

Claydon with Clattercote Newsletter

November 2018

Remembrance Supplement

As we have recently commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the armistice which ended the “war to end all wars”, it seems appropriate to publish the information obtained from Simon Bull’s research on not only the men commemorated on the village War Memorial, but also other men associated with Claydon who are not on the War Memorial, at least two of whom appear to have had a strong association with the village.



The Memorial names two men, Lance Corporal William Berry and Lieutenant William Shaw, who were killed in what was then known as the Great War. After the Second World War the name of Maurice Prew was added to the Memorial.

WILLIAM BERRY



William Berry was born in Claydon 3 March 1891, the son of William Berry (a carrier) and Hannah, (née Hemmings). By the time of the 1911 census he was still living in the village with his widowed mother and working as a cowman. He still has relatives living in the village. I have not yet discovered when he joined up, but he volunteered and became part of the 5th Battalion of the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, one of the many battalions which were raised from volunteers who enlisted as a result of the campaign organised by Lord Kitchener, which used the famous "Your Country Needs You" poster.

The 5th Battalion first went to France in May 1915. The unfortunate William died of his wounds on 28 September 1915. He is buried at Etaples. Etaples is a French coastal town at which several large hospitals treating wounded were situated. It is described in "Testament of Youth" the famous book by Vera Brittain, who, as a volunteer nurse, worked there. The fact that William had reached Etaples before he died probably indicates that he was wounded several days earlier, because the process of movement from the battlefield to a Base Hospital at a place like Etaples would have taken several days. William's Division was involved on 25 September 1915 in an engagement known as the "Second Attack on Bellewaarde". It is probable that William received his fatal wounds in that attack. Bellewaarde is a place just outside Ypres, and the site now of a busy and noisy theme park. This attack was a diversionary action designed to divert the Germans' attention, and resources, from the major battle being fought further south at Loos.

I have visited the grave of William Berry at Etaples, a massive cemetery built to serve the Base Hospitals there.

MAURICE PREW



Maurice Prew was born in 1922 at what is now 2 Bank Cottages in Claydon. He has already been the subject of a couple of articles in the Claydon & Clattercote News, in 2001 and 2012. He has relatives living in Great Bourton and Little Bourton.

Before the war Maurice was in service and then moved to work for the predecessor of Alcan in Banbury. At the age of 20 he joined the Wiltshire Regiment, but was transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Welch Regiment and in due course served with that Regiment in the "Forgotten Army" in Burma. He was killed in a Japanese attack on 18 May 1945 and initially buried at a location near to where he was killed, but is now buried in Rangoon War Cemetery, beneath a stone on which his family caused to be recorded "His life, a beautiful memory, His death, a silent grief". Maurice is not only remembered on the War Memorial, but also on a plaque inside the church beneath which there is a picture of him.

MEN BORN IN THE PARISH BUT NOT COMMEMORATED ON THE MEMORIAL

GEORGE HAWTIN ASTELL

George Astell was born in Claydon in approximately 1878, and the 1901 census shows him still living in the village. However, by 1911 he had moved to Chacombe with his family and was working as a butcher. He was killed on 26 August 1918 when he was a Private in the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

The Victoria County History entry for Claydon shows numerous references to the Astell family. I have not yet been able to establish whether he had any association with the persons named in the VCH, or indeed with Astell Farmhouse, which still exists in the village.

George Astell has no known grave and is commemorated on the Viz-en-Artois Memorial.

THOMAS BAKER

Thomas Baker died of his wounds on 9 May 1915 whilst serving with the 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. He was born in Claydon in about 1893, but had left the village by 1901, and by 1911 was living in Stratford-upon-Avon, working as a farm labourer. At the time of his death he was serving with the 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial.

JOHN BRADLEY



If one enters Claydon churchyard by the gate near to the Church Room there is to the left a large gravestone on which is engraved the following:

“In loving memory of John Bradley RASC who died December 7, 1915 aged 46 years.”

There is then the well-known quotation “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends”.

Before I noticed this gravestone, I had established that John Bradley was born in Claydon and died in the First World War.

Even though he was in his 40s by the time the war began, he volunteered and was placed in the Royal Army Service Corps, probably because, given his age, he did not meet the standards of fitness required of front-line regiments. He died, at sea, on 7 December 1915. His army record establishes that he died from dysentery on the hospital ship Latitia. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, in Turkey, for those who died fighting at Gallipoli and who have no known grave.

The fact that he is commemorated on such a memorial indicates that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission regards him as having no known grave. Given that he died at sea I regard it as almost inevitable that he was buried at sea. During the First World War (save for a short period at the start of the War, purely for the sons of the wealthy) the bodies of the deceased were not returned to the United Kingdom.

The 1881 census shows him to have been living at Farm House Cottage in Claydon and to be a scholar. By 1891 he was described as an agricultural labourer and was still living in Claydon. However, by 1901 he had moved to live in Bodicote and was working as a lock keeper on the canal. John Bradley seems to have continued to work for the canal until he joined up because in the 1911 census he was recorded as still being a lock keeper, but by now in Cropredy. His army record describes him as having married, in Claydon in 1892, Louisa Beasley who, by 1915, lived in Cropredy.

I think it must follow that, despite appearances, he is not in fact buried beneath the gravestone in Claydon churchyard. His name is not recorded on the Claydon War Memorial, yet his family seem to have felt his connection with Claydon strongly enough that they spent a good deal of money on a gravestone and placed it in the churchyard. I do not know what the attitude of the church authorities at that time would be to the erection of a gravestone which did not in fact mark a burial.

HERBERT RAYMOND STANDAGE

Herbert Standage was born in Claydon. He was killed in action on 17 May 1916 while serving with the 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers. He is buried in Cambrin Churchyard Extension in France. By the time of his death his parents are described as living in Great Bourton, where his father was the vicar. I have not yet had the opportunity to establish whether his father was ever the vicar in Claydon. The census appears to show that he was working in London as a bank clerk in 1911, living at a residential club specifically catering for young men.

AUSTIN SPENCER HADLAND



In the process of my research I have also been told (by Don Siviter, to whom I am very grateful) about a man who would appear to have a strong claim to be on the Memorial but is not. Captain Austin Spencer Hadland was born at Clattercote Priory in 1877. He served in Gallipoli and France. He was serving with the acting rank of Major, in the Rifle Brigade, when he was killed on 24 March 1918 in the Somme area. When killed he was leading his men in resistance to a German attack which was part of the huge rolling German offensives launched in early 1918, when the Germans sought to win the war before the arrival of large numbers of Americans made defeat inevitable for them. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial to the missing on the Somme battlefield in France.

JOHN CORNELIUS WELLS

John Wells was born in Claydon, but appears to have left the village by 1901. He was killed in action on 23 October 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, while serving with the 1st Battalion Hampshire Regiment. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the huge Thiepval Memorial which commemorates the missing of the Battle of the Somme.

I have not yet been able to identify any relationship between him and the

other two Wells who were born in the village and killed in the First World War.

SAMUEL AUSTIN WELLS

Samuel Wells was born in Claydon, although how long he remained in the village is not clear. He died of his wounds in France on 22 August 1915 when he was serving with the 2nd Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He is buried in Erquinghem-Lys Churchyard Extension, close to Armentieres, which featured in the well-known First World War song "Mademoiselle from Armentieres". He may have been the brother of William Daniel Wells.

WILLIAM DANIEL WELLS

William Daniel Wells was born in Claydon in approximately 1886. At the time of the 1901 census he was working as a "cattleman" in Wormleighton. He became a professional soldier and by 1911 was serving in the Army in India. He may have been the brother of Samuel Austin Wells. He was killed in action on Boxing Day 1915 while serving with the 1st Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry and is buried at La Brique Military Cemetery No. 2, close to Ypres.

AND FINALLY ... THE MYSTERY MAN WILLIAM SHAW

Despite having done extensive research trying to identify him, I have, as yet, been unable to trace Lieutenant William Shaw. There are numerous lieutenants called William Shaw who were killed in the First World War (either in the Army, Navy or the Royal Flying Corps) but, so far, I have found nothing linking any of them to Claydon.

I am aware that there are entries relating to a family called Shaw in the Claydon parish register in the years round about the time of the First World War, but I have been unable to find any information which links them to any William Shaw. Nor have I found any evidence of a family called Shaw recorded as living in the village in the censuses taken in 1871-1911.

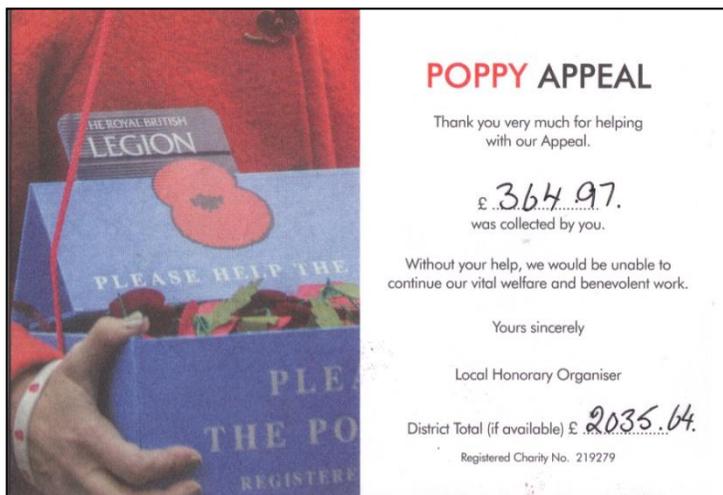
When I began to research the War Memorial, nearly 10 years ago, the fact that William Shaw was an officer led me to believe I would not have any problems tracing him. In the previous village in which I lived I had managed to identify all 26 men on the village War Memorial,

notwithstanding that three of them were named Smith and one of them was incorrectly named on the Memorial. Given that experience, I never expected William Shaw to be so very difficult to identify. I continue to research him. If anyone knows anything about him I would be grateful for any information which they can give me.

I shall continue to research the village War Memorial, and the men connected to the village who served in the First World War, and, indeed, the Second World War. I would be grateful for any information which villagers can give me about the men on the Memorial; and/or men who have any claim to be on the Memorial; and/or men from the village who served in the First and/or Second World Wars.

Simon Bull

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2018



Thanks from Anne Hoggins to everyone in Claydon and Clattercote who contributed to another record amount of £364.97. (And to Anne for organising the collection. Ed)

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