
1916

DEATH ON A SUMMER'S DAY

UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF 1916, every man in the British Army was either a professional, territorial or volunteer soldier. This was to change in February when conscription was introduced for all men fit for service between the ages of 18 and 41 years of age, unmarried, or childless widower. In May married men were also included.

On 30 May, the British Grand Fleet commanded by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe sailed on patrol in the North Sea with the expectation of meeting up with the German High Seas Fleet commanded by Admiral Reinhard Scheer – he was not disappointed. On 31 May the fleets met at Jutland off the Danish coast where a tremendous battle took place. On 1 June, when the German fleet turned for home, over 6,000 British and 2,500 German sailors had perished. The British had lost 14 capital ships against Germany's 11. Although heavier armour-plating on the German ships saved many from going to the bottom, many of them were so badly damaged that a number were not fully operational again for months. On the other hand, the British Fleet remained in control of the seas off Scandinavia – a marginal victory for Jellicoe, but only just.

Ironically, mines laid by the Germans just prior to the battle were to inflict a far greater blow than the German High Command could ever have envisaged. On 5 June the British Secretary of State for War, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, travelling aboard HMS Hampshire on his way to Russia heading a military mission, was killed when the Hampshire was sunk off Marwick Head, Orkney when it hit one of these mines.

From February to December 1916, in an attempt to break the spirit of French resistance and resolve, the German Army prepared to sacrifice itself on the fortress altar of Verdun. The French were determined that they would not succeed – 'We stand here' they said. 'Ils ne passeront pas' (They shall not pass). The 'Mincing machine of Verdun', as the battle became known, centred around the defences in the heights close to the city. Rings

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of forts, of which Fort Douaumont on the right bank of the River Meuse was the most dominant at over 1,000 feet, stood between the Germans and their objective. The fighting raged back and forth for most of the year with neither side gaining an advantage. As the year neared its close, the combatants counted their losses: France 400,000; Germany 350,000. Neither side fully recovered from the slaughter at Verdun, and for this reason, it became one of the defining battles of the war.

Talk of a 'Big Push' was much in evidence in the spring of 1916. French Allied Commander, General Joffre, planned an assault in the area of the River Somme. Two French and one British Army Corps were to break through enemy lines on a 60 mile front but, because of the decimation of the French Army at Verdun, its contribution was reduced – the British, commanded by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, were obliged to take on the lions' share of the attack. Haig was against the Somme offensive. He felt there was a much better chance of success in Flanders. However, he was overruled by Joffre who was hell-bent on a war of attrition.

For seven days and nights prior to the battle, Allied artillery pounded the enemy lines without respite. Far behind the German front, rail-yards, camps and headquarters were hit and, on the night of 25 June the town of Combles and its railhead was struck by 3,000 heavy shells with the result that an ammunition train was blown sky-high in the station. Every



A postcard, produced by the French for the English market, high-lighting their efforts at Verdun

man, from ranking officer to lowly 'Tommy', believed that nothing could survive the onslaught – the German trenches, along with their masses of protective barbed-wire, would be totally destroyed, leaving the British infantry free to walk across No-Mans Land to occupy the enemy lines and sort out the devastation. How wrong they were. For 18 months the industrious Germans had been digging into the chalk hills above the Allied line, resulting in a strong system of three trench lines, each protected by thick belts of wire entanglements. They had excavated spacious dug-outs deep into the chalk for protection against shelling. On the spurs of the hillsides, concrete and sandbagged fortresses had been built to provide enfilade fields of fire for their Maxim machine guns.

On 1 June, the British Minister of Labour, Mr Arthur Henderson, talking to a group of managers and munition workers in Leeds, let the cat out of the bag when he said:

I am asked why the Whitsuntide holidays are to be postponed until the end of July. How inquisitive we all are! It should suffice that we ask for a postponement of the holidays until the end of July. This fact should speak volumes.

It did indeed. His remarks were reported in the National Press and the Germans were aware within hours of both the 'when' and the 'where' and, in the early hours of 1 July, a German listening post at La Boisselle picked up General Rawlinson's 'Good luck' wish to the British 4th Army.

At 7.20 am on the 1 July (General Rawlinson wanted to attack before dawn, but again, the French overruled the British) 100,000 men, mostly made up of Kitchener's New Army volunteers, massed in their front line trenches. Suddenly the 1,500 guns, which had been firing without a break for over a week, fell silent. The air became still as the early morning sun warmed the backs of the troops below. Choirs of larks sang their morning chorus as the men waited for the whistles to signal that the time had come for them to go 'over the top'. At Hawthorne Redoubt and La Boisselle, two huge ammonal mines laid under the German front line trenches by Royal Engineers' Tunnelling Companies blew, the one under Hawthorne Redoubt leaving a crater 35-yards wide by 20-yards deep.

At 7.30 am, along 18 miles of the British front, the whistles sounded and the men climbed onto their scaling ladders and out of their trenches. They were fully loaded with packs, entrenching tools, rifles, ammunition, bombs and barbed-wire, ready to take-over and consolidate the German front line. These they believed, had been totally destroyed. Colonels and other senior officers walked in front of their men, some sporting walking sticks. The enemy, although having taken heavy losses in the bombardment, were still



Going 'over the top'



A German machine gun nest on the Somme

a disciplined fighting force. The survivors emerged from their bunkers, 20–30 feet deep below the chalky ground, mounted their machine guns and mowed-down lines of the advancing infantry. On nearing the German trenches, officers and men saw to their horror that, in most places, the wire was uncut. Shells, meant to have destroyed dug-outs and wire alike, had failed to do their work. Countless numbers of them were defective, laying there on the ground where they had fallen. Others were just not up to the task of penetrating the deep German shelters. The effect of swathes of uncut wire meant that men headed for the few gaps which had been created, making the job of the German machine gunners even easier. Mounds of bodies soon began to fill the gaps in the wire. The net result of all this carnage was that few objectives were achieved, and most of those that were, had to be forfeited when the efforts of flanking units failed.

At the day's end, and for very little gain, the British took nearly 60,000 casualties of whom 20,000 were killed. Among those lying dead or dying in the July sunshine was Corporal Joseph Yardley of Moulton Village.

The Battle of the Somme came to a halt in the November of 1916. Today it overshadows all other actions of the Great War. It cost Great Britain and the Commonwealth over 400,000 casualties, the French 200,000 and estimates of German dead and wounded vary from between 500,000 and 700,000. Attrition had come of age.

In the summer of 1916, bulky, tarpaulin-covered machines were shipped to France under close guard. Early drawings had described them as 'Water Transporters for Mesopotamia' but during their trip to France those guarding them, when asked, described them as "mobile tanks for fuel and water storage". On 15 September at Flers, a number of these 'fuel and water storage tanks' were used in action for the first time and, apart from the fuel they carried, and no doubt some water, they proved to be much more than mere 'storage tanks'. The 'Tank', a name still used today, was born. In their first action, some suffered mechanical problems before reaching their jumping-off points, others ditched, but the 11 which crossed the German line put the fear of God into the German troops. One straddled the line, using machine guns to clear the trench, and 300 enemy troops surrendered. A Tank Memorial now marks the spot on the Bapaume–Albert road from which these first 'tanks' went into action .

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Other Fronts

In the Caucasus, the Russians and Turks were engaged in heavy fighting resulting in major gains for the Russians when the Turks turned and fled. Alarmed, Turkish High Command sent their Second Army to the rescue. This move stabilised the situation and, by August, the Russians were on their knees, unwilling to go further.

In Italy, the fighting in the Isonzo continued throughout the year. In November the 9th battle took place with more to come. May and June saw Field Marshal Conrad and his Austrians attack on a 20-mile front at Trentino in the Austrian Tyrol. It came as no surprise to the Italians who, after backing off for five miles, held the Austrians until they wilted. Conrad then decided to scale down this operation and to concentrate his efforts on breaking through on the Isonzo front instead.

In Mesopotamia a combined British and Indian force, under siege for five months by a superior Turkish Force, was finally compelled to surrender with the loss of over 10,000 troops. In December, Bucharest fell to a combined Austrian–German onslaught.

Moulton

In February James Needham, landlord of the Red Lion at Winsford, was prosecuted for falling foul of a new military law. His offence – allowing a soldier on home leave to have a pint after 9 pm.



The first official photograph of a tank going into action

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On 2 June, the Winsford Guardian records the names of Moulton men serving with the Cheshire Regiment and wounded during recent fighting. The article went on to say that Corporal A Whitlow of the Royal Army Medical Corps had treated a number of lads including Bob Buckley. Walter Didsbury of 9 Regent Street had been wounded in his right shoulder and was in Cheltenham Hospital, where he was expected to make a good recovery.

In a letter from the front to his mother in Chapel Street, Private Harry Noden said he had met up with his two brothers, George and Arthur, for the first time in 18 months. Two Winsford lads, also named Noden, were there too, and they all enjoyed a good night out together.

In September, Mr H. W. Bowker, the Council School headmaster, received letters and cards from old scholars on the school Roll of Honour. They showed how touched the men were to have been remembered and to have received parcels. Corporal Archie Whitlow, summed up the feelings saying he wished to thank the teachers and scholars alike for their kindness to him. "I have pleasant memories of my school days", he concluded. In another, sent in November, Archie said that:

... had seen a cavalry charge a few days ago ... it was a fine sight. It was great to see the enemy with their hands up. I was bowled over by a shell, but I escaped injury but had quite a fright. I met two of the lads (G. Didsbury and W. Hodkinson) a few days ago. The weather is wretched, rain day after day and mud everywhere. You will be pleased to hear that I won a Brigade race about a month ago. I captained our team and we won all the way.

Under the heading 'Patriotic Villagers' the Winsford Guardian reported in December that in the early days of the war Moulton's response for men had been magnificent. The villagers were now very keen to ensure that all of their 170 soldier boys were kept supplied with all kinds of comforts. Parcels are sent regularly from a committee Chaired by Mr J.J. Tomlinson with Secretaries Messrs J. Winstanly and W. Taylor. A fund opened a little while ago to send a Christmas gift to each Moulton man was so successful that a postal order for 6s. 6d was also sent along with a customised Christmas card and letter from the villagers.

Nevertheless, 1916 was a sad year for Moulton. In May, Sam Ashley was thought to have been killed (it was later confirmed that he had been taken prisoner). Sadly, he died while in enemy hands with no reason given for his death. On 1 July Joseph Yardley was killed in the Battle of the Somme, and Robert H Buckley, Robert Buckley, Jervis Clarke and Joseph Shaw were to fall before the month drew to a close.

Dedicated to the Memory of Sam Ashley

In the Moulton Council School's record of 1910, Sam Ashley was voted 'Most Popular Boy', by his school pals. Sam lost none of this good nature or popularity as he matured into manhood. In June 1915 his platoon sergeant, Sergeant Byrne wrote to Sam's father offering him his condolences, when it was thought that Sam had perished. He went on to say that 'Sam had a very cheery disposition, with a pleasant smile and was very well liked and respected by both men and officers alike'.

Sam was born on 5 September 1896 and lived with his parents at 27 Regent Street until called-up for service. He attended the village council school and took part in many after-school activities, including membership of the Black Minstrel Troop. After leaving school he worked in the District County Surveyors Office in Northwich. He enlisted in autumn 1914 and was included in both the school and village Rolls of Honour of 1915. His two brothers also served in the Army. Sam was posted to the 10th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment.

In early November 1915, after completing his training, Sam found himself crossing the Channel en route for France. The Battalion arrived at dawn and proceeded up-country to the firing line. They remained in the trenches for four days, witnessing at first hand a bombardment just along the line from where they were positioned. This was followed by a battle which Sam was not permitted to name. However, it seems it was the battle of Nonne Boschen. Sam and his pals were then relieved and took shelter in a barn for the night. In a letter to Mr Bowker, his former headmaster, he said he was in the pink of condition, but that the nights 'and his feet', were very cold, and that some cigarettes would not go amiss.

Sam also wrote to his sister in Altrincham, thanking her for the parcel and 'the woollen helmet' she had sent to him. He went on to say that despite the frost, the cold and the wet, he and his pals were as 'happy as pigs in dirt'. Their trenches were in a very bad state and they had spent hours pumping the water out. Fortunately, they had been supplied with top boots and 'skin' coats which 'keep us as warm as toast'. He recounts the results of a bombardment on the enemy line to their front which 'blew the Germans to smithereens'.

/...

He said that they were in the trenches for 6 days on that occasion and that he and his pals very much looked forward to receiving letters and parcels. He explained that when parcels arrived they made a pile of the food so that everyone got a share. Dinners were good, he said, and he was becoming a first rate cook. Sam concluded this letter to his sister by telling her of his first fearful experience of 'Whizzbangs'* which screamed as they neared their target.

Mid-way through June Sam's father received a letter from the Battalion Chaplain saying that the 10th Cheshire's had been subjected to a horrendous bombardment. Many men from Northwich and District had been killed or were missing. Sam was reported missing on 21 May and was thought to have been amongst the dead buried in the trenches.

The Battalion War Diary gives the 10th's position on 21 May as 'In trenches near to St.Eloy'. It goes on to confirm the contents of the letter from the Battalion Chaplain:

During the morning trenches shelled. At 3.45 pm intense bombardment continued for four hours – most trenches destroyed. Large proportion of men killed or wounded. At 7.45 pm enemy attacked and took over our trenches with little resistance – most men having been killed or wounded in the bombardment. We counter-attacked at 2.0am on 22nd May and succeeded in retaking our lines. Casualties: 35 Killed, 106 Wounded, 41 Missing.

But Sam wasn't dead. Towards the end of June, and completely out of the blue, his father received a letter from Sam to say that he was a prisoner of war and that, although wounded slightly, he was being treated with 'the best of respect', by the enemy. Nonetheless, Sam died in captivity six months later. There is no record as to the cause of his death. His wound may have become infected or, he may have, like so many others, died of starvation.

Sam was held in captivity in the Douai area captured by the Germans from the French in October 1914. The area remained in enemy hands for the next four years. Douai Communal Cemetery was used during the occupation years for prisoners-of-war from many countries, as well as Germans killed close by. The inscription at the base of Sam Ashley's headstone reads 'He died as nobly as he lived'.

* 'Whizzbangs' German 77mm high velocity artillery shells which spent a very short time in flight.

Private Sam Ashley



Sam Ashley, Private No. 17829

10th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment

Died while a prisoner of war, Monday 20 November 1916. Age 19

His is buried in Douai Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. A 31



Private Sam Ashley's Headstone in Douai Communal Cemetery

Private Sam Ashley
 Sam Ashley's Awards



The 1914 – 1915 Star

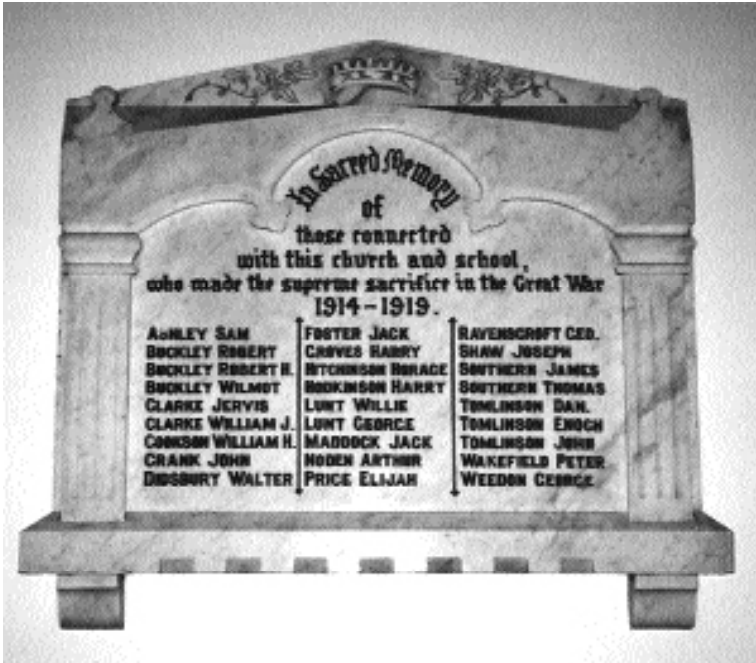


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Private Sam Ashley is also commemorated on the
 Moulton Methodist Church Tablet



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Dedicated to the Memory of Robert H Buckley

Prior to the war Robert Buckley worked for a firm of boilermakers in Hyde, Cheshire and it was from here that he enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment. He was born at 57 Regent Street, Moulton in 1879. At the time of the 1881 Census (Aged 2) he was one of five children of Luke and Fanny Buckley. There were also two other children, Ruth and William Sparks, living in the small terraced house at that time.

In 1891 Luke, Robert's father, a Salt Boiler, is recorded as living at 24 Regent Street with his sons George and Robert. Also living with them was Ruth (nee Sparks) now married with a small daughter. A mystery surrounds the whereabouts of Fanny and her remaining three children. Maybe she was away visiting relatives at the time of the Census?

In July 1915 Robert's name appears on the Moulton Roll of Honour as serving in the 14th Battalion, the Cheshire Regiment. He was drafted to the front in September and around this time transferred into the 11th Battalion.

The 3 July 1916 War Diary entry of the 11th Battalion states:

Attacked en-masse with Border Regiment on our left. Heavy machine gun fire took the Battalion out in lines. Survivors retreated back to their own trenches. Casualties: Every Company Commander, 10 other Officers, 307 other ranks. Of the 20 Officers and 657 other ranks who entered the trenches on 3rd July 6 Officers and 350 other ranks came out on the night of 4th

The Cheshire's Regimental History confirms the entry as follows:

... They were met by a withering fire of machine guns, under which they walked forward till the Battalion simply melted away. Colonel Aspinall was killed. Every Company Commander was a casualty. The Adjutant, Captain Hill, of the Suffolk Regiment, with great energy and bravery got the survivors back to the starting line. On the morning of the 4th, no organised body of men existed, 'one simply ran about no-man's land collecting men here and there' said one Officer ...

Robert was involved in the Battle of the Somme and in September his wife expressed grave concern that she had not heard from her husband for two months. Subsequently the War Office advised her that he had been killed in action on 3 July.

The body of Robert Buckley was never recovered and along with 72,000 others, his name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. Robert was 37-years old when he died leaving a wife and three children to mourn his passing.

Private Robert H Buckley



Robert H Buckley, Private No. 15918

11th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment

Killed in Action, Monday 3 July 1916. Age 37

His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing

Somme, France

Pier and Face 3C



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Somme, France

Private Robert H Buckley

Robert H Buckley's Awards



The 1914 – 1915 Star

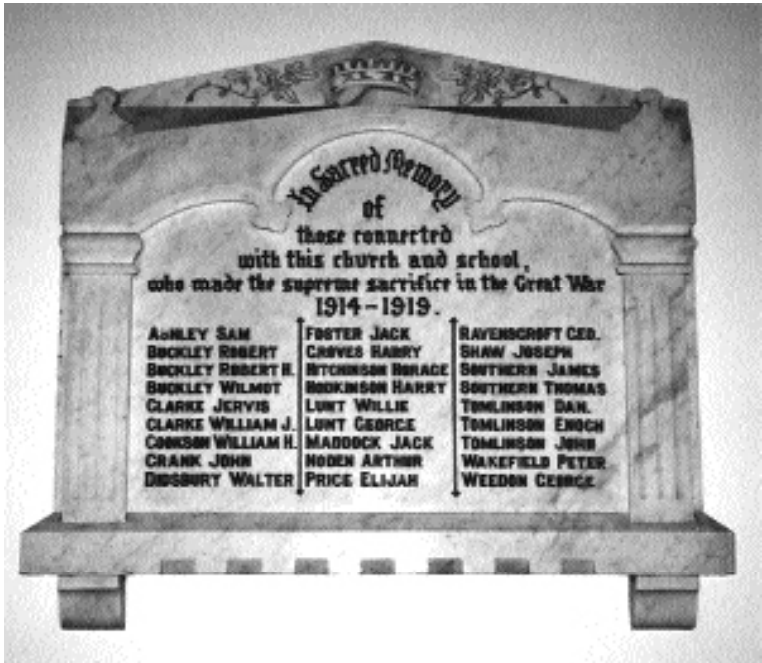


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Private Robert H Buckley is also commemorated on the
Moulton Methodist Church Tablet



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Dedicated to the memory of Robert Buckley

Bob Buckley enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment in January 1915. He was the fourth son of George and Ann Buckley and was one of thirteen children. When Bob was three-years old the family (numbering 11 at that time) lived at 5 Moulton Lane (Main Road). Ten years later they had moved to 1 Church Street. Fortunately, by then, the four eldest children had flown the nest, for there were now two additional mouths to feed. George ran the village newsagents and was well known throughout the village.

Bob was born in 1878 and, after leaving school, he worked at Brunner Mond's Alkali works at Winnington. He married Ellen and they had two children, George and Ann. He was a member of the local 'Odd Fellows' Lodge and attended the local Methodist Church. Bob would regularly treat his family to his rendering of 'The Old Rugged Cross' – his favourite hymn.

After enlisting in the Cheshire's he was listed in the Moulton Parish Roll of Honour in July 1915 as serving with the 14th Battalion. Later he transferred to the 10th Battalion and it was with this Battalion that he embarked for the front in December 1915.

On 12 July 1916, Bob was in action on the Somme in front of Ovillers, when a German shell exploded close by. He sustained terrible injuries including the loss of his arm. Two Moultoners, serving alongside him, Corporal Archie Whitlow of the Royal Army Medical Corps and Private Gilbert Ashton of the Machine Gun Corps went to his aid and saw him safely stretchered away to the nearest dressing station. From there he was transferred to No. 21 Casualty Clearing Station at La Neuville but died of his wounds on 15 July 1916. He was 39-years of age and the oldest man from the village to die in the war. At the end of July, the Battalion's War Diary lists the casualties for the month: 42 Killed, 75 Missing and 283 Wounded.

After the war, Bob's wife Ellen re-married. Her second husband was Mark Moore from Davenham.

Private Robert Buckley



Robert Buckley, Private No. 10/24614
10th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment
Died of Wounds, Saturday 15 July 1916. Age 39
He is buried at La Neuville Cemetery, Corbie, Somme, France. I.B.34



Private Robert Buckley's Headstone in La Neuville Cemetery

Private Robert Buckley

Robert Buckley's Awards

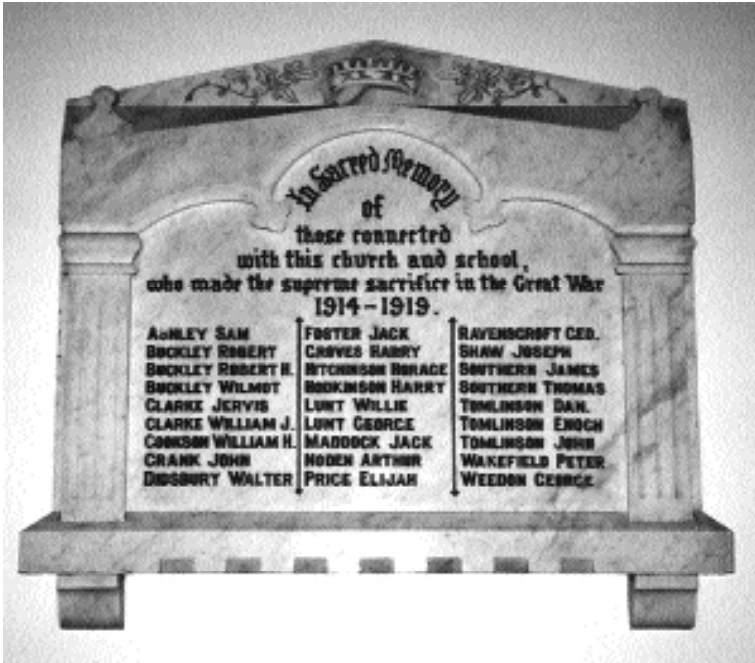


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Other Memorials commemorating Private Robert Buckley's name



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Private Robert Buckley



Brunner Mond War Memorial, Winnington.



Private Robert Buckley's bronze Memorial Plaque.

Private Robert Buckley

Director of Graves Registration & Enquiries.

Please to forward me requested a Photograph of
the Grave of:

Name Buckley

Rank and Initials Pte R. 24614

Regiment 10th Cheshires

Position of Grave La Haucelle

British Cemetery

Meuse Railway Station Corbie

All communications regarding the Photograph should
specify the number (6/2054) and be addressed to—
Director of Graves Registration and Enquiries,
War Office,
Whitehall Messrs,
London, E.

Order in the instructions to which the photograph was taken
on the 20th Dec 1918 against Sub. No. 2000 0000 only apply. Photographs
to be returned.

Corbie 2000 0000



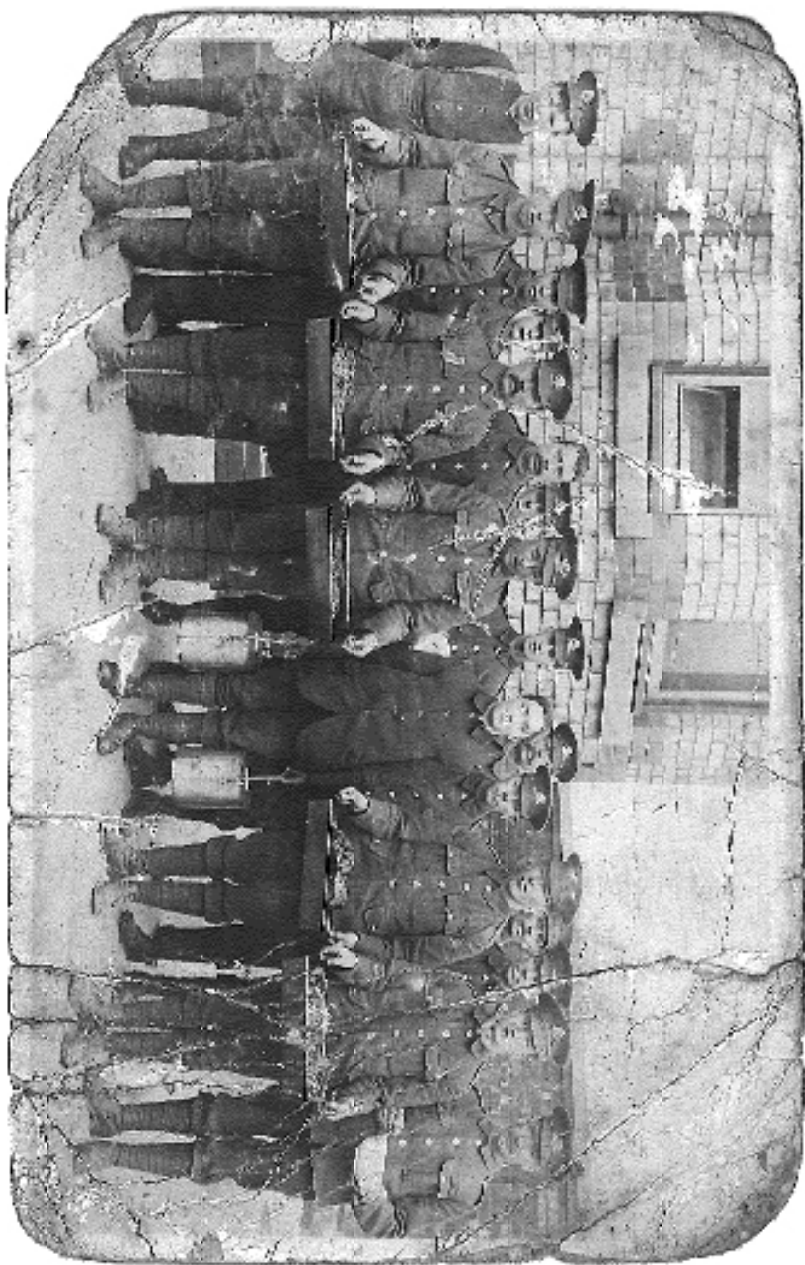
Above:
Request for an official photograph of
Private Buckley's grave.

Above right:
The photograph of Private Buckley's
grave marker.

Right:
A Memorial Card to Private Buckley
produced on behalf of his wife Ellen.



Private Robert Buckley



A group of the 10th Battalion The Cheshire Regiment showing Private Buckley on the extreme right holding a bowl

Dedicated to the Memory of Jervis Clarke

Before enlisting in Manchester in September 1914, Jervis Clarke worked in the Cooperage Department at Brunner Mond's Winnington works, where he fashioned casks for despatching Sodium Carbonate and other Alkali products to markets far and wide. On his marriage, just prior to the war, he left Moulton and set up home at 13 Church Road, Northwich. The young couple had one child. His widowed mother and sister remained in Moulton.

Jervis was a keen sportsman and could show most people a clean pair of heels. He ran for Castle Harriers and later took over the training of Jack Ashley, a well-known Moulton cyclist. He was a dedicated Christian and worked hard for his local Church. His two brothers also served in the army as did his brother-in-law.

He is mentioned in the 1915 Parish Roll of Honour as serving in the 7th Battalion, the East Lancashire Regiment. For reasons unknown, quite a few Moulton lads decided to serve in non-Cheshire battalions during the War.

On Sunday 30 July 1916, the 7th East Lancs., still part of the 19th Division, but temporarily attached to the 58th Brigade, were ordered to dig-in at Becourt Wood just south of La Boisselle, west of Albert. As they worked, the German artillery registered on them and put down a heavy bombardment.

Jervis's friend, Jack Kettle, who also lived in Church Road, was close to him when the shelling started and asked him if he could share his dug-out until things had quietened down. They talked as best they could with shells screaming overhead, and Jervis told Jack that he had spent the day bringing wounded in from the field.

During a lull in the barrage, Jervis left the dug-out to go about his duties. Shortly afterwards a shell landed close by and a piece of shrapnel extinguished his life instantly. He was buried on the spot by his friends. They erected a marker cross over the grave but, as often happened, the grave was lost in the heat of battle. He is now commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing .

The following day the 7th East Lancs. marched away from Becourt Wood to billets at Franvillers. During the period 19–31 July the Battalion lost 38 men killed and 95 wounded or missing.

Private Jervis Clarke



Jervis Clarke Private No. 6789
7th Battalion, The East Lancashire Regiment
Killed in Action, Sunday 30 July 1916. Age NK
His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing
Somme, France
Pier and Face 6C



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Somme, France

Private Jervis Clarke

Jervis Clarke's Awards



The British War Medal



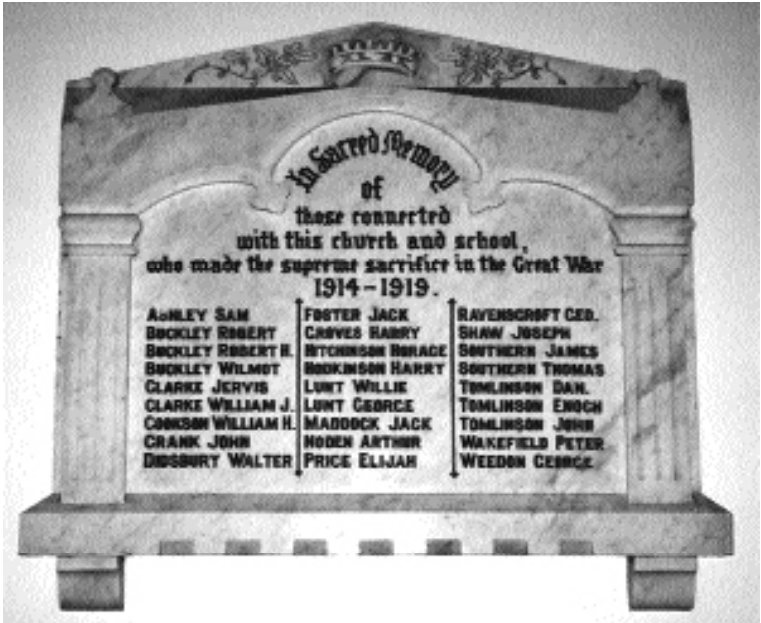
The Victory Medal

Other memorials commemorating Private Jervis Clarke's name



Northwich Town War Memorial

Private Jervis Clarke



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.



Brunner Mond War Memorial, Winton

Dedicated to the Memory of Joseph Shaw

In 1891 a one-year old Joseph Shaw is recorded on the Census as living with his parents John and Mary Ellen Shaw and five other siblings at 3 Gleaves Lane, Moulton. By the early 1890s the family had moved to 3 School Lane, the family home for at least the next 25 years. John, a Salt Boiler, like many men from the village, worked for one of the numerous salt companies in the locality.

At five or six-years old Joseph enrolled at the local council school in School Lane. From his home at No. 3 he could reach the school in less than a minute. After leaving school, he followed his father into the salt industry and took a job with Salt Union Ltd. Later he married a Winsford girl and they settled-down in Moulton.

At the outbreak of war, Joseph enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment and was initially drafted into the 14th Battalion. Later he transferred to the 13th Battalion, part of the 72nd Brigade, 25th Division. In the spring and summer of 1915 his name appeared on both the School and Parish Rolls of Honour. His brother George served with the Army in Salonica and it was whilst here that he learned of Joseph's death on the Somme – killed in action on 7 July 1916.

The Regimental History recalls the action:

The 13th Battalion, commanded by Col. L.H.K. Finch, was employed, on the 7th July, under the 12th Division against Ovillers. Jumping off trenches had been contrived from the newly won German trenches in La Boisselle... It had been arranged that the attack should be protected by smoke and by an intense barrage. But there was no smoke and our men thought the barrage particularly feeble. It is probable that, as the wind dropped, the smoke rose at once. Our advance, being thus unscreened, drew heavy artillery fire. This fire, together with machine gun fire from front and flanks, stopped the attack about half way to Ovillers.

The Battalion lost eight officers killed and twelve wounded, including their Commanding Officer, Colonel Finch. A total of 243 N.C.Os and other ranks were killed or wounded. Joseph Shaw was one of them. His body was never recovered from the field and his name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. He is in good company, for four others of the '34 Men' of Moulton are also remembered on this monument.

Private Joseph Shaw



Joseph Shaw, Private No. 24271
13th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment
Killed in Action, Friday 7 July 1916. Age 26
His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing
Somme, France. Pier and Face 3C



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Somme, France

Private Joseph Shaw

Joseph Shaw's Awards



The 1914-1915 Star

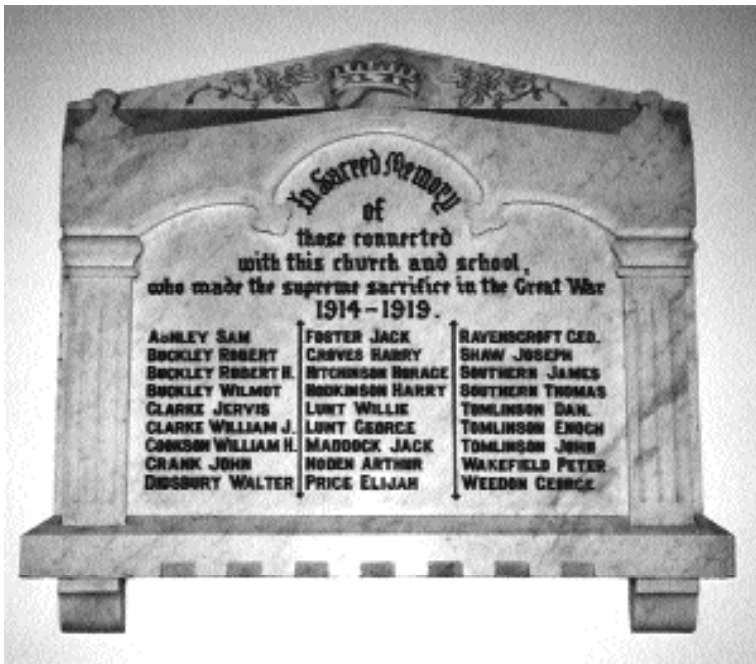


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Other memorials commemorating Private Joseph Shaw's name



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Private Joseph Shaw



Salt Union War Memorial, Winsford



Winsford Town War Memorial



St. Chads War Memorial,
Over, Winsford

Dedicated to the Memory of John Tomlinson

Like a messenger of death, the telegraph boy peddled down Main Road on that autumn morning in 1916. Strapped to his belt was a leather pouch containing a most urgent message. As he passed by, people sent up their silent prayers "Please God – not our house". Amelia Tomlinson, John's mother, was tending the fire in her kitchen when the knock came.

In 1881 John Tomlinson's grandparents, John and Sarah, were living at 57 Moulton Lane (Main Road). At that time they had four children, including George, the eldest and father to be of John.

By 1891 George, aged 25, had met and married Amelia, who was then 18 and they lived at 37 Regent Street. George was a Salt Boiler and most probably worked the salt pans at the Newbridge Salt Works close to the village.

George and Amelia (nee Sproston) raised a family of four boys and two girls. John was born 24th January 1893 and at 4/5 began to attend Moulton Council School. At the time of John's birth, the Tomlinson's were living at 15, Regent Street but earlier were at number 37 when John married Clara Buckley in 1913. By the outbreak of WW1, John and Clara had 2 children - Annie and John (Jack). John took the King's shilling soon after hostilities began and sometime later the family settled at 4, Grange Hill Winsford. John was posted to France in the summer of 1915. At about the same time he was listed on the village and school Rolls of Honour as serving in the Durham Light Infantry. A third child, Amelia Ypres, was born in 1916 just prior to John's death. It is believed that Clara decided to give her daughter Amelia the second name of Ypres because it was at Ypres, that infamous salient in Belgium, where John had served before moving south to Gueudecourt and his eventual death. In May 1916, John's cousin Enoch Tomlinson enlisted in the RGA. Enoch also went the same way as his cousin when he died of wounds in April 1917 (see pages 112-115)

Between 1 and 18 October 1916 the battle of Le Transloy was fought. On the 11th, men of the 2nd Battalion, the Durham Light Infantry took over Needle Trench to the south of Gueudecourt, a village south of Bapaume. On the 13th, the Battalion moved forward to occupy Rainbow Trench, east of the village.

At 5.15 am on 15th the Durham's quietly stood-to in their trenches and waited for the order to attack. As the whistles blew they scrambled 'over the top' and forward into No-Man's Land. To their front lay their objectives, the German held Mild and Cloudy trenches. At the end of the battle 3 officers and 19 NCOs and other ranks lay dead on the field. John Tomlinson was one of them. The attack failed and the 2nd Battalion limped back to Needle Trench to count their losses, re-group and prepare to fight another day.

John's body was never recovered and his name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. At the end of October 1916 the Durham Light Infantry's War Diary records that 142 officers and men were killed, wounded or missing during the month.

Private John Tomlinson



John Tomlinson, Private, Acting Lance-Corporal, No. 8488
2nd Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry
Killed in Action, Sunday 15 October 1916. Age 23
His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing
Somme, France
Pier and Face 14A and 15C



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Somme, France

Private John Tomlinson

John Tomlinson's Awards



The 1914-1915 Star

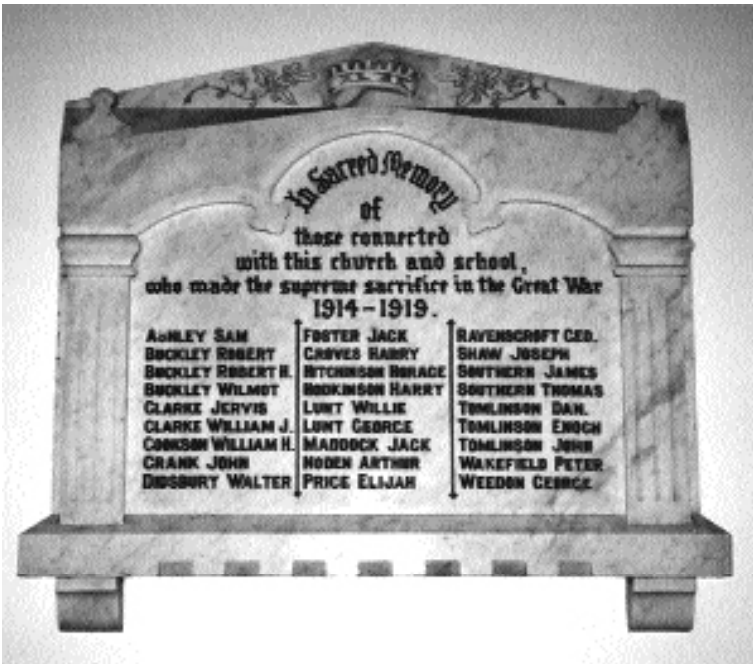


The British War Medal



The Victory Medal

Other memorials commemorating Private John Tomlinson's name



The memorial tablet in Moulton Methodist Church.

Private John Tomlinson



Salt Union War Memorial, Winsford



Winsford Town War Memorial



St. Chads War Memorial,
Over, Winsford



Whitegate St. Mary's War Memorial

Dedicated to the Memory of Joseph Henry Yardley

Joseph Yardley was born at 48 Dean Street, Over, Winsford in 1880. He was one of ten children of William and Mary Yardley. William was a Salt Boiler and worked for one of the salt refining companies in the area. Mary Yardley (née Latham) was a Moulton girl who had at one time lived at 69 Regent Street.

Having served in the Regular Army prior to the war Joseph, a reservist, was called-up as soon as hostilities began. He joined the Manchester Regiment and found himself posted to the 2nd Battalion. Four of Joseph's brothers also served.

The Battalion's War Diary states that the battalion left their billets at Senlis on the evening of 30 June 1916 and proceeded to Black Horse shelters at Crucifix Corner preparatory to going into action on the following morning. At 7.30 am the Battalion left Crucifix Corner and advanced along Dumbarton Track in Authuille Wood where they were placed in reserve along with the 15th Battalion, the Highland Light Infantry – the Glasgow Tramways Battalion.

At 1.45 pm two companies of the 2nd Manchester's fought their way towards the Leipzig Salient and entered the trench system. What they found there was heartbreaking. Highlanders, Borderers, Yorkshire Light Infantry, Lancashire Fusiliers and Dorsets were all in a sorry state. They had been subjected to artillery and machine gun fire for over six hours, while managing to repel counter-attacks from enemy bombers advancing along their own trenches. Dead and dying men were everywhere, with hundreds lying close up on the unbroken enemy wire.

During the afternoon the Manchester's, along with men from other battalions, fought their way forward. Prisoners were taken and made to run the gauntlet of their own fire on their way back to the British positions.

By the end of the day the 32nd Division had lost nearly 4,000 officers and men dead, wounded or missing (33% of the Division's strength). Lying among the carnage in No-Man's Land alongside many of his friends from the 2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment, was the body of Acting Corporal Joseph Henry Yardley of Moulton. His body was never recovered. He was 36-years old.

Private Joseph Henry Yardley



Joseph Henry Yardley, Private, Acting Corporal, No. 2328
2nd Battalion, The Manchester Regiment
Killed in Action, 1 July 1916. Age 36
His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing
Somme, France
Pier and Face 14C



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Somme, France

Private Joseph Henry Yardley

Private Joseph Yardley's Awards



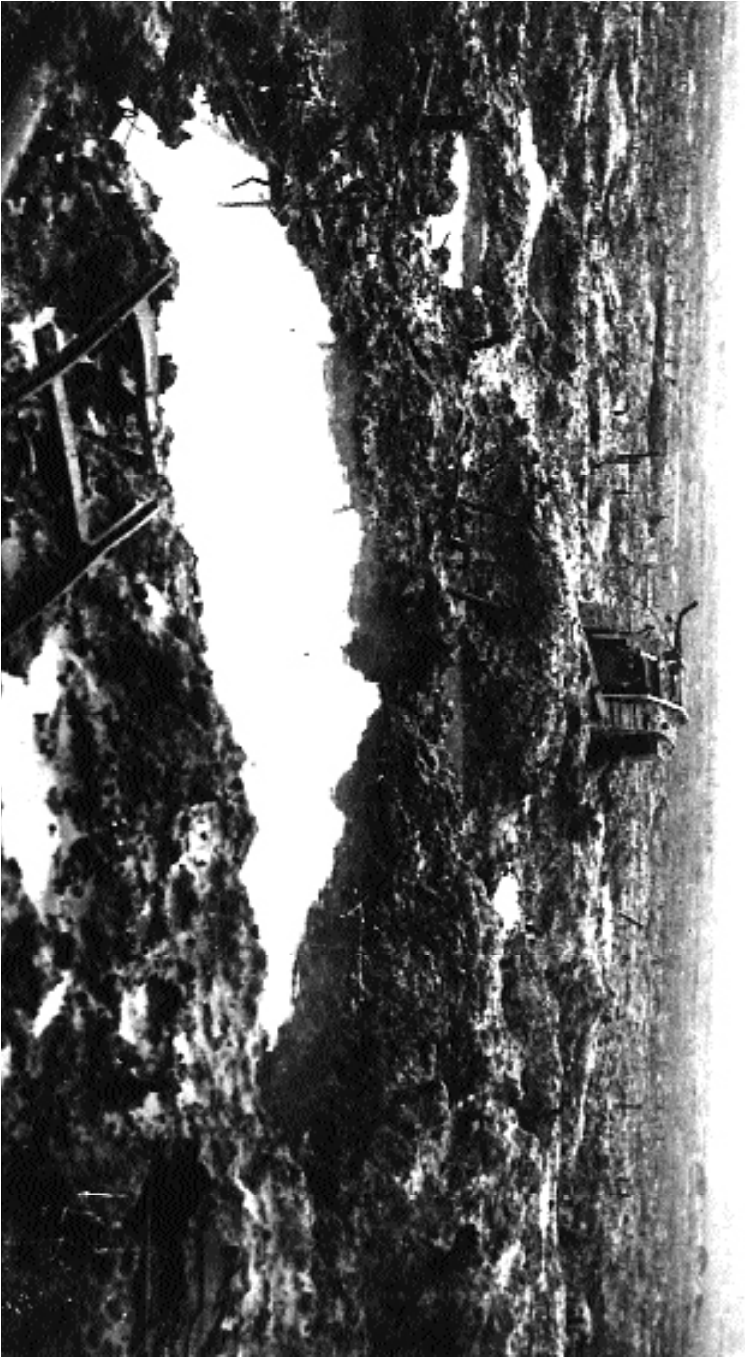
The 1914-1915 Star



The British War Medal



The Victory Medal



Passchendaele Ridge in October 1917