
1919

AFTER THE STORM

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, signed in June between Germany and the Allies, laid the foundation for the Second World War. Germany was not only defeated in 1918 she was humiliated by the terms laid down in the treaty. They lost their colonies and also Alsace-Lorraine. Their fleet was reduced to a derisory 24 ships with no U-boats and they were instructed to pay full reparation for the war. The German people were consumed with hatred at what they considered to be a gross injustice. They were so incensed that only another war, in which they were the victors, would restore their pride and allow them to vent their anger on those who had asked, in their opinion, far too much. On 21 June in an act of defiance the skeletal naval crews on board the interned German Fleet in Scapa Flow opened the sea-cocks and sent their ships to the bottom of that huge natural harbour.

The forerunner of the United Nations Organisation, the League of Nations, was the world's first peacekeeping body. It was born at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and wrecked on the rocks of German resentment.

There are few reminders now of the devastation caused by the fighting on the Western Front. Some mine craters are preserved, as are token trench lines at Vimy Ridge, Beaumont Hamel and other spots along the old front line. Remains of The Citadel at Verdun, can be viewed by those with an interest in the French side of the conflict. The most abiding reminders of those four years of hell on earth, however, are the War Cemeteries and Memorials scattered, large and small, along the old static trench systems of France and Flanders. Each year when the fields are ploughed and raked in readiness for planting, the lines of the old trench systems show themselves to the pilgrims eye.

2,316 burial grounds are looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in France and Belgium alone. These places,



Germans demonstrating in Berlin against the treaty provisions regarding Posen and Danzig

1919 – AFTER THE STORM

where the shattered bodies of our men were put to rest, are immaculately kept and maintained by a grateful nation. The ground in which they are interred, was given in perpetuity to Britain and the Commonwealth by our Allies. The missing are remembered on great Memorials such as those at Thiépval, Tyne Cot, Ploegsteert and, of course the Menin Gate at Ypres. Here at 8 o'clock every evening throughout the year, buglers of the Ypres Fire Brigade, sound Last Post and Reveille, no matter what the weather or the audience – sometimes crowds, sometimes one or two passers-by.

Somewhere in the region of 8 million men died in the Great War – man's inhumanity to man knows no bounds, and is capable of the most dreadful carnage when bloodlust is on the agenda. The Spanish Flu of 1918–19 accounted for the deaths worldwide of between 20 and 40 million people – nature's inhumanity to man can be pretty awesome too.

Moulton

A memorial service was held at the Parish Church in January for Harry Groves, Horace Hitchinson, James Southern and Dan Tomlinson.

By early January, all the Moulton soldiers who'd had the misfortune to fall into enemy hands and become prisoners-of-war, had returned to their homes. A 'Welcome Home' social and dance was held in the Verdin Institute to celebrate their release.

Of the eight ex-prisoners-of-war, one, Sergeant Archie Whitlow M.M. of the Royal Army Medical Corps, was reported in the Northwich Guardian to have died in captivity. The report of Archie's death is a complete mystery for, although he was a Moulton man he is not listed on any of the local War Memorials or Church Tablets. Neither the Commonwealth War Graves Commission nor the Royal Army Medical Corps in which he served with distinction, have any record of his having died in captivity, did he in fact survive? We may never know.

At the meeting of the committee of the Verdin Institute it was agreed that a full list of names of the men who had died should be compiled with a view to initiating a Verdin Institute Roll of Honour.

1919 was not a year without further grief for the village. The Spanish flu epidemic was reaping its deadly toll across Europe, and one of Moulton's returning soldier's, having spent three years fighting in some of the worst actions throughout Belgium and France, fell victim to this merciless sickness. On 24 February, Arthur Noden of the Machine Gun Corps, died of pneumonia brought on by the Spanish flu.

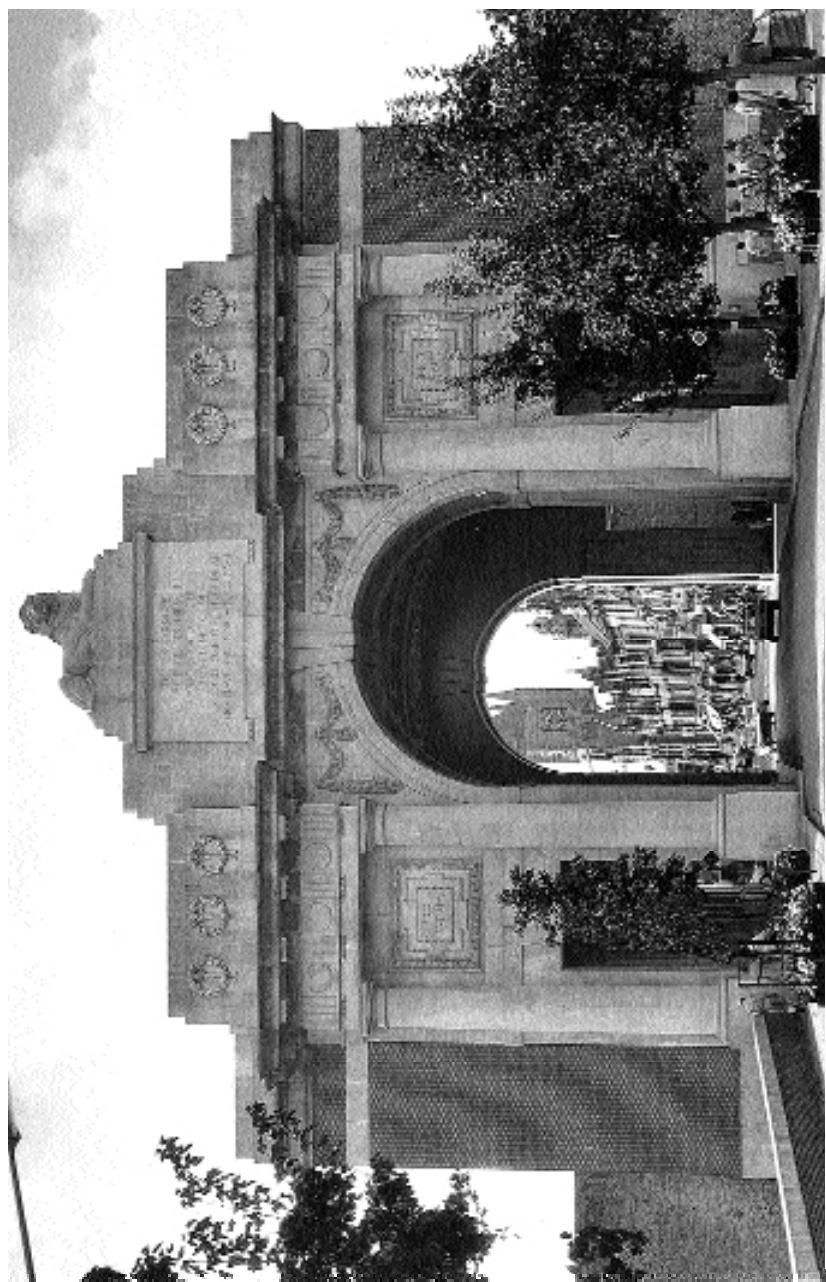


The Menin Gate, 1914



The Menin Gate, 1918

1919 – AFTER THE STORM



The Menin Gate Memorial today

Dedicated to the Memory of Arthur Noden

Arthur Noden was a rebel at school and punished often for his sins. In the School Punishment Register of 1905 he is listed on four occasions: 1) for insubordination – 4 strokes; 2) for annoying the teacher – 5 strokes; 3) for disobedience and dirtiness – 2 strokes; 4) for bad work – 2 strokes. We will never know whether his parents, William and Mary, knew or whether he chose to suffer in silence for fear of a double dose of retribution from his Dad.

There is a record of Arthur's family living in Moulton Lane in the early 1880s. At that time there were two children: Thomas, aged 5 and Sarah Ann, aged 10 months. By 1891 the family, now totalling six, had moved to Kennerleys Lane. By the end of the decade they had moved once more, this time to Chapel Street.

Arthur was born on 8 July 1893 and at 4 to 5 years of age attended the village Council School. We know that he married Minnie Whitlow prior to, or just after, the outbreak of war and that they set up house at 54 Regent Street and had two children.

When war was declared, Arthur enlisted in the 10th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment and went to France in late 1915 or early 1916. In mid-1915 he was listed on the village and school Rolls of Honour as serving in the 10th Cheshire's. In a letter to his mother in June 1916, Arthur's brother Harry, said that he had met up with his brothers George and Arthur for the first time in 18 months.

In early 1916 Arthur was trained and proficient in the use of the Vickers-Maxim machine gun and joined one of the 7th Brigade's Machine Gun Companies. During 1916, Arthur saw action with either the infantry or the Machine Gun Corps in the Somme Battles of Albert, Bazentin Ridge, Pozieres Ridge, Mouquet Farm, Ancre Height, Stuff Redoubt and Regina Trench. In 1917 the 25th Division fought at Messines and at Third Ypres (Passchendaele). 1918 saw Arthur involved in the fighting that pushed the Germans back before their final capitulation in November.

Tragically, after fighting through France and Belgium for over three years, Arthur Noden returned home only to die within days of pneumonia brought on by Spanish Flu. He was buried at St. Wilfrid's, Davenham on 1 March 1919 with full military honours, his coffin draped with the Union Flag. The Reverend J. T. Vale conducted the service at the graveside.

In later years Arthur's wife Minnie re-married, became Mrs Bennett and went to live at 1 Oak Street, Northwich.

Private Arthur Noden



Arthur Noden, Private No. 72524

The Machine Gun Corps (Inf.)

He died at home on Monday, 24 February 1919. Age 25.

He is buried in Davenham (St. Wilfrid's) Churchyard. New 659



Arthur Noden's headstone in Davenham (St. Wilfrid's) Churchyard.

Private Arthur Noden

Arthur Noden's Awards



The 1914-1915 Star

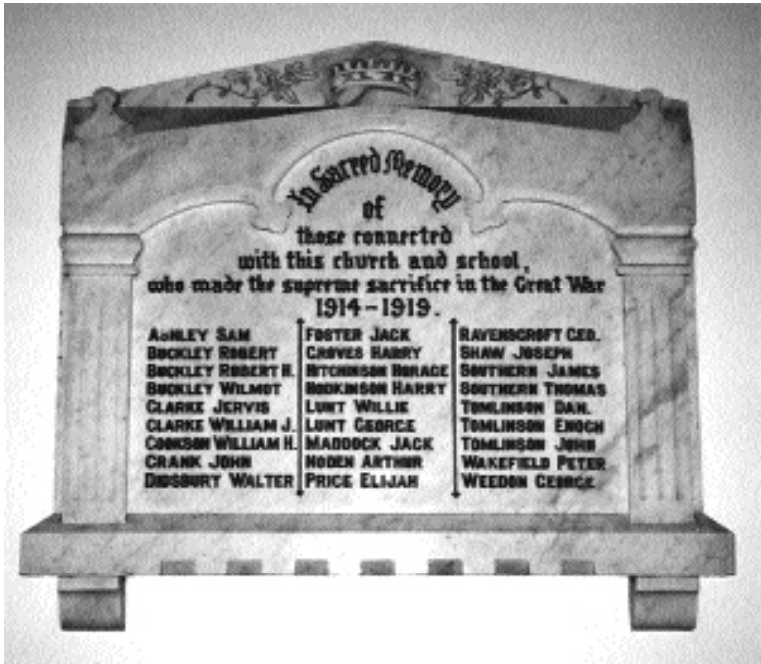


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Other memorials commemorating Private Arthur Noden's name

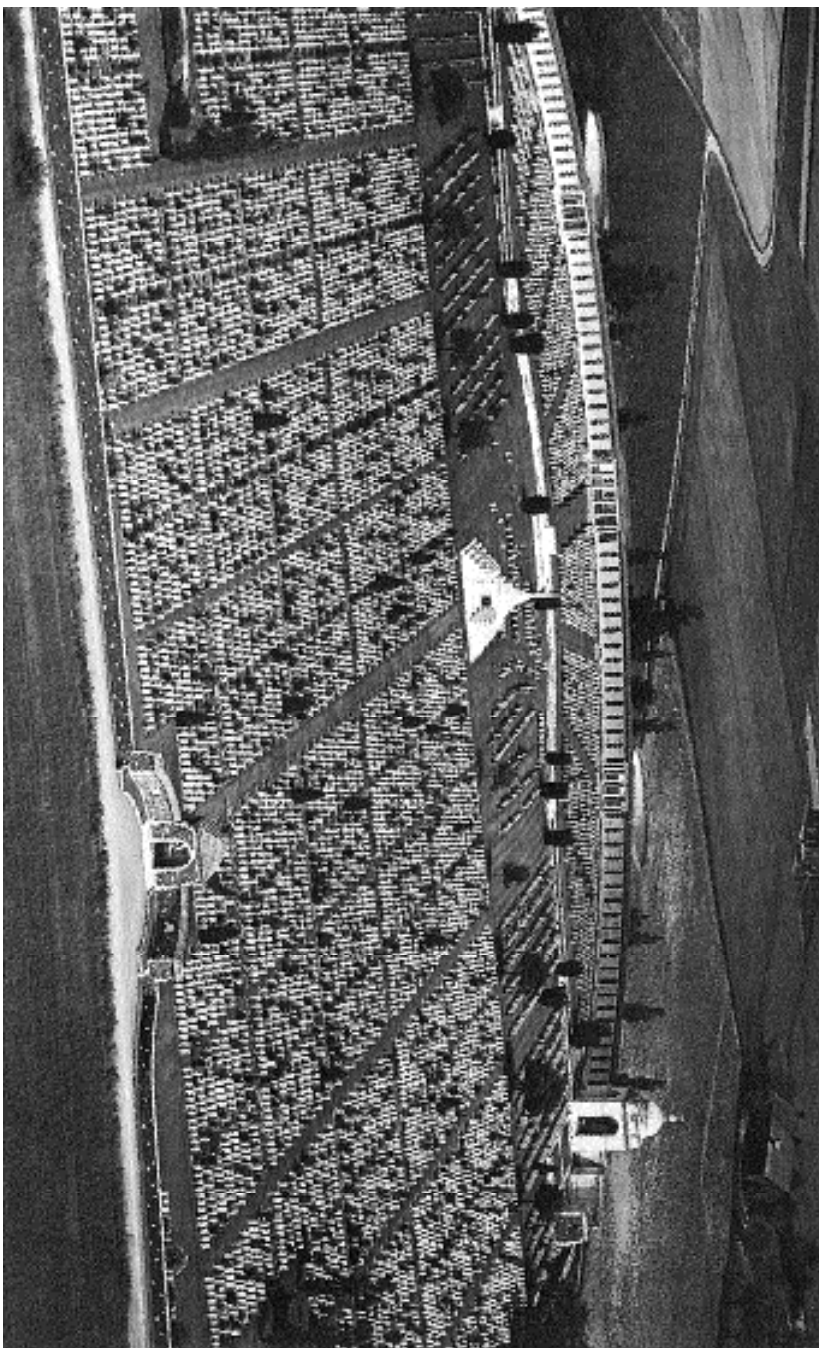


The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Private Arthur Noden



Northwich Town War Memorial



Tyne Cot Military Cemetery

Unresolved Mysteries

DURING THE COURSE of this research, and despite countless enquiries, the histories of two men remain a mystery. Their names and as much detail as is known about them are recorded here. They deserve nothing less.

Alfred Barber

Alfred Barber is commemorated on the village War Memorial and the Parish Church Tablet. No other definitive information is available.

A total of 52 'A. Barbers' are listed on the CD Rom 'Soldiers Died 1914 – 1918', none appear to have any connection with either Moulton or Northwich. Crewe – yes, Lymm – yes, but not Moulton. Strangely, Alfred is not mentioned in the local press at any time during the period of the war and there are no records of him having attended the local Council School. In the 1919 Electoral Rolls for Moulton Village the name Barber does not appear.

It can only be assumed that sometime after the war ended, but before the Memorial and Church Tablet were finalised, either his wife or his parents came to live in the locality and submitted his name for inclusion on the Memorial and Church Tablet.

Ernest Blyth

Since publication in 2001, the mystery of Ernest Blyth has been resolved. His name was spelt incorrectly on the village War Memorial and Church.

See Appendix 1.

Unresolved Mysteries

Sergeant Archie Whitlow, M.M.

In a report in the Northwich Guardian of 17 January 1919 mention is made that Sergeant Archie Whitlow had died in captivity whilst a prisoner of the Germans. Strange, therefore, that he is not commemorated on any of the memorials in the locality, neither, does the Commonwealth War Graves Commission register or The Soldiers Died in 1914 – 1918 CD make any reference to his death.

Archie was born in 1891 and attended Moulton Council School. On leaving school he worked in Knutsford and whilst there joined the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade. He was a very fine athlete and was well known in mid-Cheshire for his running ability. He belonged to both Northwich and Crewe Harriers.

At the very start of the war, Archie enrolled in the Army and was posted to the Royal Army Medical Corps where his St. Johns training would prove invaluable. For the first year he served in hospitals throughout the UK and by July 1915, when his name appears on the Parish Roll of Honour, he had been promoted to Lance-Corporal.

In early September 1915 he married Phoebe Brooks of Weaver Street, Winsford at Over Parish Church. Ann Whitlow was Phoebe's bridesmaid. Prior to the wedding Archie, who was 26-years old, lived with his parents at 10 Main Road, Moulton. Shortly after the wedding Archie received orders to embark for France.

Just before Christmas 1915 Archie wrote to the teachers and scholars of his old school to thank them for their very welcome gift of a parcel of 'goodies'. He went on to say that he had very pleasant memories of his school days and that he would visit them when next he came home on leave.

Unresolved Mysteries

In June 1916 under the heading 'Moulton Casualties' Archie (by now a full Corporal), in a letter home, mentions that he had treated some of his old pals from the village including Lance-Corporal Walker and Bob Buckley. In November, in a letter to Mr Bowker, his old headmaster, he describes some of the sights he has seen and the 'queer' places he has visited. On one occasion, he said, a shell had exploded only feet away from him, but, by some miracle, had left him unscathed. Again he recounted meeting lads from the village and talking with them. The weather, he said, was atrocious with rain day after day and seas of mud everywhere.

Despite the war Archie was still running and keeping himself fit. During a break from front line duty he led an RAMC team to victory in a local sports competition.

Sometime in the summer of 1917 Corporal Archie Whitlow was awarded the Military Medal for 'Bravery and devotion to duty' for rescuing wounded soldiers from the battlefield. In September he came home on leave and visited both teachers and scholars at his old school. He proudly wore his M.M. for all to see and was presented with a gift by Mr Bowker who said that Corporal Whitlow had brought honour to himself, the village of Moulton and to his old school. Archie received a great reception from the assembled gathering.

This is the last record of Archie Whitlow until the report of his death in captivity in January 1919. Why such a brave son of Moulton is not recorded on the memorial or church tablets is a mystery. The reason may be forever lost in the mists of time. Did he really die or did the Northwich Guardian get it wrong in their report? Did he turn up later? Were the details of his death unrecorded or lost in the confusion after the war? Did Phoebe, his widow, move away from the district and have his name recorded on some distant memorial?

Author's note: If any reader can throw any light on these soldiers, corrections will be made to any subsequent re-prints of this dedication.



The Cross of Sacrifice, or Great Cross, stands in every British Military Cemetery

Moulton expatriates who also died

IN ADDITION TO the 34 servicemen listed on the village War Memorial and Church Tablets, ten Moulton ex-patriots perished in the war. Nine of the 10 were born in the village, but all ten had moved away prior to the outbreak of hostilities. They too are remembered in this dedication:

Private Percy Bell, 12th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment.

Percy Bell was born in Moulton in 1895 and after leaving school he worked for Northwich Council. He was one of five brothers who responded to the call to arms. He enlisted at Northwich, joining the 12th Cheshires. He was the son of Henry and Ann Bell who were living at 9 Chapel Street, Castle, Northwich at the time of his death. The fortunes of his four serving brothers were mixed. Harry, died of wounds in January 1916 whilst serving with the Kings Liverpool Regiment. Arthur and Ernest, both of the 2nd Battalion, Cheshires, were made prisoners of war and saw out the duration in captivity in Germany. Thomas served throughout the conflict with the King's Liverpool Regiment.

On 29 October 1916, whilst serving with his battalion in Macedonia, Percy, who was at that time an officer's orderly, was last seen looking for his officer in trenches which his battalion had attacked and over-run. He was never seen again and his body was never recovered. Percy was 21 years old and his name is inscribed on the Doiran Memorial, Greece. He is also commemorated on the Northwich Town Memorial in Church Walk.

Private Herbert Hampton
1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment.

Since publication in 2001, more information has come to light on this soldier.

See Appendix 2.

Moulton expatriates who also died

Private John Hollins Hitchinson 6th Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment.

John was amongst the thousands killed in action on the Gallipoli peninsula in the campaign of 1915. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Turkey – Panels 139 and 140. The memorial is in the form of an obelisk some 30 metres high and can be seen by ships entering the Dardanelles en route to Istanbul.

At the time of his death, on 10 August 1915, John's parents, Fred and Emily Hitchinson were living in Derby Road, Farnworth, Widnes. Their son, who was living in Moulton in 1896, was 19 when he was killed. He enlisted at Warrington in the 6th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment and posted to the front soon after his training was finished. John may well have been a relation of Horace Hitchinson who died in India in October 1918 and whose name is mentioned earlier.

Private (acting Lance-Corporal) William Lunt 10th Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers.

Willie Lunt was the elder of two brothers killed in the Great War. Born in Moulton in April 1891, he lived with his parents at 11 Regent Street before leaving the village to live at Cledford, Middlewich. He attended Moulton Council School and, on leaving, obtained a job with the Winsford Co-op Society before joining the Maypole Dairy Company in Manchester.

In November 1914 Willie enlisted in the 10th Battalion, the Lancashire Fusiliers. His first taste of battle was at Sulva Bay in the Dardanelles in June 1915. He was wounded in the leg and thigh on the Western Front in November 1916 and hospitalised to Brackley in Northamptonshire. On his recovery he returned to the Western Front in February 1917.

Moulton expatriates who also died

On 13 September 1918, two months before the end of the war, he wrote to his father saying he was expecting leave in the very near future. Five days later, on Wednesday 18 September, his battalion attacked Gouzeaucourt, to the west of Cambrai. Immediately after the attack Willie was detailed to repair a broken signal wire when a shell exploded behind him – death was instantaneous. He was 27-years old.

He lies in Gouzeaucourt New British Cemetery, Nord, France – Grave 1V. G. 5. His name is commemorated on the Middlewich Town War Memorial and the Moulton Methodist Church Tablet.

Private George T Lunt

1/1st Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry

George Lunt was the younger brother of Willie Lunt and was born 17 September 1896. He lived with his parents at 11, Regent Street, Moulton until they moved to 21 Booth Lane, Cledford, Middlewich during the early 1900s. He attended Moulton Council School in his early years and later Middlewich Council School. After leaving school he worked for Messrs Verdin Cook and Company and in his leisure time became quite an accomplished dancer with Mrs Swain's dancing troupe. He excelled in Spanish and Irish dancing and had a very keen sense of humour.

Aged 17, he managed to persuade the recruiting sergeants at Winsford into believing he was 19 and was accepted into the Cheshire Regiment. Recruiting Sergeants were renowned for accepting under-age recruits when trying to fulfil their quotas. The much-repeated tale of asking a young lad to go for a walk around the block and to think again about his age was a regular feature of the recruiting sergeant's armoury.

In 1915 George was posted to Gallipoli, where his brother Willie was fighting with the Lancashire Fusiliers (they never managed to get together there). George contracted an enteric disease and was shipped back to hospital in Birmingham, staying there for four months. In October 1916 he was declared fit again for active service and posted to the Egyptian front. Aged 20, he was killed in action there on 6 November 1917.

George Lunt is buried in Beersheba War Cemetery, Israel – Grave E.36. His name, and that of his brother Willie, is inscribed on Middlewich Town War Memorial and also on the Moulton Methodist Church Tablet. At the time of his death his father, John, was a widower, Sophie, his wife, having died some time before.

Moulton expatriates who also died

Private George W Lyon

1/5th Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry.

George Lyon was born at 77, Regent Street, Moulton. His father William, was a Coppersmith. Sometime before the war the family moved to Greatham, Stockton-on-Tees where George met and married his wife Mary. They settled in Greatham before George enlisted in the 5th Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry at the outbreak of war.

During the Battle of the Lys in April 1918, the battalion were attacked by German infantry advancing along the railway line to capture Le Sart, a mile west of Merville in France. During this action George was killed. He was 27-years old and is buried in Aval Wood Military Cemetery, Vieux-Berquin, Nord, France. Grave III. C. 5.

Private William Poole

1st Battalion, The King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

There is little information on William Poole who was born in Moulton. At the outset of the war he lived in Crewe and enlisted at Shrewsbury in the 1st Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He was killed in action on 18 September 1916 during the assaults on Flers-Courcelette.

Sergeant Charles Price, 11th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment.

At 4.30 pm on the afternoon of Sunday 16. January 1916 a 'stray' bullet took the life of Charles Price in the Ypres Salient. He was 39-years old and left a wife, Annie and a daughter living at 51 James Street, Northwich.

Charlie Price was born at 78 Regent Street, Moulton and is recorded on the 1881 Census as aged two, living with his parents Henry and Ann. At some time after leaving Moulton with his parents to live at 29, James Street, Northwich, Charles joined the army as regular soldier, served in India and was then placed onto the reserve sometime before the commencement of hostilities in 1914. He then secured a job at the Ammonia Soda Companies Works at Plumley, Northwich.

When war broke out, despite the fact that his period as a reservist had expired, he volunteered and was drafted to the 11th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment. His service experience saw him quickly promoted to Sergeant and, due to a shortage of officers, he commanded No. 9 Platoon of his battalion from when it left England to the time of his death in January 1916. Just before he was killed his wife received a letter saying he was looking forward to a period of leave and to spending time with her and their

Moulton expatriates who also died

daughter. He rests in the London Rifle Brigades Cemetery at Ploegsteert, Belgium. Grave II.A.22. His is also commemorated on the Northwich Town Memorial, Church Walk, Northwich.

Private Elijah Price

2nd Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment.

Elijah Price was born in Runcorn on 9 January 1885. Towards the end of the 1880s, Elijah's parents, Alfred and Elizabeth, moved to Moulton village. In 1891 the family settled at 19 Main Road, Moulton. Alfred's occupation is given as 'Barber' on the Census return. Just prior to living in Main Road, the family lived for a little while at 5 Church Street.

On leaving school Elijah worked for a Mr Burston, a farmer, of King Street before joining Messrs Sanders and Handley, millers of Northwich, where he worked for six years before enlisting in the 2nd Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment. By this time his father had died and Elijah with his invalided mother had moved to 44 Bond Street, Winnington.

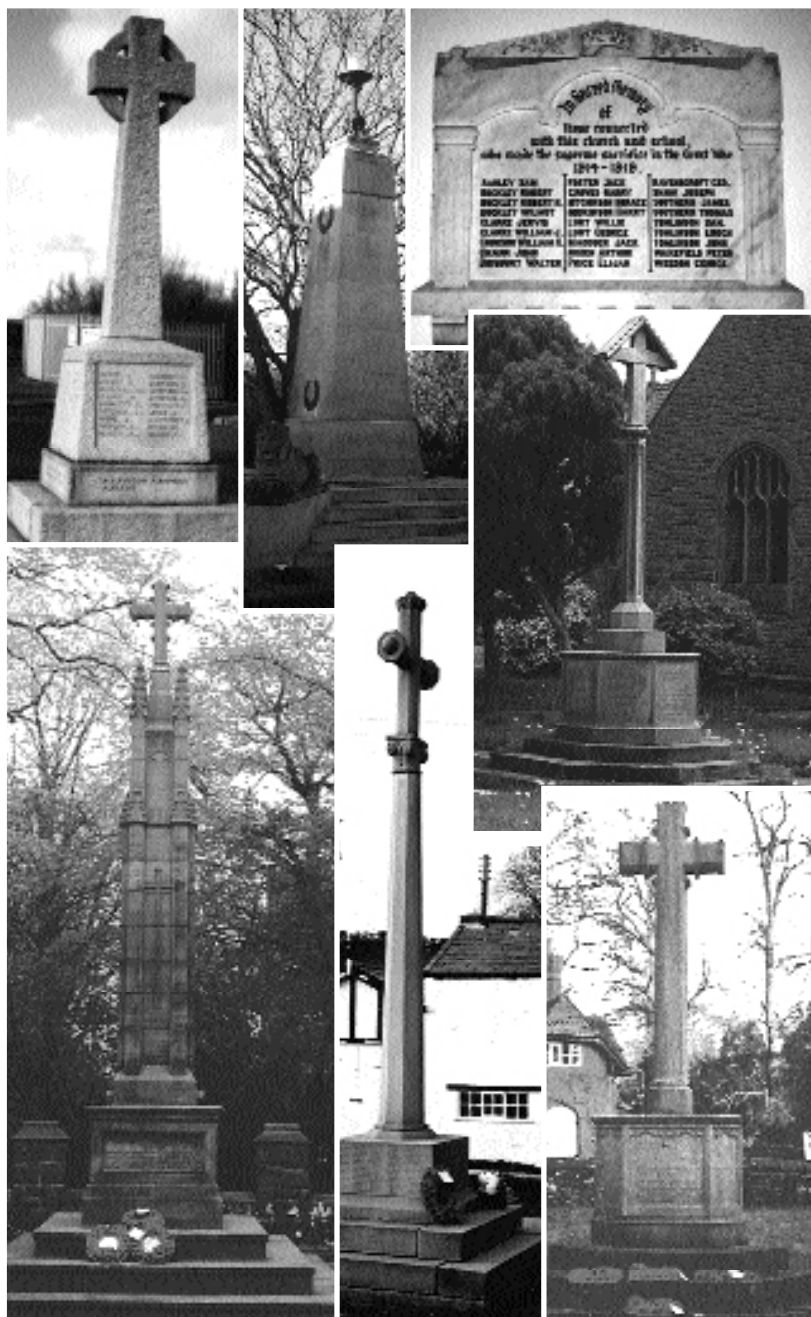
Having served at the front for 12 months Elijah, was killed in action in the Ypres Salient on 29 April 1918. His body was never recovered and his name is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, panels 92, 93 and 162A. His name does not appear on the Moulton village War Memorial although it is shown on the Moulton Methodist Church Tablet. The name E. Price appears on the Northwich Town War Memorial in Church Walk.

Elijah had two married brothers. At the time of his death one had been discharged and the other was still serving abroad. His mother was incapacitated, and may well have lived with one of her married sons in Moulton, submitted Elijah's name there for inclusion on the Moulton Methodist Church Tablet.

Private George Vallender

7th Battalion, The King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

George Vallender was 24-years of age when he died of wounds in a Casualty Clearing Station some 20 kilometres behind the Somme front line on 16 July 1916. The son of William and Phoebe Vallender, he was born at 45 Main Road, Moulton. At some point the family moved to 9 Esther Street, Widnes from where George was drafted into the 7th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry, having enlisted at Warrington. He is buried in the Corbie Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France. Grave I.D.37.



Memorials, Tablets and Rolls Of Honour

ALTHOUGH ALL 34 MEN from the village who died in Great War are commemorated on the village war memorial and Parish Church Tablet, some appear on other memorials around the district. Acting Petty Officer William Cookson, for instance, is remembered on no less than six Memorials throughout the locality. One explanation is that men, on marrying, moved away from the village to live in other areas. Their parents, on the other hand, remained in Moulton and subsequently submitted their names for inclusion on the Moulton memorial. Large employers such as Brunner Mond Ltd. and Salt Union Ltd erected memorials to their dead employees. In other instances, and this may be the answer to the lack of information on Alfred Barber, parents and/or wives of men who had died, may have moved into the village after their deaths and then submitted their names for inclusion on the Moulton memorial and Church Tablets. It is significant that neither of the two men mentioned are listed on the Methodist Church Tablet that only lists 'those connected with this church and Sunday school'.

Northwich Town War Memorial, Church Walk, Northwich.

Amongst the names on the memorial are:

J Clarke
W H Cookson
W Didsbury
A Noden
W Pool *
C Price *
E Price **
P Wakefield

*Born in Moulton but resident in Northwich at time of death. Names not listed on Moulton village War Memorial.

**Name listed on Moulton Methodist Tablet but not on village War Memorial.

Memorials, Tablets And Rolls Of Honour

Winsford Town War Memorial, Town Square, Winsford

Amongst the names on the memorial are:

F J Bates
W H Cookson
G Greatbanks
J Shaw
J Southern
T Southern
J Tomlinson

Brunner Mond War Memorials, Winnington and Lostock

To the Glorious Memory of the Men Employed by Brunner Mond and Co. Ltd who
fell during the Great War August 1914–June 1919

Amongst the names on the memorials are:

Robert Buckley
Jervis Clarke
George Greatbanks
Horace Hitchinson
Harry Hodgkinson
Albert Victor Walker
Arthur Frederick Wilkinson
Dan Tomlinson (Lostock)

Salt Union War Memorial

To the glory of God and in memory of those men from the Winsford Works of the
Salt Union Ltd who gave their lives in the Great War 1914–1918

Erected by their fellow work people 1925

Amongst the names on the memorial are:

H Groves
G Ravenscroft
J Shaw
T Southern
E Tomlinson
J Tomlinson

St. Chads War Memorial, Over, Winsford

Amongst the names on these memorials are:

Private James Fred Bates
Corporal Arnold Buckley
Leading Seaman William H Cookson
Private Joseph Shaw
Private Thomas Southern
Lance-Corporal John Tomlinson

Memorials, Tablets And Rolls Of Honour

Christ Church War Memorial, Wharton, Winsford

Amongst the names on these memorials are:

Fred Bates
Arnold Buckley
James Southern

St Mary's War Memorial, Whitegate, Winsford

Amongst the names on these memorials are:

Pte John Tomlinson
Pte Oliver Middleton

Moulton Methodist Church. Church Tablet

In Sacred Memory of those connected with this Church and School
who made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Great War 1914 – 1918

Ashley Sam	Foster Jack	Ravenscroft Geo.
Buckley Robert	Groves Harry	Shaw Joseph
Buckley Robert H	Hitchinson Horace	Southern James
Buckley Wilmot	Hodkinson Harry	Southern Thomas
Clarke Jervis	Lunt Willie *	Tomlinson Dan
Clarke William J	Lunt George *	Tomlinson Enoch
Cookson William H	Maddock Jack	Tomlinson John
Crank John	Noden Arthur	Wakefield Peter
Didsbury Walter	Price Elijah *	Weedon George

*Not listed on Village War Memorial or Parish Church Tablet

Roll Of Honour

Messrs Brunner Mond and Company Limited list of Employees who served in H M
Forces In the Great War 1914–1918 for King and Country. April 1920

Joined H.M. Forces	2688
Returned	790
Died	291
Honours	67

Amongst the names within the Roll of Honour booklet are:

Winnington

Buckley Robert, Pte	10th Cheshire's	Died
Clarke Jervis, Pte	7th East Lancs	Killed In action
Greatbanks George, Pte	2nd Cheshire's	Killed In action
Hitchinson Horace, Pte	8th Cheshire's	Died
Hodkinson Harold, Pte	3rd Cheshire's	Died
Walker Albert V, Pte	10th Cheshire's	Died
Wilkinson Arthur F, Pte	11th Cheshire's	Presumed dead Lostock
Tomlinson Dan, Lt	1st Kings L'pool	Killed in Action

Note: Above details from Brunner Mond's Roll of Honour booklet in the Public Records Office, Duke Street, Chester.

Memorials, Tablets And Rolls Of Honour

Roll Of Honour The Salt Union and Subsidiary Companies The Great War 1914 – 1918

Number who joined the forces	1169
Died	174
Gained Honours	22

Amongst those listed under Cheshire are:

Pte. H Groves, 9th Cheshire's

Pte. G Ravenscroft, 8th North Lancs.

Pte. J Shaw, 14th Cheshire's

Pte. T Southern, 14th Cheshire's

Gunner E Tomlinson, RGA

Pte. J Tomlinson, 4th Durham Light Infantry

Note:

1) All of the above are listed on Salt Union's Memorial Tablet at Winsford. There is a picture of this Tablet at the County Records Office, Duke Street, Chester.

2) The Roll of Honour can also be found in the County Records Office, Duke Street, Chester.

Facts, data and comment

THE FIRST SHOT fired by a British soldier during the Great War was on the morning of 22 August 1914. It was a sunny day when Sergeant E Thomas, M.M., 'C' Squadron, 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, took up position under trees on the Mons–Charleroi road. Suddenly a scout reported a troop of Uhlans (German Light Cavalry) advancing at a leisurely pace down the road, the officer leading, smoking a cigar. Suddenly the Germans saw their enemy and turned to flee back along the road. The Irish Dragoons gave chase, scattering the Uhlans in all directions. The order was then given for 4th troop to take dismounted action. Immediately Sergeant Thomas spotted a mounted German cavalry officer some 400 yards away, he took careful aim and fired. The officer fell from his horse either dead or wounded.

Statistics relating to total losses during the Great War change dependant on which reference book is consulted. The following data is as reliable as any:

Deaths			
Central Powers:	Allies:		
Germany:	1,800,000	Russia:	1,700,000
Austro/Hungary:	922,000	France:	1,300,000
Turkey:	325,000	U.K.:	888,000
Bulgaria and others:	93,000	Italy:	400,000
		Rumania	335,000
		USA:	50,500
		India:	72,000
		Australia:	62,000
		Canada:	65,000
		Serbia:	45,000
		Belgium:	44,000
		New Zealand:	18,000
		Others:	20,000
Central Powers Total:	3,140,000	Allies Total:	4,999,500

Total Dead – All Forces: 8,139,500

Facts, data and comment

The best estimate of civilian deaths in all theatres is 8,750,000. Just a shade over those killed in uniform.

A staggering 70% (500,000) British soldiers who gave their lives in the war were under 30 years of age. Of the millions who enlisted a total of 80% survived to tell their tales of the horrors of modern warfare. They would tell of gas, mines and machine guns, trenches and mud, pain and fear and finally of their good fortune in having survived.

Throughout the war the proportion of junior officers killed in relation to other ranks was marginally greater. However, in 1916 the chances of any officer being killed was twice that of other ranks. For example, when the 1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment attacked on 1 July 1916 (The first day of the Somme) they lost every one of their officers.

The first battle deaths of the Great War were recorded when H.M.S. Amphion was struck by a mine on 6 August 1914 and several sailors were lost.

The first Army death occurred in West Africa – Private Bai of the Gold Coast Regiment died on 15 August 1914.

The first British Army officer to perish in action was Lieutenant George Masterman Thompson, 1st Battalion, Royal Scots and Gold Coast Regiment on 22 August 1914.

The first allied soldier to die in action on the Western Front was Private John Parr, 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. He was killed at Mons on Friday 21 August 1914.

Ironically, the last man to die in action was also killed at Mons at 11.00 am on Monday 11 November 1918. He was a Canadian, Private George Lawrence Price, aged 25, 28th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. No doubt thinking that hostilities had ceased, he showed himself to a German sniper, who, in a moment of sheer vindictiveness, took aim, pulled the trigger and needlessly ended the life of a brave man. It is hoped that this German soldier carried the remorse of this, his last action, through to the end of his life. Both men are buried in St. Symphorien Military Cemetery, Mons, Belgium.

It is believed that the youngest soldier to die in the war was John Condon, 2nd Royal Irish Regiment. He was born at Waterford, Ireland in June 1901 and joined the local militia in 1913, giving his age as 16 years. He progressed from the militia and joined the 3rd Battalion, The Irish Regiment at Clonmel, County Tipperary in 1914. He was killed in action at Mouse Trap Farm, Ypres in May 1915. John Condon was just one month short of his 14th birthday.

At the other end of the scale the oldest serviceman to die in a war zone was Lieutenant Henry Webber, 7th Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment who died on 21 July 1916, aged 68. Lieutenant Webber was a native of Horley in Surrey and for 40 years was a member of the London Stock Exchange. He was

Facts, data and comment

mentioned in despatches and is buried in Dartmoor Cemetery on the Somme.

It is popular today amongst some members of the media and writing fraternity, to de-bunk anything and everything relating to the past particularly the British Generals of the Great War. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, a favourite target, is vilified and portrayed as a butcher who gave no thought for his men as he despatched them to their deaths. According to these commentators the General Staff spent their time living a life of luxury in their Châteaux behind the line and away from any danger. Their men, on the other hand, were made to live in abject misery in their forward positions. Do we really believe that the prosecution of any war, involving millions of men and armaments can be organised by staff officers standing in front line trenches up to their knees in mud? Senior officers did lead their battalions into action, Generals were killed as they met with the troops and their officers in the front line. A staggering 58 Generals died on the Western Front over the course of the conflict. In Martin Middlebrook's excellent book 'The first day on the Somme' he lists 53 senior officer casualties on the first day. Of these 31 were killed and 22 wounded. Most were Lieutenant-Colonels who were either killed or wounded leading their men over the top. Two were Brigadier Generals. Great Britain lost 888,000 men in the conflict, Germany 1,800,000 Russia 1,700,000 France 1,300,000, Austro/Hungary 922,000 and Italy 600,000. So which armies were led by bad Generals?

Most senior historians believe that Haig did all that he could, given the circumstances and equipment at the time. After all, our only means of mobility across open country, until the tank was introduced in 1917, was the horse. Mistakes were made of course, but in the end we won and Haig's brilliant plan to achieve victory in 1918 is very often 'conveniently' forgotten! It must be said that this much maligned Field Marshall was well regarded by both his men and their officers. After the war he worked tirelessly to promote the Earl Haig Poppy Fund which to this day is a source of help to the wounded of all wars.

Of the 170,000 British servicemen taken prisoner in the Great War a total of 20,000 died in captivity. Large numbers died of wounds, but 12,000, unforgivably, died of starvation. They were made to work in mines, chemical plants and on the land. They were very often ill-treated and sometimes shot. The 1929 Geneva Convention signed by the majority of civilised nations, but not by Russia or Japan, would attempt to safeguard the basic human rights of prisoners-of-war in future wars of the 20th century. In the 1939-45 conflict Germany, to a degree, treated prisoners better than most. However, there were atrocities and the best remembered of these was the execution of 50 Allied prisoners after their 'Great Escape' from Stalag Luft III, the notorious camp so well portrayed in the film of that name.

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As the British Tommy settled down to life in the trenches he would, with a pinch of nostalgia, christen the trenches with names that reminded him of home – Blighty Valley, Essex Street, Manchester Alley, Sausage Valley etc.

Place names in France and Belgium often created problems for the lads, who often had difficulty in getting their tongues around the strange, unfamiliar names. The simple solution was to anglicise the names. Consequently Ypres became Wipers, Mouquet Farm – Mucky Farm, Ploegsteert – Plugstreet, Wyschaete – Whitesheet etc. They also gave their own descriptive names to certain points – Shrapnel Corner, Salvation Corner, Suicide Road, Hellfire Corner, International Corner, Belgian Battery Corner and the like. Strongpoints, battalion headquarters, supply dumps, roads and tracks were also nicknamed by the troops, invariably related to their regiments or home towns – Rifle House, Somerset House, Lancashire Farm, Bunhill Row, The Strand, Leinster House, Gordon Farm, and so on. They also had their pet names for the German shells and mortars that rained down upon them. Small calibre, high velocity artillery shells that whizzed as they approached and exploded with a large bang became 'Whizzbangs'. Larger calibre shells were known as 'Willies', 'Black Marias', 'Crumps' or 'Woolly Bears'. One large calibre shell was nicknamed a 'Jack Johnson' after a black boxer of the day – this shell on bursting emitted a cloud of black acrid smoke. A large trench mortar (Minenwerfer) was a 'Flying Pig' or 'Coal Box' which could be seen in flight, and hopefully avoided.

One man, who had the foresight at the very beginning of the war, to foresee the enormity of the task of recording the locations of the graves of men who had died in battle was Sir Fabian Ware, later Director-General of Graves Registration and Enquiries. He convinced the authorities that the work should start immediately and this was agreed. Originally working as commander of the Mobile Unit, British Red Cross Society, then the Graves Registration Commission (formed in 1915). This eventually became the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917 which, after the war, became the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that to this day looks after British Commonwealth Military Cemeteries all over the world. Anyone who has ever visited one of these cemeteries will applaud the way they are tended and looked after by a very special and dedicated staff.

At the very outset it was decided that headstones would be plain with no distinction made on account of rank, race or creed. A standard inscription would show the regimental badge, followed by the deceased number, name, rank, regiment, date of death, age and religious symbol (Christian Cross, Star of David etc.). If the next-of-kin wished, they could subscribe to a personal

Facts, data and comment

inscription at the foot of the headstone. Costs just after the war were 3.5d per letter up to a maximum of 66 letters or spaces. In today's values this equates to 30p per letter or say, £20 for a full inscription. A bit thick when the family had already forfeited their loved one in the cause of freedom.

The Telegram

Wives, parents and loved ones with men on active service, learned to dread the sight of their postman and, even more so, the telegraph boy. Very often they were the harbingers of terrible news. After the commencement of the Somme offensive on 1 July 1916, when Kitchener's New Army battalions were decimated by machine gun fire from the German trenches, telegrams and letters of condolence fell like autumn leaves on the towns and villages of the United Kingdom.

An example of the carnage that befell one battalion says it all. When the whistles blew at 7.30 am on that fateful day, the men of the 10th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment climbed from their trenches and advanced towards the German wire. In two hours, 710 Yorkshiremen from that battalion were lying, either dead or wounded in No-Man's Land.

Other battalions suffered similarly on that day, in fact, over 30 battalions lost over 500 men from their total compliment of approximately 1,000.

Moulton Village Statistics

Most of the following data is based on information gleaned from publications circulated during, or after the war. It is not definitive, but merely an indication to help the reader understand the magnificent contribution made by Moulton Village towards the war effort:

Total village population:	circa. 1100
Served in the armed forces:	230 (20% of the village population)
Total died:	34 (15% of those who enlisted or 3% of the village population)
Killed in action:	20*
Died of wounds/sickness:	13**
Wounded: who died)	100+ (Based on a 3:1 ratio of those
First to die:	John Crank – 30 October 1914
Last to die: (Influenza)	Arthur Noden – 24 February 1919
Died furthest afield:	Horace Hitchinson – India
Died together:	Wilmot Buckley and George Greatbanks on 3 October 1915

Facts, data and comment

Died at home:	John Crank, Harry Hodkinson, Arthur Noden – all three are buried in Davenham Churchyard:
Youngest to die:	Sam Ashley, and Jack Maddock – both 19 years old.
Oldest to die:	Robert Buckley – 39 years of age.
Highest rank:	Second-Lieutenant Dan Tomlinson
Number with graves:	16*
Number without graves:	17*

* Names recorded on Memorials.

Missing from these statistics: Alfred Barber.

In Which They Served

The Regiments in which the 34 Men of Moulton served:

Regiment	Number
The Cheshire Regiment	15
The Durham Light Infantry	1
The East Lancashire Regiment	2
The Kings (Liverpool Regiment)	3
The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment	1
The Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)	1
The Manchester Regiment	2
The Royal Army Service Corps	2
The Royal Field Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery	1
The Royal Fleet Reserve	1
The Royal Welsh Fusiliers	1
Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry)	1
The Prince of Wales Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment)	2
Total	33

Note: The Regiment of Alfred Barber is unknown.

Medals

Medals or 'Gongs', awarded to the 34 range from the 1914 Star (the 'Mons' Star awarded to all who served in France and Belgium between 5 Aug. and 23 Nov. 1914), the 1914–1915 Star (Awarded to all who served between 5 Aug. and 31 Dec. 1915) – no man could hold both 'Stars' – the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Military Medal (an award for bravery). Every man who served automatically received two or three medals. The first three (including one of the 'Stars') would become sardonically known as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred by the returning troops. Those who received only the British War and Victory Medal (men who did not serve in 1914) wore Mutt and Jeff. These names were derived from cartoon characters of the time, which generally summed-up what the troops thought of the medals.

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Appendix 1 - Ernest William Blyth

Dedicated to the memory of Ernest William Blyth

ERNEST WILLIAM BLYTH

Private

269543

2/7th Battalion King's (Liverpool Regiment)

Died of wounds Wednesday 15th August 1917. Age 34

He is buried in Davenham (St Wilfred) Churchyard (new 632)

Medal entitlement: British War Medal; Victory Medal

Ernest Blyth was not a Moultoner. He was born in Downham Market, Norfolk in 1883/1884 and was the son of Frederick Blyth a carpenter and joiner. By 1901 the family were living at 59, Lynn Road, Wisbech St Peter. Ernest is shown on the census for that year as the third of five siblings living in the house. He is 17 and a boot and shoe-maker. Strangely, Mrs Blyth is missing from the census, however as her husband Fred is listed as married and not widowed, it looks very much as if she was away from home for some reason.

At the turn of the century, and at aged 17, Margaret Ann (Annie) Barlow was living with her parents Frederick and Ellen in Chapel Lane, Moulton. At that time, Fred was 43 and Ellen 42. Their 2 year old daughter Hilda was also on the scene. Fred was a railway signalman and Annie is listed as a School-teacher! It is also believed that Fred was a school governor. Some 4 or 5 years later Annie had met and married Ernest Blyth and they set up home in London Road, Davenham. Ernest was a manager, possibly of a shoe shop or cobblers. On the 23rd September, 1906, Annie gave birth to their daughter Gladys Mabelle.

Sometime after their daughter Gladys was born, Ernest and Annie moved to Strangeways Manchester. This area of the city, aside from housing that notorious academy of bad lads, was also a hive of small workshops making clothing and foot wear for the retail trade. It may well be that Ernest opened his own shoe-making business there or, alternatively, managed one for someone else. In any case, it was from Strangeways that he strode forth to enlist at the Manchester recruiting office sometime after the outbreak of war.

Appendix 1 - Ernest William Blyth

Ernest was drafted into the 2nd/ 7th Battalion of the Kings (Liverpool) Regiment to train as an infantryman. The 2nd/7th Kings along with 5 other Kings Battalions made up the 57th Division. Little could be found in the records of exactly when he enlisted or indeed, where he served until 1917. He may well have waited until the Conscription Bill was placed in the statute book in mid 1916, in which case he would not be entitled to the 1914/ 1915 Star as mentioned above.

July 1917 was a very mixed month for the 2nd/ 7th Kings based on Armentieres. According to the Battalions war diary, they began the month in the Houplines sector of the line and for the first fortnight nothing much happened. However, all good things come to an end for the enemy opposite decide to subject the lads from Liverpool to a constant and terrible barrage. During this time the Germans sent over two raiding parties to try to take prisoners. They were give short shrift by the 'Scousers' who used bombs and Lewis guns to repel the foe. Losses after these attacks were 4 killed and 30 wounded. On the 21st of July a gas shell fell on the Quarter Master's store with the result that 2 men died of wounds and seven were gassed. Gas shelling was severe and frequent at this time and on 22nd July, 19 officers and men succumbed to this most dreadful of weapons.

The last entry in the War diary for the month of July is an account of casualties for the month and gives some idea of the intense shelling to which the battalion had been subjected. A total of 12 men had been killed with 144 wounded – of these 11 more were to die. It is more than probable that Pte. Ernest Blyth was one of them. It is known that Ernest survived his injuries long enough to be transported to a military hospital at Bagthorpe, Nottingham where on the 15th of August he gave up the ghost.

After his death Annie, who may have returned to her old home in Moulton whilst Ernest was fighting on the Western Front, decided to bury her husband at St. Wilfrid's Davenham., The records show that her parents Fred and Ellen, now living at 'Brackendale', 120 Main Road, Moulton were the grave owners. In the school records for September 1918, Annie is shown as having resumed teaching but is 'absent by permission'.

Appendix 2 - Herbert Hampton

Dedicated to the memory of Herbert Hampton

HERBERT HAMPTON

Private

7730

1st Battalion Cheshire Regiment

Died Germany, Friday 8th November 1918. Age 31

He is buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery, Germany. Grave V.G.4.

He is commemorated on
Sandbach War Memorial,
Sandbach St Mary's Organ Gallery (Great War)
Sandbach St Mary's Great War Died Roll Of Honour
Sandbach St Mary's Great War Roll Of Honour.

Herbert Hampton was born in 1887 in Moulton. By 1914 he had married Alice Bradbury, and had two sons James and John. He was a carter on the horse-drawn wagon between Sandbach Station and the town. He was a member of the Cheshire Regiment T.A. He enlisted at Crewe.

As the war started he was mobilised and travelled to France on 22nd August 1914, joining the 1st Cheshires (15th Brigade, 5th Division).

He fought at the Battle of Mons. Pte Hampton was reported missing in the local papers on 28th September 1914 and as a P.O.W. on 2nd October 1914. He died at the Bramhar Camp Hospital, at Bawinkle.

Herbert Hampton had the misfortune to be captured very early in the war and the even greater misfortune to die in captivity three days before the armistice.

His brother travelled to the North East to meet the returning P.O.W. ships spending three days there before hearing the sad tidings.

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