

Brompton-on-Swale War Memorial

North Yorkshire



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Introduction

Brompton-on-Swale is a village located 3 miles southeast of Richmond in North Yorkshire. The village war memorial is located in the cemetery on Bridge Road (B6272).



Location of Brompton-on-Swale War Cemetery (B); Google Maps



The memorial is a Celtic Stone Cross in form, has two inscribed faces representing each world war and is memorial #30082 in the UK National Inventory of War Memorials.

In this document, I have tried to research some details of the individuals recorded on the monument. In many cases, I am left wondering exactly what their connection was to Brompton-on-Swale and whether I have the right individual at all! Where there is no clear connection to Brompton-on-Swale and there are perhaps others who might be the person recorded, I have tried to give some details of those other persons. In some cases, I have researched the person who had the most obvious local family connection (somewhere in the Richmond area for example). I hope I have the right people and I would dearly like to know if there is a record of exactly who proposed each name on the memorial.

I have acknowledged sources for text and all photographs where I can, other than those

of my own. This document and its contents are free to copy and re-use for non-commercial use, providing the references to original sources are maintained. If any original owner objects to any re-use of any photographs please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Hodgson. August 2020. peter.hodgson.uk@gmail.com

Photographs and Inscriptions

Background

Unfortunately, little is officially known about the commissioning of our village war memorial. As the Historic England website says:

“Nothing is known about the commissioning or erection of the war memorial in Brompton-on-Swale cemetery. The primary inscription is to the fallen from the First World War so it is believed that it dates to the inter-war period with a later inscription added after the Second World War. The memorial is not just to servicemen but includes the names of two civilians (Station Master Walter Gibson and Railway Clerk Nancy Richardson) who were killed on the 4th Feb 1944 when a munitions train exploded at Catterick. The history of those commemorated by the war memorial has been researched by a local historian. ... and that (very amateur) historian would be me!

Reference:

War Memorials Online describes the Brompton-on-Swale memorial as:

“Stone wheel cross on one-stepped base. First World War and Second World War inscriptions and names are in lead lettering on two sides of the plinth of the cross. The memorial was listed at Grade II in 2013” Reference: <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/94219>

Inscription Face 1 - World War 1

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
THIS CROSS IS ERECTED IN THANKFUL
REMEMBRANCE OF THE FOLLOWING WHO
MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE IN THE
GREAT EUROPEAN WAR.
1914 - 1918.

SIDNEY BEST	ERNEST BROWN
ROBERT R. BROWN	JOHN G HODGSON
CUTHBERT J. PEARCE	RICHARD W. PROCTER
WALTER RHODES	ARTHUR RICHARDSON
ARTHUR ROBINSON	ROBERT SIMPSON
WILLIAM SMALES.	



Inscription - World War 1

Inscription Face 2 - World War 2

ALSO TO THOSE WHO
GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE
SECOND WORLD WAR
1939 - 1945

JOSEPH W. ALDERSON
LAWRENCE BARR
ALBERT F. CLEAVER
WILLIAM CONNELLY
WALTER GIBSON
ROBERT R. JEWITT
HAROLD LYTH
JAMES H. MEECHAN
NANCY RICHARDSON
REGINALD TAYLOR
SIDNEY J. TEMPLE



Inscription - World War 2

In September 2020, I was indebted to Michelle Clark, who provided this remarkable photograph of what is either the unveiling of the memorial (believed to be in the 1920s) or an early remembrance ceremony.



The following sections provide the research on all those commemorated (and some others).

WORLD WAR ONE

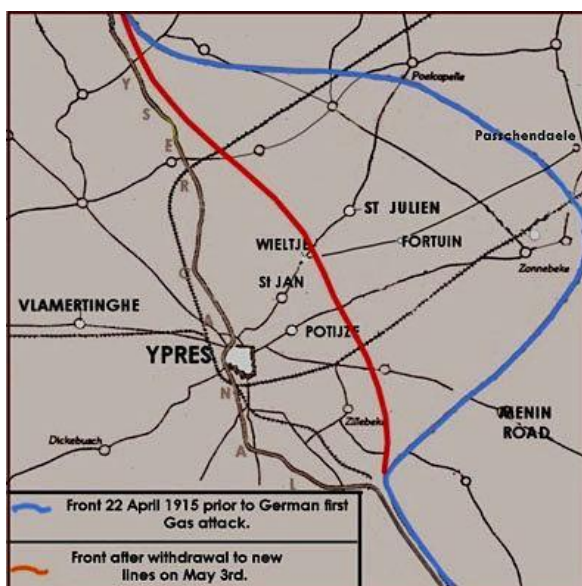
SIDNEY BEST – Private 1785, 4th Green Howards, 3rd May 1915, Age 19

Sidney Best was born in Welbury near Northallerton, Yorkshire in 1895 to Matthew and Mary Best. His father Matthew was the Station Master in Welbury and came from Melsonby and his Mother Mary was from Lancashire. Matthew had been married previously (to Jane) to whom he had a daughter, Sarah Jane in 1864 ⁽⁵⁾.

The 1901 Census ⁽¹⁾ shows Sidney as a 5 year old living with his parents, 4 brothers and two sisters:

Matthew Best	Head	Mr	61	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	Melsonby
Mary do	Wife	Mr	45	✓	✓	✓	✓	Lancashire, Broad Green	
Rosie do	Son	J	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yorkshire, Welbury	
Henry do	Son		11	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Edith do	Daughter		9	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Arthur do	Son		7	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Albert J do	Son		3	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Henrietta do	Daughter		2	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Sidney do	Son		5	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do

By 1911 ⁽²⁾ Sid was a 15 year old Blacksmith's apprentice in Brompton-on-Swale, working for John James Pennock (Blacksmith and Cartwright), with whom he was boarding. Sid enlisted before the war in Catterick in 1913 ⁽⁴⁾ when he was 17, and became a Private (number 1785) with 4th Battalion, Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment) – the Green Howards ⁽³⁾.



Map of St Julien 1915 (source: Bill Danby)

On 2nd May 1915 the battalion was serving near St Julien when the German's attacked. From noon until 4pm the Germans kept up a constant hail of shells. They followed this up with a release of chlorine gas. This wasn't the first time and the troops had improvised respirators "made of cotton-wool, handkerchiefs, mufflers and even towels soaked in soda or whatever moisture was available." The line held and frustrated all German attempts to take advantage of the gas ⁽⁶⁾.

A Sergeant Wilf Parker, also of the 4th Yorkshires, wrote to his friend in Northallerton ⁽⁶⁾ :-
 "...The worst day we had was Sunday, when the Germans started to advance.
 At about 4.30 their artillery commenced to shell us and they didn't half send the shells flying.
 Then the Germans came out of their trenches and we let them have it.
 We kept firing away but then they sent their gas shells among us.
 Oh dear! the smell is fearful. The poor fellows in the thick of it are absolutely helpless
 It gives one a horrible feeling and one hardly knows what he is doing.
 Just at this stage George Chapman got killed..."

By 8pm all was quiet again. The Battalion War Diary states that during this period 6 officers were wounded and one gassed. 34 other ranks were killed and 74 wounded. It's very likely that Sid was one of the wounded and died the following day, 3rd May 1915 from wounds received. He was 19.



St Julien Church in Ruins

Campaign :-		1914-15.		(A) Where decoration was earned.	
Name		Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A)	BEST	4/ York R	Pte	1988	VICTORIA ROLL 1914-15
(B)	Sidney				BRITISH STAR 0/12B 36
Action taken		Dead			
THEATRE OF WAR. (1) France					
QUALIFYING DATE. 18-4-15					
<small>(G 34 46) W234—HP5090 500,000 4/19 HWV(P260) K608 [OVER]</small>					

Sidney Best's Medal Card

Sidney Best is buried in BOULOGNE EASTERN CEMETERY ⁽⁴⁾, Grave Ref: VIII. B. 31.



Boulogne Eastern Cemetery

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census (RG13 PN4594; Folio: 14; Page: 5.)
- (2) 1911 Census (RG14 PN29476 RG78PN1711 RD542 SD2 ED2 SN27)
- (3) UK Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914 – 1919
- (4) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/48702>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/4800>
- (5) 1881 Census
- (6) 1/4th Battalion, Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment (Bill Danby)
<http://4thyorkshires.com/>

ERNEST BROWN – Private 19394, 8th Green Howards, 28th Sep 1917, Age 19

Ernest Brown was the Grandson of Robert and Sarah Brown who he was living with, in Darlington, at the time of the 1901 Census, aged 3 (10 Low Boyne Street) ⁽¹⁾ and also at the time of the 1911 Census, aged 13 (9 Boyne Street) ⁽²⁾. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to find out who Ernest’s parents were or what happened to them.

Ernest served as a Private (#19394) with the 8th Battalion, Alexandra Princess of Wales’s Own (Yorkshire Regiment) - the Green Howards ⁽³⁾. This battalion was part of the “New Armies” draft and was raised in Richmond on 22 September 1914. In October it was attached to 69th Brigade, 23rd Division. The battalion moved to Frensham and in February 1915 went on to Folkestone and Maidstone in Kent. It landed in France at Boulogne on 26 August 1915. They saw action on the Western Front, including the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the Battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917 and the Third Battle of Ypres later that year. Third Ypres contained many smaller battles (parts of which were also called “Passchendaele”) and lasted from July to November of 1917.

One such battle was that of Polygon Wood which took place between 26th September and 3rd October 1917 and involved the 69th Brigade in which the 8th Yorkshires served at the time. Given the location of Ernest’s grave, it’s likely he fell during this battle. He was killed in action on 28th September 1917. Like Sid Best, he was just 19.



Infantry Attack on Polygon Wood by Fred Leist (1919)

Campaign :—		1914-15		(A) Where decoration was earned.									
				(B) Present situation.									
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)									
(A) BROWN	Yorksh. R. Ck	Pvt	19394	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>WINDSOR</td> <td>10/11/11</td> <td>989</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VICTORY</td> <td>do</td> <td>do</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BRIT. "</td> <td>do</td> <td>do</td> </tr> </table>	WINDSOR	10/11/11	989	VICTORY	do	do	BRIT. "	do	do
WINDSOR	10/11/11	989											
VICTORY	do	do											
BRIT. "	do	do											
(B) Ernest	—	—	—	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>15 STAR</td> <td>01/18/17</td> <td>517</td> </tr> </table>	15 STAR	01/18/17	517						
15 STAR	01/18/17	517											
Action taken			Dead										
THEATRE OF WAR		(1) France											
QUALIFYING DATE		26.8.15											
(S. 34 46) W234—HP5590 300,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608				[OVER.]									

Ernest Brown's Medal Roll Index Card

Ernest Brown is buried in Belgium at the NEW IRISH FARM CEMETERY grave reference XXXV.
B. 25. ⁽⁴⁾



Irish Farm Cemetery

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census
- (2) 1911 Census (RG14PN29523 RG78PN1715 RD543 SD2 ED20 SN412)
- (3) UK Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914 – 1919
- (4) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/452061/>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/52200>

ROBERT R. BROWN – Private G7578, 9th Royal Sussex, 12th Feb 1916, Age 36

Robert Robinson Brown was born in 1880 near Richmond, the son of a Draper's Clerk. His Father was also called Robert and his Mother Hannah Telford Snowdon was from Brompton-on-Swale. He was probably born at St Nicholas Cottages in Richmond where the 1880 Census shows him, aged 1.

Ten years later, the 1891 Census shows Robert, aged 11 living with his Father, brother Ernest, and two sisters, Amy and Hilda at 8 Victoria Place. His Father was now a Widow, his Mother having died in January 1891.

ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES		NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	BIRTHDAY of	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	Employ	Employ	WHERE BORN
	Inhab-ited	Number of rooms (U.S. or British) (B.)								
Victoria Place			Jane Copeland	Servant	S	87	Widow		X	Yorkshire North Britain
8 do			Robert Brown	Head	Mar	33	Draper Clerk		X	Northumberland England
			Ernest do	Son		19	Scholar			Yorkshire Richmond
			Robert R do	do		11	do			do do
			Amy do	Sister		11	do			do do
			Hilda do	do		11	do			do Brompton on Swale
			Eloise Chaston	Servant	S	26	General Domestic Servant		X	Yorkshire Yorkshire

It's not clear where Robert (or his Father) were in 1901, but it seems his siblings Ernest and Amy were both in service, in London (Hampstead) so clearly they were not afraid to travel for work. If listed as plain old Robert Brown, without his middle name, it makes him hard to track down as it's a common name. However, there is a Robert Brown listed as a servant at nearby Scorton (named Robinson Brown).



Thornes House Wakefield in 1923

This may well be our "RR Brown" because in 1911⁽¹⁾ Robert was a footman in service to a barrister, Mr Charles Gaskell, in one of the largest 18th century Georgian houses in Wakefield – Thornes House. Mr & Mrs Gaskell and their 29 year old daughter, Mary, employed 14 servants no less!



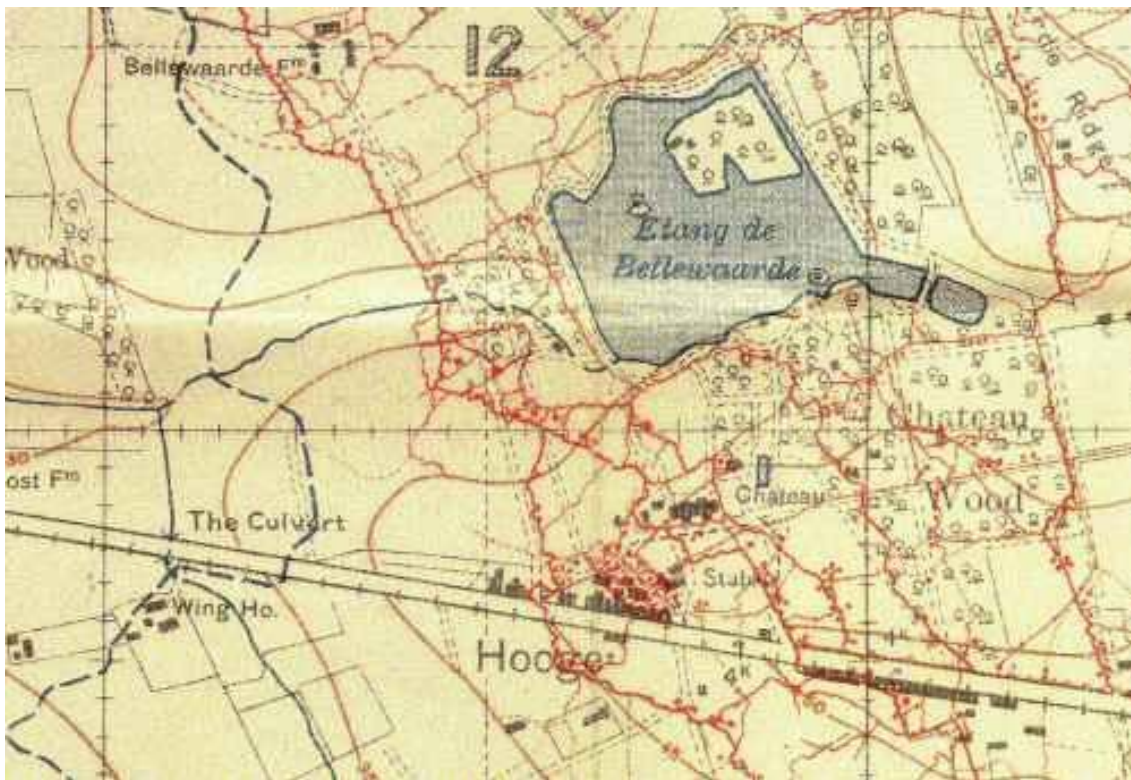
Brook House, Sussex

It's not clear what took him there (perhaps work?), but Robert enlisted in Brighton in the Royal Sussex Regiment as Private G/7578 with the 9th Battalion⁽²⁾. Interestingly Highbrook War Memorial (a small Sussex village) also commemorates Robert Brown and the Roll of Honour Web site notes that he was born in Richmond and was killed in action at Hooge on 12th February 1916, aged 36. It also notes that he was an employee of Mr Stephenson Clarke of Brook House, Highbrook⁽⁵⁾, so it seems Robert was still in service when he enlisted.

The 9th Battalion was formed at Chichester, in September 1914 and was part of Kitchener's New Army. All original recruits were given a 'G' prefix to their regimental number denoting "General Service".

After formation the battalion went into camp on the South Downs around Brighton where it often took part in recruitment marches on the seafront. Here it became part of the 73rd Brigade of 24th Division. In December 1914 the battalion moved to Portslade, and in April 1915 to Shoreham. In June 1915 a further move was made to Woking, in Surrey before arriving in France, at Boulogne on 31st Aug 1915 (6).

Within a few weeks of arrival, the battalion was thrown into the Battle of Loos, fighting near a location called "the Dump" and suffering heavy losses. Its next significant battle was in the Ypres salient at Hooze in February 1916, where the 9th manned trenches in the Bellewaarde area.



Hooze Trench Map 1916 showing Bellewaarde sector top left



Menin Road South Cemetery

Robert was killed in action on 12 Feb 1916, aged 36. He is buried at the MENIN ROAD SOUTH MILITARY CEMETERY, Grave Reference I.G.3⁽³⁾.

Sources:

- (1) 1911 Census
- (2) UK Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914 – 1919
- (3) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/95864>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/9300>
- (4) Thornes House <http://thorneshouse.org.uk/index.html>
- (5) Roll of Honour <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/Highbrook.html>
- (6) <http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/9sussex.htm>

NOTE: Although there are 3 other RR Brown's listed as casualties in the Great War, none of the others have any obvious connections to the North Yorkshire area and therefore I think they are much less likely candidates for "our RR Brown". The others are listed below.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Service Number</u>	<u>Date Of Death</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Regiment/Service</u>	<u>Cemetery/Memorial Name</u>
BROWN, R R	Second Lieutenant		18/06/1918	24	Royal Air Force	EAST BOLDRE (ST. PAUL) CHURCHYARD
BROWN, R R	Private	50252	05/08/1917	21	Royal Fusiliers	BUSHEY (ST. JAMES) CHURCHYARD
BROWN, ROBERT RITCHIE	Private	46893	10/04/1917	21	Northumberland Fusiliers	BEAURAINS ROAD CEMETERY, BEAURAINS

JOHN G. HODGSON – Private 34907, 9th K.O.Y.L.I, 16th Sep 1916, Age 35

John George Hodgson was the 3rd son of William Hodgson and Maria Hutchinson and was born in 1882 in Melbecks (in Swaledale, near Gunnerside). He had two older brothers (Joseph William, born 1877) and (David, born 1880). He also had a younger sister, Margaret Ann (Born 1888). The family were farmers and lead miners who moved to Minto Grange in Brompton-on-Swale in the late 1880s. In 1911, John was 29 and working in a Brewery (probably the Crown brewery) in Brompton-on-Swale. He was unmarried ⁽¹⁾.

John enlisted in Richmond and enrolled as Private 5395 in the Green Howards. From his military records it looks likely that on his arrival in France (around 16th July 1916), he was transferred to the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (as Private 34907). Two months later, to the day, he would be dead.



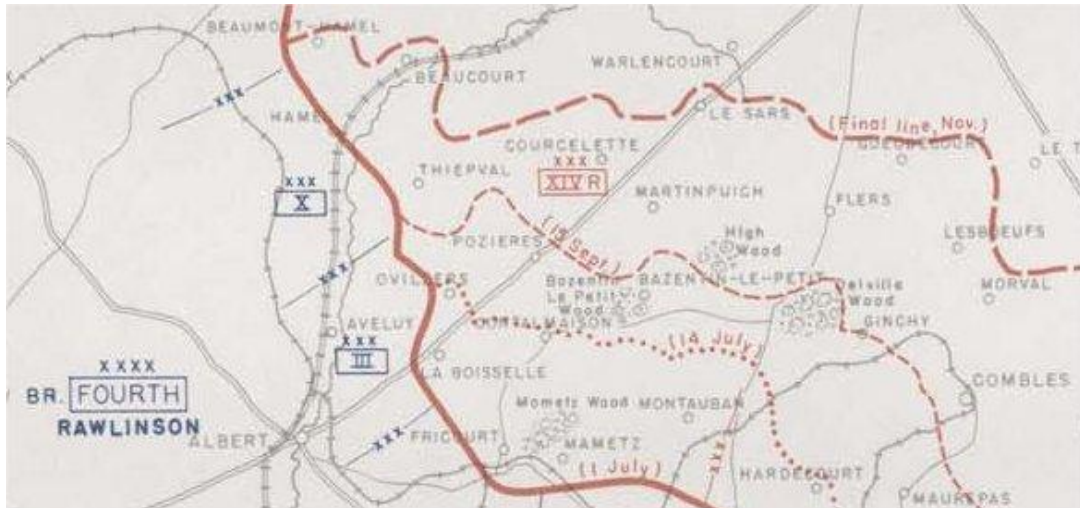
At this point the records seem unclear as to whether John was serving with the 9th or 12th battalions of the KOYLI. “Soldiers died in the Great War” states 9th Battalion whereas Commonwealth War Graves Commission states 12th battalion. The evidence strongly suggests it was while serving with the 9th Battalion, King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette (the third and last offensive forming the Battle of the Somme) that John was killed on September 16th 1916. This battle was notable as it featured the debut of the tank.

Mark 1 Tank on the Somme

One reason for believing John was with the 9th Battalion is that he is buried some way from where the 12th Battalion were in September 1916. The National Archives at Kew hold a copy of the War Diary of the 12th Battalion (Ref: WO 94/2353) and this shows that the 12th Battalion were in the Bethune sector from July to October 1916 which is a lot further away, relatively speaking, from where John was buried). Also there were 97 deaths on the 16th Sept 1916 in the 9th KOYLI, and only 1 in the 12th (John – which seems very odd).

The 9th/ KOYLI were in action near Flers and Gueudecourt and it seems this is where John was a casualty, dying from wounds. The following extracts have been taken from “The KOYLI in the Great War”.

The 21st Div. had been moved north to the neighbourhood of Arras for a less strenuous duty. Early in September, the 64th Inf. Bde. was addressed by Maj.-Gen Campbell, G.O.C. 21st Div. when at Manin, who said that the division would shortly be moving down to the battle area of the Somme again. The move commenced on the 11th. Lt.-Col C.E.Heathcote arrived to command the 9/K.O.Y.L.I.; Lt.-Col. B.C.Bridge had been in command of the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. since the 11th July. The brigade arrived in Pomieres redoubt through Fricourt on the 15th, and at 2 a.m. on the 16th it started in the rain to move up to Flers trench in front of Gueudecourt. The 9/K.O.Y.L.I. took up its position in the centre of the brigade, while the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. moved into Switch trench in close support of the 15/D.L.I. Flers trench was exactly five miles from Pomieres, and it was reached by 5-45 a.m., as it was getting light; another 2,000 yards of country separated Flers trench from the first objective of the proposed offensive.



The Somme - Map 1916

The attack on Gueudecourt by the 64th Inf. Bde. was timed to commence at 9.20 a.m. In front of Gueudecourt were two main enemy trenches, Gird trench and Gird support; these were the objects of the attack. Brig.-Gen. Headlam had a difficult problem before him. The battalion commanders had had no opportunity for making any kind of preliminary reconnaissance. In order to take advantage of our artillery barrage when it opened, it was necessary to get the troops forward to a position near enough to the barrage line for them to get cover from it. As it was not possible to get the barrage line altered the assaulting battalions had to advance twenty and twenty-five minutes before the "Zero" time in order to get across the intervening open country and up behind the barrage when it started. This was done under fire, and the 9/K.O.Y.L.I. advanced well and in fair formation to approximately fifty yards of the objective, where it occupied shell craters which were everywhere existing. The losses had been very heavy and the attack which followed was not made in sufficient strength to prevail. The position in the craters was held throughout the day, but under cover of darkness the troops were withdrawn to the road running from Flers village towards Les Boeufs. The casualties during the day had amounted to:

Officers: killed 4; wounded 6; missing 3.

Other Ranks: killed 43; wounded 180; missing 153.

It can be seen from these passages that the 9th/KOYLI were particularly exposed, having to advance across ground they were unfamiliar with, without cover of a barrage and under fire. It seems they were decimated and took cover in shell holes just 50 yards from the enemy where they endured until being withdrawn as night fell.



John George Hodgson was 35 when he died on 16th Sep 1916 and is buried in the VILLE-SUR-ANCRE COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION in France, Grave C 16.⁽²⁾

Ville-Sur-Ancre Cemetery



John George Hodgson - Gravestone

Sources:

- (1) 1911 Census
- (2) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/570968>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/63103>

CUTHBERT J PEARCE – 2nd Lt, 117th Machine Gun Company, 4th Sep 1916, Age 22

Cuthbert James Pearce was the son of Reverend William Pearce and Sarah Pearce. He was born near Easingwold at Husthwaite in 1894.



Flyford Flavell Church, Worcestershire

His Father moved from one ecclesiastical appointment to another starting in Chichester and moving to West Horsley, Surrey (Curate, 1881), Beachampton, Buckinghamshire (Reverend, 1891) and Pershore, Worcestershire (1911) where he died a few months before Cuthbert in 1915. In 1911, Cuthbert was a 16 year old market gardener, living at home with his Mother, Father and sister Winifred, at Kingston Rectory, Flyford Flavell, Worcestershire ⁽¹⁾.

Cuthbert served as a 2nd Lieutenant with 117th Machine Gun Company, as part of the 117th Brigade, 39th Division. The 117th Brigade took part in the Battle of the Somme and on 3rd September they attacked north of the Ancre river. The attack started at 05.10am after an intense 4 minute bombardment. Losses were heavy. It's likely that Cuthbert was killed during operations the following day. He was 22 years old.

At present, I can establish no obvious connection with Brompton-on-Swale, so why Cuthbert is commemorated here is a mystery (to me at least, for the time being).

Cuthbert is buried in grave B.3. at KNIGHTSBRIDGE CEMETERY, MESNIL-MARTINSART (2).



Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart

Sources:

(1) 1911 Census

(2) Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/180608>

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/17900>

RICHARD W. PROCTER – Private 2516, 8th Manchester, 31st May 1916, Age 23

Richard William Procter (or Proctor) was born in Richmond in 1891, the son of Mary and John Procter, a Stockbroker and Accountant of Castle Terrace. Richard's Mother died in 1898 and his father later remarried.

In 1911, Richard and his younger brother Joseph were working as Grocer's assistants and they were living as boarders at 24 Tyson Street (off Drawton Street) in Bradford. Richard subsequently joined the 1/8th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment (the Ardwick Battalion).



East Lancashire Division Troops in the Trenches, Gallipoli
(unknown source)

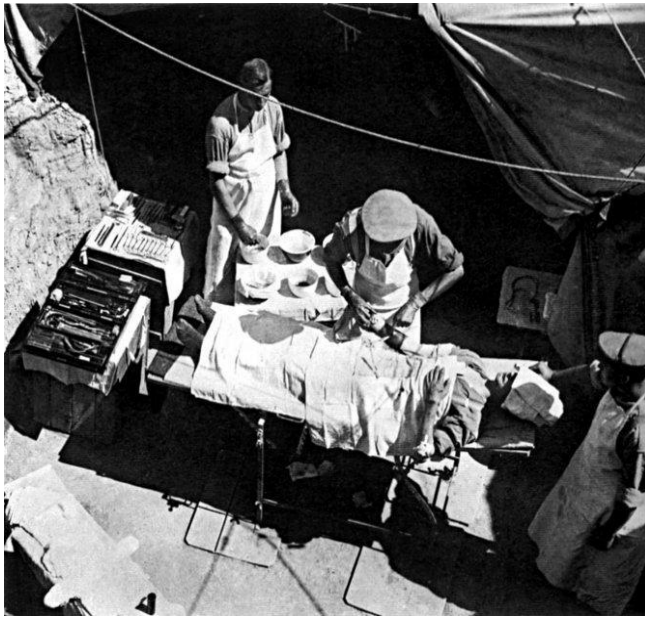
On Sept 9th 1914 the Manchester Brigade left by train for Southampton, and then travelled by boat to Alexandria via Gibraltar. After taking part in the annexation of Cyprus they returned to Egypt for 3 months training and on 6th May 1915 they boarded ships and set sail for the Dardanelles and the hell that was Gallipoli.

The eight month campaign in Gallipoli was fought by Commonwealth and French forces in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock of the Western Front in France and Belgium, and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. The Allies landed on the peninsula on 25-26 April 1915; the 29th Division at Cape Helles in the south and the Australian and New Zealand Corps north of Gaba Tepe on the west coast, an area soon known as Anzac. On 6 August, further landings were made at Suvla, just north of Anzac, and the climax of the campaign came in early August when simultaneous assaults were launched on all three fronts. However, the difficult terrain and stiff Turkish resistance soon led to the stalemate of trench warfare. From the end of August, no further serious action was fought and the lines remained unchanged. The peninsula was successfully evacuated in December and early January 1916.

The 14,224 men of the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division were in action almost immediately upon landing in May 1915 as they replaced the 23rd Division in the left centre of the front line.

The conditions at Gallipoli, for both sides, were truly appalling. In the summer, the heat was atrocious, and in conjunction with bad sanitation, led to so many flies that eating became extremely difficult. Corpses, left in the open, became bloated and stank. The precarious Allied bases were poorly situated and caused supply and shelter problems. In the winter, gales and rain caused as much discomfort. The front line trenches, exposed on the peninsula that was Gallipoli were under almost constant fire. The fighting was intense.

Extract from Sir Ian Hamilton's 2nd Gallipoli despatch ^[1]:



Field Surgery Gallipoli - a surgeon removes a bullet from a soldier's arm in an East Lancashire Division field ambulance. (War Illustrated, Aug 1915)

"From 25th May onwards the troops had been trying to work up within rushing distance of the enemy's front trenches. On the 25th May the Royal Naval and 42nd Divisions crept 100 yards nearer to the Turks, and on the night of 28th/29th May the whole of the British line made a further small advance. On that same night the French Corps Expeditdonnaire was successful in capturing a small redoubt on the extreme Turkish left west of the Kereves Dere. All Turkish counter-attacks during 29th May were repulsed. On the night of 30th May two of their many assaults effected temporary lodgment. But on both occasions they were driven out again with the bayonet. On every subsequent night up to that of the 3rd/4th June assaults were made upon the redoubt and upon our line, but at the end of that period our position remained intact."

It would have been during these battles, many of which were hand to hand and involved bayonet charges, that Richard was killed in action on the 31st May, aged 23.

Richard is commemorated on the HELLES MEMORIAL (Panels 158 to 170) which lists more than 21,000 names of those who died in the campaign and who have no known grave.



Helles Memorial, Turkey

Sources:

- (1) <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/british-field-commanders-despatches/sir-ian-hamiltons-second-gallipoli-despatch/>
- (2) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/687233>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/76100>
- (3) <http://www.themanchesters.org/8th%20batt.htm>

WALTER RHODES – Private 200195, 4th Green Howards, 21st April 1917, Age 22

Walter Rhodes was born in Knaresborough to John Edward and Ellen Rhodes in 1894. By the time Walter was 7 in 1901⁽¹⁾, the family was living in the small village of Bolton-by-Bowland, near Clitheroe in Lancashire. We next find him, given as aged 16, working as a farm labourer, away from his family home at Hollow (or Holly) Bank Farm, near Catterick Bridge for Mr Alfred Beaumont in the 1911 Census ⁽²⁾.



Hollow Back Farm near Brompton-on-Swale (c) Google Maps

Walter would have been a neighbour of John Hodgson (above) who lived at Minto Grange (the adjoining property).

Walter enlisted at Catterick was served with the 4th Battalion, Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales, Own Yorkshire Regiment).

After the British offensive, since referred to as the 1st Battle of the Scarp had halted (15th April) the 150th Brigade took over newly won front line trenches from Wancourt Tower to the River Cojeul. The 4th Battalion were in a support trench (Niger Trench) but it didn't offer much protection (it had been a German trench a week or so before and was effectively facing the wrong direction). Between 6pm and 8pm on 21st April a bombardment by German artillery using 105mm and 150mm shells took a heavy toll and the 4th Battalion War Diary reports 9 fatalities, one of which was Walter ⁽³⁾.

Walter is buried, rather poignantly, alongside all his comrades who fell on that day, in the Hibers Trench Cemetery at Wancourt in France (Grave B9, second from the right in this photograph).



Hibers Trench Cemetery, Wancourt



Walter Rhodes - Gravestone

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census
- (2) 1911 Census (Ref: RG14PN29476 RG78PN1711 RD542 SD2 ED2 SN76)
- (3) 4th Battalion War Diary for April 1917
<http://4thyorkshires.com/039Bn1917.html>
- (4) Hibers Trench Cemetery
<http://www.ww1-yorkshires.org.uk/html-files/hibers-trench-cemetery.htm>
- (5) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/307165>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/31605>

ARTHUR RICHARDSON - Private 30446, 2nd Green Howards, 16th Dec 1916, Age 24

Arthur Richardson was born in Brompton-on-Swale in 1891, the son of John Robert Richardson and Hannah M Richardson. Part of a large farming family, he had five brothers and four sisters. The family had lived in East Cowton during the 1880s and moved to Brompton-on-Swale around 1890. By 1901⁽¹⁾ the family was living on Richmond Road in the village, next to the Snowdon family.

1901 Census Record ...

No. of Inhabitants	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	Uninhabited	Names and Surnames of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Wages, or Own account	Working at Home	WHERE BORN
24	50		John Robert Richardson	Head	43	Farmer	Employer		50 - Northallerton
			Hannah	Wife	44				50 - Croft
			Annie	Daughter	19			at home	50 - East Cowton
			William	Son	17	Farmer's Son	Worker	at home	50 - 50
			Mary	Daughter	13			at home	50 - 50
			Harry	Son	12			at home	50 - 50

No. of Inhabitants	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	Uninhabited	Names and Surnames of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Wages, or Own account	Working at Home	WHERE BORN
40	50		Arthur Richardson	Son	10				50 - Northallerton
			Frederick	Son	4				50 - 50
			Cisely	Daughter	2				50 - 50
			William Clarkson	Visitor	23		Worker		50 - Northallerton
20	Richmond St		John Robert Richardson	Head	43	Farmer	Employer		50 - Northallerton

Father John Robert Richardson b 1858 Northallerton Farmer
 Mother Hannah M Richardson b 1857 Croft
 Anne E b 1882 East Cowton
 Thomas William b 1884 East Cowton
 Mary H b 1888 East Cowton
 Harry b 1889 East Cowton
 Arthur b 1891 Brompton-on-Swale
 Frederick E b 1897 Brompton-on-Swale Grandson
 Cisely M b 1899 Brompton-on-Swale Granddaughter
 William Clarkson b 1878 Great Ayton Visitor (Grocer)

A few other brothers and sisters (who are mentioned in the 1881 Census) are as follows

George b 1881 East Cowton
 John C b 1885 East Cowton
 Margaret b 1890 Catterick Bridge

In 1911⁽²⁾, he was still living at home with his parents and family in Brompton-on-Swale.

Father John Robert Richardson b 1858 Northallerton Farmer and Carting Contractor
 Mother Hannah M Richardson b 1857 Croft
 Thomas William b 1884 East Cowton
 John C b 1885 East Cowton
 Mary H b 1888 East Cowton
 Arthur b 1891 Brompton-on-Swale
 Frederick E b 1897 Brompton-on-Swale Grandson?
 Cisely M b 1899 Brompton-on-Swale Granddaughter
 John William Clarkson b 1902 Great Ayton Grandson

Arthur seems to have enlisted in Richmond (at present I don't know exactly when) in the 2nd Battalion.

The 2nd Battalion, The Green Howards was in Guernsey in August 1914 when war broke out when they were ordered to return to England. They landed at Southampton on the 28th of August and joined 21st Brigade, 7th Division. They proceeded to Belgium to join the BEF on the 6th of October 1914 landing at Zeebrugge. They suffered very heavy losses in the First Battle of Ypres and did not regain full strength until February 1915. They took part in the major battles of 1915 including, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers Ridge, Festubert, the second action at Givenchy and The Battle of Loos. On the 20th of December 1915 21st Brigade transferred to 30th Division. They then saw action in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and it seems likely that Arthur survived the main battle of the Somme, which officially ended in November 1916, only to be killed in action on Dec 16th 1916. Christmas 1916 must have been a terrible one for the family.

Arthur is buried in DOUCHY-LES-AYETTE BRITISH CEMETERY (Grave III C 10).



Douchy-Les-Ayette Cemetery

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census
- (2) 1911 Census (Ref: RG14PN29476 RG78PN1711 RD542 SD2 ED2 SN44)
- (3) Douchy Les Ayette Cemetery
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/64502>
- (4) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/583069>

ARTHUR ROBINSON – Sapper 160636, Royal Engineers, 13th May 1917, Age 23

Arthur Robinson was born in 1893 in Richmond, the son of Sidney and Frances Robinson. The 1901 Census shows the family at No 26, Newbiggin in Richmond. Arthur's Father is shown as a Shopkeeper.

28	26			Sidney Robinson	Head	M	47	Shopkeeper General	Richmond	Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636
				Frances Scott de	Wife	F	35			Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636
				Arthur de	Son	M	7			Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636
				Clara de	Daughter	F	5			Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636
				William Arthur	Son	M	18	General Sapper	Richmond	Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636
				Marjorie Gibson	Head	F	62	Retired	Richmond	Arthur Robinson	Sapper	160636

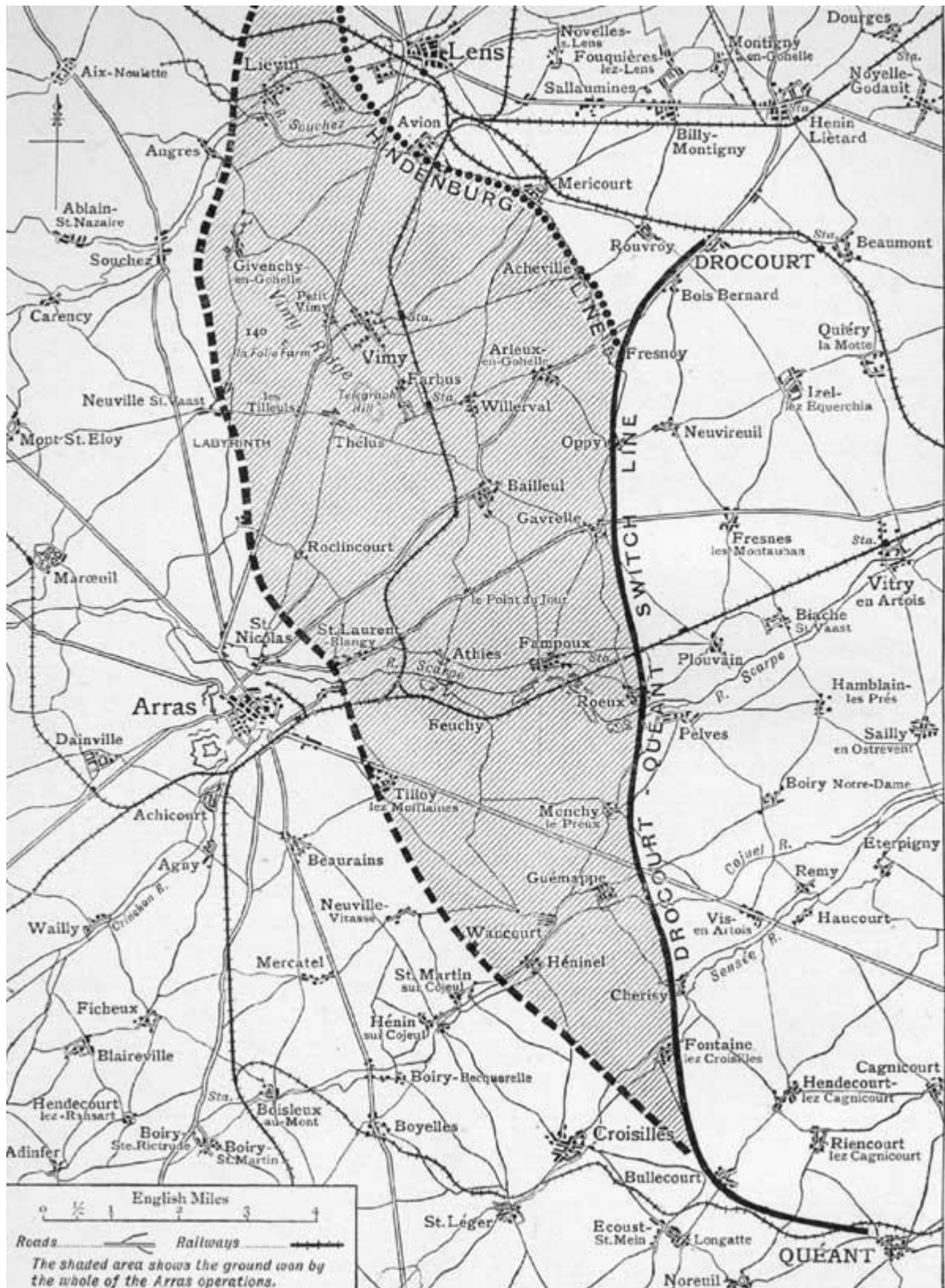
Newbiggin was (and still is) one of Richmond's most pleasant avenues, and the family would have been reasonably well off.



Newbiggin, Richmond

By 1911, Arthur was a 17 year old Draper's apprentice living at 30 Market Place, Richmond in the house of a Mr Henry Hague. Arthur enlisted in West Hartlepool, probably with the Royal Engineers and at the time his residence is given as Darlington and so far I've not found any record of a marriage for him.

The 89th Field Company were formed as part of the 14th (Light Division) in 1917 and were stationed around Scarpe up until 14th May 1917. The Division had arrived in France in May 1915 as part of Kitchener's first wave of "New Armies" – the so called K1 Divisions. They took part in what was known as the Arras Offensive (Apr-Jun 1917) which consisted of a number of separate battles, including the infamous Battle of Vimy Ridge (where the Canadians made a significant advance through what is generally viewed as combination or meticulous planning, tactical innovation and determination ... and suffered 10,000 dead and wounded). This was followed by numerous follow up Battles including the three "Battles of the Scarpe".



Arras Offensive 1917 showing ground gained

Arthur was serving as a Sapper (160636) with the 89th Field Company of the Royal Engineers when he died of wounds on 13th May 1917. However, until some further investigation throws some more light on Arthur's death it's difficult to establish how exactly he sustained the wounds that led to his death.

Arthur is buried at the ETAPLES MILITARY CEMETERY in the Pas de Calais, France (Grave Ref: XVIII. M. 18). The Etaples cemetery is over 60 miles to the West of Arras and was a centre for hospitals and wounded men (it's also the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in France, was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens), so it seems Arthur was wounded and transferred there at some point.



Etaples Cemetery



Etaples Cemetery - 1919

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census (RG13; Piece 4609; Folio 15; Page 21)
- (2) 1911 Census (RG14PN29463 RG78PN1710 RD542 SD1 ED1 SN213)
- (3) Etaples Cemetery
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/56500>
- (4) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/505289/>
- (5) Arras Offensive [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Arras_\(1917\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Arras_(1917))

ROBERT SIMPSON – Private 204077, 10th Green Howards, 26th Oct 1917, Age 38

Robert Simpson was born in Brompton-on-Swale in 1879, the son of James and Jane Simpson. His Father was 67 and his Mother was 47 when he was born and this being James 2nd marriage he had a number of older half-siblings.

Civil Parish (or Township) of		City or Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town or Village or Hamlet of		Urban Sanitary District of		Rural Sanitary District of		Ecclesiastical Parish or District of	
Brompton-on-Swale						Richmond		Brompton				Richmond		Easing	
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Un-inhabited (A), or Building (B)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	If					
						Males	Females			(1) Deaf-and-Dumb	(2) Blind	(3) Imbecile or Idiot	(4) Lunatic		
29	Cottage	1	James Simpson	Head	Mar	40		ag-Labourer	Yorkshire - Bolton						
			Jane Simpson	Wife	Mar	50			do Brompton						
			Mary A. Scott	Daug		16		Scholar	do - do -						
			James W. Scott	Son		10		do -	do - do -						
			Jane A. Scott	Daug		8		do -	do - do -						
			Robert Simpson	Son		3			do - do -						
30	do	1	William Hitchin	Head	Mar	39		General Labourer	do - Brompton						
31	Farm House	1	Robert Jayfield	Head	Mar	47		Farmer of 100 acres	do - do						
			Mary - do -	Wife	Mar	33			do - do						
			Charles - do -	Son	Mar	14		Not employed on the farm	do - do						

1881 Brompton-on-Swale Census - Robert Simpson Aged 3

By 1911, he is still living in Brompton on Swale on Richmond Road with his half-brother James (who also seems to be going by the name Simpson now) and his half-sister Mary Scott, where he is given as a General Labourer ^[2].

Robert enlisted in Northallerton and while he may have enlisted with another battalion, he was serving with the 10th (Service) Battalion of the Green Howards, when he was killed.



10th Battalion Green howards (1915, Aylesbury Camp) (ww1-yorkshires.org.uk)

In 1917 the 10th Battalion saw action on the Hindenburg Line, in the Arras Offensive and the Third Battle of Ypres. The following extract, from H.C. Wylly's "the Green Howards on the Great War", may cover the circumstances of Robert's death.

"This camp was left again on the 1st October and, marching to Dernancourt, the train was there taken for Marles-les-Mines, and arriving here on the 10th, the division marched to Fouquereuil and took over trenches in the Hairpin Crater sector in front of Vermelles and north of Loos from the 23rd Division, the 10th Green Howards being in reserve in Curly Crescent.

The trenches in this sector were bad and this probably accounts in some measure for the heavy loss experienced on the 22nd by "B" Company when occupying the Northern Crater of the Quarry Sector and Hohenzollern Redoubt, when three men were killed and eleven wounded by minenwerfers. A few days later several more casualties were occasioned by the enemy's so-called 'rum-jars'."

(As an aside, Major Stewart Walter Loudoun-Shand of the 10th Green Howards, won a posthumous VC on 1st July 1916. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewart_Walter_Loudoun-Shand)

Robert has no known grave and is commemorated on the TYNE COT MEMORIAL, Panel 52-54 & 162A.



Figure 36 - Tyne Cot Memorial

Sources:

- (1) 1881 Census (RG11; Piece: 4881; Folio: 19; Page: 7)
- (2) 1911 Census (RG14PN29476 RG78PN1711 RD542 SD2 ED2 SN5)
- (3) 10th Green Howards photograph
<http://www.ww1-yorkshires.org.uk/html-files/photos-groups.htm#10thbn1915>
- (4) Minenwerfer - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minenwerfer>
- (5) Tyne Cot Memorial
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/85900/>
- (6) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/3064926/>

WILLIAM SMALES - Private 27701, 10th Lancashire Fusiliers, 2nd Sep 1918, Age 29

William Smales was born in Woodlesford (near Halton) in Leeds in 1889, the son of Ada and Charles William Smales (a coal miner)^[1] ^[2]. By 1911, aged 23, he was still living with his parents and 18 year old sister, Hannah, at 4 Britton Terrace, Halton, Leeds and working as a Print Compositor.

In July 1915, aged 25 he married Agnes Rose May Smith (26, daughter of a Thomas Smith), by which time his father has passed away. Agnes was born in Richmond and was living in Brompton on Swale according to the 1901 Census (at Railway Cottages).

1915. Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Paul's Church</u> in the parish of <u>Whitthorpe</u> in the County of <u>York</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
403	July 21 st 1915	William Smales	25	Bachelor	Private	Britton Terrace Halton	Charles William Smales (Deceased)	
		Agnes Rose May Smith	26	Spinster		City Hospital Barnsley	Thomas Smith	Ironmaster Plate layer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by License granted by us,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, (William Smales) in the presence of us, (Edmund Wilfrid Mason)
(Agnes Rose May Smith) (Ada Smales Threlkirk)
Canon W. Wilson
Vicar

William Smales - 1915 Marriage Certificate

William probably left for training soon after his marriage and his medal card shows that he first entered the theatre of war on 3rd December 1915, serving as Private 27701 in the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
SMALES	Lanc Fus	Pte.	27701
William			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	H/1/101 B/42	8652	K in A. 29. 18.
BRITISH		25	
15 Star	17/1153 B 3	233	
Theatre of War first served in	(H ^a)		
Date of entry therein	3. 12. 15		

K. 1980

William Smales - Medal Index Card

The 10th (Service) Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers was attached to 52nd Brigade, 17th (Northern) Division and took part in a number of key battles [4] including Passchendaele which William seems to have survived.

However, he seems to have been killed during one of the final offensives of the war when the 17th Division took part in the Second Battle of Bapaume and the capture of Mont St Quentin and Péronne between 31 August - 3 September 1918.

William was killed in action and has no known grave. He is commemorated on Panel 5 & 6 of the VIS-EN-ARTOIS MEMORIAL. The CWGC records state that he was the son of Ada Smales, of 4, Britton Terrace, Halton, Leeds, and the late Charles Smales and the husband of Agnes Rose May Smales, of 4, Rose Cottages, Romanby, Northallerton, Yorkshire.



Vis-en-Artois Memorial

Sources:

- (1) 1881 Census (RG12; Piece: 3667; Folio 48; Page 6)
- (2) 1901 Census (RG13; Piece: 4198; Folio: 9; Page: 10)
- (3) 1911 Census (RG14PN27163 RG78PN1552 RD501 SD2 ED1 SN76)
- (4) 10th Battalion movements
<http://www.lancs-fusiliers.co.uk/tourspostings/10LFToursPostings.htm>
- (5) Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1748784>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/79200>

OTHERS WHO SERVED DURING WORLD WAR ONE

There are at least 3 other people I discovered during my research. 2 survived the war and even though the 3rd died, he is not mentioned on the village memorial, perhaps due the strange and controversial circumstances of his death.

Thomas William Price

Thomas William Price lived at the King William IV Inn, Brompton on Swale in 1915 when he enlisted into the West Yorkshire Regiment Prince of Wales' Own (14th Foot), aged 34. Born in 1881 in Manchester, by 1901 he was almost 20 and living in Marrick in Swaledale with his Mother and Uncle as a Farmer. He subsequently married Mary Eleanor Whitehead (from Reeth) on 23rd April 1908. In 1911 he was living with Mary as a Farmer in Marrick still, but by 1915 he had become a Publican and was at the "King Billy".

His military history sheet showed he served in the UK from 30th Jan 1917 to 31st Nov 1917 and then in Malta (probably as part of the 1st Garrison Battalion).



King William IV Brompton-on-Swale (now closed)

Charles Allison Routledge

Charles Routledge was born in Faceby (near Stokesley, Yorkshire) in 1892 one of at least 10 children to parents Robert and Mary Routledge of the Mill, Faceby. By 1901 Charles was living with his Grandparents (aged 9). He enlisted in Richmond from his residence in Brompton-on-Swale. He served as A/L Corporal P2646 with the Corps of Military Police in the "Foot Branch" (as opposed to the Mounted Branch). He embarked from England in Liverpool on 11th March 1916 and arrived in Corfu 16 days later. He proceeded to serve with the British Mission to the Royal Serbian Army in Salonika.

His records show that just over a year later he spent various periods in and out of Hospital with many ailments including varicose veins and diseases associated with soldiers "serving away from loved ones". He was then transferred to Salonika around the 6th November 1917 and back to a Hospital in Corfu 21st May 1918.

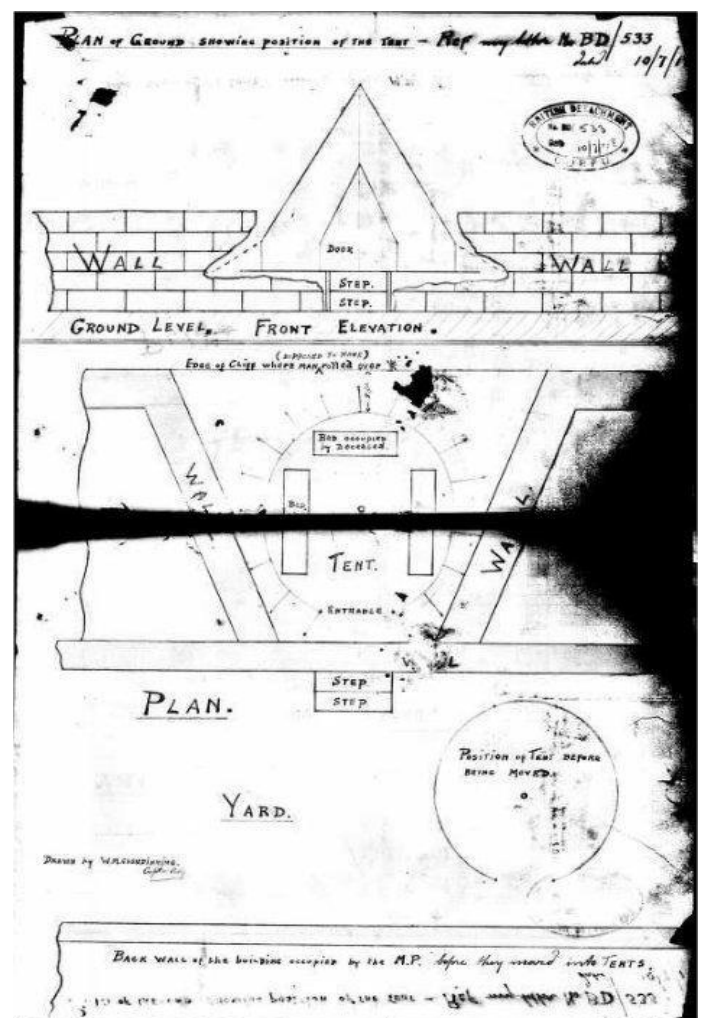


Gravestone - Charles Routledge

The Court of Enquiry into his death on 6th July 1918 states that "he came out of the rear of his tented accommodation and fell over a cliff into the sea and drowned". The enquiry offered the opinion that "the deceased ... met his death through misadventure in falling over a cliff close to his tent and being drowned. The Court considers the tent is pitched in a dangerous place being too near the edge of the cliff".

See the diagram to the right, which clearly shows the cliff edge directly behind the tent and the previous position of the tent.

However, this conclusion was disputed immediately by the Commander of the British Detachment in Corfu. He stated that it would have been near impossible to exit the rear of the tent and the victim would either have had to crawl out from under the tent or exit the front and walk around over various tent pegs and retaining ropes.



The records do not show what, if any final conclusion was reached but there are some poignant letters in the records (typical of what many parents and relatives of casualties would have received).

Station **Aldershot.**
Date **6th Novr. 1918.**

Records,
and the following No. quoted.

To **Mr Robert Routledge** From **Officer i/c Records,**
The Mill, **Military Police Corps.**
Faceby,
Northallerton.

SIR OR MADAM,

I am directed to forward the undermentioned articles of private property of the late No. **P/2646** Rank **L/Cpl**
Name **Charles Allison Routledge.**
Regiment **Military Foot Police.**
and would ask that you will kindly acknowledge receipt of the same on the form overleaf:—
4 leather wallets; postcards; photos; Medal ribbon; letters; 5 prs socks; Testament; 3 Devotional books; 6 handkerchiefs; razor in case; 1 leather brush; A.B.50; identity disc; Bible; button badge; pencil case.

These are the only articles at present forthcoming, but should any further articles be received at any time they will be duly forwarded.

Yours faithfully,
L.A. [Signature]
Lt Col.
Officer in charge of Records,
Military Police Corps.

Army Form B. 101—126.
Place **Faceby Mill**
Nov 9th 1918
Date **Nov 9th 1918**

Sir,

I have to acknowledge receipt of the articles as stated overleaf.

Yours faithfully,
Robert Routledge
(Sign here) **Thank you very much**
The Officer i/c Records,
Station _____

PA in dress

Letter to Charles Routledge's Father, re: effects

Sources:



Charles Routledge's Grave in Corfu

- (1) Corp of Military Police Records
<http://www.corpsformilitarypolice.org/soldier/4905/>
- (2) WW1 Service Records

Frederick Ernest Richardson

Frederick Ernest Richardson was born in Brompton-on-Swale in October 1896, one of eleven children to parents John & Hannah. Records show he was a Farmer and Carter as was his Father around the time he enlisted age 19, into the Yorkshire Regiment's 3rd Reserve Battalion as Private 26566 on 10-Dec-1915. On 8th July 1916 he was transferred to France and joined another battalion in the field on 21st July 1916.



Army Form B. 103.

Casualty Form—Active Service.

Regiment or Corps 3rd Yorkshire

Service No. 26566 Rank Private Name Richardson Frederick Ernest

Enlisted (a) 10/12/15 Terms of Service (a) War Service reckons from (a) 11/2/16

Date of promotion to present rank } Date of appointment to lance rank } Numerical position on roll of N.C.Os. }

Extended _____ Re-engaged _____ Qualification (i) _____

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc. during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 215, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 215, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
		Joined Battalion.	Field.	21.7.16.	
8.10.16	10 Aug 16	...		7.10.16	ED 4320
7.10.16	14 Aug 16	...		7.10.16	ED 4119
				7 OCT 1916	W 23
		...	Etaples.		
		...	Rouen.	9.10.16.	47.3515
		...	Field	14.11.16.	...
		...		22.9.17.	...
		...	Richmond, W.B.		

LCAdmiral Carter

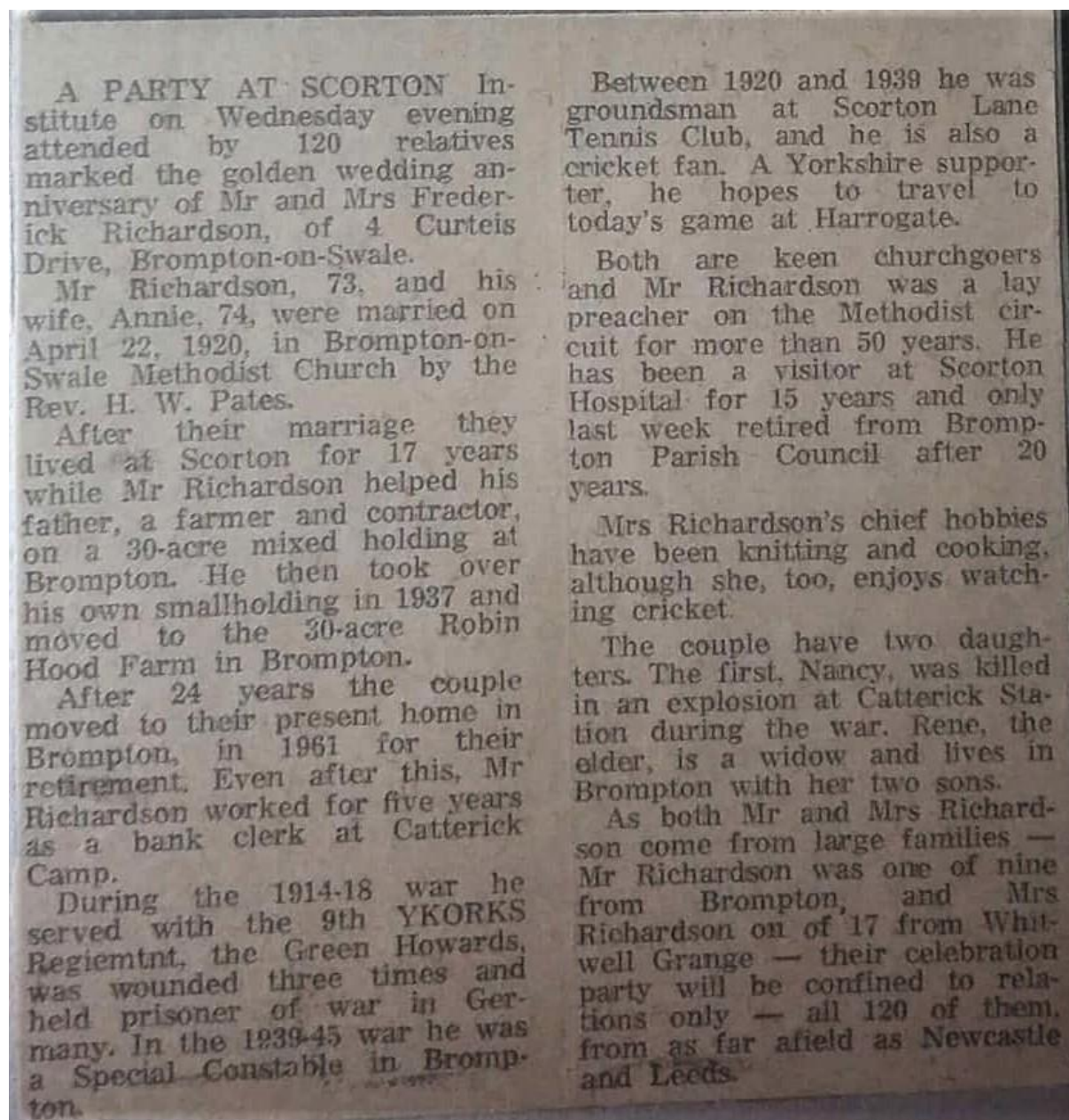
Figure 43 - Service Record (extract) - Frederick Ernest Richardson

He served at Etaples, Rouen and was wounded in the right arm 22nd Sep 1917 and spent some time at Brighton Pavilion Hospital.

On 26th Mar 1918 he seems to be listed as “missing” and then as “Prisoner of War”. This is likely to have happened during the great German offensive that began on March 21st around St Quentin (“The Kaiser’s Battle”). Fred was later repatriated and in 1920, no doubt thankful to be home, married Sarah Miller.

Fred passed away in 1983.

UPDATE Sep-2020: The following newspaper article was kindly supplied via the village Facebook page and tells us some more about Fred and his family.



The death of Fred's daughter Nancy, is covered below as she is commemorated on the WW2 memorial. The other of Ken's daughters (Renee Pardoe), ran one of the village shops (in Curteis Drive) for many years.

Sources

Bill Danby's excellent history of the 1/4th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment:
<http://4thyorkshires.com/>

WORLD WAR TWO

One might think that researching more recent history would be easier than more distant history, but it's not always the case. Not being able to refer to any on-line census records for those who died during WW2 has made this task pretty difficult and unfortunately I still have many gaps I would wish to complete. This section is very much work in progress and if anybody reading this can help, please contact me (peter.hodgson.uk@gmail.com).

Peter Hodgson November 2012.

JOSEPH W. ALDERSON, Sapper 200643, Royal Engineers, 14th May 1943, Age 27

Joseph William Alderson, was born on the 7th April 1916, in Auckland, Durham.

The 1939 Registers show Joseph living in Brompton-on-Swale (aged 23) in one of the dwellings between Village Farm and Ivy Cottage, working as a Builder's labourer possibly for Ernest Heseltine. He was single at that time and I am not aware of any marriage record at the time of writing. I cannot find any other connection with the village, so I'm guessing he came for work.

Village Farm	121	5	Rhodes Marsh	F	9 Apr 56	W	old age Pension
		1	Bart Sillan	M	10 Oct 14	M	tractor driver agri
		2	Bart Sillan	F	23 May 11	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Bart Sillan	M	1 Oct 33	S	at school
This record is officially closed.							
Brompton on Swale	122	1	Heseltine Ernest	M	7 Sep 97	M	Builder Labourer
		2	Heseltine Harriette	F	13 Dec 96	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Alderson Joseph W	M	7 Apr 16	S	Builder Labourer
		4	CHAMBERS	F	7 June 21	S	asenting Mother
		5	Heseltine Isobel	F	7 Nov 35	S	at school
Brompton on Swale	123	1	Richardson Thomas	M	13 June 85	M	Farmer + Cartman
		2	Richardson Louise	M	25 Dec 87	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Day Richard	M	10 Dec 55	W	Incapacitated
Ivy Cottage	124	1	Hurdwood Ernest	M	7 June 77	M	unpaid domestic duties
		2	Terry Ernest P.S	M	9 Dec 79	S	Incapacitated

According to the CWGC Joseph served with the 1st Field Park Squadron.

In February 1940 1st Field Squadron was deployed to France (with 1st Armoured Division). Whilst attached to 51st Highland Division the majority of the Squadron were taken prisoner at [St Valery](#). The 51st were serving with the French Army and were not part of the Dunkirk evacuation. Only 4 officers and 65 men made it back to England. At the moment, I do not know if Joseph was one of them or if he joined later.

In September 1941, a reformed 1st Field Squadron sailed for the Middle East where it was immediately committed to action in the western desert. It took part in the [Battle of Gazala](#) and in the more famous defence of [Tobruk](#) in 1942. Once again, the Squadron suffered from large-scale capture whilst attached to the 2nd South African Division.

Again 1st Field Squadron was reformed, in time to play its part in the battles of Alam Halfa (September 1942) and [El Alamein](#) (Oct/Nov 1942) and accompanied the 8th Army advance along the whole of the North African shore to the Cap Bon Peninsula in Tunisia.

Joseph died on 14th May 1943 (he would have been 27).

This is a rather tragic date because officially the North African campaign ended the day before, 13th May 1943 when the commanding British Field Marshal, Sir Harold Alexander, sent word to Prime Minister Churchill, saying "it is my duty to report that the Tunis campaign is over. All enemy

resistance has ceased." During the week, 150,000 Germans and Italians became prisoners of war of the Allies.

Joseph is buried in grave 1.G.24 of [OUED ZARGA WAR CEMETERY](#), in Tunisia, about 30km from Tunis



Oued Zarga Cemetery Tunisia

Sources:

(1) CWGC

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2822612>

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2087301>

(2) 51st Highland Division at St Valery

https://51hd.co.uk/history/valery_1940

(3) 1 Field Engineer Squadron

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Field_Engineer_Squadron

(4) WW2 Battles in North Africa

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Tobruk

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gazala

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Alam_el_Halfa

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_El_Alamein

LAWRENCE BARR, Leading Aircraftman, 641413 RAF, 03-Dec-1944, Age 32

Back in 2012, I was unable to find any military casualty named Lawrence Barr. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission listed two individuals called Laurence Barr. However, neither had an obvious connection to Brompton-on-Swale that I could see. Subsequently in 2020, it was mentioned on the Brompton-on-Swale Facebook page that Lawrence had a sister called Rita.

I then searched online records for a family with the Barr name who had two children called Lawrence and Rita. Eventually I found them. The Father was Joseph Raby Barr and their Mother, Emily (nee Place), so it seems that somewhere there has been a change of spelling in the CWGC records.

Lawrence's parents, Joseph (born 1886) and Emily (born 1889) were married in 1911 in Middleton Tyas and had 10 children as far as I can tell (Alice Rebecca born 1911, Lawrence 1912, William 1914, Emily 1916, Peter & Richard 1921, Robert R 1922, Ada 1923, Vera 1925, Rita 1929 and John 1931).

Lawrence's Father, Joseph Raby Barr also found time to serve in WW1 - joining up in 1916, he was in the 7th Battalion Yorkshire Infantry (Private 28752) and then transferred to the 1/9th Battalion Durham Light Infantry (Private 7234). When joining up he gave his address as Morris Grange, Middleton Tyas. He seems to have been captured on 5th November 1916 as his battalion took part in [attacks on the Butte de Walencourt](#) (2), being repatriated on 13th June 1919.

The Barr family, or at least Joseph, Emily and son Peter and daughters Emily and Rita were living in Brompton-on-Swale in 1939 (according to the 1939 register).

Lawrence married Margaret Marr in 1941 in Montrose Scotland. I am guessing he was probably serving at RAF Montrose when he met Margaret. I could not help but also notice that a Laura Margaret Barr was born in Montrose in 1942, but I cannot confirm this child is Margaret and Lawrence's daughter.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission gives the usual brief details for Lawrence's death ..
"Leading Aircraftman, Laurence Barr, 641413, Royal Air Force, Son of Joseph Raby Barr and Emily Barr; husband of Margaret Barr, of Montrose, Angus. Died 03-Dec-1944"

Some further research reveals what I believe happened. Lawrence was located at an airfield that the RAF had taken over called Deurne Airfield near Antwerp, Belgium which was designated "[Advanced Landing Ground B70](#)". These were temporary advanced airfields used for combat support. From October 1944, Antwerp was the target for a large number of V-weapon attacks as it was a major port being used by the Allies. Over 1,700 people were killed and 4,500 injured in greater Antwerp. Thousands of buildings were damaged or destroyed as the city was struck by 590 direct hits.

The largest loss of life in a single attack came on 16 December 1944, when the roof of the crowded cinema Rex was struck, leaving 567 dead and 291 injured.

At 12:14pm on December 3rd 1944, V2 Battery 836/3 of "Gruppe Sud" commanded by Waffen-SS General Kammler, fired the 2nd of 9 rockets it would fire that day towards Antwerp from a location near the town of Hachenburg 20 miles NorthEast of Koblenz. Approximately 5 minutes and 200 miles later that V2 smashed into the ground at supersonic speed at Deurne Airfield killing Corporal Sydney Clark (1221739) from Port Talbot and Leading Aircraftman Lawrence Barr. They were both 32.

Lawrence Barr is buried in [**SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY**](#), Belgium. Grave Reference I.B.29 alongside Sydney Clark (I.B.28)



Sources:

- (1) Warlencourt https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attacks_on_the_Butte_de_Warlencourt
- (2) CWGC <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2254873>
<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2024000>
- (3) V2 Rockets
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-2_rocket
<http://www.v2rocket.com/start/deployment/timeline.html>

ALBERT F. CLEAVER, Corporal 4469886, Leicestershire Regiment, 16th Jan 1944, Age 26

Albert was another casualty where I originally found no obvious connection to Brompton-on-Swale. However, I was subsequently given information from Shaun and Sharon Catterick of the village, who kindly explained that Albert was originally married to Margaret Harrison Snowdon (daughter of George and Alice Snowdon, who lived at Croydon House on Richmond Road). They married in 1942 at Easby church and also lived at Croydon House until Albert was deployed, sadly never to return. Margaret went on to marry Jim Catterick in 1955.

Albert Frederick Cleaver himself was the son of Frederick and Maud Ethel Cleaver, of Stapleford, Nottinghamshire.

Albert served with the 2/5th battalion, Leicestershire Regiment and after serving on home-defence and anti-invasion duties they left for North Africa in early 1943, fighting in the Tunisian Campaign, including the [Battle of Kasserine Pass](#), until the campaign ended in mid-May 1943. After resting for the next three months, the battalion's next action was in the [Allied invasion of Italy](#), where, holding off against numerous German counterattacks, heavy casualties were sustained. After a brief rest the battalion breached the [Volturno Line](#) in October before taking part in the battles around the [Winter Line](#) in the middle of Italy.

Remarkably, thanks to fellow researchers on the web site [WW2 Talk](#) the actual report on the action that led to Albert's death has been found.

Albert's unit were near a small village called [Vandra](#) (about 30km North East of Monte Cassino). The fighting in the area had been intense and the Durham Light Infantry had put an observation post in the village where they could observe German guns nearby. However, on the 13th January, the observation post was overrun and strong patrols near the now battered village were met by heavy fire. The area was also strewn with defensive minefields, and patrols lost many men killed and wounded.

On the 16th January it seems that the Albert was leading a patrol near the small village of [Vandra](#).

The report reads as follows:

This Cpl was last seen at approx 0100 hrs on 16 Jan 44, near VANDRA at 898118. Sheet 160 I Cassino

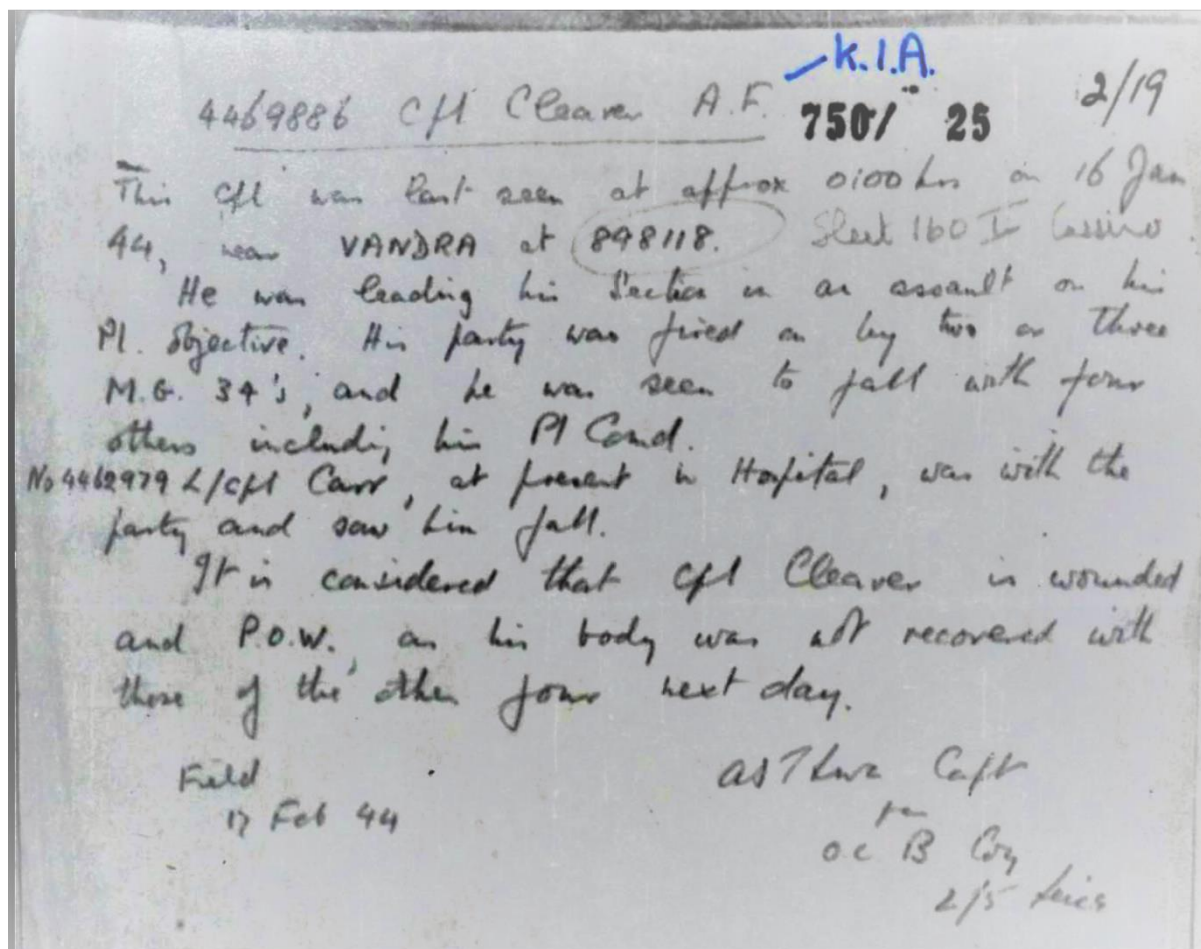
He was leading his section in an assault on his PI objective. His party was fired on by two or three M.G. 34's and he was seen to fall with four others including his PI Comd. No.4462979 L/Cpl Carr, at present in Hospital, was with the party and saw him fall.

It is considered that Cpl Cleaver is wounded and P.O.W. , as his body was not recovered with those of the other four next day.

Field 17 Feb 44

?Name Unclear? for OC B Coy 2/5 Leics

Here is that original report:



Although the report mentions the possibility of capture – the letters KIA seem to have been added later, confirming Albert's death and his body was subsequently recovered. He was 26.

The others that were killed in the patrol were:

4445131 Serjeant Harry Charles Amos

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2607982/AMOS,%20HARRY%20CHARLES>

4867097, Private Alfred King

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2410424/KING,%20ALFRED>

14566856 Private Robert H Walker

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2613288/WALKER,%20ROBERT%20HENRY>

14508579 Private Philip Mallinson

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2609344/MALLINSON,%20PHILIP>

The next day, the allied assault on Monte Cassino began.

I was confused to see that the published casualty list showed that 4 of the casualties were from the Durham Light Infantry rather than the Leicestershire Regiment as shown in the Commonwealth War Graves records. Both units were present in the in the same area, so at first I just put it down to the confusion and the "fog of war". However ... the photograph of Albert below clearly shows the DLI badge on his shoulder. I'm guessing he was a DLI man, but was transferred to 2/5 Leicester's possible with other DLI men.

Casualty Report:

3389765	BOOTH	Pte.	A.		5. 1.44.
4804226	CHANDLER	Pte.	J.C.		5. 1.44.
14214431	DOHERTY	Pte.	T.		5. 1.44.
4037932	HARSTON	Pte.	C.S.C.		5. 1.44.
3389469	ROBINSON	Pte.	J.		5. 1.44.
<u>Leicestershire Regiment</u>					
4928867	FARMER	Pte.	C.	2/5 Bn.	13. 1.44.
4887097	KING	Pte.	A.		15. 1.44.
<u>Cameronians</u>					
3196539	ROSS	Rfn.	G.		Date not reported
<u>East Surrey Regiment</u>					
6145455	SMITH	Pte.	H.J.		4.12.43.
<u>10th Bn., Royal Berkshire Regiment</u>					
5341617	ROGERS	Pte.	R.D.		11. 1.44.
<u>Durham Light Infantry</u>					
6298975	ALLWOOD	Pte.	F.H.		13. 1.44.
4445131	AMOS	Sjt.	H.C.		15. 1.44.
14391404	BROADBENT	Pte.	F.		13. 1.44.
4469886	CLEAVER	Cpl.	A.F.		15. 1.44.
4696058	ELVIDGE	Cpl.	G.		12. 1.44.
4470579	LAWRENCE	Pte.	H.		5. 1.44.
14508579	MALLINSON	Pte.	P.		15. 1.44.
4456477	MARLOW	L/Opl.	D.		12. 1.44.
14566856	WALKER	Pte.	R.H.		15. 1.44.



Left: Men of 2/5th Leicestershire Regiment supported by Sherman tanks in Italy, 1944

Albert Cleaver (photograph kindly provided by Shaun Catterick), showing his Durham Light Infantry cap badge.



Albert's grave is number XIV.B.3 at the [CASSINO WAR CEMETERY](#), Italy



Casino Cemetery, Italy

Sources

- (1) [CWGC https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2608570](https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2608570)
Grave Ref: XIV.B.3 [CASSINO WAR CEMETERY](#), Italy
- (2) <http://ww2talk.com/>

WILLIAM CONNELLY, Gunner 1780834, 2nd Maritime Regiment, RA, 27th Oct 1941

William Connelly is one of only two of those commemorated on the village War Memorial for there is a headstone in the village cemetery as well as being commemorated on the war memorial.

William was born on 21st May 1904, and the 1939 register shows him as a Painter and Decorator, living with his wife Clara (nee Matthews) and daughter Theresa (aged about 8). There may also be another child too (but the 1939 record remains closed – indicating the possibility of a surviving member of the family).

It's hard to read, but the address seems to be "Farmer's Arms Cottage"

1	Connelly William	M	21 May 04	M	Painter (Decor)
2	MATTHEWS Clara	F	6 Jun 03	17	Wife of William Connelly
3	Connelly Theresa	F	3 May 31	31	School Girl

It appears from the UK Army Roll of Honour gives his birthplace as Carlisle and he appears to be the son of Stephon and Francis Connelly of that town.

William served with the 4th Battery, 2nd Maritime Regiment, Royal Artillery and as such would likely have been assigned as a gunner to a [Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship \(DEMS\)](#).

Maritime gunners sailed on a wide variety of merchant vessels: trawlers, coasters, freighters, ore carriers, tankers, passenger ships and others. They were often away at sea for months at a time, sometimes for over a year. They sailed alone or in convoys of up to 70 ships to destinations such as the Mediterranean, America and Canada, Russia, South Africa, Australia, and the Middle and Far East. The large passenger liners such as the Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and Mauretania were used as troopships and often sailed alone, relying on their speed to outrun the enemy. The Queen Mary could transport 15,000 troops at a time, and carried up to 200 DEMS gunners. Although tasked with defending merchant ships, maritime gunners also took part in offensive operations, serving on merchant vessels which took part in landings such as North Africa, Sicily, Normandy, and the South of France.



Perhaps the best known and most costly action for the maritime artillery was [Operation Pedestal](#), better remembered as the SS Ohio convoy to Malta. On 2 August 1942 fourteen merchant vessels with a strong naval escort set sail from the Clyde for Malta with desperately needed fuel and supplies. The convoy was under constant attack from 11th to the 15th August. Only five ships, four of which were badly damaged, arrived at their destination. Of the 162 maritime gunners who took part in the convoy, thirty were killed, six wounded and nineteen taken prisoner.

Fifty three maritime gunners stranded on Malta were 'hijacked' to bolster anti-aircraft units on the island, and soldiers rescued at sea found themselves stranded in distant ports.

Of the 24,000 Royal Navy gunners who served in DEMS 2,713 were killed. Official records state that 2,600 merchant ships were sunk and 30,000 merchant seamen lost their lives, the majority drowned or killed by exposure.

Maritime RA gunners are quite difficult to trace as records don't tend to reveal which ship they were serving on when lost. However, William is **not** listed as a naval casualty and has a physical grave in Brompton-on-Swale cemetery, although that does not necessarily mean he is buried there, it could be a memorial headstone to someone lost at sea.

Eventually decided I had to order a copy of William's death certificate.

Registration District RICHMOND.									
1941. DEATHS in the Sub-District of RICHMOND in the County of YORK (N.R.)									
Columns: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.									
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
314	Twenty eight October 1941 Farmer's Arms cottages Batterick Bridge Brompton-on- Swale Richmond	William Bonnelly	Male	36 Years	Gunner No. 2/1780834 4 th Maritime Anti Aircraft Battery Royal Cavalry (Painter Journeyman)	Natural Causes. Cerebral Haemorrhage Certified by Graves, Riddison Baroness, West Dist N.R. of York after Post Mortem without Inquest	E. Bosomworth Present at the Death Farmer's Arms Cottages Batterick Bridge Brompton on Swale Richmond	Twenty Eighth October 1941	William Walker Registrar

This revealed that he died of natural causes, although sadly at the young age of 36.

It also revealed we was an anti-aircraft gunner.

Sources:

- (1) WW2 Naval Casualty Lists <http://www.naval-history.net/xDKCas1003-Intro.htm#WW2>
- (2) Merchant Gunners – Article from Britain at War (Feb 2018) – with kind permission of the author David J.B. Smith, <https://davidjbsmith.weebly.com/the-merchant-gunners.html>
- (3) CWGC Grave Ref 231 [BROMPTON-ON-SWALE CEMETERY](https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2407122), England
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2407122>

WALTER GIBSON, Station Master, Age 46, 4th Feb 1944

Brompton-on-Swale Station Master, Age 46

NANCY RICHARDSON, Railway Clerk, Age 19, 4th Feb 1944

Brompton-on-Swale, Railway Clerk, Age 19

The devastating explosion that happened at 3:56pm on the 4th of February 1944 at Catterick Bridge station is easily the most infamous incident of the Second World War in this corner of North Yorkshire.

A lot has been written about it in the local media over the years. Chris Lloyd the well know local historian and writer wrote a series of articles in the Northern Echo and Darlington & Stockton Times. I've included one of those articles below and links to the others. I've also included numerous stories and memories from local residents.

There were truly horrific scenes that day and many acts to bravery and heroism. Although much of what follows below makes difficult reading at times, personally, I don't believe it should be forgotten.

The following is extracted from the Northern Echo article by Chris Lloyd (15 June 2010) which can be found here:

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/columnists/memories/darlington/8220176.Tossing_explosives_around_and_going_out_with_a_bang/

It was four minutes to four on February 4, 1944. "I saw a flame, shaped like a big bat's wing, come from the loading area – it must have been 50 or 60 yards across," recalled the chief goods clerk Len Cockerill. "Then there was a terrific explosion, which burst my ear drum. Next thing I knew, I was sailing through the air."

John Weller, the ammunition truck driver, still sounded incredulous about what he had witnessed



three weeks later. "There was a vivid red flash and a terrific bang. My lorry disappeared," he told an inquest, "and the railway truck, in which the four men were, also disappeared. "When I came round, all I could see was some pathfinder incendiaries coming down like great white lights. As clearly as anything, I remember saying to myself: 'By hell, Jerry's copped us a real packet today'." Jerry, though, wasn't to blame, but it was a real packet: 12 were killed and 102 were injured that day at [Catterick](#) Bridge Station. Devastation was widespread: seven houses, a hotel, a cafe and the goods yard offices were destroyed. And the four men, all soldiers, did quite literally disappear: their bodies were never recovered.

Ruins of the Railway Hotel



The ruins of the Railway Hotel from the rear

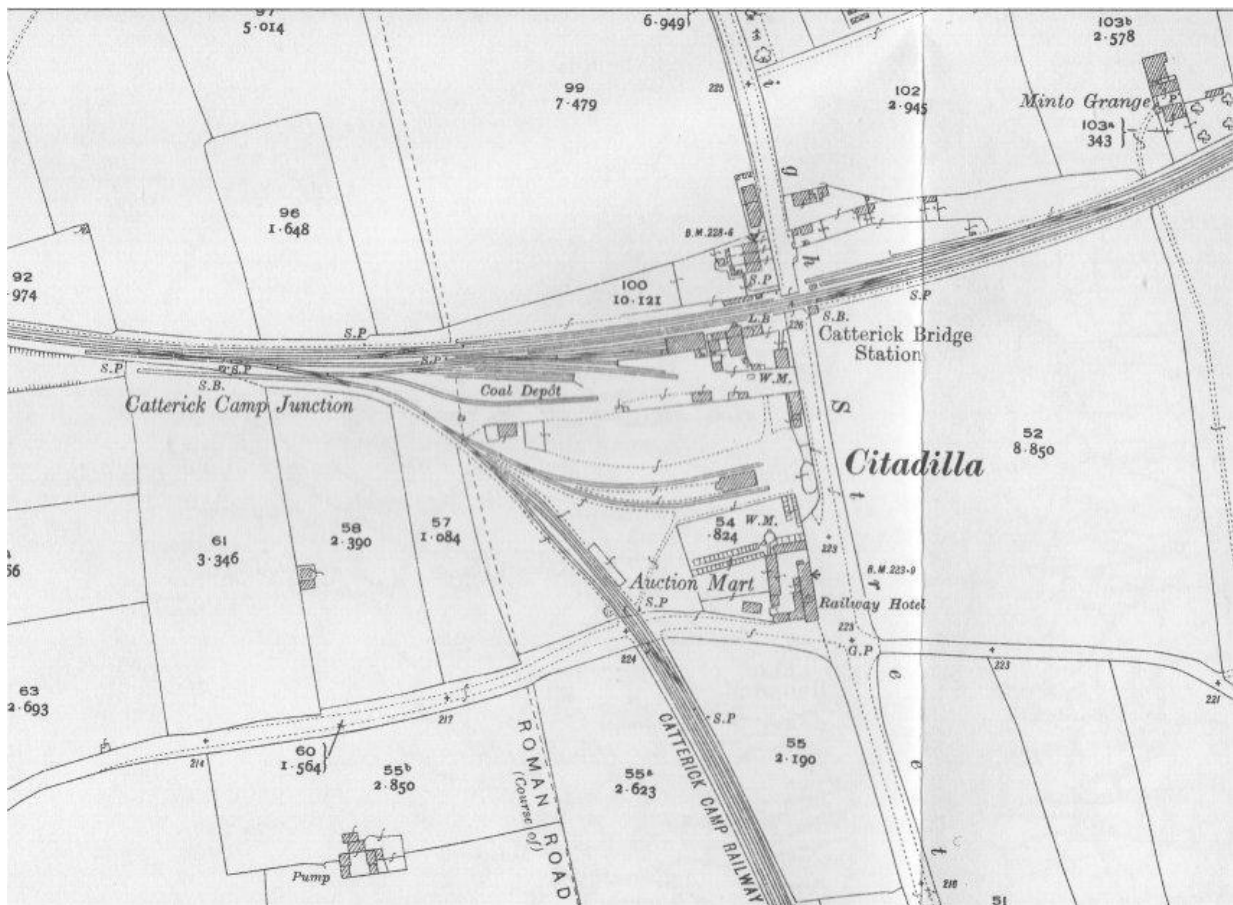
The terrible events began at about 3.50pm when Mr Weller pulled his laden lorry into the station goods yard.

It was a busy day. A passenger train had just left, and another was due any minute to collect the 25 people – largely schoolchildren making their way home or servicemen heading off on leave – on the platform. A packed double-decker bus was picking up its last passengers – Royal Air Force and Army men – from the Railway Hotel to take them on a big night out in Darlington.

Nine soldiers were loading explosives onto railway trucks. They'd been at it for days – they didn't know it then, but they were assembling the weaponry that would be used in the D-Day landings in Normandy four months later.

In fact, there was some concern locally about the amount of explosives that was building up in the goods yard. The night before, at the bar of the Railway Hotel, the landlady, Mabel

Cockerill, had said: "I'm worried about having all this ammunition so near." Stationmaster Walter Gibson replied: "If that lot goes up, none of us will have any worries." Within 24 hours, he wouldn't, poor fellow.



Catterick Bridge Station c 1905, showing location of Railway Hotel

Lorry driver Weller arrived at the goods yard with ammunition from the Hornby Park dump, near Bedale. As he parked up and walked away, Mr Cockerill noticed from a window in the Railway Hotel that four soldiers began unloading it. "I remember thinking that a month ago, they were handling those things so gently, two men to a box," he told The Northern Echo in 1967. "Now they're throwing them."

Bang! And the big bat's wing flame fanned out followed by a noise so loud it was heard ten miles away. Six six-ton trucks of antitank grenades had exploded, followed by tons of incendiary bombs which shot off like fireworks, sparking lots of smaller, satellite fires. Amazingly, the petroleum depot over the road wasn't hit. Even more amazingly, the 20,000lb blockbuster bomb in the goods yard did not go bang. Instead, the 14-ton railway truck in which it sat was blown into the air and landed – no worries – on top of stationmaster Walter Gibson. Despite an Army doctor's six hour battle, there was no saving him.

Extraordinary episodes of bravery broke out. "Though her husband was dying and her home was wrecked, Mrs W Gibson, the stationmaster's wife, warned people in the vicinity to leave their homes," said the Darlington and Stockton Times.

"Mrs Mabel Cockerill defied her own injuries to drag an elderly guest from the ruins of her home. "The signalman, 47-year-old Fred Robinson, was one of the heroes. Although severely injured, he stood by his post in the wrecked box by the level crossing. He saw his cottage across the road collapse and knew that his wife and daughter were inside, but duty demanded his remaining by the signal levers. He got a colleague to open the gates to let through a train...and when it was clear he allowed himself to be taken to hospital."

Said the Echo: "One of the local heroes is a taxi driver who ran along the line waving a flag to stop an approaching train. The roof of his car was torn off and all the glass shattered."

But 12 people died. Six were civilians: William Tindall, 40, contractor's labourer; Lancelot Rymer, 41, motor driver; Richard Stokes, motor driver; Mrs Mary Wallace Richmond, 43, railway clerk; Miss Nancy Georgina Richardson, 19, railway clerk; Walter Gibson, 46, stationmaster.

Six were servicemen: Leading Aircraftman Euan Jenkins, 31, of Barry, South Wales; Lieutenant Lawrence George King, 29, radio/telephone operator of St Albans; Private David Reece Hopkins, 23; Private Norman Day, 18; Private William Thomas, 18; Private George Stares, 34, of the Pioneer Corps.

The last four were those who just disappeared before Mr Weller's eyes. "The coroner... called Police Inspector Atkinson," said the Echo, "who testified to finding a piece of spine on the grass verge opposite the Railway Hotel and to finding pieces of skin, bone and clothing stretching for a distance of 500 yards from the scene of the explosion. He took the remains to a County pathologist. He later submitted a piece of Army shirt, which he found on the south side of the explosion, to ultra-violet rays which revealed the name "Day" on the collar.

"Dr William Goldie, county pathologist, expressed the opinion that the remains came from at least three persons. One portion of skull had black wavy hair, and the other two had brown hair." The four soldiers are buried in a tiny grave in Hornby churchyard, about five miles away.

SO what caused the explosion? An official court of inquiry was held immediately, but its classified conclusions were not released to the inquest. The coroner was told that the inquiry was satisfied that there was no negligence and that all precautions had been taken. The jury returned verdicts of "accidental death" on all 12, and the cause was officially regarded as an unsolved mystery. Sabotage, though, was ruled out – a group of Italian prisoners of war were said to be working nearby.

Reports from the Echo in the Sixties suggest that a grenade with its detonator primed had somehow got in the load. The rough handling would have set it off. Another theory was that contractors working on Catterick airfield had a bitumen furnace near the ammunition trucks and it was regularly seen tossing red hot coals out of its chimney.

The explosion ruined the Railway Hotel, and that night soldiers are supposed to have salvaged what beer they could from its open cellars. The ruins were demolished a couple of years later, and its site beside the Great North Road has had light industrial uses since, but because the hotel was \so badly blown to bits, no one bothered to annul its liquor licence which remained valid until February 1984. Old hands in the district still know the hotel's crossroads as Haggie's Corner after Robert Haggie, who was landlord there from 1916 to 1932.

In addition to the 12 killed, 102 people were injured, with casualties being transported to hospitals in Catterick, Richmond and Darlington.



The Railway Hotel's landlady was Mabel Cotterill (left).

She was buried in the rubble, but survived along with her husband, Len.

She later recounted "It was very a very popular hotel. There was a piano in one room and everyone came for a sing-song. I let my husband out of the back door and was talking to the lady who had fallen (a woman had just a fall and needed some assistance), when everything went up. My husband had just got to the garden gate when a great flame went up and he was blown right down to the crossroads. I was partially buried inside the building. When I got myself free, I heled to drag this other lady out and we were laid on top of a pile of rubble at the bottom of the yard when someone arrived. The bar, where I had been putting stock away, was wrecked when wagon wheels came through the roof."

Mr Susan Fear (right) was working a few yards down the road in her café, serving tea to some RAF personnel. She later recalled *"I can remember it all. You can't really forget it. It all just went up in smoke. It was a sad day. The café just came down like a pack of cards. We were in it and I was injured on my arm. It all happened about 4 o'clock and I was serving the Air Force boys."*

Mrs Fear was called Mrs Meechan at the time, and her husband James Meechan had lost his life in 1940 (he is also recorded on the village War Memorial). Note that the newspaper clipping above misspelt her surname as "Meechin".



The following photographs give a further impression of the devastating blast:

The Station before:



and after:



The Railway Hotel:



The goods yard:



Clear up work and wrecked carriages:



More wrecked carriages:



The Station from the rear:





As noted above the time of the explosion (about 5 minutes to 4 in the afternoon) meant that schools had just closed for the day. Some school children were sat in a double-decker bus (registration number GHN 340, operated by United Automobile Services) near the station and had a remarkable escape. Fortunately, the blast was absorbed by buildings and despite all the windows in the bus being blown out and they all survived.

Mary Walker noted on the Catterick Village History FaceBook page *“Antie Ruby was on the bus with my cousins Mike and Morris. They were taken back up to the farm by the butchers van. Just cuts and bruises. Dad said you could find train wheels in the field down towards Scorton afterwards”*



Peter Fowler (via FaceBook) informed me that the bus was the subject of an insurance claim by Darlington based United Automobile Services. The claim was met, the vehicle repaired, and it continued in service until 1958. Here seen in Richmond Market Place.

A full list of those killed is as follows;

Civilian

- Walter Gibson, Station Master, age 46
- Mary Wallace, Railway Clerk, age 43
- Nancy Richardson, Railway Clerk, age 19
- William M. Tindill, Ordnance Worker, age 40
- Lancelot Rymer, Motor Driver, age 41
- Richard Stokes, Motor Driver

Services

- [2nd Lieutenant Laurence George King, 302642, Royal Engineers, age 29](#), St. Albans, Hertfordshire.
- [Leading Aircraftman Ieuan Jenkins, 1379397, Royal Air Force, age 34](#), son of William and Margaret Jenkins, of Burry Port, Carmarthenshire, Wales. Husband of Margaret Anita Jenkins, of Burry Port
- [Private David Reece Hopkins, 14654284 Royal Army Ordnance Corps, age 23](#), son of David Reece Hopkins and Helen Hopkins
- [Private William Thomas, 14669506, Pioneer Corps, age 18](#), son of George Henry and Rose Elizabeth Thomas, of Clapham, London.
- [Private George Stares, 1691868, Pioneer Corps, age 34](#), son of Harry and Hannah Stares of Romford, Essex
- [Private Norman Day, 14669189, Pioneer Corps, age 17](#), son Thomas and Lilian Day of Harborne, Birmingham

A follow up article from the Northern Echo is also available here regarding the last four of the service casualties of the explosion who were helping load ammunition, one of whom was only 17.

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/memories/8222939.Ammunition_explosion_ignites_more_memories/

These four are buried at Hornby churchyard, South of Catterick near Hackforth.

Ammunition was stored at Hornby Park and servicemen were billeted in the area. They were only identifiable from laundry marks in their uniforms (which could be discerned using ultra-violet light).



St Mary's Churchyard, Hornby

At the time, reporting restrictions prevented newspapers from informing readers where the explosion had been, but the Northern Echo was quick to rule out sabotage.

NORTHERN AMMUNITION TRAIN EXPLOSION NOT SABOTAGE

Death Roll 12, With Five Missing: At Least 71 Injured

SCENES reminiscent of a battlefield or a blitzed area were seen during the weekend in the vicinity of the North of England railway station where an Army and R.A.F. ammunition train blew up on Friday evening with a terrific explosion, heard ten miles away.

At least five people who were known to be near the railway station are still unaccounted for. One man in a bus, which received the full force of the blast when it pulled up outside the hotel at the station, has not been traced.

The inquest opened on Saturday on eight persons — six civilians and two Service casualties. An earlier statement by the War Office gave the then known total of Service casualties as six killed and six injured.

It is known that at least 71 people were injured. Two injured who were on the danger list at the hospital were yesterday reported to be improving.

One of the local heroes is a taxi driver who ran along the line waving a flag to stop an approaching train, passengers for which were caught by the blast as they waited on the platform. The roof of his car was torn off and all the glass shattered.

The police have ruled out any question of sabotage, and conclude that the explosion was the result of an accident.

At the inquest on Saturday, only medical evidence and evidence of identification were taken. The inquests were adjourned until Friday, 18 February.

**STATIONMASTER KILLED:
WIFE INJURED**

One of the victims was the stationmaster, Walter Gibson, aged 46. It was revealed at the inquest that Army doctors fought for his life for six hours. His wife is among the injured. Two women railway clerks were also killed and three others are in hospital.

A statement issued by the War Office on Saturday read:

The War Office regrets to announce that during the loading of Army and R.A.F. ammunition trucks at a Northern railway station an explosion occurred, causing casualties among Service and civilian personnel. According to present reports the casualties were: Service personnel: Six killed, six injured. Civilian personnel: Four killed, two injured. Passengers in a passing omnibus were injured by broken glass. Of the Service personnel killed four were of the Army and two of the R.A.F. All the injured Service personnel were Army.

The statement added that next-of-kin of Service casualties were being informed and that an inquiry into the circumstances of the explosion would be held.

The eight people known to have lost their lives and on whom the inquest was held were:

William M. Tindill, aged 40, contractor's labourer;
Lancelot Eymar, aged 41, motor driver;
Richard Stokes, motor driver;
Walter Gibson, aged 46, stationmaster;
Mrs. Mary Wallace Richmond, aged 43, clerk at the station goods department;
Miss Nancy Georgina Richardson, aged 19, clerk at the station goods department;
Leading Aircraftman Ieuan Jenkins, aged 31, of the R.A.F.;
Lieut. Lawrence George King, aged 29, of the R.T.O. staff, who was on duty.

Much damage was done over a wide area; house windows were blown out over a radius of about a mile or more. A bus on the road near a level crossing close by the station got the full force of the blast and had all its windows shattered, but remained upright. The drivers and some of the passengers were among the injured.

Several fires broke out in buildings near the scene of the explosion and railway property was extensively damaged. The N.F.S. and Army Fire Service were called out in force and worked heroically.

Railway services in the district were suspended for some time and a road had to be closed to traffic while debris was cleared away and so that firemen could work unhampered.

Military personnel were loading ammunition trucks just before the explosion. Several casualties occurred on the station premises and some outside the station.

It is stated that some Italian prisoners of war were working not far from the ammunition trucks.

The station felt the full force of the explosion. Buildings on both sides of the platform, the signal box and the stationmaster's house were badly damaged. F. Robinson, signalman, was among the injured.

**RAILWAY PASSENGERS'
ESCAPE**

By a fortunate chance the explosion occurred after a passenger train had left the station and shortly before another was due.

Police, N.F.S., military and civilians worked feverishly amid scenes of devastation for some hours to control the fires. Ambulances were sent from three towns, and first-aid and rescue parties tended the injured before they were taken to hospital.

Numerous buildings outside the station were damaged, including an hotel, a cafe, garage, houses and farm buildings.

The hotel, which was about 200 yards away, was wrecked. Its landlady, Mrs. Cockerill, was among those taken to hospital. Her husband had a remarkable escape. He had been in the goods yard office at the station speaking to Miss Richardson, one of the clerks, only just before the explosion, after which he saw her charred body among the wreckage.

The explosion left a huge crater in the middle of the goods yard. The goods yard office was completely destroyed.

A petrol depot on the opposite side of the main road to the station escaped the fire.

Some further newspaper clippings from the time ...

THE INJURED

Civilians who were detained in the hospital or who received attention included:

Mr J Armitage, Mr Thomas Adamson, Mr Barker, of the L.N.E.R.; Edmond Britton, aged eight; Mr Coles; Mr Chattwin, of the N.A.A.F.L. bakery; Mrs Cowson, Mrs Cockerill, Mr Fitzpatrick, Miss Marion Gray, Thomas Graham, Mrs W Gibson, Mr G Gibson, petroleum board; Mr Hunter, Mr Hochen, St. Austell, Mrs S Meechin, aged 38; John Hugh Meechin a child; John W Nixon, Mr Overton, Miss Roberts; Mr F Robinson, signalman at the station; Miss Ada Robinson; Mr Storey, gatekeeper; Thomas Spencer, a child, Mrs Spender, Mrs Sandford, Mr J Wilds, Mr E White; Mr G Wilson, petroleum board; Mr E Williams, and Dorothy Coates, a child.

Fires and Wreckage

The scene after the explosion was like a war-torn village immediately after a battle - fires blazing, wreckage everywhere, and bodies of dead and injured lying about.

The explosion began in one of the trucks, some of which were loaded with incendiary bombs. These trucks were blown to pieces and their loads were scattered over an area of half a mile, in which they set fire to buildings.

Buildings were shaken over a very wide area and debris covered stretches of road for miles. The blast was felt three miles away.

The railway station was wrecked and Mrs. Gibson, wife of the dead station-master, is among the injured.

She and her 15-year-old daughter Pamela were in their house on the station platform at the time. Pamela said the room they were in started to fall in. They rushed out to try to find her father, but her mother was injured by the debris.

A passing bus caught the full blast of the explosion, and the driver and passengers were injured.

WORKED THROUGH THE NIGHT

Squads worked throughout the night by the aid of flares after the fires had been put out. Many householders near the scene whose homes had been damaged, had to be evacuated. Electricity and gas mains in the area were affected and telephone lines were out of use for a time.

"The scene looked just like a miniature blitz when I arrived," said a man who was on the spot shortly after the explosion occurred. "For a time," he added, "we thought the casualties would be very much heavier than they actually are. Splendid work was done by Servicemen and civilians, including women, in tending to the injured, and a large body of firemen did an excellent job in keeping the various fires under control."

EXPLOSION VICTIMS

Funerals of Stationmaster and Girl Clerk

Representatives of the military authorities, L.N.E.R. officials and many of his railway colleagues were among the big gathering of people at the funeral yesterday of Mr. Walter Gibson, aged 46, stationmaster of a North of England railway station where, last Friday, an ammunition train blew up causing heavy casualties. There were moving scenes at the cemetery, when relatives and fellow workers paid their last tribute at the graveside.

Mr. J. E. M. Roberts, L.N.E.R. District Superintendent, and Mr. K. P. Walker, L.N.E.R. District Goods Manager (also representing Mr. C. M. Jenkin Jones, Divisional General Manager) attended for the railway company.

Mr. Walker also represented Mr. Jenkin Jones later in the afternoon at the funeral elsewhere in the area of Miss Nancy Georgina Richardson, aged 19 one of the two women clerks at the railway station who lost their lives in the explosion. So big was the gathering that scores of people were unable to enter the little village Methodist Church where the funeral service took place. It could have been filled twice over.

At another village a private funeral has been arranged for Mrs. Mary Wallace Richmond, the other woman clerk who was killed.

Family mourners at the funeral of Mr Gibson were: Miss Pamela Gibson (daughter); Mr and Mrs F Gibson (brother and sister-in-law); Miss Evelyn Gibson (sister); Mr and Mrs A Gibson (brother and sister-in-law); Mrs Dance and Midshipman Dance (sister-in-law and nephew); Mrs Renwick, Mrs Kendall (sisters-in-law); Miss Freda Swayne (niece).

Nancy Richardson had taught at the village Methodist Church where the funeral was held.

" DAILY HERALD " REPORTER.

FROM his wrecked box by the level-crossing in the North of England a wounded signalman saw his cottage across the road collapsing.

He knew that his wife and daughter were in the cottage. But he also knew that trains were due to pass through the village station, which had just been demolished by an explosion.

So, though almost blinded by blood, he remained at his levers.

Less than 100 yards away an ammunition train was scattering death and destruction over the village.

It had blown up while being loaded by soldiers and airmen from a dump near the goods sidings.

Others Feared Dead

People working on the railway, passengers waiting for buses and trains, housewives preparing tea, children coming home from school were killed and injured.

Twelve people—including six Service men, the stationmaster and two girl goods clerks—lost their lives and 71 were injured. At least five others are missing and are feared to be dead.

The explosion, which was heard 10 miles away, laid waste a square mile of the village, scattering incendiary bombs and bomb fragments over a wide area.

It wrecked houses, shops and hotels, and blasted windows three miles away.

" Nobody Else "

The signalman, 47-years-old Fred Robinson, told me:—

"I saw that my cottage had gone, but there was nobody else to carry on.

"I learned later that my 24-years-old daughter, Ena, was in hospital, but my wife was safe.

"I got a colleague to open the gates to let through a train which had been held up at the distant signals because the explosion had cut our communications, and when it was clear they sent me to hospital."

hospital.
Though her husband was dying, her home wrecked and she was injured, the stationmaster's wife ran through the village warning people to leave their homes.

Mrs. Mabel Cockerill, tenant of the Railway Hotel, also defied her own serious injuries to drag an elderly guest from the ruins of her home.

*** Blown Across Road**

Tom Sykes, aged 42, motor-driver, whose wife and 11-years-old daughter, Jean, escaped with cuts when their cottage was destroyed, had an astonishing escape himself.

"I was unloading potatoes in the goods yard when the explosion blew me and my lorry across the road," he said.

Four of the victims have not yet been identified.

The inquest has been adjourned on the others: Walter Gibson, aged 46, stationmaster; Mary Wallace Richmond, aged 43, railway clerk; Nancy Georgina Richardson, aged 19, railway clerk; 2nd-Lieutenant Lawrence George King, R.E., aged 29; L.A.C. Ieuan Jenkins, R.A.F., aged 34; William M. Tindill, aged 40, ordnance worker; Lancelot Rymer, aged 41, motor-driver; and Richard Stokes, motor-driver.

There are also many memories of the day that have been recalled by local residents ...

David Graham related a number of other local memories on the Brompton-on-Swale village FaceBook page ...

Firstly, how his paternal grandfather Matthew Graham was badly injured in the explosion. *"He worked at the station as a porter and was thrown about thirty yards from where he was stood by the blast. He had been talking to the Station master and he was killed outright with both legs blown off. My granddad was off work for a year afterwards and his nerves were shattered for the rest of his life."*

It is undoubtable that there were truly horrific scenes. Walter Gibson the Station Master was in fact trapped and as noted in the Northern Echo article, there was a three hour battle to rescue him. Apparently, his legs had to be amputated as they tried in vain to save him.

Similarly, Nancy Richardson the 19 year old ticket clerk was trapped under a stove in the remains of the Station office and died of her wounds before she could be extricated.

Neil Percival said on the Catterick Village History Facebook Page

"my great grandfather William Sawyer worked with others to lift that stove off the girl trapped underneath it. They lost most of the skin on their hands trying to save her"

David Graham also mentioned Denis Brown who David worked with as an apprentice ...

"Denis Brown, who grew up in the village, and the afternoon of the explosion, was playing with his pals in the field parallel to Bridge Road which is now Curteis Drive. Denis described to me the scene as being like a gigantic firework with burning debris raining down out of the sky around them, despite their being some distance from the site of the blast. He reckoned that the pressure wave from the explosion did pass over Brompton, as a fall of soot came down the chimney at his house in Richmond Road and covered his dad from head to foot! Allegedly, at what later became our house in Bridge Road, a gentleman sat on the downstairs loo was that startled that he ran out into the back garden with his pants still round his ankles, in shock!"

"By coincidence, my dad came home on leave from his RAF Bomber Command base in Lincolnshire that evening to find the trains weren't running from Darlington to Catterick Bridge, so he got a bus to Richmond and walked to Brompton, to discover his dad (my granddad Matthew Graham) was in the Military Hospital on the Camp, having being blown up at work at the station hours earlier. Going in to the ward where he was, dad didn't at first recognise him due to the state he was in."

My own Father, Geoffrey Hodgson, also recalls playing in a field behind Richmond Road as an 8 year old, with some friends (with Denis Brown?). School had not long finished and they heard the massive explosion. Within a short time a large lump of shrapnel came down, landing a few yards away. The curious children went to pick it up but quickly realised it was smoking hot!

Peter Fowler also related interviewing his Uncle Ron, for an oral history project called Garrison Voices

"when asked if he remembered the explosion, he provided the following answer. " I remember exactly where I was when the explosion took place, I was sitting in the dentists chair at the Military Hospital". Within a few minutes patients were being removed to allow victims of the explosion to be admitted."

Peter went on to say *"Ron has vivid recollections of the rows of stretchers outside the hospital, laden with patients awaiting treatment. One other event which did not receive a great deal of publicity at the time. Three soldiers tasked with guarding the remains of the Railway Hotel, decided to help themselves, and sampled the contents of the cellar. All were charged with looting, and were dealt with by Court Martial."*

James Crowley posted the following comment on the Catterick Village history FaceBook page:

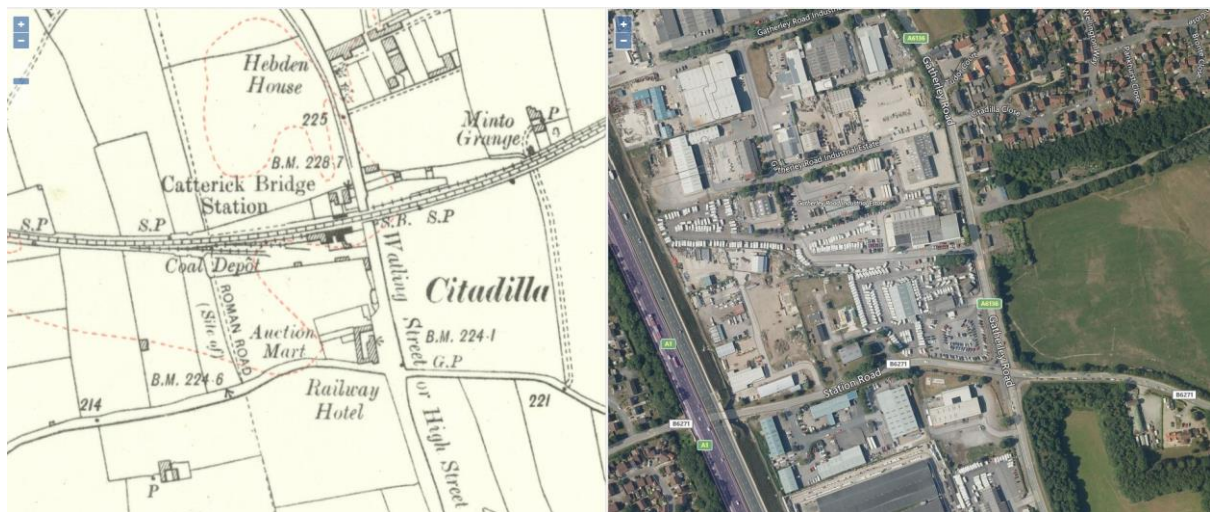
"the late John Meechan was injured in the explosion. He was a schoolboy at the time. Fred Robinson, signal man, was injured, but stuck to his post throughout the mayhem following the explosion."

Truck driver John Weller who rescued people and helped move bodies was subsequently presented with the Edward medal by King George VI – another story related in the Northern Echo

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/8260071.catterick-bridge-bravery/>

It's now quite amazing to think that there are few reminders of that terrible afternoon, with the Station Hotel and Catterick Bridge Station all gone, replaced by car and caravan lots.

I often think there should be a memorial or a plaque or something to let people know what happened. Perhaps one day.



FaceBook Page Links

Brompton-on-Swale : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bromptononswalebanter>

Catterick Camp : <https://www.facebook.com/Catterick-Camp-History-369617456386087>

Catterick Village : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/118731764922689>

ROBERT R. JEWITT, Private 7602266, RAOC, 22nd May 1940

Robert Raymond Jewitt was born in Netherton in Northumberland in 1916, the son of Robson and Eliza Jewitt. In 1935, he married my great Aunt, Lillie Hodgson in the Richmond area.

At the moment though, I can't find Robert or his family in the 1939 Register, so I don't know what he was doing or where exactly he was at that time.

What I do know is that Robert was serving in France in 1940 and initially he was listed as missing, which isn't too surprising as the retreat towards the French coast in May 1940 was chaotic.

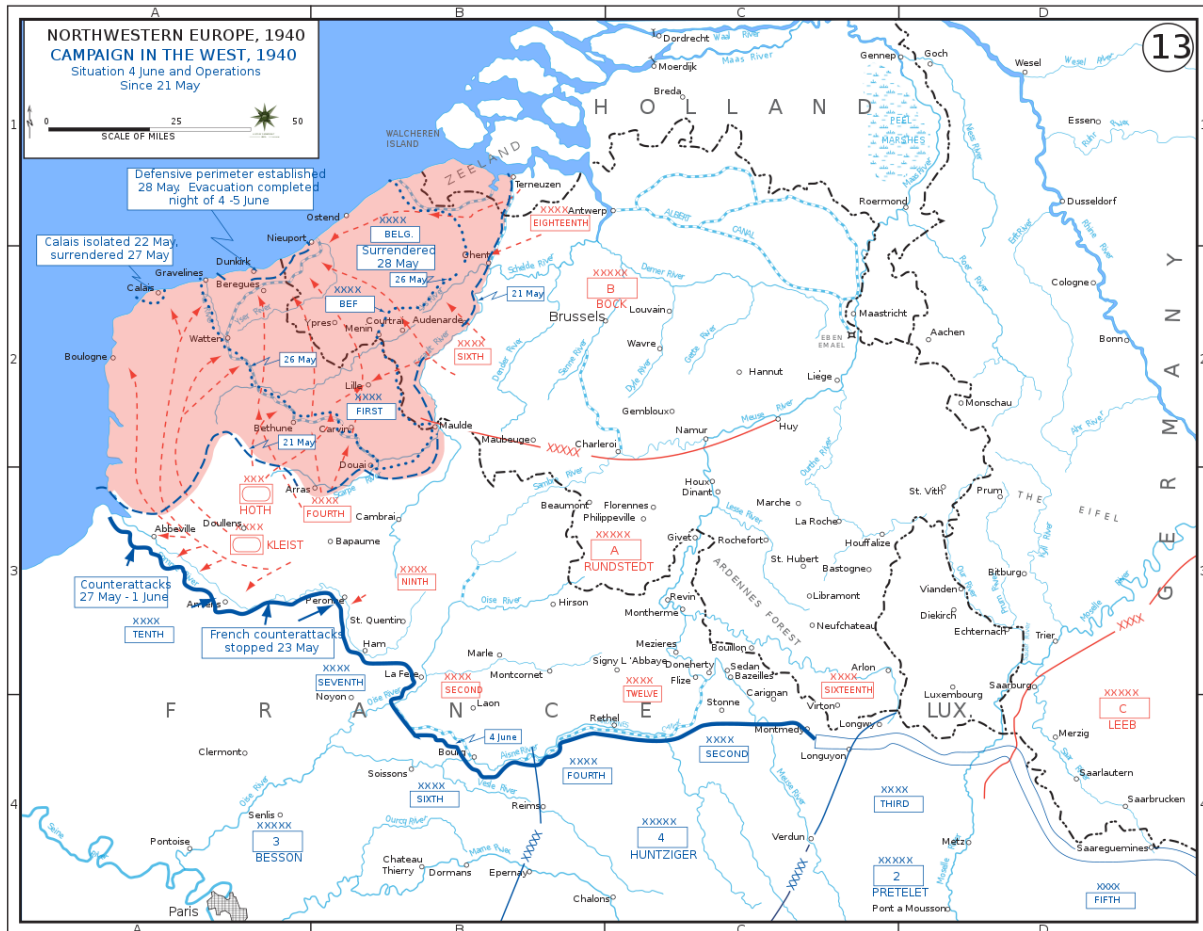
7607657	GORE	Pte.	J.		10.5/16.6.40.
7617144	GREEN	Pte.	E.		10.5/16.6.40.
7592321	GURR	Pte.	B.R.	Att. 2 Bn. R.S. Fus.	10.5/16.6.40.
7602266	JEWITT	Pte.	R.R.		Date not reported
7590735	McLEAN	Pte.	R.J.		-do-
7599131	SKEGG	Pte.	R.D.		10.5/16.6.40.
7591405	SMITH	Pte.	J.		Date not reported
7609845	WALKER	Pte.	H.		-do-
7590034	WRIGHT	A/L/Cpl.	H.J.	Att 1/7 Middx. Regt.	10.5/16.6.40.

It's likely he was killed near to the village where he was buried, Nielles-les-Blequin, during the retreat.

Nielles-les-Blequin is a small village (800 inhabitants in 2004) in the Pas-de-Calais, France about 20 miles East of Boulogne and about 40 miles South of Dunkirk. Marked by the red dot on the map, right.



On 22nd May, 1940, the [Battle of Boulogne](#) began as the German panzers of Heinz Guderian's 19th Corps and Georg Reinhardt's 41st Corps closed in on Boulogne and British and French forces fell back towards the coastal ports of Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk.



There are only two Second World War graves in the churchyard at Nielles-les-Blequin (and an additional one from WW1). Both the casualties from WW2 are from the same date (22nd May 1940). This is pretty unusual, as most graves were relocated to more centralized larger plots. Most of the exceptions were because the local villages had “adopted” the graves and they were obviously well cared for.

The other grave is that of Richard Maurice Seagrave of the RASC and its possible that both casualties were the result of enemy air action (convoys of vehicles were dive bombed and strafed in the retreat) or a more mundane road accident. Robert and Richard may even have been in the same vehicle.

I am currently trying to find out more from local French sources



Gravestone of Robert Jewitt, Nielles-Les-Blequin, France

Sources

- (1) CWGC <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/3073649/ROBERT%20RAYMOND%20JEWITT/>
- (2) May 1940 Campaign Details
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Boulogne
<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/UK/UK-NWE-Flanders/index.html>

HAROLD LYTH, Sapper 1864049, Royal Engineers, 23rd April 1941, Age 34

Harold Lyth was born in 1906 and married Edith Mary Appleton in 1927 in Bedale.

Harold enlisted in the Royal Engineers, but it seems that he volunteered for bomb disposal. The men of the Bomb Disposal Companies were all volunteers, and once enlisted, they had to serve a minimum of 6 months before they could opt for transfer.

The first unexploded bombs were encountered in the autumn of 1939 and were for the most part easily dealt with, mostly by Royal Air Force or Air Raid Precautions personnel. In the spring of 1940, when bombing became far more regular, the British government realized that they were going to need professionals in numbers to deal with the coming problem. 25 sections were authorized for the Royal Engineers in May 1940, another 109 in June, and 220 by August. Organization was needed, and as the Blitz began, 25 "Bomb Disposal Companies" were created between August 1940 and January 1941. Each company had ten sections, each section having a bomb disposal officer and 14 other ranks to assist.

As far as I can tell, Harold served with the 19th Bomb Disposal Company, 185th Bomb Disposal section, Royal Engineers. At least that's what the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show. The 19th Bomb Disposal Company was formed in October 1940 in Bedford under the command of Major LP Hodgkinson. It remained there until 1944 when it was allocated for the invasion of Europe.



Gravestone of Harold and Edith Lyth, Brompton-on-Swale Cemetery

I eventually discovered the relevant unit War History that recorded the details of how Harold died, although its listed under the 7th Bomb Disposal Company.

The records show that Harold died in Plymouth, with records indicating that his place of residence at the time was Leeds.

Plymouth was a major target for German bombing and suffered a serious raid by German bombers on 22nd April 1941 and it's likely that Harold and his Bomb Disposal unit colleagues were dealing with delayed action bombs from that raid.

It was during this raid that a communal air raid shelter at Portland Square in Plymouth took a direct hit which killed 72 men, women and children.



Corner of Old Town Street, Plymouth 1941

The War Diary for the 7th Bomb Disposal Company gives the details of Harold’s death on the 23rd April stating that he was killed in Plymouth whilst trying to defuse a delayed action bomb along with two colleagues (L/Sgt Stanley Edward Gray and Sapper William James Gibson).

“Killed by delayed action bomb 1864049 L/Sgt Gray, S.E. 186049 Spr. Lyth. H, 3311879 Spr, Gibson W.J. of No. 185 H.D. Section.”

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P.S. Regs., Vol. 1 and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Excess heading not required)

Unit: No. 7 Bomb Disposal Coy. R.E.
Commanding Officer: MAJOR G.H. BRADBURY, R.E.

Month and Year: April, 1941.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
PLYMOUTH	21		Heavy Air Raid on Plymouth.	
	22		do. do.	
	23		do. do.	
	23		Killed by delayed action bomb 1864049 L/Sgt. Gray S.E., 186049 Spr. Lyth H, 3311879 Spr, Gibson W.J. of No. 185 H.D. Section.	
	23		Killed by delayed action bomb 2122049 Spr. Smith J., 2122236 Spr. Madhams F. of No. 185 H.D. Secn.	
BRISTOL	23		Lt. A.D. Allen posted from No. 3 Coy. p. Troops Engineers. Auth: P/187173 (A.G.7(c))	
BRISTOL	25		Lt. C.A. Nash, posted from No. 2 R.L.C. Derby, Auth: P/161653 A.G.7(c)	
PLYMOUTH	25		185 & 186 S.D. Sections moved from BRISTOL to PLYMOUTH.	
BRISTOL	25		Reinforcements No. 100 & 101 R.E. Sections from No. 5 B.D. Coy. R.E.	
BRISTOL	26		Capt. A.H. Smith assumed command of Company during absence of Major J.H. Bradbury on privilege leave.	
PLYMOUTH	26		Heavy Air Raid.	

22222 Wt. 32000/1100 1.000m 12740-Mac & Co Ltd-51-2212 Form 2211922

War Diary Extract for death of Harold Lyth

The same day two more bomb disposal personnel were killed by a delayed action bomb – Sapper J Smith and Sapper McShane of 189 Section.

It just shows how incredibly dangerous bomb disposal activities were and how brave the men of the Bomb Disposal units were.

Harold's name is recorded on the Royal Engineers Association Bomb Disposal Branch Roll of Honour.

Sources

- (1) The Plymouth Blitz
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Blitz
- (2) Bomb Disposal Web Site
<https://www.royalengineersbombdisposal-eod.org.uk/individual/lyth-h/>
https://www.royalengineersbombdisposal-eod.org.uk/23_april_1941.html
- (3) Bomb Disposal Unit Overall History
<https://www.bombdisposalclub.org.uk/bomb-disposal-history/>
- (4) CWGC Grave Ref 226 **BROMPTON-ON-SWALE CEMETERY**, England
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2407123>

JAMES H. MEECHAN, Driver 44256, Royal Army Service Corps, 30th May 1940, Age 30

Tracking down the story of “our” James Meechan could have been a bit difficult as there are three casualties listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission with that name, and none had an obvious connection to the village from what I could tell.

JAMES MEECHAN Private Service Number: 7757803	Royal Army Veterinary Corps United Kingdom	Died 13 February 1944 25 years old	CASSINO WAR CEMETERY II. F. 15. Italy
JAMES MEECHAN Driver Service Number: 44256	1 Corps Ammunition Park Royal Army Service Corps United Kingdom	Died Between 30 May 1940 and 02 June 1940	DUNKIRK MEMORIAL Column 137. France
JAMES MEECHAN Driver Service Number: T/84381	Royal Army Service Corps United Kingdom	Died 16 August 1940 20 years old	BROOKWOOD 1939-1945 MEMORIAL Panel 17. Column 1. United Kingdom

However, I asked my Dad (Geoffrey Hodgson) and he knew.

He told me that “our” James Meechan was the first husband of Mrs Susan Fear of the village and that her maiden name was Susan Harker. She would later marry Charles “Charlie” Fear in 1948, becoming landlady of the King William IV. During the war Mrs Meechan as she was then, ran the café near Catterick Bridge Station and was injured in the train explosion in 1944.

I found that a James Hugh Meechan was also listed as being commemorated on a war memorial at Bolton-on-Swale, even though some web sites had this an entry for WW1, cross checking other records showed this James Hugh Meechan was born in 1910 - far too young for serving in WW1, but old enough for service in WW2. Further cross checking showed James H. Meechan marrying Susan Harker in Richmondshire in the last quarter of 1931. There is only one James Meechan on the list that is the correct age and that’s Driver James Meechan of 1st Corp Ammunition Park, RASC.

I have not yet been able to find out much more about James death. Units of the RASC were assigned and re-assigned to other units as support and it’s pretty difficult to establish where exactly James was at the end of May. His date of death is not entirely clear either, which again is typical of the chaotic retreat to Dunkirk and the channel ports.

The Army moved on wheels in 1940 and, except for the railways and unit transport, the wheels were provided by the Royal Army Service Corps. They carried troops and their equipment, they carried and distributed ammunition, stores, rations, petrol and mail; they provided transport alike in back areas and at the front for almost every purpose, driving often under most difficult conditions and at time in danger where convoys of trucks and vehicles were often the target of air attacks.

James has no known grave and is commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial which stands at the entrance to the Commonwealth War Graves section of Dunkirk Town Cemetery. It commemorates more than 4,500 casualties of the British Expeditionary Force who died in the campaign of 1939-40 or who died in captivity during this campaign and who have no known grave.



Sources:

- (1) CWGC Link to James Meechan, RASC Driver 44256 died between 30th May and 2nd June 1940. Northern France. No known grave. Commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 37.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2773001/MEECHAN,%20JAMES>

REGINALD TAYLOR, Private 4387696, 1st Bn Green Howards, 15th May 1941, Age 27

Reginald Taylor was the son of William and Catherine Taylor (nee Biggins) of Brompton on Swale. William and Catherine married in the Richmond area in 1911. They had a daughter called Florence in 1912, Reginald was born in 1913 and another daughter, Monica was born in 1916.

Reginald served with 1st Battalion, Green Howards and this battalion was very active early in the war. It proceeded to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in autumn 1939, but were brought back and sent to take part in the Norwegian Campaign.

The 1st Battalion Green Howards formed part of "Sickle Force" and were landed at Aandalsnes 17-18 April 1940. Having landed successfully, the men moved rapidly inland towards Kvam. Sickle Force secured Dombass, placing it in a position to turn north towards Trondhiem. They were then ordered to proceed onto Lillehamer. The brigade then fought a series of rearguard actions back to Dombass. Reinforcements began landing at Aandalsnes during the evening of 23 April and a battle was fought on Thursday 25-26 April 1940. Even though the British fought tenaciously, they were forced to withdraw.



Gravestone for Reginald Taylor (Photograph by Bob Dennis)

The 1st Battalion subsequently spent 12 months training in Londonderry (Northern Ireland) and Reginald is buried in the Londonderry City Cemetery

It is therefore likely he died as the result of illness or possibly in a training accident. He appears to be the only Green Howard in the cemetery.

Sources

(1) CWGC Londonderry City Cemetery, RC Plot, Sec M, Grave 3

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2931589/TAYLOR,%20REGINALD>

(2) Green Howards in Norway (1940)

<https://greenhowards.org.uk/events/80-years-ago-the-green-howards-in-norway/>

SIDNEY J. TEMPLE, Sergeant 7560229, Royal Tank Regiment, 21st May 1940, Age 30

Sidney James Temple was the son of Sidney George Temple and Anne Christine Milion and was born on 7th Jan 1910 in St Helier on the island of Jersey. He had three brothers; George Frederick born 1907; William Robert born 1912 and Albert Edward born 1914. They appear to have lived in Nelson Cottages, Kensington Place, St Helier.

His father served with the Channel Islands Militia and in the First World War and went to France in 1916.

Sidney was married in 1938 to Olive Sawyer in the Richmond area and Olive lived in Brompton-on-Swale.

Sidney served with the 7th Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) and was almost certainly killed during fighting around Arras. There is an excellent and detailed description available on the 4th and 7th Royal Tank Regiment web site (see below). A small extract is given here relating to a counterattack made by these units, code name "Frank Force" against the onslaught of the German blitzkrieg into France led by a certain Erwin Rommel, on 21st May 1940, the date of Sid's death,.

"7 RTR were late on the Start Line but had better communications, and made good progress Eastwards. Major King and Sergeant Boyle, (later awarded a DCM) in their Matilda Mk IIs, found and destroyed a battery of A Tk (anti-tank) guns and stalked and destroyed an 88 mm gun. Casualties were heavy and by 1600 hrs the COs of both Regiments and the Adjutant 7 RTR (Kauter) were among the dead. The Durham Light Infantry arrived at 1630; despite their fatigue both battalions fought bravely and effectively. Maj Gen Rommel, General Officer Commanding 7 Panzer Division, was appalled at the poor showing of the SS. His Panzer Regiment and its artillery were well ahead in Wailly and were being attacked by tanks of 7 RTR. Lt Tom Craig (a future CO of 4 RTR) had actually entered Wailly in his Matilda Mk II and was creating havoc including destroying a command armoured car. But eventually he, too, was "brewed up". Gen Rommel and his ADC, Lt Most, gripped the battery of anti-tank guns and, indicating targets personally, they brought the 7 RTR threat to a smoking halt. It had been a very close thing and Lt Most was killed in the process. He was buried with the Seventh crews in the Wailly Cemetery. At dusk "Frank Force" withdrew to rally at Achicourt with the now very depleted infantry battalions. They were subjected to dive bombing and attack by tanks from 5 Panzer Div which they successfully drove off. The Seventh War Diary records that by this stage they had four officers killed, four wounded and three missing, and twenty five other ranks killed, ten wounded and sixteen missing. "Frank Force" had achieved the aim but at a heavy cost."

It seems that Sidney paid part of that heavy cost.



A knocked out Matilda MkII Tank of 7th RTR - 1940



A Matilda MkII Tank as used by 7th RTR - 1940

Sidney was 30 when he was killed and is buried in Row A, Grave 1 of the Beaurains Communal Cemetery near Arras in France.



Beaurains Cemetery, Arras, France

Sources

- (1) 4th & 7th RTR History <http://4and7royaltankregiment.com/1940-1941.html>
- (2) Battle of Arras 1940 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Arras_\(1940\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Arras_(1940))
- (3) CWGC <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2278775/>

Links

Local History

<https://www.bromptononswalehistory.com>

Google Maps

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&q=brompton+on+swale&ie=UTF8&hq=&hnear=Brompton-on-Swale,+Richmond,+North+Yorkshire,+United+Kingdom&gl=uk&ll=54.391869,-1.660912&spn=0.000672,0.002449&t=h&z=19>

Graves and Memorials

UK National Inventory of War Memorials
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission
The War Graves Photographic Project
Roll of Honour

<http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/> Ref: 30082

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

<http://twgpp.org/index.php>

<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/>

Forums

WW2 Forum

<http://www.ww2talk.com/forum/>

WW1 Forum

<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/>