

Forgotten Soldiers to be Commemorated

In November 2011 after a tireless campaign we were pleased to hear that Percy Little, a Wiltshire Yeomanry soldier from Chippenham who died from tuberculosis which he contracted while serving in the army during the Great War, was to be finally commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Finding the Forgotten placed a temporary memorial cross on his grave which will eventually be marked with a CWGC headstone.

In January 2012 we received the great news that six more servicemen were to be commemorated and their names placed on the National Role of Honour.

Private Albert Fry
Gunner George William Hicks
Private Frederick George Kyte
Private Donald Marsh
Lance Corporal John Martin
Cadet Reginald Walter Sloper

Hullavington
Shrivenham
Bradford on Avon
Redlynch
Devizes
Devizes

After extensive research carried out by Finding the Forgotten the cases of the above were compiled and put forward to the CWGC who in turn passed them to the Ministry of Defence and each appropriate service authority for approval for each man's commemoration. Most of the men were commemorated on local memorials but had been overlooked for national recognition.

With many cemeteries and graveyards becoming over crowded it has become necessary to reuse plots which are unkept or unclaimed by relatives. Whilst generally not known plots that have not been claimed can be reused after 100 years but in some cases this date is after just 75 years. With the centenary of the start of the Great War approaching it has become more important that these forgotten men are recognised for their service and their graves be claimed and saved. Finding the Forgotten have estimated that there are between 5 and 10 servicemen for each town in the country who lost their lives as a result of service in the Great War but who remain forgotten. For example, Finding the Forgotten have been responsible for the commemoration of two servicemen from Trowbridge, Ernest Bennett and Stephen Smith. However we have a further 10 servicemen who are buried in Trowbridge Cemetery who Finding the Forgotten are committed to fighting for their commemoration.

Finding the Forgotten have also identified cases where graves are lost and the CWGC has recognised servicemen and agreed to commemorate them. An example of such case is Arthur Henry Holbrow, Royal Marine Artillery who is buried at Grittleton and it is unlikely his grave will ever be found, Because there is no plan of the graveyard.



Top: The temporary grave marker on Percy Little's grave St.Pauls Chippenham. Bottom: The grave of Frederick George Kyte at Bradford on Avon Cemetery.

Six More Men Commemorated

Private Albert Fry

4th Bn Wiltshire Regiment

Albert was a rubber worker and employed by Avon India Rubber Company at Melksham, he was also a member of the Wiltshire territorial which he joined on 1 October 1912. In the spring of 1913 he married Edith E Bodman at Melksham and at the outbreak of hostilities the 1/4th Territorial Battalion Wiltshire Regiment were sent to India to replace regular army units which were needed in Europe. Albert arrived in India in November 1914 and in January 1915 he realized that his sight was deteriorating. In March 1915 it was found that he was suffering from Retinitis Pigmentosa, an eye disease which leads to permanent blindness and on 30 December 1915 he returned to England. Albert was sent to Netley Hospital and on 13 June 1916 he was discharged from the army. On 13 July 1916 he attended a medical board where the army decided that the Retinitis Pigmentosa was caused when Albert had been employed as a rubber worker and the fumes of rubber manufacture had affected his vision. However, he was given a pension and returned to his home at Hullavington. In May 1917 he applied for an increase in pension because his health had deteriorated and on 30 August 1917 a further board found that Albert was suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis with only days to live. It was also stated that the onset of the pulmonary tuberculosis was caused by exposure on ordinary military service. Albert died on Tuesday 9 October 1917 at Hullavington.

Gunner George William Hicks

Royal Garrison Artillery

Regular soldier George was the eldest son of George & Fanny Hicks and had enlisted with the Royal Garrison Artillery in February 1915. He arrived in France on the 20 May 1915 and was badly wounded in the face and suffering from gas poisoning in August 1915. After being evacuated to England George was sent to a military hospital and discharged from the army at Gosport in December 1916. He returned home but never recovered and after spending six weeks in the Sanatorium at Abingdon he died on Friday 26 April 1918. George's Body was brought back to Shrivenham where he was buried with full military honours.

Private Frederick George Kyte

8th Bn Wiltshire Regiment

Under age soldier Frederick was the youngest son of John and Ester Kite and volunteered for service with the Wiltshire Regiment on the 13 January 1915 at 15 years of age. He had been a chorister at his parish church and was an enthusiastic member of the Church lads Brigade. He was sent to the newly formed 8th Battalion Wiltshire regiment where he became a bugler. After two years service he developed lung trouble, most likely tuberculosis and was discharged from the army on the 27 June 1917. for some time Frederick partially recovered and found employment as an insurance agent but in October 1919 his illness became worse and he died at his home on Sunday 7 December 1919. He was buried in Bradford on Avon Cemetery.

Private Donald Marsh

Royal Engineers

Eighteen year old Donald a grocers assistant was the second son of Alfred and Mary Marsh and joined the army on the 28 September 1916. He trained as a wireless telegraphy operator and showed great proficiency. However while being trained he contracted tuberculosis and was sent to Winsley Hospital for treatment. He was discharged from the army on the 7 February 1917 being no longer fit for military service. Soon after Donald was brought home by parents and died at his home on Friday 9 March 1917. He was interred at Downton South Lane Baptist Chapel.

Lance Corporal John Martin

1st Bn Wiltshire Regiment

Carman John was the eldest son of Edwin and Caroline Martin and originally enlisted with the Wiltshire Regiment on 1 July 1903. He left the army on 30 June 1906 and was transferred to the army reserve. He married Louise White at Yatesbury on 5 August 1912 and prior to the Great War was employed by the Great Western Railway Company at Devizes. At the Outbreak of hostilities John, being a reservist, was called up and arrived in France on 14 August 1914 with the 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. He was evacuated from France on 6 October 1914 suffering from tuberculosis and on 28 October 1914 he was discharged from the army. John attended an army medical board which stated that he had a permanent total incapacity and the tuberculosis was a result of active service and exposure in the trenches.

WILTSHIRE SOLDIERS - NEWS

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The grave of John Martin at Devizes Cemetery

He was granted a pension and each year John attended a medical board and in 1917 his pension was increased. John died on Monday 24 November 1919 at Devizes and was buried in Devizes Cemetery. He left a widow and young son and lies in an overgrown grave in Devizes Cemetery.

Cadet Reginald Walter Sloper Royal Flying Corps

Eighteen year old Reginald was the youngest son of Marler and Mary Sloper and volunteered for service with the Royal Flying Corps. He died of illness or disease at the Military Hospital at Bexhill on Sunday 27 January 1918 and his body was returned to his family and buried in Devizes Cemetery.. Reginald's brother Bruce James Sloper was to be killed in France in August 1918.

If you would like more information concerning these men or other cases under research by Finding the Forgotten please contact us.



Neglected War Graves

The picture to the left is the war grave of Victor Groves in Devizes Cemetery which has been toppled by cemetery staff after concerns about health and safety.

At present the Commonwealth War Graves Commission will accept no responsibility for the maintenance of war graves which are marked with private memorials. It is shameful that the CWGC receives public funds for the maintenance of war graves and not only refuses to maintain these private monuments but has no plans to change the policy. In 2012 Finding the Forgotten will be campaigning for the restoration of these monuments to be carried out. The CWGC is funded by the tax payer for the care and maintenance of all war graves.