

**Copeland**  
**Private William Copeland**  
**29900 12th Bn. Lincolnshire Regiment**  
**died February 26th 1921 Age 49**

William was the son of George and Frances Copeland. He was born *circa* 1872 at Gillow Heath and grew up in the village. In 1881 the family lived in Mow Lane. George and Frances had a large family, all born in Biddulph: Jane, Annie, Mary, Thomas, Walter, Hannah, William and Sarah. George was a coal miner and his sons followed and also became miners. They were still living at Gillow Heath in 1891 but George died in 1898 and by 1901 only William remained at home with his widowed mother. In this census return William's age was recorded as 29 and he also stated that he was single. His mother died in 1906 aged 72.

He states on enlistment that his next of kin was his brother Walter of Station Road, Biddulph and also that he had married Sarah Ellen Moors in Congleton in 1893.

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT ON ENLISTMENT.			
Applicable to all ranks. To correspond with entries on the Medical History Sheet.			
Name <i>William Copeland</i>			
Apparent age <i>39</i> years <i>3</i> months.		Height <i>5</i> feet <i>6 1/2</i> inches.	
Chest measurement	Girth when fully expanded <i>35 1/2</i> inches.		
	Range of expansion <i>1 1/2</i> inches.		
Distinctive marks			
INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY RECRUIT.			
Name and Address of next of kin <i>Walter Copeland, Station Rd., Biddulph</i>   Relationship <i>Brother</i>			
Particulars as to Marriage.			
(a) Christian and Surname of Woman to whom married, and whether spinster or widow. (b) Place and date of marriage. (c) Present address. (d) Signature of Officer verifying entry from certificate.			
<i>Sarah Ellen Moors</i> <i>spinster</i>	<i>Parish Church</i> <i>Congleton</i> <i>1893</i>	<i>Deceased</i>	(d) Verified from certificate.
Particulars as to Children.			
Christian Names	Date and Place of Birth	(d)	
Verified from certificate.			

The only marriage found for a William Copeland in 1893 in Congleton occurred in the first quarter of that year and was to Alice Fynney. However, no death can be found for either Alice Fynney or Alice Copeland.

In 1891 there was a Sarah Ellen Moores living with her parents, Cecil and Emma, and six siblings at 46, Bromley Street, Congleton. Sarah Ellen was still with her parents at the same address in 1901 but with two children, Melindra born 1897 and Annie born 1898. Sarah Ellen was allegedly single. They were noted as being grand-

daughters of Cecil and Emma with no indication of parentage but Sarah Ellen was the oldest in the family and no-one else could feasibly have been their mother. Cecil, Emma, Sarah Ellen and grand-daughters, by then 14 and 13, were at 9, Spring Street, Congleton in 1911. So, were William and Sarah Ellen married, had they then separated, and were both calling themselves single in 1901? No death could be found for Sarah Ellen before 1915 when William enlisted, so maybe, he meant 'deceased to him'. Why did he not enter 'widower' as his marital status in 1901 if Sarah Ellen had died?

From the papers which have survived we see that on enlistment in Lichfield on September 8th 1915 he gave his age as being 39. This indicates a birth of about 1876. Maybe, just as the young men added years on, William had taken years off. He was apparently just under 5ft 7in tall. He also stated that he was married, but then said that his wife was deceased. He gave his occupation as collier and he was of no fixed address. Indeed, no address was found for him in 1911. The documents indicate that originally he was in the North Staffordshire Regiment with a regimental number of 18789.

William enlisted in the 11th (Reserved) battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. This battalion was a home-based training unit. His basic training was carried out at Rugeley Camp on Cannock Chase. If this is the correct William Copeland then the notes read that he was a declared deserter on April 9th 1916 but re-joined on May 22nd 1916. For his sins, he was sentenced by the District Court Martial to 112 days in the Guard Detention Room. This was to be cancelled on July 31st when he was transferred to the 12th (Labour) battalion Lincolnshire Regiment.

This battalion was due to sail for France in early August 1916 so maybe some arrangement was made. William crossed the Channel on August 8th 1916 with his new mates who had also only recently joined this newly formed battalion. On arrival they transferred to the Lines of Communications where the 12th battalion commenced their duties. A Labour Battalion is most difficult to research as little information was recorded of their service. They carried out manual duties between the back areas and the forward sectors, always bravely facing the enemy shelling with many of their numbers lost.

Whilst working William became ill during the winter of 1916 and after treatment in France he was returned to England and his records show he spent time in the 1st Southern General Hospital in Edgbaston, Birmingham during Christmas 1916, suffering from cholera. It was not unusual for a soldier to contract this disease through dirty water. His condition did not improve and on January 12th 1917 William was discharged from the colours although he remained on the Reserve List and placed on the Silver Badge List F/239. An address is given in Manchester. Perhaps in the years following he moved back to Biddulph, as the documents of 1922 refer to 29900 being in Biddulph. J. Parkinson of 7, Albert Street received his medals.

A few years later, at home in Biddulph, and with continuing poor health Private William Copeland sadly died on February 26th 1921 aged 49. Whether his death was a direct cause of his war-time service is unknown. Whatever his life history, he enlisted to serve king and country at an age when he could probably have got deferred.

He is buried in the churchyard of St. Lawrence, Biddulph in a war grave in the old yard north of the chancel. His grave is inscribed *"29900 Private W Copeland Lincolnshire Regiment 26th February 1921 age 49. Egypt. Lincolnshire."*

He is commemorated on the cenotaph in Biddulph.

Elaine Bryan, Michael Turnock and Elaine Heathcote.

**Neville**  
**Gunner Joseph Neville**  
**19230 Royal Field Artillery**  
**died May 29th 1919 Age 26**

A name recently (2014) added to the cenotaph in Albert Square is J NEVILL. The British Legion do not provide a Christian name but state that he was Driver 19230 of the Royal Field Artillery who died aged 26 on May 29th 1919 and is buried at Audlem. They also record that his parents were Mr. J. and Mrs. S.J. Nevill of Congleton Road.

Joseph Neville was born in Audlem in 1893. His parents were Joseph and Sarah Jane Neville (née Worrall). The couple had married in October 1892 at Nantwich. Joseph was their first child and their eldest son. In 1901 they were living at 4, Wilkesley Cottages, Audlem. Joseph senior was a stockman on a farm. Seven year old Joseph had a brother Harry aged five and a sister, Frances Emily, who was three months old. Ten years later, in 1911, Joseph was a groom on a local farm. His parents were living at Hayfields, near Audlem. Two further children had been born.

Joseph was in Liverpool in the early days of the Great War, when he enlisted into the army on September 8th 1914. At the time of enlistment his height was given as a little over 5ft 9in and he was of fair complexion with grey eyes and brown hair.

He joined the Royal Field Artillery and within a few days had started his training as a gunner at the Artillery no. 2 Depot at Preston. Coming from the country and working as a groom Joe would be used to handling horses and soon learnt that an artillery man always put the needs of his horses first. Watering, grooming, feeding and bedding down, morning and night, these tasks took priority. The new recruits were to train on the 18-pounder field gun and 4.5 inch howitzers, deadly weapons which took great skill to fire. The various parts of the gun were taught besides the gun drill, cleaning and firing, they were also shown how to drive and ride the powerful six-horse team and gun limber.

The Royal Field Artillery had their Central Training Depot at Swanage in Dorset where the recruits continued their instruction. In May 1915 Joseph was posted to the Artillery Ammunition Column, 80th or 89th Brigade, (unfortunately the figures in his records are smudged with age). With their training complete the lads were now ready for war and crossed the Channel to France on July 14th 1915. Although the service records of Joseph have partially survived, sections are difficult to read

due to damage, so following his war service on the Western Front proved not an easy task and it is only assumed his Ammunition Column was part of the Artillery to 21st Division.

On the Western Front this division fought in the Battle of Loos during September and October 1915. The following year found Joseph suffering from shell shock, in May 1916, however it is not known where he was treated and how long he was out of line. The division were in action in the Battle of the Somme in July 1916 fighting at Albert, Bazentin Ridge, Flers-Courcelette, and Morval where the infantry captured Geudecourt with the artillery in support. On October 10th Joseph was posted as an Artillery Driver, presuming more drivers than gunners were required in his unit at that time. In late November the division saw their final action on the Somme at Le Transloy.

At about this time Joseph was gassed during a mustard gas attack on his sector. His condition became very serious and he would have been treated in a base hospital in France before being transferred to England on November 22nd 1916 for further hospital treatment. His condition did not improve and on February 12th 1917 he was discharged from the colours. The reason given on his service records indicates a code of "PU" meaning physically unfit for further military service.

No doubt the gassing in 1916 contributed to Driver Joseph Nevill sadly dying at his home in Audlem on May 29th 1919. He was 26 years old. He now rests in the Audlem Cemetery.

He received the British, Victory and 1915 Star medals.

His name also appears on the Audlem war memorial. It would seem that his parents moved to Biddulph after the war. Joseph senior died in 1923 and Sarah Jane in 1935. Both are buried in Biddulph.

Elaine Bryan and Michael Turnock.

**Bowcock**  
**Private Roy Bowcock**  
**Died October 14th 1920 Age 22**

Information about Roy has been difficult to find. His birth was registered in the Leek district (which included Brindley Ford at that time) in 1898. Roy appears on the 1901 census as living with his cousin, John Thomas Bowcock, who was aged 26 and lived and worked as a milk seller/farmer at Dales Green Farm, Newchapel. Also there was 55-year-old Elizabeth Bowcock, Thomas's mother. Although John Thomas was married (he had married Rosina Dutton in 1894), no wife was named on the census. Elizabeth Ann, née Boulton, had married William Bowcock on March 28th 1864 at the Wesleyan Chapel in Tunstall. Both were living at Brindley Ford at the time of the marriage, although William had been born in Leek and Elizabeth in

Congleton. William's father, another William, was a farmer and Elizabeth's father, Christopher, was a farm labourer.

On the 1911 census Roy was aged 12 and the adopted son of William Bowcock, a grocer living at 33, Victoria Street, Brindley Ford. William and John Thomas were brothers. Their father, William, then 78, was a widower living at 68, High Street, Brindley Ford with three of his sons, Arthur, Edwin, and John Thomas with his wife Rosina. Louisa Jane, William's wife, had filled in the census form on their behalf.

So, to recap, John Thomas Bowcock, born 1872, and William Bowcock, born 1866, were brothers and the children of William and Elizabeth Ann, née Boulton (married 1864). Roy's birth was registered in Leek in 1898. In 1901 he is classed as John's (and therefore William's) cousin and in 1911 he is classed as being William's adopted son. So although I can trace members of Roy's family I have been unable to identify his parents. It is difficult to establish when Roy left school (probably Brindley Ford), what his occupation may have been or when he joined the Army. We know that he was born in November or December 1898 and he probably joined up very shortly after he was 18 at the end of 1916.

British Legion documents suggest that he died in 1917 and that he was a Private in the 1st/2nd battalion North Staffordshire Regiment but there is no documentary evidence to support this. However there is a death recorded on October 14th 1920 at the NSRI for Roy Bowcock, aged 22, of 72, High Street, Brindley Ford. He was described as a farm labourer and being ex-army. He died of an abscess of the liver following appendicitis and pneumonia. The informant was R. Bowcock, described as being his mother. Could this have been Rosina, John Thomas's wife with whom Roy was living as a 'cousin' in 1891?

Roy is commemorated on the Brindley Ford Memorial as having 'died'.

Elaine Bryan.

**Private**  
**Private Charles Morris**  
**Killed in action in France - further details unknown**

The name of Charles Morris appears on the churchyard cross and memorial board at St. Lawrence and also on the cenotaph in Albert Square. Searches on CWGC, Soldiers Died, Ancestry and Find My Past for a possible medal card, service or pension record have drawn a blank. Alf Beard's 'Roll of Honour' for Biddulph does not have any information and the British Legion 'Roll of Honour' also lacks detail but states that he was a Private who was killed in action in France. His home address is given as Brown Lees although his name does not appear on the Brown Lees memorial which is contrary to the British Legion details.

Despite careful searches of census returns for 1891, 1901 and 1911 it has not been possible to locate, with any certainty, anyone of that name that could be the Charles we are searching for, other than a Charles Morris born in 1885 who lived at Mossley.

Those researched include Charles Morris, son of George and Hannah who in 1901 was living at the Huts, Brown Lees. This Charles emigrated to Canada in 1906 and appears on a form dated 1919 in his brother William's service records as alive and living in Canada. Another Charles to be discounted was the Charles Morris who in 1911 and aged 15 was living with widowed mother, Mary Jane at Welsh Row. In 1901 he was living with his family in Willenhall and had a middle name beginning with 'R'. This was probably 'Robert' and as a Charles Robert Morris married Hilda McKay at Congleton in 1922 he too has been ruled out.

Charles E. Morris, son of Charles and Maria and living in 1901 at Ball's Court, Newcastle was sent to Heswall school on the Wirral and was there in 1911. This Charles E. Morris joined The King's Liverpool Regiment and died on May 3rd 1917. Soldiers Died confirms that he was the son of Charles Morris of Ball's Court, Newcastle. Researching the family through census returns does not throw up any links to Biddulph and thus, this Charles has been ruled out.

So, who remains as a potential Charles for our Biddulph soldier?

Soldiers Died has a Charles E. Morris who was born in Newcastle and enlisted in Stoke-on-Trent and was Private 203351 in the 4th battalion Seaforth Highlanders. He was killed on July 20th 1918. I have not been able to find any more information on this soldier.

Another possibility is the Charles Morris, born *circa* 1885 in Congleton who in 1911 was living and working with the Clowes family in the High Street. The Clowes were well known butchers and head, John Clowes, had been born in Biddulph. This Charles appears to have married Mary Emma Hall at Mossley in 1913.

Unless information comes to light in the future – maybe through a newspaper article, we are sadly, unlikely to ever know just who the Charles Morris commemorated on the Biddulph memorials was.

Elaine Heathcote.