

Teston



Having seen numerous examples of the excellent work carried out by the staff of the Stone Shop, East Farleigh, Maidstone on previous occasions, it came as no real surprise to learn that it was the firm which had been responsible for thoroughly cleaning and restoring the Teston, Maidstone, civic war memorial. Whilst in conversations with three Teston locals, it was learned that the clearly cherished and respected war memorial is in the care of the Parish Council, who funded the restoration project. At the risk of repetition it seems prudent to draw attention to the fact the civic war memorial at the village of Teston, is a superb example of what can be achieved by communities who care about the debt we owe those who died in the cause of peace and freedom. Teston is a shining example (no pun intended) to other locations within the county, and elsewhere who patently neither care for or respect forms of remembrance of the fallen within their care. Although the transcriber of the following brief commemorations has no idea how much the cleaning and restoration cost Teston Parish Council, it was clearly well worth the expense, and a preventive measure for those of future generations. A word of warning for anybody unfamiliar with the Teston area of Kent, the village name is pronounced Teeson, and if asking directions some local wag is likely to say that they have never heard of Teston, but nice people though.

The Great War

1914 -1919

CHAPMAN, HENRY. Private, G/623.

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

Died of wounds 4 July 1916. Aged 31.

Born Teston, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent 1 September 1914.

Son of Thomas and Ellen Chapman of Church Street, Teston, Maidstone, Kent.

Buried Millencourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.

Grave Ref: A. 19.

Brother of the next casualty commemorated. When Henry enlisted in the army 'For the Duration of the War, he stated that he was employed as a Labourer. During his time serving in the army, Henry had unfortunately suffered a number of health problems. Whilst serving in France in December 1915, Henry was hospitalized at Chocques suffering from a bad bout of Influenza. It would appear that the Influenza ultimately turned to Pneumonia, which resulted in Henry being sent to the No 6 British Red Cross Hospital, aka Liverpool Merchants Hospital, at Etaples, Pas de Calais. When he had recovered sufficiently at Etaples, Henry was sent back to England onboard the 1210 ton Hospital Ship 'Brighton' for treatment, rest and recuperation at the London General Hospital, Wandsworth, where he remained for thirty five days. A further period of forty one days was then spent convalescing at the Woodcote Convalescent Home, Epsom, Surrey. Fully recovered Henry embarked to rejoin the 6th (Service) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) on 15 April 1916. He was still serving in the same battalion when he was wounded during the 'Battle of the Somme 1916', and succumbed to his wounds whilst being treated as a patient at the 36 Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps.

CHAPMAN, THOMAS. Driver, 60556.

133rd Army Troops Company, Royal Engineers.

Died 26 July 1917. Aged 28.

Born Teston, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Stratford, Essex.

Son of Thomas and Ellen Chapman of Church Street, Teston, Maidstone, Kent.

Buried Dickebusch New Military Cemetery, Dickebus, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Grave Ref: III. F. 2.

At the time of the 1901 census the Chapman family resided at Teston Street, Maidstone, Kent. Head of the house was 49 year old Thomas Chapman (Senior), who the census enumerator recorded as being a native of West Farleigh, Kent. Thomas (Junior's) brother Henry Chapman who was the last casualty briefly commemorated above was aged 15 on the night of the census, and unlike at the time of his army on 1 September 1914, he was recorded by the census enumerator as being employed as an Agricultural Labourer, as was his father. Please also note comments at the brief tribute in remembrance of Joseph Eldridge, who is one of the Teston Second World War commemorations.

HARDING, BENJAMIN. Private, 13696.
2nd Battalion, Scots Guards.
Died 15 September 1916. Aged 22.
Born London. Enlisted Liverpool, Lancashire. Resided South Norwood, Surrey.
Son of Mrs. Rose Harding of 31, Thirsk Road, South Norwood, London.
Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France. Pier and Face 7 D.

HODGE, ARTHUR HENRY. Stoker 1st Class, K/30127.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Derwent.
Died 2 May 1917. Aged 36.
Born Maidstone, Kent 21 June 1880.
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 24.

HOPER, ERIC SIDNEY JOSEPH. Cook's Mate, M/3901.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Hawke.
Died 15 October 1914. Aged 23.
Born Croydon, Surrey 30 January 1892.
Son of Richard and Harriett Mary Hoper of Teston Halt, Maidstone, Kent.
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 6.

LAMBERT, WILLIAM JOHN. Commemorated on the Teston, Maidstone, Kent civic war memorial as a member of the Royal Garrison Artillery. Although both serving in the Royal Field Artillery at the time of their respective deaths, two casualties with matching Christian and surnames have both CWGC and SDGW commemorations, but unfortunately neither give any indication of a connection to the village of Teston. Another explanation for the inability to find a matching Royal Garrison Artillery war death, is that it occurred post the cut-off date for the Great War, Commonwealth commemorations. When checking the on-line basic MIC entries, the following entry was found, **LAMBERT**, WILLIAM J. Driver, 192703, Royal Garrison Artillery, who had also served as Driver, L/40150, Royal Field Artillery.

LANCASTER, RORERT STANLEY. Boy 1st Class, J/41573.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Lancaster.
Died 9 July 1917. Aged 17.
Born Watford, Hertfordshire 15 March 1900.
Son of Reginald and Alice Lancaster.
Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 21.

MIRES, ARTHUR HENRY. D.C.M. Private, L/9459.
2nd Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).
Died 2 November 1915.

Born Watlington, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.
Commemorated on the Basra Memorial, Iraq. Panel 29.

Arthur is commemorated on the Teston, Maidstone, Kent civic war memorial as a member of the Machine Gun Corps, which was created by Royal Warrant on October 14 1915, followed by an Army Order on 22 October. If the war memorial details are correct it would mean that Arthur was an early Machine Gun Corps casualty. An entry in the London Gazette dated 22 January 1916, records that Arthur was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal whilst serving in the attached Maxim Battery of the 2nd Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment). "For conspicuous gallantry at Kut-el-Amara (Mesopotamia) on 28th September 1915. With another Private he carried forward and worked his gun under a very heavy fire within 300 yards of the enemy's strong redoubt, thereby materially assisting in the capture of the work."

PAGE, LEWIS JOHN. Private, G/747.
6th (Service) Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).
Died 3 October 1915. Aged 19.
Born West Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.
Son of Frederick W. and Sarah Page of 4; Mill Cottages, West Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried Mazingarbe Communal Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Grave Ref: 73.
Also commemorated on the West Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent civic war memorial.
Lewis's mother was a French born British subject.

POUND, ROBERT. Private, 4198.
55th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry).
Died 10 October 1917.
Born Teston, Maidstone, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.
Son of John Charles Pound and Elizabeth Ann Pound (nee Levett) of Teston, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried Bard Cottage Cemetery, Boesinghe, Wet-Vlaanderen, Belgium.
Grave Ref: V. A. 17.
Formerly Private, G/10483, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

SPARKS, JOHN BARHAM. Private, 8805
5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment.
Died 15 July 1916.
Born Malling, Kent. Enlisted Maidstone, Kent.
Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.
Pier and Face 5 A and 5 B.

WOLFE, ARTHUR JAMES. Private, 2211.
4th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders.
Died 11 March 1915.
Born Queenstown, County Cork, Ireland. Enlisted London.
Commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Panel 39.
Probably the son of James and Emily Wolfe, who at the time of the 1901 census resided at Marella Cottages, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, Arthur being recorded by the census enumerator as aged 8 years old at that time.

The Second World War

1939 – 1945

ELDRIDGE, JOSEPH. Leading Aircraftman, 1301357.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 2868 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 24 April 1945. Aged 30.
Son of Joseph and Elizabeth Emma Eldridge (nee Chapman).
Husband of Iris Eldridge of Maidstone, Kent.
Buried Hanover War Cemetery, Germany. Grave Ref: 6. E. 18.
It is feasible that Joseph was the nephew of the Chapman brothers who fell in the Great War, and are both commemorated on the Teston civic war memorial. On the 1901 census briefly referred to at the commemoration of Great War casualty Thomas Chapman, one the Chapman brothers' sisters was named Elizabeth.

BEWSHER, JOHN DAVID GODFRY. Gunner, 859287.
97 (The Kent Yeomanry) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.
Died 20 June 1940. Aged 25.
Born Surrey. Resided Kent.
Son of John David and Winifred Louise Bewsher of Teston, Maidstone, Kent.
Buried S.S. Peter and Paul Churchyard, Teston, Maidstone, Kent.
Pre war member of the Royal Artillery.



An addenda panel on the Teston, civic war memorial is to commemorate an Australian pilot who lost his life above Teston, during the 'Battle of Britain.'

CALE, FRANCIS WALTER. Pilot Officer (Pilot), 42104.

266 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 15 August 1940. Aged 25.

Buried Hanwell Cemetery, 38 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London, W7 3PP.

Grave Ref: Plot 16. Grave 13060.

Also commemorated amongst those who are recorded on the Australian Second World War Commemorative Roll, whose names are in a book located in the Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, A.C.T. The book is in remembrance of Australians who lost their lives whilst serving with non-Australian armed forces and formations.

Francis was shot down in his Spitfire (N3168), at 1850 hours above Teston on 15 August 1940, and he was seen to bale out and that his parachute had opened properly. However all that can be located on the ground later was a parachute with its straps burnt. Following searches Francis's body was recovered from the River Medway on the day after he was shot down.







LEST WE FORGET

THIS MEMORIAL IS ERECTED BY THE
PARISHIONERS OF TESTON
IN REVERENT MEMORY OF THEIR FELLOW PARISHIONERS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY IN THE
GREAT WAR OF 1914-1918

HENRY CHAPMAN	ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT	ROBERT STANLEY LANCASTER	HMS VANGUARD	
THOMAS CHAPMAN	ROYAL ENGINEERS	ARTHUR HENRY MIRES D.C.	MACHINE GUN CORPS	
BENJAMIN HARDING	2 ND SCOTS GUARDS	LEWIS JOHN PAGE	ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT	
ARTHUR HENRY HODGE	H.M.C.B.	ROBERT STANLEY	H.M.C.B.	
ERNEST SIDLEY	JOSEPH HOPER	HMS HAWKE	JOHN BARHAM SPARKS	5 TH LANCESHIRE REGIMENT
WILLIAM JOHN LAMBERT	ROYAL ARTILLERY	ARTHUR JAMES WOLFE	SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS	

1939 - 1945





