

ST MARY'S CHURCH, WINCHFIELD




CURWEN VAUGHAN RAWLINSON

Second Lieutenant CURWEN VAUGHAN RAWLINSON
3rd Bn attached 1st Bn, Dorsetshire Regiment.
Killed on May 21, 1915, aged 24, in the front trenches at Hill 60, Ypres, Flanders.

He was born on August 19, 1890, at Kensington. Educated at Rugby School, he was reading Law with Messrs Buck, Mellor and Norris of 45 Lincoln's Inn Fields when he joined the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps (OTC) in November 1914 and obtained a commission as Second Lieutenant (on probation) on December 16, 1914. He was confirmed posthumously in his rank as Second Lieutenant in the London Gazette dated June 8, 1915.

The first Dorsets suffered immense casualties as the result of a chlorine gas attack on May 1, 1915. A dozen men who served with Rawlinson and died of the effects a day or two later are buried in the same cemetery; altogether, more than 300 were killed or wounded.

Death from poison gas was agonising and could take days or even weeks. Although Curwen may have been gassed on May 1, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour states that he was killed in the front trenches on May 21.

A brother officer wrote: 'A good, clean-living man of whose friendship I was proud.'

Another wrote: 'He was in my Company at the Inns of Court. His was a charming personality, and everyone was very fond of him.'

Curwen was the only son of the late Charles William Rawlinson, a Master of the Supreme Court, and his wife Amy Vaughan Rawlinson.

They lived at Court House, Winchfield, and Charles Rawlinson was a churchwarden at St Mary's; he died on June 4, 1910, and there is a memorial plaque to both father and son which is to be found over the vestry door. The widowed mother moved to Shapley Heath, Winchfield. Curwen was not married.





He is buried in Reninghelst churchyard extension, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

The village of Reninghelst was occupied by Commonwealth forces from the autumn of 1914 to the end of the war and was sufficiently far from the front line to provide a suitable station for field ambulances.

The churchyard and the extension were used from March to November 1915, when the New Military Cemetery was opened. The churchyard contains three WW1 burials; the extension contains 56 WW1 burials and two from WW2.

Sergeant WILLIAM ALBERT WRIGHT
2nd Bn, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)
Killed on December 3, 1917.

He was born in Winchfield and enlisted at Odiham.

He is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louveral, Nord, France.



The Cambrai Memorial commemorates 7,058 servicemen of the UK and South Africa who died in the Battle of Cambrai in November and December 1917 and whose graves are not known.

Sir Douglas Haig described the object of the Cambrai operations as the gaining of a 'local success by a sudden attack at a point where the enemy did not expect it', and to some extent they succeeded. The proposed method of assault was new, with no preliminary artillery bombardment. Instead, tanks would be used to break through the German wire, with the infantry following under the cover of smoke barrages.

The attack began early in the morning of November 20, 1917, and initial advances were remarkable. However, two days later, a halt was called for rest and reorganisation, allowing the Germans to reinforce. From November 23 to 28, the fighting was concentrated almost entirely around Bourlon Wood, and by November 29 it was clear that the Germans were ready for a major counter-attack. During the fierce fighting of the next five days, much of the ground gained in the initial days of the attack was lost.

For the Allies, the results of the battle were ultimately disappointing, but valuable lessons were learnt about new strategies and tactical approaches to fighting. The Germans had also discovered that their fixed lines of defence, no matter how well prepared, were vulnerable.

The Cambrai Memorial was designed by Harold Chalton Bradshaw with sculpture by Charles Sargeant Jagger. It was unveiled by Lieut-General Sir Louis Vaughan on August 4, 1930. The memorial stands on a terrace at one end of Louveral Military Cemetery. The chateau at Louverval was taken by the 56th Australian Infantry Battalion at dawn on April 2, 1917. The hamlet stayed in Allied hands until the 51st (Highland) Division was driven from it on March 21, 1918, during the great German advance; it was retaken the following September.

Gunner JOHN STEWART HESTER
Base Depot, attd Southern Anti-Aircraft Group, Lines of Communication, Royal Garrison Artillery
Died of wounds on May 17, 1918.

He was born at Canterbury, Kent.

He lived in Winchfield and enlisted at Brighton.

He is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.



The town of Abbeville is on the main road from Paris to Boulogne, about 80 kilometres south of Boulogne. For much of the First World War, Abbeville was headquarters of the Commonwealth lines of communication, and No.3 BRCS (British Red Cross Society), No.5 and No.2 Stationary Hospitals were stationed there variously from October 1914 to January 1920.

The communal cemetery was used for burials from November 1914 to September 1916, the earliest being made among the French military graves. The extension was begun in September 1916.

During the early part of the Second World War, Abbeville was a major operational aerodrome, but the town fell to the Germans at the end of May 1940. Abbeville was retaken on 4 September 1944 by Canadian and Polish units.

Abbeville Communal Cemetery contains 774 Commonwealth burials of WW1 and 30 of WW2; the extension contains 1,754 WW1 burials and 348 WW2. The Commonwealth sections of both cemetery and extension were designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

Private JAMES CHAMPION
1st Bn, Coldstream Guards
Died of wounds on April 6, 1918, aged 21.

The son of Mr and Mrs A. Champion, of Winchfield, he was born in Hook. He enlisted at Hartley Wintney.

He is buried in Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, Seine-Maritime, France



Le Treport is a small seaport 25 kilometres north-east of Dieppe. During WW1, Le Treport was an important hospital centre, and by July, 1916, the town contained three general hospitals (the 3rd, 16th and 2nd Canadian), No.3 Convalescent Depot and Lady Murray's B.R.C.S. Hospital. The 7th Canadian, 47th and 16th USA General Hospitals arrived later, but all of the hospitals had closed by March 1919.



As the original military cemetery at Le Treport filled, it became necessary to use the new site at Mont Huon. There are 2,128 Commonwealth burials of WW1 in the cemetery and seven from WW2. The cemetery also contains more than 200 German war graves. The cemetery was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

Private CHARLES REGINALD COOMBS
No. 2 Coy, 3rd Bn, Coldstream Guards
Died on September 15, 1916, aged 21.

The son of Charles Henry and Ellen Coombs, of 19 Khartoum Road, Highfield, Southampton. He is also commemorated as a former pupil on the County Secondary School memorial, now Carisbrooke High School, Newport, Isle of Wight.

He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.



The Thiepval Memorial – the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme – bears the names of 72,191 officers and men of the UK and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before March 20, 1918, and have no known grave. Most of those commemorated died between July and November 1916. The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive, and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial.

The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on August 1, 1932.

On July 1, 1916, supported by a French attack to the south, 13 divisions of Commonwealth forces launched an offensive on a line from north of Gommecourt to Maricourt. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic, and with only minimal advances on the southern flank, the initial attack was a failure. In the following weeks, huge resources of manpower and equipment were deployed. However, the German Army resisted tenaciously, and repeated attacks and counter-attacks meant a major battle for every village, copse and farmhouse gained. At the end of September, Thiepval was finally captured; the village had been an original objective of July 1. Attacks continued throughout October and into November in increasingly difficult weather conditions. The Battle of the Somme finally ended on November 18 with the onset of winter.

In the spring of 1917, the German forces fell back to their newly prepared defences, the Hindenburg Line, and there were no further significant engagements in the Somme sector until the Germans mounted their major offensive in March 1918.

Private HENRY COOPER
HMS 'Queen Mary', Royal Marine Light Infantry
Killed in action on May 31, 1916, aged 23, at Jutland.

He was born on May 8, 1893, at South Warnborough. His mother, Mary, lived at 4 Railway Cottages, Winchfield. He left a widow who lived at 19 York Road, Walmer, Kent.

HMS 'Queen Mary', the flagship of Rear-Admiral Hood, went down in the Battle of Jutland with 57 officers and 1,209 men.

He is commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial.



After the First World War, an appropriate way had to be found of commemorating those members of the Royal Navy who had no known grave, the majority of deaths having occurred at sea where no permanent memorial could be provided. An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain – Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth – should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping.

The memorials were designed by Sir Robert Lorimer, who had already carried out a considerable amount of work for the Commission, with sculpture by Henry Poole. The Portsmouth Naval Memorial was unveiled by the Duke of York (the future George VI) on October 15, 1924.

After the Second World War it was decided that the naval memorials should be extended to provide space for commemorating the naval dead without graves of that war, but since the three sites were dissimilar, a different architectural treatment was required for each. The architect for the Second World War extension at Portsmouth was Sir Edward Maufe (who also designed the Air Forces memorial at Runnymede) and the additional sculpture was by Charles Wheeler, William McMillan and Esmond Burton. The Extension was unveiled by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on April 29, 1953.

Portsmouth Naval Memorial commemorates around 10,000 sailors of WW1 and almost 15,000 of WW2.

Private JOHN FULBROOK
'C' Coy, 1st/4th Bn, Hampshire Regiment
Killed on February 23, 1917, aged 22, the same day as Private Arthur Hughes, below.

He was born in Winchfield, the son of Mr and Mrs Fulbrook, of The Hurst, Winchfield, and enlisted at Church Crookham.

He is commemorated on the Basra Memorial.

The Basra Memorial in Iraq commemorates 40,680 members of the Commonwealth forces who died in the operations in Mesopotamia from the Autumn of 1914 to the end of August 1921 and whose graves are not known.



Private ARTHUR HUGHES
1st/4th Bn, Hampshire Regiment
Killed on February 23, 1917, the same day as Private John Fulbrook, above.

He lived in Winchfield and enlisted at Basingstoke.

He is also commemorated on the Basra Memorial.

Rifleman ARTHUR JOHN WARREN
Northern Rhodesia Rifles
Killed on May 17, 1915.

Born in Winchfield in 1880, he was the ninth of ten children of Levi Luckham Warren and Ellen (Eleanor) Warren, of Hurst Farm, Winchfield. Eleanor Warren topped the poll at the election in 1894 for the first Winchfield Parish Council.

He is buried in Ndola (Kansenshi) Cemetery, Zambia.

This cemetery contains 23 WW1 dead concentrated from Abercorn European Cemetery and two concentrated from Livingstone Cemetery. It also contains a special memorial to one casualty known to be buried in Chikuula Military Grave and special memorials to two casualties formerly commemorated on the Ikawa (or Old Fife) Memorial, whose graves are not known. There are also 42 burials of WW2 and one Belgian burial.



The Northern Rhodesia Rifles were formed in October 1914 and recruited European volunteers. The Germans, based at Bismarckburg at the south-eastern end of Lake Tanganyika, increased pressure on their common border with Northern Rhodesia by threatening Abercorn. The four mobile units of the Northern Rhodesia Rifles were trained at Broken Hill and formed into a column which was allocated 14 ox-wagons, 252 oxen and 30,000 pounds of supplies.

Starting on December 23, 1914, the mobile column, 106 men strong, trekked 320 miles from Kashitu Station to Kasama, arriving on February 2, 1915. It rained nearly every day and a trail had to be improved into a wagon route through the bush. Sometimes only two or three miles were covered in a day. Little African labour was available and the Riflemen did much of the physical work.

The ox-wagons were left at Kasama (where all the oxen eventually died of tsetse-fly disease) and the men trekked on another 100 miles to Saisi, this time using African porters to carry the supplies and personal kits. After a three-day halt at Saisi Fort, the column marched on to Fife, arriving on February 19, 1915. This had been a tough and extremely demanding trek which probably would have been impossible for a British regular army unit to achieve in the same time.

The Germans had been skirmishing around the southern end of Lake Tanganyika and in December had twice unsuccessfully attacked Fife. The mobile column was soon in action, taking part alongside the Northern Rhodesia Police and the Belgian troops in patrols into German territory where they encountered the German tribal irregular troops named Ruga-Rugas.

It was then decided to attack the German stockade at Mwenengambe, nearly six hours' march east of Fife. The column attacked at dawn on April 17. Lieutenant Stannus Charles Edward Irvine led the attack, taking a section through the open stockade gate and into the German trenches inside. There he received a serious wound in his shoulder from which he died the next day; he was buried in Fife Cemetery. The enemy, mostly Ruga-Ruga armed with muzzle-loading rifles, broke out of the rear of the stockade but were met by the enveloping troops. Forty of the enemy were killed or captured.

A month later, 40 Riflemen went on a reconnaissance of Mukoma's village. On the evening of May 17, while they were camping alongside a stream near the border, an enemy force of around 60 men attacked the British camp. The volunteers repulsed the enemy attack but Riflemen Arthur John Warren and Alexander Lindsay were killed and six others wounded. Five of the column's African carriers were also killed and five others wounded. Enemy losses are not known.

The mobile units were disbanded in February 1916. During their 15 months in operation the men, who had responded patriotically to the call to arms in 1914, had marched 4,000 miles. Their health remained good, primarily due to their fitness and ability to tolerate the conditions and climate on the Northern Border; those who served for the full 15 months were undoubtedly some of the toughest European volunteers that the British Empire produced. After discharge, several men went to England to enlist in British units serving on the Western Front. Others joined the Northern Rhodesia Police or the Southern Rhodesia forces. The static local defence units of the Northern Rhodesia Rifles served on until 1919. The Northern Rhodesia Volunteer Force was disbanded on April 1, 1925.

After the war the four dead of the mobile column, including Rifleman Warren, were reburied in Ndola (Kansenshi) Cemetery, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).

Captain GERALD HUGH FITZGERALD

A brass plaque on a pillar inside the Beauclerk / Charrington family pews reads:

In memory of
Capt G H Fitzgerald
4th Dragoon Guards
Killed in action
13th Sept 1914
Quis separabit

Captain Gerald Hugh Fitzgerald, 28, of the 4th Dragoon Guards (Royal Irish), was the only son of Lady Adelaide Fitzgerald and the late Lord Maurice Fitzgerald, of Johnstown Castle, Wexford.

On August 5, 1914 – the day after war was declared – he was married at South Tidworth to Dorothy Violet Charrington, the youngest daughter of Spencer Calmeyer Charrington, of Winchfield Lodge, Winchfield.

Gerald was born on April 11, 1886, at Johnston Castle. Educated at Eton, he joined the Royal North Devon Hussars (Yeomanry) in November 1904, and was gazetted from them on December 11, 1907, to the 4th Dragoon Guards; he was promoted to Lieutenant on November 17, 1908, and to Captain on November 25, 1913. He was a keen sportsman, a fine rider and polo player.

On the outbreak of war, after his marriage, he went with the Expeditionary Force to France and was slightly wounded during the first week of September. On September 13, he was shot through the head during the Battle of Aisne when in charge of his battalion's machine gun section.

His commanding officer, Colonel R. L. Mullens, wrote: 'It happened early in the morning of the 13th. We were fighting in the village of Bourg-et-Comin, about 17 miles east of Soissons, which is about 63 miles north-east of Paris. Gerald was, as always, working hard and doing good work with his maxims. Some Germans were on the canal bank about 500 yards away, and I had warned him and his men to keep their heads down. Some little time after I had to leave him to attend to other matters he was hit. Major Bridges was close to him at the time, but there was nothing to be done – the end was instantaneous. His loss to the regiment is immense. He was universally popular and loved by his brother officers and men.'

He is buried in Bourg-et-Comin Communal Cemetery, Aisne, France. There are 11 identified casualties and a small number unidentified: all died in 1914.

Gerald's widow married a second time in September 1928 to Thomas William Jefferies, whose father lived at Wexford. Thomas died on May 4, 1951; Dorothy died on April 5, 1974.

* Spencer Calmeyer Charrington's son, Harold Vincent Spencer Charrington, was also born in 1886, the same year as Gerald Fitzgerald: they were therefore exact contemporaries at Eton. He was awarded the MC and Bar for his service with XII Royal Lancers in WWI. He also served with distinction in WW2, winning the DSO; he died in 1965.

His memorial in the church echoes the plaque for Fitzgerald, ending as it does with the words 'Quis separabit': Who will separate us? – the motto of the Royal Dragoon Guards. More fully, it comes from Romans 8:35 – Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

* The London Gazette of March 2, 1937, records the appointment of Colonel Harold Vincent Spencer Charrington MC as a member of the Royal Household's Gentlemen of the Corps. On the same page (1409) is the appointment as Deputy Constable and Lieutenant Governor of Windsor Castle of Colonel the Rt Hon Clive, Baron Wigram, GCB, GCVO, CSI.

Clive, who was created first Baron Wigram in 1935, was succeeded on his death in 1960 by his eldest son Neville, who was born in 1915. His heir is the Hon Andrew Wigram, born in 1949, who in 2011 married Henrietta Charrington, granddaughter of H. V. S. Charrington, in St Mary's Church, Winchfield.

Andrew Renshaw
November 2012