

Local Heroes from Around the World

by Ian Chambers

Men from all of the area that now makes up Milton Keynes served in the armed forces during the Great War. The 'Soldiers Died In The Great War' database, (British Army), gives the following figures of men who declared their place of residence as being in the city area when they joined up:

Newport Pagnell	83	North Crawley	5	Astwood	1
Bletchley	55	Emberton	4	Filgrave	1
Wolverton	48	Little Brickhill	4	Haversham	1
Olney	36	Bow Brickhill	3	Lathbury	1
Woburn Sands	31	Newton Blossomville	3	Loughton	1
Stony Stratford	26	Stoke Goldington	3	Milton Keynes	1
Hanslope	15	Wavendon	3	Moulsoe	1
Old Bradwell	7	Weston Underwood	3	New Bradwell	1
Fenny Stratford	6	Calverton	2	Ravenstone	1
Sherington	5	Woughton	2		

This, of course, only records those that died; it does not include the many that returned.

It also does not record the many men from this area that fought in the uniform of another country. The local memorials do however, in many cases, record the names of those who had travelled to the far-flung corners of the Empire to start a new life but returned to Europe in the uniform of their adoptive countries to lay down their lives in the mud of France and Belgium for the old country.



The memorial in Queensway, Bletchley, commemorates three such men:

Francis John Vasey
was working as a farm hand
in Australia

Cyril Ralph Hill
was working as a box
maker in Canada, and

**Robert James
Warr**
was working as a stoker
in New Zealand.

Read on to find out more about them

E. A. ASHTON	H. E. CRANE
F. BARDEN	E. F. CRANWELL
S. BARDEN	H. CUTLER
W. BARDEN	F. J. DANIEL
B. E. BALDWIN	G. F. DAY
F. C. BALDWIN	A. DOYLE
E. C. BATTAMS	E. H. FENNEMORE
G. M. BENBOW	A. FRENCH
A. BETTS	J. W. GARNER
H. BIGGS	H. T. GOODMAN
S. W. BREWER	W. GUESS
J. BRIDGE	F. W. CURNY
H. BROOKS	C. HILL
C. W. BUXTON	C. HOLTON
A. CHARTER	F. H. IYENS
H. COOK	T. JACKMAN
J. COX	C. JAMES

A. R. JORDON	A. S. ROWE
F. KING	J. SCOTT
H. J. KITCHENER	W. B. SOUSTER
J. LANGLEY	H. SOUTHWELL
J. S. LITCHFIELD	H. J. STEVENS
V. C. LORO	J. TAYLOR
J. P. MASON	A. THOROGOOD
H. T. MORRIS	A. THURLOW
S. S. MORRIS	G. TOWNSHEND
H. MUNDAY	F. J. VASEY
V. PAGE	A. T. WARR
H. L. PERRY	B. W. C. WARR
T. C. PERRY	R. WHATLEY
F. T. PURCELL	S. W. WHITE
W. J. QUIMBY	C. WHITING
S. L. READ	A. WINGFIELD
T. C. RICHARDSON	C. H. WRIGHT
	H. J. WALLINER

FRANCIS JOHN VASEY

PRIVATE 3226

11th BATTALION

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

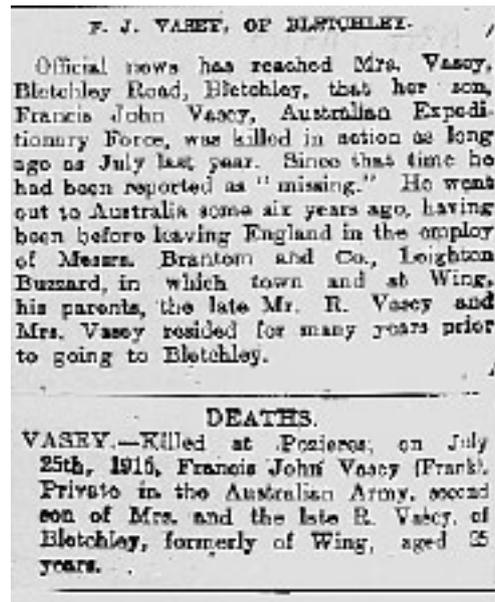


Robert Vasey, a widower, of Wing, a small North Buckinghamshire village halfway between Aylesbury and Bletchley, married Emma Woods, Spinster, of Southcote, Linslade, an equally small Bedfordshire village near Leighton Buzzard, at Wing Parish Church, on 6 April 1885. By the time of the 1891 census, they were living at Aylesbury Road, Wing, and had two sons, Robert Jnr, aged 3, and Francis aged 6 months, both of whom had been born in the village.

After leaving school Francis worked as a clerk for Messrs. Brantom & Co. coal/corn merchants of Leighton Buzzard and also served in the Bedfordshire Yeomanry for two years before emigrating to Australia, c1911. Here in the summer of 1915 he was working in the wheat belt area of Western Australia, (W.A.). Information given by his Mother after the war stated that Francis had been working as a farmer at Wickepin, W.A., however, official Australian records, while confirming his occupation as a farmer, show that at the time of his enlistment he was living at 177 Presse Street, Boulder, W.A.

He signed up for the Australian Imperial Force at Blackboy Hill, Perth, W.A., which was a large training camp, on 29th June 1915. His Attestation Papers do not record his date of birth, but give his age as 24 years and 8 months; this confirms the census information and pinpoints his birth to October - November 1890. It also shows that his next of kin, his Mother, was now living at 27 Bletchley Road, Bletchley.

Following a period of training, along with the rest of the 11th Battalion Reinforcements, he embarked on H.M.A.T. A38, 'Ulysses' at Fremantle, W.A. on 2 November 1915 and sailed to Egypt, where they joined up with what was left of the 11th Battalion, which had been evacuated from Gallipoli. On 29 March 1916 the battalion embarked on the 'Corsican' at Alexandria and sailed for France, arriving at Marseilles on 5 April 1916. In less than four months Francis was dead. The battalion's first experience of the Western Front was in the Armentieres area and apart from a few trench raids, including being on the receiving end of a heavy German raid on 30 May, they saw little action prior to the start of the battle of The Somme on 1st July 1916. Although the Australians missed the carnage of the first day of the battle, over the next month and a half, as the battle stuttered on, they suffered 23,000 casualties.

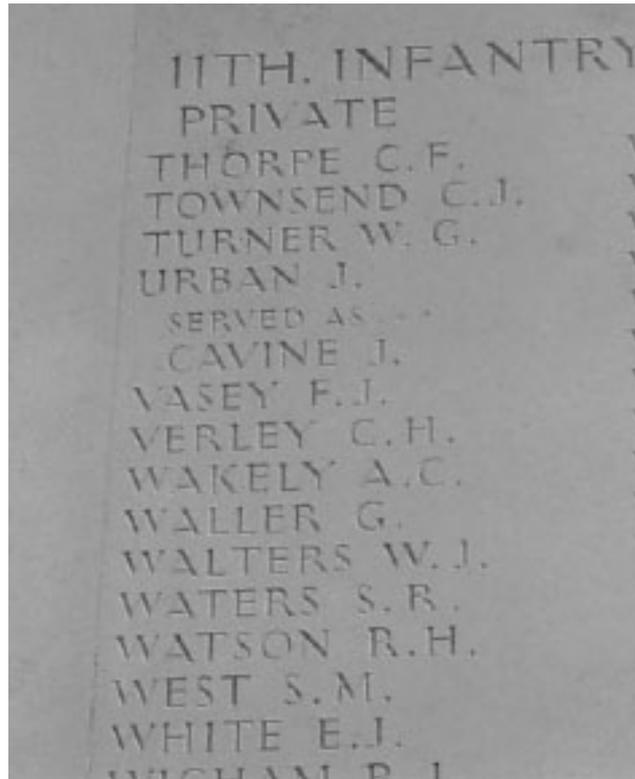


Francis was one of these; he was reported as having gone missing in action on 25th July 1916 at Pozieres, as they tried to take the village. However, it was not until 20th June 1917, that a Court Of Enquiry officially declared that he had in fact been killed in action on that day. His body was not identified as being recovered and therefore he has no known grave. He is remembered on the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.



The Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux

The Villers-Bretonneux Memorial is the Australian National Memorial erected to commemorate all Australian soldiers who fought in France and Belgium during the First World War, to their dead, and especially to those of the dead who have no known grave. There are 10,700 Australian servicemen named on the memorial who died in the battlefields of the Somme, Arras, the German advance of 1918 and the Advance to Victory.



The memorial stands in the grounds of the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery (both were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens), and was unveiled in July 1938 by King George VI. The cemetery itself was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from other burial grounds in the area, and from the battlefield clearance. There are now 2,141 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery and the graves of two New Zealand airmen of the Second World War. Of the First World War burials, 770 are Australian.

The central tower is open to the public. Those brave enough to make the climb will be rewarded with magnificent views, north across the Somme Valley and west towards Amiens.

Although the memorial and cemetery bear the name of Villers-Bretonneux, they are situated some two miles north of that village and are actually nearer to the village of Fouilloy.

CYRIL RALPH HILL

**PTE. 192242
QUEBEC REGIMENT
42ND BATTALION,
CANADIAN INFANTRY**



Cyril Ralph Hill was born in Simpson in late 1898 (the April 1901 Census shows his age as two) one of at least eight children of John and Lucy Hill. Somewhere prior 1915 he emigrated to Canada, where he worked as a box maker and lived with his sister Mrs. Violet Rollings and her family at 48 Sully Crescent, Toronto.

It was in Toronto on 10 August 1915, that Cyril joined the 92nd Overseas Battalion, Highlanders, Canadian Expeditionary Force. From the records available in this country, such as the 1901 Census, this would have made him two months short of his seventeenth birthday, and too young to join up. However, on his attestation paper he gave his date of birth as 5 October 1896, thus making him two months short of his nineteenth birthday and well past the age restriction of eighteen. This would indicate that Cyril was one of those young men, who, desperate not to miss the chance of seeing action, lied about their date of birth when joining up.

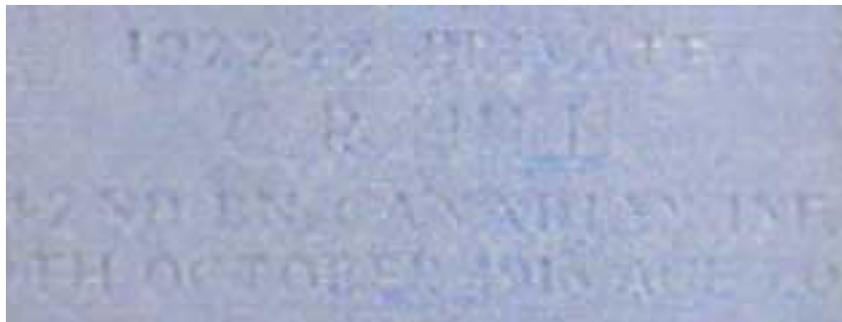
Cyril, would then have undergone a period of training before he embarked on the 'Empress Of Britain' on 20 May 1916, at Halifax, Nova Scotia, disembarking in England nine days later. In August, just a year after enlisting, he was transferred to the 42nd Battalion, Quebec Regiment, and landed in France.

The regimental history records the following details for the period immediately before Cyril's death. The unit returned to the trenches from a rest period on 5 October, on 7 October they were relieved and moved back into brigade reserve, only to be called up again on 8 October. During the first period (5 to 7 October) a recon party was moving forward to liaise with 43 Battalion HQ, when a direct hit caused numerous casualties. Once the unit was in their position a sharp bombing attack occurred on their post at Kenora Trench. The attack was repulsed but again they had numerous casualties. Finally, on 8 October, having been recalled to the front, they again suffered casualties.

As is usually the case in these histories, while the officers might be mentioned by name, the rank and file are not. Consequently, it is impossible to say in which of these actions Cyril received the wounds that were to prove fatal. The only thing that is certain is that he was evacuated to the 2/1st South Midland Casualty Clearing Station where he passed away on 9 October.



Cyril's Headstone, September 2002



Cyril is buried in the Communal Cemetery Extension in the village of Warloy-Baillon. The village stands on the D919, about 21 kilometers northeast of Amiens, and the cemetery stands on the east side of the village. The first Commonwealth casualties to be buried in the village were interred in the communal cemetery between October 1915 and 1 July 1916. Following the attack on the German front line some eight kilometers away on 1 July, the extension was begun on the eastern side of the cemetery. Most of burials contained therein are from the period July to November 1916, although there are also some from Germany's spring 1918 attack.



Pte. Highgate, William George. 10th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Albert Fletcher. 200th Bn.
 Spt. Hill, Albert Joseph. 200th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Archibald Joseph. 8th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Arthur. 27th Bn.
 Spt. Hill, Charles Mansford. 56th Bn.
 Cpl. Hill, Charles Henry. 8th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Cyril. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Cyril Ralph. 42nd Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Ernest G. 5th C.M.R.
 Pte. Hill, Frederick Charles. 42nd Bn.
 Spt. Hill, Frederick John. 1st Bn.
 Pte. Hill, George. 15th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, George. 15th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Herbert Merlin. 28th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Herbert Franklin. 60th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Horace. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Howard Edgar. 8th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, James Gordon. 11th Field Amb.
 Pte. Hill, John. 15th Bn.
 Cmr. Hill, John Emerson. 4th Bde. C.F.A.
 Pte. Hill, Joseph. 51st Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Joseph Leslie. 21st Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Lawrence. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Maynard M^cDougall. 107th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Reginald George. 1st Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Roy. 125th Bn.
 I. Cpl. Hill, Rufus Charles. 13th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Sam. 144th Bn.
 I. Cpl. Hill, William. 5th C.M.R.
 Pte. Hill, William. 2nd C.M.R.
 Pte. Hill, William. 50th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, William Earl. 27th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, William Lowrie. 49th Bn.
 Spt. Hilliard, Eldon. 2nd C.M.R.
 Pte. Hilder, George Henry. 1st C.M.R.
 Pte. Hilder, Sidney. 49th Bn.
 Pte. Hilder, William Ernest. 58th Bn.
 Pte. Hillis, Harold. 20th Bn.
 Pte. Hillman, Noble Charles. 2nd Field Amb.
 Pte. Hills, Thomas William. 5th Bn.
 Pte. Hills, William. 1st Bn.
 Pte. Hillson, John. 13th Bn.
 Dvr. Hillson, Larry. 1st D.A.C.
 Pte. Hillson, Oswald Hume. 20th Bn.
 Spt. Hillson, William Henry. C.P.C.
 I. Cpl. Hillis, Chilton. 25th Bn.
 Pte. Hillis, Donald James. 4th C.M.R.
 Pte. Hillis, Zenas. 4th Bn.
 Pte. Hilsper, Thomas. 20th Bn.
 Pte. Hinch, Charles Thomas. 1st Div. Bn.
 Pte. Hirschhite, Frank. R.C.R.
 Pte. Hirschhite, Frank. 4th Bn.
 Pte. Hirschhite, Russell K. 5th Bn.
 Pte. Hinde, Arthur. 20th Bn.
 Pte. Hindle, Cyril Stainsby. 2nd C.M.R.
 Pte. Hinds, Arthur. 52nd Bn.
 Cpl. Hinds, John Thomas. 102nd Bn.
 Pte. Hines, Fleming. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hines, Stewart Christopher. 49th Bn.



Pte. Hines, Thomas. 161st Bn.
 I. Spt. Hinshaw, Richard. 3rd Bn.
 Pte. Hinshelwood, James. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hinshelwood, James. 43rd Bn.
 Pte. Hinton, Frederick. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hinton, Thomas. P.P.C.I.I.
 Lieut. Hipswell, John Basil. 2nd Bde. C.F.A.
 Pte. Hirst, John. 10th Bn.
 Pte. Hurtle, Frank Harold. R.C.R.
 Pte. Huscock, Arthur Henry. 3rd Bn.
 Pte. Huscock, John. 42nd Bn.
 Pte. Huslop, Andrew. 21st Bn.
 Cpl. Hitchcock, Albert Edward Joseph. 58th Bn.
 Pte. Hitchings, George William. 50th Bn.
 Pte. Hitchman, Frank. 75th Bn.
 Pte. Hoar, Harold Foster. 2nd Bn.
 Lieut. Hoare, Charles Waller. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hoare, David. 16th Bn.
 Cpl. Hoare, Ernest. 13th Bn. Hoop.
 Pte. Hoare, John James. Inf. Det.
 I. Spt. Hoare, John William. 14th Bn.
 Pte. Hobbs, Charles. 2nd Bn.
 Pte. Hobbs, George Alfred. 58th Bn.
 Pte. Hobbs, James. P.P.C.I.I.
 Pte. Hobbs, John Henry. 58th Bn.
 Pte. Hobden, Cecil. 27th Bn.
 Lieut. Hobden, Stephen G.; D.C.M. 3rd Bn.
 Pte. Hobden, Walter James. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hobden, Ross. 4th C.M.R.
 Pte. Hobden, William James. 44th Bn.
 Spr. Hobin, John. R.C.E.
 Lieut. Hobbart, Charles Hamilton. 25th Bn.
 Pte. Hobson, Charles Vincent. 12th Bn.
 Pte. Hockridge, George Philip. 25th Bn.
 Pte. Hodge, John Harry. 10th Bn.
 Spr. Hodge, Raymond Eberidge. 1st Div. Coy.
 Pte. Hodge, Thomas Tomkinson. 2nd Bn.
 Pte. Hodges, Dudley Howard. 3rd Bn.
 Pte. Hodges, Edward. 2nd Div. Bn.
 Pte. Hodges, George Edward Francis. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgkin, William Henry. 1st Bn.
 Pte. Hodgins, David Isaac. 27th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgins, John James. 29th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgins, Joseph Libern. 17th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgins, Samuel Edward. 6th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgkins, Percy. 13th Bn.
 Spt. Hodgkinson, Arthur Victor. C.A.D.C.
 Pte. Hodgkinson, Joseph. 25th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Arthur. 102nd Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Herbert Roy. 13th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Joseph Milton. 20th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Samuel Procter. 13th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Thomas. 13th Bn.
 Pte. Hodgson, Walter J. 4th Bn.
 Pte. Hodson, Joseph. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hodson, William James. 19th Bn.
 Pte. Hoegy, Earl Henry. 46th Bn.



The Canadian Book of Remembrance

Cpl. Hill, Charles Henry. 10th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Cyril. 24th Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Cyril Ralph. 42nd Bn.
 Pte. Hill, Ernest G. 5th C.M.R.



**ROBERT JAMES
WARR**

**PRIVATE 8/2170
1ST BATTALION
OTAGO REGIMENT
NEW ZEALAND
EXPEDITIONARY
FORCE**



William James Warr married Elizabeth Coleman on 8 July 1878 at St. Martins Church, Fenny Stratford. The 1881 census shows they were living at Back Lane, Fenny Stratford; William's age was given as 24 years old and he worked as a Fireman on the London & North Western Railways; Elizabeth was 20 and a housewife; they also had two children, Alice May, aged 2, and William Jnr aged 5 months.

By the time of the 1891 census they were living in West View and had had a further four children, Minnie 8, Ellen 6, Annie 4 and Robert James who was a few months. (1)

Ten years later at the 1901 census they had moved to St. Martins Road, and there were another two children, Percy 9 and Frederick 5.

Robert was living at 105 Eden Terrace, Auckland, and working as a stoker for the Portland Cement Company when he joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 20 February 1915, aged 23. He was not married and gave his next of kin as his father who was then living at 15 South Terrace, Bletchley. He also declared that he had previously served for three and three quarter years in the Royal Navy.

He underwent training in New Zealand until 12 June 1915.



Robert's headstone, July 2004

Robert was entitled to three medals:



The 1914-15 Star was authorised in 1918 and was awarded to those who saw service in France & Flanders between 23 November 1914 & 31 December 1915 and to those who saw service in any other operational theatre between 5 August 1914 & 31 December 1915.



The British War Medal 1914-1920, was authorised in 1919, and was awarded to eligible service personnel and civilians alike. The basic qualification requirement for army personnel was that they entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918, or served in Russia in 1919/20.



The Victory Medal was also authorised in 1919 and was awarded to all eligible personnel who served on the establishment of a unit in an operational theatre.

Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial



A view of part of the cemetery taken from below the Cross of Sacrifice

The cemetery is so named because buildings that originally stood on the site reminded soldiers of the Northumberland Fusiliers of cottages that stood on the river Tyne in northern England. The site on the Passchendaele-Broodseinde road, contained several German Pill Boxes and was taken on 4 October 1917, by the 2nd Australian Division during the advance on Passchendaele during the 3rd Battle of Ypres. From the date of its capture to the end of March 1918, 343 burials took place, the area then passed back into German hands from 13 April to 28 September 1918, before being liberated for the last time. After the war, the battlefields were cleared and the remains found there, plus those from several smaller cemeteries were consolidated at Tyne Cot, increasing the number of Commonwealth burials to 11,953, of which 8,366 are unidentified, thus making it the largest Commonwealth War Cemetery in the world. Four of the German Pill Boxes were incorporated into the design of the cemetery, and the Cross of Sacrifice actually stands on the top of the largest of these.

The north-eastern wall of the cemetery is formed by the Tyne Cot Memorial, which is one of four memorials to those who have no known grave in Belgian Flanders, and which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until mid 1918 when the Allies broke the Germans and started on the final advance to victory. On this wall are engraved the names of almost 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom and New Zealand who died in the Ypres Salient between 16 August 1917 and 11 November 1918, and who either have no grave, or whose graves are not known.

Note:

(1) This does not tie in with the date of birth, 28 October 1891 that Robert gave on his Attestation Papers. The 1891 census was taken on ? April, 1891, Robert was declared on this a being a few months old and so presumably he must have been born on 28 October 1890.