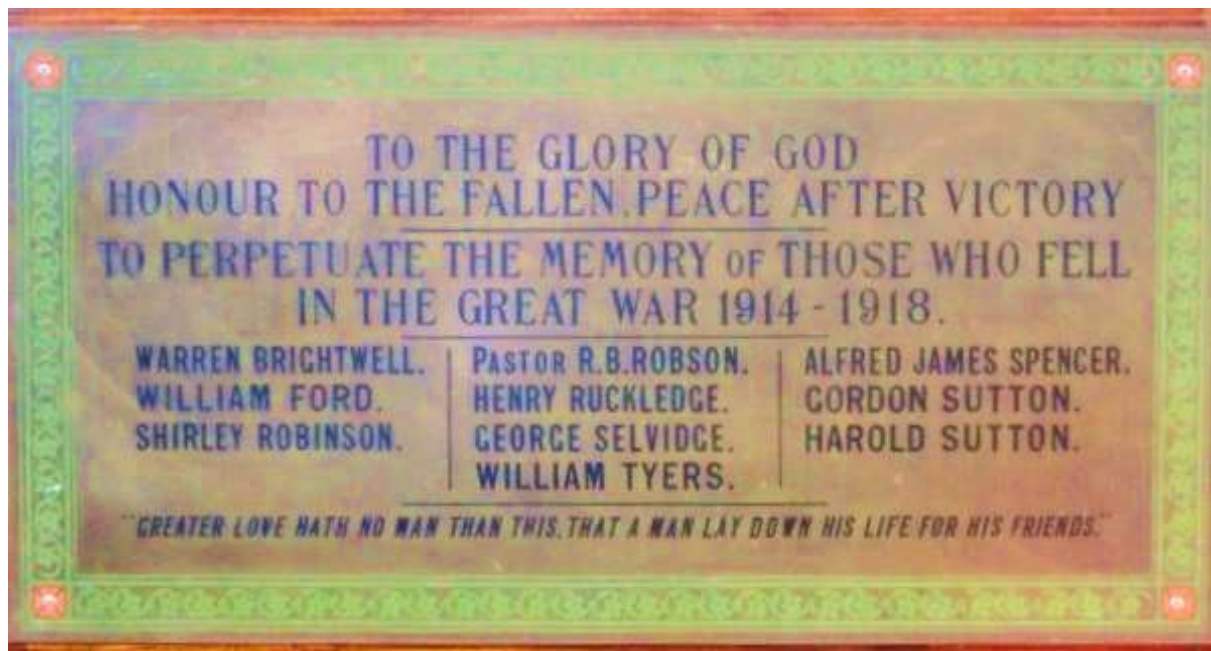


Biographies of the men commemorated on the World War 1 memorial



South Wigston Methodist Church

Blaby Road, South Wigston, Leicestershire

The church and the memorial

The Wesleyan Methodist Society was founded in the early 1880s, shortly after the establishment of the new village of South Wigston.

The current church, built in front of the 1886 chapel, was opened in 1902.

The Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists joined forces and proceeds from the sale of the Primitive Methodist Church in Countesthorpe Road were used to modernise the Wesleyan Church. It re-opened in 1971 as South Wigston Methodist Church.

The memorial to ten men who died in the first World War is a small plaque situated in the prayer chapel of the church. If you would like to view the memorial please e-mail mail@swmchurch.org.uk

Research into the lives of the soldiers was started in September 2014 and formed the basis of a series of articles in the church magazine *The Oracle*. Further research has been carried out and relatives of two of the men have been able to add some information and photographs.

This booklet remains a work in progress — additional information and corrections are welcomed.

Mary Bryceland

pmbry@gmail.com

Notes

Addresses are in South Wigston unless otherwise stated.

Soldiers records – information from The National Archives:

In September 1940, as the result of a fire caused by an incendiary bomb at the War Office Record Store in Arnside Street, London, approximately two thirds of 6.5 million soldiers' documents for the First World War were destroyed. Those records which survived were mostly charred or water damaged and unfit for consultation and became known as the 'burnt documents'. Commencing in 1996 and with the aid of Lottery funding and volunteers from the Genealogical Society of Utah under an agreement with the Ministry of Defence, the surviving records were the subject of a large microfilming programme designed to capture as much information as possible from these fragile documents and enable them to be permanently preserved.

Military records for some of the soldiers on the memorial are missing.

The UK censuses for 1891, 1901 and 1911 were used to find out about the soldiers' families.

**Private, 201462, Joseph Warren Brightwell,
1/4th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment**

Born: 1897 in South Wigston

Died: Friday 29 June 1917 aged 19

Commemorated: Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

Parents: John Thomas Brightwell and Florence Eleanor Brightwell (née Wood)

Employment: Midland Railway Company

Joseph Warren Brightwell was known to family as Warren, under which name he appears on the 1901 and 1911 censuses. His father was John Thomas Brightwell who was a platelayer on the Midland Railway and was born in Naseby, Northamptonshire. In 1895 John married Florence Eleanor Wood of Wigston Magna. In 1901 the family was living at 62 Bassett Street, and by 1911 they had moved to 15 Glen Gate.

1911 census

John Thomas Brightwell age 40, Platelayer, Midland Railway

Florence Eleanor, 37

Warren age 13, Walter 11, Violet 10, Ralph 6, were all at school. The two youngest children were Iris 3 and Charles 1.

Additional information: Married 15 years, 6 children born alive, 6 still living; all born in South Wigston.

Warren signed up to the 3/4th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment on 5 June 1915; he was aged 17 years old and living at 15 Glen Gate. At the time of his death he was with C Company of the 1/4th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment; this formed part of the 46th (North Midland) division under General Horne. The division was involved in the Arras Offensive; in particular a flanking operation towards Lens from 3 June - 26 August 1917.

Warren died on Friday 29 June 1917 aged 19. The entry in the regimental diary for that date is brief 'Position [Hill 65 west of Lens] the same. Heavy artillery at intervals.'¹

*The Fifth Leicestershire: A record of the 1/5th Battalion the Leicestershire Regiment, T.F., during the War, 1914-1919.*²

The objective this time was "Hill 65," "Adjunct," "Adjacent" and "Advance" trenches and the outskirts of the Cité du Moulin—the last of the Cités outside Lens itself. Three Battalions would attack, ourselves on the right, our 4th Battalion in the centre, and the 5th S. Staffordshires on the left.

Warren is remembered on the Arras Memorial which commemorates almost 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras sector between the spring of 1916

¹ The National Archives, WO 95-290.

² www.bigenealogy.com/leicestershire/hill_65.htm [11 October 2021].

and 7 August 1918, the eve of the Advance to Victory, and have no known grave.³

The newspaper report and photo are too blurred to include; the report states

Pte. J. W. Brightwell of the Leicesters, was killed in action on July 29th. A letter from his officer states that he was much liked by all the N.C.O.s and men of his company, always ready and willing, and wearing a smile; he will be much missed by his comrades. Pte. Brightwell enlisted just over two years ago, and had been at the front about 21 months. His father and mother reside at 15 Glen Gate, South Wigston. Before joining up Brightwell worked for the M.R. Company.⁴

³ Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

⁴ *Leicester Mail*, 27 July 1917, p. 5.

Scan of Warren's sign-up form showing his signature and address. *Deceased 1917* has been written across the form.

OF

Brightwell Corps / *15* *5111* *111111*

to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. *Joseph Warren Brightwell*
15 Glen Gate
South Wigston

2. *Yes*

3. *Yes*

4. *No*

do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

J. W. Brightwell SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
J. W. Brightwell
W. J. ... Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

J. W. Brightwell swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, according to the conditions of my service.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

I, *Capt R. W. Bedingfield* do hereby certify, that, in my presence, all the foregoing Questions were put to the Recruit, above named, that the Answers written opposite to them are those which he gave to me, and that he has made and signed the Declaration, and taken the oath at *LEICESTER* on this *5* day of *June* 1915. *R. W. Bedingfield* Signature of Justice of the Peace, Officer, or other person authorized to attest Recruits.

0372

One of the 'burnt documents' from The National Archives

**Private, 70444, (Thomas) William Ford,
2nd Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby
Regiment)**

Born: 1893, South Wigston

Died: 17 October 1916, aged 23

Commemorated: Grove Town Cemetery, Meaulte,
Somme, France

Parents: Thomas and Jane Ford

Wife: Florence Robinson

William Ford proved slightly elusive. Having spent some time tracing the only William Ford associated with South Wigston it was concluded that Thomas William Ford is the man commemorated on our memorial and mentioned in Pamela Ward's book *Wigston at War* – perhaps he was known in the family as William to distinguish him from his father Tom.⁵

Thomas William Ford was born early in 1893 to Thomas and Jane Ford of Glen Gate. In the 1891 census the household comprised 33 year old Tom, a builder's waggoner born in Dunton Bassett, his 26 year old wife Jane born in Bruntingthorpe, 14 year old son, Jonathan, a railway bar nipper, also born in Bruntingthorpe. 11 year-old Matilda, who was born in Wigston, was still at school. The house must have been crowded as there were three more adults: 78 year old grandfather, and former farm

⁵ P. Ward, *Wigston at war* (Wigston: The Author, 2004)

labourer, Tom Ford senior, a lodger and a boarder both aged 21 and working as firemen on railway engines.

In the 1901 census, at 45 Glen Gate, Jonathan was working as a railway storekeeper (Thomas) William, aged 7, appeared on the census, and there were three different boarders – all railway firemen.

In 1911 the family was still at 45 Glen Gate and 17 year old (Thomas) William worked as an apprentice carpenter.

In early 1916 William married Florence Robinson (Florrie in the 1911 census), a 21 year old hosiery worker from Wigston Magna. At the time of William's death Florence was living at 36 Moat Street, Wigston Magna.

William's service papers have not survived but it is known, from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, that he served with 2nd Battalion the Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment). The Battalion was part of the 6th Division of the 4th Army under Lieutenant General Henry Rawlinson and was engaged in the battle of le Transloy from 1st to 18th October. William died on 17 October 1916 aged 23. The Regimental diary for that date only mentions the death of an officer while the statistics for the month note that 40 other ranks died. It is not clear from the diary exactly where the Battalion was based. The diary, which is very faint, reads

9th October MONTAUBAN The Battn moved from camp by companies intervals between each at 3.30 pm and took over support line trenches from (...) at N 32 D. Battn HQ at approximately N 32 D. 84. All companies were in position by 8.5 pm.

The next day the officer wrote that *digging parties had rather a warm time from enemy machine gun fire and a few shells.*

The Battalion appears to have remained in this position until after William's death.

In September 1916, the 34th and 2/2nd London Casualty Clearing Stations were established at Meaulte, known to the troops as Grove Town, to deal with casualties from the Somme battlefields so it is possible that William was taken there. It is interesting that the typewritten Grave Report gives "W. Ford" with the letter T being inserted by hand – perhaps confirmation that he was usually known as William.

**Private, 32660, Shirley Robinson,
1st Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment
(Formerly 011011, R.A.O.C)**

Born: 1891, South Wigston

Died: 12th May 1917, aged c. 26

Commemorated: Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

Parents: John Robinson and Sarah Goode

Shirley Robinson was born shortly after the 1891 census which showed his parents and siblings living in Glen Gate.

John Robinson, age 45, Railway guard, b. Glen Magna

Sarah Robinson, 42, b. Peatling Magna

Kate Robinson, 9, Scholar, b. Wigston

Ernest G. Robinson, 3, b. Wigston

Two older siblings, Ellen and William appear on earlier censuses.

Shirley appeared in the 1901 census as a 9 year old, and 26 year old Ellen had returned home to 63 Glen Gate and was working as a draper's assistant. Kate was a bobbin fitter and Ernest, a shoe office boy.

In 1911 the family was still at 63 Glen Gate. Ernest, aged 23, was a clerk (Elastic web) and 20 year-old Shirley a warehouseman at the same company. The company was probably Leaders Elastic Web factory off Garden Street;

this subsequently became the New Brunswick Works for 'Morrisons Electric'.



The Robinson family of Glengate c.1890. John Robinson was born in 1846, his wife Sarah in 1849. Following the death of John a few years after this date the family moved to Albion Street and some of their descendants live in South Wigston today.

Photo of the Robinson family⁶

Shirley's final days taken from the *Diary of the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment, May 1917*

10th May Position: Sapignies and Behagnies
The Battalion relieved the 2nd Gordons and 2nd
Border Regiment in the front line on the night
10th/11th

⁶ P. Mastin, *South Wigston: the early years 1883-1913* (Wigston Magna: Windhover Publications, 1997)

11th May Near Bullecourt

Battalion holding front line. Preparation for attack.

Casualties: Other Ranks: 1 Killed. 15 wounded

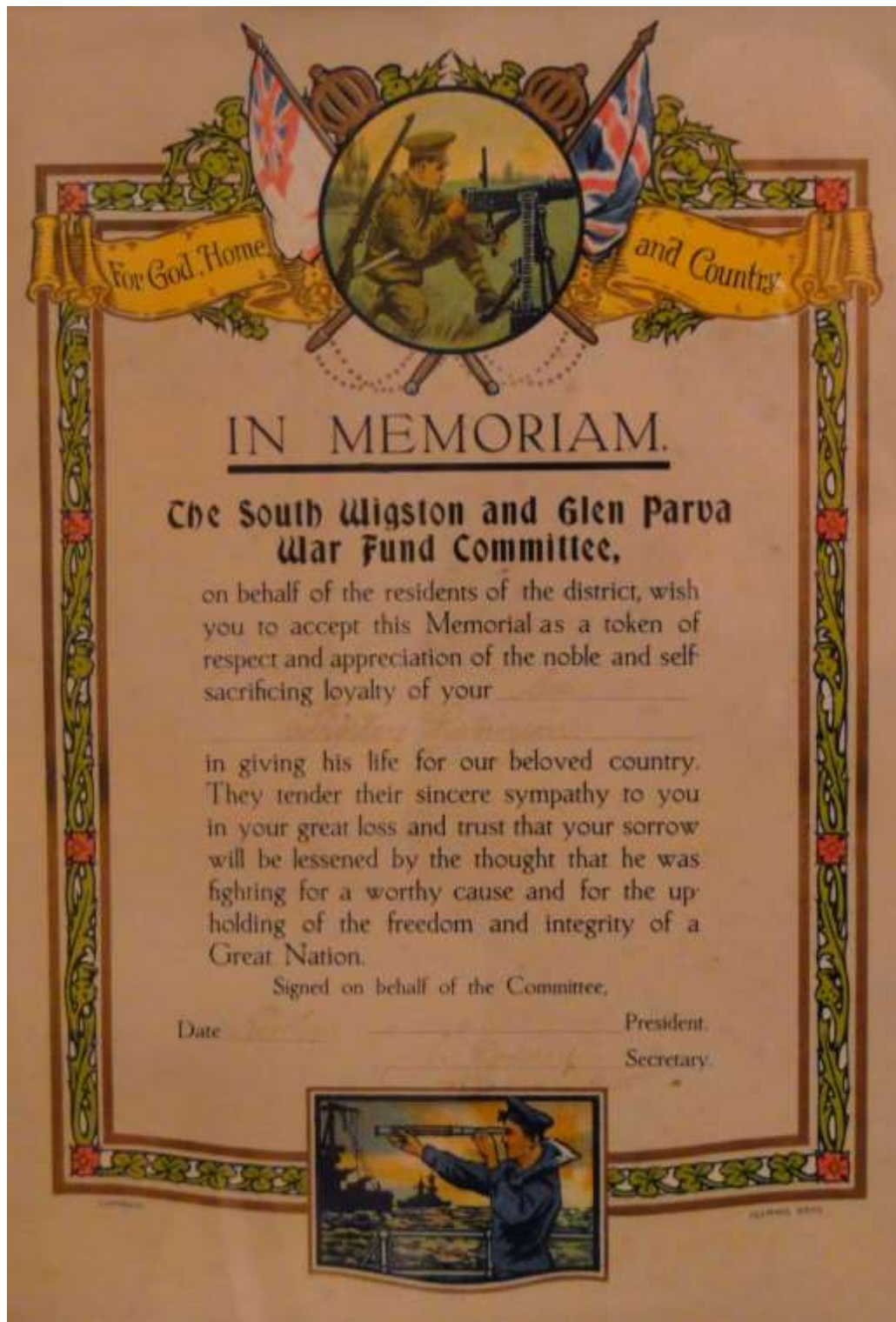
12th May Bullecourt

The Battalion attacked the village of BULLECOURT, the following officer casualties occurred [officers are named].

Casualties in Other Ranks were: Killed 21.

Wounded 61. Missing 26.





A certificate given to Shirley's family honouring the man who had "given his life for our beloved country."

Pastor Robert Bell Robson
Private 81143 RAMC, then 41994, 1/8th Battalion
Gloucestershire Regiment

Born: 1882, South Shields

Died: 2nd September 1918. aged c. 36

Commemorated: Karasouli Military Cemetery, Greece

Parents: James Robson and Bell Urwin

According to our church records Pastor Robert Bell Robson came to the church in 1915 but was only there six weeks before leaving to join the RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps).

Robert was difficult to trace and thanks go to Eric Orbell, the Trinity Methodist Circuit archivist, who discovered that Robert was born in South Shields ca. 1882.

Eric states that his father, James, was a Life Assurance Agent and his mother was called "Bell" which was her Christian name. He also had a brother Urwin as well as a sister Mary Unwin. Bell Urwin was his second wife, his first being called Martha, so Robert had 5 half siblings and 5 full ones. The family lived at 16 Shor[e]bridge Street, South Shields and they were still there in 1901.

In the 1901 census 18 year old Robert was employed as a dock checker, and his older brother Urwin was a railway porter. The 1911 census shows Robert living as a paying guest in the home of Miss Alice Adkin in Honiton, Devon. His occupation was Wesleyan Evangelist.

By the time of his death he was Private 41994 in the 1/8 Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. As his military records are missing it is not known when he transferred to the Gloucesters.

The regiment formed part of the 27th Division which was ordered to Salonika in November 1915; embarkation began on 17 November; it was not until 13 February 1916 that the last of the Division finally arrived.

1916 30 September - 2 October 1916: the capture of Karajakois

3-4 October: the capture of Yenikoi

17 November and 6-7 December 1916: the battle of Tumbitza Farm

1917 14 October: the capture of Homondos

1918 1-30 September: the final offensive in Salonika, including the capture of the Roche Noir Salient (1-2 September).

Robert Bell Robson died on 2nd September 1918 and is among the 1365 casualties buried at Karasouli Military Cemetery, Greece. The Cemetery is on the edge of the town of Polykastro (formerly Karasouli) which lies some 73 kilometres from Thessaloniki (formerly Salonika).

In his will Robert left £104.8.10d; his sister Mary Urwin Robson was his executrix.

Sergeant, 7449, Henry Elliott Ruckledge, DCM
2nd Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment
Formerly East Yorkshire Regiment

Born: 1878, Snaith, East Riding of Yorkshire

Died: 31st March 1915, c. 37

Commemorated: Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France

Parents: Samuel Ruckledge and Eliza

Wife: Eva Winifred Prior

Henry is one of several men on our memorial not native to South Wigston having been born in Snaith, Yorkshire. The 1891 census shows 13 year-old Henry, a scholar, living with his parents Eliza and Samuel, a railway signalman; Henry had 5 younger siblings – 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

Henry joined the East Yorkshire Regiment, at Beverley, on 23rd January 1896. His medical records show that whilst on the ship *SS Dunera* in 1898 he suffered from influenza. The ship was used regularly as a troop carrier taking soldiers to India or South Africa. Henry is missing from the 1901 UK census, so he was probably serving overseas. His medical records show that he was at Madras (India) in 1901. On 5 June 1904 he had a medical examination “for transfer to Leicestershire Regiment and found fit”; unfortunately the location is illegible.

In 1901 his future wife, Eva Winifred Prior, was aged 15, working as a dressmaker’s apprentice and living with her parents and siblings in Sandgate, Folkestone.

By 1911 Henry and Eva had been married for three years and were living in York Road, Aldershot. They had two sons: 1 year-old Clarence Edward born at Sandgate, and Owen, aged 6 months, born in South Wigston. Henry was a Lance Sergeant with the Leicestershire Regiment.

Henry's Service Record includes the information that on 8th September 1914 he "Reverts to Regtl, Sergt. Duty" and on the same day "apptd Acting C.Q.M.S." [Company Quarter Master Sergeant].

Sergeant Henry Elliott Ruckledge was wounded on 10th March 1915 at Neuve Chappelle and died on 31st March; he was 37 years old. We know a little about how Henry received his wounds as he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his gallantry on that day, as listed in the *Edinburgh Gazette*⁷

For conspicuous gallantry on 10th March 1915, at Neuve Chappelle, when he dressed the wounds of several men after being wounded himself in the leg. He then collected the sand-bags and took them back to the firing line, being wounded in the wrist whilst so doing. Serjeant Ruckledge next went to the assistance of a severely wounded Officer and rendered him first aid. All these gallant actions were performed with the utmost coolness under heavy fire.

His death was also recorded, among a long list of casualties, in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.⁸

⁷ *Edinburgh Gazette*, 8 June 1915, p. 4.

⁸ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 26 April 1915, p. 8.

Henry was buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. His headstone inscription, as chosen by his widow, reads '*Death divides but fond memory clings*'.

In October 1915 Eva was awarded a pension of 23/6 a week for herself and her four children. Eva never re-married and died in Sandgate in 1955. She left £292 0s 6d and probate was granted to her son Owen.

Private, 44100, George Selvidge
Durham Light Infantry
formerly 21655 Leicestershire Regiment

Born: 1891, Anstey

Died: 23 March 1918, c. 27

Commemorated: Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres,
Somme, France

Parents: Tom Selvidge and Amy Lee

George was born in Anstey in 1891 where his father, Tom, was a clicker in the shoe trade. His mother Amy was from Dover and he had a 1 year-old sister, Ada, born in Leicester. In the census their address was "Near the Green" in Anstey. By 1901 the family had moved to 89 Kirkdale Road, and Tom was still working as a clicker whilst Amy was a shoe fitter. The 1911 census shows the family still at the same address; Ada and George had joined their father in the shoe trade: Ada was a hand machinist and George was a clicker. Amy doesn't have a recorded occupation but there is an addition to the family – 9 year-old Robert.

George's service record has been lost but it is known from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that he served in the 1st/8th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry. According to *Soldiers Died in the Great War* he was formerly 21655 Leicestershire Regiment.⁹

It appears that George died during the battle of St Quentin (21-23 March) as he was killed on 23rd March 1918 and

⁹⁹ *Soldiers died in the Great War*, [CD-ROM]

is buried in Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, in the Somme. The reburial record also notes that George was serving as a Vickers gunner attached to the 31st Battalion AIF [Australian Imperial Force, 31st Batt., Royal Queensland Regiment – 8th Brigade, Australian 5th Division].

His grave bears a cross and the inscription chosen by his mother (who lived at 109, Countesthorpe Road) *Ever remembered* from his loving Father & Mother, Sister, Brother.

**Private, 28043, Alfred James Spencer
6th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment**

Born: 1890, Blaby

Died: 11 June 1917, aged 28

Commemorated: Croiselles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

Parents: Alfred Spencer and Emma Brewin

Wife: Louisa Freeman

Alfred James Spencer appeared in the 1891 census aged 1 year old and living with his parents Alfred, a railway wagon repairer, and Emma. He had a three-year old sister, Florence. Their home was in Sycamore Street, Blaby. In 1901 they were still there and his father was a gas engine fitter. Thirteen year-old Florence was a stocking machinist and Alfred was still at school. In the 1911 census the family remained at Sycamore Street; twenty-one year old Alfred was single and employed as a boot & shoe finisher; sister Florence was also unmarried and worked as a boot & shoe machinist. Their father was once again described as a Railway wagon repairer.

Alfred signed up on 10th December 1915 and was put into the Army Reserve. He still lived at Sycamore Street and worked as a hosiery hand.

He was eventually mobilised on 14th April 1916 when his medical history was taken. It stated that he was 26 years and 240 days old; 5 ft 4 ½ inches tall, weighed 116 lb,

and his chest when fully expanded measured 33 ¼ inches; so he was a small, thin man.

By 28th August he had joined the 6th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment and remained with them until 11th June 1917 when he was killed in action; he was 28 years old.

The War diary of the 6th Battalion for that day records: Croiselles. 'Battn. moved up to the front line and took over a frontage extending from PLUM TRENCH to the SENSEE RIVER'¹⁰

The diary goes on to describe, in great detail, the dispositions of the various companies but makes no mention of those killed or injured.

In the summer of 1915 he married Louisa Freeman. Following his death his belongings were sent to her at 9 Station Street. On the 18 December 1919 she was sent Alfred's memorial scroll, and on 28 November 1921 she acknowledged receipt of his medals.

¹⁰ TNA, WO 95-2164.

PRIVATE SPENCER, BLABY.



Private A. J. Spencer, of Blaby, attached to the Leicestershire Regiment, was killed in action on June 11th. His wife lives at Station Road, South Wigston.

Leicester Mail, 30 June 1917, p. 3.

Private, 1917, Gordon Sutton
1st/4th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment

Born: 1895, Blaby

Died: 2nd May 1915, aged c. 20

Commemorated: Pack Horse Farm Shrine Cemetery,
Wulverghem, Heuvelland, Belgium

Corporal, 1512, Harold Sutton
1st/4th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment

Born: 1896, Blaby

Died: 13th October 1915, aged c. 19

Commemorated: Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

The brothers were the sons of John Sutton and Emma Orton. In the 1901 census the family was living on Saffron Road. John worked as a shoe riveter and Emma was a grocer, working on her own account from home.

They had five children:

George (age 16) was also in the shoe trade, Horace (11), Elsie M[iriam] (7), Gordon (5) and Harold (4) were all at school and had been born, like their mother, in Blaby. One year-old Eveline was born in South Wigston.

By 1911 the family was living at 77 Clifford Street. John was still in the shoe trade, as were George, Elsie (now known as Miriam), and Harold. Their mother Emma did 'house work' and Gordon was a butcher boy. Eveline and her nine year-old sister Lily were at school.

Private Gordon Sutton

From the Battalion's War Diary¹¹

27 April 1915

Battalion order from HQ. The 4th L'sters will relieve the 5th Lincoln Reg. on night 28/29 inst.

The relieving Batt. will arrive at a) at ONE TREE FARM & b) at PACK HORSE FARM at 9.00pm. Where they will be met by guides from Batt's to be relieved. Reliefs will commence at 9.30 pm.

2nd May

3.30 pm. Killed No. 1917 Pte G Sutton C Coy – hit at 9.45 in head, dead on way to dressing stn.

11 wounded – Privates, and 2nd Lt. K Dalglish.

Gordon was 20 when he died and his grave is to be found at the Packhorse Farm Shrine, Heuvelland, Flanders, Belgium. The inscription reads *Death is Victory when life is given for friends.* Gordon's father's address, as next of kin, is given as 45 Kirkdale Road, South Wigston.

SOUTH WIGSTON MAN KILLED.



¹¹ TNA, WO 95-2960.

The newspaper report which accompanied Gordon's photo states that

The parents of Pte. Gordon Sutton of the Leicesters, who resides at South Wigston, have received information that their son was killed in action on May 2nd. Pte. Sutton was formerly a scholar at South Wigston School and played Rugger with the school team. Last season he played with the A team which won the Junior Shield, and had previously assisted the first team, being a plucky and dashing forward.¹²

Private Harold Sutton

The Battalion War Diary for the day of Harold's death¹³:

13th October 1915

Noon. Our artillery started to Bombard.

1 pm Our smoke & gas started.

1.50 pm. Smoke & gas stopped.

2 pm. Artillery lifted & Bn. Assaulted the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

Lt. Col. C E Martin was wounded early but remained directing operations for nearly 24 hours & until ordered to the dressing station by Brig. Gen. Kemp. All the officers of the Bn. were either killed or wounded.

Harold was 18 when was killed and is commemorated on Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Unlike his brother he does not have a known grave.

¹² Leicester Mail, 15 May 1915, p. 3.

¹³ TNA, WO 95-2960.



Cpl. H. SUTTON, 4th
Leicesters, killed on
Oct. 15th. His parents
reside at 45, Kirkdale-
road, South Wigston.
His brother, Pte. Gor-
don Sutton, was killed
on May 2nd.

Daily Post, 2 December 1915, p. 8

**Private, 27061, Alfred William Tyers
6th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment**

Born: 1893, South Wigston

Died: 14th October 1916, aged c. 23

Commemorated: Vermelles British Cemetery, France

Parents: William Tyers and Annie Chalk

Wife: May Kirby

Alfred William, (listed on the memorial as William), was the youngest son of William and Annie who were both born in Stamford, Lincolnshire. They spent their early married life in Oakham where they had 4 children. The 1891 census shows the family living in Glen Gate with six more children; and by 1901 they had added Nellie and Alfred William, plus grandchild George.

In the 1911 census nineteen year-old Alfred William was still living with his parents and three of his sisters but their address was now 75 Kirkdale Road. His father, William continued to work on the railway and Alfred William was working in a boot & shoe stock room.

In April 1914 Alfred William married May Kirby, a hosiery machinist who, in 1911, lived in Long Street, Gt. Wigston.

Alfred William signed up to the Army Reserve in December 1915; his attestation record describes him as 23 years and 329 days old, a warehouseman who was 5ft 81/2 inches tall; his address was 26 Aylestone Lane, Wigston. He didn't join a regiment until April 1916 when

he was posted to the 12th Leicestershire Regt. He was then posted to the 6th Batt. late in August 1916.

The 6th Battalion formed part of the 21st Division; the War Diary reads

Bernafay Wood, Somme 11th-15th October 1916: Much time taken up in trying to repair damaged trenches, which were in very bad condition. Hostile minenwerfer fire severe and the battⁿ lost 3 killed and 12 wounded.¹⁴

Private Alfred William Tyers died on 14 October 1916 and is assumed to have been one of the 3 men mentioned as killed in the War Diary; he was 25 years old.

His grave in the Vermelles British Cemetery bears the symbol of a cross with the inscription '*Rest in Peace*' as requested by his widow, May.

On 13 April 1917 May was awarded a widow's pension of 13/9 a week; she had no children. In 1920 May signed a document giving details of Alfred William's living relatives. In addition to herself, still at 26 Aylestone Lane, she listed his parents who were still living at 75 Kirkdale Road.

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¹⁴ TNA, WO 95-2164

Sources

Books and CDs

Peter Mastin, *South Wigston: The early years 1883-1913* (Wigston Magna: Windhover Publications, 1997)

Pamela Ward, *Wigston at war* (Wigston: Pamela Ward, 2004)

Soldiers died in the Great War [CD-ROM]

Archives

Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland

The National Archives (in person and online

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)

First World War, Unit War Diaries (WO 95)

Service records (WO 363)

Medal records (WO 372)

Newspapers

Leicester Post

Daily Mail

Thanks to Joan Rowbottom who produced a list of death reports & photos which appeared in Leicestershire newspapers during WW1.

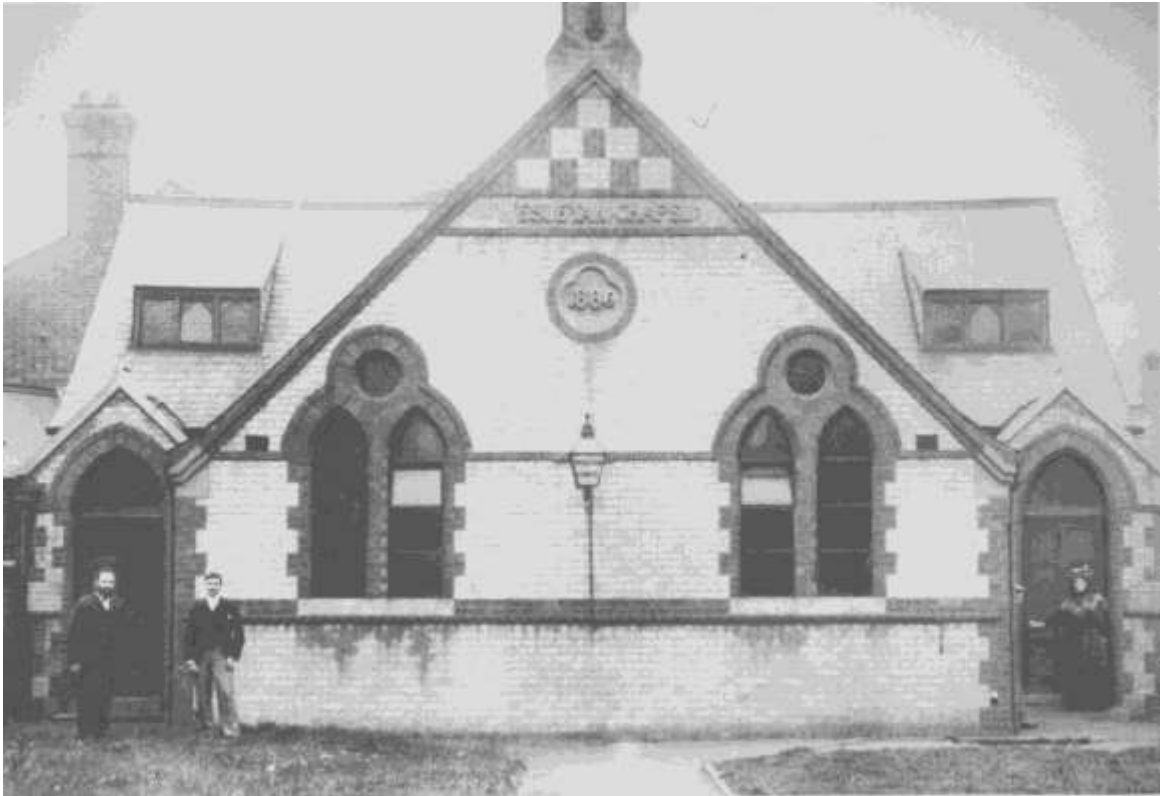
Websites

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

www.cwgc.org

Find my past www.findmypast.co.uk

FreeBMD www.freeBMD.org.uk



The original chapel, opened in 1886



The 1902 church [photographed in 1952]