

CLIPSTON CONNECTIONS

YOUR VILLAGE PAGES ON OUR

'CLIPSTON YEOMAN'



An Occasional Publication: No. 2

December 2018

Welcome to the second edition of our 'Clipston Connections' where we want to bring you articles of local interest on a wide variety of subjects. We would welcome articles/stories/information for future editions, so please help us to make this a fascinating and interesting future for 'Clipston Connections'.

HOW TO CONTACT US: Email: info@clipston.org Editors of this edition: Rose Anderson, Jim Tyson, & Stephen Woodgate

For our second edition we will be covering the life and history of a Clipston Yeoman in 'The Great War'

100th Centenary

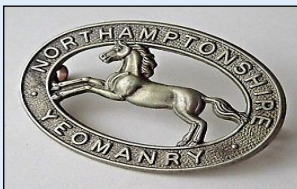
We have recently marked the centenary of the ending of World War I with our Remembrance Service and the planting of the 12 oak trees on the playing field to commemorate the 12 Clipston men who gave their lives (see p.4 for plaque). But what about those who survived and actually returned to the village?

The great grandfather of David Wilford, who lives on Church Lane, son of the village green Wilford's, Bryan and Jean, did just that. In April 1915 Private "Dick" Wilford was shot from his horse during a battle in France, taken prisoner by the Germans with serious leg injuries and didn't return to Blighty until three years later in early 1918. The following tells the history of this lucky, remarkable and brave man.

The Man

Richard Wilford was a twin, born with his sister Emily in 1892 at Kelmarsh to George Wilford, aged 40yrs and Emma Sharman aged 38yrs. His sister Ada followed in 1894. At the age of 5 Richard attended Clipston Grammar School and in 1901 the family moved to Noble Cottage, 10 Pegs Lane. George was employed as a cowman on Nobold Farm.

By the age of 18 Richard had become an apprentice butcher and later owned his own butchers shop on Church Lane Clipston.



He also voluntarily joined 'C' squadron of the

Northamptonshire Yeomanry; the Clipston Troop was founded and officered by C.R.A. Wartnaby, of Clipston. Training to shoot took place at the range in Clipston for miniature rifles and also at Sywell. The troops had to pass firing at various distances with army rifles which was to stand them in good stead.

On 27 April 1912 and still only 19 Richard married

Frances Sarah Bentley at Market Harborough registry office and they had 3 children - George, (Bryan Wilford's father), Kathleen and Derek.



This rural life and peace was not to last – Germany's invasion of Belgium brought Britain into the war and on July 28 1914 war was declared; Richard had to leave his young family, landing in France on 4 November. He was soon in the thick of the fighting around Ypres.

Ypres occupied a strategic position as it stood in the path of Germany's planned sweep across the rest of Belgium and into France from the north, (the Schlieffen Plan). The German army surrounded the city on three sides, with heavy bombardments. To counterattack British, French and allied forces made costly advances from the Ypres Salient into the German lines on the

surrounding hills.

In the first battle of Ypres the Allies managed to capture the town from the Germans. But the Germans used poison gas for the first time on 22 April 1915 marking the beginning of the second battle of Ypres ending 25 May 1915.

Fateful Day

On 22 April 1915 “Dick” Wilford was shot off his horse during the battle at Boeschepe, just outside Ypres. He was reported missing in action - it not being clear whether he had been killed or wounded.

The War Diary shows that he had gone out on patrol in the evening and that 2 other ranks were taken prisoner and 3 horses killed near Pilkem.

A letter written by Clarence Smeeton, (known as Benjamin, his middle name), to his father, a grocer in Clipston, tells the story of what happened on that patrol –

29th April 1915

Dear Father,

I've got some bad news to report this time but perhaps someone is beforehand in writing about it, nevertheless I will tell you. It concerns poor Dick Wilford and Sergeant Barratt of our troop.

At ten o'clock last Friday night we were all turned out of our billets with the order to saddle up and be ready to move off in five minutes. We saddled up and then the order came for only eight men to move off, the others to stand by their horses, ready. Dick was included in the eight men and they were under the charge of Lieut. Collier our troop officer, and Sergeant Barratt. Their special duty was to patrol a piece of open land between the English and French trenches, just to see if all was well there. When near the lines they formed single file with Lieut. Collier and Sergeant Barratt in front and headed down a deserted road. This was about three o'clock in the morning and it was still dark. They proceeded at a trot and soon made out in front of them the outline of some farm buildings and spread across the roadway near them, a large number of soldiers. In the darkness they couldn't make out whether they were English, French or Belgium, so when they got up to them, Lieut. Collier halted and peered down into their faces and asked them who they were, but no sooner did he ask the question than he noticed their helmets, which were spiked ones. They were Germans! Lieut. Collier immediately shouted out, "Files about, GALLOP!". They did so, and the Germans let fly a volley with their rifles, Lieut. Collier's horse was shot from under him and he eventually made his way home on foot. Someone saw Dick pitch sideways out of his saddle, doubtless he was shot, whether killed or not nobody knows, perhaps we shall never know if he was wounded, he would be made prisoner, but again we know that the Germans behind our lines have had orders not to take any prisoners and that they bayonet the English wounded. This is a true fact or I wouldn't mention it. We don't know what became of Sergeant Barratt, except that his horse was seen to gallop past some of the others with no rider. Of course, the incident was reported to Headquarters and a regiment of infantry was sent to drive the Germans out, but beyond that, we have heard nothing. Lieut. Collier has tried his utmost to get news, but so far hasn't come upon a trace of the men or their horses.

Prisoner of War

Just over 2 weeks later, on May 8 1915, his wife Frances received a letter from the War Office advising that Richard was missing in action, and then in July another letter saying he is being held as a prisoner of war in Barack Laz, Ohrdruf, Germany.



Ohrdruf POW concentration camp Germany. 1915

Berne, Switzerland & Home

Maybe he was lucky that his leg injuries were severe enough, fracture of the left leg femur in four places to be transferred to a hospital in Berne, Switzerland. A more comfortable place than a prisoner camp. But the leg would never completely heal with the dressings needing to be changed a couple of times a week for the remainder of his life. Frances did actually go to visit him but not until early in 1917 – nearly two years later. What an anxious time it must have been for the family – no mobile phones or Facebook!

Richard was discharged from the army May 1918 being no longer fit for war service. He served a total of 6 years and 147 days and was awarded the Victory and British War medals.

After 43 years of marriage Frances passed away in 1955 at the age of 63 years.

But that's not the end of the story, Richard then went on to marry Harriet Elizabeth Parsons living in Clipston at 1 Church Lane and then one of the Almshouses on the High Street.

He died on 20 March 1975 of bronchopneumonia, aged 83 years.



1915-15 Star | British War Medal | Victory Medal

Some facts you may not know:

BLIGHTY - is military slang for a wound suffered by a soldier in WWI which was serious enough to merit being shipped home

WAR DIARIES - are kept by the National Archives for two main reasons:

- To provide an accurate record of operations for reporting the official history of war.
- To collect information to make improvements in preparing the services for war.

They are still kept by the armed services today.

BELGIAN REFUGEES from Brussels were housed and looked after in the village.

RALPH BUSWELL - The baker's son won the military medal

LIEUTENANT WARTNABY
Was killed at Neuve Chapelle;
near where he was killed an
officer picked up a large silver
crucifix – you can see it in the
church above a bronze plaque
in his memory.



WW100 Remembrance Plaque

WAR MEMORIAL - erected in 1921, records the names of 13 men, not just the 12 from Clipston, as one of them, probably from Kelmarsh, had been missed off their memorial. There is also a memorial stone in the church.

As well as listing the names of the fallen, the inscription on the back of the memorial reads:

"In thoughtful appreciation of the 78 other men of this parish who served their King and Country 1914-1919"

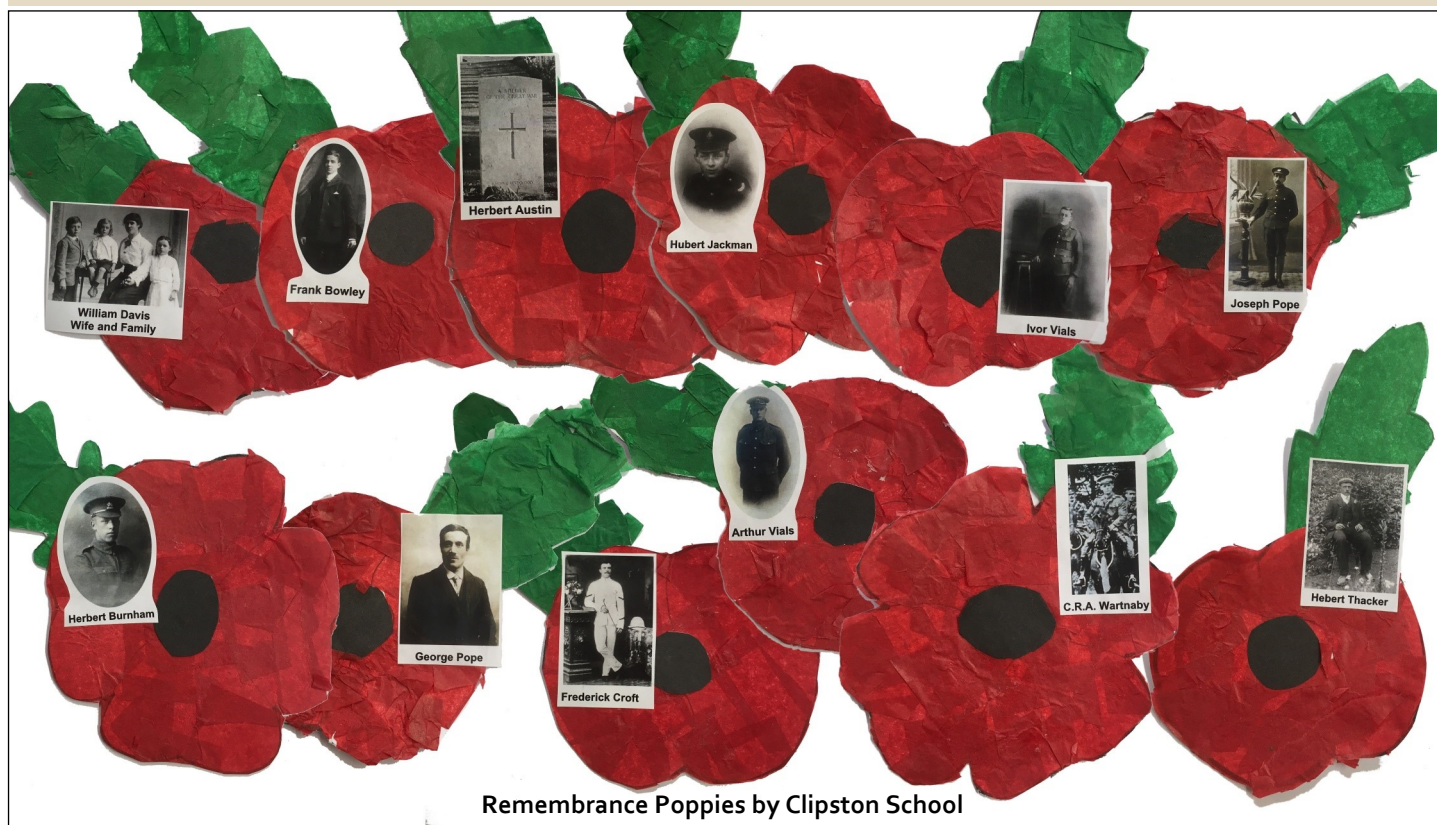
There were great celebrations in the village around the Armistice – the church was decorated with flags, the bells were rung and returning soldiers, no doubt our Dick amongst them, were entertained at a dinner in the village hall.

Our celebrations today do not glorify war but are a remembrance lest we forget all those that played their part, women as well who joined working parties of the Red Cross and kept the home fires burning.

They all made it possible for us to enjoy freedom, still not even possible everywhere today, and continue living in this lovely village.

Editor's Note: Thanks and acknowledgement for the content of this article go to David Wilford and "A Clipston Heritage" 1998 by Alison Collier & Jeremy Thompson.

We hope you have enjoyed learning a bit more about our local 'Clipston Yeoman' If you can add or correct information (or have additional photographs, documents etc.) please contact the editors by Email: info@clipston.org



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