

The following information about the men named on the war memorials in the Cerne Valley is a summary of what is known about them. If you would like more details about any of them, please contact the Cerne Historical Society.

CERNE ABBAS AND UPCERNE

GREAT WAR OF 1914 TO 1918

There are 14 Cerne Abbas men who died in the Great War and one from UpCerne. Most were in their 20s. The three killed in 1914 were among the Regulars who sustained enormous casualties in containing the German advance and gave the vital time necessary for Britain and its Allies to mobilise for the struggle ahead. Local people remember being told by their fathers that there was a general exodus of young men marching into Dorchester and Sherborne to join the colours following the Declaration of War on 4 August 1914.

Edward Henry Young

Edward joined the 1st Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment in 1904. He lived in part of what is now 38 Long Street, Cerne Abbas (The Crown). His father was a Thatcher. The 1st Battalion was in Ulster at the outbreak of the war, but moved immediately to the front in Belgium and fought at the 1st Battle of Mons and at Le Cateau in the subsequent retreat. He was killed in The Battle of the Aisne on 16th September 1914 aged 27 and has no known grave. He is commemorated on the La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial in Seine-et-Marne.

Horace Collier

Horace's family lived in what is now 6 Abbey Street and in Back Lane, Cerne Abbas. His father was a Miller and Baker and Horace was one of a family of 11 children. Horace joined the 1st Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment in 1912. He survived the battles in which the Battalion was involved in Belgium and France, only to be killed at the Battle of Le Basse during the 'Race to the Sea' on 13th October 1914 aged 20. In this action, for which they were 'Mentioned in Despatches', the 1st Dorsets suffered over 400 casualties, including 122 dead. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial in the Pas de Calais. Two poignant letters sent to his sweetheart survive and are now in the Keep Museum in Dorchester.

John Henry Strode Batten

John was the son of Colonel John Mount Batten who was Lord Lieutenant of Dorset and lived at UpCerne Manor. He was educated at Minterne Magna School, Thomas Hardye Grammar School in Dorchester and Rossall College before going up to Trinity College, Cambridge. He then joined his father's regiment, The Kings (Liverpool), and served in the Boer War, including the Siege of Ladysmith. The Kings (Liverpool) Regiment had been in the thick of the fighting from the beginning and by 21st October was in the line at Langemark in Belgium for the start of the First Battle of Ypres. He had been 'Mentioned in Despatches' for his leadership at the previous Battle of the Aisne. John was killed by a sniper during the First Battle of Ypres and has no known

grave. He was aged 39. John is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, in Hardye's School, and with a plaque in UpCerne Church placed there by his wife. There were no children from the marriage.

Charles Damen

Charles Damen was born in Plush in 1881. He served in the Rifle Brigade for 8 years before emigrating to Australia around 1913. On the outbreak of war he enlisted in Melbourne into the Australian Infantry Force (AIF). As part of ANZAC, the AIF landed on the Gallipoli Peninsular on 25th April 1915. Charles was posted missing in action that first day, but was subsequently identified when a mass grave was opened after the war. He is buried in the Lone Pine Cemetery, not far from ANZAC Bay where the landing took place.

Harry Derriman

Harry was a son of the Derriman family who had owned the Cerne Village Stores for much of the 19th century. He emigrated to New Zealand in July 1913 to live in Alton, North Island. He enlisted as a Trooper in the Wellington Mounted Rifles on the outbreak of war. As part of ANZAC, Harry was killed in action attacking Chanuk Bair on the Gallipoli Peninsular on the 9th August 1915 aged 25. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Chanuk Bair (New Zealand) memorial and in his new home town in North Island.

Albert Edward Way

Albert enlisted in November 1914, describing himself as a 'Carter'. He was one of 10 children, of whom 7 had survived, born to George and Charlotte Way of Acreman Street, Cerne Abbas. He enlisted into the 5th Dorsets in November 1914 and landed with them at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli on 7th August 1915. He was wounded on that first day. Albert did not survive the journey by sea to hospital in Egypt and was buried at sea on 13th August aged 21. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial at Gallipoli.

James Henry Lake

James was one of 9 children of whom 8 survived and lived in Alton Lane at a time when there were cottages on the side of the road opposite the Cerne Abbas cricket ground entrance. He enlisted into the 5th Dorsets on 10th August 1914 with his brother, Walter. James was wounded at Suvla Bay on the same day as Albert Way (above) and survived seven operations before being medically discharged in March 1916. He died in the Dorchester Borough Isolation Hospital on 27th November 1916 aged 24 and was buried in the Dorchester (Fordington) Cemetery in an unmarked grave. His grave has recently been relocated and he will now be honoured with a CWGC headstone.

Harold Hunt

Harold was an agricultural labourer, the son of George and Georgina Hunt. The family lived in a cottage to the north east end of Acreman Street, Cerne Abbas, now demolished. He enlisted into the Grenadier Guards on 15th December 1915 and moved to France on 12th August 1916, by which time the Battle of the Somme was well underway. His 4th Battalion was part of an attack on Lesboeufs by the Guards Division on 25 September 1916. It was the Battalion's first action and Harold was posted as missing the same day, aged 20. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, with 73,000 other men who fell on the Somme and have no known grave.

Charles Burt

Charles Burt was a farm labourer and in 1911 he was working at Tucking Mill Farm. This farm was on the right of the road on the way to UpCerne from Cerne Abbas and was subsequently demolished in 1964. He married a girl from Dorchester in 1914. Charles initially joined the Dorsetshire Regiment, but transferred to the 1st Battalion Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry. He died on 4th October 1917 aged 27 during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). Charles has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial with 35,000 other soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient after August 1917 and have no known grave.

Thomas Williment

Little is known about Thomas, except that he was a son of Thomas, a dairyman of Barton Farm, Cerne Abbas. It was another large family with 10 children. The family story is that he 'was blown to pieces' on 31st July 1917, the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres. He was aged 29. Which army unit he was serving is not certain, but believed to be the Leinster Regiment. He is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial with 35,000 other soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient before August 1917 and have no known grave.

Frank Paulley

Frank Paulley was a 'labourer and painter' and lived in Alton Lane. He joined the 2nd/1st Bucks Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. He died on 22nd August 1917 aged 27 during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial with 35,000 other soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient after August 1917 and have no known grave.

George Curtis

George was the youngest son of Tom Curtis, the village blacksmith who ran the Forge in Mill Lane. His peacetime occupation was as Fitter and Turner, so it is not difficult to see why he ended up as a fitter in the Royal Field Artillery. He died of wounds in the military hospital in Etaples on 31st March 1918 aged 26. He is buried with some 12,000 other British and allied soldiers in the Military Cemetery there.

Reginald Henry Vine

Reginald was a 'Groom Domestic' and lived in what is now 5 Acreman Street, Cerne Abbas. He was mobilised in July 1916, but because of his poor health he was assigned to the 440th Agricultural Labour Corps at the end of June 1917. He was medically discharged in April 1918 and died the following month from Tuberculosis. His discharge record states that his 'Disability' was 'Aggravated by Ordinary Military Service'. He is buried in Cerne Abbas Burial Ground, his headstone reading: 'Buried 15th May 1918, a Private Soldier'. He will now be honoured with a CWGC headstone.

William Charles Walter Miller

Of William Miller we know almost nothing, except that he was a farm labourer and lived in The Folly in one of the thatched cottages below Barton Lodge, Cerne Abbas. He joined the 6th Battalion of the Dorsets and was killed on 8th July 1918 during a night raid on German lines near Beaumont-Hamel on the Somme. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial on the Somme.

Hamilton Diment

Hamilton was a shepherd and was married with four young children. The family lived in Back Lane. He enlisted on 20 February 1915 into the 6th Battalion, The Dorsetshire Regiment. Hamilton survived the war, only to die of what was described as 'Bronchitis' on 27th December 1918 aged 40 and is buried in Cambrai East Military Cemetery.

SECOND WORLD WAR - 1939 TO 1945

There are 9 Cerne Abbas men who died in the Second World War. There were two pairs of brothers among them and the descendants of these brothers still live in Cerne Abbas.

Christopher Downton

Christopher enlisted into the 7th Battalion, The Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. He was the son of Christopher John and Annie Jane Downton of Cerne Abbas. Severely wounded in action in Italy, he was sent to Minterne House which had been turned into a hospital for the duration. On the 8th June 1945 he asked to be taken home to Cerne Abbas, where he died later that day. He was aged 21 and is buried in the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground.

Walter Charles Downton

Walter was the brother of Christopher Downton (above) and husband of Amy Louisa, of Horton Kirby, Kent. He enlisted into 91 Battery, 44th Light AA Regiment, Royal Artillery. By 1945 the Regiment was in Burma where it was being used as Infantry in pursuing the retreating Japanese forces. He died from gunshot wounds to the head on 9th May 1945, aged 29. Walter is buried in the Maynamati War Cemetery, Bangladesh.

Thomas Herbert Harvey

Thomas 'Bert' Harvey was one of a family of ten children born to Thomas and Edith Harvey. His father had been a sergeant in the local police force until leaving to move into the old Cerne Union Workhouse to run it as a Youth Hostel. 'Bert' Harvey, a journeyman joiner in peacetime, was married to Ruby and had two daughters. He joined the 111th Regiment (Royal Armoured Corps), attached to the Manchester Regiment. 'Bert' died in an Army vehicle accident during training at Oxley, Yorkshire on 28th June 1943, aged 34. He is buried in Cerne Abbas Burial Ground.

John William Harvey

John 'Jack' Harvey was the eldest son of Thomas and Edith Harvey and a brother of Thomas Harvey (above). He was married to Margaret Ann Maria Harvey of Hamworthy and had two sons. He had joined the Royal Navy towards the end of the First World War and on completing his service had transferred to the Fleet Reserve. 'Jack' was called up in August 1939 as war approached and joined HMS Dunedin, a World War One cruiser. On 24th November 1941 the ship was patrolling about 900 miles east of Sierra Leone, searching for German raiders, when it was torpedoed by U124. Only 72 of the complement of over 400 men were subsequently rescued; 'Jack' was not among them. He was 43 years old. U124 was later sunk with all hands by the Royal Navy in April 1943 in the Bay of Biscay when attacking a convoy. John

Harvey is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial and on the family grave in the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground.

John Robert James Norman Jay

John was the only son of John and Flora Jay of Cerne Abbas. He had completed 12 years service in the Royal Navy before leaving to join the Dorchester Rural District Council as an assistant engineer. At the outbreak of war he was called up and joined the destroyer HMS Esk. On Saturday 17 August 1940 he married Cicely Hilary Bown in Cerne Abbas. After one night with his new wife, he returned to his ship in Portsmouth. The ship sailed next morning, never to return. It struck a mine off the Dutch coast on 1st September 1940, sinking within two minutes. John was 35 years old. He is commemorated on the Portsmouth War Memorial and on his parents' grave in the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground.

Montague Moore

Montague Moore was the son of Henry and Florence Moore who farmed in the Cerne Valley. He was educated in the Cerne School and the Dorchester Grammar School (now Hardye's). Montague joined the Royal Air Force on leaving school and then sent to 206 Squadron in 1939 as a Sergeant Pilot. Equipped with Hudson aircraft, the squadron flew North Sea patrols in 1940, including covering the possible invasion ports. He is believed to have been shot down off the Belgian coast, but died in hospital on 12th May 1940. He was 26 years old. Montague is buried in the Sage War Cemetery, Germany. He is also commemorated at Hardye's School.

Ernest Robert Old

Ernest was the son of Harry and Elizabeth Mary Old, of Cerne Abbas. He joined the 5th Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment which became part of the 43rd Wessex Division. The Division landed in France soon after D-Day and quickly acquired a reputation as a successful fighting unit. The 5th Battalion were part of an operation to seize vital high ground to the southwest of Caen. The operation was successful, but with heavy casualties against determined opposition. One of these casualties was Ernest who died on 10th July 1944, aged 26. He is buried in the Tilly-Sur-Seulles War Cemetery, France.

Alan Jeffrey Thomas

Jeffrey Thomas, as he is named on the war memorial, was the son of George and Lilian Thomas. Jeffrey had been born and brought up in Cerne Abbas. He joined 100 Squadron, Royal Air Force, in 1943 as a Warrant Officer Pilot flying Lancaster bombers in operations over Germany. He was killed on 29th June 1943, aged 22, and is buried in the Eindhoven General Cemetery in the Netherlands, suggesting that he was killed either on his way to or returning from operations over Germany.

Richard Wilfred Yearsley

Richard Yearsley was the son of William and Edith Yearsley who lived in Duck Street, Cerne Abbas. He joined the 4th Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, before the outbreak of the Second World War and was among those evacuated from Dunkirk in May 1940. He was subsequently captured by the Italians in the Western Desert in June 1941 and became a prisoner of war. He was released in May 1945 with the German surrender and returned home to Cerne Abbas. Sadly, he was

killed in a motor cycle accident on 7th August 194, shortly after his return home. He was 25 years old and is buried in the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground.

FALKLAND ISLANDS CONFLICT 1982

Ronald J Rotherham

Sergeant Ron Rotheram, Royal Marines, volunteered to join the British Task Force to liberate the Falkland Islands after the invasion by Argentinean forces in April 1982. He was born in Liverpool, but lived in Cerne Abbas with his wife, Maureen, and daughter, Dawn. On the evening of 8th June, the Landing Craft Unit F4, part crewed by Ron Rotheram, was attacked in Choiseul Sound by 3 Argentine aircraft while returning to HMS Fearless after transporting troops ashore. The crew of four Royal Marines, including Ron Rotheram, and two Royal Navy ratings, were all killed. Ron was aged 34. He is commemorated at Bluff Cove Memorial, Falkland Islands.

GODMANSTONE AND NETHER CERNE

THE GREAT WAR OF 1914 TO 1918

There are 4 men on the war memorial at Holy Trinity at Godmanstone. The population of Godmanstone and Nether Cerne in the early 20th century was about 160, much larger than today.

William John Hill Dunman

William was born in Puddletown. His father had died before he was born, but his mother remarried and William was living in Nether Cerne as a farm labourer at the outbreak of war. He enlisted into the Dorset Yeomanry at Sherborne in October 1914. The Regiment landed at Suvla Bay in Gallipoli on 18th August 1915 and took part in operations against Turkish positions on 21st August. It lost 7 out of 8 officers and 119 out of 301 other ranks that day. Amongst the latter was William, aged 19. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli.

Ernest Ralph Rolls

Ernest, born in Winterbourne Abbas, joined the 5th Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment on 1st September 1914. At that time his parents were living at Bushes Bottom, near Godmanstone. The 5th Battalion landed at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli on 7th August 1915. His records do not indicate when he was wounded, but he died on 8th December 1915 aged 18 onboard HM Hospital Ship 'Assaye' at Mudros in Greece. His wounds were described as 'gun shot wounds to abdomen and leg'. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli.

John Osmond

John was born in Cheselbourne and joined the 1st Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment at the outbreak of war. His family were living at Nether Cerne. He was with the 5th Battalion in Gallipoli and survived, only to be transferred back to the 1st Battalion in France for the Somme Offensive which commenced on 1st July 1916. On that first day British casualties were 58,000; including 20 officers and 500 out of 800 other ranks

from the 1st Battalion. The Battalion remained in the front line and John died on 6th July 1915 aged 19. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, with 73,000 other men who fell on the Somme and have no known grave.

Edward Silas Morris

Edward was born at Ansty and joined the Royal Field Artillery in Dorset, date unknown. Why his name is on the Godmanstone memorial is also unknown, but there must have been a local connection. His 108th Brigade was sent to the Ypres Salient in Belgium in support of the British Army for the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) which commenced on 31st July 1917. The War Diary for the 108th Brigade records continuous casualties thereafter, mainly from enemy artillery, including Edward who died on 20th August aged 24. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial with 35,000 other soldiers with no known grave who died in the Ypres Salient after August 1917.

SECOND WORLD WAR - 1939 TO 1945

Thomas Leo Pile

Thomas was the son of Frank and Amy Pile of Godmanstone. He was educated at Hardye's School in Dorchester and worked for the General Post Office in Dorchester before being called up into the Army. He was a Trooper in the 107th Regiment (5th King's Own Royal Regiment of Lancashire), Royal Armoured Corps. On 21st October 1944 Thomas was part of a Reconnaissance Troop attempting to force a corridor up the east side of the Scheldt Estuary. They came under fire and Thomas was killed. He was 21 years old. Thomas is buried in the Geel War Cemetery, Antwerpen in Belgium. He is also commemorated at Hardye's School and at the General Post Office in Dorchester.

Charles Trevett

Charles was the son of Richard and Eliza Trevett of Nether Cerne and the husband of Agnes Trevett of Dunfermline, Fife. He was a Petty Officer Stoker and was serving in the light cruiser HMS Penelope in the Mediterranean when it was torpedoed by U410 on 18th February 1944 about 35 miles east of Naples. Only 250 men of a complement of over 600 were rescued and Charles was not among them. U140 was itself destroyed the following month while alongside in Toulon. Charles is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. He was 30 years old.

MINTERNE MAGNA

THE GREAT WAR OF 1914 TO 1918

There are 9 men on the war memorial at St Andrew's at Minterne. The population of Minterne which included Lyons Gate was barely 300 at that time. The names are particularly poignant in that they include three (of four) Napier brothers. They were the sons of Timothy and Amelia Napier who had both died by 1914 and therefore did not live to see what was to befall their family. The surviving brother, Herbert, was saved from a possible similar fate by being declared as in a 'reserved occupation'.

Francis (Frank) George Napier

Frank joined the 9th Battalion Rifle Brigade at Winchester in August 1914, his peacetime occupation described as 'Gardener'. The Battalion moved to the Ypres Salient in Belgium in May 1915 and their war diary relates that it was involved in 'routine trench warfare' from 9th to the 11th July 1915, during which time it suffered numerous killed and wounded. Frank is recorded as having died on Sunday 11th July aged 25. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial with 54,900 other British soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient prior to August 1917 with no known grave.

James Timothy Napier.

James had married Lillie Louisa of Nursling in Hampshire in 1909 and was living at Lyons Gate as a 'Small Holder' at the time of his mobilisation into the 1st Battalion Royal Marine Light Infantry in August 1916. The 1st Battalion moved to the Arras Sector in France in December 1916. At dawn on 28th April 1917 it attacked high ground near Arras in what became known as the Battle of Gavrelle Windmill. The casualties were appalling and included James, aged 31. He is buried in the Orchard Dump Cemetery, Arleux-en-Gohelle, Pas de Calais. There were no children from the marriage.

Abdon Napier

It is not known when Abdon enlisted into the Royal Garrison Artillery, but his Battery (142nd Durham Heavy Battery) moved to France in March 1916. It was based near Amiens in support of the British 4th Army. On 8th August 1918 the 4th Army had opened the '100 days' offensive that finally led to the Armistice of 11th November. The Regimental History records that the continuing offensive on the 8th October '*was a hard day's fighting, but the absence of a really well-coordinated counter-battery programme caused many casualties from enemy guns*'. Abdon, aged 21, was one of these casualties and he is buried in the Vadencourt British Cemetery, Maissemy, Aisne.

George Hawkins

George enlisted into the Dorsetshire Regiment in November 1911 and joined the 2nd Battalion in India at Poona. The Battalion moved to Mesopotamia in late 1914 to secure the British oilfields at Abadan, and the port of Basra. The Turkish Army was subsequently defeated in the battles at Saihan and Sahil. George died of wounds on

18th November 1914 aged 22 and is buried in the Basra War Cemetery. At the time of his death his parents were living at Rose Cottage, Minterne Parva.

Frank Bratchell

All that is known about Frank Bratchell is that his parents lived in Hampshire, where he was born, and that he was a private in the 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers, enlisting at Sherborne. He died on 20th May 1915 aged 24, has no known grave, and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. Why his name appears on the Minterne war memorial is not known, but there must have been some local connection.

Cecil Cheeseman

Cecil was the son of George and Mary Cheeseman who lived at Dogberry Hill, Minterne Magna. Mary had been the sub-postmistress in Minterne and Cecil went to school there. A carpenter, he joined the Royal Engineers as a Sapper. He died on 1st August 1916 aged 29 from wounds received during the Somme Offensive that had started on 1st July 1916. He is buried in the Daours Communal Cemetery on the Somme.

Ernest Adams

Ernest was born and went to school in Minterne. He enlisted into the 1st/4th Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment and was sent to India to join the operations in Mesopotamia. Ernest died on 8th February 1917 aged 26 from dysentery. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Kirkee Memorial at Poona.

Joseph Clark

Little is known about Joseph, except that he was born in Minterne and went to school in Minterne. His parents lived at Lane's Cottages, Minterne. He initially enlisted into the Dorsetshire Regiment, but transferred to the 6th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. Joseph was killed on 22nd August 1917 aged 22 during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). His Battalion suffered 330 casualties out of a total strength of 550 on that day. He is buried in the Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

George Pilgrim

George Pilgrim was born in Nottinghamshire and enlisted into the 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers in Dorchester in May 1915. Little is known about George or why his name appears on the war memorial, but Frank Bratchell (above) had died in action with this Regiment in May 1915 and there may be a connection. George died on 27th March 1918 aged 18, suggesting that he lied about his age on enlisting. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Somme.

SECOND WORLD WAR - 1939 TO 1945

Joseph Charles Clark

Joseph was a Territorial prior to the Second World War. He enlisted into the 4th Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment in April 1939. The 4th Battalion became part of the 43rd Wessex Division. The Division landed in France soon after D-Day and quickly acquired a reputation as a successful fighting unit. On 3rd August 1944 the Division was ordered to capture the vital high ground at Ondfontaine, southwest of Caen. The attack by the 4th Battalion met stiff resistance and casualties were very heavy. A

further attack on the following day was also unsuccessful and the position was only taken on the 5th August. Joseph was killed on 3rd August, aged 23 years, and is buried in the Hottot-les-Bagues War Cemetery, Calvados in France.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM