

Ruscombe War Memorial

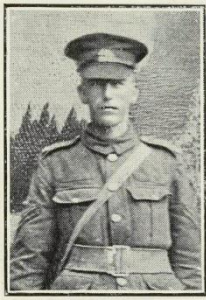


In Memory of the Fallen

1914 – 1918

By Paul Aplin

Stanley Victor Burgess



Rank:	Corporal 17172
Regiment:	2nd Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	25th Brigade, 8th Division

Stanley Victor Burgess was born in Wargrave, Berkshire in 1898. From birth Stanley lived with his grandfather at Southbury Farm, Southbury Lane in Ruscombe, and from an early age he worked on the farm alongside his grandfather.

Stanley enlisted at Reading with the Royal Berkshire Regiment. After training with the 3rd Battalion he landed in France on 30 September 1915 and joined the 2nd Battalion at Fleurbaix on 4 October 1915.

On 13 August 1917 the 2nd Battalion moved to Steenvoorde, France and assembled in the forward area in preparation for the forthcoming attack. On 15 August the battalion moved to their assembly position at West Moek Ridge. The attack on the German green line commenced at 4:45am on 16 August. The battalion advanced quickly behind the artillery barrage and reached its first objective, Hanebeek, and then continued to take the green line. After reaching the Potsdam Redoubt the battalion started taking heavy machine gun fire from the left where the 16th Division had not kept up with the advance. The Germans commenced strong counter attacks causing the battalion to fall back later that day.

Sidney Burgess was wounded during the attack and taken prisoner. The 2nd Battalion suffered 15 killed, 238 wounded and 124 missing during the attack on the German green line.

Stanley Victor Burgess died of wounds on 19 August 1917 aged 19; he was buried at the Iseghem Cemetery German Extension. After the war, the bodies of many soldiers buried in German cemeteries were exhumed, and buried in larger British memorial cemeteries. In June 1924 Stanley's remains were exhumed and re-buried at the Harlebeke New British Cemetery Belgium (XII. D. 16).

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Reginald William John Butler



Rank:	Private 35129
Regiment:	5 th Battalion, Duke of Wellingtons West Riding Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	186 th Brigade, 62 nd Division

Reginald William John Butler was born in Ruscombe on 7 December 1899 to Thomas and Agnes Butler of Castle End Cottages, Ruscombe. After Reginald left school he worked in Ruscombe as a gardener.

On 10 February 1917 Reginald enlisted at Reading, and after training was posted to the 51st Graduated Battalion. He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 21 May 1918 but was demoted for being absence without leave on the 9 August 1918 after being late returning back to camp. Reginald landed in France on 15 August 1918 for training; and was transferred to the 5th Battalion Duke of Wellingtons West Riding Regiment on 31 August 1918.

On 11 September 1918, the 5th Battalion prepared for the attack on Havrincourt, France. At 5:25am on 12 September the battalion advanced behind a creeping barrage with the Shropshire Spur Road as their first objective, and then advanced onto the second objective of the south east corner of Havrincourt village. They encountered heavy machine gun fire whilst advancing on the first objective, but successfully took both objectives and commenced to bomb their way down Kangaroo Avenue trench capturing a machine gun and taking prisoners.

The next two days was spent consolidating the gains made and making bombing attacks. On the morning of 15 September the enemy commenced an artillery barrage across the whole of the new front line lasting several hours.

Reginald William John Butler was killed in action on the 15 September 1918 age 19; he is buried at Hermies Hill British Cemetery, France (II. E. 29).

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.



James Frank Bye



Rank:	Private 32021
Regiment:	2 nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	23 rd Brigade, 8 th Division
Formerly:	Hampshire Regiment

James Frank Bye was born in Ruscombe, Berkshire in 1895; the second of nine children to James Frank and Mary Ann Bye of Castle End Cottages, Ruscombe. By the time James was 15 he was working as a farm labourer.

James enlisted with the Hampshire Regiment sometime in mid-1915, and after training with the regiment he landed in France on 18 December 1915. Later he was transferred to the 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment.

On 26 October 1918 the Battalion relieved the 2nd Northamptonshire Regiment at Odomez, France near the River Escaut. On 27 October three companies attempted to cross the River Escaut but the crossing failed. Another attempt to cross commenced on the 30 October, after the Royal Engineers had built a pontoon bridge under heavy shell fire. 'A' and 'D' companies established a bridgehead on the opposite bank by 1230am; by 2.30am the Germans were observed readying for a counter attack, and 'C' company was sent forward from reserve. The battalion held the bridgehead all day until relieved by the 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment.

James was wounded during the attack and moved to the 57th Casualty Clearing Station at Valenciennes.

James Frank Bye died of wounds on 31 October 1918 aged 23; is buried at the Valenciennes (St. Roch) Communal Cemetery, France (II. D. 14)

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Edward Alfred Excell



Rank:

Corporal 70529

Regiment:

1/1st Battalion, Berkshire Yeomanry

Brigade/ Division:

Yeomanry Mounted Division

Edward Alfred Excell was born in Waltham St. Lawrence in 1893, the eldest son of Edward and Jane Excell of Vale Cottage, Ruscombe.

Edward enlisted on the same day as his cousin Ernest Excell in April of 1915, at Reading and both joined 3/1st The Berkshire Yeomanry. Edward Excell had service number 2574 and his cousin Trooper Ernest Thomas Excell was number 2575. Ernest Excell was killed in action on 26 October 1918 and he is also commemorated on the Ruscombe memorial.

After training they were part of a Draft in November and joined 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry, which entered theatre and landed at Mudros on 6th November 1915 although by this time the regiment were resting and it's not sure if he would have gone to Gallipoli. By mid-December the Yeomanry were back in Egypt. In January 1916 the Berkshire Yeomanry were sent to the Western Frontier of Egypt and in early 1917 took part in the first and second battles of Gaza. On 17 November 1917 began the battle of Jerusalem, the 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry at this time were part of the Yeomanry Mounted Division and fought in the battle of Nebi Samwil.

On 27 November 1917, the Ottoman army began a campaign of counter attacks, the first of these against the Yeomanry Mounted Division outpost at Zeitun on the Beitunia Ridge west of Ramallah. They held off a larger Ottoman force until 28 November when the division was forced to withdraw.

Edward Alfred Excell was killed in action on 27 November 1917 age 24; he is buried at the Jerusalem War Cemetery (D. 93).

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Ernest Thomas Excell



Rank:	Private 165208
Regiment:	'A' Coy. 34 th Battalion Machine Gun Corps
Brigade/ Division:	34 th Division
Formerly:	Berkshire Yeomanry

Ernest Thomas Excell was born in Twyford in 1895, the third of four sons to Henry and Sarah Ann Excell of 3 South View, Ruscombe Road. At the age of 15 Ernest was working as a groom.

Ernest's three brothers also served their country during the war; Henry John (Army Service Corps), Arthur Sydney (19th Battalion Hampshire Regiment) and Albert James (6th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment). Ernest 2575 enlisted in Reading in April 1915 on the same day as his cousin Edward Alfred Excell (2574) and joined 3/1st Berkshire Yeomanry. Edward Excell, was killed in action on 27 November 1917 and is also commemorated on the Ruscombe memorial.

After training they were part of a Draft in November and joined 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry, which entered theatre and landed at Mudros on 6th November 1915 although by this time the regiment were resting and it's not sure if he would have gone to Gallipoli. By mid-December the Yeomanry were back in Egypt where he was re-numbered 70530. In January 1916 the Berkshire Yeomanry were sent to the Western Frontier of Egypt and in early 1917 took part in the first, second and third battles of Gaza, and the capture of Jerusalem where Ernest had his horse shot out from under him. On the 4 April 1918 the Berkshire Yeomanry and Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars merged to form 'C' Battalion, Machine Gun Corps which later changed to the 34th Battalion Machine Gun Corps. The newly formed Machine Gun Battalion sailed from Egypt on the Leasowe Castle. At 12.25am on 27 May 1918 the ship was torpedoed and Ernest was thrown overboard, he and others were rescued by other ships. After spending time at home on leave Ernest returned to France on 4 September 1918. By October 1918 the 34th Battalion were in Bellerghem, Belgium. On 25 October 1918 companies of the 34th Machine Gun Battalion prepared to assist with the attack east of the Courtrai-Bossuyt canal, by putting down a machine gun barrage whilst the infantry attacked positions on the Ooteghem Ridge.

Ernest Thomas Excell was killed by an exploding shell on 26 October 1918 age 23; having served in Gallipoli, Palestine, France and Belgium he became the last Berkshire Yeomanry badged soldier Killed in Action during WW1, he was buried at the Heestery Churchyard, Belgium. A decision was taken to consolidate cemeteries and have fewer, larger memorial cemeteries which were more efficiently maintained. As a result on the 13 March 1961 Ernest's remains were exhumed and re-buried at the Cement House Cemetery, Belgium (XIX. A. 47).

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Henry Golding



Rank:	Private 16012
Regiment:	1 st Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	6 th Brigade, 2 nd Division

Henry Golding was born in Waltham St. Lawrence in 1891. He was the youngest of eight children to James and Esther Golding of Waltham St. Lawrence. From an early age Henry worked as a farm labourer.

Henry enlisted at Reading with the Royal Berkshire Regiment and would have been sent for training with the 3rd Battalion who were stationed in Portsmouth. On the 4 May 1915 Henry arrived in France, he would have received further training before joining the 1st Battalion on 19 May 1915 at Bethune.

On 30 May 1915 the battalion moved to Les Brebis just south of Mazingarbe, France after marching all day and moved into billets.

The 1st Battalion relieved the Kings Royal Rifle Corps from the front line trenches at Grenay on the night of 2 June 1915. "B" Coy took over the right section, "A" Coy the left, "D" Coy were in support and "C" Coy positioned in reserve.

Henry Golding was killed in action on 3 June 1915 age 24; he has no known grave but is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial France (panel 30).

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Charles Hawkins



Rank:	Private 16245
Regiment:	5 th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	35 th Brigade, 12 th Division

Charles Hawkins was born in Woolhampton, Berkshire in 1875 the fourth of twelve children to Charles and Fanny Hawkins.

Charles married Clara Ellen Holmes in 1900 and moved to Sonning Eye, he was working as a general farm labourer. By 1911 the family had moved to Ivy Cottages in Ruscombe with their four young children.

Charles enlisted at Wokingham; he would have trained with the 5th Battalion at Aldershot before arriving in France on 28 April 1915, this was ahead of the rest of the 5th Battalion who did not arrive in France till 31 May 1915. Initial training was undertaken at Armentieres then trench warfare training at Plogesteert Wood.

On 1 October 1915 the battalion took over the front line trenches near Loos, and were relieved on 5 October and proceeded to billets at Noyelles. The battalion once again relieved the Coldstream Guards in the front line on 12 October. On 13 October they attacked Hulluch Quarry, sustaining 65 killed and 91 wounded. This was the final day of the Battle of Loos.

On 17 October 1915 at 5.00am the Coldstream Guards began a bombing attack on the battalions left along with artillery support. The German artillery shelled the front line constantly until approximately 5.00pm. That day the 5th Battalion suffered 1 killed, 19 wounded and 5 suffering from shell shock.

Charles Hawkins was killed in action on 17 October 1915 age 40; he has no known grave but is commemorated on the Loos Memorial France (panel 93 to 95).

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Stephen Prater



Rank:	Sergeant 358394
Regiment:	1/10 th Battalion, The Kings Liverpool Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	166 th Brigade, 55 th Division
Formerly:	4 th Queens Own Hussars 8 th Kings Royal Irish Hussars

Stephen Prater was born in East Hendred in 1891, the fourth of 10 children to Sidney and Lucy Prater of Castle End Cottages, Ruscombe.

Stephens's younger brother William who served with the Australian Infantry, was killed in action on 8 August 1918; he is also commemorated on the Ruscombe Memorial.

By 1911, Stephen had joined the 4th Queens Own Hussars and was stationed in Colchester. On the outbreak of war Stephen was with the 8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars at Ambala in India. After leaving India they arrived in France on 10 November 1914, and some time later Stephen was transferred to the 1/10th Battalion, The Kings Liverpool Regiment.

On 31 July 1917 at 3.50am the 166th Brigade commenced an attack on enemy positions east of Wieltje. The battalions advanced behind a creeping artillery and machine gun barrage, arriving at Steenbeek with little opposition. After this they encountered heavy machine gun and rifle fire whilst advancing on the German Black Line trenches, which were eventually taken. Whilst consolidating the positions taken, enemy snipers caused many casualties. The enemy tried on several occasions to make a counter attack but were prevented in doing so by British artillery. The next two days were spent holding the ground gained, before the battalion were relieved.

Stephen Prater was killed in action on 31 July 1917 age 26; his remains were exhumed from a smaller cemetery in March 1920 and re-buried in New Irish Farm Cemetery, Belgium (XXV. H. 5)

He was awarded the 1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



William Prater



Rank:	Corporal 1888
Regiment:	16 th Battalion, Australian Infantry
Brigade/ Division:	4 th Australian Brigade, 4 th Australian Division

William Prater was born in East Hendred in 1894 the sixth of ten children to Sidney and Lucy Prater of Castle End Cottages, Ruscombe. From an early age William worked on the farm with his brothers and father. William left England for Australia on 28 October 1913 landing at Fremantle. He married Bertha Ann Farris on 25 October 1917 at Long Whittenham, Abingdon when he returned to England for recuperation and training.

Williams's older brother Stephen, who was with the Kings Liverpool Regiment, was killed in action on 31 July 1917; he is also commemorated on the Ruscombe Memorial.

On the 17 February 1915 William enlisted with the Australian Expeditionary Force. The division left Australia on 27 December 1915, stopped in Aden before disembarking at Alexandria, Egypt on 3 February 1915. The battalion left Egypt for Gallipoli, landing at Anzac Cove at 6.00pm on 25 April 1915. William was admitted to hospital in Alexandria on 6 August 1915 with a gunshot wound to the knee, he re-joined the battalion at Gallipoli on 12 September 1915. In June 1916 the battalion sailed for France. William received a gunshot wound to the arm on 6 August 1916 and after treatment at the 26th Casualty Clearing Station, he was sent to Hospital in England. In August 1917 he attended the school of musketry at Tidworth. He re-joined the battalion back in France on 25 May 1918 and was once again wounded on 24 June 1918 but stayed with his battalion.

At 4.20am on the 8 August 1918, the battle of Amiens began the first day of the great allied offensive. The 16th Battalion advanced and by 8.20am they had passed through the German lines, clearing away the enemy from the outskirts of Mericourt.

William Prater was killed in action on 8 August 1918 age 24; he has no known grave but is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial France.

He was awarded the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Ernest Albert Spicer



Rank:	Sergeant 10042
Regiment:	5 th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment
Brigade/ Division:	36 th Brigade, 36 th Division

Ernest Albert Spicer was born in Crowmarsh, Oxfordshire in 1896; he was the third of eight children to John and Mary Spicer of Kennel Cottage, Haines Hill, Ruscombe. By the time he was 14 Ernest was working as a labourer on the farm.

At the outbreak of war it seems that Ernest was with the 2nd Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment in India. The battalion sailed from India on 27 September 1914 arriving in Liverpool on 23 October. The battalion then meet up with the 8th Division and arrived in France on 5 November 1914.

Sometime after this Ernest was transferred to the 5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment. At the beginning of 1918 the 5th Battalion suffered heavy losses during the second battle of the Somme. By mid-August 1918 the battalion was near Becordel, France manning the frontline trenches.

On the 26 August 1918 orders were received that the battalion was to attack German positions in the village of Carnoy. At 3.30am they made the three and half mile march to their forming-up positions; the artillery barrage commenced at 4.45am and the soldiers went over the top to follow the barrage. On reaching the village the battalion was held up by heavy machine gun fire. During this time they had taken many casualties and eventually the battalion had to fall back without taking the village of Carnoy.

During the attack the 5th Battalion suffered 46 killed, 98 wounded and 31 missing.

Ernest Albert Spicer was killed in action on 26 August 1918 age 21; he is buried at the Peronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt France (III. C. 30). On the 7 October 1918 he was posthumously awarded the Military Medal for bravery in battle.

He was awarded the 1914 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal and Military Medal.

