

Walter Ernest Bath (1897-1918)



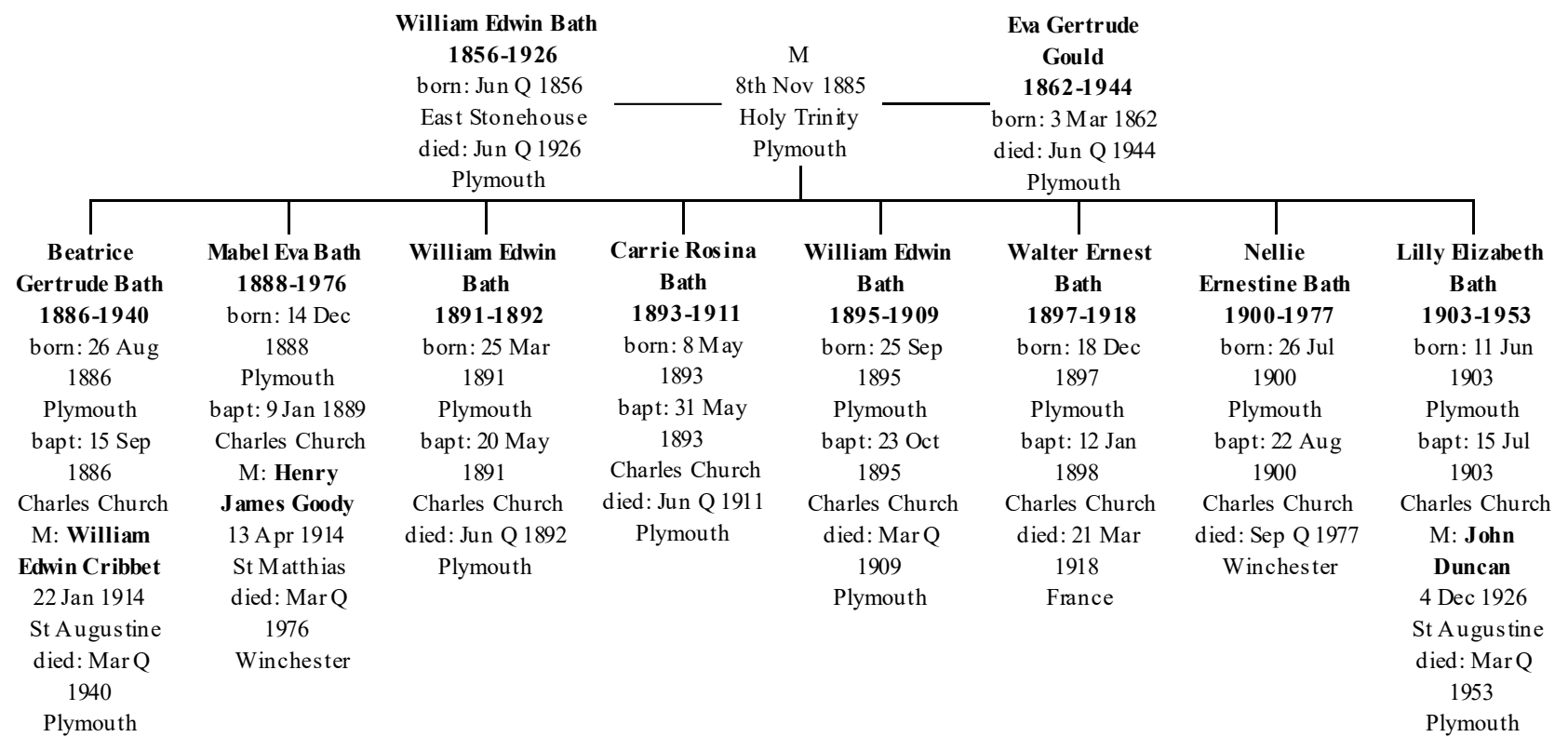
Walter was born on 18th December 1897 in Plymouth and baptised on 12 January 1898 at Charles Church. He was the sixth child of William Edwin, a postman, and Eva Gertrude Bath.

In 1901 the family lived in Mainstone Avenue, Cattedown, Plymouth. By 1911 they had moved to 10 Old Laira Road. The family were all musical and Walter played the violin.

Walter joined, or was conscripted to, the Hertfordshire Regiment in 1917, he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps in October 1917. He probably went overseas in Dec 1917/Jan 1918, as the 61st Battalion which he joined wasn’t formed until 1st January 1918.

Walter died on 21st March 1918 and is commemorated at Pozieres. The battle Walter died in was the Battle of St Quentin. At the beginning of 1918 the Germans began a massive assault to try and split the French and British armies before the Americans could turn the war against them, it was known as the Michael Offensive. It began on the 21st March 1918 concentrating on the area around the Somme. Heavy bombardment destroyed much of the ally’s

communication system; the extensive use of gas added to the foggy weather meant that the British weren’t able to support each other and were quickly overrun. The machine gunners were expected to stay at their posts until they ran out of ammunition, over 2500 gunners were killed that day. By the end of March the Germans had advanced 40 miles and retaken the Somme Battlefields fought over nearly two years earlier.



William John Birch (1893-1917)



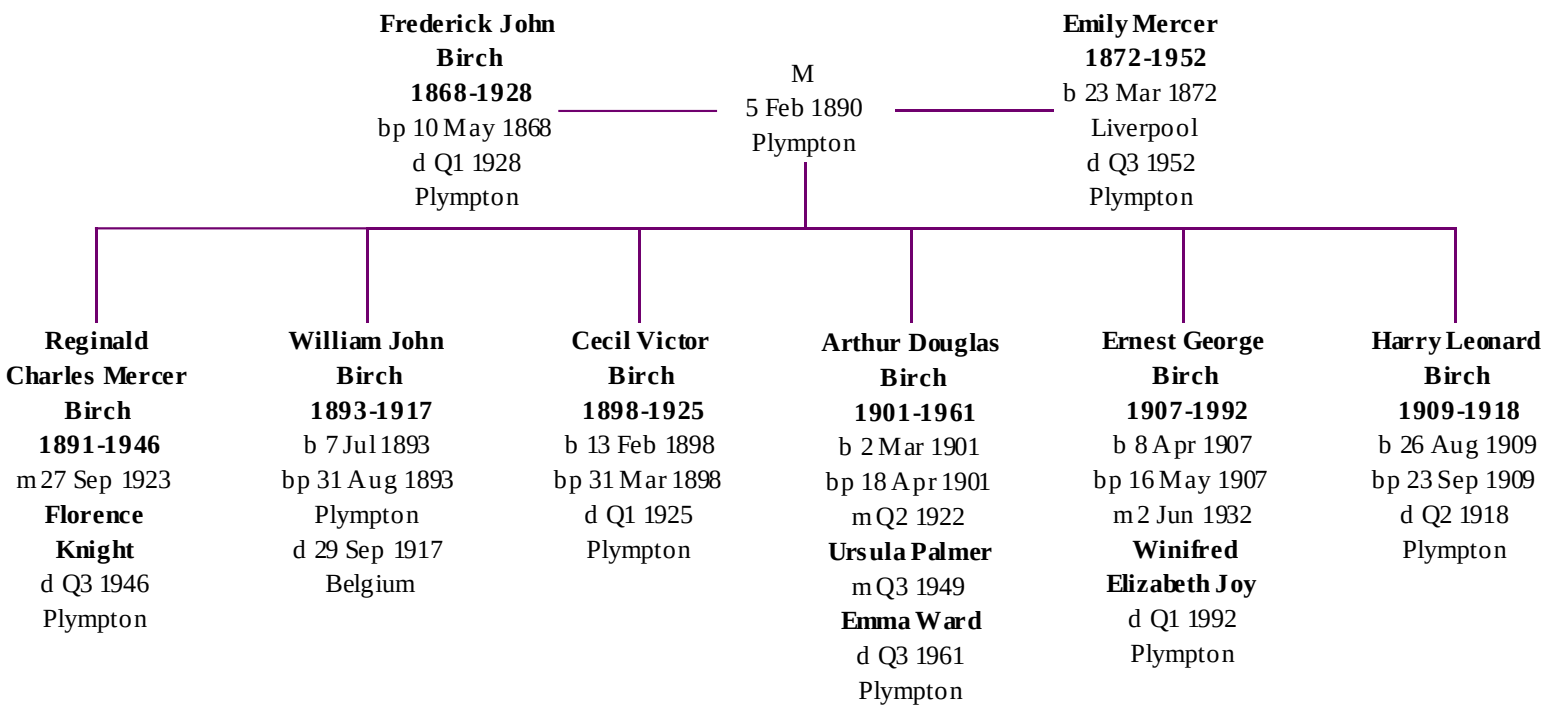
William John Birch was born on 7th July 1893, and baptised on 31st August 1893, at Plympton St Mary. His parents were Frederick John Birch and Emily Mercer, who had married in Plympton in 1890. William was the second of six sons. Frederick was a shoe & boot maker, and the family lived in Underwood. In 1911 William was a clay labourer.

At some point William joined the Royal Garrison Artillery (Devonshire), who were in charge of defending the port of Plymouth. Later he transferred to the 275th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, and served in Belgium. The siege battery was

formed in Plymouth, with a nucleus of gunner from the RGA (Devonshire). Siege Batteries were armed with the heaviest machine guns, firing high calibre explosive shells.

He died of wounds on 29th September 1917, probably during the Battle of Passchendaele, and is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial.

Two of William’s cousins died in WWI. Harry Pearse, who was also in the Royal Garrison Artillery (Devonshire), died on 12th May 1916. James Pearse died on 10th December 1917, his mother, Amanda Pearse, was a first cousin of Frederick John Birch. Amanda moved to Laira, which is probably the reason that William John is on the memorial at Laira.



William Henry Bodilly (1884-1916)



William was born in Penzance in 1884, he was the only surviving child of Alfred and Emma Bodilly. He was baptised on 1st March 1884 at St John, Penzance. By 1901 William was a draper’s assistant; in 1911 he was living in London and was a drapery warehouseman. In the meantime William’s father had become station master at Laira and was living at 27 Albert Terrace, Old Laira Road.

William was still living in London when WW1 commenced and enlisted at Chelsea. He probably enlisted in late 1914 or early 1915, and joined the 1/18th Battalion of the London Regiment known as the London Irish Rifles. The Battalion, which was a Territorial Force, had been stationed at Chelsea when the war broke out. They were then sent to St Albans for training.

William made his will on 7th March 1915 leaving all his possessions to his father. The Battalion was sent to France on 9th March and on the 10th landed at le Havre.

The Battalion fought at the Battle of Aubers Ridge; the Battle of Festubert; Battle of Loos; and were at the Actions of the

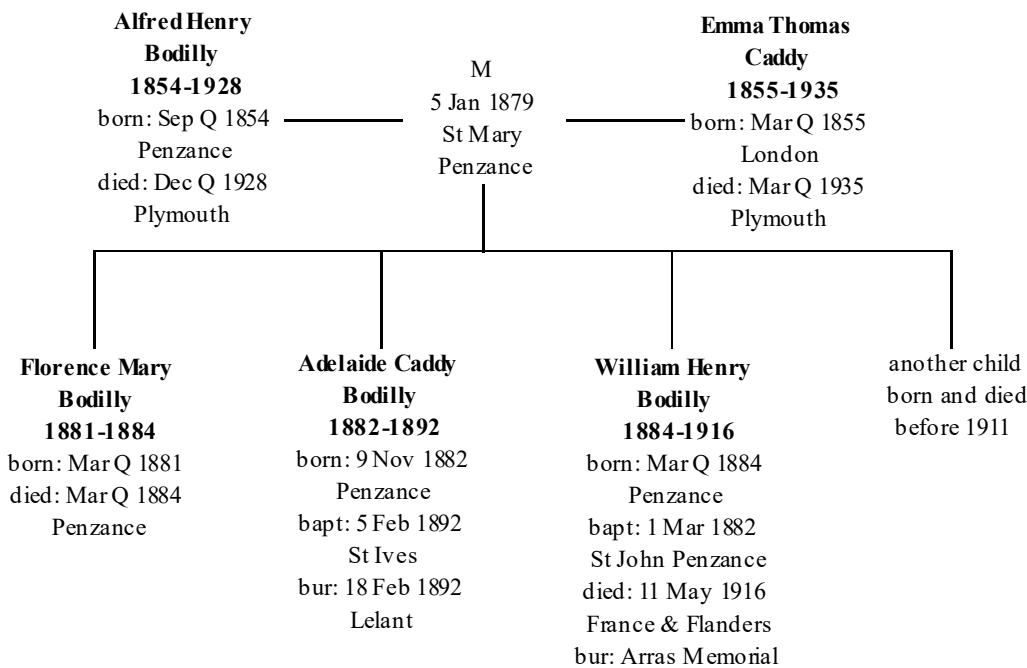
Hohenzollern Redoubt.

At the beginning of May the battalion were at Maisnil Bouche, in reserve. They moved to the support huts on 2nd May and into the front line on 8th May. On 9th May a mine exploded near their position, damaging their trenches. They were unable to occupy the trench, and there was heavy firing on the 9th and 10th May. On 10th they began repairing their trenches, continuing on 11th.

William died on 11th May 1916 at Vimy Ridge and is remembered on the Arras Memorial. By 1915 both side had realised that a mass breakthrough of enemy lines was unlikely to happen. In 1916 the Germans decided to concentrate on attacking Verdun as the French would defend it at all costs. Therefore the British decided on a massive attack on the Somme, in an attempt to draw away German troops from Verdun.

Vimy Ridge was a difficult sector for the Allies as the Germans had a clear field of fire from on top of the ridge. Both sides engaged in an intense underground war, tunnelling and laying mines to blow up the enemy. At the beginning of May the Germans started to bombard the allies in order to capture the entrances to the British tunnels. The most powerful bombardment was on the 21st May, the British counterattacked on 23rd with limited success. They decided to concentrate on the Somme Offensive.

War Diaries – 11th May 1916
Work continued on trenches by day. At night operations commenced on new cut crater as enemy supposed to be mining inside.



George William Brown (1893-1917)



George William Brown was born in 1893 in Plymouth. His parents were Samuel Brown (1857-1933) and Ellen Andrew Widlake (1854-1927) who married on 1st March 1882 at Holy Trinity Church, Plymouth. They had six children; Henry Thomas (1888-1970), Walter Samuel (1889-1966), Caroline Ellen (1890), Ernest John (1891-1965), George William (1893-1917), and Sydney Charles (1894-1962).

In 1901 the family were living at 3 Bedford Cottage, Plymouth, where Samuel (Sr) was a chair maker. By 1911 they had moved to Laira, and lived at 2 Albert Terrace, now known as Old Laira Road. Samuel was a chair frame maker, and several of his sons probably worked with him. Henry was also a chair frame maker, George was a French polisher, and Sydney was an apprentice upholsterer.

George joined the Devonshire Regiment, possibly before the war as he has a 4 digit service number, although he doesn't have the 1914/15 Star Medal. His battalion was the 1st/4th Battalion, which was originally the 4th Battalion (Territorial Force) and re-named at the beginning of the war.

The 1st/4th battalion sailed for India on 9th October 1914, on 2nd March 1916 they landed at Basra, from February 1917 they were based at Amara.

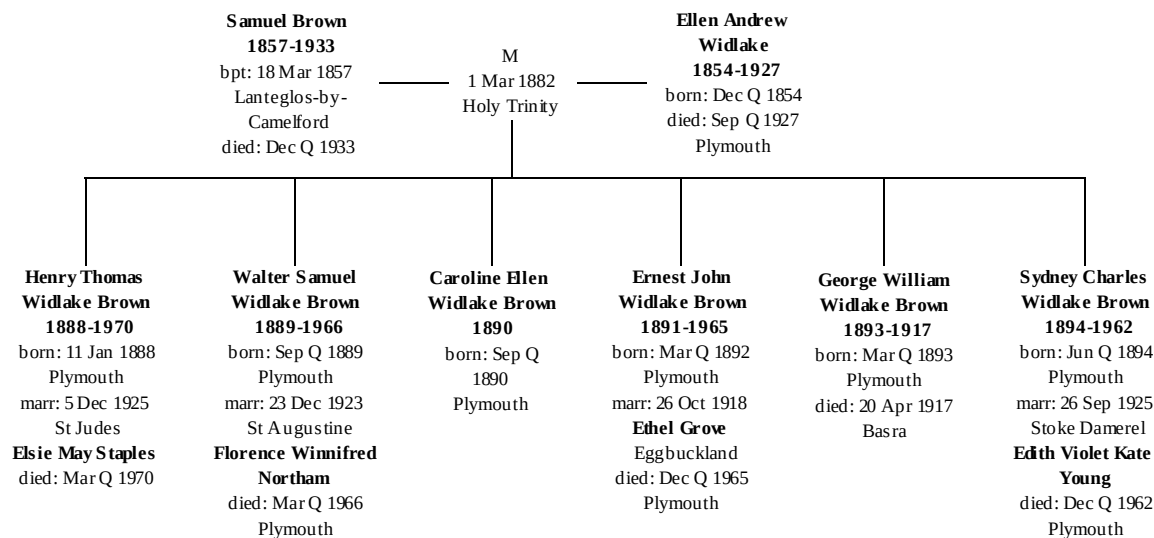
During the first few weeks of April 1917 the battalion spent their time, parading, training and night digging. On 18th April over 200 men left to go to India for a month's leave. On the same day 6 officers with 51 N.C.O.'s and men proceeded to Sheikh Saad to escort some prisoners to Basra, one of the men was George Brown. On 19th April 8 men were sent to Baghdad to join the police force there.

The entry for the 20th April records "information received from officer of Escort Party that No 4855 Pt Brown G (A Coy) disappeared from P.S. Co between Sheikh Saad and Amara on night of 19th/20th April 1917."

The military authorities must have had a good reason to believe that George died that night as he is not listed as "missing" or "presumed dead" but described as having died the night of 19th/20th April 1917. However they don't appear to have recovered his body as he is remembered on Basra Memorial, which commemorates soldiers who have no known grave.

On 21st April the battalion were issued instructions on the re-numbering of the soldiers, George did receive a new regimental number, so must have still be in the system. On 22nd April the battalion received reports of marauding Arabs, and on 27th April the rest of the escort party returned to Amara.

George's brothers remained in Plymouth, his brother Walter was still living in Old Laira Road in 1939. George's mother died in 1927 and his father died in 1933.



Andrew Burgoyne (1885-1914)

Andrew Burgoyne was born on 18th Sept 1885 in Plymouth. By 1891 he was living in Laira, at 4 Brandon Road. Andrew's father, who was a seaman, died when Andrew was 12.



Andrew joined the 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment c1903, by 1911 he had left the regiment and was a labourer in Melton Mowbray at the time of the census. He was also a football player, who played for Babbacombe and Devon County.

On 26th December 1912 Andrew married Florence Emma Warmington, at Plympton St Mary; their son Roderick was born on 28 October 1913.

When war was declared Andrew was a reservist and a skilled dockyard labourer. The reservists of the 1st Devons were ordered to Exeter, and by 22nd August the main army and the reservists met at Le Havre. Andrew was in Company B. They stayed behind the lines until 11th September. Their first taste of trench warfare came at the Aisne, where they held the front line for 10 days and were relieved on 26th September. On 1st October they began their march to Flanders; as the British Army was repositioned. They spent the last three weeks of October under very heavy fire during the battle of La Bassée. They were relieved on 1st November but were not able to rest long, they were back in the trenches by 4th November.

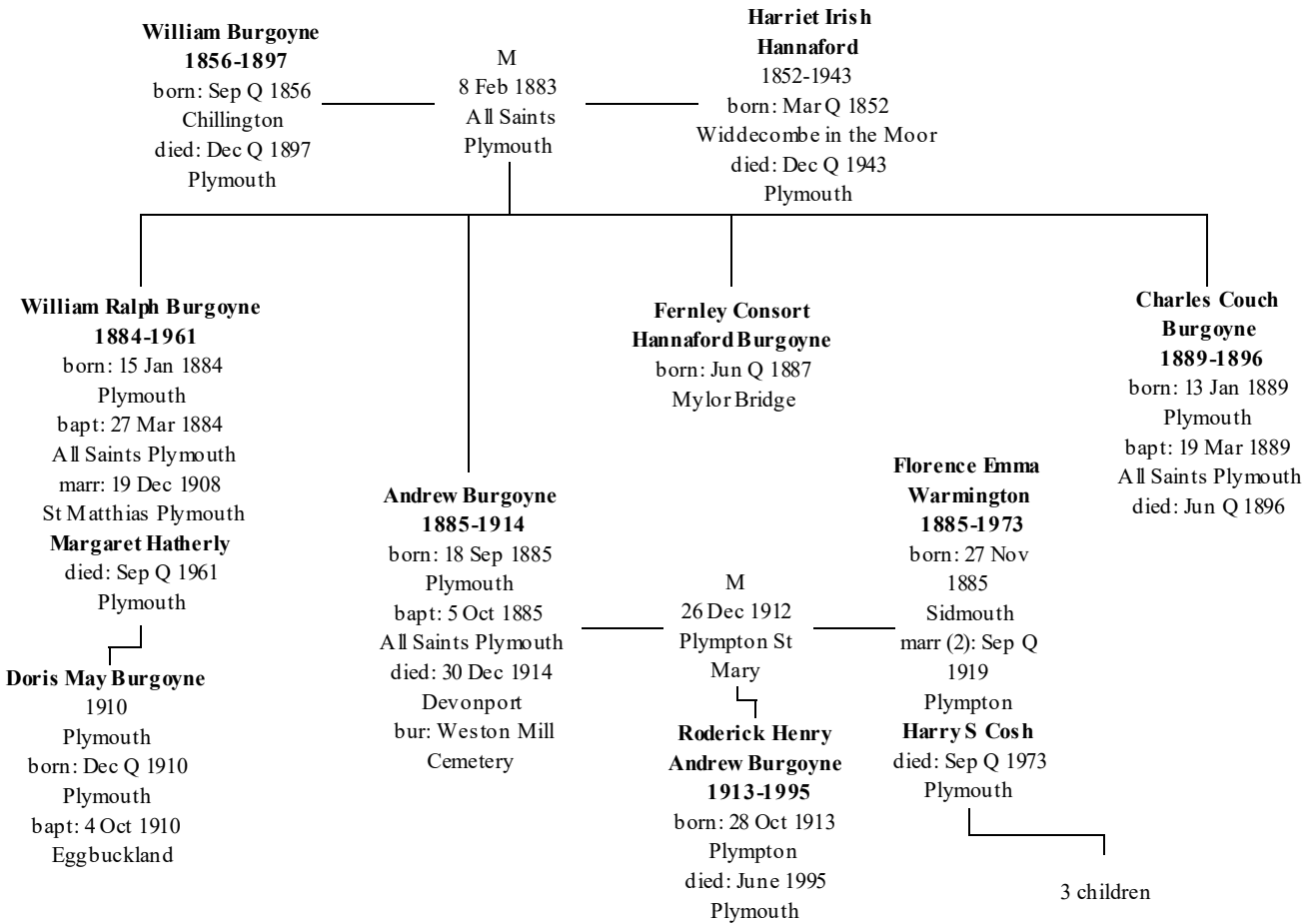
On the 15th November the 1st Devons were sent to relieve the Calvary at Messines Ridge, just south of Ypres. At some point in November (on or after 17th) Andrew was injured in the arm and was invalided home. He was admitted to the Fern Hill Auxiliary Military Hospital, in Stacksteads, Bacup, Lancashire on the 29th November 1914.

Andrew was interviewed by the Plymouth & Exeter Gazette, which published an article about his experiences on 26th December.

On 29th December Andrew visited his brother in Laira, from his home in Underwood, but he didn't return. On 30th December he boarded a train in Exeter; he cut his throat using his soldier's knife, and died of shock and blood loss in Paradise Road, Devonport (probably the station). The verdict of the inquest was "suicide whilst in an unsound state of mind", and "that the jury are of opinion that the deceased's mind was unhinged owing to the experiences which he had undergone at the front." Andrew was buried in Weston Mill Cemetery.

Andrew's brother Fernley was a professional footballer, who briefly played for Plymouth Argyle. Fernley served with the Australian army in WWI.

Andrew's brother William remained in Laira. He lived in Riga Terrace and used to cut the local boys hair in his back garden.



Albert George Campbell (1898-1917)



Albert George Campbell was the son of Colin William George Campbell and Elizabeth Honor Hodge. Albert was born in 1898 and baptised on 30th March 1898 at the Crabtree Mission Chapel.

The family lived at 23 Tollox Place, Laira, quite likely they moved in when it was first built about 1895. Colin and Elizabeth had seven children; William Samuel (1891-1954), Frederick William (1892-1967), Bessie (1893-1983), Florence Maud (1896-1983), Albert George (1898-1917), Rosina Jane (1899-1900) and Violet (1901-1973). Colin was a labourer.

In 1901 and 1911 the family were living at 23 Tollox Place, Colin died in 1905 when Albert was 7.

Albert joined the 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment at Plymouth.

At the start of June 1917 the battalion were behind the lines, parading and training. They also had a cross country race, and two games of cricket with the 1st Worcester Regiment, they won one game each.

On 14th June the battalion moved into the front line at Ypres, they spent much on their time on the front digging a new trench. They were relieved on 20th June, and a number of men had received wounds during this time. On 24th June they moved back to the front line, and again spent a lot time digging trenches. They were relieved on 29th June.

Much of July was spent behind the lines training, which included a demonstration of tanks. There was also some concerts held. On 23rd July they moved back to Ypres and held a section on the ramparts. On 31st July the 3rd Battle of Ypres commenced. The battalion moved forward at zero hour (3.50am) and quickly took their first target. Unfortunately some other battalions weren't as successful and hadn't managed to keep pace. The advance was halted but the Devon's didn't receive this information and were caught in machine gun fire. They eventually consolidated their position.

On 1st August the Germans counter-attacked, and the battalion suffered heavy casualties, 170 men were wounded. The battalion was relieved in the night. The battalion spent nearly two weeks resting and training before going back to the front line on 12th August, with the HQ at dug-outs in Mud Lane!

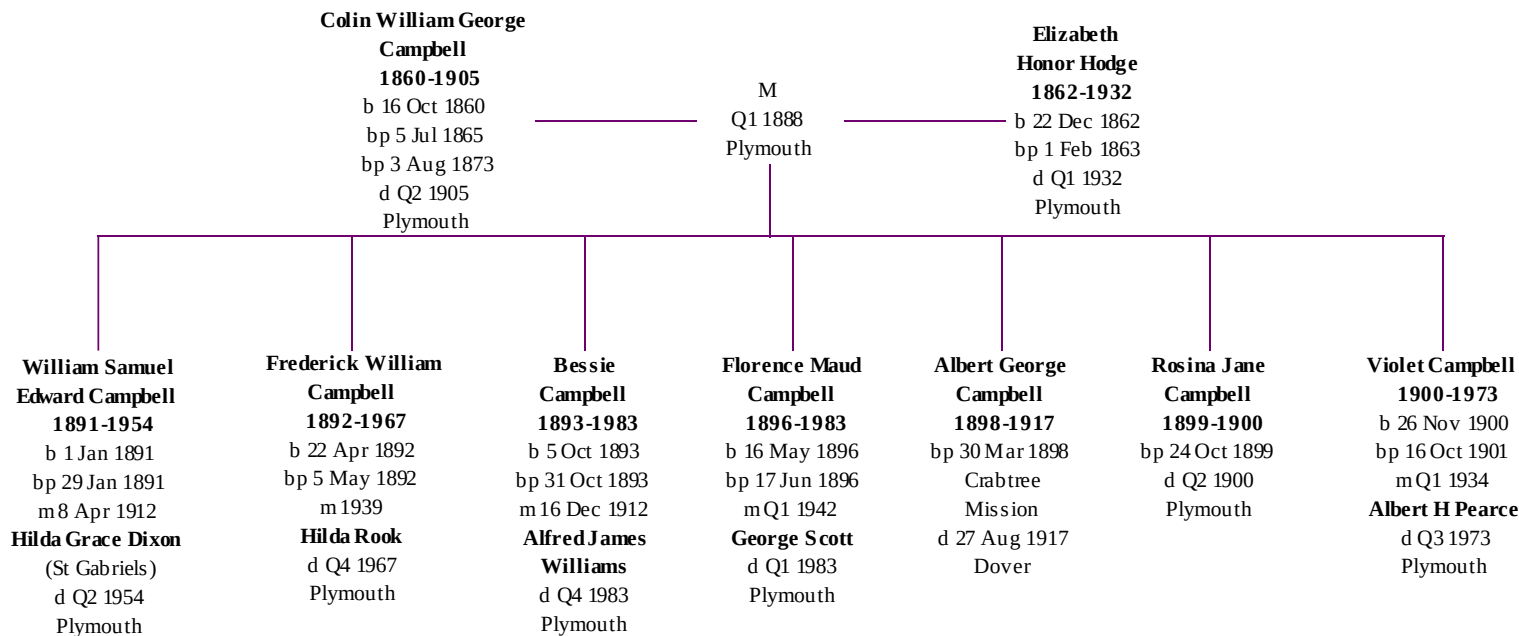
At some point, quite likely during this period, and maybe even on 1st August when so many men were injured, Albert was wounded. He died of his wounds in Dover, on 27th August 1917. He left £3 9s 1d which was sent to his mother, who later received another £3 war gratuity. Elizabeth died in 1932.

Albert's oldest William Samuel also served in WWI; he joined the Royal Army Service Corp, 22nd Supply Company on 13th October 1916. William was a butcher when he enlisted and was assigned to Field Butchery. He arrived on the front in November 1916, was promoted to Corporal on 9th September 1918 and demobilised on 5th December 1919, having spent much on 1919 serving in Cologne. William died in 1954.

Albert's next brother, Frederick William, joined the Navy when he was 18. He spent most of the war on HMS Hyacinth, which was based around Africa, first escorting conveyes and then blockading the Germans.

Frederick died in 1967.

Albert's sister Bessie was still living at 23 Tollox Place in 1939, she died in 1983.



William Henry Dawe (1878-1919)

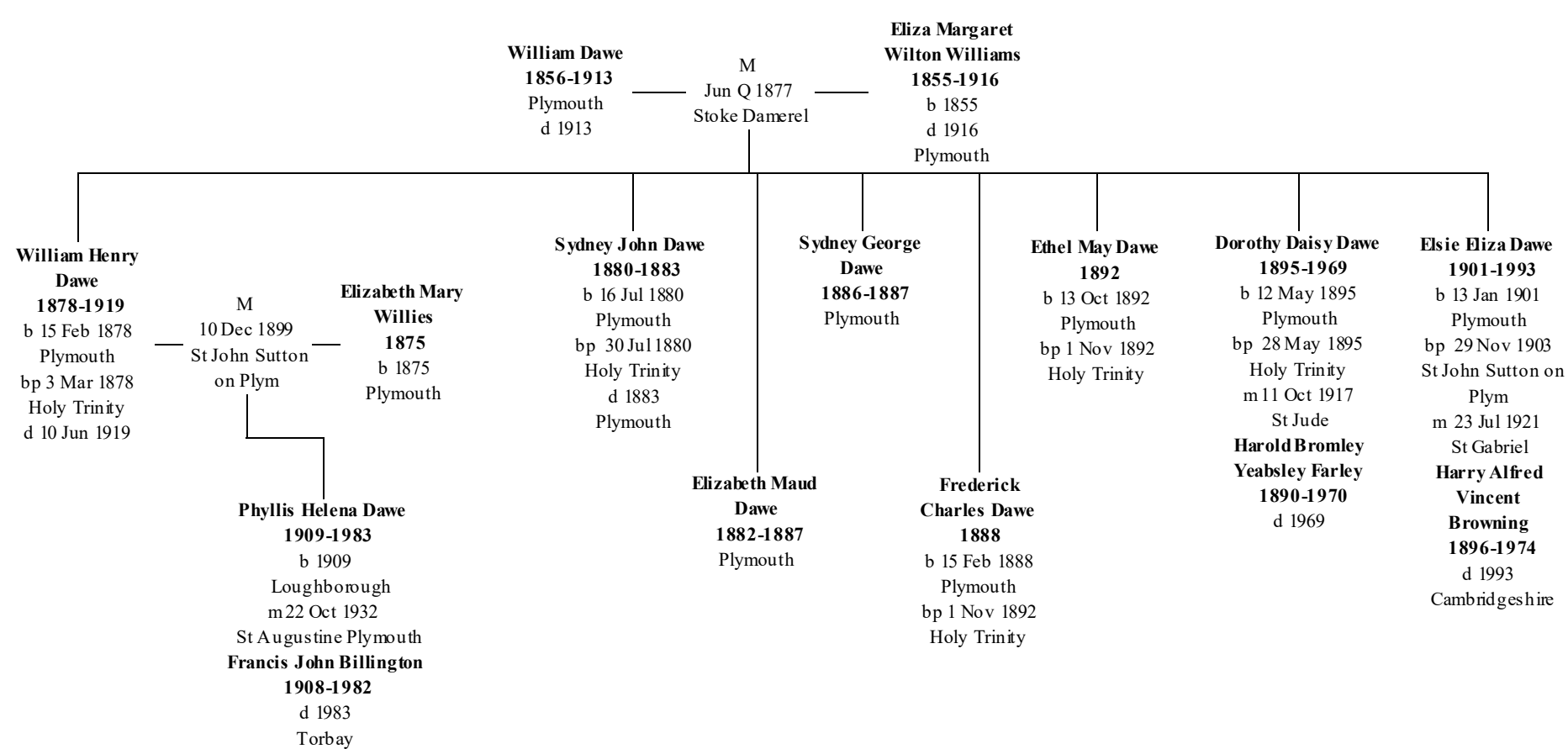
William Henry Dawe was born on 15th February 1878 and baptised on 3rd March at Holy Trinity. His parents were William and Eliza Margaret, and at the time of William’s birth the family lived at 7 New Street, Plymouth. William was the oldest child. By 1881 they had moved to 7 Stokes Lane, and William now had a younger brother, Sydney. William Sr. was a gunner in the navy. In 1891 William Sr. was at sea, Eliza was living at 46 York Street, with William Henry and Frederick. William and Eliza had lost several children between the census’s.

On 10th December 1899 William Henry married Elizabeth Mary Willies at St Johns Sutton-on-Plym. They were both living at 57 Tresillian Street, Plymouth, and William was a plumber. In the census a few years later they were living at 16 St Leonard’s Road.

By 1911 they had moved to Loughborough and were living at 19 Arthur Street. William was now a water inspector working for Loughborough Corporation. William and Elizabeth’s only child, Phyllis Helena was born in 1909 in Loughborough.

It isn’t known when William signed up but at some point he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in the 2nd London Sanitary Company. The war diaries don’t go up to time William died but looking at the diary for March 1917 the duties carried out that month by the company included: finding water sources and testing the water to check for poisons. Checking water carts and the efficiency of chlorination of the water. Disinfecting after a case of measles, dysentery, and scarlet fever, the 8th Devons had an outbreak of measles. Routine sanitary inspections of villages and billets, presumably they also ordered the cleaning up when found unsatisfactory. On some occasions they were asked to come and inspect a camp and in some cases they declared a camp unfit for habitation. They checked plans for proposed latrines. Another task was preparing a scheme to deal with the waste water from a laundry and baths at a rest camp.

It would be logical to assume that William carried out similar duties to those he had done for Loughborough Corporation. In June 1919 the company were in Egypt. William died of tetanus on 10th June 1919 and was buried at the Suez War Memorial. His gravestone says “Abide with me, the dearly beloved husband of Elizabeth Dawe and dear daddy of Phyllis”. Elizabeth died in 1923, their daughter Phyllis married in 1932 and died in 1983.



Reginald Thomas Dawe (1894-1918)

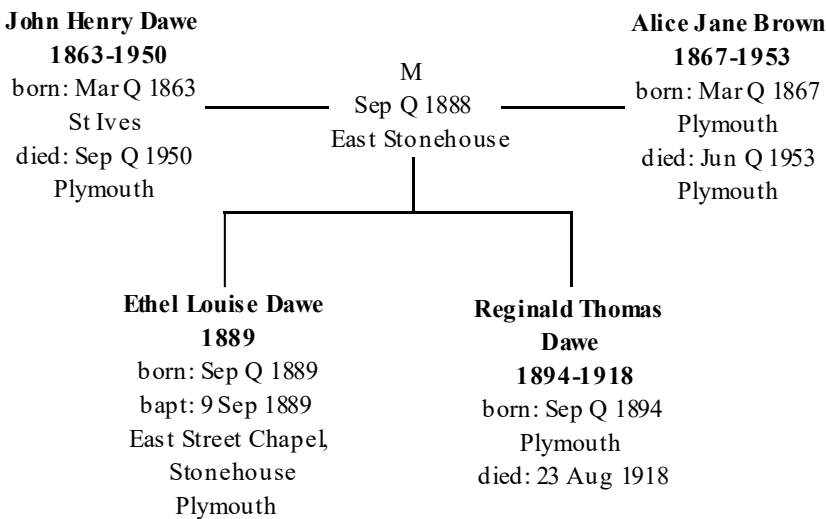
Reginald Thomas Dawe was born in 1894 in Plymouth. His parents were John Henry Dawe and Alice Jane (nee Brown). John was a carriage builder from St Ives. Reginald had an older sister, Ethel Louise, who was five years older than him. The family lived at 2 Sevenfield Terrace, Old Laira Road. In 1911 Reginald was a clerk in the coal industry. The family attended the Congregational Chapel.



Reginald joined the Army in 1916. He attested on 17th January 1916 in Plymouth. According to his service record he was 5’6” with a 32” chest. He was mobilised on 16th August 1916 and joined the depot at Exeter on 17th, he and was transferred to the battalion in Devonport in October. On 19th December 1916 he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps. He proceeded overseas on 24th April 1917 and disembarked in Alexandria on 1st June 1917.

Reginald was killed in action in Palestine on 23rd August 1918, he was buried at Ramleh War Cemetery, his gravestone says “Duty nobly done, so dearly loved, so sadly missed”.

Reginald’s parents died in the 1950’s, they were still living in the same house.



Walter James Giles (1882-1916)

Walter James Giles was born in Islington in 1882, the son of Walter Charles and Emily. Walter had a younger brother, William. Walter’s mother died when he was five, and in the 1891 census he was living with his father, brother and grandparents. Later that year his father re-married and had a daughter with his second wife.

Walter joined the Royal Dragoons in 1900, but he soon transferred to the Royal Artillery, he was 5’8”, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion. He had a tattoo of a pierced heart on his left forearm. Walter served at home for the first seven years of his career, during this time he met and married Harriet Artie Cooper, whose father ran the canteen at Efford Fort. At some point they lived with Harriet’s parents in 3 Efford Cottages, Laira.

On 22nd January Walter was sent to India, his wife came with him and presumably their two children also. Their third child was born in India, however she died on 13th December on board the ship they were coming home in.

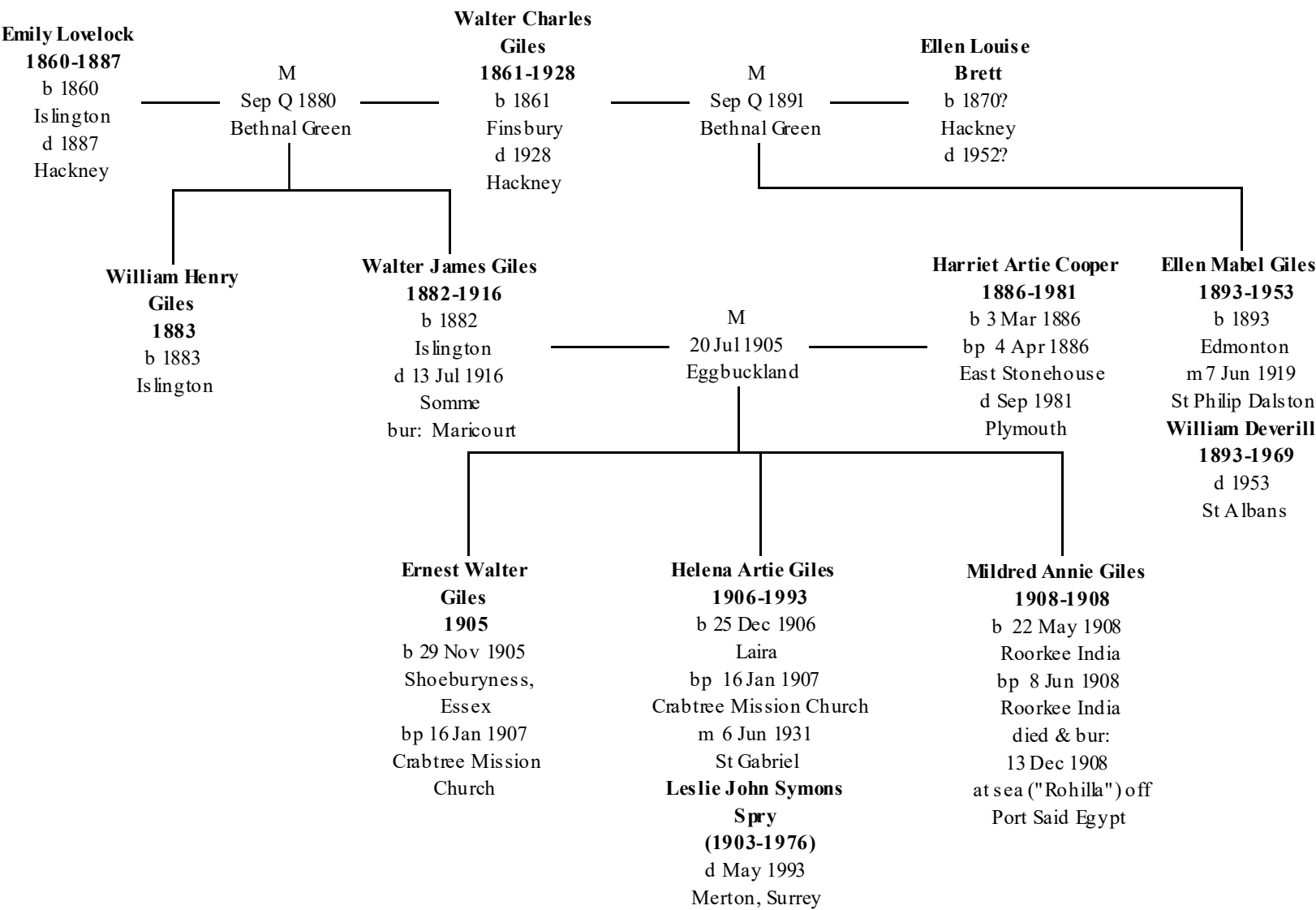
In 1911 Walter and his family lived at Maddick Cottage, Hooe, and Walter was a corporal in the Royal Garrison Artillery. At the outbreak of war Walter was a sergeant in the 32nd Siege Battery RGA, at some point before 1916 he was promoted to lieutenant. Between 4th and 14th January 1916 he had leave and came home. He had another weeks leave between 11th and 18th April 1916. On 24th April Walter was granted special leave to England, returning to Ypres on 3rd May. On 12th May Walter was suffering from shell shock and removed to rest billets.

Walter was killed by shell fire on 13th July 1916, just after midnight, during the Battle of the Somme, and was buried at Maricourt.

Harriet never remarried, in 1939 she was living at Mirador Place with her sister, Harried died in 1981.



Efford Cottages, Laira



William Henry Guppy (1895-1916)



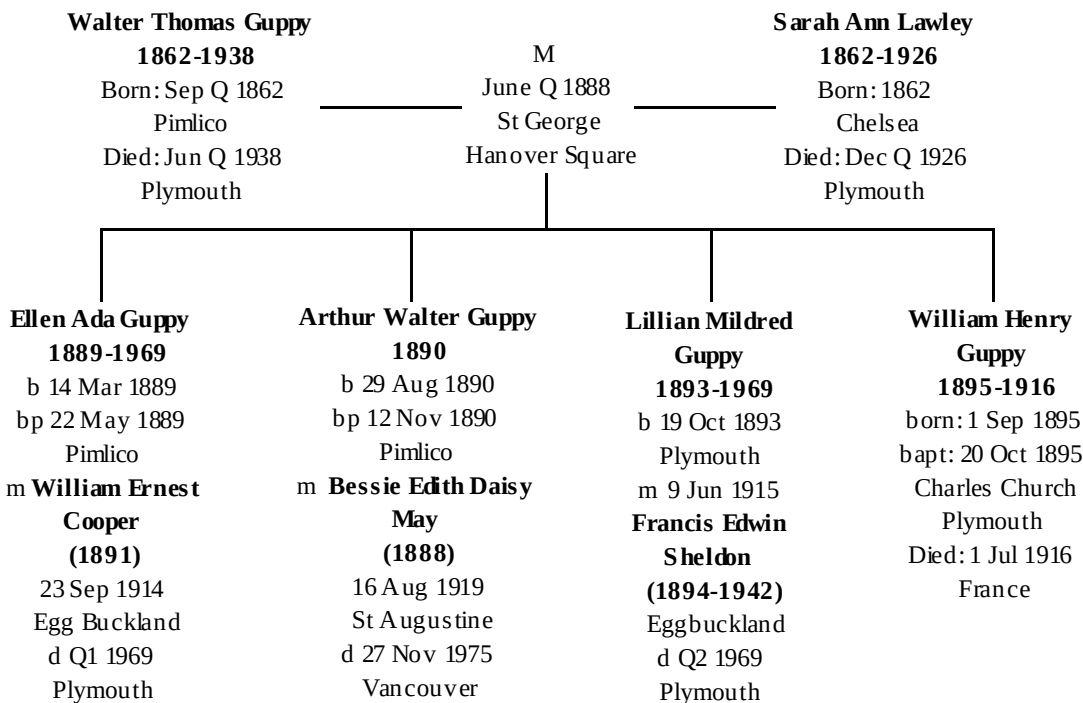
William Henry Guppy was the son of Walter Thomas Guppy and Sarah Ann Lawley who married in 1888 in London. William Henry was born in Pimlico and Sarah Ann was born in Chelsea. They had four children; Ellen Ada, Arthur Walter, Lillian Mildred, and William Henry. The oldest two children were born in London, by the time Lillian was born, in 1893, the family had moved to Plymouth. Walter was a clerk for the Army & Navy Stores and by 1901 the family were living in Marlborough Villa on the Avenue. Sarah died in 1926 and Walter died in 1938.

William Henry was born on 1st September 1895 in Plymouth, and was baptised on 20th October 1895 at Charles Church, the family were living at 15 Plympton Terrace, Mutley at the time. In 1911 William was a clerk and student, living with his parents in Marlborough Villa. William joined the 2/4th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment; he probably joined after the war started as he didn't have the 1914/5 Star, also he enlisted in Plymouth but was in the Gloucestershire Regiment. His rank is given as Corporal on his medal card, but Lance Sergeant on some other documents.

The battalion spent the first weeks of June 1916 training. They took over trenches at the 'moated grange' on 16th June. There was a gas alarm on the 17th, and they were relieved on 21st June. On 1st July the battalion was based at Riez Bailleul, a farm near Laventie. The battalion was training that day, and the war diary records that one 'other rank' was accidentally killed and one Lieutenant & one 'other rank' were accidentally wounded. The man killed must be William, and presumably he was killed in a training exercise. He was buried in Pont-Du-Hem Military Cemetery, La Gorgue. He left £5 19s 2d, which when to his mother, along with £9 10s war gratuity.

His brother, Arthur Walter Guppy, worked as a cleaner at Laira Station and then enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery on 28 January 1908, and was serving in India in 1911. Arthur served in the RGA until 1928, at which point he emigrated to Canada. Arthur married Bessie Edith Daisy May in 1919 at St Augustine's, and had a son, but by 1939 they had separated. Arthur died on 27th November 1975 in Vancouver.

Lillian Mildred married Francis Edwin Sheldon and lived on Old Laira Road, she died in 1969.



Charles Stuart Hayes-James (1899-1918)

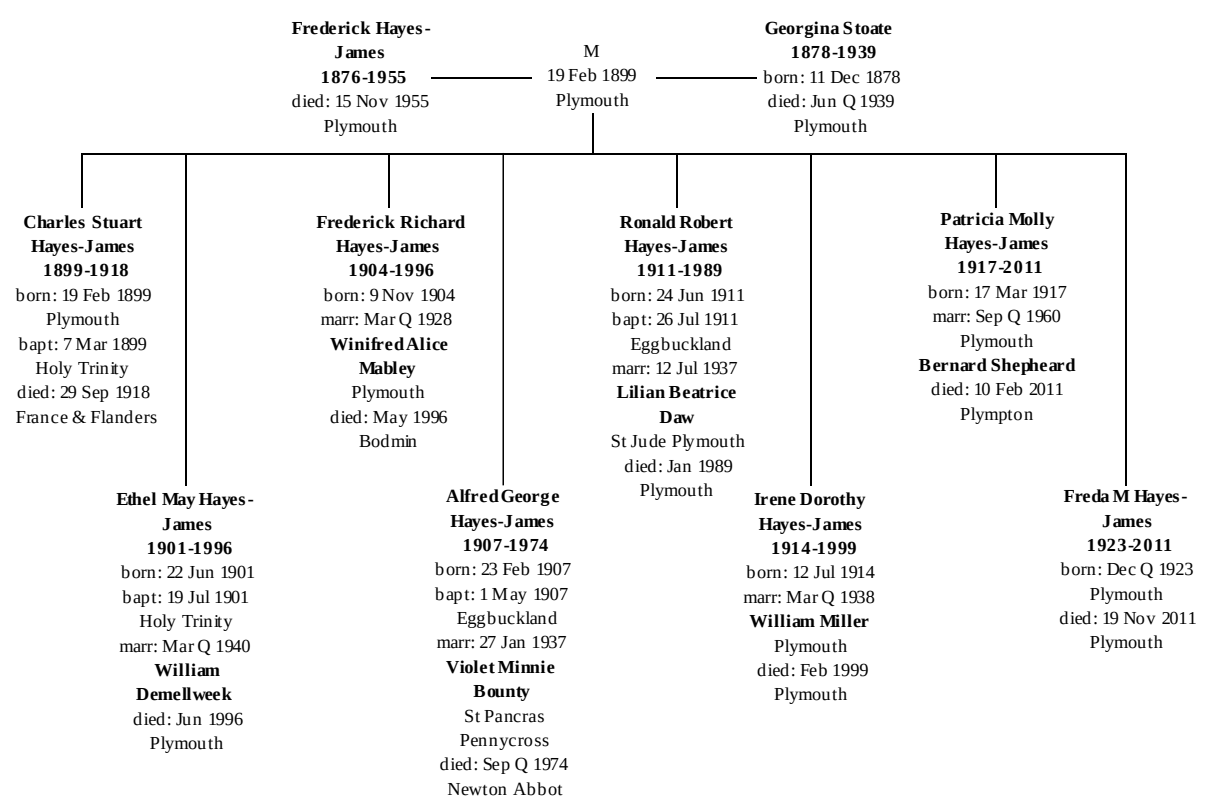
Charles Stuart Hayes-James was born on 19th February 1899 in Plymouth, he was the eldest of eight children. Charles was baptised on 7th March 1899 at Holy Trinity Church, the family were living at 5 Florence Place, and his father’s occupation was given as accountant.

Charles’s parents were Frederick and Georgina (nee Stoate) Hayes-James, who appear to have married on the same day that Charles was born! In 1901 they were living at 8 Cotehele Avenue, Plymouth and by 1911 they were living at 9 Huntley Place, Laira. Frederick was a commercial traveller.

2nd September the battalion was relieved and moved to Divisional Reserve at Mount Kokereele, about 10 miles from Ypres. There they rested and cleaned up. Next they moved to Magilligan Camp, then to Waterloo Camp, where they were shelled on 5th September. They moved back to Magilligan Camp, and then on the night of the 15th to 16th September they relieved the 1st Royal Irish Rifles in the reserve line. About 3pm on the 16th a high range shell landed on the mess at HQ, killing the commander of the battalion, and wounding his second in command. They moved their HQ. On the night of 19th to 20th they were relieved and moved to the asylum area at Bailleul. They then marched to Eecke and then on to Wormhoudt. They were billeted at Wormhoudt for a few days and on 25th a number officers and men received medals. Unfortunately the rest of September is missing. Charles died on 29th September 1918, in action.

Frederick joined the Royal Army Medical Corp on 5th June 1918 at Exeter. His age was 45 years 8 months, he was 5’ 2” tall, and had fair hair and blue eyes. Frederick was demobilized on 17th January 1919. It isn’t clear whether Frederick actually went abroad.

Georgina died in 1939 and Frederick died in 1955.



Thomas Alfred Hayward (1879-1916)

Thomas Hayward was born in Ludlow on 20th March 1879. He was the oldest son of John and Elizabeth Hayward. John was a gardener and in 1881 they lived at Delbury Hall in Shropshire. By 1891 they had moved to Kingsteignton, and were living at Greenhill Lodge. By this time Thomas had four younger siblings.

Thomas joined the Navy on 24th July 1899. He was 5'4", light brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He joined as a 2nd class stoker.

At the time of the 1901 census, Thomas was based at HMS Vivid.

On 29th December 1901 Thomas married Lucy Maude Holmes at Kingsteignton church. At that time Thomas was serving on HMS Fairy.

By 1911 Thomas was a Petty Officer. In the census of that year Lucy was living in Millbrook with three of her four children. The family moved to Tollox Place probably in 1912.



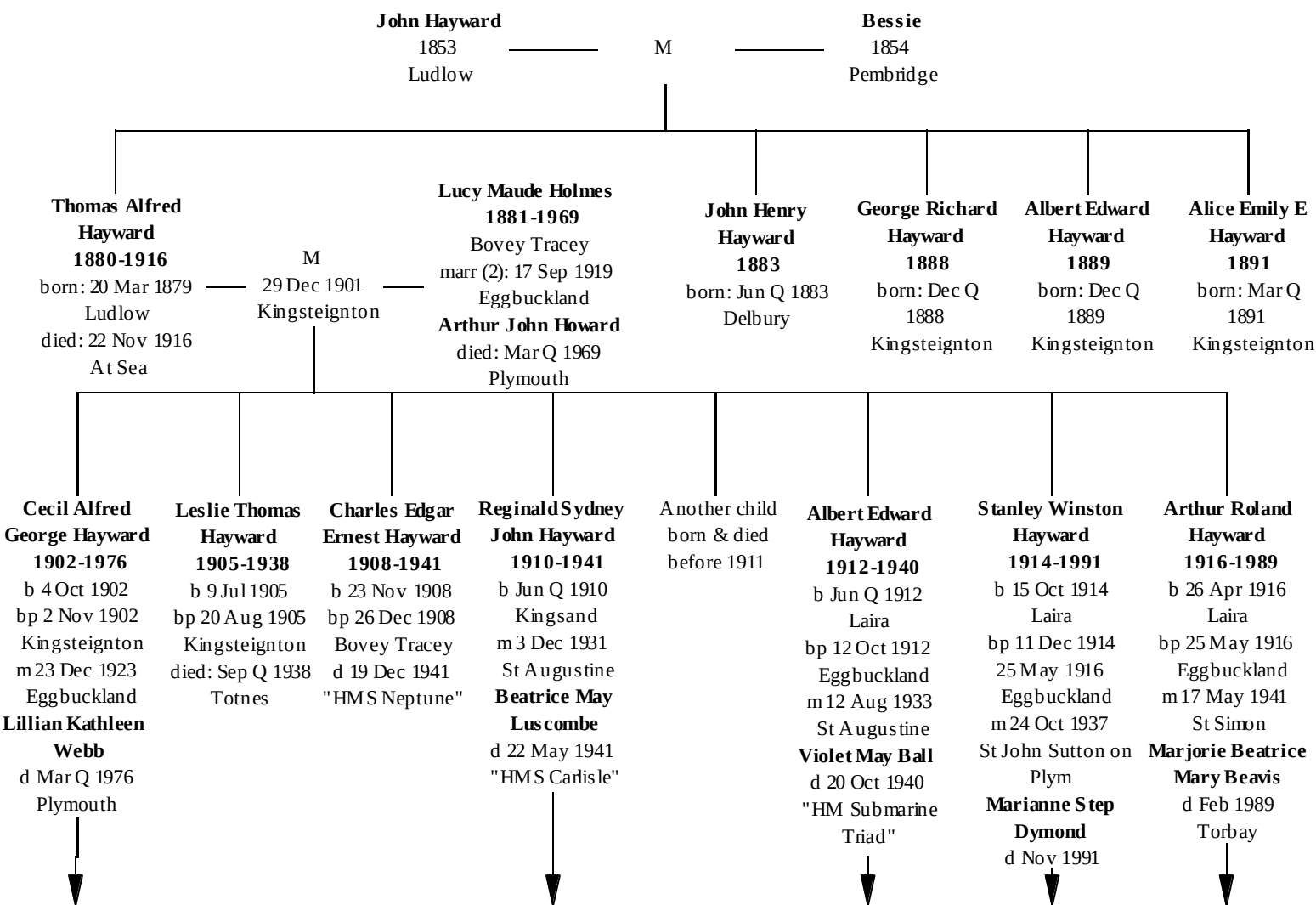
At the start of WWI Thomas was based on HMS Torch as Petty Officer Stoker. In February 1916 Thomas transferred to HMS Titania, which was a submarine depot ship, and he was still assigned to her at the Battle of Jutland. On 3rd June HMS Titania sent submarine G10 to find and sink the floating remains of HMS Invincible, to prevent the capture of material.

On 6 September 1916 Thomas transferred to HMS Maidstone, another depot ship. On 22nd November 1916 submarine E30 hit a mine off the coast of Orfordness in Suffolk. Thomas and all the other crew were lost.

By this time Thomas had seven surviving children, the youngest being only 7 months old.

Lucy remarried on 17th September 1919. In 1939 Lucy was living in Mount Gould with her second husband, she died in 1969.

Three of Thomas and Lucy's sons died in WW2, they were all in the Navy, and Albert Hayward also died in a submarine.



Horace Dawborn Herring (1887-1918)



Horace Dawborn Herring was born in Belfast in 1887, the son of Willie Harry Herring and Mary Anna. In 1891 the family were presumably still in Belfast, as that is the birthplace of Muriel Lucy the youngest of the family who was born in June 1890. By 1901 the family were living at 23 Albert Terrace, Laira. Horace was a contractor’s clerk. On 16th October 1910 Horace married Mary Ann Ellacott, at Plympton St Mary, Mary Ann lived on the Ridgeway.

In 1911 they were living with Mary Ann’s widowed mother, who had a sweetshop on the Ridgeway, Horace was a tobacconist’s manager.

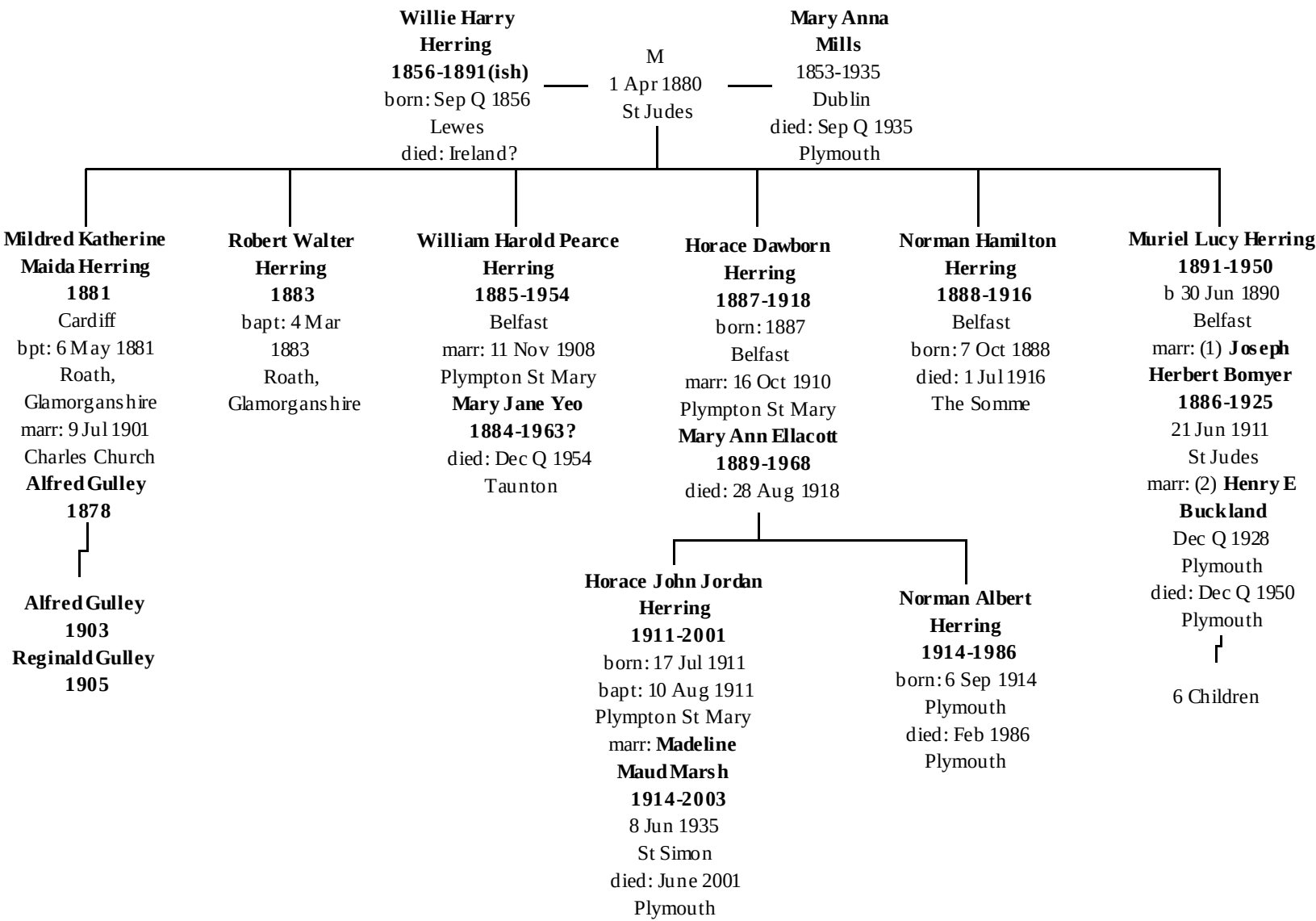
Their first child was born on 17th July 1911 and was called Horace John Jordan Herring; their second son, Norman Albert was born on 6th September 1914. By 1918 Mary was living in Cecil Avenue.

Horace joined the 1st Wiltshire Battalion, and became a lance corporal; he joined up in about December 1916 and joined the field in April 1918. For much of July the battalion had been training, between 8th and 15th of July they suffered an influenza epidemic. The middle of July was intensely hot, making training marching difficult. On 19th July they marched to Forceville, where they relieved the 6th & 7th Leicestershire Regiment in the trenches. It rained heavily that night. They moved to Acheux Woods and re-commenced training. From 24th July they were in the trenches at Englebelmer, it was mostly quiet and wet, although they suffered some shelling, including gas shells. Most of Augsut was spent in this same area, a few days in the trenches a few day out.

Horace was admitted to hospital on 22nd August and put on the sick convoy on 23rd, his condition was undiagnosed but he was retaining urine.

Horace died of illness on 28th August 1918 and was buried at Etaples Military Cemetery.

In 1939 Mary was living in Craven Avenue, with her younger son who was a watchmaker. Mary died in 1968.



Norman Hamilton Herring (1888-1916)

Norman Hamilton Herring was born 7th October 1888 in Belfast. His father, Willie Herring, was a customs officer. His grandfather Captain John William Mills of the West Yorkshire Regiment was living in Laira in 1881.

Norman was educated at Regent Street Intermediate School in Plymouth. In 1901 Norman was living at 23 Albert Terrace Laira, his mother was a widow and was a piano teacher.

Norman joined the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1908 and transferred to the 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment in 1910.

In August 1914 the 2nd Devons were stationed in Cairo. They returned to England before being sent to the front. Norman was admitted to hospital on 8th November for valvular disease of the heart, he was treated for 12 day.

The battalion arrived at the trenches at Neuve Chapelle on 18th November; they remained in that area for 18 months. The heaviest fighting at Ypres (to the north) was over by this time so they were mostly consolidating their trenches. The first major engagement was 18th December when they attacked the Moated Grange. They took part in the Christmas Truce of 1914. The next attack was March 1915 at Neuve Chappelle, which was successful and then again in May 1915 which was disastrous. The rest of the year was relatively quiet. From 24th November 1915 to New Year the whole division was in the rest area. They went back to the Neuve Chappelle trenches for the first few months of 1916 then moved to The Somme arriving on 5th April.

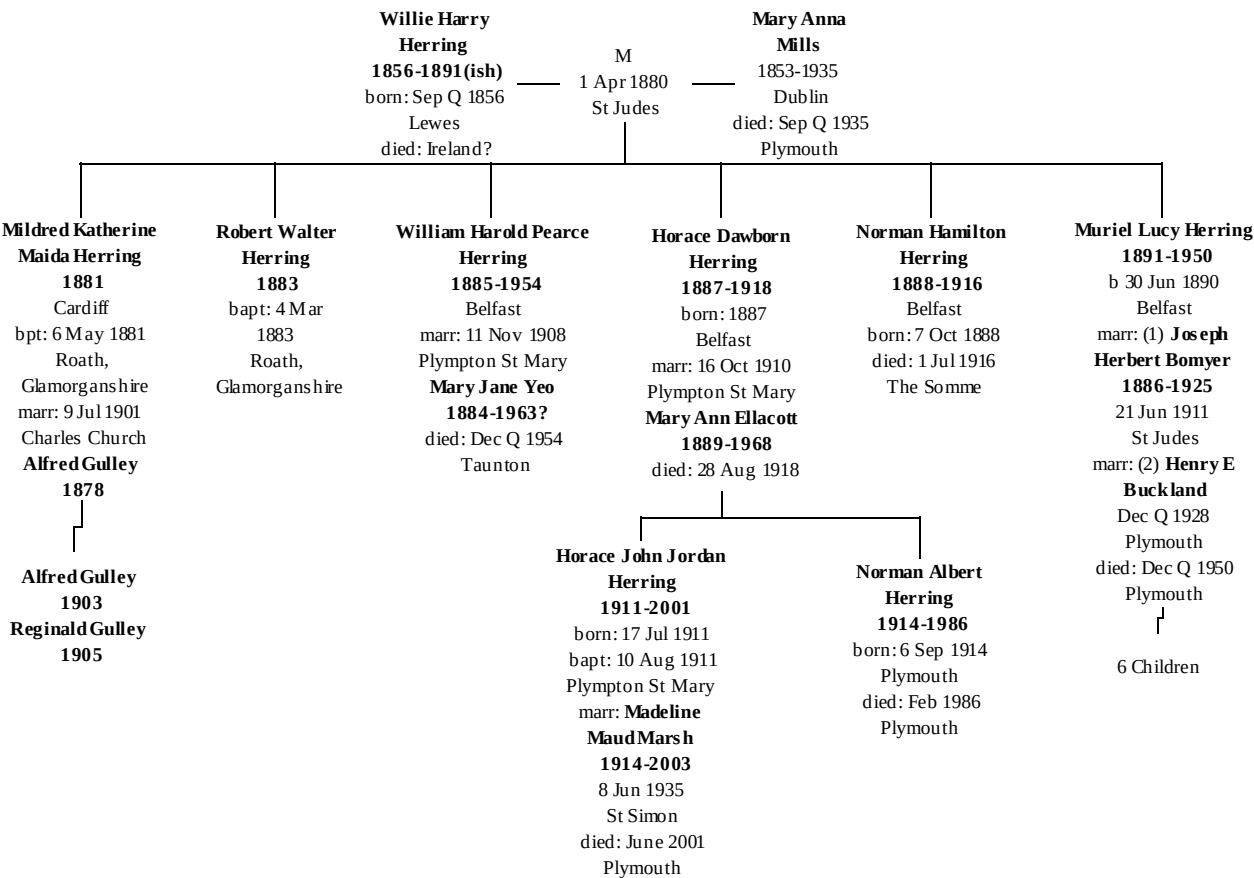
Norman died on the first day of the Somme, 1st July 1916, although he wasn’t officially declared dead until February 1917. His division was attacking a particularly formidable section, the bombardment did little damage to the Germans. When the men went over the top they were met with a tornado of fire, the few who reached the German trenches were speedily overcome. Norman left all his property & effects to his mother.



Flora Cottage, Laira



23 Albert Terrace, Laira



Maurice George Howard (1891-1917)



Maurice George Howard was born on 2nd May 1891 in Plymouth and baptised at Holy Trinity on 5th June. His father was George Howard, a town haulier, and his mother was Mary Ann (nee Langman). They lived in Brunswick Road at the time of his birth. Maurice was one of eleven children, four of whom died in infancy. By 1901 the family had moved to 36 Tollox Place, at this time George was a navvy. In 1911 George and Mary were still living in Tollox Place, George was now a coal porter. Maurice was not living there at this time.

It would seem probable that Maurice had moved to Canada as that was where he was when war broke out. On 16th November 1914 he attested into the 21 Battalion in Kingston, Ontario.

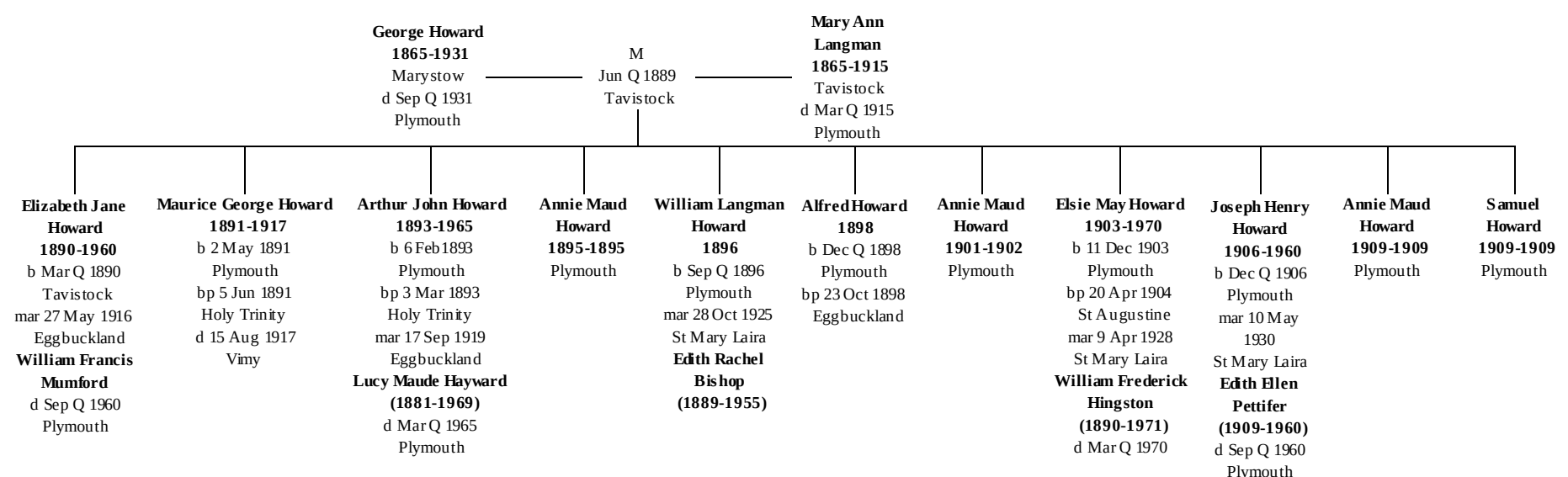
After training in Canada he arrived in Devonport on 15th May 1915, and then on 14th September 1915 he left Folkestone for France.

At the beginning of July 1917 the battalion were at Coupigny, the first few days they were training. The weather was fine. On 10th July they relieved the 22nd Canadians in the Lens sector, and on the 12th they moved into the front line. There was much air activity, and one enemy plane was downed. On 16th they fired gas bombs at the enemy and took one German prisoner. They were relieved later that day and proceeded back to the reserve. On 23rd July the battalion enjoyed a bath and a change of clothes. On the last few days of July they prepared to go back to the front.

On 1st August orders were received that the proposed operations were postponed, and so they continued with light training. On the night of the 4th/5th they relieved the 27th Canadians in the reserve at Bully Grenay. They remained in reserve and on 9th carried out a raid, to ascertain the condition of the enemy trenches. On 10th they were relieved and returned to divisional reserve, where they received a change of underwear. On 13th the battalion moved forward as per Operation Order #116 and #117, this was the Battle of Hill 70. Their objective was to reach the German Reserve Line, (the Green Objective).

The battalion moved into position on 13th and on 14th there was much enemy shelling. Zero hour was 4.25 am on the 15th. The weather was ideal and the battle started with a barrage of fire. The artillery had done its job and there was little wire in the way, the battalion quickly took the enemy trenches. Soon after daylight the enemy aircraft were about and fired on the men, which accounted for many of the casualties. There were counter-attacks, but the Canadians repulsed them.

The following day the German aircraft was again very active. In the evening the battalion received reinforcements. On the night of the 16th/17th there was another counter-attack in which over 100 of the enemy got into the trenches, however again they were forced back. On 19th they were relieved and returned to the reserve. Maurice was killed in action on 15th August 1917, he is remembered on the Vimy Memorial for those soldiers with no known grave.



Ronald John Lear (1896-1918)



Ronald John Lear was born in 1896 in St Budeaux. His parents were John and Sarah. His father was a blacksmith, and in 1901 they lived at 1 Brunswick Terrace. In 1911 they were living at 2 St Barnabas Terrace, by this time Ronald had three younger brothers.

At Some point John and Sarah moved to 5 Moor View Laira, they were still living there in 1939. John died in 1948 and Sarah in 1950.

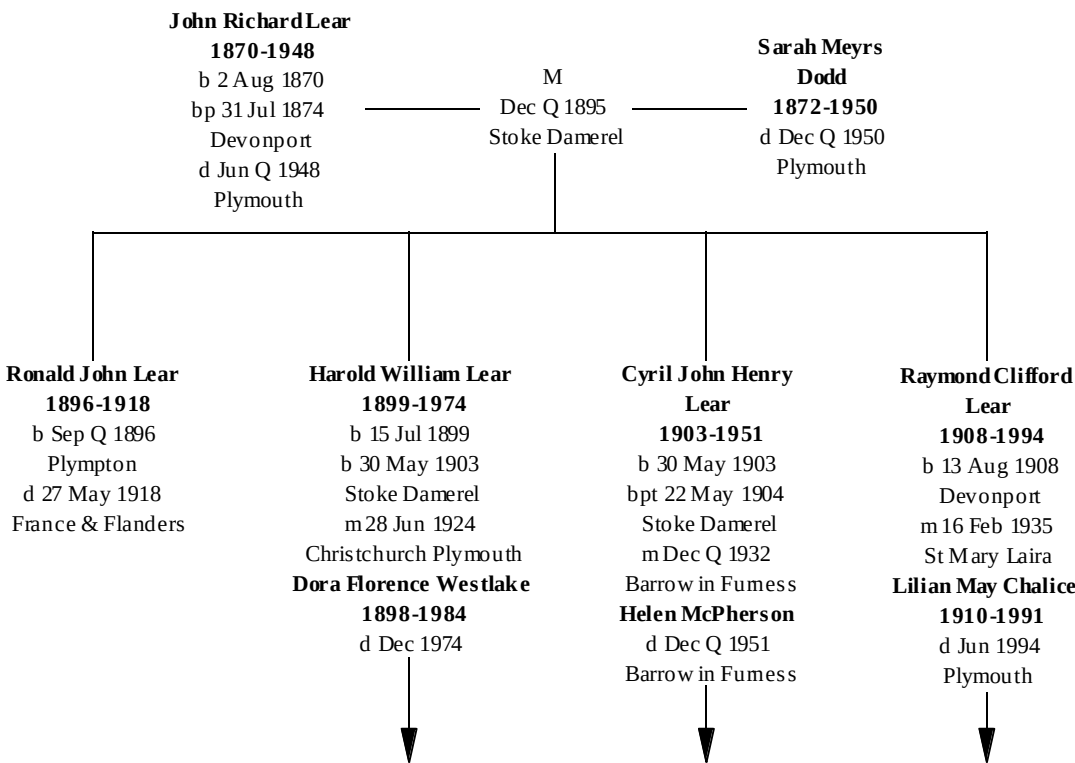
Ronald joined the 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment, it isn't known when he joined but it was after 1915.

At the beginning of April 1918 the battalion were training, following a fierce attack in March in which they had to retreat several times. On 20th April they moved into the line at Villers Bretonneux, they moved to billets on 22nd and back into the line on 23rd. On 24th April there was an enemy attack.

On 25th April Ronald was awarded the Military Medal, for gallantry and devotion to duty under fire, for his part in the battle of 22nd March to 2nd April. The Germans had launched Operation Michael on 21st March and took back much of the area taken by the allies in the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

On 27th April they left the trenches and marched to Pont Noyelles. The beginning of May was spent training, including a demonstration of signal rockets and bombs given by a French Officer. There was also a concert held. On 11th May the battalion marched to Concevreux Quarry, where they relieved a French Regiment in the front line. It was quiet until the 18th when the enemy rushed a post held by the battalion, and they carried out their own abortive raid on the enemy on the 20th. They were relieved on 21st. On 26th they moved into the support trenches at Bois de Buttes, where an enemy attack was expected.

At 1am on 27th May the bombardment started followed a little later by the enemy attack, the battalion was forced to retire under heavy shell and machine gun fire. For the following two days the fighting and retiring continued. The battalion withdrew to the Ardre Valley on 30th where together with other units they were able to hold the line. On the 31st the Devon's were ordered to the rear and were able to reorganise and rest. Ronald died at some point during these days, he was officially listed as missing on 12th July, and he is presumed to have died on 27th May.



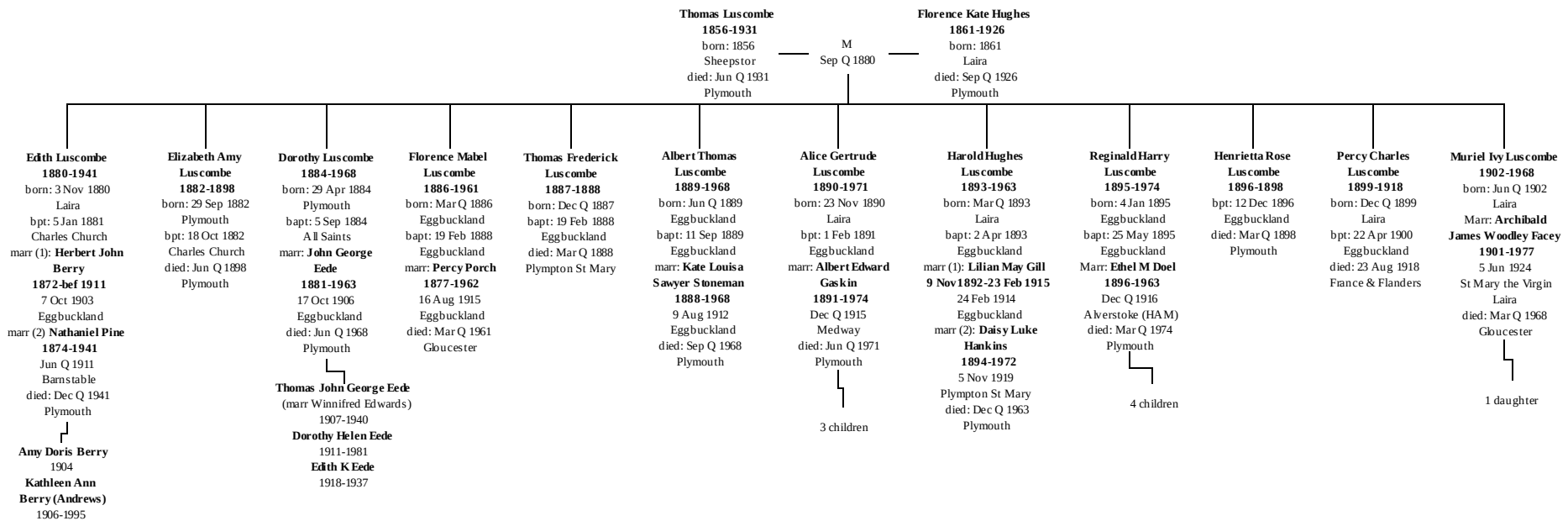
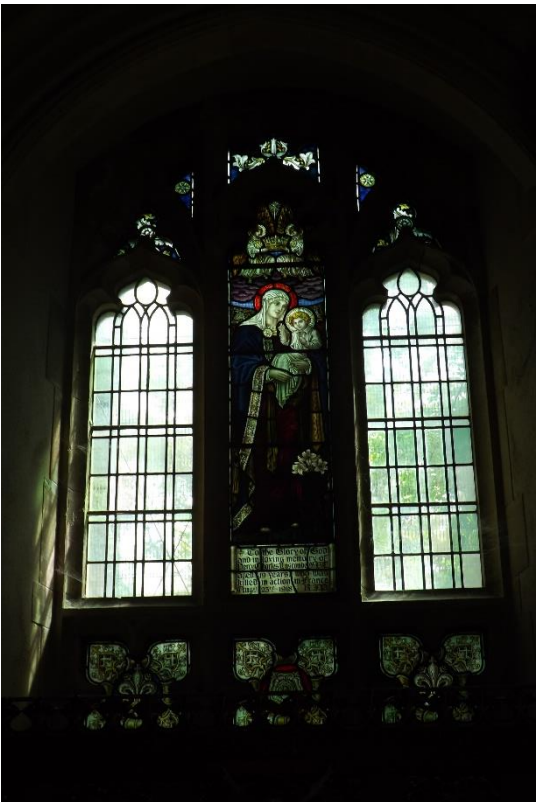
Percy Charles Luscombe (1899-1918)

Percy Luscombe was born in 1899 in Laira, and baptised on 22nd April 1900 at the Crabtree Mission. His parents were Thomas and Florence Kate Luscombe, who ran the Laira Inn. Thomas was born in Sheepstor and had been running the Laira Inn since about 1889. Percy came from a large family, he had 11 siblings, although 3 of them died in childhood. In 1901 and 1911 the family were living at the Laira Inn.

Percy joined the Machine Gun Corps, it's not know when but Percy wasn't 18 until the end of 1917 so presumably this is when he joined. On 23rd Aug 1918 he was killed instantly by a shell at the Somme, he was buried at Meaulte Cemetery. His gravestone says "A bright young life, a noble death, and for a noble cause".

Several members of his family placed notices in the Illustrated Western Morning News announcing his death. These show that three of his brothers were also serving at the time.

Percy's family had a stained glass window dedicated to his memory placed in St Mary's Church.



James Pearse (1881-1917)



Saltram Villas

James Pearse was the illegitimate son of Amanda Pearse. He was born in Underwood in 1881 and baptised on 11th July in Plympton St Mary. In 1891 he was living with his grandparents at 12 Huntley Cottages, Laira. By this time Amanda had married and had a daughter called Kate.

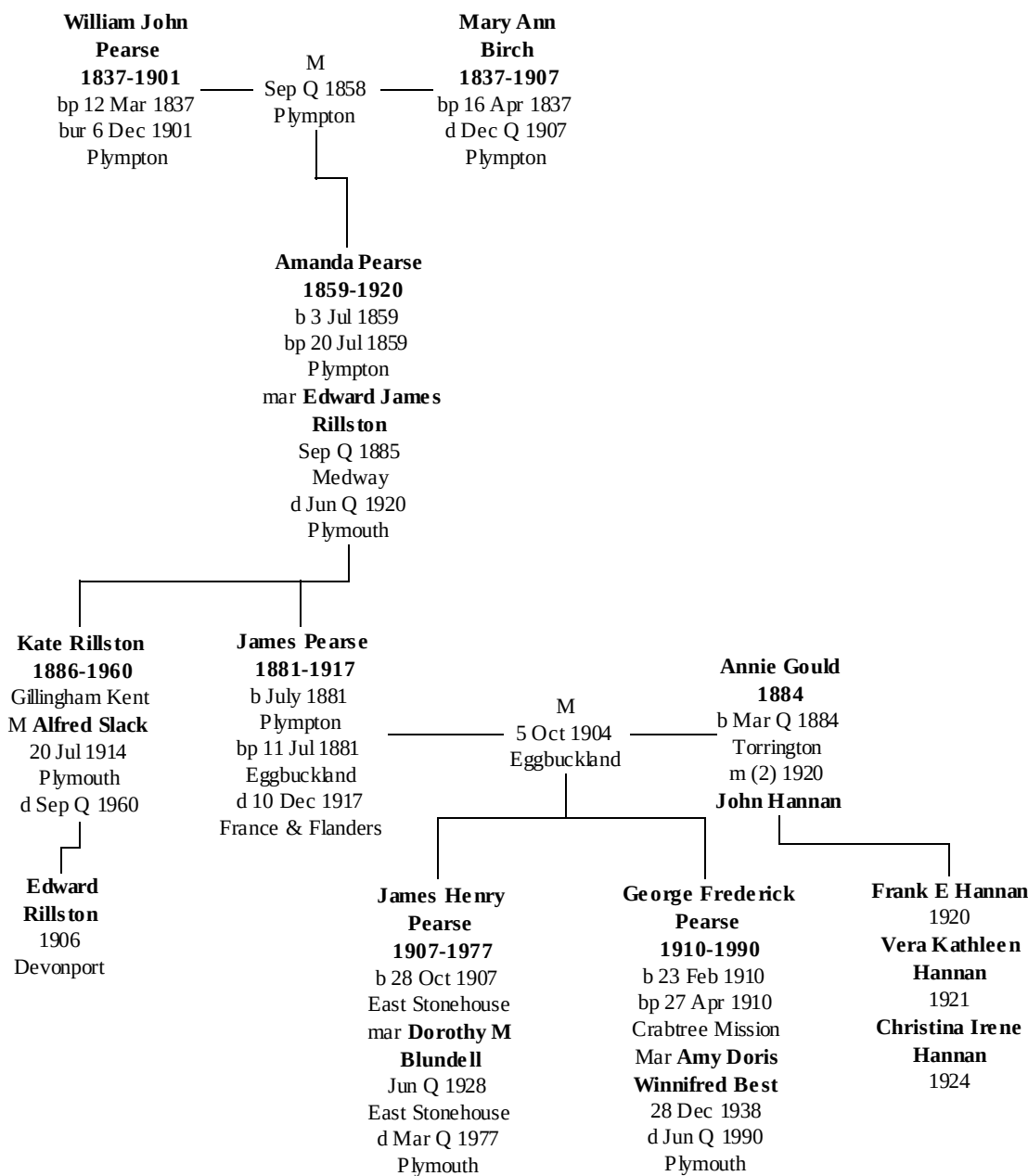
On 3rd April 1900 James joined the Devon Artillery, he was a platelayer for the GWR. James was 5’4½”, what light brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. In 1901 he was a bombardier and in barrack in Newport.

On 5th October 1904 James married Annie Gould at Eggbuckland church. He gave his grandfather’s name as his father’s. They had two children, James Henry Pearse born on 28th October 1907 and George Frederick born on 23rd February 1910, at the time of his birth they were living at 1 Saltram Villa.

In 1911 James was in the 14th Battery and stationed in India, but Annie and the children haven’t been found.

James was killed in action on 10th December 1917 the circumstances aren’t known as the war diaries for that day say “nothing to report”.

Annie remarried in 1920, she and her second husband, John Hannan, had three children together.



Henry Leonard Ricketts (1894-1918)



Henry Leonard Ricketts was born on 11th November 1894 in Willesden, he was baptised on 23rd March 1895. His parents were Henry and Annie. They had eight children. In 1901 the family lived at 47 Hawthorn Road, Willesden. In 1911 Henry was a photographer, boarding with a family at 73 Berry Street, Willesden.

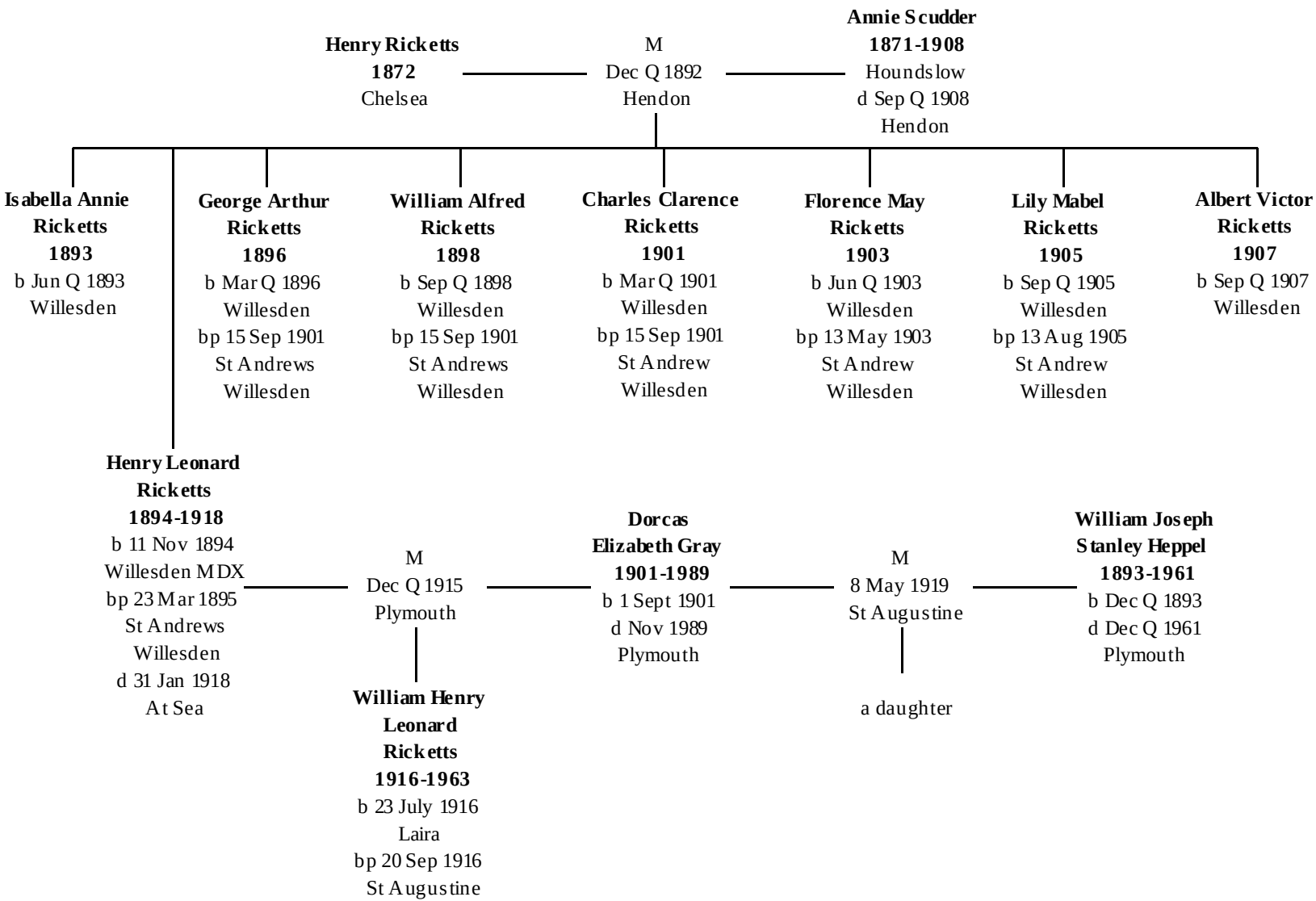
Henry joined the Navy on 10th July 1915 for the hostilities, his occupation was fitter’s mate. He was 5’6” with dark brown hair, hazel eyes and a dark complexion. He was a stoker 2nd class until 15th Aug 1917 when he became a stoker 1st Class.

In the last quarter of 1915 Henry married Dorcas Elizabeth Gray, who had had her 14th birthday on 1st September. This was before the youngest age for marriage was raised to 16. On 23rd July 1916 their son William Henry Leonard was born, Dorcas was not quite 15. William was baptised on 20th September.

From 14th October 1917 to 21st October Henry spent seven days in the cells! On 1st January 1918 Henry was assigned to submarine K17.

K17 was hit by HMS Fearless on 31st January 1918 and sunk in eight minutes with the loss of all hands. That night a fleet of naval vessels were on route from Rosyth to the North Sea for fleet exercises. The night was misty and there were a total of five collisions involving eight ships. Two submarines were lost, three others and one cruiser were damaged, and 104 men lost their lives. This night became known as the Battle of May Island.

Dorcas was now a widow with a baby and only aged 16, she had remained living with her parents. In 1919, and not yet 18, Dorcas married for the second time, and a few years later had a daughter. Dorcas died in 1989.



William Henry Guide Sampson (1874-1916)

William Henry Guide Sampson was born on 7th March 1874 in Devonport. William’s parents didn’t actually get married until he was 10. William had an older brother, Samuel, and an older half-sister, from his mother’s first marriage. In 1881 William’s father, John, was at sea and he was living with the rest of his family at 24 Cannon Street, Devonport. In 1891 William was a butcher’s apprentice, and living with his family in Chapel Street, Devonport.



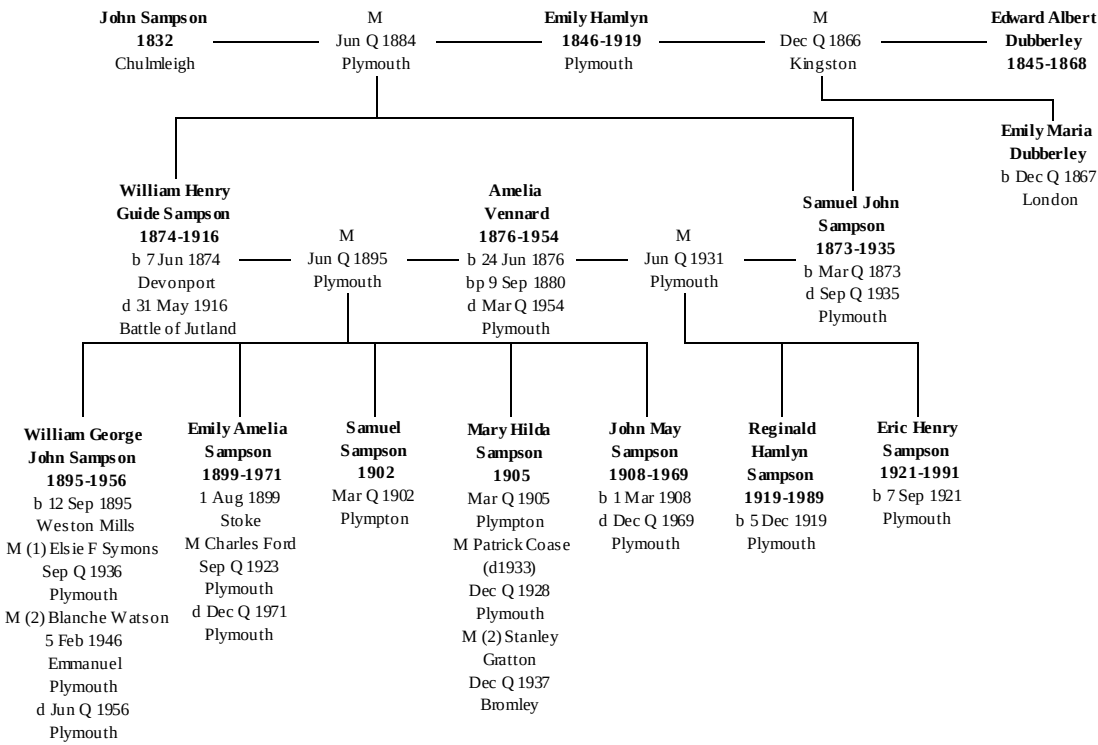
William joined the Navy on 28th January 1893, giving his date of birth as 1873 rather than 1874. It may be that he didn’t know what year he was born, as even his actual date of birth made him over 18. William started as a 2nd class stoker and by 1908 had risen to chief stoker.

In 1895 William married Amelia Vennard. In 1901 Amelia was living with her widowed father and two children. There first son William George John was born on 12th September 1895, and next child Emily Amelia was born in 1899. Three more children followed, Samuel (1902), Mary Hilda (1905) and John May (1908). In 1911 Amelia and her children were living at 17 Hanover Road.

On 17th June 1913 William was assigned to HMS Indefatigable. The Battle of Jutland was the only major sea battle of WWI. It took place on 31st May 1916. The navy had been under pressure to be seen to be doing something, but everyone knew that a major sea battle was a very big risk, and could lose the war in a few hours. The outcome of the battle was a little inconclusive, with both sides claiming victory. The British lost more ships and men, but succeeded in containing the German fleet. Both sides avoided a major engagement for the rest of the war.

At around 16.00 on 31st May Indefatigable was hit in the rear turret by shells, and started sinking, three minutes later her magazines exploded, most likely blowing out the bottom of the ship. Archaeological evidence shows that she blew in half within minutes of being hit. There were only three survivors out of a crew of 1019 men.

Amelia went on to have two more children, Reginald (1919) and Eric (1921), presumably William’s brother Samuel was the father, as they got married in 1931. By 1939 Amelia was widowed again and living with her two youngest sons at 12 Ford Park Road. Amelia died in 1954.



Ernest Sluman 1887-1916

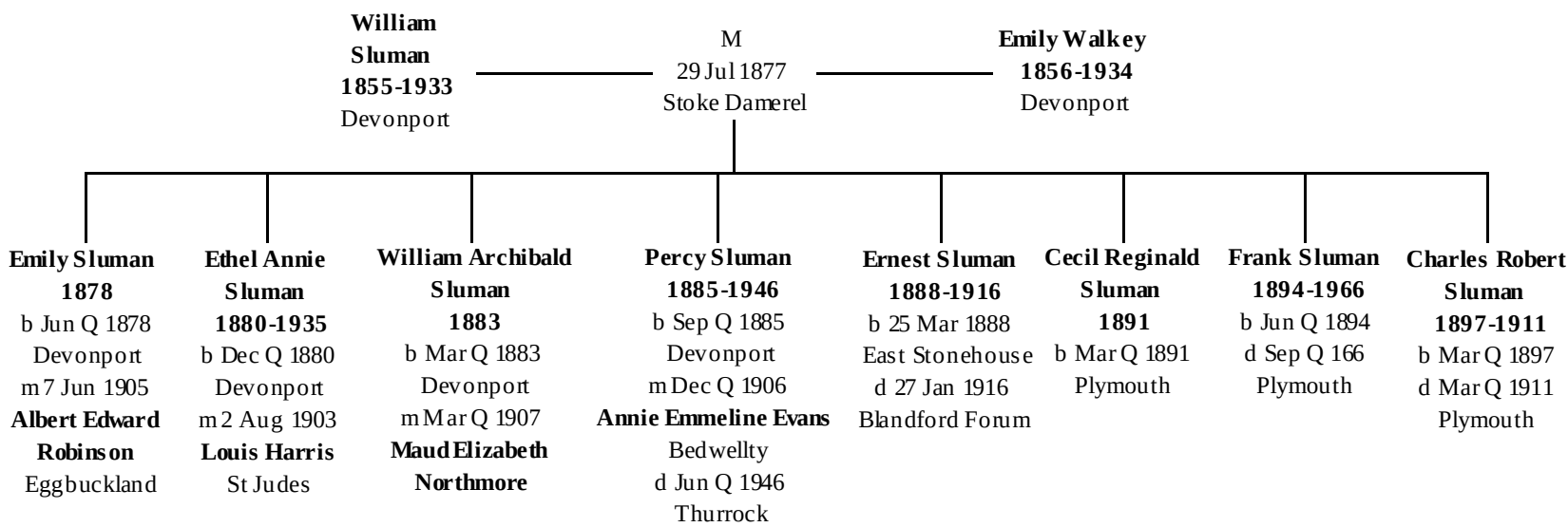


Ernest Sluman was born on 25th March 1887 or 1888! His school admission and Naval casualty records give the year as 1887, his Royal Marine Service Record gives 1897, but the only birth entry is in 1888. His place of birth is also varies, Eggbuckland, Stonehouse, Plymouth or Devonport, the birth entry is in Stonehouse.

His parents were William Sluman and Emily Walkey who married in Stoke Damerel in 1877, William was a tailor. They had eight children, Ernest was the fifth. In 1891 they were living at 2 Morley Place, Plymouth. On 23rd April 1900 Ernest was admitted to Charles Boys School, in Plymouth, his previous school was given as Laira. He was living at 22 Gilwell Street, where they family were living in 1901. By 1911 they had moved to Arnold’s Point. Ernest was a boot maker’s assistant.

Ernest enlisted in the Royal Marines on 4th December 1915. On 27th January 1916 he died suddenly in the afternoon of natural causes, at Blandford Camp. He was buried in Efford Cemetery.

Ernest’s parents were living at 30 Federation Road, Laira, at the time. William died in 1933 and Emily died in 1934.



Arthur Tipton (1894-1916)



Arthur Tipton was born in Penzance in 1894. He was the son of John and Elizabeth Ann, John was a railway engineman. In 1901 they were living in Abergavenny. In 1911 they were living at 1 Brockley Road, Arthur was a wine merchant’s clerk. As well as his parents Arthur lived with his two younger brothers, and his grandmother.

Arthur enlisted in the 24th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, who were formed in London on 20th November 1914, so maybe Arthur was living in London in 1914. The battalion spent most of 1915 training in England. They sailed for Le Havre on 15th November 1915.

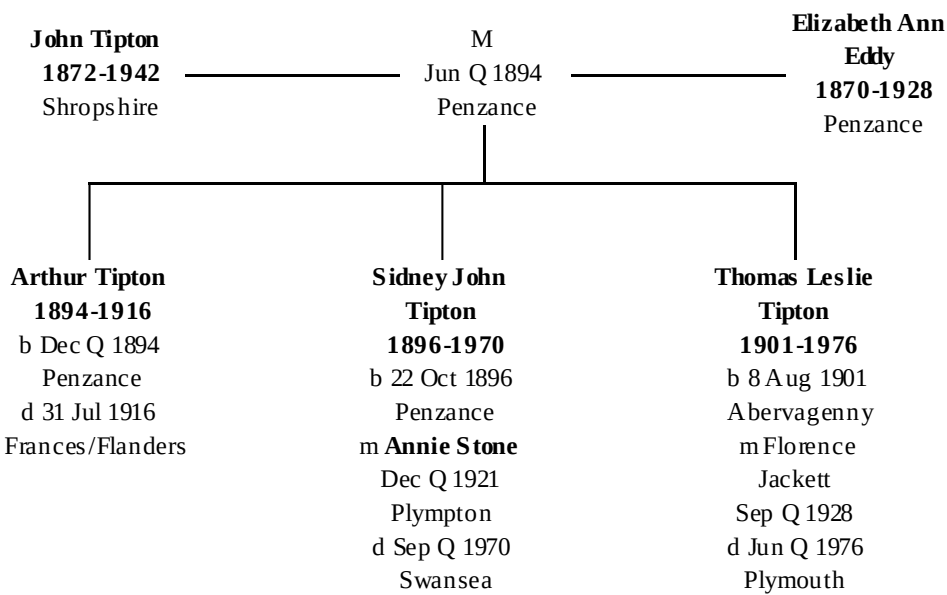
At the beginning of July 1916 they were in the support trenches at Carency, near Arras and so weren’t involved in the first day of the Battle of the Somme. On 2nd July they moved into the front line. At 10.45 pm on the 3rd the Twins crater was blown, men from “c” and “d” company immediately took and held it. Arthur was in “c” company so could well have been involved. There was much bombardment making holding it difficult. The next day there was heavy rain, making the job of consolidating the crater, and repairing their trenches hard work. They were relieved on the 6th July and moved to billets at Villers au Bois. For the next week they spent a few days in the front line and few days out.

On 13th July they moved to Camblain L’Abb , then over the next few days, to Dieval and then Pernes. On 20th July they reached Saleux by train and then on to Corbie. They then moved closer to the front line, through Happy Valley, Bernafay Wood, Trone Wood, and on 29th July moved into the trenches at Delville Wood.

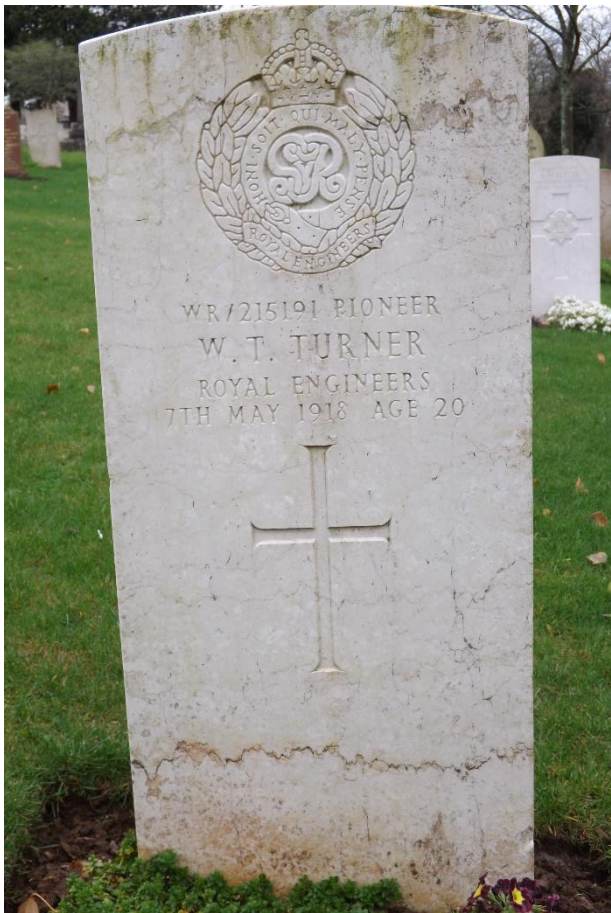
On 30th July the war diaries state “at 4.52 am “c” company made an attack on the German trench 600 yards east of Waterlot farm. The attack was unsuccessful due to the wire not having been cut and the difficulty of maintaining direction in the mist, of the 3 officers and 114 other ranks who made the attack. 1 officer (wounded) and 11 other ranks got back. Capt CS Meares was killed on the German wire, leading his men.”

The next day the battalion was relieved, and a list made of those known to have died and those missing in action.

Although listed in the war diaries under missing in action Arthur’s body was at some point identified and buried, after the war he was moved to Delville Wood Cemetery and his gravestone says “For the honour of his country and the glory of his God”.



William Thomas Turner (1897-1918)



William Turner was born Cardiff in 1897. His parents were Thomas and Harriet Turner, Thomas was a general labourer. They probably moved to Laira shortly after William’s birth as their next children, Edith, was born in Eggbuckland in 1900. In 1901 they lived at 6 Tollox Place.

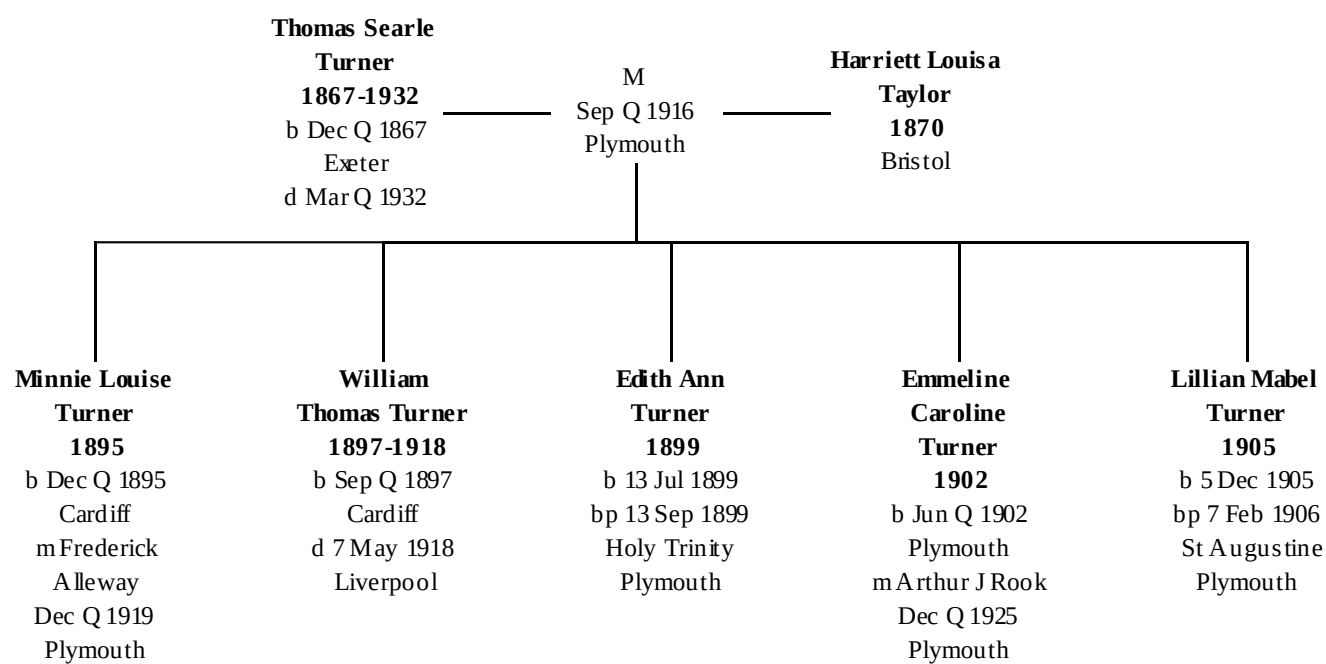
In 1911 they were still living in Tollox Place, at the time of the census Thomas was working away in Wales, the children all attended school.

William joined the army, probably in 1916. He transferred through a number of regiments, London Regiment, Royal West Kent Regiment, back to the London Regiment, before finally joining the Royal Engineers.

William was assigned to the 34th Railways Company. On 21st March 1918 the Germans began Operation Michael, their last offensive. A few weeks earlier on 7th March the 34th Company had moved into the Bapaume area. On 22nd March they were forced back to Pozieres and then to Vecquemont, while the Germans managed to take back the much of the Somme. The royal engineers had been forced to abandon their rolling stock, equipment and records.

It may be that William was injured in this retreat. On 7th May 1918 he died in Liverpool General Hospital, the records state the he died rather than died of wounds. It is therefore a possibility that he actually died of Spanish flu, or some other disease.

William had written a will on 18th February 1918, leaving all his effects to his mother, her address at the time was 26 Hyfield Terrace, Old Laira Road. William was buried in Efford Cemetery.



Frank Werran 1896-1914

Frank Werran

Frank Werran was born on 5th January 1896 at St Austell. He was the second son of John Werran by his second wife Elizabeth Jane Hicks. By the time Frank was 2 the family had moved to 21 Tollox Place, Laira. Frank joined the Navy as a Boy in October 1911. He served on the following ships:

- Impregnable
- Leviathan
- Implacable
- Berwick
- Cornwallis
- Highflyer
- Monmouth

Frank became an Ordinary Seaman on 5th January 1914, his 18th birthday. He was transferred to the Monmouth on 1st August 1914. Frank was described as 5’6½”, dark brown hair, grey/hazel eyes and a fresh complexion. Frank died on 1st November 1914 when the Monmouth



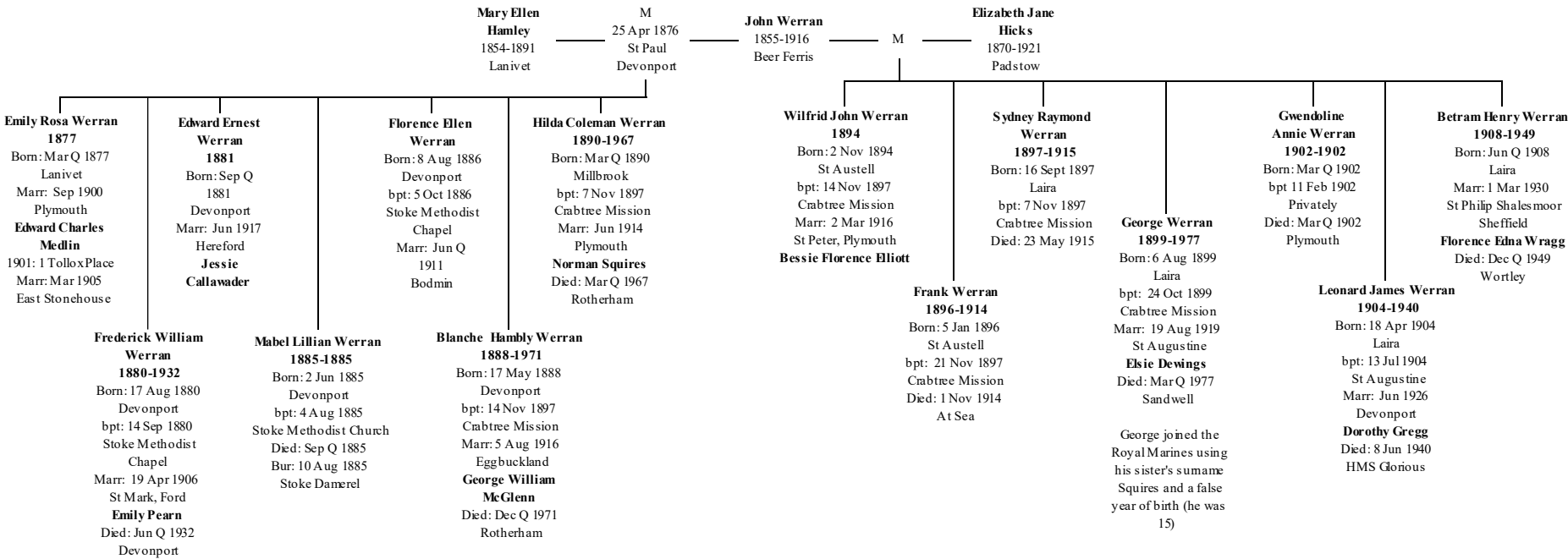
21 Tollox Place

HMS Monmouth & the Battle of Coronel

The HMS Monmouth that Frank served on was the 6th of that name, and had been launched on 13th November 1901. She was an armoured cruiser. By 1913 HMS Monmouth was part of the reserve Third Fleet, she was recommissioned at the start of WWI, but crewed mostly by reservists with little experience. She was assigned to the 5th Cruiser Squadron which based in the Central Atlantic and tasked with tracking down the fleet under the command of German Vice-Admiral Spee. The British Squadron, under the command of Rear Admiral Craddock, spotted the German ships at 16.30 on 1st November 1914, off the coast of Chile. The German squadron was larger and better armed. HMS Monmouth’s forward turret was hit, causing a fire. She was slowly sinking when the Nürnberg sighted her; after offering surrender the Nürnberg opened fire and HMS Monmouth sank with all hands.

Illustrated Western Weekly News 21/11/14

Werran – On November 1st, Frank, the dearly-beloved son of John & Elizabeth Werran, of 21, Tollox-place, Laira, who lost his life on H.M.S. Monmouth, aged 18 years and 10 months. Sadly missed by his father, mother, brothers, and sisters. “Thy will be done.”



Sidney Raymond Werran (1897-1915)



Sidney Raymond Werran was born on 16th September 1897 and baptised at the Crabtree Mission on 7th November 1897. His parents were John and Elizabeth Jane Werran. Sidney was baptised the same day as his older sister, Hilda. John had married twice and had fourteen children in total. In 1901 the family was living in 21 Tollox Place, and John was a labourer.

The family were still there in 1911, but Sidney was not at home and hasn’t been found elsewhere.

Sidney joined the Royal Marines on 31st August 1914, claiming to be nearly 18 when he was actually not quite 17. His occupation at the time was officer’s steward. He was 5’4”, with hazel eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion.

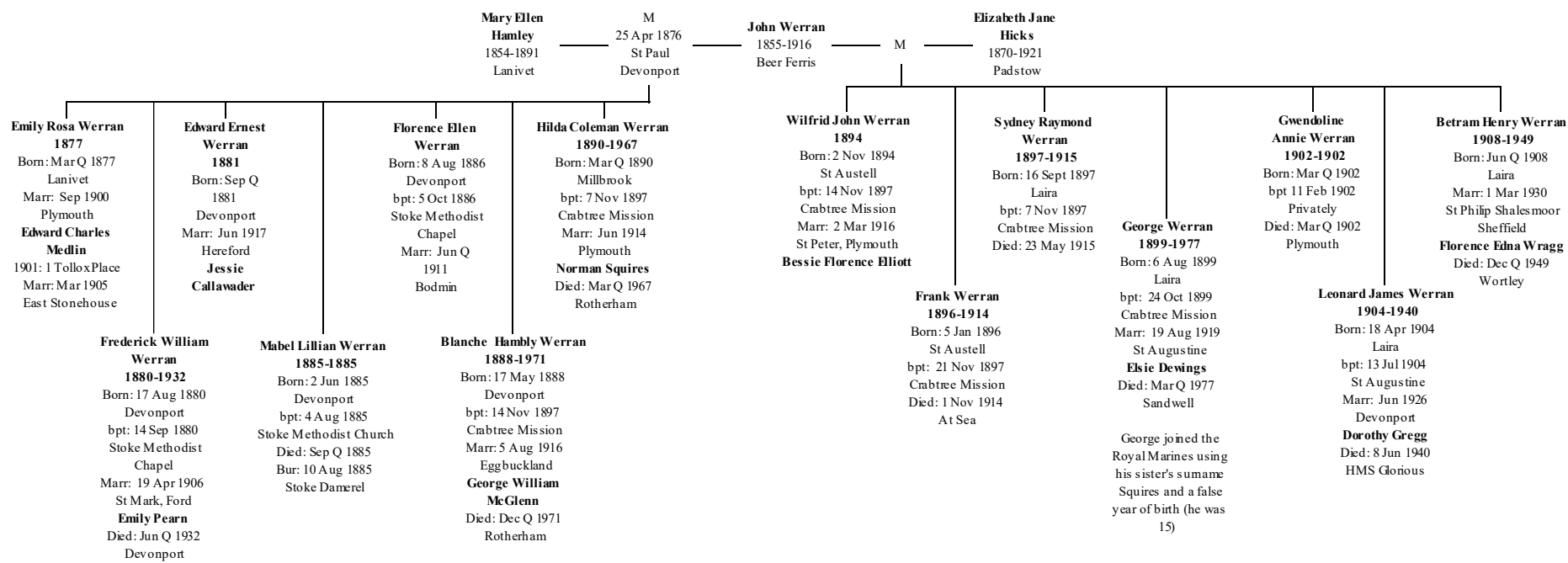
Sidney had 16 days forfeited until his “18th” birthday. Sidney was assigned to Victory brigade, an infantry unit made of Royal Navy reservists and Royal Marines would were not required on ships.

The Victory brigade was part of the Gallipoli campaign, the aim of which was to break the stalemate on the western front by an attack elsewhere. On 25th April 1915 there were some successful

landings, but they were met with heavy resistance from the Turks. Despite the poor start to the campaign the allies persisted until December 1915. The evacuation of the troops between 19th December and 8th January 1916 was the most successful part of the whole campaign. Not a single man was lost and the Turks were unaware of what was happening.

Sidney died on 7th May 1915, it isn’t clear what happened to him as one document says he died of wounds and another says killed in action.

Sidney’s brother Frank had did earlier in the war on HMS Monmouth, his younger brother George, joined the marines with a false name and date of birth, fortunately he survived the war.



Alfred James Williams (1889-1914)

Alfred James Williams was born on 31st May 1889 and baptised at Padstow on 13th July 1889. There is some confusion over his date of birth as the baptism and the naval record give different dates, neither of which really agree with the quarter he was registered in. However as he was baptised in July and naval date is definitely wrong. His parents were Joseph and Amelia Williams, Joseph was a gardener. The family lived in Church Lane, Padstow.

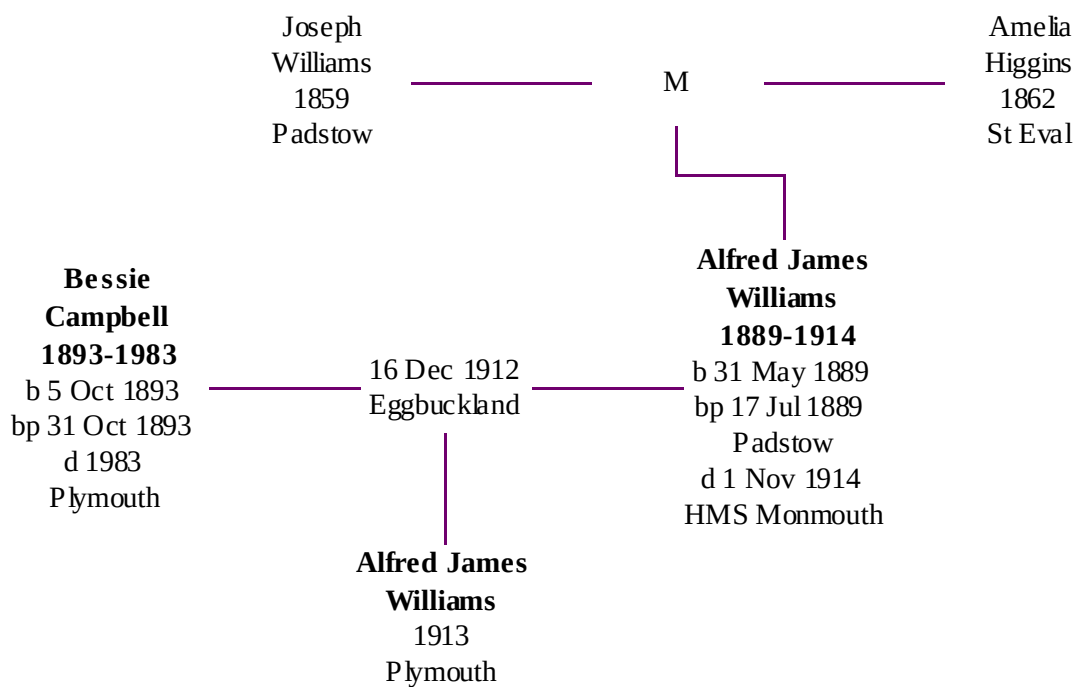
On 4th May 1906 Alfred joined the navy as a 2nd class boy, he must have believed he was born in November as he didn't become an ordinary signalman until his "18th" birthday, which was six months later than it really was. Alfred rose through the ranks to become a leading signalman in 1912.



On 16th December 1912 Alfred married Bessie Campbell at Eggbuckland church. They had one son, Alfred James, born about a year later in 1913.

Alfred died on 1st November 1914 when HMS Monmouth was sunk off the coast of Chile. Bessie also lost a brother, Albert George Campbell, in the war. Both are remembered on the Laira War Memorial.

In 1939 Bessie lived in 23 Tollox Place, which had been her childhood home, she never remarried and died in 1983.



William John Wyatt (1881-1917)

William Wyatt was born on 16th March 1881 in Plymouth, and was baptised on 14th March 1894 at St Andrews church. William’s father, Richard, was a police constable, his mother Margaret (nee Mudge). In 1881 they lived at 31 Well Street, Plymouth. In 1891 they were in Notte Street, William now had a younger brother and sister. By 1901 they had moved to 15 Mildmay Street, and William was now a lithographer’s draughtsman.

On 14th September 1910 William married Winifred Emmeline White at the Wesleyan Chapel on Ebrington Street. William was now a police constable himself, and his address was 17 Albert Terrace, Laira. His mother and sister were living there in 1939.

In 1911 they lived at 20 Allendale Road. They went on to have two children Eric in 1912 and Esme in 1914, who died aged 9 in 1925.

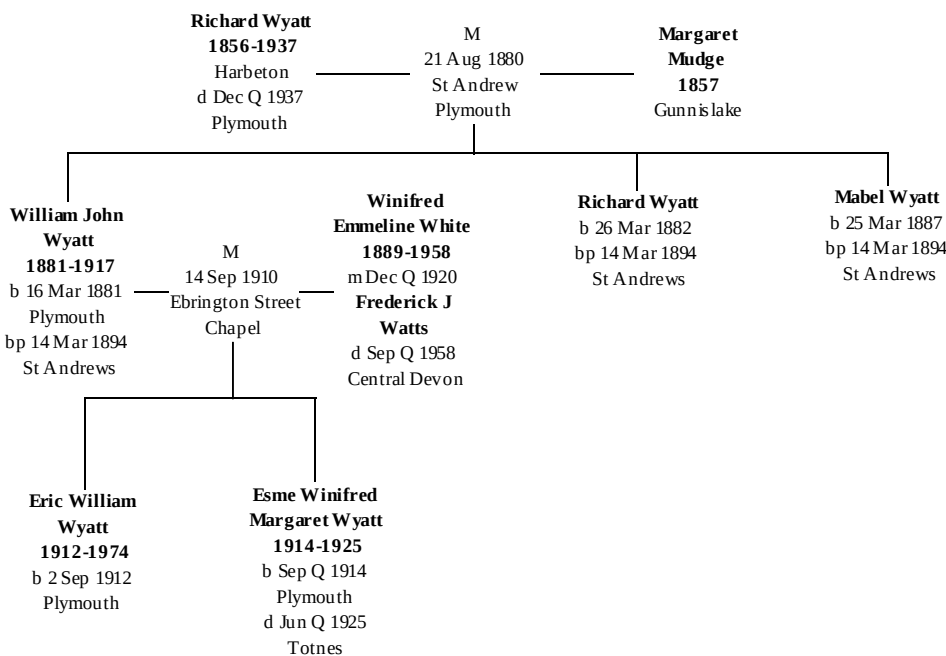
William joined the 8th Battalion Devonshire Regiment. As a married man, with children who was also a police constable he wouldn’t have been a high priority for calling up. William joined the battalion in the field on 21st June as a 2nd lieutenant.

On 8th October the 8th battalion moved to a camp at Zillibeke (near Ypres). They moved to Westoutre, the other side of Ypres, on 10th October, the weather was very wet. They were behind the lines cleaning up, practising with Lewis guns and grenades, and even had a bath, until the attack on 26th October.

The attack on the 26th October was towards the village of Ghelevult. The plan was that the 9th Devon Regiment and the 2nd Borders would advance first, under a creeping barrage (a barrage of gun fire aimed just ahead of advancing troops to protect them from the enemy). The 8th Devons would then move forward, and at the first objective pass through the 9th Devons and advance towards the next objective.

Unfortunately things didn’t go according to plan. The 2nd Borders met stiff opposition and couldn’t advance, which left the 9th Devons with exposed flanks. The 8th and 9th Devons soon became muddled up as the men further back, unable to see the barrage, moved forwards too quickly. Some parties managed to reach the village but were forced back in a counter attack at 10 am. By 11 am only two groups of men were left north of the Menin Road, both amalgamations of several regiments. By this time they had suffered very heavy casualties and most of their rifles had stopped working due to the mud. The survivors fell back and 8 pm they were relieved. The battalion had 127 men killed or missing and 131 wounded.

William was leading “C” company, who were “mopping up”, following behind “B” and “D”, however they were quickly muddled up with the other companies. At one point some of “C” managed to take and hold a pill box but were driven back during the counter attack. The survivors of this attack became attached to one of the groups north of the road.



William was wounded in this attack and died of his wounds on 29th October, he was buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

William left £245 4s 4d to his widow, his will wasn’t proved until 23rd February 1920. Later that year Winifred married Frederick Watts.