

The fifteen men of Bekesbourne
who died in the
Great War 1914-18.

Compiled by Mark Jopling 2012.

The Sources.

The War Memorial, which stands on the south side of St. Peter's church, bears the names of twelve Bekesbourne men under the following inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
IN MEMORY OF
THE BEKESBOURNE MEN
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-18.

“LEST THOU FORGET” DEUT. IV v 9.

CAPT. W. HOWARD THE BUFFS.

GNR. W.T. GOLDUP RFA.

GNR. P. MOORE RGA.

PTE. F.W. KINGSFORD RW SURREY REG.

L. SERG. S.J. BUSHELL THE BUFFS.

PTE. A. BEAN THE BUFFS.

PTE. W. GIBBS THE BUFFS.

PTE. H. HOARE THE BUFFS.

PTE. J. KNIGHT THE BUFFS.

PTE. W.C.V. NEWPORT THE BUFFS.

PTE. G.E. CAGE S. LANCS. RGT.

PTE. J. MEPSTED KENT CYCLISTS BATT.

Three further men are commemorated on individual memorials inside the church:

COMMANDER GEORGE GIPPS RN.

2nd LIEUT. NORMAN RAMSAY RIFLE BRIGADE.

LIEUT. COLONEL RICHARD NELSON BENDYSHE ROYAL MARINES LIGHT INFANTRY.

There are four main sources available on the internet for tracing “The Fallen”:

1. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] which takes immaculate care of all British and Commonwealth cemeteries and memorials overseas and holds all the records.
2. Soldiers Died in the Great War [SD] first published in book form on behalf of the War Office in 1921.
3. Roll of Honour [RH] which is in the process of being compiled by the Ministry of Defence and the British Legion. They hope, in the end, to have dealt with the men and women named on every headstone and memorial in the UK.
4. Faded Genes [FG.] A group of enthusiasts are compiling this and intend to cover every town and village in Kent. They have done several, some in amazing detail, tracing a person's family back to their Great-Great Grandparents.

Other important and available sources are the Census Records. These started in 1801 as mere headcounts for purposes of taxation and recruitment in the Napoleonic Wars. Since then, they have been held in every year ending in 1 (except 1941 when the information could have been useful to the enemy), but it is only since 1841 that people's names, approximate ages and occupations are recorded. For people of the right age to have been caught up in the Great War, the relevant ones are 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911. The rest are not yet released.

Also very useful are Parish Registers of Baptisms and Marriages, but these require a visit to a library or archive offices. Very limited information can be found on line in the Birth, Marriage and Death Records.

Occasionally a serviceman's Naval or Army Service Record may have survived the bombing of London in the Second World War.

1. Pte. A. Bean The Buffs.

CWGC records him as Private Arthur Bean G/8115 1st Battalion The Buffs [East Kent Regiment.] Died 17th May 1916, aged 36, and is buried in Essex Farm Cemetery. Son of Thomas and Harriet Bean of Canterbury.

Essex Farm Cemetery lay behind the British lines in the Ypres Salient. Neither side was staging a major offensive at Ypres in May 1916, but there were plenty of ways that a man could be killed in the attrition of trench warfare. There were always shells and snipers, trench-raids by both sides, small-scale attacks to gain more advantageous ground for your trenches and night patrols and wiring parties in No-Man's-Land. Arthur's body had been recovered and buried behind the lines.

SD identifies him as Arthur Bean born in St. Mary's Canterbury, resided in Canterbury and enlisted there. It agrees with his Battalion, number and date of death and adds Killed in Action.

RH has the same as SD and FG simply quotes CWGC.

Since he was aged 36 when he died, the first census to include him will be that of 1881. Here, living at 61, Old Dover Road in St. Mary Bredin parish in Canterbury, we find Thomas Bean, 27, Agricultural Labourer, born in Adisham and his wife Harriet, 29, born in Nackington. With them were three children, all born in Canterbury: Alice, 4, Scholar; Harry, 2; our Arthur, 11 months. They also had Harriet's mother, 76 year old widow Charlotte Rogers, born in Bridge.

In 1891, the family had moved to 52, Old Dover Road, now in St. Paul's parish, Northgate. Thomas was still on a farm and Harriet gave her occupation as Laundress. Her mother was no longer with them and Alice, aged 14, had left home. Harry, aged 12, said he was a Cricket Field Labourer, and Arthur, 10, was a Scholar (ie at school.)

By 1901, at 52, Old Dover Road, Thomas had changed his job and said he was a Gardener. Harry was 22 and a Printer Compositor, and our Arthur, 20, like his father, said he was a Gardener. The family are quite difficult to trace in this census because their surname has been transcribed as Bran, not Bean.

In 1911 the parents were still at the same address, but Thomas had gone back to being a Farm Labourer and Harriet said she had been married 35 years and had borne three children who were all alive and well. Only Arthur, 30 and unmarried, was still with them and still working as a Gardner Domestic.

From all this evidence, it is hard to see what possible connection Arthur Bean had with Bekesbourne. One likely solution is that, at some time between 1911 and the date he enlisted, he went to live and work, perhaps as a Gardener, in Bekesbourne and thus became a parishioner of St. Peter's.

2. L. Serg. S.J. Bushell The Buffs.

In CWGC he is recorded as Sidney Bushell Lance-Sergeant G/346 'B' Company 6th Battalion The Buffs. He died on 11th July 1917, aged 22, and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing. Son of Mrs. A.C. Bushell of Forge House, St. Martin's Hill, Canterbury.

The major British offensive, the Battle of Arras, in which the Canadians pulled off the dazzling success of the capture of Vimy Ridge, had lasted from 7th April to 17th May, so Sidney's death came some time later, but in the same area. There were plenty of ways a man could be killed other than in a major offensive: small-scale attacks and counter-attacks by both sides, shelling, sniping, night patrols and wiring parties out in No-Man's-Land, trench raids by either side. However he died, his body was not recovered or identified so he has no known grave.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but SD and RH say exactly the same as each other. They give the same basic information of rank, Battalion, number, date of death, but they spell his first name as Sydney and add born and resident in Bekesbourne, enlisted in Canterbury and Killed in Action.

He is one of only two of the Bekesbourne men whose Army Service Record has survived. From it we learn that he enlisted on 28th August 1914 in Canterbury and signed on for the duration of the war. He was posted to the 6th Battalion The Buffs on 1st January 1915 and landed in France on 30th May 1915. Dates are given for his promotions to Lance-Corporal, Corporal and Lance-Sergeant and his next-of-kin is named as Annie Taylor of Bekesbourne and step-father William Taylor. His 1914-15 Star was sent, in May 1920, to his mother in Oakleigh Lane, Bekesbourne and his plaque and scroll followed. Oddly, both spellings of his first name are used in his Service Record.

The first census in which he appears is that of 1901. In that year, his mother, Annie, is named as Licensed Victualler at The Unicorn Inn on Bekesbourne Hill. She was 39, born in Faversham, and her husband William Taylor said he was 39 too, a Farm Labourer, born in Ash. The Marriage Records show Annie Caroline Bushell marrying William Henry Taylor in July 1899. Her four children were with them, all born in Bekesbourne: Charles, 14, Errand Boy; Amy, 12; Annie, 10; our Sidney, 6. All four had retained the surname Bushell. [In the previous census, 1891, their father, Charles Bushell, 33, born in Bekesbourne had been the Publican at The Unicorn. Annie was with him and his two older children, Charles, 4, and Amy, 2. The Death Records say their father died in October 1897 at the early age of 39.]

By 1911 Annie and William Taylor had given up The Unicorn and were living in Rose Cottage, Oakleigh Lane. William, 49, was a Farm Labourer and Annie, 49, said she had been married to him 11 years and had borne a total of 8 children who were all alive and well. With them were our Sidney James Bushell, 16 and an Errand Boy; William Henry Taylor, 12, a Scholar; Francis Reginald Taylor, 9, a Scholar; Eric John Taylor, 7, a Scholar. All three Taylors were born in Bekesbourne.

This 1911 census is the only one of these sources to give us his middle name of James. The question of how to spell his first name is settled by the Birth Records which include Sydney James Bushell born in January 1895 in the Bridge District. In St. Peter's churchyard, to the south-west of the church, are the grave and headstone of Charles Bushell who died on 7th December 1897, age 39 [not the same date as given by the Death Records. Perhaps he was buried on 7th December.]

Added to it is an inscription which reads: "Sydney James Bushell. 6th Buffs. Killed in France 11th July 1917 aged 22 years." He is 100% a Bekesbourne man.

3. Pte. G.E. Cage S. Lancs Rgt.

CWGC identifies him as George Edwin Cage Lance-Corporal 9205 7th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment. He died on 19th December 1915, aged 26, and is buried in St. Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoue.

This cemetery lies 9 Km. North-East of Bethune very near the British front lines. There had been a number of big British offensives in 1915 in this region, but, although nothing special was happening by December, as we have seen with the two previous men, there were plenty of ways a man could be killed in the daily attrition of trench warfare.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but SD only gives his name as George and adds to his rank, number and battalion the information that his regiment was also known as The Prince of Wales Volunteers, that he was born and enlisted in Canterbury and was Killed in Action.

RH agrees with SD entirely, but makes the mistake of interpreting the first initial on the Memorial as a 'C' and suggesting that his name was Charles E. Cage. This is wrong since none of the military web-sites record this name. RH then goes on to give the relevant information on a Charles Cage who was Private G/9720 in 6th Battalion The Buffs. He was Killed in Action on 3rd December 1917, born in St. Stephen's parish Canterbury, resided Bekesbourne and enlisted in Canterbury. RH also says this man is named on the Petham Memorial. CWGC agrees with all this and adds that Charles Cage is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval.

George Edwin Cage is one of only two men whose Army Service Record has survived. He was a Farm Labourer who enlisted in Canterbury on 8th January 1909 aged 19 years 7 months. He was posted to India with the 1st Battalion South Lancs. in August 1914, but from 13th November to 31st January 1915 he was in hospital in Quetta with Chronic Splenitis. It seems that his discharge as "being no longer physically fit for War Service" was considered but not carried out although he was back in hospital with the same complaint from 13th March to 9th April 1915. He must have then gone back to England because he married Marian Alice Law in Petham Church on 25th July 1915 and was posted as Lance-Corporal to France with the 7th Battalion on 11th August. The address for his wife to receive her "Separation Allowance" was Grandacre Farm, Waltham, but the address to send her his plaque and scroll in July 1919 was in Northwood, Middlesex.

The census records make interesting reading not least because they reveal a family Cage with two sons called Charles F. and George E. In 1881, living in Tyler Hill, Blean, we find George E. Cage, 36, Gamekeeper, born in St. Stephen's, Canterbury and his wife Susanah, 33, born in Harbledown. With them were their nine children: Henry S., 12, Scholar; William F., 11, Scholar; Fanny C., 10, Scholar; Charlie F., 8 Scholar, these four all born in St. Stephen's, Canterbury; Emily, 4, Scholar; Thomas, 4, Scholar; John, 3; George E., 1; Frederick, 6 months, all born in Blean.

By 1901 the family had moved to Lynsore Bottom. The three oldest children had left home, but Charles F. was there aged 18 and a Farm Labourer, and our George E. was 11. Two more children had been added, Mary A., 6, born in Blean and Lucy E., 4, born in Ripple.

In 1911 Charles, 27, was in Petham working as a Waggoner on Farm and lodging with the farmer Stephen Kennett and his family at Duckpit Farm. This is why he is on the Petham Memorial. George was 21 and a Private living in barracks with 7th Battalion South Lancs.

It seems certain that these two were brothers and, since their parents were, by 1911, living on Bekesbourne Hill, it would explain why George, despite having married a Petham girl, is on the Bekesbourne Memorial. Presumably, their parents wanted one of their sons at least to be commemorated in their own parish and George's wife seems to have left the area after his death. Only CWGC gives George's middle name as Edwin and none of these sources gives Charles's. The Birth Records confirm that George was George Edwin, born July 1889, and Charles was actually Charlie Frederick, born Dec 1882.

4. Pte. W. Gibbs The Buffs.

He is named in CWGC as Warwick Horace Gibbs Private G/574 6th Battalion The Buffs. He died on 13th October 1915, aged 34, and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial to the Missing. Son of Maria Gibbs of Preston Forstall, Wingham and the late Charles Sandum Gibbs.

He would have gone missing, presumed dead, towards the end of the Battle of Loos which was a big British offensive from 25th September to 13th October 1915. This was by far the largest-scale of three such attempts in 1915 designed to drive the Germans out of France, but none made any real headway.

CWGC is the only one of the Military sources, or of the census records, to give us his middle name and the Birth Records confirm that Warwick Horace Gibbs was born in June 1881. FG simply quotes CWGC.

SD repeats his rank, number, battalion and date of death and adds born and resided in Preston, enlisted Canterbury, Killed in Action. RH says exactly the same.

Turning to the census of 1891, we find, living in Workhouse Cottages, Preston, Charles S. Gibbs, 39, Agricultural Labourer, born in Sandwich and his wife Maria, 32, born Preston. Their five children were Sophia F., 11, Scholar; Warwick H., 9, Scholar; Robert M., 8, Scholar; Sydney B., 3; Oscar R., 1, all born in Preston.

By 1901, Maria Gibbs was a widow and living, with her youngest son Oscar, 11, in The Forstal, Preston, as Housekeeper to widower John Bennett, 63, and his two adult bachelor sons. The Death Records confirm that her husband Charles Sandum Gibbs died in October 1898. Warwick Gibbs, 19, a Contractors Clerk, was living as a Boarder, along with three others, at the King's Head Tavern in Sarre.

In the 1911 census, Maria Gibbs was 52 and still living in The Forstal, Preston, and working as Housekeeper for John Bennett's bachelor sons, George, 44, and Harry, 33, both Farm Labourers. Of Warwick, however, there is no sign. He does not appear to be living in Bekesbourne or Preston and the Marriage Records make no mention of him. He would have been about 29 and he might have joined the army and been posted somewhere. Another possibility is that his name has been wrongly transcribed and therefore cannot be found.

His connection with Bekesbourne is, likewise, pure conjecture. We know from his whereabouts in 1901 that he was not a Stay-at-home and it could be that, at some time after 1901, he came to live and work in Bekesbourne and thus qualified to be included on the Memorial.

5. GNR. W.T. Goldup RFA.

CWGC identifies him as William Thomas Goldup Gunner 123170 'B' Battery 223rd Brigade Royal Field Artillery. He died on 16th November 1918, aged 22, and is buried in St. Peter's Churchyard, Bekesbourne, north-east of the church. Son of Charles and Polly Goldup of Holly Tree Cottages, Bekesbourne.

The wording on his military headstone reads: 123170 Gunner W.T. Goldup Royal Field Artillery 16th November 1918 "We miss him most that loved him best. Gone but not forgotten R.I.P." It is obvious that he died after the Armistice.

William is the only one of the Bekesbourne men who gets detailed coverage from FG. The important additions to what we already know are that he was born in 1896 in Egerton, Kent, enlisted in Maidstone in 1915 and died on 16th November 1918 at Edinburgh War Hospital aged 22. He was buried on 23rd November 1918 at St. Peter's Church. We have no way of knowing where and when he was badly wounded or how long he was in hospital.

SD adds nothing new, but does make two mistakes: one, giving his birthplace as Hedgington, Kent (which does not exist) and secondly giving his number as 129170.

RH seems to have followed SD, but it does suggest that Hedgington is probably a mis-spelling of Egerton.

In the census of 1901 William's parents were living at Schools Cottages, Thanington Without. Charles was 34, a Farm Carter/Waggoner, born Little Chart with his wife Polly, 32, born Brabourne. Their seven children were Elizabeth, 13, born Willesborough; Agnes, 11, born Willesborough; Annie, 9, born Hothfield; Charles, 7, born Pluckley; our William, 5, born Egerton; Frederick, 2, born Thanington; Ellen, 7 months, born Sturry.

By 1911, the family had moved yet again to Plaxtol near Sevenoaks. Charles was still a Waggoner and Polly stated that they had been married 24 Years and she had borne 11 children, 10 of whom were alive and well. The first four children were listed, but later crossed out presumably because the parents had thought they were supposed to enter all their children instead of just those living with them. Our William was 15, but gave no occupation, Frederick and Ellen were both Scholars and three more children had been added: Albert, 7, Scholar, born Thanington; Edith, 2, born Sevenoaks; Walter, 3 months, born Sevenoaks.

We know that sometime after 1911 the parents moved to Holly Cottages, Bekesbourne because CWGC and FG agree on that address for William's next-of-kin, and they would want him commemorated in their parish.

6. Pte. H Hoare The Buffs.

He is recorded in CWGC as Henry Hoare Private G/9113 1st Battalion The Buffs. He died on 29th December 1916, aged 22, and is buried in Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos. Son of Henry and Annie Hoare of Chartham Hatch, Canterbury.

There were no major offensives by either side at that time, but, as we have seen before, there were plenty of ways a man could be killed in the attrition of trench-warfare. There were always shells and snipers, small- scale attacks by both sides to secure more favourable ground for their trenches, night patrols and wiring parties in No-Man's-Land and trench raids.

FG inexplicably has no entry at all on him, but SD and RH agree with each other almost word for word. They confirm the same rank, number, battalion and date of death and add born in Ashford, which is wrong, resided Chartham Hatch and enlisted in Canterbury. Killed in Action.

SD then makes the very odd suggestion that H. Hoare could be Harry William Hoare. Three factors make this extremely unlikely: Harry has a middle name which the Memorial does not include (although we have seen how often middle names could be ignored); Henry was a Private while Harry was a Sergeant; Harry's Army Service Record has survived and neither this nor the census records make any mention at all of this part of the county.

Looking for Henry in the 1901 census, we find him and his family living in Chartham Hatch. His parents, as CWGC says, were Henry, 39, Agricultural Labourer, born in Crundale and Annie, 31, born in Wye. Their four children were Gertrude, 9, born in Thanington, our Henry, 6, born in Thanington, William, 4, born in Wye and Frederick James, 11 months, born in Chartham.

The family were still in Chartham Hatch in 1911. Henry said he was a Farm Labourer working on hops and fruit, Annie stated that they had been married 17 years and she had borne 5 children all of whom were alive and well. Gertrude, 19, was a Paper Mill Hand, Henry, 16, was a Boot Shop Assistant, William, 14, was a Cattleman on a Farm, Frederick James, 11, was a Scholar, born in Chartham. One more child had been added, Harold, 8, Scholar, also born in Chartham.

No mention so far of Bekesbourne, but it would not be difficult for a man from Chartham Hatch to find work in Bekesbourne and to move there. We know that his parents did not move there from what CWGC has told us when they were named as his next-of-kin.

7. Capt. W. Howard The Buffs.

CWGC records him simply as W. Howard Captain 8th Battalion The Buffs who died on 8th October 1915 and is buried in Le Treport Military Cemetery. This cemetery lies on the French coast 30 Km north-east of Dieppe and served an important hospital centre. It is highly likely, therefore, that the Captain died of wounds. FG does no more than quote CWGC.

SD gives the same rank, regiment and date of death, but also gives his name as William and, significantly, states that he Died of Wounds. RH agrees, but none of them gives his age.

The earliest census in which he can be found is that of 1881. It records a William Howard, aged 20, unmarried, born in Russia, who was a "Gentleman Cadet" at Sandhurst Royal Military College. This means he was born in 1860 or 61 and, presumably, he was still in Russia at the time of the 1861 census, but his absence in 1871 is a mystery.

By 1891 he was married. William Howard, 30, born in Russia but a British Subject, describing himself as Retired Lieutenant in Cavalry, and his wife Ida Edith, 27, born in Lucknow, India, were visitors staying with friends in Culmington Manor, near Ludlow in Shropshire. The couple, however, are not to be found in the Marriage Records.

They are nowhere to be found in 1901, but in 1911 their connection with Bekesbourne is firmly established. William, 50, born in Russia and living by Private Means, and Ida, 45, born in India were living at The Old Palace, Bekesbourne. Ida stated that they had been married 22 years and she had borne 1 child who was alive and well. This places the marriage in about 1889, but their child cannot be found in the Birth Records or census returns.

I am grateful to Jill Thomas for giving me information from the Kentish Gazette. On 30th October 1915 it reported in its Roll of Honour that Captain William Howard of the 8th Battalion The Buffs had died of wounds. Before that, on 16th October 1915, it published his obituary under the title "Death of Captain William Howard of Bekesbourne." It reads: "The late Captain Howard was a son of the late Mr. William Howard of Ersham House, Canterbury, and a brother of the late Mr John Howard of Sibton Park, who died some four years since. He was educated at Cambridge and subsequently joined the 16th Lancers Regiment for a short time. He had been connected with the county of Kent for practically the whole of his life. Captain Howard resided at Bridge for a period of some five years and had lived at The Old Palace, Bekesbourne for the last three years. He was very fond of outdoor sports of all kinds and was a particularly good horseman. Always genial and kindly, the late Mr. Howard was most popular and his loss to the district will be deeply regretted.

When war broke out Mr. William Howard-who had a wonderful knowledge of the French, German, Russian and kindred languages- offered his services as interpreter to the War Office. It was decided, however, that this work should be carried out by the French, and, regrettably, no use could be found for the valuable service which he might have rendered in his way.

Determined to 'do his bit', he tried every means to find some form of useful employment..... and eventually he was offered and accepted a commission as Captain in the 8th Buffs..... Captain Howard left for the front about the 24th August last. He was wounded at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning 25th September whilst taking part in the big advance in France. His injuries consisted of a bullet wound in the head and also in the leg, the latter wound being of a very slight nature..... Serious symptoms developed.... He died at about 3 o'clock on the Friday afternoon [8th October].... his wife being with him at the last...."

"The big advance in France" must refer to the first day of the Battle of Loos which was the largest of three British offensives in that year designed to drive the Germans out of France. Considerable gains were made on the first day, but failure to exploit the advantage meant that all the ground gained was lost again to German counter-attacks.

Another web-site called "Cambridge Alumni" lists a William Howard who went up to Trinity College in Michaelmas Term 1877. He was a son of William Howard who lived, at that time, in Tower House, Westgate, Canterbury and he was born on 10th September 1860. This must be our man.

The Kentish Gazette on 13th November includes a report headed "Memorial Service for Captain Howard." The service had been held "on Sunday last" at Bekesbourne church and "The little church, standing on a hill and overlooking the Old Palace, the home of the late Captain Howard, was very full." As well as near relatives and friends "A large number of sympathisers from the village also attended."

On 11th December 1915 the Kentish Gazette contained this notice: "Mrs. Howard, of the Old Palace, Bekesbourne, has left for India and much regrets that she has been unable to answer all the kind letters of sympathy she has received."

One last unusual thing about this man was his age. Given that he was born on 10th September 1860, he would have only just passed his 55th birthday when he was wounded. Whilst not unique, this was a very late age for active service.

8. Pte. F.W. Kingsford RW Surrey Reg.

In CWGC he is named as Frederick William Kingsford Private G/2876 8th Battalion The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment. He died on 21st August 1916, aged 33, and is commemorated on the Massive Thiepval Memorial to the Missing on the Somme. Son of George William and Martha Kingsford of Hode Farm Cottages, Patrixbourne. FG simply quotes CWGC.

RH gives the same name, rank, battalion and date of death, but insists on a quite different number, G/2671, and adds that he was formerly No. 2605 The Buffs and that he was born in Elham, resided and enlisted in Dover. SD says exactly the same as this, only adding Killed in Action.

The action in which Frederick was killed and his body lost was in one of the many attacks going on in the second month of the huge British offensive The Battle of the Somme.

In 1891 we find him living with his parents at Peene Cottages, Peene, near Hythe. George, 30, was an Agricultural Labourer, born in Staple and Martha, 29, was born in Lyminge. Their three children were Henry, 10, a Scholar, born in Lyminge; our Frederick, 8, a Scholar, also born in Lyminge; Eliza, 2, born in Hythe.

By 1901 the family had moved to 2, Georges Cottages, Broadmead, Folkestone. George had become a Waggoner on a Farm and his eldest son, Henry, was a Waggoner's Mate. Three more children had been added: Edwin, 9, born in Newington; Alfred, 6, also born in Newington; Martha, 2, born in Capel-le-Ferne. Our Frederick, 18, had left home and was a Boarder with Farm Bailiff William Marchant's family at Danton Farm, Cheriton where he worked as a Carter on the Farm. The brothers Henry and Frederick both gave their birth place as Elham, not Lyminge.

In the 1911 census the family is recorded living at Park Farm Cottages, Shutterfield, Lyminge. George, 50, was still a Waggoner and Martha, 48, stated that they had been married 30 years and she had borne 11 children of whom 8 were alive and well. The last two of the eight are listed as Walter, 9, born in Broadmead, Folkestone, and Robert, 4, born in Lyminge. Our Frederick is nowhere to be found. One plausible explanation would be that he had joined the Army by then, presumably, as RH and SD say, in The Buffs. Later on he was transferred to the Royal West Surrey Regiment.

CWGC names his next-of-kin as George and Martha of Patrixbourne. Why, therefore, he is commemorated in Bekesbourne and not Patrixbourne is not clear, but it might be simply that his parents chose to attend St. Peter's instead of St. Mary's.

9. Pte. J. Knight The Buffs.

CWGC records him as James Stanley Knight Private T/202706 7th Battalion The Buffs. He died on 12th October 1917 and is buried in Cement House Cemetery, Langemark. Langemark had been in German hands since April 1915 when they had secured it in their offensive to try to eliminate the Salient. The British had won it back in August 1917 in the early stages of the big offensive that was the 3rd Battle of Ypres or, as it came to be known, the Battle of Passchendaele. It was not in the front line after that, but, as we have seen, there were many ways a man could be killed in the grind of trench warfare, not least the constant shelling.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but RH not only gives the same name, battalion, number, rank and date of death, but adds born in Birmingham, resided Maidstone, enlisted Gravesend. SD agrees word for word and adds Killed in Action. None of these states his age, but we know from the census that he was about 30 when he was killed.

In the 1891 census in Birmingham we find James Knight, 47, Brickmakers Labourer, born in Birmingham and his wife Rose Ann, 42, born in Birmingham. Their five children, all born in Birmingham, were William, 18, Coal Dealer's Assistant; Arthur, 11; Charles, 9; our James, 4; George, 1.

By 1901 the family had moved to Manchester and their father, James, had died. The Death Records name a James Knight, aged 52, who died in Manchester in January 1898. Rose Ann, now calling herself Ann, was a widow, aged 51, and with her were her four youngest children: Arthur, 21, Railway Carter; Charles, 19, Iron Foundry Labourer; our James, 14; George, 11.

By 1911, Ann, aged 63 had gone back to Birmingham. She stated that she had been married 40 years and had borne 10 children of whom 8 were alive and well. Only her youngest, George, was with her, aged 21 and a Steel Tube Drawer. James, meanwhile, had joined the army. In 1911 he is listed, aged 24, in the barracks of the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards at Farnborough, Hampshire. It is notable that in none of these census documents does he mention his middle name Stanley or even the initial.

What his connection with Bekesbourne might be is pure conjecture. We can explain his belonging to two different Regiments by suggesting he enlisted in the Coldstream Guards for a short term, perhaps 5 years, and, when that was completed, he ended up in Kent, possibly even in Bekesbourne. RH and SD claim he was living in Maidstone when he enlisted in The Buffs in Gravesend, presumably early on in the war, but Maidstone was an important recruitment centre itself so there would have been no need to go all the way to Gravesend. It is tempting to conclude that naming these two places is a mistake.

10. Pte. J. Mepsted Kent Cyclists Batt.

Inexplicably, CWGC spells his surname with an extra 'a' and calls him John Mepstead Private 265572 Kent Cyclists 1st Battalion. He died on 14th August 1917, aged 22, and is commemorated on the Kirkee 1914-18 Memorial, near Poona, India. Son of James and Harriet Mepstead of Mulberry House, Bekesbourne.

The Kirkee Memorial commemorates 1,800 servicemen who died in India in the Great War and were buried all over the country in graveyards that it has become increasingly difficult to maintain. There was no fighting in India, but the toll from disease was always huge.

The Kent Cyclists Battalion was dismounted in November 1915 and served as infantry. They were sent to India in February 1916.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but RH, spelling his name as Mepsted, confirms his rank, number, battalion and date of death and adds born and enlisted Canterbury, died in India.

SD says exactly the same as RH, but spells his name Mepstead.

In the census the surname each time is Mepsted. So, in 1891, before John was born, his parents were living with the husband's father in The Lees, Challock. James H. Mepsted was a widower, aged 66, a General Labourer, born in Challock. Two of his sons were with him: one was David, 30, born in Wye, the other was also James H. Mepsted, 35, General Labourer, born in Molash, along with his wife, Harriet, 27, born in Lower Hardres, and their child, Douglas, 2, born in Wye.

By 1901, our John had been born, but his father, James H. had died. The Birth Records name a John Mepsted born in April 1897 and registered in Ashford, while the Death Records have a James Horton Mepsted who died, aged 45, in July 1900, registered in Ashford. So, living at The Bowl Inn, Hastingleigh, we find James H. Mepsted, 76, now a Publican. With him is another of his sons, John, 47, Butcher's Manager, born in Wye, and his daughter-in-law, Harriet, a widow, aged 36. Her four children were there too, all born in Challock: Douglas, 12; Lilian, 8; Laura, 6; and our John, 3.

A deathly hush falls over the entire family in the 1911 census and not a single one is to be found, presumably because their surname has been wrongly transcribed and cannot be traced. John would have been 13 or 14, too young to have enlisted before 1914, but we do know from CWGC that his mother's address, given as his next-of-kin when he did join up, was Mulberry House, Bekesbourne. We do not know exactly when she moved there, but it could have been in time for the 1911 census. Assuming the John Mepsted found in the Birth Records is our man, he was born in April 1897 and, therefore would have been nearer 20 than 22 when he died.

11. GNR. P. Moore RGA.

He is recorded in CWGC as Percy Moore Gunner 27320 41st TM Battery Royal Garrison Artillery. He died on 27th October 1915, aged 27, and is commemorated on the Ypres [Menin Gate] Memorial to the Missing. Son of R. and Alice J. Moore of 41, Union Street, Canterbury. From this it is certain that he was killed in the 2nd Battle of Ypres when the Germans were on the offensive to eliminate the Salient, capture the city and thrust into France to capture the Channel Ports. The Salient was squeezed in, but it held despite two fearsome new German weapons, poison gas and flame-throwers.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but SD not only agrees with his name, number, rank, regiment and date of death, but adds born Ashford, enlisted Canterbury and Killed in Action. RH agrees with all this.

Given his age when he was killed, he would have been born in about 1888 so the first census in which he will appear is that of 1891, when he would have been about 3, but he cannot be found. This is very probably because the surname has been wrongly transcribed and cannot be traced.

In 1901 we find the family living in Oakleigh Lane (or Mud Lane as it was also known) in Bekesbourne. His parents were John Moore (not, as CWGC has it, R. Moore), 51, Agricultural Labourer, born in Headcorn and Alice, 35, born in Ashford. Percy, 13, born in Ashford, was the eldest of five children and the others were John, 8, born in Ashford; Alice, 5, born in Lyminge; Ellen, 4, born in Lyminge; Richard, 2, born in Herne.

By 1911 the family had moved to Palmstead Hill, St. Martin's, Canterbury. John said he was still a Farm Worker, and Alice stated that they had been married 20 years and she had borne 8 children who were all alive and well. [If she was right about the 20 years, Percy would have been born out of wedlock.] Only Ellen, 14 and Richard, 12, a Scholar, were still at home and three more children had been added: Minnie, 9, born in Bekesbourne; Rose, 7, born in Canterbury; Harry, 5, born in Canterbury. It might seem that the family's link with Bekesbourne had been severed until one discovers that Palmstead Hill is on the Canterbury side of the big dip in Bekesbourne Lane between Oakleigh Lane and The Hoath Farm. At the bottom of this dip lies the Lampen Stream which is the border with Bekesbourne parish. They would have been living just on the St. Martin's side of the parish border in a dwelling somewhere between Palmstead Hill House and The Hoath Farm. It is very likely that Rose and Harry were born at Palmstead Hill which is, technically, in St. Martin's, but the family still regarded themselves as belonging to St. Peter's, Bekesbourne. That is why his parents wanted him named on the Bekesbourne Memorial, although he is commemorated on the Canterbury Memorial in the Buttermarket as well.

Percy, meanwhile, had joined the army. He is listed in 1911 as Percy Moore, 25, Gunner in 73rd Company, RGA living in barracks. If, as we have seen, he was born in about 1888, he would have been about 23 at this time.

12. Pte W.C.V. Newport The Buffs.

Despite the Memorial specifically giving his initials as W.C.V., CWGC names him as Charles William Victor Newport. The Birth Records confirm that William Charles Victor Newport was born in April 1897 and registered in Bridge District. CWGC continues Private G/2508 in 7th Battalion The Buffs. He died on 3rd May 1917, aged 20, and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing. Son of Mr. J.J. Newport of Bekesbourne Hill.

FG simply quotes CWGC, but RH not only confirms his rank, number, battalion and date of death but gives his name as W. Charles V. Newport and adds born and resided in Bekesbourne, enlisted Canterbury.

SD records his name simply as Charles Newport and only adds Killed in Action. He would have been killed in the Battle of Arras, a series of big British offensives between 9th April and 17th May 1917.

The first census to include him is that of 1901. In it, his parents were living in Bekesbourne. James J. Newport was 30, a Farm Labourer born in Littlebourne and his wife Mary J. was also 30 and born in Canterbury. Their four children, all born in Bekesbourne, were James, 5; our William C.V., 3; Edward J., 2; and Florence M., 1.

In 1911 the family is found living in Vine House, Bekesbourne Hill. Their father, James, was a Carter and Carrier and their mother, Mary Jane, stated that they had been married 15 years and she had borne 6 children all of whom were alive and well. Eldest son James, 15, was a Butcher, William Charles Victor, 13, was a Scholar as were Edward John, 12, and Florence May, 11. Two more children had been added: Hilda Evelyn, 8, a Scholar, and Francis Louis, 1, both born in Bekesbourne.

He was 100% a Bekesbourne man, born and bred in the parish and working there when he enlisted.

A. Commander George Gipps RN.

He is the first of the three men commemorated inside the church. His stone reads: "In remembrance of Cmdr. George Gipps RN [son of George Bowdler Gipps Esq. JP, until latterly of Howletts in this parish,] who was killed in action on board HMS Grafton in the Eastern Mediterranean on January 3rd 1916 in the 34th year of his age. This stone has been placed here by his loving sisters Edith Weir and Maud Hill." This is not entirely correct since Howletts House, the centre of the large estate, was, by a quirk of parish boundary demarcation, in Ickham parish whilst other parts, such as Howletts Farm and Cobham Court, were in Bekesbourne. According to the pamphlet "St. Peter's Church Bekesbourne: A History and Guide", George Bowdler Gipps' grandfather, also a George, bought the estate in 1820 and the family thereafter regarded St. Peter's as their parish church and were extremely generous to it. Certainly, there are several memorials to Gipps family members inside the church and a number of Gipps headstones and tombs in the churchyard. I am especially grateful to Jill Thomas for helping me to sort them out.

CWGC records our George Gipps as Commander George Gipps Royal Navy, serving on HMS Grafton. He died on 3rd January 1916, aged 34, and is commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial amongst some 10,000 naval men who have no other grave but the sea. Son of George Bowdler and Emily Edith Gipps of Ickham, Canterbury.

This is the only one of the military sources to include him. FG and RH cover the twelve men named on the Memorial, but not the others. SD deals with soldiers only, not the navy.

HMS Grafton was a cruiser, launched in 1892, which served off Gallipoli and was hit by shell-fire from Turkish shore batteries on 3rd January 1916. This is what killed the Commander and he was then buried at sea, which is why he was named on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

Turning to the census, in 1891 a George Gipps, aged 8, born in Canterbury, was a Boarder and Scholar at Weybridge School, one of 23 boys aged 8 to 14 living in one of the Houses. His parents were recorded at Audley Street, St. George Hanover Square, and their surname has been transcribed as Gibbs. George B. Gipps, 38, born in Edinburgh, was living on his own means and his wife was Emily E., 34, born in Brighton. Their two daughters were Edith, 13, and Eliza Maud, 10, both born in Lymington, Hampshire [the two sisters who donated the memorial stone.]

In 1901, a George Gipps, aged 18, born in Canterbury, was a Midshipman (Naval Officer) in the crew of HMS Undaunted. His parents cannot be found, probably because their surname has been transcribed as something outlandish, but were probably in London. We know, for sure, they were not at Howletts.

By 1911, George Gipps, unmarried 28, born in Bridge, had risen to Lieutenant RN and was staying with a fellow Lieutenant, Gerard Brook Riley, in York. His parents were in London. George Bowdler Gipps, 58, born Edinburgh, was living by Private means and he had re-married. His first wife Emily Edith, mother of the Commander had died. The Death Record says Emily Edith Gipps died in August 1908, aged 51, in Hampstead District. His new wife, Charlotte Annie, said she was 42, born in Wood Green, Middlesex and had been married 1 year. The Marriage Record says George Bowdler Gipps, Widower, 56, married Charlotte Annie Bray, 41, at Kilburn St. Mary in Hampstead on 4th September 1909.

It seems that George Bowdler Gipps and his family had not resided at Howletts very long at all and, in fact, it was he who started to sell the estate off in various lots starting in 1910. He died in November 1929.

B. 2nd Lieutenant Norman Ramsay Rifle Brigade.

The second of the three additions. The "History and Guide" to St. Peter's says the Ramsay family, who gave the oak pulpit in 1920, were "the new owners of Howletts." The little memorial plaque beside the pulpit reads: "In memory of Norman Ramsay 2nd Lieut. 16th Battalion Rifle Brigade youngest son of Robert Ramsay of Howletts born 14th August 1869 killed in action in France 3rd September 1916 this pulpit was erected by his brothers and sisters November 1921." Again I thank Jill Thomas for her help with the Ramsays.

CWGC confirms what the plaque tells us about his rank, battalion, date of death and father and adds his age at the time of death, 47, which is surprisingly old, and that he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing on the Somme.

SD agrees adding that he was Killed in Action and that the Rifle Brigade was also known as The Prince Consort's Own. FG and RH only deal with the men on the Memorial.

Since the plaque and CWGC tell us Norman was 47 when he died, the first census in which to look for him would be 1871, but he is nowhere to be found. The 1881 census tells us why: Robert Ramsay and his younger children were in Australia. In 1881, the parents were living in Dinder House, Dinder, Somerset (near Wells). Robert Ramsay, 63, born in Calcutta, was a Landowner in Australia and his wife was Susan, 53, born in Scotland. With them were four of their children: Marmaduke Francis, 20, Cambridge Undergraduate; Robert Christian, 19, also a Cambridge Undergraduate, both born in Cheltenham; Nina Mary, 14, a Scholar; Edith Patricia, 10, a Scholar, both born in Queensland. Our Norman, meanwhile, was 11, born in Australia and a pupil at Glyngarth Prep School, Cheltenham, one of 49 boys aged 9 to 13 living in one of the Houses. Sadly, this is the only census in which Norman appears.

In 1891 the Ramsay connection with Howletts and Bekesbourne began. In that census, Robert Ramsay, 75, born Calcutta and Susan, 63, born Scotland were living at Howletts House, Ickham. Only their daughters, Nina M., 24 and Edith P., 20, both born in Queensland were there with them. It is possible that Norman, or either of his brothers, had joined the army and were posted somewhere.

In 1901, only one Ramsay was listed at Howletts, a sister we have not come across before called Mabel Ramsay (or more correctly Agnes Mabel), unmarried, 37, living on her own means, born in Cheltenham. Her unmarried sisters Nina M., 34 and Edith P., 30, were visiting friends at The Grange, Barton Fields, Canterbury. Her parents, Robert, 83, and Susan, 73, were staying with people in Folkestone. Still no sign, however, of Norman or his brothers.

By 1911, Robert and Susan were dead. The Death Record names Robert Ramsay who died in July 1910, aged 92, and Susan Ramsay who died in January 1906, aged 78, both registered in Bridge District. Their two headstones stand in St. Peter's churchyard. Meanwhile, three unmarried Ramsays were living on Private means in Howletts: a brother not mentioned before, Arthur Douglas, 43, born in Queensland; Nina Mary, 44, born in Queensland; Agnes Mabel, 47, born in Cheltenham. Norman remains as elusive as ever.

It seems that, for the period of these three census records, 1891, 1901 and 1911, the Ramsays were renting Howletts from George Bowdler Gipps, who owned the whole estate, but who lived in London. After 1910, however, the estate was broken up and auctioned off in lots and, quite probably, the Ramsay family bought Howletts from him.

With Norman's parents both dead, his medals, plaque and scroll were to be sent to his eldest brother, Marmaduke Francis Ramsay of Fredville near Dover (in fact in Nonington.)

C. Lieut. Col. Richard Nelson Bendyshe Royal Marine Light Infantry.

He is the third of the men commemorated inside St. Peter's and the one with the least justification for being there. His only connection with Bekesbourne was that he married Eleanor Margaret Wardell in St. Peter's on 15th August 1893, third daughter of the vicar at the time. His memorial tablet on the north wall reads: "AMDG (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam or For the greater glory of God) and in loving memory of Richard Nelson Bendyshe Lt. Col. RMLI. Dearly loved son-in-law of Henry John and Isabella Ann Wardell who fell Cabatepe May 1st 1915 and on whose soul may God have mercy." Cabatepe, or Gaba Tepe, is on the Gallipoli Peninsular where Allied landings, spearheaded by the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, took place on 25th-26th April 1915 and soon earned the place the name Anzac.

For incomprehensible reasons, CWGC does not include this man at all, maybe because he was killed by one of his own men and not by enemy action. None of the other military sources record him either. RH and FG only cover the twelve men on the Memorial and SD, being specifically for soldiers, does not include the Royal Marines. This meant that the usual information available for all the others was simply not accessible, but Jill Thomas came to the rescue again. She has a great deal of information on Richard Bendyshe including the fact that he went to King's School, Canterbury and they have one of the very best sets of records on all their Old Boys who died in wars called King's School, Canterbury Roll of Honour. This reveals all.

Richard was born in Woodstock, Ontario, Canada on 18th January 1866 and attended King's School September 1879 to July 1882 after which he went to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. On leaving, he passed 5th in the examination for the Royal Marines and was commissioned as a Lieutenant on the 1st September 1885. He was promoted to Captain on 1st April 1895, to Major on 1st February 1903 and Brevet(Acting) Lieutenant Colonel on 1st February 1910. He was serving as full Lieutenant Colonel with 12th Battalion Royal Marine Light Infantry when he retired from the service on 1st July 1910.

In September 1914 he succeeded his uncle as owner of the Barrington Hall Estate in Cambridgeshire which had been the family seat since the reign of Edward III, but, on the outbreak of war, he had already re-joined the army and was in command of a wireless station on South Uist and had applied to re-join the Marines. He was posted to the Deal Battalion and sailed with them to the Eastern Mediterranean as second in command. The Deal Battalion joined the 1st Royal Naval Brigade and Richard was promoted to command of the Battalion on 10th April 1915. They landed at Gallipoli on 29th April 1915 where they relieved the 6th Battalion Australian Infantry in the trenches.

An account of the bizarre nature of Richard's death is copied from the private papers of an Australian officer who was present. To summarise, Colonel Bendyshe was being briefed by the Australian commander Colonel McNicholl. The two men were squatting down in front of a group of Deal men while Colonel McNicholl underlined the importance of saving ammunition by only firing at clear targets. One of the Deal men seemed to take exception to the scruffy appearance of Colonel McNicholl as compared with the smart and clean English officer and seemed to have taken him for a spy. The man stood up, raised his rifle and fired at Colonel McNicholl, but the bullet missed and struck Colonel Bendyshe in the stomach, killing him.

"Pandemonium broke out" as other Deal men armed with bayonets seized Colonel McNicholl, who received a bayonet wound in the arm, and he was tied up, blindfolded and marched under armed escort down a communication trench. Matters were put to rights when the escort got back to the Australian troops and officers.

The Roll of Honour gives the last word to Sir Archibald Paris, commander of the Royal Naval Division, who wrote in a private letter on 5th May 1915, “A sad accident the other day. Lieutenant Colonel Bendyshe when visiting the trenches was shot by one of his own men, as if our casualties weren’t heavy enough without adding to them. Men get jumpy and fire at anything, especially these very young men....”

As well as in Bekesbourne and the King’s School, he is commemorated at Lone Pine Cemetery, Anzac, Turkey where he was buried and on a plaque in the family chapel inside All Saints Church, Barrington, Cambridgeshire.

Turning to the census records, we find him in 1871 with his parents and two brothers living at Easton House, Bigbury, Devon. Nelson Bendyshe, 47, a Gentleman, born in Bath and his wife Charlotte, 40, born in Mauritius were his parents. Richard was 5 and born in Canada and his younger brothers were Edmund, 2, born in Canada and John, 1, born in Fritham, Hampshire.

By 1881, Edmund was 13 and a Scholar at King’s School, Canterbury, John was 11 and a Scholar at Clifton College, Bristol. His parents are nowhere to be found and nor is Richard, but we know he was at King’s School and would have been about 15.

Richard cannot be found in 1891, nor can his parents, but we know he was a career soldier and a Lieutenant in the Royal Marine Light Infantry, probably posted somewhere abroad.

In 1901 he and his family were in officers’ quarters at barracks in East Stonehouse, Plymouth. Richard Nelson Bendyshe, 35, was a Captain in the Royal Marine Light Infantry and his wife since 15th August 1893, Eleanor Margaret, 33, was born in Walthamstow. They had two children: John Nelson, 6, and Margaret Charlotte, 5 months, both born in East Stonehouse.

The census of 1911 records them all at Hornapark, Lifton, Devon. Richard, 45, was Lieutenant Colonel Royal Marines (retired) and Eleanor, 43, stated that they had been married 17 years and she had borne two children, both of whom were alive and well. The children were at home: John N., 16, and Margaret C., 10, both gave their occupation as Students.