

West Peckham



The marble commemoration plaque shown above was erected in the parish church of St. Dunstan's West Peckham in 1919, in remembrance of the men connected with the parish who lost their lives during the Great War. Despite the overall parish being quite small which was reflected by the size of the population during the Great War, unfortunately as with virtually every other location in the county large and small, West Peckham too had men that are sadly not commemorated on the parish tribute to the fallen. Those men who are not commemorated at St. Dunstan's have been added below as 'Lost Men.'

The Great War

1914 -1919

BARTON, ALFRED JOHN. Private, 22525.

6th (Service) Battalion, Border Regiment.

Died 26 September 1916.

Born and resided West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Tonbridge, Kent.

Son of John and Alice J Barton of Court Lodge, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent.

Husband of Sarah Elizabeth Barton (née Fancett) of 5, Percy Cottages, St. Johns, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Pier and Face 6 A and 7 C.

Formerly Private, 4736, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

At the time of the 1901 census, the Barton family resided at Court Lodge, West Peckham. Head of the house was 43 year old Mereworth, Kent native John Barton, who was employed as a Gamekeeper and General Farm Help. The then aged 13 year old Alfred was employed as a Carter on a farm. Alfred and his father were both probably employed at Court Lodge Farm. Alfred enlisted in the army 'For the duration of the war,' on 3 December 1914. When he enlisted, he stated that he was 25 years and 302 days old, employed as a Carman and residing at Court Lodge, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Initially Alfred was posted to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) to commence his military training on 9 December 1914, and was transferred to the 1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), on 22 April 1915. On 9 July 1915, he was posted back to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion. Alfred was transferred to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, Border Regiment on 9 November 1915, and posted to the 1st Battalion of the regiment fifteen days later, Alfred remained in the 1st Battalion until 7 February 1916, at which time he was posted to the 6th (Service) Battalion, Border Regiment, in which he then remained until he fell at Thiepval on 26 September 1916. On the day that he lost his life, Alfred's battalion had left their trenches at 1235 hours "in grand style all along the line," (as quoted in the battalion war diary) Joseph and Schwaben Trenches being carried by 1245 hours, the attack of The Border Regiment being led by Captain Carr and Second Lieutenant Fulton who, though both wounded before the objective was reached, 'carried on' and saw their men established ; the captures here amounted to 2 machine guns and 191 prisoners, while nearly one hundred of the enemy were killed. The night of the 26th-27th was spent by the 6th Battalion in Joseph and Schwaben Trenches, where they experienced some annoyance from a gun firing upon them from Schwaben Redoubt.

COOK, THOMAS WATSON. Rifleman, 4855.

3rd Battalion, Rifle Brigade.

Died 31 July 1917. Aged 23.

Born West Peckham, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent. Resided Hampton, Tonbridge, Kent.

Son of Mr. W. W. and Mrs. S. A. Cook of Mill House, Hamptons, Tonbridge, Kent. Commemorated on the Menin Gate, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Panel 46.

FEVER, WILLIAM HENRY. Private, G/4831.

"D" Company, 1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

Died 23 August 1918.

Born West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.

Son of Herbert Arthur Fever and Jessie of Letter Box Cottage, Hampton, West Peckham, Tonbridge, Kent.

Buried Adanac Military Cemetery, Miraumont, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: IV. C. 34.

Henry enlisted in the army 'For the duration of the war,' on 7 December 1914, at which time he stated that he was 19 years old, employed as a Labourer, and that he resided at Hampton, West Peckham, Tonbridge, Kent. On 15 December 1914, William joined the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) to commence his military training. He was posted to France in the 1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), where was assigned to "D" Company. On 17 May 1917, William was appointed an (unpaid) Lance Corporal, and from 3 November 1917 he was a paid Lance Corporal. As the result of attempting to avoid the censorship regulation which were in place, on 12 February 1918, William was deprived of his rank and became a Private. Prior to being killed in action, in addition to his service on the Western Front, William had also served in Italy with his battalion.

FRANCIS, JOHN EDWARD. Private, 1926.

1/1st Royal Berkshire Yeomanry.

Died 21 August 1915. Aged 28.

Born Kidmore End, Reading, Berkshire. Enlisted Reading, Berkshire. Resided Maidstone, Kent.

Son of Frederick and Ida Mary Francis of Yorkshire.

Husband of C. N. Gasson (formerly Francis), of Ivy Cottage, Oxon Hoath Park, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent.

Commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Turkey. Panel 18.

During the attack by the Royal Berkshire Yeomanry on Hill 60, Gallipoli when John fell, one of his comrades Private Frederick Potts although wounded in the thigh, remained for over 48 hours under the Turkish trenches with Arthur Andrews who was severely wounded, and unable to move. 'Fred' fixed a shovel to the equipment of his wounded comrade and using it as a sledge, dragged the wounded man back over 600 yards to safety, being under fire all the way. For his heroism Frederick William Owen Potts (1892-1943) was awarded the Victoria Cross. In 1913 Fred had saved a young boy from drowning in the River Thames.

HENNIKER, ERNEST EDWARD. Private, G/24433.
9th (Service) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Died 21 February 1918. Aged 19.
Born Smarden, Ashford, Kent. Enlisted Tonbridge, Kent.
Son of Edward and Jane Henniker of The Hurst, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried Tincourt New British Cemetery, Somme, France. Grave Ref: IV. F. 12.
Ernest's brother, George Henniker served during the Great War as a Lance Bombadier in the Royal Garrison Artillery, having enlisted on 25 October 1915. George won the Military Medal which was presented to him on 21 December 1918. On 2 April 1919, George was transferred to the "Z" Reserve, and returned home safely to West Peckham.

HOOKER, ALBERT HENRY. Private, 3063.
13th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F.
Died 29 August 1916.
Born Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent. Resided Young, New South Wales, Australia.
Son of Horace Hooker of Adamswell Farm, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried A.I.F. Burial Ground, Flers, Somme, France. Grave Ref: XV. P. 11.
Commemorated on the Australian National War Memorial Panel 69.
At the time of his enlistment on 4 August 1915, Albert was employed as an Engine Driver in a Flour Mill. His address for correspondence was c/o Mrs. Richardson, Lovell Street, Young, New South Wales, Australia. Initially Albert was allotted to serve in the 45th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F. He was later transferred to serve in the 13th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F., and on 6 September 1915, Albert sailed from Sydney on board the Australian troopship H.M.A.T. Ballarat (A70), in a reinforcement draft for the 13th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F. serving in Egypt. After serving in Egypt, Albert sailed from Alexandria on 1 June 1916, and arrived at the French port of Marseilles two days later. Whilst serving on the Somme, Albert was posted as missing, and his family at West Peckham received no news of him. Albert's father contacted the Australian military authorities requesting information about the fate of son. With commendable speed he received a reply, but it only informed him that Albert was officially recorded as missing. On 23 January 1917, a Court of Enquiry was convened which was to decide on the fate of a number of casualties, including Albert, and as the result of its decision Albert was deemed for official purposes, to have been killed in action on 29 August 1916. Horace Hooker was then advised of same. The Graves Registration Unit later located Albert's original grave, approximately one mile to the west of Courcellette, from where he was moved and finally laid to rest at the Australian Imperial Force, Burial Ground at the Somme village of Flers. Albert had gone to Australia when he was 22 years old, and originally he had worked on farms before being employed at a Flour Mill.

KEMP, THOMAS WILLIAM. Lance Corporal, L/7397.

1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

Died 28 October 1914. Aged 29.

Born Paddock Wood, Kent. (Please see below) Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.

Son of Mrs. Susan Saunders (formerly Kemp) of Church Row, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent, and of the late Thomas Kemp.

Commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Panel 30 and 31.

At the time of the 1901 census Thomas resided at Pratling Square, East Peckham, Kent. Head of the house was Thomas's step-father 36 year old East Peckham native George Saunders, who was employed as an Agricultural Labourer. Thomas was recorded by the census enumerator as being a 16 year old native of Watlingbury, Kent, and employed as an Agricultural Labourer. Thomas's place of birth (Paddock Wood) as shown above, was as is shown at his entry in/on SDGW. At the time of the 1891 census Thomas resided with his parents at Beltring, Kent, his father who was a 70 year old native of Etchingam, Sussex, was recorded as the head of the house, mention is made of same because it too shows Thomas (junior) as having been born at Watlingbury, Kent.

MAY, SIDNEY CHARLES. Sapper, T/1507.

1/3rd Kent Fortress Company, Royal Engineers.

Died at sea 28 October 1915.

Born and resided Oxenhoath, West Peckham, Kent. Enlisted Tonbridge, Kent.

Son of William May of Elm Cottage, Oxenhoath, West Peckham, Kent.

Commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Turkey. Panel 23 to 25 or 325 to 328, and on the H.M.S. Hythe memorial in the parish church of St. Matthew, High Brooms, High Brooms Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

At the time of the 1901 census, the May family resided at Four Wents, West Peckham, Kent. Head of the house was 61 year old Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent native William May, who was employed as an Agricultural Labourer. Sidney was educated at West Peckham village school, and after leaving school he was employed as a Mechanical Engineer. At the time of his enlistment into the Kent Fortress Company, Royal Engineers on 3 November 1914, Sidney stated that he was 26 years and 1 month old. Sidney was drowned during the tragic sinking of H.M.S. Hythe. For more comprehensive details appertaining to the loss of the ship, please see same elsewhere on this website.

MILLARD, LEONARD. Private, 417915.

5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, (Quebec Regiment).

Died between 1 October 1916 and 2 October 1916.

Buried Regina Trench Cemetery, Grandcourt, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: II. C. II.

Commemorated on the Sherbrooke war memorial, Quebec, Canada. Leonard is also commemorated on page 135 of the Canadian First World War Book of Remembrance, but with his Christian name spelt Ludger.

SIMMONDS, ERNEST GEORGE. Private, G/4980.

6th (Service) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

Died 3 May 1917. Aged 25.

Born West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.

Son of Walter Simmons of Council Cottages, Beech Road, Mereworth, Maidstone, Kent, and of the late Eliza Simmonds.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Bay 6.

At the time of the 1901 census, the Simmonds family resided at The Point, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Head of the house was 58 year old West Peckham native Walter Simmons, who was employed as a Stone Quarryman. Ernest enlisted in the army 'For the duration of the war,' on 14 December 1914. When he enlisted, he stated that he was 22 years old, employed as a Farm Carter, and residing at Church Row, West Peckham, Kent. Ernest had enlisted at Maidstone in the 6th (Service) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), on the actual day that it was formed there, as part of one of the K1 (Kitchener Battalions), and was attached to the 37th Brigade, 12th (Eastern) Division. The battalion initially went to Colchester, Essex, and then moved on to Purfleet, Essex in September 1914, before going to billets at Hythe, Kent in December. From Hythe, Ernest's battalion then moved to Aldershot, Hampshire in February 1915. On 1 June 1915 the battalion travelled back to Kent and embarked from Folkestone Harbour, arriving at Boulogne-sur-Mer, Pas de Calais, France later the same day, at the start of its active service with the British Expeditionary Force. As part of the overall 'Battle of Arras 1917,' Ernest fell during a costly attack which was carried by his battalion, in an attempt to swing up the left flank of the 12th (Eastern) Division with its right flank, and in so doing, reduce the salient at the village of Monchy-le-Preux, between Arras and Cambrai. For quite a long time Ernest's worried father received no word from or about him, and the Reverend R. Swan of St. Dunstan's church contacted the War Office on behalf of Walter Simmons. In the reply to the letter, it stated that since 3 May 1917, Ernest had been officially classified as "Missing," and that should any more information be forthcoming his family would receive notification of same. Eventually it was decided that for official purposes, Ernest had probably died on 3 May 1917 whilst on active service whilst serving in the British Expeditionary Force.

VIDLER, CHARLIE RICHARD. Driver, M2/118688.

VIII. Corps, Royal Army Service Corps.

Died 12 May 1918. Aged 25.

Born Horsmonden, Kent. Enlisted Coventry. Resided Tonbridge, Kent.

Only son of Walter and Fanny Vidler of Mill House, Hamptons, Tonbridge, Kent.

Buried Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Pas de Calais, France.

Grave Ref: IX. B. 71.

Commemorated on Great War memorial plaque which is located in the parish church of St. Michael and All Angels, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent.

At the time of the 1901 census, the Vidler family resided at Spring Grove Cottages, Marden, Kent. Head of house was 35 year old Horsmonden, Kent native Walter and Fanny Vidler, who was employed as a Coachman.

WOOLLETT, ROBERT. Private, 4636.

"C" Company, 57th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F.

Died 5 April 1918. Aged 33.

Born West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent.

Son of the late Thomas and Eleanor Woollett.

Buried Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: III. O. 23.

Commemorated on the Australian National War Memorial Panel 164.

Robert had arrived in Australia when he was 26 years old. He enlisted in the Australian army at Melbourne, Victoria, on 10 August 1915, at which he stated that he resided with his sister Florence Woollett of 368, Clarendon Street, South Melbourne, Victoria, who he named as his next of kin. Robert sailed from Melbourne on 28 January 1916, on board the Australian troopship H.M.A.T. Themistocles (A36) in a reinforcement draft of the 7th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F., bound for Egypt. The ship arrived at Suez on 22 February 1915, shortly after which Robert was transferred to the 58th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F., but on 2 April 1915 he was transferred to the 57th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F., in which he then remained until his death. In mid July 1916, Robert's battalion left Egypt to serve on the Western Front. Whilst serving in France, Robert had a plethora of various illnesses and a number of woundings. Information obtained via the Australian Red Cross from a number of witnesses to Robert's death, made very similar statements, along the lines that he was known as Bob, and that he was in the Reserve Lines near Corbie when he and Louis Turlan were killed instantly by a high explosive shell at about 1500 hours on 5 April 1918. Initially, Robert was buried about 100 yards from where he fell and a cross with his name, number and unit marked the grave. Later the graves of Robert and Louis were moved to Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, where Louis is at rest in grave III. O. 23.



The Great War

1914 -1919

Lost Men



CLEMENTS, HENRY ERNEST. Private, G/11182.

6th (Service) Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).

Died Friday 5 April 1918.

Born West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Ashford, Kent. Resided Newtown Post Office, Newtown Road, Ashford, Kent.

Son of James and Harriett Clements.

Buried Senlis Communal Cemetery Extension, Senilis-le-Sec, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: I.A.5

Commemorated on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial, and on a Great War memorial plaque in the parish church of St. Mary's, Ashford. Henry's name was also inscribed on the Ashford Branch Great War memorial plaque of the 'Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society,' which has since been misplaced! The latter form of Henry's remembrance is inscribed with the names of a total of 17 casualties, and also bears the following simple, but adequate inscription:-

TO THE GLORY OF GOD/ AND IN MEMORY OF THE BROTHERS/ OF THE
ASHFORD BRANCH OF THE/ TUNBRIDGE WELLS/ EQUITABLE FRIENDLY
SOCIETY/ WHO FELL IN THE WAR/ 1914 - 1919.

Our primary reason for drawing attention to the misplaced Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society memorial plaque, is in the hope that somebody reading these brief commemorations might be aware of its location or fate.

Henry was Christened at St. Dunstan's, West Peckham, on Christmas Day 1887.

WINCHESTER, WILLIAM AMOS. Private, SD/3259.
13th (Service) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment (3rd South Downs).
Died 16 April 1916. Aged 35.
Born Ticehurst, Sussex. Enlisted Hastings, Sussex.
Son of William and Jane Winchester of Mereworth, Maidstone, Kent.
Husband of Dora Bertha Winchester (née Kemp) of Swan Cottage, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried Bethune Town Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Grave Ref: III. G. 83.
At the time of the 1901 census, the Winchester family resided at Down Ash Lodge, Ticehurst, Sussex. Head of the house was 43 year old Lamberhurst, Kent native William Winchester (senior), who was employed as a Farm Carter. The then 20 year old William Amos Winchester was recorded by the census enumerator as being employed as a Domestic Vanman. The SD prefix on William's regimental number, is indicative of ordinary rank Great War members of the three South Downs Battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment, which were the 11th, 12th and 13th, (Service) Battalions.





TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND
IN MEMORY OF OUR BOYS WHO FELL
IN THE GREAT WAR OF 1914 - 1918

ALFRED JOHN BARTON	PTE ATT ^B BORDER REGT
THOMAS W. COOK	PTE 3 RD RIFLE BRIG
WILLIAM H. FEVER	PTE 1 ST R. W. K.
JOHN FRANCIS	PTE BERKS. YEOMY
ERNEST E. HENNIKER	PTE ROY. SUSSEX REGT
ALBERT H. HOOKER	PTE 13 TH B ^T A.I.F.
CHAS. SIDNEY MAY	SAPPER-K.F.R.E.
LEONARD MILLARD	PTE 5 TH CAN. M ^T RIFLES
ERNEST C. SIMMONDS	PTE 6 TH R. W. K.
CHARLES R. VIDLER	PTE 7. A.S.C.
ROBERT WOOLLETT	PTE 5 TH B ^T A.I.F.

