

The war memorial in St. Mary's Church

THESE MEN OF LITTLE COXWELL GAVE THEIR LIVES SERVING THEIR GOD KING AND COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR

Pte Ambrose Elborough	Royal Berks Regiment
Pte George Edward Russ	Wiltshire Regiment
William Higgs A.B.	Anson Battalion, Royal Naval Division
Pte Henry William Hunter	Royal Berks Regiment
Sgt Frederick Nash	Royal Berks Regiment
Pte John Henry Hanna	Gloucester Regiment
Pte Jesse Preston	Royal Berks Regiment
Pte Albert Ernest King	Royal Berks Regiment
Bombardier Harry Kibble	Royal Field Artillery

Thumb-nail sketches of these nine men with an emphasis on their links with the village

Ambrose James Elborough

Ambrose's name on the war memorial is the sole recorded evidence that I have found linking him to Little Coxwell. From records it is quite obvious that his links are more strongly with Longcot and Fernham; Ambrose was an ordinary village lad with strong roots in this area of Berkshire. Ambrose James Elborough (also Elbrow) was born in 1886 at Hatford; his father Charles was employed as a carter. The family moved later to Longcot where at 14 years old Ambrose was working as a plough boy. Later Ambrose married Rosetta Jane Roberts at Longcot and became a cowman. It is likely that when he and his family were living at Little Coxwell he continued to work as a cowman. Ambrose served with the Royal Berkshire Regiment. Ambrose was killed in action on the 16th May 1916, aged 29; he was buried at Hebuterne Military Cemetery, France.

N.B. Also on the war memorial at Longcot: as 'Ambrose Elbrow'. Of the nine men whose names are listed on the Little Coxwell war memorial Ambrose James Elborough is the one individual who is not included on the war memorials in Faringdon.

George Edward Russ

George Edward Russ was born in 1893 at Wroughton, Wiltshire. By the time George was 7 years old, his family had moved to Buckland, where his father was employed on a farm. At 18 years old, George was working as a groom at Challow. By 1914 when George enlists in the Wiltshire Regiment he and probably his parents have settled at Little Coxwell. George died on the 31st August 1915 whilst a prisoner of war at Gottengen Camp; aged 22 years. He was initially buried at Oberhone Cemetery but reburied at Niederzwehren Cemetery in 1924 (both cemeteries in Germany); his headstone also bears the inscription: Never forgotten. At the dedication of the War Memorial in Faringdon in February 1921, the card on a floral tribute placed by his family read: From a loving Mother, Brothers and Sisters, Brothers-in-law and Sisters-in-law, in fond and loving memory of a dear son and brother who was brutally murdered by the guards at Gottengen prison camp, Germany, Gone but not forgotten. The road named Russ Way, in Faringdon, commemorates this hero.

William James Higgs

Will was born, schooled, lived and worked in Little Coxwell. He was born on the 21st August 1898. By May 1917, aged 18, William was employed as a stud groom and labourer on the farm and in the gardens at Little Coxwell House Estate. His father, Robert Higgs, was also employed by the Little Coxwell House Estate. Will served with the Anson Battalion (Royal Naval Brigade) fighting in the trenches. Will died of wounds at the 150th (Royal Naval) Field Ambulance on the 25th August 1918 following action in the Second Battle of Bapaume. Will's death was four days after his 20th birthday. Will's grave is in the Bucquoy Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

Henry William Hunter

Harry Hunter is another lad who was born, schooled, lived and worked in Little Coxwell. Initially named as William Henry, he was born on the 25th November 1887; he was subsequently called Harry, consequently he was known as Henry William. Harry's father died when Harry was ten years old. Harry's mother, Sarah, then worked at home as a dressmaker to support herself and the children. By 1901, aged 13, Harry was working as a plough boy on a farm at Little Coxwell. Later Harry moved to Goring where he worked as a cowman. In September 1916 the Faringdon Advertiser reported that Mrs Hunter had received intimation that her son was killed in action on September 21st. In the letter of sympathy, the Chaplain of the regiment wrote that 'Pte. Hunter was killed instantaneously. They held a very nice funeral service on the following day, and erected a cross at the head of the grave.' Harry's grave is at Vermelles British Cemetery, France; his headstone bears the inscription: Rest in peace.

Frederick Nash

Frederick Nash was born at Tadley, Hampshire in 1886; when Frederick left school he worked on a farm near his home. In 1903, aged just 16 or 17 years, Frederick married Amy Maria Mitchell, the daughter of his employer. Fred's search for work (as gamekeeper or farm labourer) brought him and his family to Little Coxwell, settling there about 1916; after the war his wife and children moved away. It was from Little Coxwell that Fred joined the Royal Berkshires. Frederick died of wounds sustained in battle on the 19th May 1918, he was aged 31 years. Frederick's grave is at Aire Communal Cemetery, France.

John Henry Hanna

John Henry Hanna was born in August 1897 at Little Coxwell and this was where he grew up and lived for his short life. His father James Hanna, born in Ireland, had served with the Royal Marine Light Infantry, retiring as colour-sergeant. John's mother Sarah (born at Knighton) died when he was three years old. John started school the day after his mother's funeral, on the 19th September 1900. John served with the Gloucestershire Regiment. He died on the 20th September 1917, aged 20, having fought in the Third Battle of Ypres. John has no known grave; he is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium.

Jesse Preston

Jesse Preston served from the start of the war in 1914 until he was killed in the action of the Battle of the Aisne on the 27th May 1918; he was 36 years old. Jessie, as he was known within his family, was born, schooled, lived and worked at Little Coxwell. Jessie was born on the 13th September 1881. Jessie's father, John Preston, worked as a carter for the Little Coxwell House Estate. Jessie also worked on the same estate as a groom; in fact he was the third generation to have worked there as his grandmother Harriet was employed on the estate by Jonathan Belcher in 1840s. Jessie served with the Royal Berkshire Regiment; he had previously served with the regiment at the time of the Boer War. Initially Jessie was buried at Berry-au-Bac, where a wooden cross marked his grave; subsequently he was reburied at Jonchery-sur-Vesle British Cemetery, France. Jessie was married with a daughter and a son.

Albert Ernest King

Albert Ernest King (Bert) died in September 1918 in Fulham Military Hospital in London as a result of wounds received to his face and hands in Italy. He was 20 years old. Albert Ernest King was born in 1897 at Little Coxwell; he attended Little Coxwell school and after leaving school probably assisted his father in the family butchery business. Bert served with the Royal Berkshire Regiment

although initially he had enlisted with the Berkshire Yeomanry. Bert is buried in the graveyard of St. Mary's Church at Little Coxwell.

Harry Kibble

Harry Kibble as a young boy probably visited his grandparents at Little Coxwell. Harry Kibble's grandparents retired to Little Coxwell after a working life on the Buscot Estate. Harry was born on a farm, part of the Buscot estate; his parents at retirement also came to live at Little Coxwell. Harry served with the Royal Field Artillery; he was killed in action in the final advance in Picardy on the 8th October 1918, aged 20 years. Harry's grave is in France at Bellicourt British Cemetery and has the inscription: He died that we might live.

Further observations on these nine men

- five of the nine are born at Little Coxwell (Hanna, Higgs, Hunter, King and Preston)
- two are not born in Berkshire (Nash in Hampshire and Russ in Wiltshire)
- the other two are born in nearby villages in Berkshire (Elborough and Kibble)
- five join the county regiment, the Royal Berkshires (Elborough, Hunter, King, Nash, and Preston)
- only one serves in the navy (Higgs)
- one dies whilst a prisoner of war in Germany (Russ)
- one is buried at St. Mary's (King)
- one has no known grave (Hanna)
- the remaining six are buried in war cemeteries in France (Elborough, Higgs, Hunter, Kibble, Nash, and Preston)
- the first death occurred in 1915 (Russ)
- five died in 1918 (Higgs, Kibble, King, Nash and Preston)
- the youngest to die was just 20 years old (Higgs)
- the oldest to die was 36 years old (Preston)
- average ages at death: the mean average is 25 years, the mode average is 20 years, the median average is 22 years
- the only lads known to be related are Higgs and Preston
- the youngest and oldest to die were the cousins Higgs and Preston
- three men were married (Elborough, Nash and Preston); all three had children