

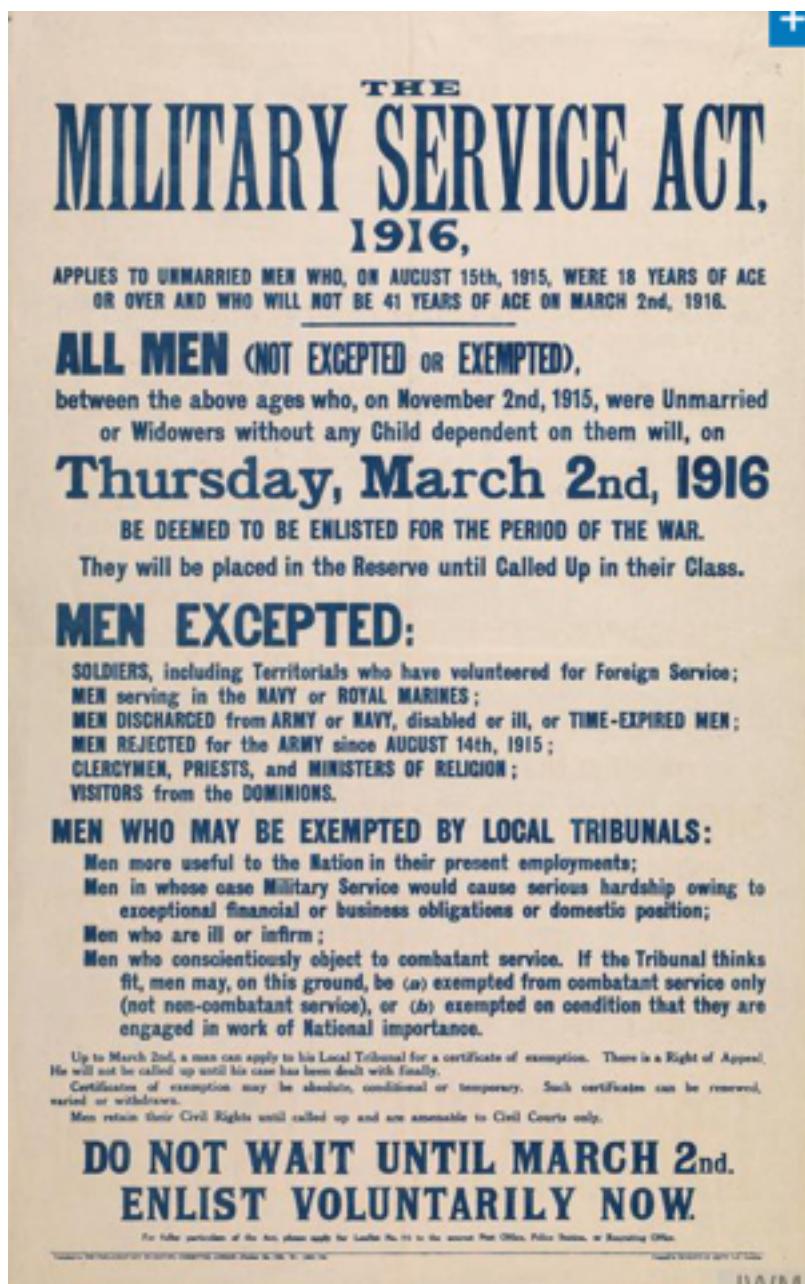
On the Western Front the Germans mounted a major offensive at Verdun but with great courage and determination the French Army repulsed most of the attacks. On the Eastern Front the Russian offensive at Lake Naroch ended without success and cost the Russians up to 125,000 casualties against a German cost of perhaps 20,000.

In Mesopotamia a British garrison (6th Poona Division) besieged for over 140 days through a harsh winter by the Turkish Army at Kut-el-Amara found its food supplies almost exhausted. No means of a consistent re-supply of food was found, a relief force was unable to break through the Turkish lines, and the garrison surrendered. 9,000 to 13,000 men were made prisoners of which 2,500 sick and wounded were released and of the remainder nearly 5,000 died later from disease, illness and neglect.

The 5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment remained in Sainy-Au-Bois for the month of April. There seemed to be a rotation throughout the month whereby the four different companies, A,B,C and D (local Mayfield men would have been in D company) spent time at The Keep in Rebuterne, Bayencourt, the trenches and back at Sainy-Au-Bois. 22 draft men from base arrived towards the end of the month, and on the 29th April there was a night alarm until 5am on the 30th, but fortunately no attack.

On the Home Front, in Ireland in late April, Roger Casement an Irish Nationalist, landed from a German submarine with weapons to support what became known as the Easter Rising. After a declaration of Martial Law the rebellion, centred on Dublin, was quashed within a few days. Roger Casement together with other Nationalists were captured, tried and more than a dozen eventually executed.

In this same time period four German battlecruisers shelled the East Coast of England at Yarmouth and Lowestoft for approx. 20 mins before withdrawing as the Royal Navy arrived.



The Tribunals formed to hear appeals for exemption from military conscription continued with the thankless task of identifying genuine pleas from the confusing variety of reasons put forward by individuals and employers alike. The Uckfield Tribunal heard an appeal from a Mayfield farm carter submitted by his employer E Coppard & Son, Mere's Farm pleading the essential nature of retaining his labour force. The case was dismissed.

On the same topic at the Mayfield Parish Council AGM on the 17 April 1916 Councillor Christie noted that the Clerk to the council was of military age and would in all probability be called up in one of the later groups, but under the circumstances he thought the Council ought to support a claim for exemption, saying that *"This Parish Council do make application to the local tribunal for the exemption from military service of the assistant overseer and collector of rates, and clerk to the parish council for Mayfield, , it being considered that he is indispensable as his duties are of National Importance and it would be most difficult to obtain an efficient substitute"*. The proposition was carried unanimously and the Chairman consented to appear before the tribunal if necessary. No record of this appeal or a tribunal decision has yet been found.

Image 1 - IWM - Military Service Act

At an earlier Parish Council Meeting in April, Councillor Moon mentioned the necessity of stopping the church clock from chiming and striking at night as he understood that similar precautions were being taken in many places during the current crisis of Zeppelin raids. The importance attached to the crisis is indicated in leaving the matter in the hands of the Churchwardens.

Henry Fenner, eldest son of Mr & Mrs Henry Fenner, joined the Royal Navy and is reported as training on HMS Ganges.

The Rifle Club decided to close down for the duration of the war, having lost nearly all its members to enlistment. The local VTC was reported as taking over the shooting range for at least 3 months.

Two names are recorded on the local War memorials for April 1916.



Image 2 - Kent & Sussex Courier, 14th April 1916, p.3

William Basil Paine, Private Army Service Corps, Service No. M2/081988. Basil died of spotted fever on the 5th April 1916, aged 17 years, and is buried at Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir cemetery in Pas de Clais, France.

Basil was born in 1898 and baptised on the 3 April 1898 at St Dunstans in Mayfield. His father, William Gates Paine, was the son of James Paine who ran an Ironmongery/Grocers business from premises in East St. William G Gates in the early 1900s was a blacksmith as was his brother and other members of an extended family. By 1901 James had established a business in Mayfield High St and his occupation was recorded as a Cycle and Motor Engineer, presumably in the premises that is now "Mayfield Garage".

Basil was the eldest of three children and the only son. It seems likely that he worked for his father, although no proof of this has been found. He was a member of the parish church choir and a bellringer. He won 3rd place in the One Mile Cycle handicap as part of the Mayfield Flower Show and Sports. He enlisted in London in May 1915, aged when he was 17, along with Leslie Jarvis* and Albert Sivyer. He went out to France in August 1915. Four days before his death his parents had intimation of his serious illness, before he succumbed to spotted fever (meningococcal meningitis).

The Kent & Sussex Courier noted, '*Amongst the numerous letters of sympathy received by the bereaved parents was one from Corporal P W Grimes stating his own and comrades wish to subscribe and erect a stone over the deceased's grave or a brass plate suitably inscribed to be fixed in Mayfield Church, whichever the parents would prefer. Mr and Mrs Paine preferred a small stone being erected and expressed their sincere thanks. The Rev F J Okell (Chaplain) also wrote a letter saying he conducted the service at which the deceased was laid to rest and that he was buried just outside St Omer in a plot of ground given for a Soldier's Cemetery. Just the simple Church of England burial service was read at the graveside and he was laid to rest as reverently as possible. A wooden cross bearing his name, unit and date of death marks the site, until one day it was hoped something more permanent might be erected.*'



Image 3 - Kent & Sussex Courier, 13th May 1916, p.3

Alfred Ashdown, Private 11 Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, Service No. SD/277. As this low number suggests he enlisted early in the war, one of Lowther's Lambs, at Eastbourne 7 September 1914. He was killed in action in France on the 28 April 1916 and is buried in the Guards Cemetery, Windy Corner, Pas de Calais.

Alfred was born 1893 in Mayfield to Parents George Tomas and Emily Ashdown and was the eldest son among seven children. He lived his entire non military life at Colkins Mill and in the 1911 census is recorded as single and working as a farm labourer. His Service records show he was 5' 8" in height: Weighed 138 pounds: Blue eyes: Brown hair; Fresh complexion. War Diaries reveal that on the 28 April the 11 Battalion RSR was stationed in the Givenchy Village Line trenches. During the course of the evening a German attack, artillery

duel and gas alarm caused some movements of position. The outcome for the battalion was 1 x Officer wounded: 2 x other ranks killed: 8 x other ranks wounded (incl. 4 shell shocked): 1 x missing.

The K & SC 19 May 1916 carried the following report of Alfred's death from a Lt. Cassels. ' Death was caused by a German shell which exploded in the trench close to him and that death was instantaneous. The men in his platoon were very fond of him. He was a keen soldier, always ready to do his share of the day's work. He was buried in a little graveyard which is reserved for British soldiers and a cross has been put up with his name , regiment and date'.

Image 1 - Imperial War Museum

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28449>

Image 2 - Kent & Sussex Courier, 14th April 1916

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000483/19160414/015/0003>

Image 3 - Kent & Sussex Courier, 13th May 1916

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000483/19160519/013/0003>

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