

Chapter 9: Personal Experiences

In order to understand grandad's experiences of the war and those of his family it is necessary to first understand a little of the process of recruiting men to the military in the first world war. I had thought that all adult men had been in the military apart from those who were conscientious objectors. This was not the case. What I had not realised was that there was a [whole system of Tribunals](#) set up to consider those who, for various reasons, sought exemptions to military service.¹

[Military Service Tribunals](#) were established by councils to hear applications for exemption from conscription during World War 1. Although they were not strictly recruiting bodies, they played an important part in the process of conscription. They were initially established as part of the scheme developed by Lord Derby in 1915 but were continued on a statutory basis following the passing of the Military Service Act.

There were 2,086 local Military Service Tribunals, staffed by local dignitaries, with 83 County Appeal Tribunals to hear appeals by applicants not happy with the local Tribunal decision. A Central Tribunal in London served as the final court of appeal. Although they are best known for the way they dealt with conscientious objectors, most of the Tribunals' work dealt with domestic and business matters. Only around two percent of cases related to conscientious objection.

According to the [Military Service Act of 1916](#), grounds that Tribunals could consider were:

- (a) on the ground that it is expedient in the national interests that he should, instead of being employed in military service, be engaged in other work in which he is habitually engaged or in which he wishes to be engaged or, if he is being educated or trained, for any work, that he should continue to be so educated or trained; or
- (b) on the ground that serious hardship would ensue, if the man were called up for Army Service, owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position; or on the grounds of ill-health or infirmity; or on the ground of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service.

In addition, Government Departments could grant exemptions to men who were employed or engaged or qualified for employment or engagement in any work which was certified by the Department to be work of national importance.

A very large number of men applied. By the end of June 1916, 748,587 men had applied to Tribunals. Over the same period, around 770,000 men joined the army. Most men were given some kind of exemption, usually temporary (between a few weeks and six months) or conditional on their situation at work or home remaining serious enough to warrant their retention at home. As of May 1917, 780,000 men were exempt with 110,000 pending. In addition, at this point there were also 1.8 million men with exemptions granted by the government, for example, those working in war industries. Combined, these exemptions covered more men than were serving overseas with the British Army.

There was such a Local Tribunal established in Kirkby. I researched this fairly extensively from a newspaper archive and compiled a [blog](#) on the topic. Material from that research of specific relevance to the personal experience of my family is included here.

Two different systems of medical grading appear to have been in use at the time. It is not clear if one was an older system² or if one grading was used for an initial medical with another used by the Tribunal itself.

¹ Quite a lot of detail about [how the tribunals operated](#) is contained in a book about Joseph Blackburn. This book is called Joseph, 1917. It is by David Hewitt.

² There was a [change in how the medical assessments were carried out](#), in November 1917. Before that time, medicals were conducted by the military but, after that, they passed to civilian control. Based on evidence from the [Kirkby Tribunal](#), it does appear that these systems may have been used at different times.

One used a system of numbers from I to IV.³ Under this system, grade III meant that the person had marked physical disabilities and was considered fit only for clerical work. Grade IV meant that the man was totally and permanently unfit for military service.

The [other system](#) used a combination of letters and numbers as shown below:

A	Able to march, see to shoot, hear well and stand active service conditions. <i>Subcategories:</i>
AI	Fit for dispatching overseas, as regards physical and mental health, and training
A2	As AI, except for training
A3	Returned Expeditionary Force men, ready except for physical condition
A4	Men under 19 who would be AI or A2 when aged 19
B	Free from serious organic diseases, able to stand service on lines of communication in France, or in garrisons in the tropics. <i>Subcategories:</i>
BI	Able to march 5 miles, see to shoot with glasses, and hear well
B2	Able to walk 5 miles, see and hear sufficiently for ordinary purposes
B3	Only suitable for sedentary work
C	Free from serious organic diseases, able to stand service in garrisons at home. <i>Subcategories:</i>
CI	Able to march 5 miles, see to shoot with glasses, and hear well
C2	Able to walk 5 miles, see and hear sufficiently for ordinary purposes
C3	Only suitable for sedentary work
D	Unfit but could be fit within 6 months. <i>Subcategories:</i>
DI	Regular RA,RE, infantry in Command Depots
D2	Regular RA,RE, infantry in Regimental Depots
D3	Men in any depot or unit awaiting treatment

There were [concerns](#) about the fairness and objectivity of the system. These concerns included that some men were given an unduly positive medical grade⁴ while others, who were accepted into the military on one basis (e.g. grade III), could have that grading changed (e.g. to grade I) so that they ended up directly in the firing line.⁵

There are many entries in grandad's diary concerning his relatively poor health. In February 1915, he noted being examined by a doctor and he started exercising as a result. He recorded using various remedies including Zam-Buk⁶ for his knees, some "*embrocation stuff*", Doans backache pills⁷, bone marrow, a porous plaster, a medical coil, a magneto machine, St Jacob's oil⁸, iron jelloids, Hall's wine⁹,

³ While most references I have seen related to this use roman numerals, the newspaper reports of [Kirkby Tribunal](#) did not. Nevertheless, I have assumed it was the same system.

⁴ From the work of the [Kirkby Tribunal](#), there were many examples where applicants considered their medical grading too positive. In addition, In the case of J J B McKinley, a 33 year-old, market gardener, he had a partly paralysed right arm and was classified C2. One of the Tribunal commented that the Medical Board "*wanted kicking*" for such a classification. The Tribunal granted him total exemption on medical grounds.

⁵ This happened to Frank Seville's brother Horace. He was initially considered unsuitable for foreign service because of problems with vision but he was later posted to Salonika on the basis that the vision problem was corrected with glasses. Albert Lockwood was a carter with East Kirkby Co-operative Society. He appealed to the [Kirkby Tribunal](#) and was classified C1, that is, suitable for home service. However, he was killed in action on 25 March 1918.

⁶ A [herbal balm and antiseptic ointment](#) still available today. There is an advert for this in the Daily Mirror of 1912 that was among mum's papers (p12).

⁷ Based on [magnesium salicylate](#) and still available today.

⁸ Described as a [liniment](#) for muscular pains and aches.

⁹ [Alcoholic wine](#) that also contained cocaine.

Regelax¹⁰ and some Dr Cassels tablets¹¹. He was a small, slight youth. In June 1914, he was weighed and measured, he was 5ft 2½ins and 7st 1¼lbs (45kg). Among mum's papers was a height and weight card for grandad from September 1913 which gave his height then as 5' 1¼" and his weight at 6st 11lbs (43kg). He also recorded problems with his teeth and, in January 1917, had at least ten teeth out. He had dentures made in March 1917 and had them repaired and modified in January, June and July 1918.



Above left – examples of some of the remedies grandad used during this period. At the back are bottles for a free sample of Hall's wine tonic, St Jacob's oil and Dr Cassell's tablets. There is also a small tin of Zam-Buk. In front of those are adverts for Dr Cassell's tablets and Hall's wine and, in front of those, another advert for Dr Cassell's tablets and one for St Jacob's oil.

Above right – grandad's height and weight 1913

In August 2015, he filled in "degeneration forms". I assume this was some kind of deregistration form in relation to military call up. In June 1917, he recorded that his papers came from Mansfield and, in July 1917, he went to Mansfield to be examined. As a result of this, he wrote the single word "discharge". At the end of July 1917, his discharge papers¹² came from Derby. In January 1918, he

¹⁰ This appears to have consisted of [liquid paraffin](#).

¹¹ I am not sure exactly what was in these tablets but they were described as a nerve tonic and [marketed](#) for a wide range of disorders from headache to anaemia.

¹² There was a note related to this among mum's papers when she died. I am grateful to Ian Graham of the [World War 1 Facebook Group](#) for explaining that AFB stands for Army Form B and AFB2079 was a standard discharge from service certificate. ACI stands for Army Council Instruction.

received a doctor's bill of one guinea for his certificates. As far as I can see, grandad never appeared before [Kirkby Tribunal](#). Indeed, his diaries make no reference to appearing before any Tribunal.

To:-
W. J. Parker
72 Station St
East Kirkby

Herewith A.F.B-2079 issued to you, as being permanently and totally rejected for Service in accordance with A.C.I. 642 para 10. Please sign the receipt below, and return in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

[Signature]
Captain.
for Chief Recruiting Officer.
45th Recruiting Area.

DERBY.
24/5/1917

Grandad's discharge papers

So, it seems grandad was discharged from military service on health grounds but there was then the matter of what happened to his brothers. In January 1917, he noted that "*Cyril & Len went to Derby*". This may have been related to Tribunals and could have been an appeal at the County Tribunal although, in the case of Kirkby Tribunal, such appeals would presumably have been heard in Nottingham. It is therefore also possible that this trip was not connected to Tribunals at all.

On 1 February 1917, grandad noted that "*Len got Cond Ex at Mansfield*". I assume that this means a time-limited conditional exemption. However, I reviewed a newspaper [article](#) concerning the meeting of Mansfield Tribunal on 1 February 1917 and there is no record of Len's case being discussed. I wondered if it was possible that the article omitted a case or that grandad mixed up either the place or the date? So, I searched for Parkins attending Tribunals in Nottinghamshire around that date. I found an [article](#) in the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times of Friday 9 February 1917 which reported on a meeting of Blackwell Tribunal which had taken place in Mansfield on Thursday. I wonder if it was referring to the previous Thursday, 1 February, as if it had been the 8th, would it have said yesterday or last night? This article noted that John Leonard Parkin, a 28-year old married bootmaker from Wharf Road in Pinxton, had been granted a conditional exemption. So, it turns out that Leonard was seen at a Tribunal in Mansfield in February 1917 but it was the Blackwell Tribunal not the Mansfield one.

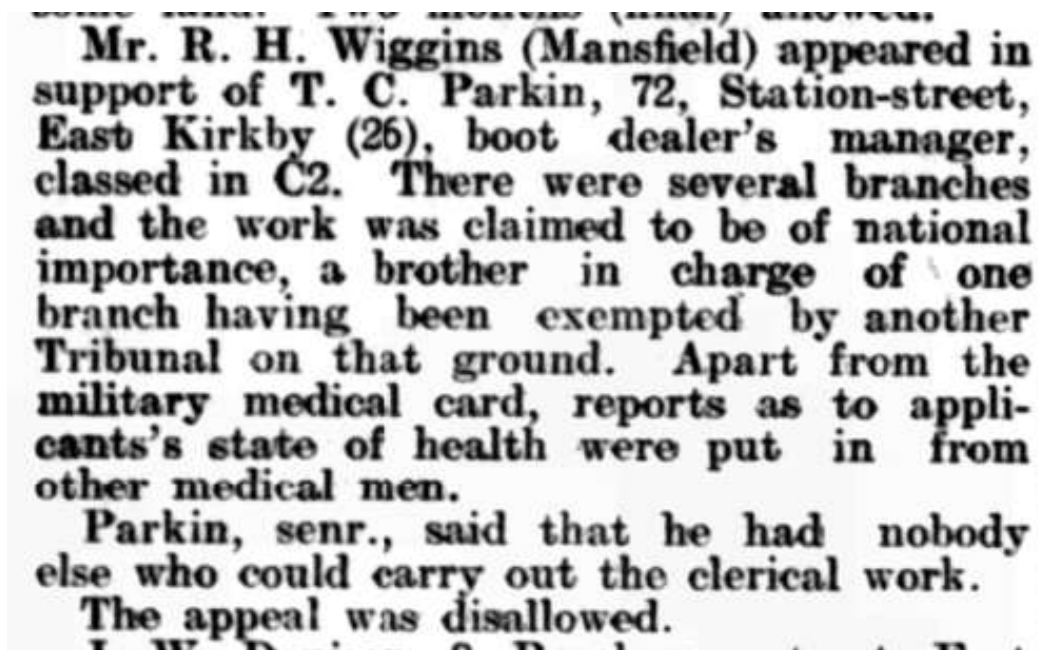
In June 1918, "*Len got discharged at Nottm*". I have not been able to find any news article confirming this. However, I have assumed that this followed a hearing at the County Tribunal.

It is not clear why Len was discharged while others in the family were called up. One factor may have been that, from May 1918, Len had been running the Pinxton business on his own. It is also possible that the decision to take this business on by himself might have been influenced by the pending

Tribunal appearance. One thing I had not realised was that bootmaking was considered work of national importance, particularly in a mining area, see [Kirkby Tribunal blog](#).

The first time grandad's diary mentioned Cyril in relation to a Tribunal was in May 1917. However, there is no diary for 1916. So, if Cyril went to a Tribunal in 1916, there would have been no record of this in grandad's diary. According to a [report](#) in The Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times of Friday May 19 1916, at a Tribunal meeting on 16 May 1916, *"the managing partner of a bootmaking and repairing concern appealed. He was 25 years old and his father was the senior partner but was not scholar enough to look after the business himself, and knew nothing of the retail trade. He asked for three months to get over the coming busy time – No exemption at all was allowed."* Although he is not named, I think this may refer to Cyril. The role and relationship between the son and the father would fit Cyril and Henry Parkin. Cyril was born in December 1890. So, in May 1916, he would have been 25. On balance, I suspect it was him but I don't know for sure.

Grandad noted in his diary, in May 1917, that Cyril went to Mansfield for his medical examination and was *"passed grade III"*. He also noted that on 4 June 1917, Cyril saw Dr Battle and also went to the Tribunal. I found a [report](#) of that hearing in the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times of Friday 8 June 1917. Cyril was supported by a Mansfield solicitor¹³, Mr R H Wiggins¹⁴. His age was given as 26 and he was described as a boot dealer's manager. His medical classification was given as C2. Reference is also made to reports from other medical men and presumably Dr Battle would be among them. The application was based on their work being of national importance. The case of a brother who was exempted on that basis was cited and presumably this refers to Leonard. Henry Parkin noted that he had no-one else to do the clerical work. However, the application was disallowed.



Mr. R. H. Wiggins (Mansfield) appeared in support of T. C. Parkin, 72, Station-street, East Kirkby (26), boot dealer's manager, classed in C2. There were several branches and the work was claimed to be of national importance, a brother in charge of one branch having been exempted by another Tribunal on that ground. Apart from the military medical card, reports as to applicants's state of health were put in from other medical men.
Parkin, senr., said that he had nobody else who could carry out the clerical work.
The appeal was disallowed.

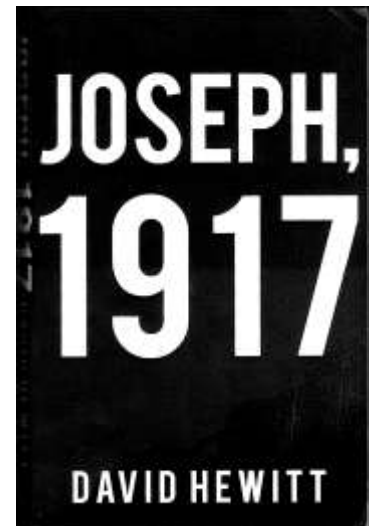
News cutting from the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times of Friday 8 June 1917 concerning Cyril's appearance at Kirkby Tribunal on 4 June 1917 obtained through paid subscription to [FindMyPast](#)

¹³ It was not unusual for applicants to be represented by someone else, commonly a relative, employer or a solicitor. However, this did lead to some criticism in the media that some solicitors were profiting from the Tribunals, see [Kirkby Tribunal blog](#).

¹⁴ I think he may have been Henry Parkin's lawyer as he acted for him in 1910 in a court case against Henry Goadby, see [Chapter 47](#). He was born in 1875 in Surrey. He married Ethel Lottie Halford in 1901. In 1911, Robert Henry Wiggins was living at "Magdala", The Park, Mansfield with his wife and their three children Ethel Irene Carrie (b1903), Halford Berridge (b1906) and Harry Desmond (b1908). They had five servants, two nurse, an under nursemaid, a cook and a house parlourmaid. It appears that he may have moved from the area as, in 1921, he and his wife were living in Poole. They had two more daughters, Barbara (b1911) and Betty Clara (b1914). In 1939, he appears to have still been living in Poole but he was now married to Hilda Elizabeth. He died in 1957.

Grandad noted, on 18 June 1917, that Cyril appealed to Nottingham but the Tribunal was “on strike” on the 19th. Initially, I was surprised to find that a Tribunal was on strike but found one [fairly well-documented case of such a strike](#) which relates to the case of Joseph Blackburn. In this case, the local Tribunal, in Thornton, decided that an exemption should be given on the basis that Joseph was a market gardener. However, the exemption was overturned by the Central Tribunal who considered that he was merely a “hawker” of fruit and vegetables and he was sent to the front. The Thornton councillors were outraged and vowed not to entertain any more military service appeals until Joseph was sent home. However, he was not. He was killed in action in August 1918.

However, in looking into the Kirkby Tribunal in more detail, it became clear that such Tribunal strikes were not uncommon. I have found evidence of such strikes in [Derby](#), [Mansfield](#), [Nottingham](#) and [Sutton](#). Commonly, they arose because the Tribunal was unhappy about how it was being treated by the War Office, other Tribunals and/or their Military Representative. There were other reasons though. For example, in [November 1918](#), there was a strike over the proposed amalgamation of Ilkeston, Heanor and Ripley Tribunals.



Book about the experiences of Joseph Blackburn and the Tribunal during the first world war

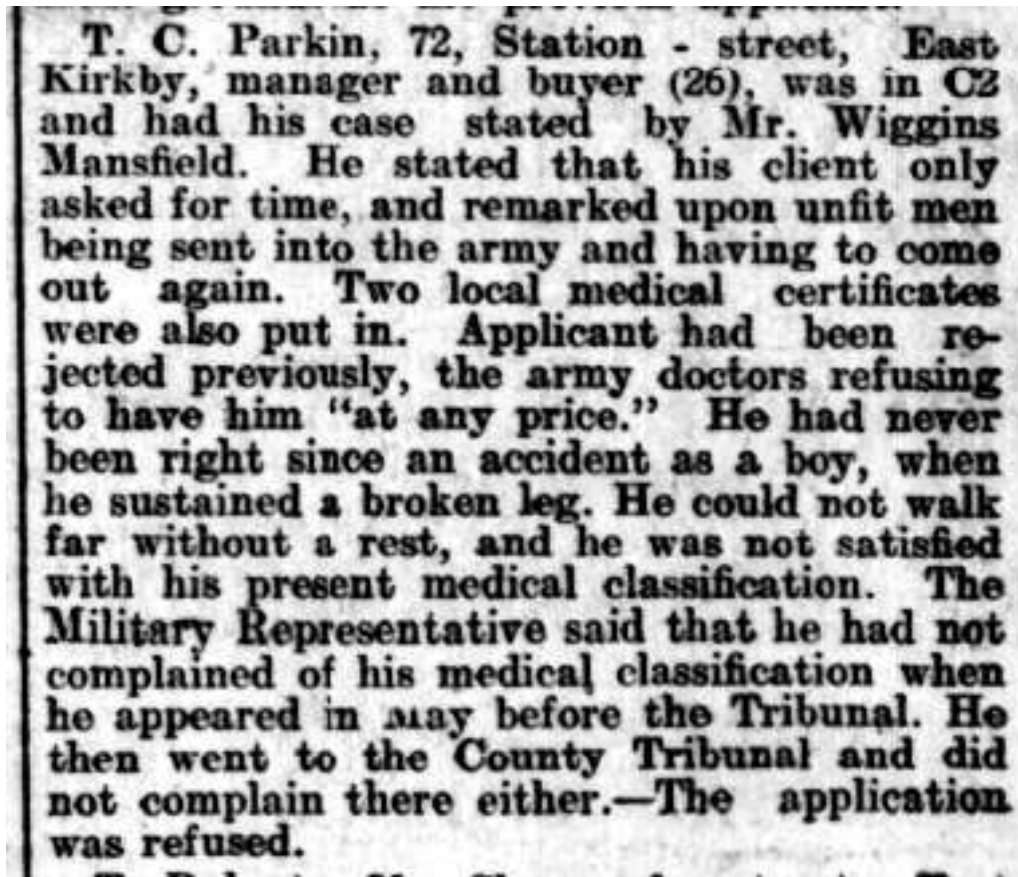
While I have not yet found information about the strike at Nottinghamshire County Tribunal which affected Cyril, I have found details of a strike by the Kirkby Tribunal which is relevant here.

On 23 June 1917, the Gazette and Echo [reported](#) that 25 applicants, who had attended the Tribunal the previous Tuesday, the 19th had had the benefit of a postponement because the Tribunal was on strike. The Chairman highlighted two cases over which the Tribunal was unhappy. The first related to a local colliery clerk who had been allowed three months by the Tribunal. He then appealed to the Colliery Tribunal who exempted him. The second case was of a conscientious objector who the Tribunal had recommended for non-combatant service. However, the War Office had not called him because of his religious beliefs.

The Tribunal’s first sitting after the strike was on Monday 16 July 1917. The Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times [reported](#) that the Chairman made a brief statement explaining why they had been on strike which focused on the intervention of the Colliery Tribunal. The Tribunal considered the matter at an end. The Chairman emphasised that if anyone was unhappy with a decision of the Local Tribunal they could appeal to the County or Central Tribunal.

Grandad noted on 31 July 1917 that Cyril “went to Derby”. As with previous trips, it is possible that this related to the Country Tribunal in Derby but it might not have done. However, it does seem that, for whatever reason, family appeals to County Tribunal took place in Derby and not in Nottingham as I might have expected. I found a news [report](#) in the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton-in-Ashfield Times of Friday 27 July 1917 concerning a Tribunal meeting which had taken place on the 24th and, at which, Cyril had had a further hearing. He was described as a manager and buyer and his medical classification was given as C2. He was again represented by the solicitor Robert Henry Wiggins. Mr Wiggins noted that Cyril was only asking for time. He also noted that unfit men had gone into the army only to be sent out again. They submitted two further medical certificates and recounted a story whereby Cyril had previously been rejected by the military saying that the army doctors refused to have him “at any price”. Part of the application was that “he had never been right since an accident as a boy, when he had sustained a broken leg. He could not walk far without a rest, and he was not satisfied with his

present medical classification". The Military Representative took objection to this saying that the applicant had not complained about his medical classification when he appeared before the Local Tribunal in May. He had then gone to the County Tribunal and also had not complained there. The application was refused.



T. C. Parkin, 72, Station - street, East Kirkby, manager and buyer (26), was in C2 and had his case stated by Mr. Wiggins Mansfield. He stated that his client only asked for time, and remarked upon unfit men being sent into the army and having to come out again. Two local medical certificates were also put in. Applicant had been rejected previously, the army doctors refusing to have him "at any price." He had never been right since an accident as a boy, when he sustained a broken leg. He could not walk far without a rest, and he was not satisfied with his present medical classification. The Military Representative said that he had not complained of his medical classification when he appeared in May before the Tribunal. He then went to the County Tribunal and did not complain there either.—The application was refused.

News cutting from the Mansfield Reporter and Sutton Times of Friday 27 July 1917 concerning Cyril's appearance at Kirkby Tribunal on 24 July 1917 obtained through paid subscription to [FindMyPast](#)

Grandad noted, on 10 August 1917, that "*dad went to Derby*" which I have assumed was related to an appeal for Cyril to the County Tribunal although I have not found any newspaper report of this. After this, on the 13th, grandad noted that "*Cyril went to Derby Passed in C1 Domestic*". My interpretation of this is that the County Tribunal agreed to a new medical assessment but that this assessment passed Cyril one grade higher than his previous assessment (C1 as opposed to C2). It then seems that the County Tribunal declined the application. Grandad noted, on the 14th, "*Cyril came from Derby in khaki*", i.e. in army uniform. He was then sent to barracks in Nottingham the following day but was granted a permit to come home on the 21st. In April 1918, grandad recorded that Cyril had 14 days leave and, in September, he was promoted to corporal.

Based on Cyril's military records, his service numbers were 91895 and 17332 and he initially joined the Sherwood Foresters but was quickly transferred, on 15 August 1917, to the Army Pay Corps. He had enlisted on 11 December 1915 but his service reckoned from 13 August 1917 which was the day he came home in khaki from Derby. The service record notes that he was promoted to Corporal on 15 August 1918 which is a little ahead of the date of September that grandad noted. He was demobilised on 8 March 1919, see [Chapter 12](#). Interestingly, on his discharge documents, his medical category is given as C3. His medical history form appears to be stamped as both C2 and C3. Under slight defects, he is noted to have "*marked genu valgum*" (knock knees) and "*poor physique*".

On 8 September 1915, grandad simply records that his friend *“Len Teece was missing”*. Len’s name is recorded among those killed in the war on the Trinity Sunday School memorial in Kirkby and also on the main Kirkby War Memorial. From other sources, Leonard Teece had been born in 1897 in Hucknall. His father (Philip) was a coal miner. His mother was called Annie (née Holland). Leonard had two brothers – James William and Frank. As of 1911, they were living in Milton Street in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Leonard enlisted with the sixth battalion, Lincolnshire regiment and was killed in action on 9 August 1915 at Gallipoli. He was 19 when he was killed. His name is commemorated on the [Helles Memorial](#) in Turkey along with 20,770 other names.

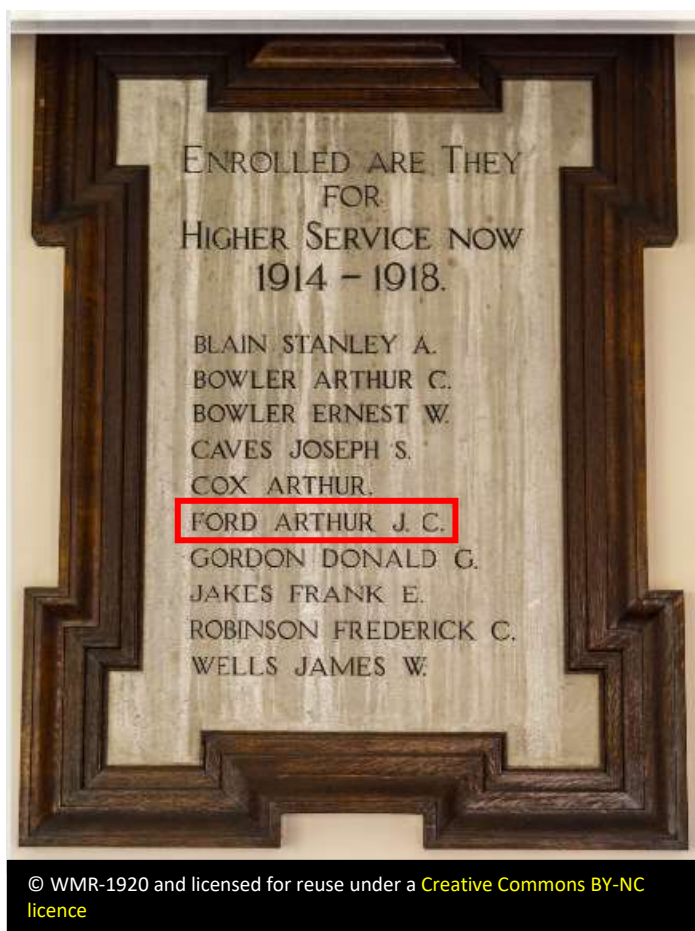


On 29 September 1915, grandad noted that there was *“a Milertary [sic] Funeral a soldier who died of wounds”*. However, he did not name the soldier. On 10 June 1918, grandad’s friend Willie Clover *“joined the colours”*. On 7 November 1918, just four days before the armistice was signed, *“Billy Clover got wounded”*. I have as yet been unable to find anything about how serious his wounds were or what happened to him.¹⁵

So, towards the end of the war, grandad and his brother Len had been discharged from military service. Cyril had been called up and was serving locally as a corporal. Joe had received his call up. Of his friends, Willie Clover had been injured and Len Teece had been killed.

Grandad recorded that a number of discharged soldiers *“started to learn the trade”*, i.e. shoemaking with one starting in 1917, two in 1918 and one in 1919. In addition, the business bought in a large number of old army boots. It is not exactly clear where these came from but, presumably, they were from dead or injured soldiers. There was a whole grading system, presumably based on quality, which determined price.

¹⁵ He appears to have survived the war as, in October 1921, grandad bought him a wedding present. According to FreeBMD, he married Elizabeth M Cuddy in Mansfield in Q4 1921 and they had five children – William H (1922), Ronald (1923), Dorothy M and John (1926 – twins?) and Joseph D (1928). Grandad noted going with him to Colwick to the Nottinghamshire show in June 1922. In 1929, he became unwell. Grandad and/or grandma visited him in hospital in March, April and May of that year. He died in October 1929 aged just 30. Grandad went to his funeral and visited his grave.



I have less information about anyone on grandma's side who served in the first world war. On the extensive Cirket family tree that mum had there is reference to an Arthur James Cirket having been killed in action in France. He was the son of Sarah Jane, the sister of grandma's father Charles, and her husband James Alfred Ford. So, he would have been grandma's cousin. Arthur James was born in 1892 and, of course, his surname was Ford, so Cirket was presumably a second middle name. He died on 5 March 1916 and is buried at Lapugnoy Military Cemetery in France. He is also remembered on a war memorial at [Elstow Bunyan Meeting House](#).¹⁶ He was a corporal in the 5th Battalion, Northamptonshire regiment and he died of his wounds.

Bunyan Fellowship Hall war memorial with name of Arthur James Cirket Ford highlighted

There are two Bowlers mentioned on the Elstow Bunyan Meeting House war memorial. [Arthur Charles Bowler](#) was the son of Christopher Ernest Bowler.¹⁷ He died on 17 November 1916 aged 20. He is buried in Contay British Cemetery in France. The other Bowler is Ernest Webb Bowler who was in the Machine Gun Corps. He died on 26 November 1916 and is buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord. I don't know if and how he is related to our family but, as a Bowler from Elstow, he is likely to be related in some way or other.

In August 2022, Jo and I visited Elstow and we attended a service at the church where the memorial is. Interestingly, there is also another memorial outside the church. Although there is overlap of the names on the two memorials¹⁸, Arthur Ford's name only appears on the church memorial and not on the village memorial. The same is true for Frank E Jakes. One possible explanation is that people attended the church who were not from Elstow but Arthur Ford was from Elstow or at least his mother was. According to the 1911 census, the family were living in Kempston, some four miles from Elstow and Arthur was working as an elementary teacher. Perhaps, his mother was considered to have left Elstow when she married and so he was not counted as coming from there. Again, according to the 1911 census, the record for his mother Sarah shows that she was born in Elstow but his shows that he was born in Bedford.

¹⁶ In addition, his brother Stanley Edgar Graham Ford, named his first son David Arthur Cirket Ford.

¹⁷ Grandma's mother's younger brother. So, grandma and Arthur Charles were first cousins.

¹⁸ Eight names appear on both memorials – Stanley A Blain, Arthur C Bowler, Ernest W Bowler, Joseph S Caves, Arthur Cox, Donald C Gordon, Frederick C Robinson and James W Wells. There are three names on the village memorial but not on the church one. They are Ernest H Bygrave, Richard F Chillery and Joseph E Goddard.



War memorial in Bunyan Fellowship Hall on visit to Elstow in August 2022

War memorial in Elstow village. It is just outside an old school which is next to the church where the other memorial is. Photo taken on visit to Elstow in August 2022.



Among mum's photographs, there were also some of grandma's brother Ray in uniform. I have found out that he served in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment.¹⁹ I also found out that, on 7 January 1918, he was transferred from No 11 Casualty Clearing Station to No 2 Casualty Clearing Station.²⁰ From the original records, it appears he was suffering from influenza.



Left – grandma's brother Ray in uniform. It is dated 13 November 1917 and says "To Ethel with fondest love Ray"
Above – grandma with her brothers Bert and Ray (in uniform)

I came across a photo in one of mum's albums that I have found extremely intriguing. From the other photos that are with it, it seems to have been taken in 1949 or 1950. It shows the Portsmouth Naval Memorial in Southsea with a group of people standing in front of two cars. It is annotated on the back and says "off Southsea near Portsmouth. The war memorial for the naval losses in 1914-18. Ted's name is on the panel facing the camera, the Cirket family & two cars". From a [map](#) of the site, the visible panels seem to be numbers 9-16. However, there is no-one with the name Cirket anywhere on the memorial and I was unable to find any reference to a Ted or Edward Cirket in any of mum's papers. I tried multiple lines of enquiry over several months, including reviewing all the Edwards listed on the memorial to see if any seemed familiar. I drew a blank.



off Southsea near Portsmouth
The war memorial for the
naval losses in 1914-18
Ted's name 2
is on the
panel facing the camera
The Cirket family & two cars

Above – Cirket family group in front of Portsmouth Naval Memorial
Left – annotation on the back of the photograph

¹⁹ Also known as the [Sherwood Foresters](#).

²⁰ From a [list](#) of locations of Casualty Clearing Stations, it appears he was transferred from [Godewaersvelde](#) to Authersteene (I have not been able to locate this place).

Then, I wondered if perhaps mum had visited the memorial with the Cirkets who lived in Hastings when she visited them in either 1949²¹ or 1950²² and if Edward could have been related to grandma's sister-in-law Doris. Her maiden name was Wright and she was born in 1905. Based on the 1911 [census](#), she was living in Hucknall with her father Joseph and her mother Mary. She had two older siblings, Joseph (b1893), who was working as a coal miner (road repairer below ground), and Rachel (b1895). Intriguingly, her brother's middle name was Edward and, given that he had the same first name as his father, whose middle name was Armstrong, it seems plausible that he would have been known as Edward or Ted. I then found a [record](#) of a Joseph Edward Wright who had been a British Royal Navy seaman. His birth date was given as 4 May 1893 and his place of birth as Alfreton, Derbyshire. Viewing the [original record](#), his occupation was given as a pony driver in a colliery. It seems he joined the navy on 13 March 1912, that is before the war started, and his service number was SS3878.

Joseph Edward Wright's naval record was as follows. From 13 March 1912 to 15 May 1912, he was assigned to [HMS Victory I](#) which I believe refers to [shore-based training](#) in Portsmouth.

From 16 May 1912 to 8 November 1912 he was stationed on [HMS Prince of Wales](#) and then served on [HMS Superb](#) for two years, from 9 November 1912 to 1 November 1914.

He then returned to [HMS Victory I](#) for two days, presumably for further training before being assigned to the shore establishment [HMS Excellent](#) for six months from 4 November 1914 to 13 May 1915. Might this have been for further training?

From 14 May 1915 to 8 May 1916, his record noted that he was serving on [Blake \(Broke\)](#) and then from 9 May 1916 to 31 May 1916 on [Hecla \(Broke\)](#). I don't quite understand these records but it [may be](#) that the unbracketed name is a shore accounting base and the name in bracket a seagoing ship. However, it seems that HMS [Blake](#), [Broke](#) and [Hecla](#) were all navy vessels during WW1. But, Blake and Hecla were both described as depot ships.



Public domain image provided by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

He was killed in action at the [Battle of Jutland](#) on 31 May 1916. HMS Broke was hit by fire from the German battleship Westfalen resulting in 50²³ crew being killed and a further 30 injured. The helmsman was killed and this caused HMS Broke to collide with HMS Sparrowhawk leading to the loss of the latter. In a [record](#) of British Armed Forces Overseas Deaths and Burials, Joseph Edward Wright was recorded as buried at sea. His father's name was given as Joseph Armstrong Wright who, at that time, was living in Rotherham. I confirmed that his name is [indeed on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial](#) on [panel 14](#).²⁴

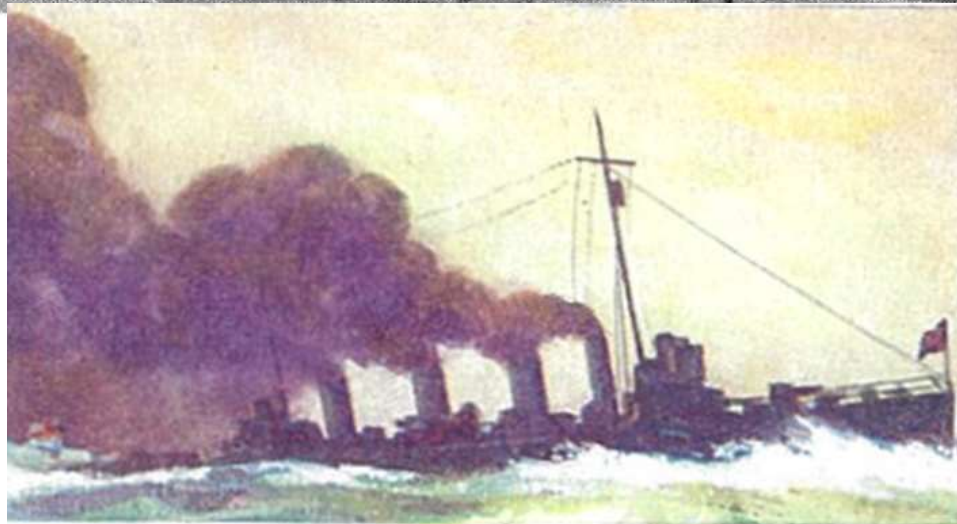
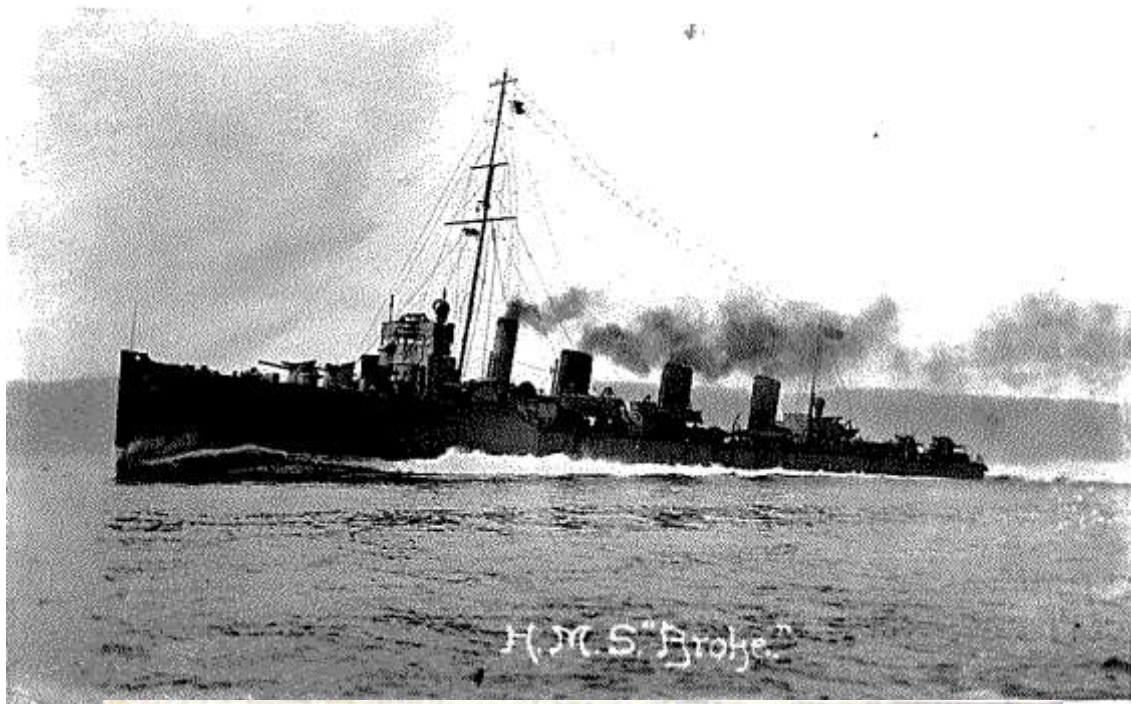
HMS Broke in dry dock in Tyneside following the Battle of Jutland in 1916. The picture shows the damage caused when she collided with HMS Sparrowhawk

²¹ [Chapter 40](#).

²² [Chapter 52](#).

²³ According to a [list](#), the number killed was 46 and included Joseph Edward Wright and John William Wilson.

²⁴ There is a photo of the entry related to him on the Wooster family [website](#).



BROKE. 1914-18

Top – postcard showing HMS Broke
Above – cigarette card showing HMS Broke produced by R & J Hill Ltd. The reverse side (right) gives some details of Broke but focuses on a later battle and does not mention her involvement in the Battle of Jutland

FAMOUS SHIPS

No. 10.

H.M.S. "BROKE."

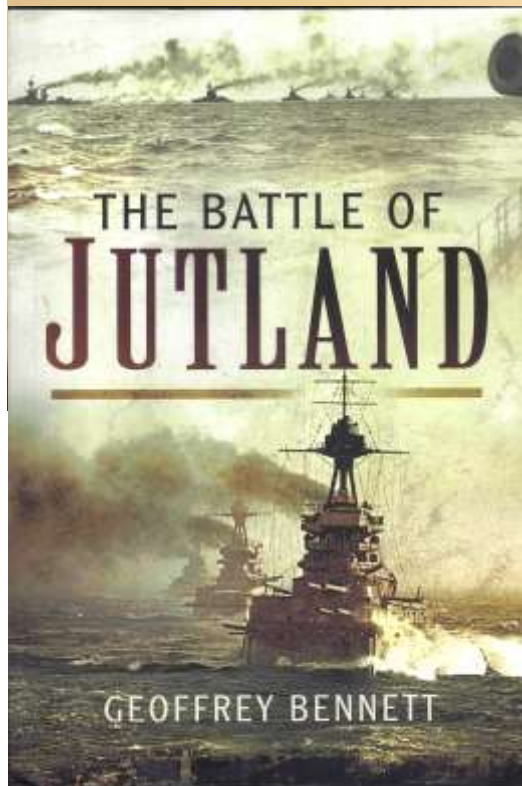
This vessel helped to make history during the conflict of 1914-18, under the command of the Arctic explorer Captain E. R. G. R. Evans.

In company with the *Suff*, she fought an action with six German destroyers, April 20th, 1917, off the Belgian coast, in complete darkness. One vessel was sunk by ramming, and a fierce hand-to-hand battle took place on the *Broke's* decks.

Broke formerly belonged to the Dover Patrol, but was sold to the Government of Chile in 1920. Her displacement was 1850 tons, and speed 31 knots. She carried six 4-inch and two machine guns, as well as four tubes for torpedoes.

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R. & J. HILL LTD.
 Proprietors of
HY. ARCHER & CO.
 LONDON & BIRMINGHAM

The Battle of Jutland



Above – sign for the Battle of Jutland in the National Museum of the Royal Navy that I visited in September 2022

Left – book about the Battle of Jutland that I bought following my trip to the National Museum of the Royal Navy in September 2022



*Top – large commemorative medallion from the Battle of Jutland in 1916
Above – “death penny” for John William Wilson who was also killed aboard HMS Broke during the Battle of Jutland. He is also commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial but on panel 20 [inset] as he was a Stoker First Class*



Image Source: [Find My Past](#)

This is a photograph of panel 14 of the Portsmouth Naval Memorial with the details for J E Wright highlighted. I am grateful to Nick Wooster, who took the pictures in 2017, for permission to include these here. There are two photos of Ted. Left – with friend Sid (seated). I am grateful to Dave Deeming for sharing this photo. Right – photo in [Sheffield Independent](#) of 9 June 1916

In September 2022, Jo and I managed to visit Portsmouth and went to visit the memorial. We found the memorial to Ted and also for John William Wilson whose “death penny” I have. We also visited the National Museum of the Royal Navy and found out more about the Battle of Jutland. We had a go at recreating the photo that mum had in her album which triggered my interest in this story.

WELCOME TO THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION'S Portsmouth Naval Memorial

This memorial commemorates more than 24,500 Royal Navy personnel who died during the World Wars: 9,700 in the First World War and 14,850 in the Second World War. These men and women have no grave but the sea: their bodies were lost with their ships, or given a traditional naval funeral and committed to the deep.

When a recruit joined the Royal Navy they were allocated to a 'manning port': Portsmouth, Plymouth or Chatham. After the end of the First World War, the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission built memorials at each of these ports, inscribed with the names of their dead. This had the symbolic effect of bringing them home.

Each of the three memorials took the form of an obelisk, which served as a marker for ships entering the safety of the ports. All were later expanded to incorporate the names of those from each manning port who died during the Second World War.

1 First World War memorial 2 Second World War extension



1 The copper globe symbolises the earth. It is a leading mark for ships, helping them navigate into Portsmouth Harbour.

2 Four bronze statues depict the 'four winds' about ships' prow.

3 Naval crown showing the sails and growth of wooden ships. Below it an anchor surrounded by a wreath: one half is laurel for victory, the other oak, reflecting the construction of ships in the age of sail.

4 Bronze reliefs above the names depict the key actions and battles fought by the Royal Navy during the First World War.

5 Four lions symbolise the British Empire. The Royal Navy played a key role in British imperial and military power in the early twentieth century.

6 The names of the First World War dead are inscribed on bronze panels attached to the obelisk's base.

7 The names of Second World War dead are inscribed on bronze panels attached to the surrounding walls.

8 Four Portland stone statues of sailors guard the memorial.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

No grave but the sea



Lieutenant Commander Malcolm Wardley, VC, commanded the Royal Navy submarine *Lopholoeche* during the Second World War. Operating from Malta in the Mediterranean, he was one of the most outstanding submariners of the war, undertaking many enemy vessels, including the Italian transport *Centa*. For his valour and relentless determination he received the Victoria Cross, Malabar and the entire crew of *Lopholoeche* disappeared while on patrol in April 1942. He was 30 years old. He is commemorated on Panel 61, Column 1.

Malcolm Wardley VC, WW2 723

Design and unveiling



The First World War obelisk was designed by Sir Robert Lorimer, with sculpture by Henry Poole. It was unveiled by Prince Albert, the Duke of York (later King George VI) in 1914.

The Second World War extension in the form of a wall was designed by Sir Edward Maufe, with sculpture by Sir Charles Wheeler, William Meredith and Edward Burton. It was unveiled by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in 1954.

Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, inspects Royal Marines in the unveiling of the 1914-1954 extension, 1954 © CWGC

Commonwealth War Graves Commission



We honour and care for the men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, ensuring they will never be forgotten. Funded by six Member Governments, our work began with building and now maintaining cemeteries at 23,000 locations all over the world.

Today, over a century after we first began, our work continues through our staff, supporters and volunteers who preserve our unique cultural, horticultural and architectural heritage and ensure that the stories of those who died are told.

© CWGC Delmar

Scan the QR code to discover more about this memorial

For more information about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, or to search our records online, visit www.cwgc.org



1914	1916	1917	1918	1924	1939	1941	1942	1944	1945	1953	1960	2016
Outbreak of First World War	Battle of Jutland (3,400 commemorated here)	Creation of the Imperial War Graves Commission	End of First World War	Portsmouth Memorial unveiled	Outbreak of Second World War	HMS <i>Hood</i> sunk (1,380 commemorated here)	HMS <i>Lopholoeche</i> sunk in Mediterranean (14 commemorated here)	D-Day Normandy landings	End of Second World War	Portsmouth Second World War Memorial unveiled	Our names thought to Commonwealth War Graves Commission	Portsmouth Memorial Ford Gate 1

Sign at the Portsmouth Naval Memorial which gives information about it including that the original first world war monument was unveiled in 1924. The second world war extension was unveiled in 1954 and would not have been there when mum visited in 1949 or 1950



Portsmouth Naval Memorial in September 2022 from Southsea Common with the WW1 obelisk in the centre and the WW2 wall extending to both sides



Mum's original photo alongside a similar one I took in September 2022 more than 70 years later. The lampposts are the same but the parking meter is new!

I also found another photograph among mum's papers. She did not know who it was of and it is simply labelled "*Your Old Sport, still smiling 1917*". It is clearly a photograph of a soldier from the First World War.

Initially, I thought it might have been Cyril, grandad's brother as I knew from the diaries that he was drafted in 1917. However, with some help from the [Kirkby Living Memory Facebook group](#), I discovered that the cap badge in the photograph is from the Royal Artillery. However, Cyril was briefly in the Sherwood Foresters and then in the Army Pay Corps. So, it seemed unlikely that the photograph was of Cyril.

I also found a record of a James H Parkin who was in the army from 1914 to 1920 initially as a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery²⁵ and then with the Labour Corps.²⁶ My suspicion is that this photograph is of grandad's older brother James (Jim). Grandad's diaries say nothing about any military service Jim might have had during the first war. However, there is a note to say that Jim started work at the Summit in March 1920. This would fit with him leaving the army at that point and the fact that he served in the Labour Corps might indicate that he had prior experience as a miner.



Left - I believe this may be a photograph of grandad's oldest brother James (Jim) Henry Parkin
Above – Royal Artillery cap badge

In her book(let) "*I Remember*" (from p23), Edith Searson describes her experiences of the first world war. Her family were farming in an area adjacent to one the government chose for a new air base at Cranwell. She described going to the funeral of the first trainee pilot to be killed there and also Zeppelins coming over to bomb the airfield. She recalled a number of young men killed during the first world war. They included a farmhand, Sam, her cousin, Richard and a farmer's son, Harry. Her brother, Alfred, served in the war and she describes in detail journeys she used to make to Sleaford by bike to collect letters from him. Eventually, letters stopped coming from him as he was killed on 31 July 1917 aged just 21. He was a private in the Lincolnshire Regiment and he is remembered at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial in Belgium.

²⁵ Apparently, [one of three regiments](#) within the Royal Artillery in World War One. The other two were the Royal Horse Artillery and the Royal Garrison Artillery.

²⁶ This was [in operation from 1917 to 1918](#) and consisted of men with experience of picks and shovels, e.g. miners who might be unfit for fighting.

I got some details of the experiences of the Newcombe family of the first world war from Helen Jay. William Newcombe was a Bombardier in the Royal Field Artillery and his service number was 82032. He was killed on 9 October 1916 and he is buried/remembered at St Sever Cemetery, Rouen B 16 61. His name is also included on the memorial at Trinity Methodist Church.²⁷ William's older brother Phil also served in the first world war. His service number was 61099 and he reached the rank of Corporal in the West Yorkshire Regiment. Albert, Frank and Phil Newcombe all received [temporary exemptions](#) to military service from Kirkby Tribunal.



I am grateful to Helen Jay for these photos and permission to include them
Above far left – notice of William's death that was sent to people to post in their windows
Above left – Phil Newcombe's medal
Above – Phil Newcombe (top right) with his colleagues. It looks like he may have been Acting Sergeant at this point. The photo appears to have been taken in Bury St Edmunds
Left – Phil Newcombe's dog tag. Note the service number

²⁷ See [Chapter 8](#).