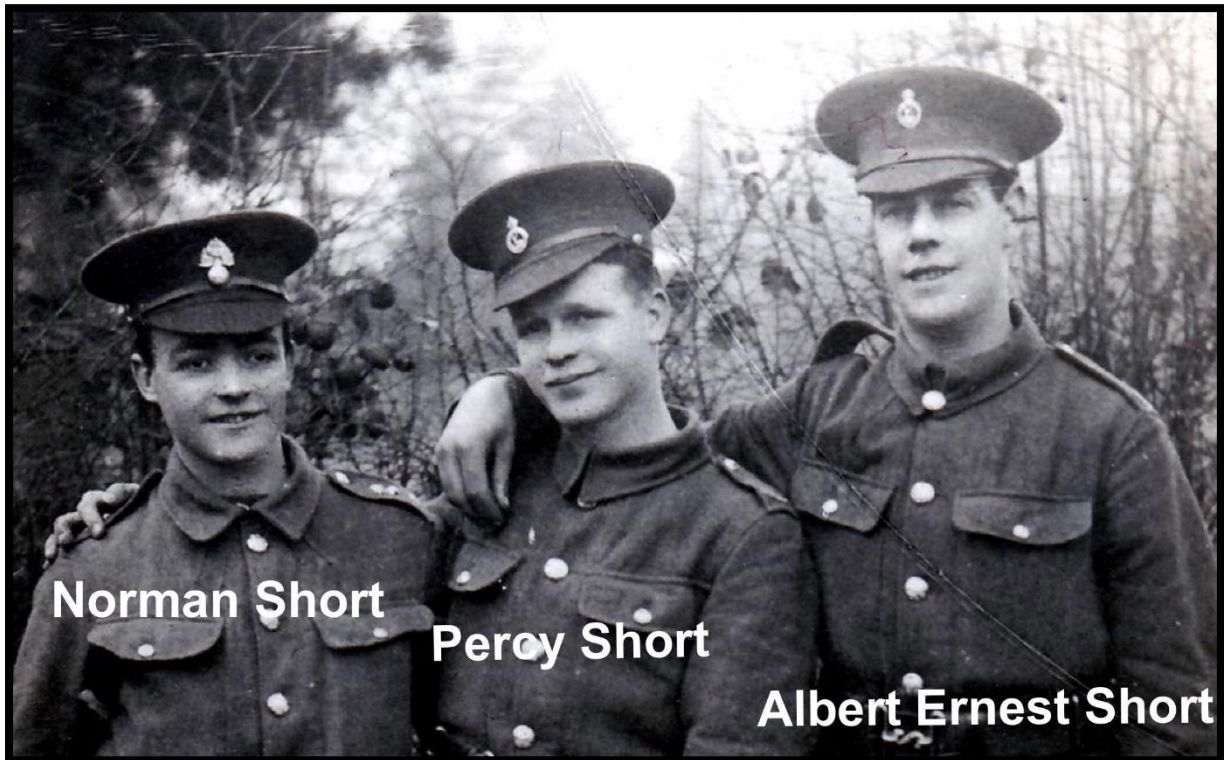


In Life and Death - The Story of the Short Brothers



The devastating loss of a family member during the First World War occurred in many homes across the British Isles. The county of Hertfordshire would share in the nation's grief, seeing more than 23,000 of its serving personnel losing their lives in various locations across the world. The anguish of any loss was greatly augmented in cases where parents lost one, or more, of their children, losses that continue to resonate through their families to this day.

One such case is that of William and Alice Short, who would see three of their eight children lost on foreign fields. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, the family lived at 1 Pretoria Cottages, Church Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth. William Short had married Alice Gunter in 1887 and there would soon be a series of children Edward Daniel (1887), Harvey William (1888), Rose Charlotte (1890), Albert Ernest (1892), Norman (1894), Laura (1896), Percy (1898) and John (1904). William worked hard as a Brewers labourer whilst Alice did her utmost to care for the ever-expanding family, ensuring they all survived infancy and early childhood, at a time when infant mortality was very high.

At least two of the brothers, Albert and Percy, chose to enlist in the Territorial Army, joining the ranks of the Hertfordshire Regiment at Rickmansworth, a part-time volunteer component of the British Army, created in 1908 to augment British land forces without resorting to conscription. As members of the TA, they would attend weekly parades and annual camps, for which they would receive an annual bounty. Uniforms and equipment, food and transport would all be provided, and it would also be a highly effective means of socialising with members of the community from the location where they lived.

The outbreak of the First World War would see those serving with the Territorial Army liable for service anywhere in the UK but could not be compelled to serve overseas. However, in the first two months of the war, territorials volunteered for foreign service in significant numbers, allowing territorial units such as the Hertfordshire Regiment to be deployed abroad. At the same time many civilians flocked to recruiting stations to join the fight, including more members of the Short family.

This is their story.

Private Norman Short

Service Number: 882

Regiment: 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

Date of Death: 18 March 1916 aged 21.

Buried at Vermelles British Cemetery, France

Grave Reference: II. L. 3.

Awards: 1914/15 Star, British War and Victory medals



Memorials

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial,
- St. Peter's Church, Mill End,
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School, Mill End

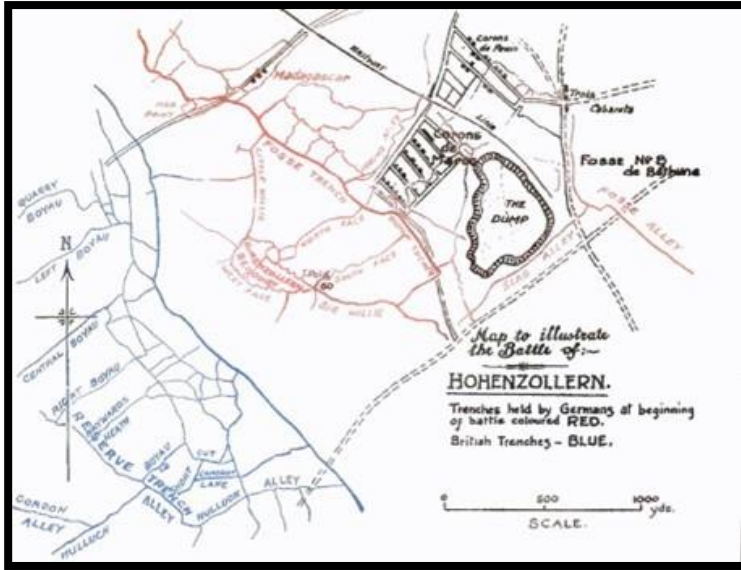
Norman would be the first of three brothers to fall on the battlefields of France. Born in Rickmansworth on 19 October 1894, he was baptised at West Hyde on 26 January 1895. Following his formal education at St Peter's school in Mill End, he began working for a renowned watchmaking company, Ingersoll, which was based in the city of London. Records show that with the outbreak of hostilities Norman enlisted in the British Army at Marylebone and entered service with the 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.



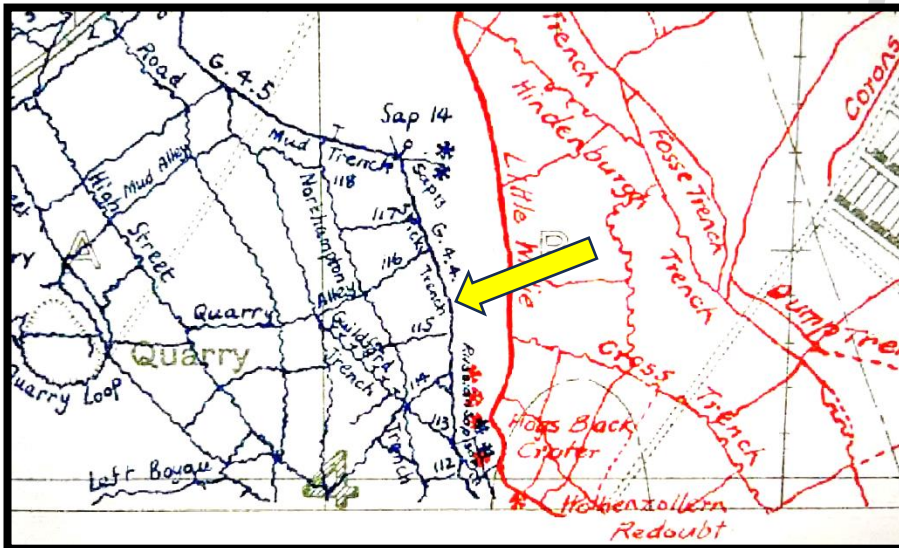
The battalion was part of 36th Brigade, 12th (Eastern) Division, and left Aldershot at 5:30pm on 31st May 1915, reaching Boulogne, France, by 10:30pm the following day. Norman was attached to "A" Company and, following a journey of 11 days, which took the men through Arques, Le Creche and Armentieres, they arrived at L'EpINETTE. At 9:00pm on 11 June 1915, "A" and "B" Companies entered the front-line trenches for the first time, in the company of the 1st Battalion, Kings Royal Rifle Corps and 2nd Battalion, Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. The following morning, "C" and "D" Companies of the Fusiliers relieved them, having suffered one slight casualty from a bullet wound.

The Battalion served continuously in the vicinity of Houplines throughout the Summer of 1915, taking part in actions in locations that would become synonymous with the Western Front in the early part of the First World, such as Ploegsteert, Armentieres, Le Touret, and in late September and early October the Battalion was engaged in the Battle of Loos. Often providing working parties to aid in the building and repair of frontline trenches, work that was both arduous and extremely dangerous, the Battalion suffered many casualties, some of whom would have been known to Norman.

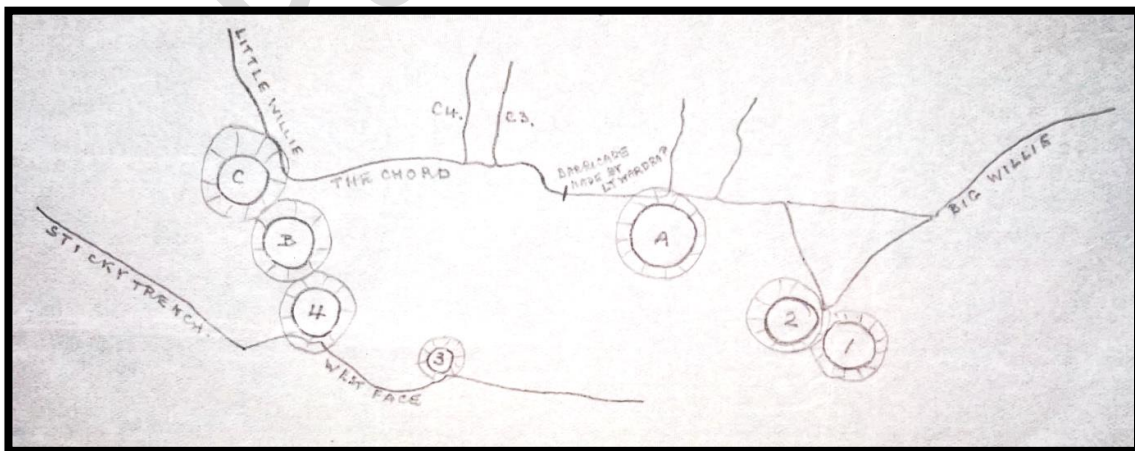
On Christmas Eve 1915, the men of the Battalion spent the day carrying 7000 grenades and 1200 rifle grenades into the trenches at Givenchy in preparation for the defence of their positions. At 9pm on Christmas Day they moved into the front-line trenches, relieving the men of the 7th Battalion, Sussex Regiment. With the 9th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on their left and the 21st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on their right. The Germans attacked their positions by blowing a mine between two saps, and then mounting a machine gun on the forward lip of the crater. The fusiliers attempted to bomb the Germans out of the position on Boxing Day, but their attempts proved unsuccessful. With the assistance of a Trench Mortar Battery, the crater was finally cleared on 27th December, at which point the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Battalion, Sussex Regiment and returned to billets at Le Quesnoy. By January 1916, the Battalion were in billets in the Tobacco Factory in Bethune. Following a brief period on the front line in Givenchy, they moved to locations at Festubert, after which they moved into reserve at Bourecq where they underwent a period of rest and training.



On 13 February 1916, the men of the Battalion returned to the front line, taking up positions at Vermelles, close to Hohenzollern Redoubt. On 18 February, a party of Naval troops consisting of 1 officer and 7 other ranks, entered the trenches to gain an understanding of trench life. They were “not favourably impressed” with trench life, and quickly asked to be shown the artillery positions, which were well away from the trenches. Two days later, a group of American journalists paid a visit to the very same trenches. Due to an unusual amount of bombing around Sticky Trench, they were shown an officer’s dugout, after which they “hastily withdrew”.



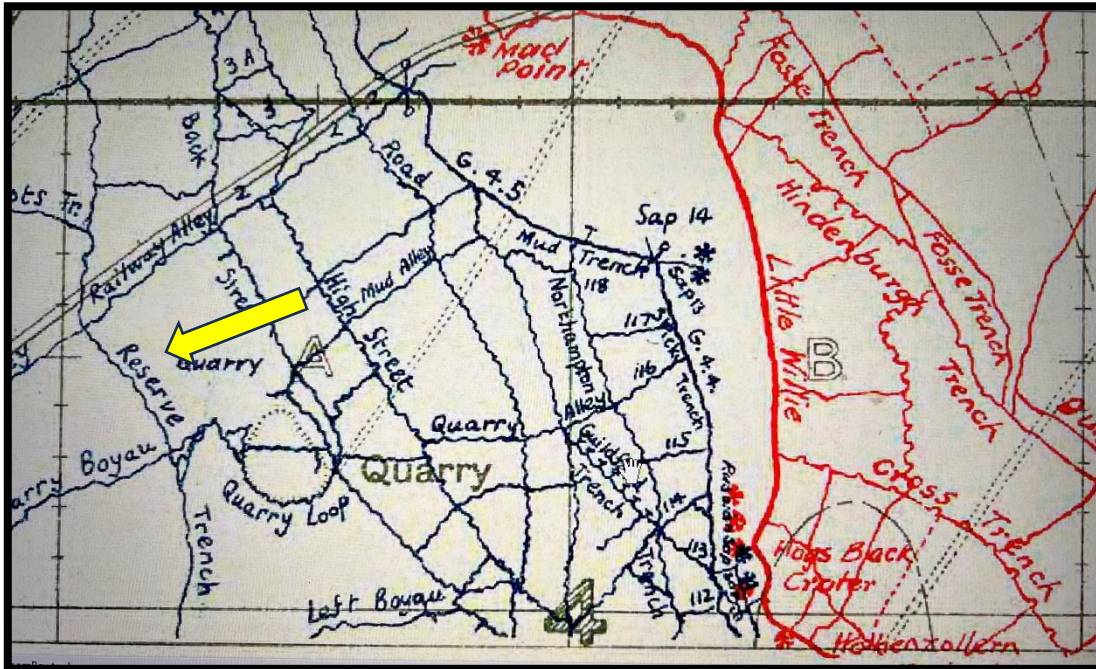
“Sticky Trench” – A place of immense danger, where the men of 8th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers were situated during the early months of 1916. The maps above and below provide a detailed perspective of the location and the shell craters that were bitterly fought over.



At 5:30pm on the 18 March 1916, the Battalion were in billets in Vermelles when there was a heavy bombardment of high explosive and gas shells in the village. The unit war diary describes the fumes from the Lachryolatory gas as being “in spite of smoke helmets irritating to the eyes” At the same time, the Germans assaulted the craters in the Hohenzollern sector. “A” and “D” Companies were sent forward at 7:30pm to hold Reserve Trench, whilst “B” and “C” Companies were sent into Vermelles in preparation to defend the village. By early the next morning

the craters that had so bitterly been fought over had fallen into German hands, all except for No.4. It is uncertain if Norman was a victim of the initial shelling of Vermelles, or if he perished in Reserve trench.

Map showing location of Reserve Trench where "A" Company were located on the evening of 18 March 1916.



Buried alongside Norman at Vermelles British Cemetery are the comrades whose lives were lost on the night.

- 6713 Private Herbert William Hayden aged 24.
- 1474 Private George Edwin Osborn aged 28.
- 17700 Private Fredrick Williams aged 20 (Died of Wounds on 19 March 1916)

Private Albert Ernest Short

Service Number: 5547

Regiment: 1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment

Date of Death: 13 November 1916 aged 23.

Commemorated at Thiepval Memorial, France

Panel Reference: Pier and Face 12C

Awards: British War and Victory medals



Memorials

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial
- St. Peter's Church Memorial, Mill End
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School Memorial, Mill End
- Hertfordshire Regimental Memorial, All Saints Church, Hertford



The eldest of the three brothers, Albert, was born on 22 April 1892 in Harefield, Middlesex. He was christened on 29 May 1892 at West Hyde. Following his formal education at St Peter's school in Mill End, Albert is known to have worked as a gardener and nurseryman. Records indicate that Albert did not serve overseas until after January 1916, during which time the Hertfordshire Regiment formed part of 118th Brigade and 39th Division.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

It was on 10th August 1916 that the Battalion left the Trenches near Festubert for the last time, after being relieved by the 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. They marched back to Bethune, where the Brigades of the 39th Division were placed into Army Reserve, and prepared to move South to the Somme sector, where the British Army had been engaged in a major offensive since the 1st July.

On 11th August, the Brigade marched to billets at Cauchy-A-Le-Tour, a 9-mile march. The following day they moved to Monchy Breton, a further 7 miles. By 13th August they had reached Ostreville, where they remained for a period of 10 days, undergoing training in preparation for their arrival on the Somme. It was here that another draft of 12 Other Ranks joined the Battalion on the 15 July. They marched to billets at Houvin-Houvigneul on the 23rd August, and the following day marched a further 9 miles to the village of Grouches-Luchuel, where they were joined by a further draft of 64 Other Ranks. The following day, another 9-mile march took the Battalion to the village of Bus-Le-Artois and, following an overnight rest, they marched the remaining 5 miles to their objective, the village of Englebemer, arriving there on the 26th August 1916. The journey had been completed entirely on foot and they had covered nearly 50 miles, with each man marching in full-service order, carrying all of his own kit in the high heat of the summer.

On the night of the 26th August 1916 the 39th Division took over positions near Thiepval from the 6th Division. Fighting had been very heavy in this area since the 1st July, when the Battle of the Somme opened, and the men of the Hertfordshire Regiment knew that some of their number would soon be lost in the bitter stalemate that typified the Western Front at that time. On the last day of the month a further new draft of 30 Other Ranks arrived to ensure that the Battalion maintained full strength.

The 1st September 1916 saw the arrival of 6 Officers and 30 Other Ranks from England. The following day the Battalion moved into positions overlooking the Ancre Valley, known as Fort Prowse and Fort Moulin. No.1 Company were positioned a short distance away in the village of Mesnil, in preparation for an assault on German positions on the 3rd September. The 118th Brigade were in support of the attack, but it was deemed to be a failure as the Germans made a successful counterattack in the afternoon, forcing the attacking British troops to withdraw. The German artillery had been particularly aggressive during the operation of the 3rd September, and there was considerable damage to the British trenches. Working parties from the Hertfordshire Regiment assisted in the repair work, which involved extremely hard labour throughout the night. For the troops in the trenches, things were not

much better. Due to the high level of gas shells the Germans had been firing, they were required to wear their gas helmets all through the night.

On the 12th September, the Hertfordshire's were relieved by the 1st/6th Cheshire Regiment and moved into billets in Englebelmer, a welcome relief from the drudgery of the trenches, which had been made worse by continued rainfall in the area. During the time they had been in the Somme sector, a total of four drafts had arrived, bringing 86 new faces to the Battalion. Sadly, since their arrival in the sector the Battalion had seen 17 members killed or dying of their wounds, with many more wounded. For Jack Willmott, and many of his comrades, it was a time of great fear, as it was not a question as to whether they would be killed or wounded, but when?

The 19th September 1916 saw the Battalion back in the frontline. This time they were holding the sub section of well-known position named Y Ravine, remaining there until the 3rd October. During this time, they were engaged in mainly repairing Trenches, Dug-Outs and Tram Lines. On the night of the 20th/21st September two Patrols were sent out under Corporal's King and Bilby to investigate the enemy fortifications. They reported the German barbed wire as up to 30 feet deep and heavily staked with very long spikes, and completely impassable.

The Battalion were relieved by the 13th Royal Sussex Regiment on the 3rd October, and they, in turn, took over positions from the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment in the right sub section of the village of Hamel. The Hertfordshire's remained here until the 7th October when they moved into Huts and Billets in the village of Martinsart, after being relieved by the 11th Royal Sussex Regiment.



British Huts in the village of Martinsart, similar to those in which the men of the Battalion stayed (IWM).

On the 14th October 1916, the 118th Brigade were ordered to attack a German strongpoint known as the Schwaben Redoubt, on the outskirts of Thiepval. The Hertfordshire Regiment were held in Reserve to support the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment who were at the forefront of the assault. The attack was successful and the Cambridgeshire's were able to seize and hold the position. A Platoon of the Hertfordshire's were used in a supporting role during the attack, with two Officers winning the Military Cross and three Other Ranks winning the Military Medal.

THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE

The Battle of the Ancre began on the 13th November 1916, and was the final large scale British attack of the Battle of the Somme. The Hertfordshire Regiment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Page DSO, achieved notable success in the battle advancing 1600 yards and holding their position. The attack was preceded by seven days of heavy shellfire and was launched before dawn to try and take the Germans by surprise. The men travelled lightly, each had been given bombs and around half the men carried spades. Moving an entire Brigade into position in the dark was an exceedingly difficult operation and careful reconnaissance had to be carried out ahead of the attack. Second Lieutenant Gilbey had carefully marked out the lines on which the different Companies had to assemble over the previous nights and this work helped the Brigade get into position without too many difficulties. Every man was in his place before 2am, ready for the attack.

The Hertfordshire Regiment attacked from the Schwaben Redoubt which they had been involved in capturing a few weeks earlier. The attack was aided both by the darkness and a mist which hid the soldiers. It had also been dry for several days leading up to the 13th November which allowed the men to move much faster across the battlefield although they still had to carefully avoid shell holes, some of which contained up to a foot of water. Despite the mist and darkness, the battalion kept together and moved quickly towards the Hansa Line, their ultimate objective. The advance was a great success and the battalion was able to seize the whole of the Hansa Line as well as capturing 250 prisoners and nine machine guns. During the battle, seven of the Regiment's officers were wounded and another 150 men were either killed or wounded.



Some of the German stores and equipment captured during the Battle of the Ancre (IWM)

It was at 7.36am on the 19th November 1916 that the Battalion, along with a quarter of the 118th Machine Gun Company, left the Somme sector, after boarding Train No.24 at Candas. The journey took them back to Belgium, where the Battalion had first seen service in November 1914.

Albert's body was not recovered from the Somme battlefield and his name is recorded on Pier and Face 12C of the Thiepval Memorial, France

Private Percy Short

Service Number: 203113

Regiment: 6th/7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers

Date of Death: 18 April 1918 aged 19.

Commemorated at Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium

Panel Reference: 4.

Awards: British War and Victory medals

Memorials:

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial,
- St. Peter's Church, Mill End,
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School, Mill End,
- John Dickinson & Co, Croxley Mills, Croxley Green

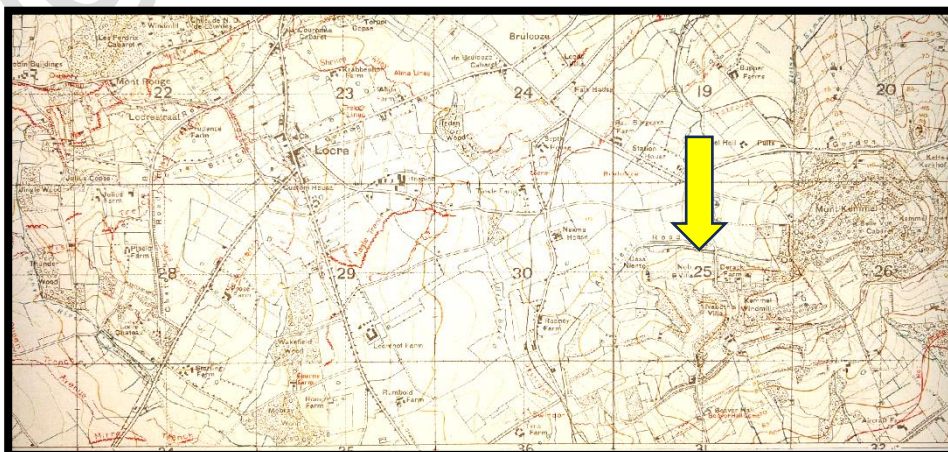


Percy was the youngest of the three brothers, and the last to perish on the battlefield. He was born on 20 July 1898 and was baptised at St Peter's Mill End on 21 September 1898. Like his older brothers, he attended St Peter's school, and after leaving his formal education worked as a labourer.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Percy enlisted in the Hertfordshire in September 1914, but was too young to serve on the frontline and was held in reserve until he was old enough to be sent overseas. Although he was a member of the Hertfordshire Regiment, the shortage of men in combat units saw him transferred to the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, being given the Regimental Number 7237. Following this, he was transferred for a second time to the 6th/7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers (Pioneers), part of the 59th Division. On this occasion his Regimental Number changed again, this time to 203113. During March 1918, Percy's battalion had been continuously in the front line attempting to resist the German Spring Offensive near Vaulx-Vraucourt, east of Bapaume. At the beginning of April, the battalion moved to Ypres and relieved the 18th Middlesex Pioneers at Middlesex Camp, Ypres. They mounted working parties to repair shell damage to infrastructure such as railway tracks.

By 15 April the battalion was defending the front line near Bailleul. On 17 April 100 rifles from 'A' company were placed at the disposal of 100th Infantry Brigade for a counterattack which took place that night. There were 20 casualties. Percy appears to amongst those whose bodies were not recovered from the battlefield and therefore, his name is recorded on Panel 4 of the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium.

Map showing approximate location of detachment on the night of 17 April 1918, which suffered 20 casualties during an assault on German positions.





This image, taken at some point between September 1914 and March 1916, shows the three brothers most likely close to their home at Mill End.

1 A.M. Harvey William Short (12157) – The Fledging Service

On 30 October 1915, with his brothers serving in the Army, Harvey William Short enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps. In civilian life he had been a Fitter, and his skills were in great demand in the fledgling air service. Initially, he was attached to a Kite Balloon section but by 1 February 1916, he would find himself promoted to 1st Class Air Mechanic after which he was posted France. He initially served with No. 6 Squadron but was later posted to No.101 Squadron, eventually serving most of his time with No.40 Squadron. It seems the Harvey suffered some health issues and found himself in hospital at Calais on more than one occasion.

Harvey served with the Royal Air Force until May 1919, when he eventually returned home. By 1921, the 32-year-old was still living with his parents at Mill End, and was working as an Engine Driver for the Bells United Asbestos Company. In the Summer of 1921, he married Blanche Ashworth but it appears she passed away in 1929. Harvey then married Celia May Groom in the winter of 1937, and the couple ran the “Stag & Hounds” public house in Eton. Harvey passed away in October 1969



The Greatest Family Tragedy - Private Bertie Thomas Sharpe

Service Number: G/66345

Regiment: 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

Date of Death: 13 October 1918

Buried at Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny, France

Grave Reference: 4.

Awards: British War and Victory medals

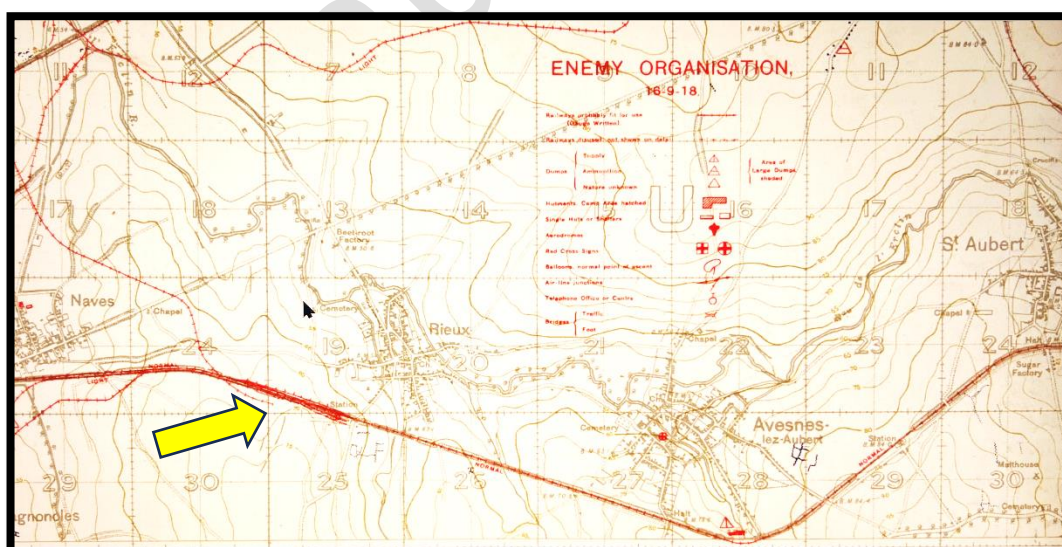
Memorials:

- Rickmansworth Urban District Memorial,
- St. Peter's Church, Mill End,
- St. Peter's C & E Primary School, Mill End,
- John Dickinson & Co, Croxley Mills, Croxley Green



Although William & Alice would lose three of their sons to the Great War, it was perhaps Rose Short who would make the greatest sacrifice, not only losing her siblings but also her husband. In the Summer of 1911, the 21-year-old married a local lad, Bertie Thomas Sharpe, who was born in Rickmansworth on 26 October 1885, the son of Thomas and Alice Sharpe (nee East), and baptised on 22 November 1885 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth. His parents had married on 9 November 1873 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth, and his father died in 1899 when Bertie was aged 14. He was aged 50 and was buried on 10 May 1899 at St Mary's, Rickmansworth. Bertie worked for John Dickinson & Co. at Croxley Mills. After marrying Rose Short, the couple were to have three children, William Thomas (1912), Doris Rose (1912) and Frederick Arthur (1917), and made a home at 69 Fearnley Street, Watford.

Like his brothers-in-law, Bertie joined the army and initially served as a Private in the Northamptonshire Regiment with the Service Number 46078. He was later attached to the Northumberland Fusiliers and on the 8 July 1917 was transferred to the 12th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, whom he served with for 6 months. He was then transferred to 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers on 30 January 1918.



On 10 October 1918, the Battalion moved from Niergnies to Cagnoncles, a short distance from Cambrai, where they were to support the 73rd Infantry Brigade. At 4:00am the following morning, as the Battalion were assembling near the village of Rieux, they came under a heavy artillery barrage. The intention was for them to move through the 73rd Infantry Brigade and assault German positions but they were held up by intense machine gun fire and casualties were very heavy. The nature of the ground and the absence of tanks made it impossible for the men to move. Later in the morning, as the

73rd Brigade were being relieved, a lone German tank attacked the battalion with machine gun fire and a few shrapnel rounds, but quickly retired from the battlefield. The Battalion suffered 43 officers and men killed, 187 wounded and 4 other ranks missing. Bertie was amongst the wounded and was evacuated most likely to either the 29th or 46th Casualty Clearing Stations which were nearby. He is buried at Delsaux Farm Cemetery, Beugny.

G66345	Pte.	SHARPE Bertie	North'h.R.Pte.46078	1(a)19..6.17 to 7..7.17	OK
		Thomas	12/R.Fus. 66345	1(a)8..7.17 " 29..1.18	
			1/" "	1(a)30..1.18 " 13.10.18	

W.D.O. 4276
W.I.

Name Sharpe Bertie Thomas Regimental No. G/66345 Case No. 4658
 Regiment 1st Royal Fusiliers Rank PA
 Form 104-88 received 26.10.18 Date of notification of death 19.10.18 Form 104-76 received 31.10.18
 Date and cause of death 12.10.18 Wounds rec^d in Action MM1566
 Widow Rose Charlotte, 69 Fearnley St. Watford. Herts. Date of birth 14.3.89
 Children :-

Name	Date of birth	Date of Expiry	Remarks
<u>William Thomas</u>	<u>20.5.12</u>	<u>20.5.28</u>	<u>18 grant paid 29.10.18</u>
<u>Donis Rose</u>	<u>26.9.14</u>	<u>26.9.30</u>	<u>not received 31.3.19</u>
<u>Fred Arthur</u>	<u>13.9.17</u>	<u>13.9.23</u>	<u>Case received from A.P. 21.7.19</u>
			<u>A.P. refused 21.7.19</u>
			<u>Case returned to Registry 5.8.19</u>
			<u>Bent to A.P. 12.8.19</u>

Pension 29/7. a week from 21.4.19.
 Date awarded 3.4.19. If refused, reason
 Papers _____ reason _____
 F6217 Wt.15643,854 50,000 (12) 1.18 J.P. Gp. 158

Now a war widow with three young children, Rose found love again with a much older man, James Henry Miles, whom she married in the autumn of 1919. James passed away in the Summer of 1965, Rose joined him in the Autumn of 1974.

Joseph George Spicer – A Wounded Soldier



After the First World War had ended, the brother's younger sister, Laura, married Joseph George Spicer, a man who had served with the British army and had been discharged as no longer physically fit for service on 25 January 1919.



Joseph had enlisted in on 9 December 1915 entering service with the 3rd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment and given the Regimental Number 26993. He was later transferred to the 6th Northamptonshire Regiment, with the Regimental Number 43248.

After he was discharged from service, under the terms of Para.392 (xvi) of the Kings Regulations, Joseph was granted a Silver War Badge numbered B140178. The couple married in 1921 and a year later their only son, Joseph Victor H Spicer, was born. Sadly, her husband was to pass away in 1929. Laura joined him in March 1972 and their son passed away in 1990.

REMEMBER THEM.