

War memorial at Four Oaks Methodist Church, Sutton Coldfield

Author: Paul Harrison in collaboration with the Royal Sutton Coldfield Great War Project,
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Image © Google 2025

Location

The war memorial is located inside Four Oaks Methodist Church at 155 Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2UU.

The War Memorial

The memorial is a brass plaque measuring 600mm in height and 450mm in width. It features the names of seven men and the below inscription.

TO THE HONOURED/ MEMORY OF/ (NAMES)/ OF THIS CHURCH WHO GAVE THEIR/ LIVES IN
THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1919/ "GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS, THAT/ A MAN LAY
DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS"¹

The memorial is not currently listed.

According to the church website, the seven men listed on the memorial were from the families who formed the first generation of the church, who attended Sunday School here as children and who left friends and family at the church.²

The website also states, "In keeping with the tradition of the time most of the men served with the local regiment, the Royal Warwickshire's, and as was so often the case in the Great War this meant that the community suffered especially hard when the local regiment was involved in a major battle. Of the seven men listed on our memorial, three were killed in action on the same day, 4 October 1917". This was part of The Third Battle of Ypres - also known as Passchendaele.



Image from <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/38628>

¹ <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/38628>

² <https://www.fouroaksmethodist.org.uk/our-war-memorial>

267663 Private Sydney Norton Cavit
1st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Sydney Norton Cavit was born in Wolverhampton on 9 April 1898, to Joseph John Cavit and Frances Ellen Cavit. His father was the managing director of a house furnishing company.

The 1901 census recorded Sydney as being two years old and living with his family at 56 Compton Road, Wolverhampton. By 1911, he was 12 years old and a scholar living with his family at a large property named "Mostyn" on Lichfield Road, Four Oaks.

He attended Bishop Vesey's Grammar School between 1912 and 1916. Sydney achieved the Leaving Exhibition award from the school in 1916.

He attested as Private 6225 with the 7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment from school on 13 May 1916, at the age of 18 years and 1 month. He lived at "Mostyn", Lichfield Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield and he was a scholar. He was 5' 8" tall and has a chest measurement of 35 ½". His religion was Wesleyan.

He then joined the Army Reserve and on 24 November 1916, he was posted to the 7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

On 22 August 1917, he embarked for Rouen, France and was posted to the 1st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment on 30 August 1917, as Private 267663.

Private Sydney Norton Cavit was killed in action aged 19 on 4 October 1917, near Langemarck in Belgium.

ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT.—Berry 16579 A. (Cov-
entry); Cavit 267663 S. N. (Birmingham); Jones 28332 A. (Islington,
W.V. Warwidale road W. (Birmingham); Shorne 22421 H. (Sain-
He was included in the list of men killed in the Weekly Casualty List (War Office & Air Ministry) 06 November 1917

He is buried at Cement House Cemetery at Langemarck, Ypres, Plot VIII.F.8. "Cement House" was the military name given to a fortified farm building on the Langemark-Boesinghe (now Boezinge) road. He is also commemorated on the memorial at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School and the war memorial at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield.

The 1st Royal Warwicks, (10th Brigade, 4th Division) were attacking to the North of the Langemarck-Poelcapelle Road. The long-term aim was to attack through the Houthulst Forest and outflank the northern end of the Passchendaele Ridge.

The attack commenced at 6.00 am with the Warwicks in reserve. The Laudetbeek Marsh and 19 Metre Hill were crossed and consolidated. At 3.00 pm the Germans counter-attacked but they were beaten off when the 1st Warwicks and 1st East Lancs came to assist, together with enfilade fire from the 29th Division on their left. Two companies of the 1st Warwicks filled a gap between the 4th and 29th Divisions. Private Cavit and thirteen other ranks were killed in the fighting.

Two identity discs were sent to Mr Joseph Cavit of 31 Stirling Road, Edgbaston in June 1920.

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Image of gravestone for Private Sydney Cavit³

³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11155988/s-n-cavit>

91642 Corporal Frederick Henry Cobb
1st/6th Battalion Durham Light Infantry

Frederick Henry Cobb was born in Kings Lynn on 29 March 1887 and was the son of Charles and Jane Cobb of Norfolk. Charles worked as a Saddler. In 1891 he was 3 years old and living with his family at Brick Yard, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. By 1901 he was aged 13 and living with family at Long Row, Grimston, Norfolk.

On 5 July 1906 Frederick Henry Cobb attested as a Private with 11th Hussars in Dublin and was given the regimental number 5913. He was born in Kings Lynn and was aged 19 years 3 months. His occupation was saddler. He was 5 feet 4¼ inches tall with a chest measurement of 36 inches and weighed 142lbs. He had grey eyes, fair hair and a fresh complexion. His religion was Church of England. After "six months service and gymnastics course" his weight had dropped to 114lbs. His given next of kin was his father Charles in Grimston, Norfolk. His brothers Charles, Walter and Bertie were also listed.

He attained a Second-Class Certificate of Education on 13 December 1906 in Dublin. He was appointed as Lance Corporal on 20 January 1908. He appears to have been employed as a School Assistant from 1 May 1909. He served until 25 November 1909 when he was discharged having paid £25 to buy himself out of the army.

The 1911 Census recorded him living with his parents in Grimston, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. He was aged 23, single and working as a Commercial Traveller. At some point he moved to Four Oaks, and he married Alice Eveline Bate at the Wesleyan Trinity Church in Walsall on 3 April 1912. They had a child, William Bate Cobb, who was born on 19 December 1915 at Four Oaks.

Prior to the war, he had run a business as a tailor at "Belwell House", Belwell Lane, and presumably lived above the premises. The 1916 Kelly's Directory of Warwickshire recorded a "Cobb & Co." hosiers at Belwell Lane Four Oaks. His address also listed as Belwell House on the Electoral Register of 1918.

3666	Cobb, Frederick Henry	Belwell House, Belwell Lane	12944, 3rd Welsh Fus.	3666
1918 electoral register Hill Ward of Sutton Coldfield				

He enlisted on 24 June 1916 aged 29 years and 6 months, apparently as a conscript. His address was Belwell House, Four Oaks, and his occupation was Tailor and Outfitter. His wife Eveline Cobb was listed as Next of Kin, and his religion was Wesleyan. He had previously served in the army with the 11th Hussars. He requested that he be posted to either the Royal Flying Corps, (unreadable) Army Service Corps or Machine Gun Corps Heavy Section (precursor to The Tank Corps).

He appears to have initially enlisted into the Mechanical Transport Depot (MT) of the Army Service Corps and he had given "Learner Driver" as his qualification. He joined for service at Sutton Coldfield on 31 January 1917 and went to Grove Park (the No 1 Reserve MT Depot) on 1 February 1917.

On 15 February 1917 he was transferred to the 60th Infantry Reserve Battalion and on 23 February 1917 he was posted to the 61st Infantry Reserve Battalion as a Private with the regimental number 12944 to Kinmel Park, North Wales. He was promoted to acting Lance Corporal on 27 February 1917 becoming a full Lance corporal on 1 March 1917. From 3 April to 12 April 1917, he was in hospital with tonsillitis. He became an acting Corporal on 1 May 1917 and was posted to the 221st Infantry Battalion on 18 July 1917. He was later posted to the 62nd Infantry Reserve Battalion on 26 September 1917. Having been in several training units, he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion Welsh Regiment on 31 March 1918, this was a reserve battalion. On 11 April 1917 he was promoted to Corporal. On 12 April 1917, he sailed to Le Havre in France from Southampton and was posted to 9th Welsh Regiment (regimental number 73575) at Etaples same day. He was posted to the 18th Welsh Regiment on 15 April then transferred to the 1/6th Durham Light Infantry (regimental number 91642) on 19 April 1918. He applied to for admission to an Officer Cadet Unit but in September 1917 discovered he was not selected for the course.

He was reported as missing from 4pm on 27 May 1918.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	a) Familienname b) Vorname (nur der Rufname) c) nur bei Russen Vorname des Vaters	Dienstgrad	a) Truppenteil b) c) Komp.	a) Gefangennahme (Ort und Tag) b) c) vorhergehender Aufenthaltsort	a) Geburtstag und -Ort b) Adresse des nächsten Verwandten c) <i>Quedlinburg</i>
a) 29	Cobb	Corp.	6.	Craonne	29.8.87 Kingslyll
b)	Frederik		D.L.S.	27.5.18	
c)	91642		V	Laz. Thelon	Birmingham

Extract from International Committee of the Red Cross records archive⁴

The above record from the Red Cross archives state that he was captured on 27 May 1918 at Craonne, France. He was initially held at Lazarett Trélon (a military hospital) before being taken to Quedlinburg Prisoner of War camp in Germany. The above record reads Laz. Thelon but according to the Great War Forum this is a misspelling as the hospital was at Trélon, France near the border with Belgium. His service record indicates that he confirmed he was a POW on 5 October 1918.

Four British divisions had been sent to a relatively quiet sector of the French front to rest and rebuild after their casualties in March and April, only to suffer a torrential attack on 27-31 May 1918 as part of the 3rd Battle of the Aisne. The 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions of the Durham Light Infantry were east of Craonne on 27 May 1918 and on that day, they were heavily attacked by the Germans taking heavy casualties and with many men being prisoner.⁵

According to his service record, Corporal Frederick Cobb died at 8am on 1 November 1918, aged 31, whilst he was a prisoner of war in Quedlinburg, Germany. No cause of death has been found. He was buried at the Quedlinburg Cemetery. This cemetery and graves were later relocated to the Niederzwehren Cemetery, Kassel in Germany. He was buried in Plot VIII.D.19. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission mistakenly gives his date of death as 18 November 1918.

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Eveline Alice Cobb, widow of Frederick Henry Cobb, was awarded a widow's pension and a child's award from August 1919. She received his medals, plaque and scroll at Belwell House. Frederick Cobb was commemorated on the war memorial at Grimston, Norfolk and is also commemorated on the memorial at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield.

The following was featured in the In Memorium section of The Sutton Coldfield News from 1 November 1919, "In loving memory of Frederick H Cobb who died at Quedlinbergh, Germany on November 1st, 1918. Fondly remembered by his wife, Eveline A. Cobb of "Belwell House", Four Oaks". Eveline and her son William were recorded on the 1921 census living with her parents at Ingledels, White Hill, Kinver, Staffordshire.

⁴ <https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/List/1481415/698/40913/>

⁵ <https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/85608-durham-light-infantry-may-27-1918/>

86609 Private Cyril George Colbourn
62nd Company Machine Gun Corps

Cyril George Colbourn was born in 1897 at Lea Moor in Walsall, Staffordshire to John William and Elizabeth Colbourn. His father was a bricklayer. In 1901 he was 3 years old and living with his family at 7 Victoria Terrace, Bloxwich, Walsall. By 1911 he was 13 and living with family at "Hill Cottages", Lichfield Road, Four Oaks. His occupation was given as scholar and hairdressers assistant. The 1914/1915 Electoral Roll recorded Cyril's address to be "Hill View", Lichfield Road, Four Oaks.

His service record exists though it is badly damaged. Cyril Colbourn of 5 Hill Cottage, Lichfield Road, Four Oaks, was 19 years old and single when he attested on 19 November 1915 in Birmingham. His occupation was that of book binder. He initially joined as a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was given the regimental number 23158.

His medical examination was undertaken at Warwick on 23 November 1916. He was 5 feet 9½ inches tall with a chest measurement of 33½ inches. His physical development was classed as fair. He had a 'congenital myocardia' (heart defect) but was declared fit to serve.

His next of kin was his father, John and his mother Elizabeth. His siblings were Victor, 18; Norman, 7; Ethel, 20; Lucy, 14 and Mary, 11. His religion was Wesleyan.

He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 8 January 1917. On 24 February 1917 he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps and given the regimental number 86609. For reasons unknown he reverted back to Private at his own request on 6 March 1917.

He embarked on 21 April 1917 at Folkstone and disembarked the same day at Boulogne. He joined Base Depot at Carniers on 22 April 1917 and later joined 62 Company in the field on 14 May 1917.

He was killed in action on 4 October 1917 aged 20 during The Battle of Broodseinde as part of the Battles of Third Ypres. 62 Machine Gun Company was part of 62 Infantry Brigade of 21 Division.

Cyril Colbourn has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Arrondissement Leper, West Flanders, Belgium, Panel 154 - 159 and 163A.

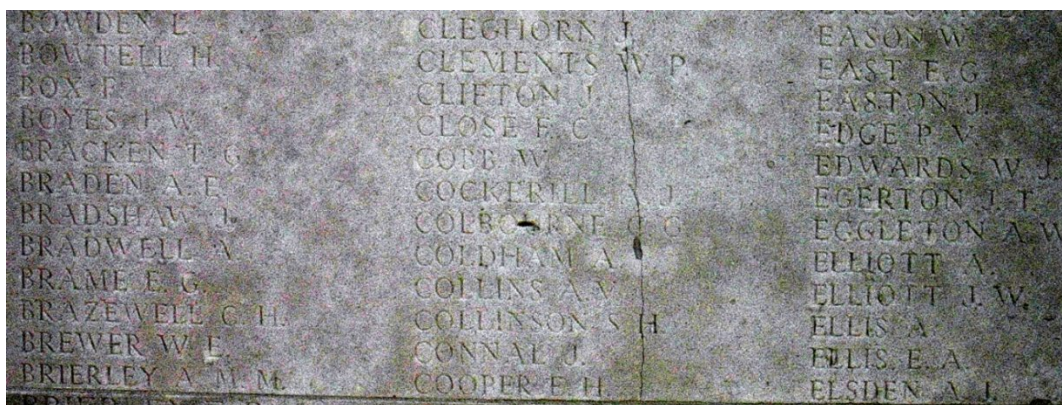


Image of panel from the Tyne Cot Memorial featuring the name of Private Cyril Colbourn⁶

He was awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal. His personal effects and medals were sent to his father on at 5 Hill Cottages, Lichfield Road. Cyril George Colbourn was commemorated on the St James Church Roll of Honour and is also commemorated on the memorial at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield. The following was featured in the In Memorium section of The Sutton Coldfield News from 4 October 1919, "In ever loving memory of our dearly loved son Cyril George who fell in action 4.10.1917. The influence of his life will ever live in the hearts of all at home".

⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11970024/cyril-george-colbourne>

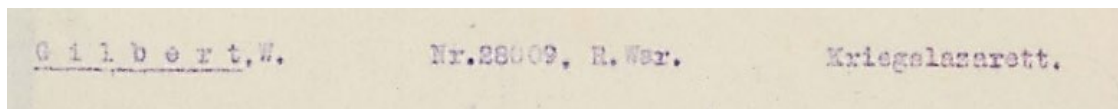
28009 Private William Gilbert 10th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

William Gilbert was born in Sutton Coldfield in 1895 to John and Lucy Gilbert. In 1901 he was 5 years old and living with family at No. 2 Station Cottages, Station Drive, a road which led from Lichfield Road to Four Oaks Station, where his father worked as a plate layer. He was still living there with his family in 1911, he was then 15 years old and employed doing odd jobs at a piano manufactory. Prior to enlisting he worked at the Yote Manufacturing Company, Mere Green Road, Four Oaks. They were manufacturers of small accurate parts and wheels in brass and steel.

William was attached to the Lewis Gun Section (these were machine guns) of his battalion. Between 21 March and 26 March, 1918, his battalion saw much action and heavy fighting and it is likely he was injured at this time.

The battalion had left Vittoria Camp at Barastre for front line trenches south east of Beaumetz on 21 March 1918. The battalion was subjected to heavy shelling on both the 21 and 22 March and then was involved in heavy fighting on 23 March. The battalion was attacked by a numerically superior force and was pushed back, taking part in a fighting withdrawal, with some companies standing their ground and fighting to the last man, thus allowing others to retire. The battalion was in reserve trenches by 27 March having taken very significant casualties with over 300 killed wounded and missing in the period.

William Gilbert died of his wounds aged 22 on 28 March 1918 in France. He was buried Denain Communal Cemetery, France, Plot B. 60. Denain was a German hospital centre during the greater part of the War; and from November 1918 to March 1919, the 33rd Casualty Clearing Station was posted in the town. The Communal Cemetery was used by the Germans to bury their soldiers and (in 1917 and 1918) 153 British prisoners⁷. A British plot was made at the south east end, after the capture of the town; and after the Armistice the graves of the prisoners and other British graves were regrouped beside it. This information indicates that William was wounded, captured and died at the German military hospital a few days later. On taking advice from the Great War Forum⁸, this was confirmed by records held by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)⁹.



Extract from Red Cross archives confirming that he was in a Kriegslazarett (war hospital)

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal which indicates he didn't go overseas until sometime after 1915.

His estate was left to his father, John. He is also commemorated on the memorials at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield and All Saints Church, Four Oaks.

The following was featured in the In Memorium section of The Sutton Coldfield News from 3 March 1919, "In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private William Gilbert, 10th Royal Warwickshire Regiment who was killed in action on 22.3.18. 'Too far away thy grave to see: but not too far to think of thee'. Ever in the thoughts of mother, father, brothers and sisters". His older brother, John Howard Gilbert, served in the war with the Royal Engineers and survived.



Gravestone of Private William Gilbert¹⁰

⁷ <https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/33000/denain-communal-cemetery/>

⁸ <https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/314950-possible-pow-record/>

⁹ <https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/File/Details/2741598/3/2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25245663/william-gilbert>

64947 Serjeant Edward Holbeche MM
95th Brigade Royal Field Artillery

Edward Holbeche was born on 22 January 1886 at Lapworth, Warwickshire to John and Sarah Holbeche. At that time, his father was a Coachman. Edward was baptised on 21 February 1886 at Lapworth Parish Church.

In 1891, Edward was 5 and living with his family in a cottage next to the Vicarage at Hill (Mere Green). In 1901 he was 15 years old and a Gardeners Boy living with his family in a "Private Cottage" at Mere Green.

Edward married Ellen Hykin on 9 September 1909 at St James Church, Mere Green. He was 23, a labourer and lived on Mere Green Road, she was 20 and lived on Hill Village Road. By 1911, Edward lived at "The Cedars", Mere Green Road, with his wife and her brother William. Edward was 25 years old and a Bricklayer's labourer. Edward was recorded living at "The Cedars" on the 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1918 Electoral Registers. According to an article in the Sutton Coldfield News dated 3 November 1917, "Edward Holbeche was educated at Hill School. Before enlisting he worked for Mr S Pugh, builder of Lichfield Road, Four Oaks as a labourer."

His service record exists but it is badly damaged and difficult to read.

Edward attested in the Royal Field Artillery at Suffolk Street recruiting office, Birmingham on 14 January 1915. His address was Mere Green Road, Four Oaks. He was 28 years and 11 months old, and his occupation was Labourer. He was 5 feet 7½ inches tall, weighed 142lbs, had a chest measurement of 37½ inches and his physical development was described as good.

He was posted on 19 January 1915. He then went to various training units before going to France on 9 September 1915. He was appointed as a Bombardier on 26 March 1916, then promoted to Corporal on 26 September 1916 then to Sergeant on 29 May 1917.

While serving with the 95th Brigade Royal Field Artillery, Edward was awarded the Military Medal. The Military Medal was first instituted in March 1916 as an award for bravery in the field for Warrant Officers, NCO's, and lower ranks.

The aforementioned article in the Sutton Coldfield News from 3 November 1917 stated that, "He was awarded the Military Medal for rescuing wounded soldiers out of dugouts that had been hit by German shells". No date or place was given for the action for which the award was merited. However, the award was listed in the Supplement to the London Gazette in January 1918. That edition was for October 1917 and included actions from the 3rd Battle of Ypres, commonly known as Passchendaele. Further advice from the Great War Forum indicated that the award was for action between 6 – 10 October 1917¹¹.

Awarded "The Military Medal."

Surname	<i>Holbeche</i>	FRANCE
Christian Name	<i>E.</i>	
Rank	<i>Sgt</i>	
Corps	<i>B/9.5th Bde RFA</i>	
Regimental Number	<i>64947</i>	
Date of Gazette	<i>14. 1. 18</i>	
Registered Paper	<i>68/12/368</i>	Schedule Number <i>118348</i>
68/Gen. No. 2730 (M.S. 3(1))		W854/H3973 20000 4/17 [X323L] W. & Co. H17/611 W851/PP122 20,000 10/17 [X488a]

In order to avoid duplicate issues of Medals it is imperative that the cards be referred to before any names are gazetted.

Military Medal Index Card from The National Archives - reference WO 372/23/121108

It appears he was severely wounded by a gas shell on 2 November 1917. According to the Great War Forum, the relevant war diaries recorded that some batteries were hit by gas shells on 02 November 1917 and that 95th Brigade suffered 5 wounded including 3 gassed¹². He was subsequently a patient in the Northern General Hospital, Victoria Road, Leicester from 13 November 1917 to 4 January 1918 with gas poisoning. He was then transferred to Devonshire Hospital in Buxton

¹¹ <https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/316244-sjt-edward-holbeche-mm-rfa/>

¹² <https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/316244-sjt-edward-holbeche-mm-rfa/>

until 19 February 1918, with the same condition. The final unit he served with, apparently as an instructor, was the 348th Brigade RFA, it was in 69th Division which did not serve overseas.

Edward Holbeche died aged 32, at the Brook War Hospital in Woolwich on 6 November 1918 from pneumonia caught on active service. He was buried at St James Church, Mere Green, Plot I.13 (A/B 19), and was commemorated on their Roll of Honour. He is also commemorated on the memorial at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield.

A piece in the Sutton Coldfield News dated 23 November 1918 stated that, "Having seen much service, he was gassed on October 29th, 1917, and was brought back to England. He was an inmate at Buxton Hospital until February 1918 when he went to Salisbury and other places as an instructor. He was taken ill with pneumonia on 28th October 1918 and taken to the Brook War Hospital, Woolwich where he died. He was buried with full military honours."

In addition to the Military Medal, he was also awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star.



Image of gravestone for Serjeant Edward Holbeche taken by Yvonne Moore 2 August 2014

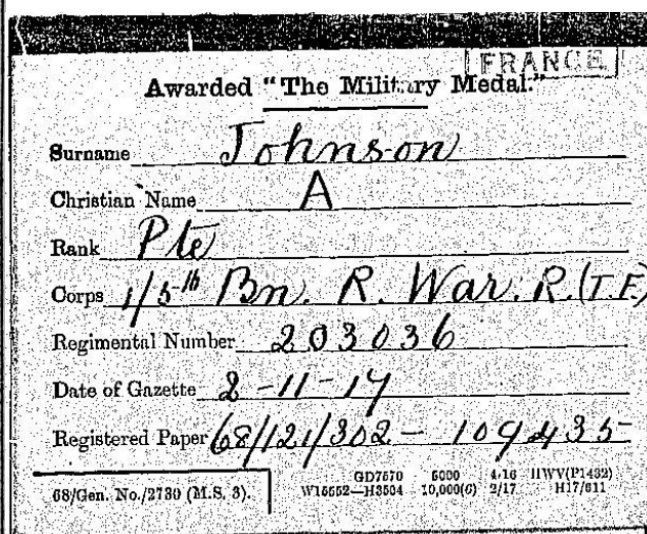
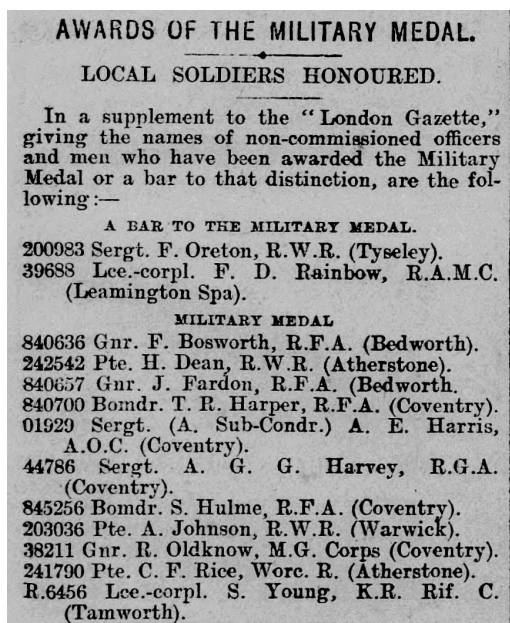
203036 Private Arthur Johnson MM
1st/5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Arthur Johnson was born in Sutton Coldfield on 19 September 1891, to Arthur and Sarah Ann Johnson; he was a twin brother to Harold. They were both baptised on 22 November 1891, at St Peters Church, Little Aston. His fathers occupation was Labourer, and their address was Little Aston. In 1901 he was 9 years old and living with his family in a cottage on Clarence Road, Four Oaks.

By 1911 he was 19, single and still living in Clarence Road with his parents and two of his siblings. He was employed as a butcher.

He appears to have enlisted with the Warwickshire Yeomanry (regimental number 3434) but transferred to the 1st/5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (regimental number 203036).

Arthur was awarded the Military Medal. The Military Medal was first instituted in March 1916 as an award for bravery in the field for Warrant Officers, NCO's, and lower ranks. According to the Great War Forum, his award was for action in August 1917. The war diary records that he was presented with his medal at St Jan Ter Bizen on 12 September 1917, by the Corps Commander¹³. This was later reported in the London Gazette dated 2 November 1917, thus, "His Majesty the KING has been graciously please to award the Military Medal for bravery in the Field to the undermentioned Non-Commissioned Officers and Men: - (amongst others) 203036 Pte. A. Johnson, R. War. R. (Warwick). That Gazette relates to August 1917 for Ypres/Flanders. It is not clear for what act of gallantry he was awarded the medal. His battalion saw a much action in August 1917 including spells occupying waterlogged and extremely muddy front-line positions under heavy artillery fire. Then followed a successful local attack on Hillock Farm by B Company on the 19th and on the 22nd and 24th, larger scale and costly attacks on pillboxes in awful conditions near St. Julien, part of The Battle of Langemarck¹⁴.



Clipping from the Coleshill Chronicle dated 10 November 10, 1917 (left) & Military Medal Index Card from The National Archives - reference WO 372/23/126034 (right)

In October 1917, his battalion took part in The Battle of Broodseinde. The 1st/5th Warwicks (143rd Brigade, 48th Division, XVIII Corps) were to the north east of St Julien when their Brigade attacked on 4 October 1917. The 143rd Brigade consisted of the 1/5th on the right, 1/6th in the centre, 1/7th on the left, with the 1/8th in support. At 6.00am the British barrage fell, the intense noise wiped out hearing, but the accuracy of fire prevented any reply. The 1/5th Warwicks went over the top and advanced into the mud. The Battalion was caught in a belt of snipers and machine-guns in shell holes and the battle broke up into a series of duels between small, isolated parties. Many platoon leaders

¹³ <https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/315224-private-arthur-johnson-mm/#comment-3355709>

¹⁴ <https://archive.org/details/5thbnwarwickshireregt/page/55/mode/2up>

and section commanders became casualties. They persevered and captured their objectives, Vale House and Winzig, but the left company took severe casualties from heavy fire from a machine-gun post. 150 Germans were captured, but the four Battalions lost 12 officers killed, 15 wounded and 1 missing, with 765 other ranks as casualties.

Private Arthur Johnson was killed in action in the above battle aged 26 on 4 October 1917, at St Julien in Belgium. He was buried at Dochy Farm New British Cemetery, Belgium, Plot II. C. 8. Several men from his regiment who were killed on the same day are also buried in the same cemetery. His headstone inscription, "Thy Will Be Done", was chosen by his older sister, Miss N Johnson of 21 Tower Road, Four Oaks. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website (which mistakenly recorded his age at death as 31) details Arthur as the "Son of the late Arthur and Sarah Johnson, of Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham".

In addition to the Military Medal, he was also awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal indicating he didn't go overseas until sometime after 1915.

His war gratuities were paid to his brother Harold and older sister Nellie. He is also commemorated on the memorials at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield and All Saints Church, Four Oaks.



Gravestone of Private Arthur Johnson¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11892161/arthur-johnson>

202992 Private Primrose Logan Larnach 2nd/6th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Primrose Logan Larnach was born in Birmingham on 15 March 1898, to John Logan and Mary Ann Larnach. He was baptised on 8 May 1898, at St Mary the Virgin Church, Aldridge, Staffordshire. His fathers occupation was Architect, and their address was Brick Yard Row, Aldridge. John Logan Larnach was listed in the Kelly's Directories for 1883, 1888, 1890 and 1892. He was a lithographic printer based at 11 Broad Street, Birmingham.

In 1901, Primrose was 3 years old and living in a "Private Cottage" on Mere Green Road, Four Oaks, with his parents and younger brother. His fathers occupation was given as Architect and Artist. By 1911 he was living with his mother and younger two siblings at Ivy Cottage, Belwell Lane, Four Oaks. He was 13 years old and at school. Primrose attended Bishop Vesey's Grammar School between 1909 and 1912. His father was not found on the 1911 census. Mary Larnach had been married for 14 years and had four children, one of which had died.

According to the Sutton Coldfield News dated 13 March 1915, his father, an artist named John Logan Larnach, died on 6 March 1915.

He enlisted in the 1st/5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment and later transferred to the 2nd/6th Battalion of the same regiment.

Primrose Logan Larnach was killed in action in France on 5 December 1917, aged 19. He has no known grave as is commemorated on Panel 3 of the Cambrai Memorial, Louveral, France.

At the time of his death, the 2nd/6th Warwicks (182nd Brigade, 61st Division) were occupying part of the Hindenburg Line on Welsh Ridge, between Bapaume and Cambrai, at the end of the Battle of Cambrai.

The captured German trenches faced the wrong way, which meant that the Germans could attack down their old communication trenches to the old front trench. 'B' Company were engaged in heavy fighting on December 5th when Germans attempted to bomb their way down Emden Trench to the 2nd/6th Warwicks. The Battalion was also subjected to heavy shelling.

The Germans nearly gained the line but were repulsed. There was a lack of ammunition and Mills grenades as these, together with water and rations, had to be fetched 26km from the Quartermasters base, behind the original 'jumping off' line. After 12 hours of fighting the Germans were finally driven back.

From December 2nd to the 7th, the Battalion lost 5 officers killed and 11 wounded, with 29 killed, 101 wounded and 2 missing amongst the other ranks, including Private Larnach.

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal indicating he didn't go overseas until sometime after 1915.

His war gratuity was left to his mother. He is also commemorated on the memorials at King Edwards Square, Sutton Coldfield and All Saints Church, Four Oaks. His surname is misspelled as "Larnock" on the memorial at Four Oaks Methodist Church.

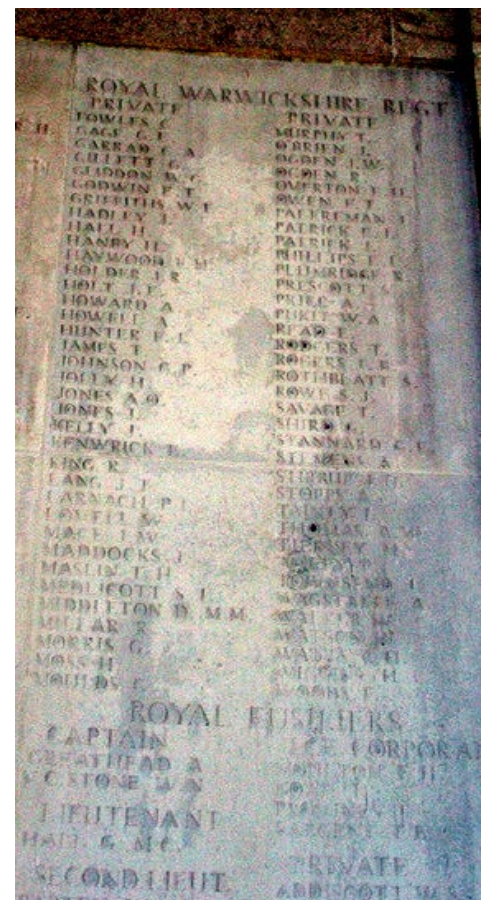


Image of panel from the Cambrai Memorial featuring the name of Private Primrose Larnach¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56027942/primrose-logan-larnach>

The following was featured in the In Memorium section of The Sutton Coldfield News from 7 December 1918, "In ever loving memory of Private P L Larnach who fell in action December 5th, 1917. Never forgotten by mother, brother and sister".

General References - Websites

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/> - Census, birth, marriage and military service records
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> - Contemporary newspaper articles about the servicemen
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/> - Details about the servicemen and where they are buried or commemorated
<https://www.findagrave.com/> - Details and images of the servicemen and where they are buried or commemorated including images of their gravestones and memorial panels
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/> - Census, birth, marriage, and military service records
<https://www.fouroaksmethodist.org.uk/our-war-memorial> - Details of the memorial itself
<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/> - Information about Military Medal awards
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/17349> - Details about the war memorial at All Saints Church, Belwell Lane, Four Oaks
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/38628> - Details about the plaque at Four Oaks Methodist Church
<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk> - Information on army units and their whereabouts during WW1. Advice on interpreting service records. Also details about campaign and bravery medals.
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> - Battalion war diaries, soldiers medal cards and service records
<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/cultural-collections/medals/collection/first-world-war-campaign-medals/#:~:text=There%20were%20five%20British%20campaign,War%20Medal%20and%20Victory%20Medal> – Information about campaign medals
<https://www.royalsuttoncoldfieldgreatwarproject.co.uk/> – Information on the servicemen commemorated on the Sutton Coldfield war memorial from the Royal Sutton Coldfield Great War Project

General References – Books

By God they can fight: A history of the 143rd Infantry Brigade, 1908-1995 by Peter Caddick-Adams. Published by 143rd (West Midlands) Brigade; (1995)

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All information is provided in good faith but, on occasions errors may occur. Should this be the case, if new information can be verified, please supply it to the author and corrections will then be made.