

EVENLEY WAR DEAD



A report on the Soldiers of WW1, who were killed in action during the conflict and are commemorated on the Evenley War Memorial and or Church Roll of Honour

1. Current Situation

Evenley’s ‘fallen soldiers of the Great War’ are commemorated in three places; the Village War Memorial on the Village Green, a brass plaque displayed in St Georges Church and on a ‘Roll of Honour’, also displayed in the Church.



There are discrepancies regarding the names as follows: There are six names inscribed on the war memorial located on the Village Green and on the commemorative plaque in the Church; they are the same set of six names. There are seven names listed as ‘killed in action’ on the ‘Roll of Honour’ and two names of individuals who were listed as ‘missing’ rather than ‘killed’. Two of the names on the war memorial and the Commemorative Plaque, Ernest Chapman and Herbert George, are listed on the Roll of Honour as ‘missing’ rather than ‘killed’. Three names appear as ‘killed in action’ on the ‘Roll of Honour’ that do not appear on the war memorial or the commemorative plaque.

| WAR MEMORIAL | COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE | ROLL OF HONOUR |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ernest Chatwell | Ernest Chatwell | Ernest Chatwell (Missing 28-04-1918) |
| Thomas Reynolds | Thomas Reynolds | Thomas Reynolds (KIA 19-09-1918) |
| Ernest Pratt | Ernest Pratt | Ernest Pratt (KIA 23-10-1918) |
| Herbert George | Herbert George | Herbert George (Torpedoed 08-06-1916) |
| Thomas Holton | Thomas Holton | Thomas Holton (KIA 19-08-1916) |
| Michael Leigh Russel | Michael Russel | Michael Russel (KIA 02-05-1917) |
| | | T Gunn (KIA 19.08-1916) |
| | | J North (KIA 28.10.1918) |
| | | Colonel J W Scott (KIA 23-04-1917) |

2. Objective

Research and identify as much information as possible about the nine individuals and present the findings to Evenley Parish Council.

3. Methodology

Desktop research was carried out using the following sources

- 1901 and 1911 Census and Electoral Rolls (Ancestry UK)

- Births Marriages and Death records (Ancestry UK)
- 100 Year Anniversary Military Records of Service and Deaths during World War One (Ancestry UK)
- Military Deaths (Commonwealth War Graves Commission)
- Various internet sites such as 'Croughton War Memorial', 'National Roll of Honour' and 'The Great War'.

4. Challenges

It is difficult to search for individuals who have no known first name and are listed with only an initial.

Names can be changed on documents to reflect fashion (i.e. Edwin is often a variation of Edward), individual preferences (someone going by their second name rather than their first) and second and third names can be omitted.

Some soldier's names appear on more than one War memorial.

There is no complete register of War memorials or the soldiers names inscribed upon them.

Records are 100 years old or more.

5. Research Findings

Ernest Chatwell

Ernest was the son of John and Mary Jane Chatwell, who lived at 34 Spring Cottage Evenley. He was born in 1887 and served in the First World War as a Private in D Company, 13th Battalion of The Essex Regiment, 6 Brigade, 2nd Division. His Army number was 29188.

Ernest was posted as 'missing' during the fighting at Arleux during the Battle of Arras on 28 April 1917, aged 31. He was later declared as 'killed in action' and is buried in Lieven Communal Cemetery, France.



Lieven Communal Cemetery, France.

Prior to joining the Army, Ernest was a 'Carter'.

Thomas Reynolds

Thomas was recorded in the 1911 Census as living at 30 Village Cottage, Evenley, with his Aunt Louisa Reynolds, who was listed as 'head of household'. Thomas was born in Grimsbury, Northamptonshire in 1889 (Grimsbury was incorporated into Banbury the year Thomas was born) and served in the First World War as a Private in the 1st, 4th Battalion of The Northampton Regiment. His Army number was 14838.

Thomas was 'killed in action' on the 19th September 1918 whilst fighting in Palestine.

Before the war, Thomas was a 'Cowman'.

Ernest Pratt

Ernest was the son of Samuel and Mary Jane Platt who, in 1911, lived at Knights House, Evenley. He was born in 1899 in Brailes, Warwickshire and was one of eight sons. It is not clear when Ernest 'joined up' but in 1914 he was only 15, so he either lied about his age or joined the war in its later years. He served as a Private in the 1st Battalion of The Northampton Regiment. His Army number was 58879.

Ernest was posted as 'killed in action' whilst fighting in France, on the 23rd October 1918, only 22 days before the end of the War! He was 19 years old and is buried at Le Chateau Cambresis Highland Cemetery, Nord Pas de Calais.



Highland Cemetery

As Ernest's Father and four older brothers all worked as farmhands, it is highly likely that he also worked on the farm between his 14th Birthday in 2013 and joining the army.

Herbert George

The 1911 census shows a Herbert George living in Brackley, aged 29, married to Edith George. They had a one year old child, Maud. Herbert was a Chauffeur. There is also a George Family living in Evenley during 1911; William and Sarah George, but they have no children living with them at this time. From the 1891 Census ten years earlier, Herbert J George was found to be the eldest of 7 siblings born to William and Sarah George, who were at that time living in Brackley. It is possible that William and Sarah moved to Evenley before 1911 or that they already lived in Evenley, Brackley but just recorded their address as Brackley. Either way, it would appear

that the Herbert George from Brackley is the Herbert George on the St Georges 'Roll of Honour', with the parents being the link to Evenley.

Herbert served with the Army Service Corps (see further information about the ASC, under J North) and is listed on the St George's Church 'Roll of Honour' as being 'torpedoed in the Mediterranean Sea' on 8th June 1916.

Herbert James George of Brackley also served as a Private with the Army Service Corps and also died at sea, further confirming that they are one and the same person. However, Herbert died on the 8th January 1916 (Jan could easily have been copied as Jun). Herbert's Army number is M2/097515.

Herbert James George was 'killed at sea' and is now commemorated at Bari War Cemetery, Puglia in Italy.



Bari War Cemetery, Puglia in Italy.

Thomas Samuel Holton

Thomas was the eldest son of Frederick and Sarah Holton. Thomas had four siblings, three brothers and a sister, who lived together at a property known as No 48 Evenley. Thomas was married to Amy Holton and they had a daughter Ella Irene Holton (aged 2 in 1911). They lived at a property known as No 22 Evenley. Thomas was born in 1887 and served in the First World War as a Private in the 7th Battalion of The Northampton Regiment, 73 Brigade, 24th Division. His Army number was 17065.

Thomas was posted as 'killed in action' on 18th August 1916 during the fighting at Deville Wood as part of the Battle of the Somme. He was 30 when he died. His body was never recovered but he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Thomas was a Shepherd before the war.



Thiepval Memorial

Michael Leigh Russel

Michael was the son of Thomas and Mathilda Russel who lived in Bexleyheath, Kent. Michael appears on the 1901 Census, residing at Charles Henry Rodgers property known as Plomers Furs Farm. Michael is listed as Charles' Nephew (Mathilda was Henry's daughter). Michael Thomas was born in 1882 and was educated at Magdalen College School in Brackley. He emigrated to Australia in 1908 and served in the First World War as a Private in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) 25th Brigade. His Army number was 5904.

Michael was posted as 'killed in action' on 3rd May 1917 (and not the 2nd as recorded on the St Georges Church Roll of Honour) during fighting at Bullecourt, France. Michael is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial



Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, nr Amiens, France.

T Gunn

No records for a T Gunn were found. There was a family living in the Parish of Evenley at the time of the 1911 Census; John Gunn, married to Sarah Gunn who lived with their son Henry (also referred to as Harry). There is no mention of a T Gunn. However, in the early 1900's there was significant emigration of young British folk to Canada, seeking a new life and it could be that T Gunn had emigrated to Canada during this period which is why he did not appear on the census.

The Roll of Honour in St Georges Church shows T Gunn as a member of the Canadian Regiment who died on 28th February 1918. The fact that he fought for a Canadian Regiment further supports the hypothesis that he had emigrated to Canada from the UK, prior to the war commencing.

Further research will be carried out.

J North

There are no records of a J North living in the Parish of Evenley. There is a James North living in Brackley, who was a 'Soap Maker', but he was aged 47 at the time of the 1911 Census which would make him 50 at the outbreak of war and unlikely to be the J North listed on the Roll of Honour in St Georges Church.

A record of a J.G.S North was found, who served in the First World War as a Private in 1st and 4th Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders. His Army number was S/43398

J.G.S.North was posted as 'killed in action' on 28th October 1918, the same date as the J North listed on the Roll of Honour in St Georges Church. However, the latter served in the Army Service Corps.

The discrepancy between the two Regiments at first suggested that J.G.S. North may not have been the same person as J. North, despite their identical date of death. However, it is important to understand the layers of command in the armed forces and the merging of Battalions during WW1, to make sense of this discrepancy.

A Corps, such as the ASC, was a body of perhaps 40,000, split into two or more Divisions. A Division could have consisted of more than one Regiment, which would then have several Battalions. The ASC was a complex amalgam of units with different responsibilities focussed on the logistical supply of food, ammunition and equipment to soldiers on the front line. The officers and men of the ASC would not normally be considered as combat soldiers, although many were exposed daily to the capricious dangers of the battlefield as they moved around it performing their varied duties. On occasion, when the military situation demanded, ASC troops were ordered to take up their rifles and were drafted into front-line defences. Also, whole groups of ASC men were drafted into Front-line battalions and other active service units as replacements for casualties whilst their place was taken by troops who were not considered fit for front-line duty. One can see from this, how a soldier could be a member of the ASC and find themselves as part of another Battalion such as the Seaforth Highlanders.

This information, the common date of death shared by the two 'Norths' and the fact that no other J North was identified in any War records, makes it highly possible that J.G.S. North serving with the Seaforth Highlanders was the same individual as J North said to be serving with the ASC. However, there remains insufficient proven links with Evenley to identify why he is included on the Roll of Honour

J.G.S. North is buried at Queant Road Cemetery, Buissy.



Queant Road Cemetery, Buissy, France.

Further research will be carried out.

John Willoughby Scott (Lt. Colonel)

Lt. Colonel John Willoughby Scott was married to Madeline Ethel Scott, the Daughter of Reverend Edward Worsley, Vicar of Evenley Parish Church. He was the son of Sir John Scott, KCMG, DCL and Lady Scott. He and his wife Madeline lived at Tudor Cottage, Overthorpe



Lt. Colonel John Willoughby Scott

Lt Col J.W. Scott was a professional soldier who had previously seen active service in South Africa. He went to war in September 1914 as part of the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, as A Squadrons Commanding Officer. He later became second in Command at Headquarters until he left the Regiment in early 1916 to take command of the Somerset Light Infantry. The Lt Colonel was killed 'by a chance shot, whilst leading the Somerset Light Infantry in an attack on Greenland Hill, east of Arras'. There is some irony in this because troops were being withdrawn from the area due to the Battle of Arras being effectively over.

Lt. Colonel Scott is buried in the Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Nord Pas de Calais, France.



Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery

In addition to being included on the Roll of Honour, there is also a plaque dedicated to Lt Colonel John Willoughby Scott on the wall of the chancel to the left of the altar in St Georges Church which carries the following inscription

LT. COL J.W.SCOTT DSO

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF / LIEUT. COLONEL JOHN WILLOUGHBY SCOTT DSO / OF THE QUEENS OWN HUSSARS / BORN ON THE 25TH JANUARY 1879 / KILLED IN ACTION ON THE 23RD APRIL 1917 / NEAR ARRAS FRANCE / WHEN COMMANDING THE 8TH SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY./ ERECTED BY HIS WIFE MADELINE ETHEL, DAUGHTER OF EDWARD WORSLEY VICAR OF THIS PARISH. RIP

Lt. Colonel SW Scott is commemorated on the Hinton in the Hedges War memorial.

6. Summary

A significant level of supporting information has been identified and a number of questions answered.

Ernest Chatwell is no longer missing and his last resting place in France has been identified. Where he lived in Evenley is now known as are details of his family.

Thomas Reynolds was connected to Evenley via his Aunt. It is now known that he died overseas in Palestine.

Details of **Ernest Pratt's** family have been found and his final resting place in France. Ernest was one of the youngest of Evenley's 'fallen soldiers'.

Details of **Herbert George** have been identified and his links to Evenley. It is now known that he died after being 'torpedoed' in the Mediterranean Sea but this happened six months earlier than the 'Roll of Honour' suggests. His final resting place has been found in Italy.

Details of **Thomas Holton's** family have been found and it has been discovered that Thomas had a second name, Samuel. He is commemorated on the Somme's largest memorial at Thiepval near Arras in France, but it is now known that his body was never found.

Details of **Michael Leigh Russel**'s family have been found and where he lived. It is now known that Michael was a pupil at Magdalen College School and that he emigrated to Australia. His final resting place in France is now known.

Little information on **T Gunn** was found but it can be speculated that he emigrated from Evenley to Canada before the war commenced and then served as part of the Canadian Army. Perhaps his relatives who remained in the UK requested his inclusion in the Roll of Honour but none were identified in Evenley.

J. North has been identified as the same individual as J.G.S North. Confusion over his Regiment has been clarified and the Regiment on the 'Roll of Honour' appears to be either incorrect or out of date at the time of his death. No details of Mr North's family have been found. His final resting place is known.

Lt. Colonel **John Willoughby Scott** was the most senior rank of Evenley's fallen soldiers. Details of his family and his links to Evenley have been identified and his connection with St Georges Church. His final resting place is now known. John was not an Evenley man and is commemorated on the Hinton in the Hedges War Memorial.