

Snapshots from “Ickleton and the Great War”

SURVIVOR: Frank Hubert (k/a Dan) Lilley (1899-1985) – he served as a Private 310731 in the Tank Corps and was awarded the Victory and British War medals. He married Grace Bowtell at St Mary Magdalene Church, Ickleton Church, Ickleton in 1934 and they had 2 daughters, Margaret b.1936 and Pauline b.1939. The 1939 Register shows them living in South Street (Frogge Street) and that he worked as an agricultural engine driver. He worked for C R Pumfrey and Sons of Duxford in the 1920s and 1930s. Pumfreys were agricultural contractors and had steam traction engines which were used for farm work such as threshing. Frank continued to drive engines in their collection at shows and rallies up to the 1960s. He is buried in Ickleton cemetery and the Burial Register records his address as 27 Abbey Street.



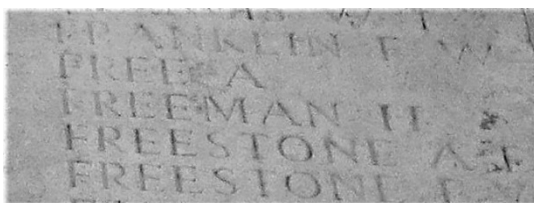
RED CROSS HOSPITAL: Norman Hall had been owned and lived in by Miss Susannah Francis. She died in 1910 and, at some point, it would seem that her Executors sold the property to **Fred Godfrey**. It was certainly an amazing gesture to let the Red Cross have the use of Norman Hall but, although it was attributed to Fred, the Godfrey family recall that Norman Hall had been given to his daughter **Dorothy Godfrey** for her 21st birthday in 1913 though Fred would still have had a say in its use. It seems we must thank both of them on behalf of all the patients who were treated there. The hospital opened on 5 November 1914 when it received 20 wounded Belgian soldiers. The first English soldiers arrived on 22 December 1914. Mrs Gertrude Bowen was the Commandant and Quartermaster, Mrs Nunn was the matron and most of the other staff were VADs supported by local volunteers who were members of the Red Cross Ickleton Working Party. The Red Cross records show that 114 men had been treated by August 1915. The hospital remained open for the duration of the war and finally closed on 18 January 1919.



TRAGEDY FOR THE FAMILY OF DICK AND JANE PAGE: Dick and Jane Page had 8 children born in Ickleton. Jane also had a son, Herbert Freeman. Dick worked as a farm labourer and the family lived in Abbey Street in 1901 and in Grange Road (Deadman’s Hill) in 1911.

Herbert Freeman enlisted at Sawston and served as Private 18288 in the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. He embarked for France on 20 July 1915. **Arthur Page** enlisted in Cambridge as part of the ‘Villages around Cambridge Squad’ recruited in September 1914 and served as Private 2694 and then Private 325855 in the 1/1st Battalion, Cambridgeshire Regiment. **Alfred Page** enlisted on 10 December 1915 at the age of 23 as Private 26678 in the 14th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment. **Jabez Page** was exempted from military service as he had a deformed foot.

Herbert Freeman was reported missing in July 1916 and was thought to be dead. Arthur was wounded on 31 July 1917, during the Battle of Pilkerm Ridge when the Cambridgeshires attacked at St Julien (the opening attack of the Battle of Passchendaele, the 3rd Battle of Ypres). He died on 10 August 1917 aged 22 due to an explosive bullet which exploded inside him. His mother visited him in France before he died and was present at his burial. Only 12 days later, on 22 August 1917, Mrs Page received a letter confirming that Herbert had been killed on 20 July 1916 (more than 12 months earlier). The very next day, on 23 August 1917, she received a card telling her that Alfred was wounded having received a shrapnel wound to his right forearm. Seven months later, on 29 March 1918, Alfred was severely wounded in both legs and as a result his right leg was amputated below the knee.



Herbert has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, Somme. He was awarded the Victory, British War and 1915 Star medals. Arthur was buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais and was awarded the Victory, British War and 1915 Star medals. Alfred was discharged from the army on 19 December 1918 and was awarded the Victory and British War medals and received the Silver War badge.

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE: Frank Charlton Jonas (b. 1881, d. 31 July 1917) – born in Ickleton to George and Jane Ellen Jonas. The Jonas family were important Ickleton farmers. Frank’s

grandfather Samuel was a renowned farmer, particularly of sheep, first in Ickleton, where he lived on Abbey Street, and later at Chrishall Grange. Frank's father George also farmed in Ickleton (Heath Farm, now known as Rectory Farm). The family lived on Abbey Street and Frank was the youngest of the children. By the time he was 9 the family had moved to Vicarage House (later known as the Old Vicarage) on the Green in Duxford. Frank's mother died in 1889 when he was 7.



Frank was posted to 1/1st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment in Flanders where he commanded C Company (men from Whittlesey and Wisbech) from 25th November 1916.

His last letter, 4 days before he died, was to his daughter Betty, aged 4.

"I have seen such a lot of airoplanes (sic), one was doing such clever tricks, turning over and over in the air, I thought he must fall but he did not, it was very clever." He talked of chickens and ducks that he had seen, and funny little carts that dogs pulled with hay in to feed the cows; how they slept in tents. He talked to her as if he was on holiday and enjoying all the animals he saw. "This morning I saw a mother with her eight little chicks only a few days old."



Frank was killed in action, aged 36, leading his company on 31 July 1917 the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The war diary of the 1/1st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment for that day starts with the entry "At Zero hour (3.50am) the attack commenced. The morning was fine with a slight mist. The bombardment was the heaviest that had ever been fired in the World's History." Unfortunately, the advance did not go to plan. There had been heavy rain and there was confusion, thick mist, mud and lack of artillery support. In a history of the Cambridgeshires by Brigadier-General E Riddell (former CO of the 1/1st Cambridgeshires when he was Lt-Col Riddell) recounts:

"I sent Jonas with his remaining two platoons of C Company to occupy Border House and hold it at all costs. Nothing was to tempt him from his position save a written order from me or my successor. That was the last I saw of the gallant Jonas. Jonas and the majority of his men have no known resting place; their names are graven on the Memorials to the Missing and their deeds on our hearts."

VOLUNTEERS AT THE RED CROSS HOSPITAL:

William Miller (1860-1932) (Billy's grandfather) – he had served in the City of London Police Force from which he retired as a Police Sergeant in 1908 and came back to Ickleton. Every morning he emptied earth closets and pig buckets, from 5 November 1914 to 18 January 1919, for which he was paid (we should think so too!). He lived in Mill Street (25 Mill Lane) in 1911, in Grange Cottages in 1920 and in Abbey Street by 1925. Mrs Bowen thanked him in her farewell speech for the disagreeable jobs he had done and for being 'most willing and obliging'.



William's Red Cross medal

Ada Jane Stubbings (1887-1966) – in 1911 her family was living in part of Hovells which may have been divided into 3 small cottages at this time. Her brothers William and Herbert served in the war. She did scrubbing at Ickleton Red Cross Hospital every morning from 21 April 1917 to 27 April 1918. She married Sergeant Alfred John Knowles of the Grenadier Guards in May 1918 at St Mary Magdalene Church, Ickleton. He had been a patient at Ickleton Red Cross Hospital for 4 months – a hospital romance!

Mrs May Webb (1880-1963) – the 1901 census shows her working for Mr and Mrs Bowen as a housemaid and living at the New Grange. She married Eustace Webb in 1906, probably in Elmdon, and they had 2 daughters. In 1911 the family were living at 21 Brookhampton Street. She did washing every week from 5 November 1914 to 19 January 1919. Her husband was killed in the war in November 1917.