



THE

SERVICE

&

SACRIFICE

OF THE MEN

OF

DARNHALL



DARNHALL VILLAGE HALL.

Lt. COL. R.N.H. Verdin	Pte. G. Capper	Pte. W. Lewis *
Capt. O.H. Cooke	.. W. Carter	.. A. Noden
2nd Lt. H. J. Oliver	.. J. ...	.. J. ...
Reg. ...	.. J. ...	.. J. ...
Serg. P. ...	.. W. Dean	.. T. Sant *
Corp. D. Gregory	.. J.A. Dodd	.. T. Simcock
.. F. Mellor	.. H. Fowles	.. J. Sproston
Pte. A. Astbury	.. R. Gilbert	Jno Sproston
G. Astbury	.. C. ...	.. W. ...
.. E. ...	.. W. ...	.. W. ...
.. S. ...	.. W. ...	.. W. ...
.. G. Booth	.. L. Hitchinson	.. B. Vickers *
.. J.W. Booth	.. C. Hulse	.. G. Walley
.. W. Boffey	.. W. Ikin *	.. E. Wakeling
.. W. Brown *	.. C. Jackson	.. J. Wilkinson
.. T. Buckley	.. R. Kane	Serg. R. Williamson
.. F. Buckley	.. R. Kane	

GOD SAVE THE KING

DARNHALL MEMORIAL

It is now a century since the Great War, World War I, ceased on 11 November 1918, in fact as some of these pages are being compiled it is 11am on 11 November 2018 – exactly 100 years since the armistice. During the traumatic years, Winsford and the surrounding areas were to lose many of their young men – regular soldiers, volunteers and conscripts. For most people the war seemed far away, nevertheless the war brought change to mid-Cheshire with disruptions to traditional social and economic patterns of life. In and around Winsford there are many memorials to those who fought and died in the conflict. So too in Darnhall.

The wooden rectangular memorial board measures 59 inches high and 37 inches wide. It has a carved pediment and is flanked by pillars. It has the title 'Roll of Honour' with the dates 1914 and 1919 either side of the Royal coat of arms. In the top corners of the board are escutcheons bearing the Prince of Wales feathers, representing him as the Earl of Chester and thus the Cheshire Regiment, and a ship's anchor, presumably representing the Royal Navy. Beneath the name 'Darnhall Village Hall', in gilt letters dispersed among three columns, are the names of 51 men from the area. The names appear in order of their rank, though it seems that Sergeant Wilkinson was added at the end as an afterthought. Those who died are marked with a black cross on the memorial board and with a similar cross in the text below.

Research has indicated that not all of the men listed lived in Darnhall: those who did not were either employed in Darnhall or had some other connection with the Darnhall Estate, i.e. tenants.

This booklet has been written to honour those who suffered the ultimate sacrifice for their country and those who also served in the armed forces.

It has not been possible to identify every man listed on the memorial board, and for some of those who are identified their full service record has not been available. This is due to the fact that many military service records of the period were destroyed during the Blitz of the Second World War. The names given below are given in the order they appear on the memorial.

In compiling this record reference has been made to the following:

National military records and census records as available on the Internet via 'findmypast.co.uk', 'ancestry.co.uk', and the War Graves Commission.

Copies of the *Northwich Guardian* newspaper.

A. Ravenscroft, *The Winsford Returns: A record of a Town's Service 1914-1920* (1996).

A. Clayton, *A Cheshire Parish at War: St. Chad's, Over, Winsford* (1998).

Tony Bostock
Swanlow
November 2018

LT. COL. R.N.H. VERDIN

Richard Norman Harrison Verdin, born in Wharton, Winsford, Cheshire on 20 May 1877. He was son of William Henry Verdin who originally lived at Highfield House, Wharton, and later moved to Darnhall Hall. He was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. Richard joined the army in August 1914 and reached the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the 2/1 Cheshire Yeomanry. He was a Justice of the Peace for Herefordshire, Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Cheshire, and High Sheriff in 1933. He lived at Darnhall Hall, and also at Garnstone Castle, Weobley, Herefordshire. He married on 23 February 1909, Alison Macfie Barbour (Cheshire) and had four children.

CAPT. O.H. COOKE

Oswald Hayward Cooke had been in Rome when war was declared and hurried home to enlist. He was son of George Henry Cooke, solicitor and Winsford Town Clerk. As Lieutenant Oswald Cooke he served with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and saw service in Flanders in 1916, 1917 and 1918. On 1 October 1916, he was wounded whilst attacking enemy positions and as a consequence of his actions was awarded the Military Cross. He was again wounded during his second tour of service whilst leading a party of stretcher bearers and for this he received a bar to his M.C. He was wounded yet again during his third term of service in Flanders whilst on a recognizance mission. He married and had a son.

† 2nd Lt. H. J. Oliver

Henry John Oliver was a son of John and Harriet Oliver, of Upper Shop, Marton, Chirbury, Salop. He joined the Machine Gun Corps and held the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. At the time of his war service his home was Darnhall Hall Gardens, where he had been employed as a gardener. He died of wounds on 23 April 1918, aged 27, and was buried at the Aire Communal Cemetery in France.

R.S.M. P. DODD

Percy Dodd was born in 1891 to William and Sarah Dodd of 147 Dingle Lane, Winsford: he was one of four children. Before the war Percy was an articled clerk at a solicitor's office. He joined up at the start of the war and served with the Royal Army Medical Corps (3/2nd West Lancashire Field Ambulance) for 2½ years in France and Belgium. He was mentioned in despatches by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. As a Regimental Sergeant Major, he was demobilised in June 1919 and married Lilly Harrington two years later.

SGT. P. HODKINSON

Peter Hodkinson lived at 164 Weaver Street, Winsford. He commenced service with the 1/7 Cheshire Regiment (No. 1507) in 1914 and eventually transferred to the 5th Cheshires (No. 15682) and latterly the 4th Cheshires (Reserve No. 244282). During his 41 months service in Belgium and France he was wounded twice: first, at Bray he got hit by shrapnel in the shoulder, then, at Arras in the throat and leg. He served in the battles of Neuve Englis, Hill 60, Ypres and Chambis Wood.

CORP. D. GREGORY

Born in 1895, Daniel Gregory was son of Harry Gregory, a shipwright, of Woodford Lane, Over. He joined the 1st battalion, 3rd Cheshire Regiment (No. 32551). He served for 3 years in France followed by 9 months in Italy and was wounded by shellfire and gassed on two occasions and was listed as a wounded soldier from the Expeditionary Force.

CORP. F. MELLOR

Frank Mellor of 188 Weaver Street, Winsford, a postman joined the army in November 1915 and was attached to the 4th Royal Warwickshire (No. 20660) and the 10th Royal West Surrey regiments (No. 25849). Frank was promoted to Corporal in March 1917. He served for nearly two years in France and Belgium and was wounded twice: 9 October 1917 and 24 October 1918: on the second occasion when a gas shell wound to his jaw he was transferred to England. He was put forward to be awarded the Military Medal. Demobilised in March 1919. He married in 1907 to Lizzie Oakes and he had at least one child – Hilda born in 1909.

PRIVATE A. ASTBURY

Albert Astbury of 159 Delamere Street, Over, was the eldest son of Thomas and Bertha Astbury: he was born in 1893. He worked as a labourer before joining the 1/5 Cheshire Regiment (No. 244305) in August 1914 and served in France.

PRIVATE G. ASTBURY

George Astbury of 124 Woodford Lane, Over, was born in 1893, son of Charles and Harriet Astbury. Before he joined 3rd Cheshire Regiment (No.34651) he was employed as a cowman. However, he only served 100 days as he was discharged on 27 June 1916 as not likely to become an efficient soldier.

PRIVATE J. BAKER

John Baker was born in 1895, son of Frank Baker, a corn miller of Moors Lane. He became a cowman for the Bebbingtons at Dairy House Farm, Weaver, before becoming a corn mill operative, a 'leamsman', living in Beauty Bank, Darnhall. In February 1916, he married Ellen Dickenson and by June had a son named George Raymond. He joined the army as a gunner with the Royal Field Artillery, in August 1916 (No. 159425). On 28 September 1917, he received a gas shell wound to his abdomen and transferred back to England, but did not claim to have been in any way disabled by the event. He left the arms services at the beginning of 1919.

PRIVATE S. BLACKBURN

Possibly Samuel Blackburn, born in 1899, one of thirteen children born to Jabez and Elizabeth Blackburn of 25 Dean Street.

PRIVATE T. BOOTH

Not identified.

PRIVATE J.W. BOOTH

John William Booth was a cowman employed by Mr Rutter of Little Budworth in 1911. He was born in 1894, son of Thomas and Catherine Booth of 120 Woodford Lane, Over. A man named J.W. Booth, served in the Liverpool Regiment, the Labour Corps and the South Lancashire Regiment, and was awarded campaign medals for his service. It is likely that he is the same as the John Booth mentioned in the *Winsford Returns* as a member of the South Lancashire Regiment (No. 40421) who enlisted in 1917, and served in France for a period of 10 months during which time he was wounded. Again this is likely to be the J. Booth of the 1/5 South Lancashire Regiment who was admitted to the hospital in Lincoln as a severely wounded soldier in October 1918, and perhaps the same as Rifleman J. Booth, of the South Lancashire Regiment who was a prisoner of war at Munster in January 1918.

PRIVATE W. BOFFEY

Born in 1899, William Boffey, son of Charles and Emily Boffey of Corner Farm, Wettehall, joined the 9th Cheshire Regiment (No. 76754) in May 1918 and transferred to the South Lancashire Regiment (No. 30034) and was posted to the Expeditionary Force in September 1918. By November he was in hospital suffering from influenza. On discharge in January 1919 he transferred to the reserves.

† PRIVATE W. BROWN

Gunner Walter Brown of the 255 Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery (No. 112976) joined up in 1916 when aged 23 years and was killed on 8 February 1917. He is buried at Bailleul Community Extension, Nord, France. Before he joined the army he had been employed as a railway clerk and lived at 'Laurel House', 13 School Road, Wharton. He married Mary Such at Christ Church, Wharton on 20 November 1916. He was one of four children of Rowland and Margaret Brown.

PRIVATE T. BUCKLEY

According to the *Winsford Returns*, Thomas Buckley lived at Darnhall Farm, Darnhall, in 1918, son of John Buckley. He joined the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (No. 36598) in 1915 and served in France for 2 years and was wounded there on 28 September 1917. He was born on 1 June 1891 and his parents were John and Alice Buckley who farmed at Fields Farm Darnhall and then in Bostock, before returning to Darnhall.

PRIVATE F. BUCKLEY

According to the *Winsford Returns*, Frank Buckley lived at Darnhall Farm, Darnhall, in 1918, son of John Buckley. He joined the 9th Welsh Regiment (No. 40603) in 1915 and served in France for 18 months years where he was slightly wounded on 11 January 1918. He was born on 14 August 1893 and his parents were John and Alice Buckley who farmed at Fields Farm Darnhall and then in Bostock, before returning to Darnhall.

PRIVATE G. CAPPER

In 1918 George Capper lived along Hill Street, Winsford. He joined the Manchester Regiment in 1914 and saw service in France in 1915, Italy 1917, and France again in 1918. According to the *Winsford Returns* he held the rank of Lance Corporal. The only George Capper to be found in the census for mid Cheshire is a son of Samuel and Annie of Frith Fields, Davenham, who was born in 1897.

PRIVATE W. CARTER

Not identified

PRIVATE W. COOKSON

Gunner William Cookson of the Royal Garrison Artillery (No. 180505) lived at 233 Ways Green, Winsford. He joined in 1917 and served for 16 months. Born in 1896, he was son of William and Emma (née Hewitt) Cookson, of 233, Ways Green, Winsford, Cheshire, a nephew to Henry Cookson a farmer of Darnhall.

PRIVATE J. COOKSON

Joseph Cookson paid the ultimate sacrifice, dying from wounds, on 30 September 1917 having served in France for just over a year: he was 32 years old. He was a bombardier with 'C' Battery, 296th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (No. 159872). He was son of William and Emma (nee Hewitt) Cookson, of 233, Ways Green, Winsford, Cheshire, a nephew to Henry Cookson of Fields Farm, Darnhall, for whom we worked when he was 15 years old. He next worked for his aunt Margaret Bourne at Blackden Lane Farm, and then, at the outbreak of war, for Richard Bancroft of Beech House, Darnhall. He joined the forces on 30 September 1916 and six months later was in France. His death was reported in *The Guardian* with extracts from a letter from a colleague's letter to his mother and sister.

PRIVATE C. E. COURTNEY

A man named Charles E. Courtney served as a gunner with the Royal Field Artillery (No. 116790). This may be him, but nothing further is known.

PRIVATE W. DEAN

May be the Walter Dean, labourer, who, in 1911, lived at 76 Weaver Street, Winsford, with his wife and two children. He was born in 1882.

PRIVATE J. A. DODD

John Alan Dodd of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment (No. 31577) served in Belgium and France. He was discharged 11 August 1918 with a disabled wrist which he suffered whilst on active service. His home was Darnhall Smithy where his father worked as the blacksmith. He was born in 1890 and worked as a woodman in Darnhall before joining the services.

PRIVATE H. FOWLES

Harry Fowles became a gunner with the Royal Field Artillery (No. 180506) in 1917 and served in France for 9 months. According to the *Winsford Returns*, his home was on Beauty Bank, Darnhall. Harry may be the son of John Fowles a labourer at Lower farm Little Budworth.

PRIVATE R. GILBERT

Not identified

PRIVATE R. HARRIS

Richard Harris of the 9th Cheshire Regiment (No. 12514) served in France for 3 years 7 months. His home was 42 St George's Road, Winsford.

PRIVATE W. HEMMINGS

Walter Hemmings joined the Irish Guards (No. 13636) in December 1915. His home was at 48 Littler Lane, Over, but his parents William and Mary Ann Hemmings once lived at Darley Cottages, Little Budworth. Before joining he had been employed as a waggoner.

PRIVATE A. E. HOLLISTER

Not identified

PRIVATE L. HITCHINSON

Leonard Hitshinson's home was at 46 Wharton Road, Winsford. He joined the West Yorkshire Regiment (No. 56999). He served in France and was captured becoming a prisoner on 24 April 1918 at Gustrow Camp. Born in 1899 he was son of Eli and Agnes Hitchinson of 135 Croke Lane, Wharton.

PRIVATE C. HULSE

Enlisting at the start of the war, Charles Hulse became a Corporal with the Machine Gun Corps (No. 74708). He served in Egypt for 2 years and in France for 9 months. He was gassed on 27 October 1918. Born in 1896, he became an apprentice joiner on the Darnhall Estate before enlisting in the Cheshire Yeomanry in 1913: his father was James Hulse, a farmer of School Green, Darnhall.

† PRIVATE W. IKIN

Although shown as a 'Private', this no doubt refers to Sergeant William Ikin of the 1/7th Battalion, Cheshire Regiment died on the 19th October 1917. William was born in 1895, one of twelve children born to John and Emma Ikin of John Street, Winsford. On leaving school he worked as a waggoner on

farm in Wettenhall and Cholmondeston. When war broke out he was working at Darnhall Hall. He enlisted at Macclesfield and was posted to the 1/7th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, in September 1914. His medal index card shows that he arrived overseas on 8th August 1915, where he first saw action in the Balkans: on one occasion, when all officers and NCOs had been killed or wounded, he took control of his platoon. This led to promotion to Sergeant and a mention in despatches. From Gallipoli he moved on to Palestine and fought at the battle of Gaza. His next theatre of war was Egypt. He died from dysentery on 19 October 1917 and was buried in Deir el Belah War Cemetery, Palestine.

PRIVATE C. JACKSON

Not identified

PRIVATE R. KAYE

Richard Kaye was 27 years old when he joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery (No. 175408): he served as a farrier in Belgium. He had previously worked as a butcher, cattle dealer and cab proprietor at 190/192 High Street, Winsford. When he enlisted he was a widower with four children.

† PRIVATE W. LEWIS

William Henry Lewis of 21st Manchester Regiment (No. 40644) died from wounds received in the area of the Somme on 5 May 1917. His memorial is at Achiet le Grand Communal Cemetery in France. He left a widow, Ellen, at 9 Winnington Street, Winsford. Previously he had served with the Cheshire Regiment (No. 2531). Unusually he seems to have been in his 50s when he joined the Manchester Regiment having previously been employed as a salt worker. In 1911 he had been married for 28 years and had 11 children.

PRIVATE A. NODEN

This name could be Allan Noden born in 1896, son of William Noden of Wettenhall Hall, who joined the 3rd Cheshire Regiment (No. 76745) in July 1916. He had previously worked as a waggoner.

It is possible that Albert Noden of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment (No. 40247) is referred to. Born in 1890, he was married to Bertha and lived at 21 Chapel Street, Winsford. He served in France and was taken prisoner on 22 March 1918 and confined at Gustrow Camp.

PRIVATE C. PACE

Charles Pace South Wales Borderers (No. 41606). W. 14-9-1918 in head and leg. Born in 1899, he was a son of Samuel Pace, 104 Swanlow Lane, Over.

PRIVATE E. PRIDEAUX

There is a Private Prideaux who served in the 23rd King's Liverpool Regiment (No. 93420). He seems not to have served overseas but 'at home' for 1 year and 114 days.

A. STUBBS

Not identified, but possibly Albert, son of Alfred Stubbs of 'Ferndale', Swanlow Lane, Over, who was born in 1894.

† T. SANT

Thomas Sant was born in 1884, son of William Sant, a salt boiler. Before he joined the army, he was employed on the Darnhall Estate as a carter. He joined the Royal Field Artillery (No.701491) and spent 13 months in France. He died from his wounds and gas poisoning on 21 March 1918 and is buried at Pozières, France. He left a widow, Maggie (née Dodd) and had two children who lived along Moors Lane, Darnhall. His death was reported in *The Guardian* on 26 April.

PRIVATE T. SIMCOCK

Not identified

PRIVATE J. SPROSTON

Jesse Sproston was a driver with the Army Service Corps (No. 93105) from 1915. He served in Salonika for 2 years 4 months. Born in 1891, his home was Grange Farm, 94 Swanlow Lane, where he worked with his father and brothers: his parents were Arthur and Maria.

PRIVATE JNO. SPROSTON

Not identified

PRIVATE F. TAYLOR

Frank Taylor became a driver with the Royal Field Artillery from 1917. He served in Egypt & Palestine. He may be the nineteen years old Frank Taylor who worked as a chauffeur in 1911, and lived at 164 Weaver Street, son of Frank and Eliza Taylor: one of eight children. Was he a driver for the Verdins at Darnhall Hall?

PRIVATE E. THOMPSON

This may be Edwin Thompson, born in 1895, of Grove Cottage, Swanlow, a son of farmer Stephen Thompson.

PRIVATE E. VERNON

Edward Vernon was born in 1890, son of George Vernon of School Green Farm, Darnhall. Before joining the armed forces he was a butcher.

† PRIVATE B. VICKERS

Bertram Vickers was killed on 23 October 1917 and is buried at the Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium. Born in 1893, he was the youngest son of, the then late, Matthew and Emma Vickers of Hebden Farm and later of 136 Delamere St., Over. He worked for Mr. Slater of Woodford Hall and a Mr Wardleworth before joining the army in January 1917 and went to the front six months later. He was a member of 'A' Battalion, 93rd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (No.190580) and two weeks before his death he joined the signalling section. On the day of his death he had gone with two colleagues to repair telegraph cables which had been destroyed by regular bombardment from enemy positions. As they were repairing the cable a shell landed in their dug-out killing Bertram and another man instantly. His death was reported in *The Guardian* on 16 November.

PRIVATE G. WALLEY

He may be the same as the 'G.Walley' who joined the 5th Grenadier Guards and was admitted to hospital with 'disability' in October 1916, having served for 2½ years and then aged 20

PRIVATE E. WAKELING

Edgar Harold Wakeling was in 1/5 Cheshire Regiment (No. 243959). He served in France for two years before being gassed. He was born in 1896, son of John Beaver and Mary Wakeling, of 5Darnhall School Lane; his father was a gardener, perhaps at Darnhall Hall.

PRIVATE J. WILKINSON

John Wilkinson was born in 1884 and took work as a farm labourer before enlisting in 1915. He became a driver with the Royal Field Artillery (No. 67228). He served in France for 3 years and was demobilised in 1919. He broke bones in his right foot in October 1917. His home was 30 Townfields, Over.

SGT. R. WILLIAMSON

Richard Williamson, a single man, served with 'D' Battery, 47 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (No. 115737 & 24660) from 1916 in France for 16 months. He was born in 1882, a son of William Williamson, a wine merchant, whom he followed into business at 'The Vaults', Delamere Street, Over.

