

# Fairfield



Numerous churches in Kent and elsewhere are justifiably described as being tranquil, but very few churches can equal the church of St. Thomas à Becket at Fairfield as a haven of peace. Fairfield church stands stark and alone on Walland Marsh, close to the county border with Sussex and near the town of Rye. The immediate area surrounding the church is devoid of any memorials or gravestones because the area often used to flood. The church is approached by a grass causeway which was built in 1913, prior to which when the area was in flood, parishioners attending services would have to row a small boat over to the church which stands on a mound. Back in the 1840's a local clergyman, the Reverend Richard Harris, described Romney Marsh as a land apart. He wrote of "The World as divided into five parts, namely Europe, Asia, Africa, America and The Romney Marsh." The small Fairfield parish on Walland Marsh might have been one of the places that had influenced the train of thought of the Reverend Harris. Amongst the modern day attractions on the Romney, Walland, Denge, and East Guildford Marshes which abound each other, are the churches, most of which have now sadly outlived their

congregations. The Romney Marsh Historic Churches Trust looks after fourteen of them, and also the ruins of four more. Of them all, arguably the most singularly beautiful is that of St. Thomas à Becket at Fairfield. According to local legend it was built in the fifteenth century by a grateful Archbishop of Canterbury who fell into a ditch while crossing the Marsh, and he was rescued after praying to St. Thomas à Becket. For civil purposes the parish of Fairfield is in the Administrative County of Kent, the Hundred of Alosesbridge, the Lathe of Shepway, and the civil parish of Snargate. For church purposes it is in the Diocese of Canterbury, the Archdeaconry of Maidstone, and the Rural Deanery of South Lympne. Fairfield is very unusual in that there is no village there now. Before the Black Death swept through the fields of the marsh, and claimed many victims, there had been (albeit small) a real community. But since the start of the nineteenth century, the census returns for the three square miles of Fairfield parish have never reached three figures. The highest of which was in 1831 when the recorded population was only 89; and at the time of the last count a century later, the number had dropped to 61 and falling. The sixteen casualties commemorated at Fairfield, also have two forms of remembrance at the nearby village of Brookland, as all are commemorated on a memorial plaque in the parish church of St. Augustine, and on a plaque which is set in a pillar of the cemetery gates. Thanks are due to Lieutenant-Colonel (Retd) Frederick W. Fifield, T.D., for kindly furnishing the above photograph for inclusion here. Research and transcriptions of the commemorations by Patrick D. Scullion.

## The Great War

1914 -1919

**ABREY, AMBROSE.** Ordinary Seaman, J/25273.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. "Invincible."

Died 31 May 1916. Aged 18.

Born Lydd, Kent 13 March 1898.

Son of Emma Abrey of Barling House, Brookland, Kent.

Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 14.

On the day that Ambrose lost his life, H.M.S. Invincible was sunk during the Battle of Jutland by the German ships S.M.S. Lützow and the S.M.S. Derfflinger. The SMS Lützow was almost sunk by H.M.S. Invincible during the same action in the North Sea.

**BAKER, EDWARD.** No clear trace at this time. Edward was possibly a son of Ernest and Florence Baker. At the time of the 1901 census the Baker family resided at Pod Corner, Brookland, Kent. Head of the house was 26 year old Brookland, Kent native Ernest Baker, who was a Journeyman Carpenter. Edward was also born at Brookland, probably in 1899. Mrs. Baker was recorded by the census enumerator as being a 37 year old native of Whitstable, Kent.

**BATSON, LEONARD HENRY.** Second Lieutenant.  
6th (Service) Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).  
Died 3 July 1916. Aged 24.  
Born 29 June 1892.

Eldest son of the Reverend Vincent Lascelles Batson, M.A. and the late Fanny Batson (née Bagnall).

Buried Ovillers Military Cemetery, Somme, France. Grave Ref: VIII. F. 3.

Leonard's father (1861-1920), who was a native of Raucbury, Wiltshire, was the Vicar of Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent, for sixteen years, from 1904 until his death on 15 February 1920. Prior to going to Brookland, Leonard's father had been the incumbent at the parish church of St. Margaret's, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent. Leonard's late mother was born at Dean Farm, Hatherop, Gloucestershire on 23 January 1866, and died on 15 December 1905. Leonard's medal index card entry shows that he had served in France from 20 October 1915, and that all correspondence appertaining to his 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal, was addressed to Miss B. Bagnall, 46 Albert Road, Ashford, Kent.

**BULL, WILLIAM JAMES.** Private, G/4967.  
1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).  
Died 22 July 1916.

Born Brenzett, Kent. Enlisted Lydd, Kent. Resided Ruckinge, Ashford, Kent.

Son of John and Elizabeth Bull (née Vidler).

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France. Pier and Face 11 C. At the time of the 1901 census, the Bull family resided at Rhee Wall, Ivychurch, Romney Marsh, Kent. Head of the house was 42 year old Bilsington, Ashford, Kent, native John Bull, who was employed as a Farm Stockman. Mrs. Elizabeth Bull was recorded by the census enumerator as being aged 46, and a native of Ivychurch, Romney Marsh, Kent. William was recorded as being 9 years old.

**CARE, ALBERT WILLIAM.** Private, G/14487.  
8th (Service) Battalion, (Pioneers), Royal Sussex Regiment.  
Died 30 April 1918. Aged 25.

Born Brookland, Kent. Enlisted Dover, Kent.

Son of William and Ellen Ann Care (née Tomsett) of Brook House, Fairfield, Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent.

Buried Sains-du-Nord Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. Grave Ref: 320.

At the time of the 1901 census, the Care family resided at "Cottage," Fairfield, Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent. Head of the house was 46 year old Fairfield native William Care, who was employed as a Farm Labourer. Mrs. Ellen Ann Care was recorded by the census enumerator as being aged 33, and a native of Charlwood, Sussex.

**CHAPLIN, RICHARD ERNEST.** Lance Corporal, G/4813.  
1st Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).  
Died 6 June 1915.

Born Willesborough, Ashford, Kent. Enlisted Chatham, Kent. Resided Strood, Kent.

Son of Joseph White Chaplin and the late Annie Chaplin (née Timmins).

Buried Voormezele Enclosures Number's 1 and 2, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.  
Grave Ref: I.B.9.

At the time of the 1901 census, 15 year old Richard was residing at The South Eastern Tavern, 79 Torrington Road, South Ashford, Kent. Head of the house was Richard's uncle, 35 year Willesborough, Ashford, Kent native Richard Chaplin, who was the Licensee of the establishment. At the time of the 1891 census, Richard was still residing with his parents and eight of their children at Brookland. Head of the house was 31 year old Joseph White Chaplin, who was recorded by the census enumerator as an 'Own Account' Licensee. It would seem likely that Mrs. Annie Chaplin, who was the late mother of Richard and Thomas Chaplin, who is the next casualty briefly commemorated below, had died in the Romney Marsh area of Kent, (probably Brookland) early in 1897.

**CHAPLIN, THOMAS GREAVES.** Private, 60354.

10th (Service) Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Died 16 June 1917. Aged 37.

Born Willesborough, Ashford, Kent. Enlisted Ashford, Kent.

Son of Joseph White Chaplin and the late Annie Chaplin (née Timmins) of 1, Lafayette Villas, Beaver Road, Ashford, Kent.

Husband of Caroline Chaplin (née Allgrove) of Brookland House, Brookland, Ashford, Kent.

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

Formerly Private, 176703, 2nd Home Counties Field Ambulance, Royal Army Service Corps. At the time of the 1901 census Thomas's future wife, the then Miss Caroline Allgrove, who was a native of Staines, Middlesex, resided as a boarder at 1, The Street, Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent, and was employed as a School Teacher. Head of the house was 41 year old widower Joseph White Chaplin, who was a native of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent, and was living on his own means. Joseph was the father of Thomas, and his brother Richard who is the casualty briefly commemorated above. Prior to enlisting in the army, Thomas had formed and run the local building firm of T.G. Chaplin & Co. Builders, of Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent. Thomas's widow Caroline, having worked at there for several years, later became the Headmistress of the village school at Brookland, which is located next to the parish church of St. Augustine.

**GOSBEE, CHARLES.** Private, 15101.  
2nd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.  
Died 7 March 1917.  
Born and resided Brookland, Kent. Enlisted Ashford, Kent.  
Buried Fouquescourt British Cemetery, Somme, France. Grave Ref: I. BB. 5.  
Formerly Private, 3808, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).

**HUGGETT, JAMES.** Private, SD/5135.  
11th (Service) Battalion, (1st South Down), Royal Sussex Regiment.  
Died 11 May 1916.  
Born Brenzett, Kent. Enlisted Hastings, Sussex.  
Buried Le Touret Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoué, Pas de Calais, France.  
Grave Ref: III. F. 6.  
At the time of the 1901 census, 12 year old James was residing at the home of his grandmother Mrs. Jane Pain, who was a 53 year old widow from Ashford, Kent, living at 45 High Croft Cottages, Farningham, Kent.

**LANCASTER, CYRIL.** Private, 50965.  
1st/5th (Territorial Force) Battalion, Manchester Regiment.  
Died 2 September 1918.  
Born Old Romney, Kent. Enlisted Lydd, Kent. Resided New Romney, Kent.  
Son of Mrs. M. L. Lancaster of Alma Cottages, Brookland, Ashford, Kent.  
Buried Bancourt British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Grave Ref: II. H. 12.

**NOAKES, ALBERT.** No clear trace at this time. Albert was probably the son of Frederick and Kate Noakes. At the time of the 1901 census the Noakes family was residing at The Street, Brookland, Ashford, Kent. Head of the house was 40 year old Peasmarsh, Sussex native Frederick Noakes, who was a self employed Shoemaker. Albert was recorded by the census enumerator as being a 5 year old native of Brookland, Ashford, Kent. Albert was possibly related to 28 year old fellow Brookland, Kent, native, Private, 5070, James William Noakes of the 4th Dragoon Guards (Royal Irish) who fell on 18 November 1918, and is commemorated on the Menin Gate, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

**POOLE, PERCY.** Private, G/67080.  
2nd (City of London) Battalion, London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers).  
Died 28 September 1917. Aged 27.  
Born Appledore, Ashford, Kent.  
Son of Thomas Albert and Louisa Poole of Grove Lane Crossing, Brenzett, Ashford, Kent.  
Buried Mendinghem Military Cemetery, Proven, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.  
Grave Ref: VI. F. 7.  
Formerly Private, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). At the time of the 1901 census the Poole family was residing at Railway Crossing Cottage, Brenzett, Kent. Head of the house was 40 year old Appledore, Ashford, Kent, native Thomas Albert Poole who was employed as a Railway Platelayer.

**SIMS, FREDERICK.** Private, 47721.

23rd (Tyneside Scottish) Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Died 21 March 1918. Aged 39.

Born Brookland, Ashford, Kent. Enlisted Pluckley, Ashford, Kent.

Son of Stephen Burgess Sims and Elizabeth Mary Sims (née Millgate) of "Homestead", Brookland, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Bay 3.

At the time of the 1901 census, Frederick was employed as a Farm Labourer and resided as a lodger at 20 Claremont Terrace, Slades Green Lane, Crayford, Kent. Frederick's father was the former Licensee of "The Royal Oak," Brookland, Kent, and which is probably also the location where Frederick was actually born.

**TURK, GEORGE EDWARD.** Private, TF/3648.

2nd/5th (Territorial Force) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.

Died 4 September 1916. Aged 22.

Enlisted Rye, Sussex.

Son of Mrs. and the late Mr. J. T. Turk of Old Hall Farm, Brookland, Kent.

Buried Acheux British Cemetery, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: Plot 1. Row B. Grave 2.

The VIII Corps Collection Station was placed at Acheux in readiness for the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and the graves of July, August and September 1916, in Row A and part of Row B, including George's are the earliest in the cemetery.

**VELVICK, JAMES HERBERT.** Private, 5128.

9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers.

Died Monday 24 August 1914.

Born Tenterden, Kent. Enlisted Lydd. Resided Canterbury, Kent.

Commemorated at Elouges Communal Cemetery, Hainaut, Belgium.

Special Memorial A. 2.

Elouges village and commune was the scene of the 'Action of Elouges' (24 August 1914), in which the Germans were held in check by units of the 2nd Cavalry and 15th Infantry Brigades. It was not retaken by Canadian troops until just before the Armistice in November 1918. The communal cemetery contains 55 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, three of them unidentified. The 1914 burials, in rows A and C, were mainly from the 5th Division; they are in trench graves, and the actual position of each body in the row is not known. Early on during the well documented 'Action of Elouges,' the 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers were recorded as having used their rifles to good effect against opposing enemy infantry. Following the engagements with their rifles, the Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. M. Campbell, later ordered the 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers to advance, which they did at the gallop in column of squadrons, with two troops of the 4th Dragoon Guards echeloned to their left rear. Crossing the sunken road from Baisieux to Elouges at a point where it ran level with the ground, they galloped on, speared a couple of German scouts near the road, and caught sight of a few more taking cover among the corn-stooks ;

then their advance was checked by the fire of nine enemy batteries and they hesitated. Some dismounted by the sugar-factory, others swept round to the right and back towards Audregnies, and a great number, retiring along the mineral railway towards Elouges, rallied there upon the 18th Hussars. Simultaneously, a squadron of the 4th Dragoon Guards galloped down a narrow lane towards Baisieux, in order to seize a house at the end of it, and thus cover a further advance upon Quiévrain. On its way the squadron was shattered by heavy fire of rifles and shrapnel and, though the cottage was eventually reached and held, the effort led to no result. It would seem likely that as was the case with the other twelve other ranks of the 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers, who fell on Monday 24 August 1914 at Elouges, James's was killed in action by enemy shellfire.

**WILLIAMS**, FRANK. Lance Corporal, G/9755.

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

Died 7 October 1916. Aged 24.

Born Breasted, Kent? Enlisted Folkestone, Kent. Resided Brookland, Kent.

Son of Frances Williams of Grove House, Brookland, Kent, and the late Stephen John Williams.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France. Pier and Face 5 C.

Places of birth, enlistment and residence were extracted from Frank's SDGW entry. Place of birth appears to be the village of Brasted near Westerham, but spelt with an additional e. It occurred to the transcriber of these brief commemorations that the spelling of Frank's place of birth might also be indicative of the village of Bearsted near Maidstone. It is probably of significance that at the time of the 1901 census, there was a Williams family residing at Holm Mill, Harrietsham, Maidstone, Kent. Head of the house was 33 year old Lenham, Kent, native Stephen John Williams who was a self employed Green Grocer and Market Gardener. Stephen was married to 32 year old Harrietsham, Kent, native Frances Williams. Also recorded by the census enumerator as being at home on the night of the census was three children of Stephen and Frances Williams; 9 year old Sydney Williams who was born at Bearsted, Kent, 5 year old Wallace Williams, born at Harrietsham, Kent, as was 6 months old Edith Catherine. Unfortunately it has not been possible thus far to obtain an exact census match for Frank.

# The Great War

1914 -1919

## Lost Men

**KEYS, JACK MAURICE.** Private, G/7630.

10th (Service) Battalion, Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment).

Died 7 January 1917. Aged 28.

Born Hunton, Kent. Enlisted Cranbrook, Kent. Resided Marden, Kent.

Son of John and Emily Keys of Marden, Kent.

Husband of Mabel Turk (formerly Keys), (née Elliott) of Little Cheyne Court, Midley, Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent.

Buried La Clytte Military Cemetery, De Klijte, Heuvelland, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Grave Ref: II. D. 22.

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

At the time of the 1901 census the Keys family resided at The Square, Hunton, Kent. Head of the house was 36 year old Selling, Faversham, Kent, native John Keys, who was employed as a Horse Keeper on a farm. Jack married Miss Mabel Elliott at Cranbrook, Kent, on 28 August 1915. When Jack enlisted in the army on 10 November 1915, he stated that he was aged 24 years and 60 days that he was employed as a Horseman, and resided at Tanner Farm, Goudhurst Road, Marden, Kent. Following his enlistment, Jack was placed on the army reserve until being mobilized on 9 February 1916, and posted to the 9th (Reserve) Battalion, Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) on 11 February 1916 to undergo his basic training. Possibly due to the growing crisis re replacement personnel, Jack was posted to the 10th (Service) Battalion, Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) on 4 March 1916. Having by that time carried out more training, on 5 May 1916 Jack embarked for war service on the Western Front. It would appear that at the time of his death, Jack's home address and that of his widow Mable, was at Becketts Cottages, Fairfield, Brookland, Romney Marsh, Kent.

**WELLSTED, WILLIAM ALBERT.** Private, 61457.

13th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment).

Died 20 May 1917. Aged 20.

Son of William Henry and Lydia Wellsted of Beckett House, Fairfield, Romney Marsh, Kent.

Husband of Nellie Gertrude Wellsted of Mount Pleasant, Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent.

Buried Lodge Hill Cemetery, Birmingham, West Midlands.

Screen Wall Commemoration Ref: B10. 6. 472C.

The cemetery where William is at rest contains 498 Great War burials, most of them including William's are in a war graves plot in Section B10.