



**Record of the men from Elmore who died during**

**The Great War 1914 -1918**

## **Lest we Forget - The Elmore Casualties**

It is appropriate that we recall the sacrifices that were made by many during WW1, which includes the 8 men from Elmore who died during that conflict. The military lives of these brave men of Elmore who fought and died during WW1 were covered in the 4 issues of The Elmore Parish Magazine, The Bridge, during 2017. This article is the consolidated story detailing the lives of the 8 men killed during WW1. Their stories are shown below in chronological order with those who died in 1914 first. Sadly, there isn't a lot of detail about those who died in the early part of the Great War but as the years progressed and the War dragged on, more information was available about those who survived to the later years. Although the narrative mentions some of those who survived the Great War it does not explore the many men from the local area who fought, were wounded or survived.

### **Background**

During the Great War there were a few employments that were designated as 'Reserved Occupations', for example farmers, coal miners, doctors, clergymen, teachers and iron & steel workers. Some of these professions were regarded as essential for the war effort. Therefore, people in these jobs were exempt from conscription but that didn't stop them volunteering. In the early stages of the war only unmarried men were recruited for the military but conscription was introduced in March 1916 for men aged between 19 and 41 and then expanded to include married men from May 1916.

Several of the Elmore men who died during WW1 had joined, not surprisingly, the Gloucestershire Regiment. What is amazing is that The 'Glosters' lost 8,100 men killed during that war.

Officially men had to be aged 18 to enlist and 19 to fight on the front line but during WW1 some 250,000 boys lied about their age in order to enlist. It would seem that the whole country was complicit in the fraud as teachers extolled the virtues of fighting for one's country, parents encouraged their unemployed, and mostly unskilled, sons to join the Forces in order to earn a living, and the Recruiting Officers were paid the equivalent of £6 for every person who signed on, so many a blind eye was turned when an obviously under age young man appeared at the recruiting centre. In addition, many people in the early 20<sup>th</sup>C didn't have birth certificates so there was no way of checking on age. However, one in five of the underage recruits were discharged within a month and re-joined the Forces when they were old enough.

Sadly, many of the WW1 individual military service records were destroyed by fire during the London blitz of WW2. Therefore, only snippets of information on some people are now available.

Many of the families of those who killed during WW1 and who were living in Elmore are still living in the village.

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## Lieutenant Henry George Christopher Guise

Henry Guise was born in Elmore on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1893 and was the son of Sir William Francis George Guise and Lady Ada Caroline Guise, (née Coope) of Elmore Court. During his formative years Henry was educated at Eton. He also came from a family with a distinguished military background, including:

His father: Colonel Sir William Frances George Guise Bt (1851 – 1920)

His uncle: Colonel Christopher Dering Guise, (1855 – 1926)

His great grandfather: General Sir John Wright Guise KCB (1777 – 1865)

His granduncle: General Sir John Christopher Guise VC, CB (1826 – 1895)

His 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin: Captain John Henry Wingfield Guise (1865-1899) who died in Nyasaland (now Malawi) serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Scottish Rifles.



2Lt Henry G C Guise

When War was declared on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, Henry Guise joined the Army at the age of 21. He was commissioned immediately as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment based at The Barracks in Gloucester. After basic training in Bristol he was posted to 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, which was part of 145<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in 48<sup>th</sup> (South Midland) Division and he was given command of 11 Platoon of C Company. His battalion embarked for France on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1915, landing at Boulogne, whereupon the unit marched over 100 miles to the 48<sup>th</sup> Divisional concentration area just SW of Ypres.

The battalion was billeted at Steenvorde and then Meteren in France on the Belgian border before taking over trenches in the front line in the Ploegsteert Wood Sector in Belgium on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> May, after a 3-week spell in the trenches, Henry's unit was earmarked as the Divisional Reserve and it moved to Le Romarin, west of Ploegsteert, just inside the Belgian border and NE of Lille. While at le Romarin, and on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 1915, 2Lt Henry Guise was instructing his platoon grenadiers in bomb-throwing when he accidentally exploded a "Jam Tin" grenade which killed both him and 3335 Private T E Bates. Both men were buried in the Ploegsteert Wood Cemetery on 7<sup>th</sup> May - a week before Henry's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday!

Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery was made by the enclosure of a number of small regimental cemeteries. Plot II was originally the Somerset Light Infantry Cemetery, made by the 1st Battalion in December 1914. The 32 graves it contains, as well as ten in Plot I, are from that battalion. Plot IV, the Bucks Cemetery, was made by the 1st/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, in April 1915 and 11 of the 20 graves it contains are from that battalion. Plot III contains 16 graves of the 1/5th Gloucesters, made between April and May 1915, including the graves of Lt Guise and Private Bates and in Plots III and I there are 12 graves of the 8th Loyal North Lancs from October to December 1915.

In addition to this small cemetery there is the Ploegsteert Memorial which commemorates more than 11,000 servicemen of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in this sector of the Belgian Front during the First World War and have no known grave. The original intention had been to erect the memorial in Lille. Most of those commemorated by the memorial did not die in major offensives, such as those which took place around Ypres to the north, or Loos to the south. Most were killed in the course of the day-to-day trench warfare which characterised this part of the line, or in small scale set engagements, usually carried out in support of the major attacks taking place elsewhere or who died in an accident, as was the situation in Henry Guise's case.

#### Historical Note:

What was a Jam Tin grenade? The 'Jam Tin' grenade was exactly as its nickname implied; it was an improvised munition made from ration tins because there were not enough manufactured grenades available in the early years of the war. It comprised two tins, a small tin inside a larger one – the inner tin being packed with explosive and the gap between the tins stuffed with pieces of metal in order to create shrapnel when the improvised grenade exploded. However, because of the improvised nature of this munition it was a dangerous item to handle and its use was discontinued after many reported accidents similar to the one that killed Henry Guise.

The shortage of manufactured munitions in the early years of the war was a well-publicised scandal at the time and Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, was often blamed for the shortage in the press. As a direct result of the costly failure of the Battle of Aubers Ridge on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915, Lloyd George was appointed as the first Minister of Munitions and his success in this role eventually led to him becoming Prime Minister.

#### **11317 Private Wintour Edward Webb**

Wintour Edward Webb was born at Elmore Back in January 1895 and was the son of Herbert Webb (1861 - 1905) and Elizabeth Olly Hyett (1862 - 1944). The large family of 4 daughters and 5 sons, the youngest being born in the same year that his father died, had lived at Elmore Back for many years and the Census of 1911 clearly showed the family still living there then and also showed that the only family breadwinner after their father died in 1905 was Wintour's eldest brother, Ernest, aged 19, who is listed as a salmon fisherman. After her husband died in 1905 Elizabeth struggled to bring up the family of 9 children on her own so she remarried a George Smith in late 1911 and moved to Holly Tree Cottage in Longney.

Wintour Webb joined the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1914 at the age of 19 and was allocated to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion and allocated the Army Number 11317. This battalion came under command of 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade in 13<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division and moved to Tidworth in Hampshire in the latter part of 1914. Having moved to Aldershot in January 1915 the Battalion returned to Bristol and embarked on a troopship at Avonmouth on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1915, landing in Alexandria in Egypt and then on to Mudros in Greece, to prepare for their move to Gallipoli in early August. The Allies' base on the Greek Island of Mudros, pictured below, was used during the Dardanelles Campaign as a staging base for troops. It was also used as a hospital and many wounded Australian and NZ troops died in the hospital there and are buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in the town.



At that stage, the allied landings at Cape Helles and Anzac<sup>1</sup> Bay were at a stalemate so the British attempted to gain the advantage by landing at Sulva Bay in an attempt by the British General Hamilton to pursue a new plan for the campaign which resulted in what is now called the Battle of Sari Bair.

On the night of 6<sup>th</sup> August, a fresh landing of two infantry divisions was to be made at Suvla, five miles north of Anzac. Meanwhile at Anzac Bay a strong assault would be made on the Sari Bair range by breaking out into the rough and thinly defended terrain north of the Anzac perimeter.

The landing at Suvla Bay was only lightly opposed but the British commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stopford, had so diluted his early objectives that little more than the beach was seized. Once again, the Turks were able to win the race for the high ground of the Anafarta Hills thereby rendering the Suvla front another case of static trench warfare.

The offensive was preceded on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> August, by diversionary assaults at Helles and Anzac. During the assault at Helles became another futile battle with no gains and heavy casualties for both sides,. Especially at Krithia Vineyard. At Anzac, an attack on the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine by the infantry brigades of the Australian 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anzac: **Australian and New Zealand Army Corps**

Division was a rare victory for the Anzacs. However, the main assault aimed at the peaks of Chunuk Bair and Hill 971 was less successful.

The 13<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division landed at Anzac Bay on 6<sup>th</sup> August, initially in reserve to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, but were committed to the offence very quickly once the main attack had stalled. The lead unit in the assault for the attack at Chunuk Bay on that fateful morning was Wintour Webb's unit, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment.

The main force striking for the nearer peak of Chunuk Bair comprised the New Zealand Infantry Brigade. It came within 500 meters of the peak by dawn on August 7<sup>th</sup>, but was not able to seize the summit until the following morning. This delay had fatal consequences for another supporting attack on the morning of August 7<sup>th</sup>; that of the Australian 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigade at the Nek which was to coincide with the New Zealanders attacking back down from Chunuk Bair against the rear of the Turkish defences. The New Zealanders held out on Chunuk Bair for two days before relief was provided by two New Army battalions from the Wiltshire and Loyal North Lancashire Regiments. A massive Turkish counter-attack, led in person by Mustafa Kemal<sup>2</sup>, swept these two battalions from the heights.

Of the 760 men of the New Zealanders' Wellington Battalion who had reached the summit of Chunuk Bair, 711 were casualties. Such figures give some idea as to the massive casualty toll inflicted on the Allies during this campaign.

Private Wintour Edward Webb was killed in action on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1915 at the age of 20. His name is commemorated on the Helles Memorial in Turkey along with another 137 men from his own Regiment as well as further 19,000 UK casualties, 1500 Indian soldiers and 249 Australians.

The British had some 21,255 soldiers killed and a further 52,230 wounded during the Gallipoli campaign, his accounted for almost 50% of the 41,150 Allied soldiers killed as well as 53% of the 97,397 soldiers wounded. There were so many men killed on both sides during this campaign that a truce was often arranged so that the bodies could be removed from the battlefield.

### **36733 Private Alfred Spencer**

Alfred Spencer was born in Elmore in December 1878 and was the son of William Boughton Spencer (1848-1918) and Mary Price (1845-1906) of The Cottage, Elmore.

The 1871 Census listed Alfred's mother and father as living with their 2 children in his grandfather's house (Daniel Spencer -1812-1877) in Elmore.

The 1881 Census listed the family; William and Mary plus 6 children, living in a cottage in Elmore. Over the years the family grew and there were eventually 9 children (5 boys and 4 girls).

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<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Kemal Ataturk: Very successful Turkish Army Officer and later first President of Turkey.

In November 1886, Alfred's older brother William James Spencer (1869 – 1914) joined the Royal Artillery. He didn't serve in the Army during WW1 but is likely to have taken part in the Boer War. However, he was once again living in Elmore by 1901. In his later years he became one of the Chelsea Pensioners.

The 1901 Census showed the family living in a cottage near Elmore Farm, with his father's occupation shown as agricultural labourer. At this stage Alfred was aged 22 and his elder brother, William who was aged 31, were both listed as agricultural labourers.

By 1911 the Census listed Alfred Spencer, aged 31, living as a single man in Chapel Lane as a boarder in the cottage of William Ruck, who was a retired postman. Alfred's occupation at that time was shown as 'builder's labourer'. His widower father, William Boughton Spencer, who was aged 64 in 1911, was also a boarder in the same cottage, his wife Mary having died in 1906.

Alfred Spencer joined The Gloucestershire Regiment in the early years of the war and was assigned to 10<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion and allocated the Army number 36733. This battalion was formed in Bristol in September 1914 and attached to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. After formation the unit moved to Salisbury Plain for intensive training but by November of that year they were back in billets in Cheltenham. They returned to Salisbury Plain in April of 1915 and by 8<sup>th</sup> August that year they had embarked on a troopship and landed in France.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1915 the Regiment was transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. The Regiment first saw action during the Battle of Loos in Belgium on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1915. The Battle of Loos was the largest British offensive in the War to date and was aimed at breaking the stalemate of trench warfare that had prevailed in the War so far, however the offensive failed. It was during this battle that the British first used poisonous chlorine gas. The main reason for the use of gas was that there was, at this stage, still a shortage of artillery shells so the idea was to subdue the Germans with gas instead of using a heavy and costly artillery barrage. The British attack was launched with 75,000 men but failed to meet the objective and the troops were repelled by the Germans. The fighting was so fierce in the northern part of the assault on Holzensollers Redoubt on 13<sup>th</sup> October that the British suffered 8,000 casualties in one day.

In early 1916, the battalion moved south to an area some 20kms south of the town of Arras in France. On 14<sup>th</sup> July 1916 they were involved in the Battle of Bazentin Ridge which was a British victory. However, prior to the attack a French commander had dismissed the idea as '*an attack organised for amateurs by amateurs*'.

This victory was closely followed by another major battle, the Battle of Pozieres Ridge, on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916. Sadly little progress was made against German resistance and the German's successful use of withering machine gun fire. However, a second assault was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1916 and managed to gain some ground.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, including 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment, made a spirited attack on High Wood to the NE of Pozieres Ridge on 3<sup>rd</sup> September and although they managed to gain their objective for a short time, they were repelled by a German counter-attack. It was during this German counter-attack on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1916 that Albert Spencer was killed in action.

Private Alfred Spencer's name is inscribed on the Thiepval Monument along with more than 72,000 officers and men of the Commonwealth who died during the battles of the Somme during WW1. This monument was erected to commemorate all those who died on The Somme before 20<sup>th</sup> March 1918 but have no known individual grave, mainly because their bodies could not be individually identified; this was particularly common when the number of casualties from a single battle or attack were so great and the bodies were quickly removed and placed in mass graves.



**The Thiepval Memorial** – Commemorating over 72,000 Officers and Soldier who died during the battles on The Somme during WW1 and have no known grave.

The War Office Records show that after his death, Alfred's personal effects were sent to Blanche Maud Gardner (1879 – 1945), also an Elmore resident, living at Brookfield House and who, according to the Register of Electors, was still living there as a spinster in 1938. The fact that she was, de facto, nominated as his next of kin may not be surprising as not only were they neighbours in Elmore but Blanche's brother, Private James Gardner, was also a member of the Gloucestershire Regiment and was killed on The Somme in August 1916. There is the possibility that, as she was just 2 years younger than Alfred, she may have been his intended bride had he survived the war!

### **28248 Private William Joseph Merrett**

**William Joseph Merrett** was born in Miserden in May 1891 and was the son of Henry Edward Merrett (1856 - 1925) and Mary Ann Houdley (1856 - 1925), of Ivy House, Elmore. The family moved to Elmore some time between 1891 and 1901. William Merrett's father, Henry Merrett (1856-1925), was listed in both the Elmore Church

records and the Census of 1881, 1891 and 1901 as the local Blacksmith and it would appear that he took over the roll of blacksmith from William's grandfather, William Merrett (1818 -1884). The 1911 Census listed William's father, Henry, as the blacksmith, living in Penny Lane. William had 4 uncles on his father's side of the family, all of whom were born in Elmore but none seem to have married. His uncle William (1851-1939) was an engine fitter and the 1881 Census had the note 'cripple' written against his uncle John (1864-1941) at the age of 16.

William Joseph Merrett joined the Army at some stage in the early part of the war and was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment and allocated the Army Number 28248.

*(Note: Although the Elmore War Memorial is inscribed with the fact that William Merrett was part of 12<sup>th</sup> Gloucestershire Regiment, The Commonwealth War Graves Records as well as The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Regimental Records and the official War Office documents all show him as a member of 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Gloucestershire Regiment.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> /5<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed in August 1914 became part of 145<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in 48<sup>th</sup> (South Midland) Division. William Merrett's battalion embarked for France on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1915, landing at Boulogne, whereupon the unit marched over 100 miles to the 48<sup>th</sup> Divisional concentration area just SW of Ypres. *(Note: This was the same unit in which both 2Lt Henry Guise and Private James Gardner served).*

The battalion was billeted at Steenvorde and then Meteren in France on the Belgian border before taking over trenches in the front line in the Ploegsteert Wood Sector in Belgium on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

For most of 1915 the Western Front had become a bit of stalemate with little ground being made by either side. The emphasis for the Allies was, at this time, in the Dardanelles.

In 1916 William's battalion was in action in the Battle of the Somme, suffering heavy casualties on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July during the assault on the Quadrilateral (Heidenkopf). They were also in action at The Battle of Bazentin Ridge, the capturing of the town of Ovillers, The Battle of Pozieres Ridge, The Battle of the Ancre Heights and The Battle of the Ancre.

In 1917 the 48<sup>th</sup> Division occupied Peronne during The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and were in action in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battles of Ypres. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres was a long affair lasting from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> December 1917. William Merrett was badly wounded during this 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres and evacuated to a Casualty Clearing Station near Dozinghem in Belgium.

Three Casualty Clearing Stations (CSS), the 4<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> were set up in Dozinghem from July 1917 to care for casualties from the 1917 British summer offensive which would become the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres, leading to the Battle of Passchendaele which lasted from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> November 1917.

The text of a letter to his family in Elmore during 1917 indicated that William Merrett seemed to be making a recovery but sadly he died of his wounds on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>

October 1917 at the age of 26. He was buried at Dozinghem Military Cemetery in Belgium.

The Dozinghem Cemetery was continually in use during WW1 until early 1918. The number of burials for the First World War totals 3,174; there are also 65 German graves. During WW2 there were 74 burials dating from May 1940.

As William was the only son in the family, combined with the fact that none of his four uncles had married, the male line of the Merretts in Elmore seems to have died out.

### **30798 Private Edward Martin Clarke**

Edward Martin Clarke was born in Cwmbran, Newport, Wales on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1897. He was the son of Thomas Charles Clarke (1868 - 1926) and Frances Annie Taylor (1868 - 1946) who were living at 5 Victoria Cottages, Rea Lane, Hempstead, when he joined the Army. This property is situated on the Stonebench Road and now part of Quedgeley, at that time these cottages appeared to be part of Elmore. Edward's family comprised one elder brother and 5 sisters. Edward's father, Thomas, was listed in the 1901 Census as a 'cowman Agricultural cattle' living in Upton St Leonard and in 1911 his occupation was listed as a Salmon fisherman, living in Rea Lane.

At the outbreak of WW1 Edward would have been 16 years old. He initially joined the Gloucestershire Regiment and was allocated the Army number 28147. However, he subsequently joined 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Lancashire Fusiliers (also known as The West Yorkshire Regiment) and given the Regimental number 30798, probably around mid 1916. It is likely that Edward was one of the boys who tried to join the Army while under age and was discharged until such time as he reached his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1916.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers was formed at Bury on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army and came under command of 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 11<sup>th</sup> (Northern) Division. The unit was then stationed at Belton Park, near Grantham. In April 1915 they moved to Witley Camp, near Godalming in Surrey.

Although the Battalion sailed from Liverpool on 5 July 1915, going via Mudros to Suvla Bay in Gallipoli, disembarking on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1915, it is highly likely that Edward would not have been with them at that stage as he was still too young. In December of 1915 the whole battalion was evacuated from Gallipoli to Mudros having suffered severe casualties from combat during their involvement in the Battle of Scimitar Hill and the attack on Hill 60. Disease and the harsh weather also increased the toll on the Regiment.

In January 1916 the unit moved to Egypt to protect the Suez Canal and thence to Marseilles in France, arriving on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. The Battalion then proceeded by train to St Pol, a small town NE of Arras. Once off the train they marched to billets near Croisette. It is likely that Edward Clarke joined the battalion at this point as one of many, much needed, reinforcements.

After some intensive training in gas warfare and the use of heavy mortars, the Battalion moved north to the area of The Somme. They suffered their first casualties on 1<sup>st</sup> August and were involved in the capture of the Wundt-Werk (Wonder Work), The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, and The Battle of Thiepval.

During 1917 the Battalion was involved in operations on the Ancre, The Battle of Messines, The Battle of Langemarck, The Battle of Polygon Wood and The Battle of Broodseinde:

The Battle of Broodseinde (Ypres) started on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917 and was the last of three successful “bite and hold” battles launched by General Herbert Plumer, Commander of the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, during the middle phase of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres.

As part of the Operation an attack by II ANZAC (The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) successfully achieved its objective on the first day of the battle and reached the high ground just below the summit of the Broodseinde Ridge



Men of the ‘Yorkshires’ going up to the front line.

The battle had opened with an ambitious attempt to push the Germans back along a long stretch of their line. Unfortunately that effort had failed in the mud of The Somme. General Plumer’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Army had then taken over from the 5<sup>th</sup> Army. General Plumer believed in making limited advances by attacks on shorter stretches of the line, stopping once a pre-determined point had been reached and digging-in ready to repulse the inevitable German counterattack.

The first two attacks, at Menin Road Ridge on 20<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> September 1917 and Polygon Wood, 26<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September, had gone entirely to plan. A creeping barrage had protected the advancing troops while standing bombardments had isolated the German troops under attack. Both attacks had seized their objectives and then held off the expected German counter attacks.

Both the Germans and the British were planning a further attack on 4<sup>th</sup> October in the Broodseinde area. When the British bombardment began, it caught a number of German units out in the open preparing for their own attack (amongst them the 4<sup>th</sup> Guards and 19<sup>th</sup> Reserve Divisions). The British attack comprised divisions from Britain, New Zealand and Australia. As at Menin Road Ridge and Polygon Wood, the British attack achieved its main objectives and then halted to dig in.

Although these attacks are normally described as ‘small scale’ battles, the casualty figures demonstrated the real scale of the fighting. The Germans suffered 10,000

casualties and lost 5,000 prisoners. On the Allied side the Australians suffered 6,432 casualties, the New Zealanders 892 and the British 300.

Sadly, Private Edward Martin Clarke was one of those 300 British casualties, killed at Broodseinde on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917, at the age of 19. His name is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium (situated just south of Passendaele). The Cemetery of Tyne Cot, on the Passchendaele Ridge, includes the graves of some 11,900 servicemen and the Memorial holds a further 35,000 names of Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Ypres salient during WW1 and have no known grave,



**The Tyne Cot Cemetery & Memorial** - situated east of Ypres in Belgium, commemorating some 46,900 servicemen who died in that area during WW1.

There is an interesting twist to the Clarke family history: Edward's father, Thomas Charles Clarke, enlisted in the 13<sup>th</sup> Somerset Light Infantry on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1918, (probably as a result of a new law raising the age for conscription to 50 years of age with the idea that younger men could be released from UK based duties and bolster the front line units to help finish off the war. As it happened, his battalion, as a 'home front unit', was never destined to deploy to France. On enlistment, 54700 Private Thomas Charles Clarke was aged 50 years and 3 months perhaps this showed how desperate Britain had become to get men into the Army in the latter stages of the Great War. By the time Thomas was discharged from the Army on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1919 with a weekly pension of 5s 6d (30p in today's money!), his Army number had changed to 92245 and he was then a member of 300<sup>th</sup> Company of the Royal Defence Corps. He had been transferred to this unit on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1918 because his fitness state was below that required for active service and he was also recorded as having a 20% disability.

### **241677 Private James Gardner**

James Gardner was born in May of 1885 in Elmore, he was the son of James Gardner (1849 – 1915) and Rose Hannah Hone (1849 - 1918) who lived at Brookfield House, Elmore at the time of his birth. The Gardner family moved from Woolstrop in Quedgeley to Brookfield House in Elmore between 1883 and 1886 and James was the first of their children born in that house. The Gardner family was a large one comprising 16 children; 8 sons and 8 daughters with James being the seventh son. The census of 1881 showed James' eldest brother Albert, with an occupation of 'ploughboy' at the tender age of 12!

The 1901 Census clearly shows James as a 'student' living at Brookfield House, Elmore, with his parents and seven siblings. However, the Census of 1911 indicated that James, at the age of 26, had moved to Wales and was living near Newport with his eldest brother Arthur who had become a miner. James' occupation in 1911 was listed as working as a platelayer on the railways.

James Gardner was conscripted into the Army in 1914 at the age of 29 and joined the 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment and allocated the Army Number 214677. This battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment was the same one that both 2Lt Henry Guise and Private William Merrett had joined, both of whom had lived in Elmore. The 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed in August 1914 and became part of 145<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in 48<sup>th</sup> (South Midland) Division. James' battalion embarked for France on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1915, landing at Boulogne, whereupon the unit marched over 100 miles to the 48<sup>th</sup> Divisional concentration area just SW of Ypres.

The battalion was billeted at Steenvorde and then Meteren in France on the Belgian border before taking over trenches in the front line in the Ploegsteert Wood Sector in Belgium on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

During 1915 the Allied political and military focus was in the Dardanelles (Gallipoli) and in the Mediterranean because on the Western Front the Germans had established air superiority so not many major battles were fought on that front in the early part of that year. However, fighting did continue and British troops suffered the first use of gas by the Germans on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1915 in the Ypres area. The mud and rains of the Somme winter of 1915 meant that little progress could be made by either side so a stalemate existed until the spring of 1916.

In 1916 James' battalion was in action in the Battle of the Somme, suffering heavy casualties on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July during the assault on the Quadrilateral (Heidenkopf). They were also in action at The Battle of Bazentin Ridge, the capturing of Ovillers, The Battle of Pozieres Ridge, The Battle of the Ancre Heights and The Battle of the Ancre.

In 1917 the 48<sup>th</sup> Division occupied Peronne during The German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and were in action in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battles of Ypres. This 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres was a long affair lasting from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> December 1917.

During the early part of 1917, 145th Brigade, including 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, was held in reserve around Sailly au Bois, Couin and Maillet-Mailly until 14<sup>th</sup> July when 48<sup>th</sup> Division was ordered into the attack on Ovillers. The Gloucesters were heavily involved, attacking German positions north-west of Pozieres but they failed to make any headway here. After having been withdrawn from the fighting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1916, 48<sup>th</sup> Division was again back in action around Ovillers and the Nab Valley on 13<sup>th</sup> August until 28<sup>th</sup> August when it was moved to Auchonvillers in the Ancre sector. The heaviest days of fighting in August 1916 for 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion were during the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> /16<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> August."

It was during fighting on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916 that Private James Gardner was killed in action. The Commonwealth War Grave Records for the Thiepval Monument state that Private James Gardner of A Company, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment died on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916 not 6<sup>th</sup> August 1917 as shown on the Elmore War Memorial; this date

ties in with Somme battles. James Gardner is not only commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial in The Somme, but his name also appears on the Gloucestershire Regiment Memorial adjacent to Gloucester Park.

*(James Gardners' name is spelt Gardiner on the Elmore War Memorial but the Church baptismal records for 27<sup>th</sup> May 1888 and the 1891 Census as well as the Commonwealth War Grave records for the Thiepval Monument, all spell his surname without an 'i'. In the various official records, his mother is referred to as Rose Anna, Rose Alma, Rosanna and Rose Hannah).*

Members of the Gardner family were still living at Brookfield House in 1939.

Historical note: Britain lost 3 men for every 12 inches of ground gained on the Somme battlefield. Nearly 60,000 casualties occurred on the first day and, of these, approximately 20,000 died. During the 5 months of the Battle of The Somme some 70,000 men were lost without trace, either killed and swallowed by the mud or blown to pieces by the relentless artillery bombardments. It is these 70,000 men who are commemorated on the impressive Thiepval Monument.

More than a third of the original 990 officers and soldiers of 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, who went to France in 1915, were killed and many more were wounded and disabled.

### **17164 Lance Corporal Arthur Moss Lovell**

Arthur Moss Lovell was born in Quedgeley on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1895 and was the son of Henry Lovell (1861 -1951) and Rosa Jane Moss (1866 – 1947) who lived, at that time, at Highliffe Farm, Quedgeley. Arthur Lovell was baptised in Quedgeley Church on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1895.

The Census records for 1901 and 1911 listed Arthur as student still living at Highliffe Farm with his family. However, at some stage between 1911 and 1918 the family moved to Severn Farm on the Stonebench Road, then to Farley's End and finally settling at Severn Bank Farm in Elmore Back, where members of the Lovell family still live.

Arthur joined the Army in 1915 at the age of 20 and was assigned to 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment and allocated the Army Number 17164. This battalion was established on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army and recruits had to be unmarried and aged between 19 and 35. In less than a fortnight 500 recruits, practically half the battalion's full strength had been enrolled and it at once became known as 'Bristol's Own'. Basic military training was carried out at Ashton Gate in Bristol in late 1914 and early 1915.

In June 1915, 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment came under command of 95<sup>th</sup> Brigade in 32<sup>nd</sup> Division at Wensley in Yorkshire. The Division moved to Codford, on the edge of Salisbury Plain, in August 1915 for further intensive training and on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1915 the Battalion was mobilised for war. The 990 officers and soldiers of The 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment then embarked for France, landing on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1915.



Men of 12th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, training at Ashton Gate, Bristol in 1914.

On arrival in France they transferred, with 95<sup>th</sup> Brigade, from 32<sup>nd</sup> Division to 5<sup>th</sup> Division as part of an exchange designed to stiffen the inexperienced 32<sup>nd</sup> Division with regular army troops. In March 1916, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division took over a section of the front line between St Laurent Blangy and the southern edge of Vimy Ridge, near Arras. They moved south in July to reinforce The Somme and were in action at High Wood, The Battle of Guillemont, The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval and The Battle of Le Transloy, all of which were part of the bloody Somme offences. The Battle of Le Transloy being the last offensive by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) during the Battle of the Somme. In early October 1915 they moved to Festubert and remained there until March 1917 when they moved to prepare for the major Battles of Arras.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1917 the 5<sup>th</sup> Division moved out of the line for a period of rest before being sent to Flanders in Belgium where they were in action during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres.

In late January of 1918 the British 5<sup>th</sup> Division was sent to Italy and took up positions in the line along the River Piave, in north east part of the country. This was a political move to help strengthen the Italian resistance to the Austrian breakthrough in that region. However, the unit was recalled to France to assist with the defence against the major German advance in late March 1918 and were in action during the Battles of the Lys.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1918 the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was withdrawn for two weeks rest but it would appear that 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment remained in the front line and was involved in the Battle of Albert:

The Battle of Albert (21<sup>st</sup> –23<sup>rd</sup> August 1918) was the third battle by that name fought during World War I, following the First Battle of Albert and the Second Battle of Albert, with each of the series of three battles being fought roughly two years apart. This smaller third battle was significant in that it was the opening push that would lead to the Second Battle of the Somme and involved the Australian Corps. This attack opened the advance, with the main attack being launched by the Third Army along with support from the Fourth Army. On 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1918, the 18<sup>th</sup> (Eastern) Division took the town of Albert, with the British and Americans advancing on Arras.

It was on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1918, during the advance on Arras, after the Battle of Albert, that Arthur Moss Lovell was killed in action at the age of 23, having survived most of the war on the front line and less than 3 months before the war ended.



Men of the Gloucestershire Regiment advancing during the Battle of Albert.

Arthur Moss Lovell was buried at Queen's Cemetery, Bucquoy in France; this cemetery is situated 15 km SW of Arras and NE of Amiens. Bucquoy is situated on the D919, Arras-Amiens road, 15 km south of Arras. Queens Cemetery is located on the western side of the road just south of the village of Bucquoy and commemorates over 700 servicemen from WW1 of whom only 523 have been identified.

At some stage during WW1 Arthur Lovell was promoted to Lance Corporal (L/Cpl) and although the Elmore War Memorial lists him as a Sergeant, no record can be found which lists him as such and the Commonwealth War Graves Records for Queen's Cemetery at Bucquoy also lists him as a L/Cpl.

The Lovell family contribution to The Great War didn't just include Arthur Lovell.

Edward's eldest brother, Edward Henry Lovell (1893-1977) was a Sergeant in the Gloucester Yeomanry prior to WW1 and his Army number was 1909. He went to Egypt with his Regiment and would appear to have gone with the unit when it was sent to Gallipoli in the dismounted role. He was wounded in September 1915, probably in Gallipoli. He was discharged in November 1918 and married Fanny Louise Blandford (neé Mayo) (1884 – 1969) in 1920 and lived in Elmore Back until he retired to Yeomanry House in Tuffley.

Artillery on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1915 at the age of 19. His Army number was 113323 and he was posted to A Battery, Royal Field Artillery which was then part of 48<sup>th</sup> Division stationed in France at that time. He embarked on a troopship on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1915 and joined his unit in The Somme. During the Battle of Flers-Courcelette on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916, Edward received a gunshot wound to the upper part of his right arm and was sent to the military hospital at Le Havre, he was then shipped home on the Hospital Ship Asturius for hospitalisation and convalescence. However, once he had recovered he

returned to France on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1917 and stayed there until February 1919 and was then discharged from the forces.

Edward's father, Henry Lovell, was living at Highliffe Farm in Quedegely when Edward joined the Army in 1915 but by the time he had been discharged in 1919 the family had moved to Severn Bank Farm at Elmore Back. However, Edward's discharge papers stated he lived at Severn Farm, which is situated on the Stonebench Road.

Edward survived the War and married Gertrude Annie Meek (1894 – 1970) in 1924 and the Elmore Church records state that he was resident at Farley's End and Gertrude lived at Elmore Back. By 1931 they were living in Yew Tree Farm, Longney. The local connections are still very strong because Edward Lovell (1895 -1983) and Gertrude Annie Meek (1894 – 1970) were Graham Lovell's and Marvyn Lovell's grandparents, who still live in Elmore Back. Arthur Lovell would have been their grand uncle.

### **138417 Private Reginald William Ernest Mayo**

Reginald Mayo was born in The Dunney Cottages, Westbury on Severn in January 1898 and was the second son and fifth child of Ernest George Mayo (1872 - 1902) and Sarah Annie Ryder (1874 - 1942). James came from a large family comprising 7 sons and 4 daughters. Reginald was baptised on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1898 in Minsterworth Church.

Minsterworth, at that time, was linked to Elmore Back, or rather visa versa, by virtue of a fishing weir across the River Severn so there was a close link between the two communities. Ernest Mayo, Reginald's father, was listed in the Census records as a fruit merchant,

The 1901 Census showed James living with his family in 24 Church Lane, Minsterworth and his father's profession was shown as 'fisherman' while his mother's occupation was shown as a 'baker'.

The Census for 1911 showed that Reginald, at the age of 13, was living with his grandfather, Edwin Lacey Ryder (1836 - 1918) and his grandmother, Sarah Ann Prosser (1848 - 1918) at Hollow Farm in Elmore, while attending Elmore School. Meanwhile, his own family lived on the other side of the River Severn.

At the outbreak of WW1 Reginald would have been aged 16 so was too young to join the Army. However, in 1916, when he was 18 years old, he joined the Northumberland Fusiliers and allocated the Army Number 138417. Very soon afterwards he transferred to The 58<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Corps.

*Historical Note: The Machine Gun Corps was formed in Grantham in September 1915 and equipped with British Vickers Machine Gun. Because the gun and its tripod were so heavy (the gun weighing 28.5lbs & the tripod 20lbs) and with a rate of fire of 500 rounds a minute, a 'Gun Team' comprised 6 men was required; 2 men to carry and operate the gun, 2 men to carry the ammunition and the water required for cooling the gun plus 2 spare men!*

*The Machine Gun Corps was disbanded in 1922.*



A Vickers Machine Gun and crew during WW1

The 58<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Company was attached to 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1916. They were in action during the Battle of the Somme, capturing La Boisselle and were involved in the attacks on High Wood, The Battles of Pozieres Ridge, the Ancre Heights and the Ancre.

In 1917 the unit was in action in The Battle of Messines and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres. They joined with the other Machine Gun Companies of the Division to form 19<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1918.

At some stage in the next few months Reginald came home to Elmore on leave, probably in late April of 1918, and while home he married Lucy Margaret Hinder (1895-1949) on 8<sup>th</sup> May in Elmore Church. Lucy was the daughter of The Elmore Estate's Gamekeeper, Frank Hinder (1865-1943) and his wife Rose Blanche Clark (1871-1954). After they were married the young couple moved into Keeper's Lodge with Lucy's parents.

On his return to France shortly after his wedding, probably in June 1918, his new battalion was attached to the Australian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and committed to further battles in the Somme area, including The Battle of Amiens and The Battle of St Quentin:

Historical note: At the end of August 1918 the German troops were at their last stronghold at Mont St Quentin which overlooked the Somme River and the town of Péronne. Mont St Quentin stood out in the surrounding country, making it a perfect observation point and a vital strategic area to control. This area was key to the German defence of the Somme line. As it was such an important area, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, the Australian Commander, was keen to capture it and thus possess a valuable position.

This resulting Australian operation is sometimes regarded as the finest achievement of the Australian Forces during WW1. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division crossed the Somme River on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> August, and attacked Mont St Quentin at 5 am, from the unexpected position of northwest. It was a difficult position from which to attack as it

was an uphill fight for the troops, across very open ground where they were vulnerable to attack from the German-held heights above.

Rifle grenades and trench mortars were employed to outflank the German outpost positions. The Allied battalions positioned to the right made a lot of noise to distract the Germans, while the centre and left battalions got a foothold on the hill and in Feuillaucourt.

Private Reginald Mayo was Killed in action (KIA) on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1918 but it is unclear as to exactly where or in which battle. It may have been that he was killed during the Battle of St Quentin and his body only recovered once the area had been made secure. He is buried at The Péronne Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme France and situated east of Amiens; this cemetery also contains many of the Australians who were killed in that area.

There is twist to this tragic tale of Reginald Mayo: Lucy Mayo, (née Hinder) who married Reginald Mayo on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1918 gave birth to their son on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1919. This son was named Reginald Lieramont Ernest Mayo (1919 – 1984). In December 1921 Lucy Mayo remarried a Hubert John Jones (1892 – 1968) and had 4 more children; she died in 1949.

The extended family suffered a further WW1 casualty in that 27977 Private Cyril George Mayo (1897-1917) was killed in France on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1917. Cyril was, de facto, Reginald's uncle, even though he was the same age, as he was his grandfather's son from a second marriage. Cyril was a member of 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment and his name is inscribed on the Cambrai Memorial near Lourerval in Northern France.

There is a Mayo Cottage in Weir Lane, Elmore and this was the family home of Reginald's great uncle William Mayo (1848 – 1902) and his wife Sarah Ann Butler (1849 – 1911). Their son, Mark Louis Mayo (1880 -1943) and his wife Eliza Ann Hyett (1874 -1969) were still living there in 1939.



**The Elmore War Memorial - We Shall Remember Them**