

MAYFIELD AND THE GREAT WAR - NO. 57 - DECEMBER 2018

The Great War had ended. Destruction and loss of life had been suffered at a level never before experienced. Four empires had collapsed ie Germany, Austro-Hungary, Russia, Turkey; and the British and French empires, considerably weakened, faced consequences which would take decades to resolve. The British public knuckled down to the task of restoring daily life to 'normal' although how many recognised that pre 1914 conditions were never to be the same, is unknown. One change universally welcome from the dark days of war was the constant fear of receiving an official telegram conveying news of the death of a loved one. This fear was not entirely absent as vast armies still remained and new threats were still to be encountered. As in many villages, towns and cities across Britain the war memorials of Mayfield and Five Ashes bear no inscriptions, beyond October/November 1918 of individuals killed in action. However, during 1919 four more individuals died in military service and rightly deemed as Great War casualties.

Frederick Pettitt. Private 308th Company. Royal Defence Corps. Service No 35447. Frederick died 20 February 1919. He died from an unknown sickness (possibly influenza) in February 1919 and is buried at Preston (New Hall Lane) Cemetery, Lancashire. Frederick was born 1865/6 in Mayfield to parents Robert (General Labourer) and Ruth (nee Richardson). Both parents were Mayfield born and Frederick was the eldest child in a family of 8 children, 4 boys, 4 girls, all born in Mayfield. Robert and Ruth lived in Mayfield all their lives at various addresses at Back Lane and South St. Nothing is known of Frederick's early life but at the age of 15 his occupation was an Ag Lab. He enlisted into the army in 1886 at Chichester, where he gives his occupation as Bricklayer and states he has had military experience with 3rd Battalion Cinque Ports Authority. In stature 5'9" tall; weight 156 lbs; fresh complexion; grey eyes with light brown hair. In 1886 he elists for 12 years with the 1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment. Service No 2457 and in 1887 gains a certificate to act as an assistant instructor in field works. He appears to have been posted to the home depot as over the next 6 years he is variously to be found at Chichester, Aldershot, Chatham, Preston, Fleetwood, Dublin and Fermoy. Whilst stationed in Preston he met Barbara Valentine, and married her in 1890. In 1891 he is recorded as lodging at 13, Springfield Place, Preston with Barbara, a Weaver (cotton). In 1893 Frederick was transferred to the Army Reserve and was eventually discharged from the army in 1898. In 1901, he is living in Preston and working as an electrician in an Electric Works. By 1911 his employment is the same and he is still living in Preston although he now has three young daughters. At an unknown date after 1916 Frederick joined the Royal Defence Corps serving with the 308th Company: Service No 35447. The RDC was formed in 1916 to carry out duties connected with the local defence of the UK, including those hitherto performed by the Supernumary Territorial Force Companies.. The 308th Company would have been employed in Western Command guarding important locaions such as Ports and Bridges and also providing guyards for POW camps. The circumstances and nature of his death are unknown. His wife Barbara died in late July 1919 and a memorium to both was reported in the Lancashire Evening Post. No details have been discovered on any Preston War Memorial and presumably his family living in Mayfield thoughtfully had his name included on the Mayfield War Memorial.

Harvey Maurice Beale. Ordinary Seaman. HMS Resolution. Service No J70671. Maurice died of Septic Pneumonia 13th March 1919 and is buried at St Marks Church. Hadlow Down. Maurice as he was known, was born in 1899 to single mother Kate Beale, only surviving child of Samuel (Farmer) and Frances of Old Crouch Farm, Hadlow Down, Five Ashes. Almost nothing is known of Maurice's early life except that in 1910 and 1912 he was mentioned in the Sussex Agricultural Express in the childrens section for having submitted 'Commended Drawings'. He enlisted for Duration of Hostilities in the Royal Navy in May 1917 and is described in the very brief service record as being 5'6 1/2" in height: Brown Hair: Blue Eyes and having a dark complexion. He served until June 1917 in HMS Pembroke and transferred to HMS Resolution* on which he served until March 1919. His conduct throughout his service is noted as 'very good'. He was sent to the VAD Hospital in Hull where he died, aged 19, possibly following a bout of influenza. Maurice is buried in St Marks Church, Hadlow Down and is also commemorated on the Hadlow Down and the Five Ash Down war memorials. *HMS Resolution was a Revenge-Class battleship, laid down in Jarrow, 1913 and launched January 1915 and commissioned in December 1916. A powerful battleship carrying main armament of 8 x 15" guns and 12 x 6" guns, from 1916-1919 she served in the 1st battle Squadron of the Grand Fleet.

His mother Kate Beale, never married, and with Maurice's Grandmother Frances Beale, moved from Old Crouch Farm, in 1931, to Armondale, Framfield. Frances Beale died in 1932; Kate Beale is recorded as living in Uckfield in the 1939 Register and is thought to have died at the age of 94 in Hailsham in 1969.

Harry William Blake. Private 4th Battalion East Surrey Regiment. Service No 204295. Harry died in the VAD Hospital, Felixstowe 14 March 1919 and is buried in St Dunstan's Churchyard, Mayfield.

To date, research has not discovered where Harry William Blake was born, his date of birth remains unverified, childhood details are unknown as are his family details. His army service records have not survived, consequently it is unknown as to where or when he enlisted or was conscripted. Details which are known reveal that he enlisted with the 4th Battalion East Surrey Regiment and subsequently served on the Western Front with the West Kent Yeomanry. During this latter posting it appears that he was either wounded or suffered sickness, and on recovery was transferred into the Labour Corps, specifically 581st Home Service Employment Company. Such companies were formed with men who were no longer fit enough for front line duties and were posted within the UK for light duties such as clerical or maintenance work. Eventually Harry was posted to Felixstowe where he completed his term of service and was on the brink of being demobbed in the Spring of 1919. At this time he was affected by the influenza epidemic and died of pneumonia.

His connection with Mayfield stems from his marriage to Daisy S Luck in late 1918. Daisy was the daughter of Amos and Eliza Luck of 9 Victoria Road, Mayfield and one of a family of 12 children all born in Mayfield. The K&SC 21/3/19 P8 reported: *'The funeral took place at the Parish Church on Wednesday afternoon (20th March) of Trooper Harry William Blake, West Kent Yeomanry. The deceased who was the son-in-law of Mr & Mrs Amos Luck, Victoria Road, Mayfield, was 27 years of age and had just been demobilised. He was taken ill on the 10th Inst. and died on the 14th from pneumonia, following influenza, at the Military Hospital, Felixstowe. He joined the West Kent Yeomanry 3 1/2 years ago and saw service in France where he was wounded, and after being in hospital was transferred to Felixstowe. Full military honours were accorded the deceased, the coffin being borne on a gun carriage and covered with the Union Jack. The bearers, firing party and bugler were supplied from Crowborough camp and a military representative from Felixstowe was present. In addition to the family mourners, a large number of friends were present at the graveside.'*

1919 was a sad year for the Luck family as in August 1919 Amos Luck father of Daisy died in his 58th year. Daisy S Blake (later known as Sarah D) never remarried and remained at the Luck family home until at least 1939 when she appears in the 1939 Register living with her widowed mother Eliza, at Victoria Road. Sarah D died in early 1972 as noted in the Tonbridge Register.

Cyril George Beale. Private 3rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps. Service No: 192544. Cyril died of sickness in Cologne 28 August 1919, and is buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery.

Cyril was born 1899 in Mayfield to parents Luther (Ag Lab) and Ellen both of whom the 1901 Census records as being born in Mayfield and living at Leeds Cottages, Five Ashes. To date no trace of either parent has been found prior to 1901 and no evidence of a marriage. Also, no evidence of the death of Luther Beale has been found but Ellen married Arthur Fenner (farm labourer) in 1905 and two daughters, Doris and Norah, were subsequently born in 1909 and 1914. Stepfather Arthur, Ellen, Cyril, and his two sisters are recorded in the 1911 Census as living at 7, Alexandra Terrace, Mayfield. On reaching the age of 18 Cyril was eligible for conscription but was not called up until May 1918 when he enlisted at Brighton and was posted into the 4th (Res) Battalion of the Royal West Surrey Regiment. Service No: 31480. The records reveal he was of a relative slight physical character being 5' 2 3/4" tall and weighed in at 108 lbs. In November 1918 he was posted to the 3rd battalion RWSR at Sittingbourne where he remained until transferred to the Machine Gun Corps at Grantham (Belton Park) where he underwent further training. By the end of July 1919 he had joined the 3rd Battalion MGC in Cologne as part of BAOR but within 4 weeks was admitted to hospital on account of a perceived bout of influenza. Transferred to 6th Casualty Clearing Station he was very quickly passed on to 37 CCS and died on the 28 August 1919. His brief medical records report that he had died of Pyaemia, a bacterial blood infection, and he was buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery. The SAE 5/9/19 P3 reported: *'Mrs Fenner of Baiden Cottages, Mayfield has received the sad news that her son Private Cyril Beale has died at Cologne from pneumonia, following influenza. The deceased who was only 19 years of age was home on leave as recently as a month ago. Before joining up he worked at Yew Tree Farm, Mayfield and was well known in the district.'*

At some time in the late 1920s/early 1930s the Fenner family moved to Burwash Place, Burwash. Daughter Norah married Benjamin J Fieldwick at Mayfield Parish Church in 1932 and subsequently the Fieldwick family expanded with three children. It appears that Doris Fenner never married and died in

1992. Arthur and Ellen Fenner did not reside permanently at Burwash and by 1939 were back living at Great Baiden Cottages, Mayfield together with the Fieldwick family. Arthur died in 1945, aged 73; and no clear date has yet been found for the death of Ellen Fenner.

These four men had the sad distinction of being the last names to be inscribed on the Mayfield and Five Ashes War Memorials. A sadness compounded by the fact that they all died after Great War hostilities had ceased and as individuals probably never contemplated fighting an unseen, merciless invisible enemy.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM