed by whistles from steam locomotives, railway fog signals and the ringing of church bells. This is how the news of the end of hostilities was relayed to the people. The news had arrived in Newton Abbot to the MDA offices via warships in Torquay, who had received a wireless communication to say the armistice had been signed, and although there was no official confirmation the celebrations began. The MDA described the moment the armistice began:

At eleven o'clock, when the hostilities were to cease, the noise began again, and each arriving train was heralded by fog signals. Meanwhile flags and bunting brightened up the streets and residences, children appeared in hundreds with flags, work practically ceased throughout the town, and the streets became crowded with happy folk.¹



This was followed by wounded soldiers being driven through the streets and with local businesses and schools closing for the afternoon. The local council organised a procession from the railway station, down Queen Street to the Tower led by the cadets and the Salvation Army and Brotherhood bands. A meeting was held at the Tower with local dignitaries, religious leaders and military personnel being prominent. Some four to five thousand people gathered to listen to moving speeches, especially to those who had: "sore hearts and beclouded homes"². In the evening there were church services and the streets were full of people entertained by the Seale-Hayne Military Hospital Orchestra followed by fireworks.

In Abbotskerswell there were similar scenes:

there was much rejoicing throughout the village on Monday when the good news that hostilities had ceased was received. Flags were hoisted and several merry peals were rung on the church bell during the day.³

The local MP, Colonel E F Morrison-Bell, described how he was: "highly elated at the splendid news of the final smashing of the unspeakable Hun"⁴. He summed up what all of Abbotskerswell must have felt when he wrote:

my heart goes out to those mothers, fathers, wives and relations, in this time of 'national rejoicing', who will never welcome their dear ones home; but they will at least feel that the terrible sacrifices have not been made in vain.⁵

The 1911 Census showed Abbotskerswell had 236 males, of those nearly 100 went to war and 18 died in what then became known as 'The Great War', a heavy price indeed. The statistics from the local villages looking at the number of men who died as percentage of the village's population, make an interesting study as *Chart 3* below shows.

Chart 3

Village	Population in 1901	War Deaths	Deaths as % of Pop.
Abbotskerswell	457	18	3.9
Kingskerswell	1027	35	3.4
Denbury	303	11	3.6
Kingsteignton	1942	58	3.0
Ipplepen	813	23	2.8
Ogwell (West & East)	250	1	0.4

It is remarkable that Ogwell only lost one man in the war, but the figures do show that Abbotskerswell did indeed pay a heavy price.

1919

Of course the war did not just stop and the men come home; it would take several years for that to happen. However, more men were returning on leave, no doubt to rapturous receptions. Sergeant W Taylor, the youngest son of George Taylor of Town Farm, who had left England for Canada nine years previously, was spending a few days on leave back in the village; and like a good many village lads, he had fought with the Canadian contingent. By January more 'boys' were home on leave: Fred Lee*, William Bond*, James* & William Abrahams*, Percival Prowse*, Samuel Cowell*, Thomas* & Walter Webber*, Fred Yeo*, Stanley Hinks* and Samuel Perryman* all visited the village. Two very interesting returnees in January were the men who had been captured by the Germans and been prisoners of war; the mysterious 'S Coombs' returned on 18th and Edgar Thomas, who had been repatriated on the 26 December, on the 4th. Lt. Thomas' medal card notes that he was on 'Exonerated Officers List/28', which means he was not to blame for being taken as a prisoner.



An important aspect of post-war life was the marking of the graves of the men who died during the war. In 1917 the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission was created to ensure that as many graves as possible were marked and a standard gravestone was devised using Portland stone which carries the name and regimental badge of the person buried. There is an example in Abbotskerswell churchyard, that of Fred Lee who died in 1920 and whose story is told in *Appendix 5*. The graves of three men from our Roll of Honour buried in Abbotskerswell are still checked by the CWGC.

During the war the Government began to approve campaign medals for those involved. There were to be four of these: 'The 1914 Star' (known as the Mons Star) for soldiers fighting in France or Belgium between 5 August and 22 November 1914; 'The 1914-15 Star' awarded to military personnel serving overseas in any theatre of war on land, sea or in the air, between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915; 'The British War Medal' which was awarded for any service overseas during the war including medical personnel and civilian volunteers in officially recognised organisations; and

'The Victory Medal' which followed the same criteria as the BWM except it was for service in a designated theatre of war. 'The Military Medal', as has already been noted, was for acts of gallantry under fire and was a military decoration. Greater detail on each can be found on the AbbPast website @ www.abbpast.co.uk. *Chart 4* below shows the medals awarded to 'Roll of Honour' members where records exist.

Chart 4

Name	Campaign Medals	Gallantry Medals
G Cowell	1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal	Military Medal
A Cornish	1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal	
W Tubb	1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal	
F Hawkins	1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal	
S Lomax	1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal	
C Symons	1914-15 Star, Victory Medal, British War Medal	
B Rowe	1914-15 Star, Victory Medal, British War Medal	
J Marsh	1914-15 Star, Victory Medal, British War Medal	
J Hayman	1914-15 Star, Victory Medal, British War Medal	
H Hawkins	Victory Medal, British War Medal	Military Medal
G Tucker	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
S Smith	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
F Norton	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
F Evans	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
E Stoneman	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
J Martin	Victory Medal, British War Medal	
T Bond	British War Medal	

In Alfred Rowe's case he had not served during the war. The medals were sent to the next-of-kin or could be claimed on their behalf.

In addition to the service medals a 'Memorial Plaque' was issued after the war to the next-of-kin of all British service personnel who died as a result of the war. The plaque, or more correctly plaquette, was



made of bronze, and hence popularly became known as the 'Dead Man's Penny', because of the similarity in appearance to the somewhat smaller penny coin.

Another major honour created during the war was 'The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire', an order of chivalry established on 4 June 1917 by King George V. The Order is composed of five classes in civil and military divisions. The 4th in order of seniority is the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE). This was awarded to Captain Evan Jukes-Hughes* of the RMLI on 17th July for his valuable services on HM ships *Revenge* & *Ramilles*, which were battleships of the 1st Battle Squadron of The Grand Fleet. His brother Edward had been awarded The Order of St Anna 3rd class with swords by the Russian government for his distinguished services at Jutland.

A formal state of war between the two sides persisted for another seven months, until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. Following this a 'Peace Day' was declared for 19 July and Abbotskerswell celebrated in style. A committee of village ladies organised a day of events beginning with a luncheon and fete for the servicemen. Lady Perrott, one of Mrs Hare's daughters, and her husband Sir Herbert were presidents of the committee and Captain Robert Jukes-Hughes was Chairman.

Abbotskerswell meant to rejoice and to honour its service men, and dark skies and heavy rain could not damp the enthusiasm of the people.⁶

The day had begun with a joyous peal of bells summoning the villagers to a church service held by the Revd F Gordon Campbell, complete with patriotic sermon. The luncheon in Church House was followed by speeches from William Prowse (chairman of the Parish Council), the Vicar and a message from the Committee Chairman, Captain Jukes-Hughes, who was sadly ill on the day. There was music from a small but select band. In the afternoon the village was invited to the grounds of Court Grange for tea but because of the rain it was held indoors, with Lady Perrot's daughters Priscilla and Helena presenting 'Peace Mugs' to every child.

The evening was devoted to a ball in Church House, with the first dances organised by Lady Perrot. The day had been due to have a sports event but the rain postponed this until the Monday, when the village seemed to have another day of celebration with the sports in the park, a jumble sale,

bowling for a pig, maypole dancing and side shows. Tea followed with a speech by Lady Perrot who thanked everybody but especially the ladies who had organised the events, she then: "made the gratifying announcement that the £30 realised by the jumble sale would be devoted to buying coals for the poor during the coming winter."⁷

The day was concluded with another dance in Church House which continued until the small hours of the morning.

The 'Peace Day' had also contained an event that was about the new future on which the village had to focus. Was it a coincidence that this day was chosen for a wedding? It seems a symbol of the past events of the hostilities, but also the future that, Mabel Tubb, the sister of Roll of Honour member William, and George* Stoneman whose brother Ernest also died in the war, should marry on that day. George had witnessed the terrible events in France serving there for three years as a sergeant with the RFA, but now he was a newly de-mobilised 23 year old young man with a brighter future to look forward to.

By 1919 Abbotskerswell had transferred to the Totnes Division for elections and following the enfranchisement of many women over 30 years of age the Electoral Roll revealed that the village had 264 voters, of which 107 were women who gained the vote via their, or their husband's, occupation. However, all men over 21 now received the vote through residence. Although still not equal for women it was a sign of change following the war.

1920

The hard work of the Abbotskerswell Division of the St John Ambulance Brigade was rewarded in January when Corporal F W Prowse, Privates R H Abraham, W Elliott and J W Palk were awarded the 'St John Ambulance War Service Badge' in connection with their splendid services during the war with the VAD Hospital and transport duties.

The need to commemorate the efforts of the men who fought was very strong and was shown in a number of ways. In 1919 an illuminated manuscript featuring the names of all the Abbotskerswell men who fought was completed, sadly the identity of the artist, 'HM', is not known. Interestingly it remembers 'The Great European War of 1914-1919' and carries the dedication to 'the men of Abbotskerswell who obeyed their



country's call with those who gave their lives for their King and country'. It was during 1918 that the movement to construct war memorials began in earnest. In Britain they seemed to embrace the concept of peace, although for some it was a symbol of victory and to others a memorial to the fallen. The first memorials actually appeared during the war, Devon's first was in Exeter in January 1917; but it was the construction of the Cenotaph in London in 1919 that seemed to galvanise the movement. Each community produced its own memorial, based on local discussions and designed to reflect local politics, class struggles, rivalries, religious tensions, taste and economics. There was no system or compulsion to build; the desire came from within community:

there was a need to show gratitude to servicemen as well as desire on the behalf of the bereaved to have a place to remember the dead, particularly given so many men were buried abroad.⁸

In Abbotskerswell the first War Memorial discussions were held on 21 November 1918 with an open meeting at Church House which elected a committee to progress the project. The Committee proved to be a social who's who of the village which included the Revd Gordon Campbell as Chairman, Headmaster Henry Keites as the Honorary Secretary, Captain Evan Jukes-Hughes from Whiddon House, Alfred Barrington JP from The Manor House, John Palk from Odlehill House, Ellen Symons the Postmistress and local farmers John Elliott and John Buckpitt. The wives of the latter two were elected as subscription collectors.

At the Committee meeting on 19 December 1918 four suggestions were made as to the type of memorial: a stained glass window, a new pulpit, a memorial plaque in the church and a memorial in the church lych-gate. It was felt necessary to discuss the ideas with the families, although the plaque within the church was the most popular choice. However, it took until May of 1919 for agreement to be reached on the plaque and Captain Jukes-Hughes was detailed to obtain a design and an estimate. By June that had been achieved with the two ideas of a plain plaque costing £35, or one flanked with a soldier and a sailor at a total cost of about £70. As the collection had already raised £52 the more ornate version was chosen with an inscription to be included that said 'Duty Nobly Done'. Further discussions on the wording on the tablet followed and it was agreed that it should read: "To the glory of God and in proud memory of the lads of this parish who gave their lives in the Great War"⁹. Eventually it read gallant lads from this parish.

Captain Jukes-Hughes had approached W H Crossman, a stone and marble mason in Newton Abbot. The estimate for the memorial including a carved soldier and sailor, was £67.17s.6d. and although the collection was still £11.15s. 2d. short, the Committee decided to press ahead. However, at the meeting of 3 July a problem arose, that of the issue of the '*Faculty*', which although it was deemed a concern was still not expected to be a problem; this proved to be far from the reality. A '*Faculty*' is the process a parish church has to go through to obtain permission to alter or add to or even repair the building or churchyard. Since churches are exempt from planning legislation they have to adhere to stringent requirements set by the Church of England. Plans have to be submitted on anything that is deemed to be a permanent change in the building; so undoubtedly the siting of the war memorial would have had to be scrutinised. There would have been strict guidelines on what the memorial could look like and agreement had to be sought on where it could be placed; there was also a cost of £1.6s.0d (it is £200 today).

It would appear that the Church authorities were approached about the war memorial and were less cooperative than expected because at the September Committee meeting the Chairman read extracts from a letter received from The Chancellor regarding The Faculty. The Committee were furious and the Minutes note:

the meeting was unanimous in its opinion: and also disapproved strongly, that had '*Faculty*' difficulty been anticipated with all its requirements etc the Memorial would have been erected elsewhere and that in future, any minor improvements inside the church would be unsupported under such conditions, and that the Chairman be asked to express its disapproval in a letter to the Registrar.¹⁰

However furious they felt they did press ahead with the memorial because by November it was unanimously decided to complete the '*Petition For Faculty*' and it was recorded that the proposal to erect a tablet with all the necessary diagrams and documents should be sent with:

the humble petition of Rev^d F G Campbell of Abbotskerswell in the County of Devon, Vicar of the Parish of St Mary in the Diocese of Exeter and of Col. Sir Herbert C Perrot Bar. CH. CB. And William Elliott Churchwardens of the said Parish.¹¹



The reply was speedy as in December 1919 it was agreed that a '*Memorial Tablet*' should be erected in the parish church; The Faculty was granted on 16 January 1920. The Memorial had been completed and installed in the church on February 25 by W H Crossman's for the agreed cost of £67.17s.6d. On 14 March at 3pm a '*Memorial Service, unveiling of the tablet*'¹², was held in the church, with Revd Campbell officiating as usual. At the last Committee meeting on 3 March the final accounts were audited with Crossman's having been paid on 25 February.

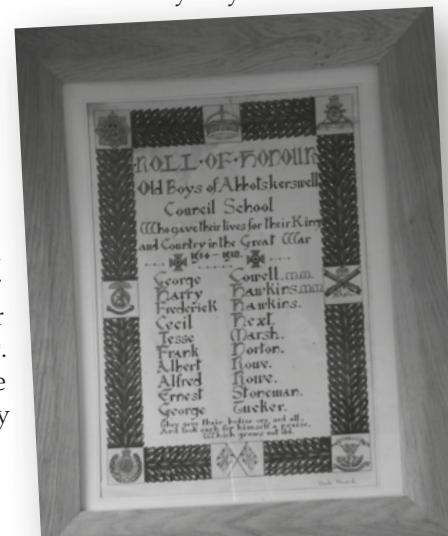
One unexplained issue was how those on the memorial were chosen. The Committee Minutes make no reference to this process so presumably it was by villagers' suggestions. Certainly nearly all of the eighteen men listed had either probably lived in or had lived in the village, but there were at least two other notable possibilities: Cecil Hext, an old boy of the village school and Walter Miseman whose parents had moved into the village during the war. Both appear to have as good a reason for inclusion as John Martin, Frank Evans or Charles Symons; perhaps nobody suggested them. Another person sometimes linked to the village is Algie John Shenton. In October 1915 the MDA listed him amongst nine Abbotskerswell men who had enlisted that week. He was killed in May 1918, and incorrectly army records give his name as Alfred and state that he was born in Abbotskerswell. Since he is actually listed on the Ipplepen war memorial we must assume he was not considered to be from Abbotskerswell, and in fact there is little evidence to suggest that he was. Appendix 4 contains the detail on these three men.

A second rather unusual reminder of the war in the village occurred during March, when a machine gun was sent to Mr Elliott of the Parish Council. It is an odd story that began in December of 1919 when a village meeting agreed to the offer of the weapon from the Hon. Lieutenant of the County. Following the meeting the Parish Council minutes note that: "the Council accept with much gratification the offer of a machine gun to the parish as a War Trophie [sic]"¹³. The problem was that the gun had to be securely

housed, but Devon Education Committee refused to allow it to go into the school and the Trustees of Church House also rejected it. Mr Prowse, the Chairman of the Parish Council, sought advice from the Territorial Force Association. Since nothing more is noted in the Minutes we must assume that this rather macabre reminder of the war was returned.

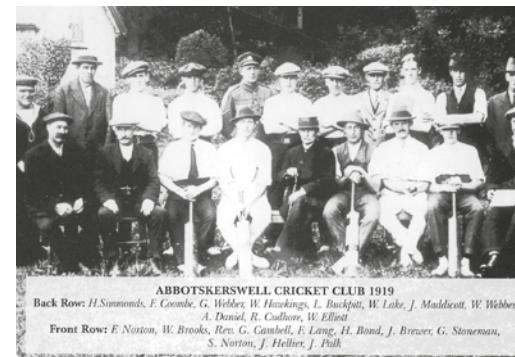
The aftermath of The Great War took many forms, for many of those involved. The mental strain of the war and the period afterwards must have been immense. Creating peace was a vital part of the post-war period and Abbotskerswell's Arthur Huggett* took part in the process in the far off area of Upper Silesia in eastern Germany. The peace Treaty of Versailles had ordered a plebiscite in Upper Silesia to determine whether the territory should be a part of Germany or Poland. The area contained both German and Polish speakers, but the importance of the areas mining industry made it vital to the reconstruction of both countries. Arthur, having been with the British military in Berlin, was attached to the British section of the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Committee in May 1920. It was conducted in March 1921, with Silesia going to Germany, but not until there had been two Silesian uprisings.

Earlier in 1920 each member of the Roll of Duty had been presented with a beautifully executed scroll as a gift from the grateful villagers. However, the tributes to the fallen were not yet complete as the village school also wanted to commemorate those ex pupils who gave their lives for King and Country by creating its own Roll of Honour. This had been suggested by the Headmaster Henry Keites, and its design and completion was by Claude Howard. Claude was an old boy of the school and was only 14 years old and a pupil of Newton Secondary School, when he completed it; he went on to study at Newton Abbot College of Art and The Royal College of Art. He would eventually become one of the world's top designers of church windows. The Roll of Honour bears the ten names of the old boys who died, with their regimental badges and the epitaph: "They gave their bodies one and all, And took each for himself a praise, Which grows not old"¹⁴. An appeal was made for funds to cover the cost which was quickly met, given mainly by the ex-service old boys of the school.



A ceremony took place on 4 November 1920 when the Scroll was hung in the classroom of the school. Today it hangs in the Parish Rooms.

An interesting and unusual link to World War 1 that Abbotskerswell churchyard reveals is that of the grave of Fred Lee*. He was a career sailor and his family were long standing members of the village (see Appendix 5). He survived the war only to die in 1920 and as such has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.



Another change in the post-war landscape of the village was the sale of Court Grange in February 1920. For around 50 years the Hare family had been significant in the village, but now Mrs Hare's daughters had sold the estate to Mr L A Johnson of Park Hill, Ipplepen. Some aspects of life were returning to normal and the resurrection of the Abbotskerswell Cricket Team was one of them. The team featured in Chapter 2 was largely in place, in fact the team playing in May 1920 had seven of the same team. The 1919 photo features many of the men who went to war and even shows Walter Hawkins* in his RE uniform; half of those shown feature in the village 'Roll of Duty'.

The Great War was slowly fading into the past, although on the second anniversary of Armistice Day the Revd. Campbell still said special memorial prayers for those who had fallen. What is unknown is the mental damage that many of the returning Abbotskerswell men must have suffered. For some there would be years of suffering from the effects 'neurasthenia' usually known as shell-shock, when any loud noise could cause upset. It was apparently usual that the men never talked about their experiences. As life returned to normal one last story of the impact of the war relates to Albert Cornish's widow, Jessie, who moved from her Jersey barracks home to raise their children Hilda, Edna and Sidney in the village. In 1924 she married Albert Stoneman, Ernest's brother, and soon gave birth to their daughter Eileen. Sidney would continue the link to The Great War and his father, by serving in the Devonshire Regiment in World War II.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Priory

It does seem strange that although Aller Vale was in the parish of Abbotskerswell, the Priory of St Augustine and the houses around it were in the parish of Wolborough. Therefore it is mainly for interest and a total view of what might be considered 'The Village', that the 1911 Census details are included here. The Priory, its Lodge, Abbotsleigh (the old house within the Priory) and Maristowe had 58 inhabitants. At the Priory there were 43 nuns, 2 Priests and a Prioress. The oldest nun was 84 and the youngest 25; the chart below shows the spread of their ages.

20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-4
4	6	10	8	8	5	2

Lilian Beaumont, the Prioress, was born in India in 1864, probably the daughter of a civil servant in the Raj. In 1891 after returning from India she lived in Cheltenham, but by 1901 she was at the Priory as one of the 42 nuns, with 2 Priests and the Bishop of Plymouth, William Vaughan who was 87.

Joseph Flip, the gardener, lived in Abbotsleigh with his wife, 3 children and mother.

Appendix 2: THE FARMS

Map House No.	Farm	Occupant
32	Abbotsford	John Mortimore
Off the map	Aller Farm	Thomas Wakeham
82	Court Farm	William Buckpitt
68	Fairfield	Thomas Morris
94	Laburnum Farm	George Wilton
Off the map	Lang Bridge Farm	Mrs Elizabeth Bulley (Widow of William)

Map House No.	Farm	Occupant
65	Manor Farm	John Buckpitt
Off the map	Manor Farm, Aller Vale	William Mills
31	Ruby Farm	Edward Wilton
76	Town Farm	Mrs Elizabeth Chudleigh (Widow of Robert)
Off the map	Whiddon Farm	William Sercombe

Appendix 3: Ships At The Battle Of Jutland With Abbotskerswell Crew

HMS Revenge: a battleship of the *Revenge* class. She was launched in 1915 and commissioned in 1916. Her displacement weight was 28000 tons, being 624 ft long and 88 ft beam, with a draft of 28 ft. Her propulsion was with steam turbines generated from 18 boilers and driving 4 shafts, this gave her a top speed of 23 knots. Her crew complement was 997 men. Her armaments were 8 x 15 inch guns in twin turrets, 14 x 6 inch guns, 2 x 3 inch anti-aircraft guns, 4 x 47 mm guns and 4 x 21 inch torpedo tubes.

HMS Minotaur: was a *Minotaur*-class armoured cruiser. She was launched in 1906 and commissioned in 1908. Her displacement weight was 14,800 tons, being 519 ft long and 75 ft beam, with a draft of 26 ft. Her propulsion was with steam turbines generated from 24 boilers and driving 2 shafts, this gave her a top speed of 23 knots. Her crew complement was 825 men. Her armaments were 4 x 9.2 inch guns in twin turrets, 10 x 7.5 inch guns, 16 x 12lb guns and 5 x 18 inch torpedo tubes.

HMS Dublin: she was a *Town*-class light cruiser. She was launched in 1911 and commissioned in 1913. Her displacement weight was 5,400 tons, being 457 ft long and 49 ft beam, with a draft of 17 ft. Her propulsion was with steam turbines generated from 12 boilers and driving 4 shafts, this gave her a top speed of 25.5 knots. Her crew complement was 475 men. Her armaments were 8 x 6 inch guns in twin turrets, 4 x 3lb guns, 3 x 3 inch anti-aircraft guns and 2 x 21 inch torpedo tubes. She was hit by 5 x 5.9" shells from the *SMS Elbing* and 8 x 4.1" shells from the *SMS Stuttgart* during the battle.

HMS Royal Oak: was also a *Revenge* class battleship, with same design details as *Revenge*. During the battle *Royal Oak* fired a total of thirty-eight 15-inch and eighty-four 6-inch shells, claiming three hits on the battlecruiser *SMS Derfflinger*, putting one of its turrets out of action, and a hit on the cruiser *SMS Wiesbaden*.

HMS Colossus: was a *Colossus* class of *Dreadnought* battleship. She was launched in 1910 and commissioned in 1911. Her displacement weight was 19680 tons, being 546 ft long and 85 ft beam, with a draft of 26 ft. Her propulsion was with steam turbines generated from 18 boilers and driving 4 shafts, this gave her a top speed of 23 knots. Her crew complement was 800 men. Her armaments were 10 x 12 inch guns in twin turrets, 16 x 4 inch guns and 3 x 21 inch torpedo tubes. She fired at the light cruiser *SMS Wiesbaden* which later sank, having been fired on by several ships. In a later action several hits were reported on *SMS Derfflinger*. *Colossus* was damaged by 2 shells on the forward superstructure but with little damage and the fighting efficiency of the ship was not affected.

Appendix 4: Walter Miseman, Cecil Hext & Algie Shenton

Walter Francis Miseman was born in 1898 at Bridgetown near Totnes the only child of Walter and Ellen. In 1911 the family was living at 10 Somerset Place, Bridgetown. By 1916 their address was Prospect Place, Abbotskerswell with Walter Snr being a gardener. Walter enlisted in the Somerset Light Infantry in Taunton but transferred to the Machine Gun Corps (53rd Company) which moved to France and joined 18th Division on 13 February 1916 at Ribemont. Walter died on 19th July 1916 aged 18 whilst fighting in the 1st Battle of the Somme. He has no known grave and consequently is noted on the Thiepval Memorial. He is on the Totnes War Memorial and commemorated on his parents grave in Abbotskerswell graveyard, which adds the sad epitaph: "His [father's] dearly loved only son".

Cecil Walter Hext was born 1899 at Wheal Josiah near Tavistock, the only child of Walter and Elizabeth. By 1911 they were at Mallands Lodge where Walter was the caretaker and Cecil was at the village school where he got into plenty of trouble; between 21.03.11 and 2.07.12 he was caned 6 times for offences such as "repeated talking", "inattention to work", and "throwing things about at boys". By 1918 the family was living at 'Ash Hill', Highweek. Cecil was a private in the Devonshire Regiment (1/5th Battalion) and was reported as killed in action on 30th September 1918, aged 18. He was buried at Flesquieres Hill British Cemetery. His MDA obituary showed he was a much

reformed character because he was very well thought of at the town Wesleyan Chapel where he was a Sunday School teacher and prospective preacher. He is commemorated on the Newton Abbot War Memorial.

Algie John Shenton was born in Landscore in 1895 the first child of James and Charlotte. In 1911 he was a 16 year old farm waggoner living in Ogwell, whilst his parents and sister Hilda were living in Ipplepen. He serving as a Bombardier in the RFA, 110th Battery in the 204th Brigade. He was killed in action near Ypres on 27th May 1918 and buried at Brandhoek New Military Cemetery No 3 in Belgium. An officer wrote: "He was hit in the head at 1.45 am, and died an hour later without becoming conscious".

Appendix 5: Frederick Lee

Frederick George Lee was born in Abbotskerswell in 1878, the son of George and Anne, and brother to Anne, Albert, Frederick and Harry. The family lived at 1 Burrow Road in 1891, with George being a gardener. By 1901 they were at 3 Sunny Bank and all the children had left home. Fred attended the village school, leaving in August 1890 to become a labourer. He joined the RN in 1896 as a 5'7" tall 18 year old. He trained at HMS Vivid at Devonport; his first ship in 1899 was *HMS Archer*, a torpedo cruiser. In 1901 he was on *HMS Ocean*, based at Lazaretto Creek, Malta. By 1911 he was serving on the 1st class cruiser *HMS Kent* in the China & East Indies area. He married Francis Denley in 1904 but following her death in 1906 he later married Margaret Bond in 1909. In 1911 her address was 2 Town Cottages, where she lived with her parents and brother William*. Fred and Francis had three children; Gladys, Harold and Olive.

At the beginning of WW1 Fred was aboard *HMS Argyll*, a Devonshire class cruiser, which captured a German merchant ship in August 1914. By May 1915 he was a chief stoker on *HMS Royal Oak* and remained with her until April 1918. His last naval role was as a Chief Stoker on *HMS Eaglet* which was the Royal Naval Reserve training centre for Merseyside, North West England and North Wales. In 1919 he was on 'shore demob', which was an abbreviation for 'Posted Ashore on Demobilisation'; this means that he ceased to be on the strength or crew of his ship and went into an administrative role prior to discharge. Whilst in the RN his character was always described as very good. Fred died on 27th October 1920 aged 42, presumably of illness as he died in Streatham Hall Hospital in Exeter. He was buried in Abbotskerswell churchyard where his grave is marked with a Commonwealth War Graves headstone and carries the epitaph: "Resting where no shadows fall".

Glossary of Terms Used

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CEF	Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force
CB	Companion of the Bath
CH	Companion of Honour
CWGC	Commonwealth War Grave Commission
CO	Conscientious Objector
MDA	Mid Devon Advertiser
MDNT	Mid-Devon and Newton Times
RE	Royal Engineers
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RGA	Royal Garrison Artillery
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
RMLI	Royal Marine Light Infantry
RN	Royal Navy
RNVR	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RRC	Lady of the Royal Red Cross
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment

Bibliography

- Bridger Geoff, *The Great War Handbook*
- S Baring-Gould, *A Book of Devon*
- Gray Todd, *Lest Devon Forgets*
- SomersCocks John, Abbotskerswell Devon
- *Kelly's Directory*
- Newspapers: *Mid Devon Advertiser*; *Newton Abbot Western Guardian*; *Torquay Times*; *Cork Examiner*
- Abbotskerswell School: Log Book; Punishment Book
- Websites: [Ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk); [gmic.co.uk](https://www.gmic.co.uk); [Forces-War-Records.co.uk](https://www.Forces-War-Records.co.uk); [Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)
- The Army Children Archive (TACA)
- Royal Navy Record Sheets
- Abbotskerswell Parish Council Minutes
- Abbotskerswell War Memorial Committee Minutes
- Abbotskerswell Church Register of Services
- The Parliamentary County of Devon Electoral Roll

Acknowledgements

- Mid Devon Advertiser for providing and allowing us to print photographs
- Mrs H Duncan for providing and allowing us to print photographs and post cards
- Mrs L Barnett for allowing us to photograph and use C Symons' Death Plaque
- Mrs E Shears for allowing the use her father's regimental certificate
- Mr K Eales for access to the Abbotskerswell Parish Council Minutes

References

Chapter 1

- ¹ 1911 Census
- ² *Kelly's Directory* 1914
- ³⁻⁴ *A Book of Devon* S Baring-Gould
- ⁵ *Kelly's Directory* 1914
- ⁶ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 4.07.14
- ⁷ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 31.10.14
- ⁸ *Abbotskerswell Devon* J Somers Cocks
- ⁹⁻¹⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 4.07.14

Chapter 2

- ¹ *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* 9.05.1914
- ² *Abbotskerswell School Log* 30.11.1893
- ³ *ibid* 1898

Chapter 3

- ¹⁻² *Mid Devon Advertiser* 8.08.14
- ³ *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* 19.09.14
- ⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 15.08.14
- ⁵ *The Great War Handbook* G Bridger
- ⁶ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 5.12.14
- ⁷ Gentleman's Military Interest Club (www.gmic.co.uk) 11.12.2007
- ⁸ *Newton Abbot Western Guardian* 3.09.14
- ⁹ *Abbotskerswell School Log* 7.12.1903
- ¹⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 6.03.54
- ¹¹ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 12.09.14
- ¹² *Mid Devon Advertiser* 22.05.15
- ¹³ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 31.10.14
- ¹⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 27.03.15

Chapter 4

- ¹⁻³ *Royal Navy Record Sheet* – T Bond
- ⁴ *The Cork Examiner* 8.09.18
- ⁵ *National Probate Calendar* 1858-1966
- ⁶ *Newton Abbot Western Guardian* 24.09.14
- ⁷ *The Army Children Archive (TACA)* a postcard from Jack
- ⁸ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 10.10.14
- ⁹ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 5.12.14
- ¹⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 3.04.15
- ¹¹⁻¹² *The Torquay Times* 26.03.15
- ¹³ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 19.05.15
- ¹⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 24.07.15
- ¹⁵ *Volunteer Regulations 1901* - Section II, Paragraph 118
- ¹⁶ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 10.02.17
- ¹⁷ *Abbotskerswell Parish Council Minutes* 27.07.15
- ¹⁸ *The Torquay Times* 31.03.1915
- ¹⁹ *Ancestry.co.uk*
- ²⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 22.12.17
- ²¹ *ibid* 24.04.18
- ²² *The Torquay Times* 5.02.15
- ²³⁻²⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 6.05.16
- ²⁵ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 12.08.16
- ²⁶ Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme
- ²⁷ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 25.08.17
- ²⁸ *Abbotskerswell School Log* 4.12.1896
- ²⁹ *ibid* 10.06.1902
- ³⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 6.05.16
- ³¹ *Ancestry.co.uk*
- ³²⁻³⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 27.01.17
- ³⁵ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 2.06.17
- ³⁶ *Abbotskerswell School Log* 15.12.1905
- ³⁷ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 9.06.17

- ³⁸ Grave of Millie Stoneman - Abbotskerswell churchyard
³⁹ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 23.06.17
⁴⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 9.06.17
⁴¹ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 16.06.17
⁴² *Mid Devon Advertiser* 7.07.17
^{43 - 44} *Mid Devon Advertiser* 25.08.17
⁴⁵ *Abbotskerswell Parish Council Minutes* 17.05.1917
^{46 - 47} *Mid Devon Advertiser* 29.12.17
⁴⁸ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 9.2.18
⁴⁹ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 16.03.18
⁵⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 13.07.18
⁵¹ *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* 21.09.18
⁵² *Mid Devon Advertiser* 28.09.18
^{53 - 55} *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* 12.10.18
⁵⁶ Grave of J & Cowell - Abbotskerswell churchyard
^{57 - 58} *Mid Devon Advertiser* 19.10.18
⁵⁹ *Abbotskerswell School Punishment Book* 21.03.11
⁶⁰ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 2.11.18
^{61 - 63} Post card belonging from A Rowe
⁶⁴ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 2.11.18
^{65 - 66} Wikipedia – Article on World War 1

Chapter 5

- ^{1 - 5} *Mid Devon Advertiser* 16.11.18
⁶ *Mid Devon Advertiser* 26.07.19
⁷ ibid
⁸ *Lest Devon Forgets Todd Gray*
^{9 - 11} Abbotskerswell War Memorial Committee – Minute Book 10.06.1919
¹² *Abbotskerswell Church Register of Services* 1917 – 1935
¹³ *Abbotskerswell Parish Council Minutes* 23.12.1919
¹⁴ Abbotskerswell School – Roll of Honour