

Bamford
Private John Bamford
2nd West Riding Regiment
died February or March 1915



Data on the life of John Bamford has proved difficult, if not impossible to find. No definite trace could be found for him on census records or in Births or Marriages. A report of his death was in the Sentinel on March 6th 1915. It gave his home address as 24, Victoria Street, Brindley Ford and that he had a wife and four children. Unfortunately it gave his regiment but no army number.

'Private J. Bamford, Killed in Action

Private John Bamford, of the 2nd West Riding Regiment, who lived at 24, Victoria Street, Brindley Ford, has been killed in action. Private Bamford, who was a reservist, leaves a widow and four children.'

John is commemorated on the war memorial at Brindley Ford.

Elaine Bryne

Shallcross
Private William Henry Shallcross
15826 2nd Bn., Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)
Died of gas poisoning on 5th May 1915 Age 26



William Henry Shallcross was born c.1889; the son of Joseph and Emma Jane Shallcross and the eldest of five sons. His childhood was spent in the Gillow Heath area of the parish and on Easter Sunday in 1910 he married Martha (Patty) Bailey at St. Stephen's, Congleton. The young couple can be found on the 1911 census living at 136 John Street, Biddulph. William's occupation at this time was given as a coal miner and it was his occupation that led to the couple moving to Yorkshire. William, along with a number of other Biddulph men, moved to Goldthorpe, near Rotherham, Yorkshire where he found employment at the Hickleton Colliery. The couple resided at 10 Cross Street, Goldthorpe.

In September 1914 he enlisted in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry before being transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).

William's battalion, the 2nd Duke of Wellington West Riding, as part of 5th Division, had gone to war in August 1914. Following his training, William joined them as part of a draft replacement in April 1915. Almost at once the new men were ordered into battle fighting in the 2nd Battle of Ypres and during April the battalion lost 420 men at Hill 60, and then on the 5th May, during a gas attack by the enemy, the battalion lost a further 300 brave soldiers who were without gas masks.

Sadly Pte William Henry Shallcross was one of these brave men lost on the 5th May 1915. His death came after only one week on French soil.



Pte. W. H. SHALLCROSS.

After William's death Martha returned to Congleton and from the 29th November 1915 was granted a widow's pension of 10/- a week, which was less than the separation allowance of 12/6d that she had been receiving.

William Henry Shallcross has no known grave and is commemorated at Ypres on the Menin Gate memorial. Locally, his name appears on the churchyard cross and memorial board at St. Lawrence and on the Biddulph cenotaph.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Wilshaw
Private John (Jack) Wilshaw
2489, 1st/5th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
Who died on 25th May 1915 Age 22

One of three Wilshaw brothers to serve in the Great War, Jack had left his family at Ewters Hall Farm, Braddock's Hay, before the war - to live and work in Goldthorpe, Yorkshire, along with other Biddulph miners. He was the eldest son of Thomas and Mary Ellen Wilshaw. Jack enlisted in the 1/5th Kings Own

Yorkshire Light Infantry. We believe that this was at Doncaster in October 1914. His battalion trained at Doncaster, Gainsborough and York. Training complete the battalion attached to the 49th West Riding Division and went to France on 12th April 1915, sailing from Folkestone.

On arrival at Boulogne they moved forward to their concentration area at Estaires-Merville before going into battle in early May at Auber's Ridge. This was a baptism of fire for Jack and his pal William Cottrell as they had only been on the Western Front about one month. This was a short but fierce action; another disaster with little gain.

After the battle the 1/5th Kings Own remained in line in the same area and on the 25th May 1915 near to the village of Fleurbaix the battalion endured shrapnel shelling. It was here that Pte Wilshaw, on Whit-Monday, was sadly killed in action aged 22 years. William Cottrell had lost his mate and within a month he too was to become one of the brave fallen.

An account and photograph was published in the Chronicle which reported that Jack had not long been at the front. He had also been "*a member of the Biddulph Unionist Club and a prominent athlete of the defunct Knypersley Gymnasium Club.*" Now at rest, Jack Wilshaw lies in the White City Cemetery, Bois-Grenier, Armentieres and is also remembered on the churchyard cross and memorial board at St. Lawrence and the town's cenotaph.



PRIVATE J. WILSHAW.

Michael Turnock.

Mitchell
Lance Corporal Sidney Mitchell
10102 North Staffordshire Regiment 1st Bn. 24th Division
Died of wounds 1st June 1915 Age 19



Sidney Mitchell was probably born in Rushton James in 1894. There is a birth registered (SBMD) for a Sidney Mitchell born in the Leek Frith sub district in this year. In 1901 he was living with his family at Fir-Tree, a farm or small holding at Rushton James. His father, Alfred, was a forge labourer. By 1911 the family had moved from the countryside to 53, Bourne Street, Brindley Ford. His mother, Jane, had by now re-married and was Mrs. Jane Odey and Sidney was described as a pony driver in the pit in the census of 1911. He was already serving in the army at the start of the Great War, as he enlisted, according to local reports, in Tunstall in April 1914.

There is confusion over the spelling of his first name. The 1894 entry in the local birth register spells his name with an 'i', and his name appears in the 1901 and 1911 census also spelt as Sidney. However, on the Brindley Ford memorial and in a local newspaper article, it appears as Sydney. The confusion probably stems from the existence of another Mitchell, sharing the same first name but spelt as 'Sydney' on his service records. This Sydney Mitchell enlisted on 8th November 1915 at Tunstall. His address was given as 3 New Buildings, Black Bull and his father was named as Thomas Mitchell of the same address.

Service records do not appear to have survived for Sidney, but we know that his overseas service was with the 1st Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment who trained at Cambridge and Newmarket before moving to France in October 1914, attached initially to 6th Division.

Here they fought in the Battle of the Aisne and in the following year Sidney was to serve in the 2nd Battle of Ypres. The brave 1st Battalion were in trenches at Hoge and it was here that Private Mitchell was promoted to Lance Corporal. During this action he was wounded when an enemy sniper shot both Sidney and his sergeant and sadly he died of his wounds on the 1st June 1915. This account was taken from a letter sent to Sidney's mother and published in the Sentinel:

Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel: June 19th 1915
Lance-Corporal S. Mitchell of Biddulph

"Information was received by Mrs. Mitchell of Fan Row, Black Bull on Saturday last that her son, Lance Corporal Sydney Mitchell, 1st North Staffords, had been shot by a German sniper."

The news was conveyed to Mrs Mitchell *"in a letter from a sergeant in Mitchell's company."* Her son was apparently *"conversing with two sergeants and as they separated one of the sergeants and Mitchell were bowled over by a sniper."* Lance Corporal Mitchell was 20 years of age and was a son of Mr Alfred Mitchell, Newtown, Biddulph Park. He was educated at Biddulph Church schools and previous to enlisting was employed in the Forge Works at Black Bull. He enlisted at Tunstall in April last year in the special Reserves of the 1st North Staffords. He left for the front in October and while there he received his promotion."

L/Cpl Mitchell now rests in the Erquinghem-Lys churchyard cemetery extension near Armentieres. At home Sidney Mitchell is commemorated on the additional 1990s plaque on the cenotaph at Biddulph and on the Brindley Ford Memorial.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote



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Booth/Bailey
Private James Arthur Booth/Bailey
17346, 7th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 23rd July 1915 Age 19

Commemorated on two war memorials in neighbouring parishes is perhaps a little unusual – but even more so is the use of two different names for the same soldier. This seems to be the case with Private James Arthur Booth. It is under this name that he appears on the St. Lawrence memorials – both inside the church and on the churchyard cross, and on the Biddulph cenotaph. However, any search for Private Booth in military records draws a blank. He cannot be found on the CWGC site and his name doesn't appear on any medal cards. There is no service history or pension record. So just who was Private James Arthur Booth?

Local knowledge and a newspaper cutting of his memorial service suggested that he may have been adopted. He was a member of the choir and Sunday school at St. John's church, Knypersley and also of the Knypersley Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. A search through the 1911 census provided a link - as a James Arthur Booth was listed on the return as nephew to Henry Booth – the Booth family resided in Gutter Lane and so he could well have attended St. John's

from here. Also in the household was a 71 year old widower by the name of William Bailey, who was described as uncle to the head of the household. We already knew of Private James Arthur Bailey, son of James & Annie Bailey of Endon, who had died on 23rd July 1915 aged 19, and it was decided to research further into this James Bailey.

James Arthur Bailey was born in 1896 and his birth registered at Norton. His parents were James Bailey, a carter and general haulier who had been born at the Hurst, Biddulph, and Annie (nee Willatt) the daughter of a potters' engraver from Milton. They married in 1894 at St. Bartholomew's, Norton-in-the-Moors. The 1901 census finds them resident at 27, Hill Street, Smallthorne. James Arthur had an older sister Annie Elizabeth and two younger sisters, Mary Ellen and Clara. There may have been two other siblings as in 1911 James Arthur's widowed mother entered the detail that she had had six children, all still living, on the census form. Mrs. Annie Bailey, a 34 year old widow was visiting her sister Nellie at Madely at the time of the census. This led to a determined search for her children.

The death of James Bailey, at sometime between 1901 and 1911 must have been catastrophic for the family as the 1911 census shows that the children had all been placed in separate homes. Annie Elizabeth Bailey was with Arthur and Edna Weston at Pool Fold. Clara Bailey (now Clara Bailey Moss) was with William and Ellen Goodwin at Park Lane, Knypersley, Mary Ellen Bailey was living with her grandmother, Jessy Willatt, at Smallthorne, and James Arthur (now shown as 'Booth') was living with Henry and Clara Booth, also at Knypersley. Further research provided a link between the families: Edna Weston, Ellen Goodwin and Clara Booth were sisters – daughters of George Moss and Elizabeth Bailey. James Bailey was their brother.

Did James Arthur enlist with Biddulph pals and workmates from Heath's New Forge at Black Bull or with friends from his earlier years? We may never know, but it would appear that he enlisted in Hampshire. The 13th Western Division, of which the 7th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment formed part of, were concentrating at Blackdown, Hampshire, in February 1915 and it was here that James enlisted.

Early June orders were received to prepare for war with a move to the Mediterranean. Leaving England on the 13th June, the men sailed from Avonmouth to Alexandria Egypt. Then James and his pals, on the 4th July, sailed on to Mudres and prepared to move forward to Gallipoli on the Dardanelles Straits.

By the 16th, the 13th Division was at Cape Helles to relieve another division and here they met inhospitable terrain to face the enemy. Within the next two weeks, at the age of 19, Private James Arthur Booth had lost his life - killed in action. He has no known grave and he is remembered on the Helles Memorial Dardanelles.

The 'Sentinel' printed a report of his memorial service at which Pte Booth was described as "*of a quiet, retiring disposition, much esteemed and*



popular amongst his workmates,” and that the service, which was conducted by the Rev. E L. Stacey, “was a most impressive one, few in the congregation being unaffected by the touching references from the pulpit to deceased’s life, and to a death which the preacher termed ‘a death full of honour and of glory.’”

Presumably, the Booths who had reared James Arthur from his early teens felt that he was a ‘Biddulph boy’ and as such, should be remembered as James Arthur Booth on the Biddulph memorials. His surviving family based in Milton and Endon may also have wished to remember him in their area but as James Arthur Bailey, which is how he appears on the Endon memorial and the CWGC memorial site.

M Turnock & E Heathcote



Doorbar
Private John Ernest Doorbar
3744, 1/5th Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment
Died 25th July 1915 Age 34



John Ernest Doorbar was born on 24th July 1881 in Biddulph; the youngest son of Hugh and Margaret. In 1891 the family resided at the Royal Oak Inn on the High Street, where Hugh was the publican. By 1901 Hugh had died and John and his widowed mother lived in John Street. The 1911 census records John as single, 29 years of age and a miner. He was still living with his widowed mother and sisters at Fern Cottage, Lower John Street.

John's older brother, Timothy Sherratt Doorbar, had served with the Cheshire Regiment through the 1900-2 campaigns in South Africa. A local newspaper reported that Timothy had the Queen's medal with five clasps for Paardeberg, Drufontein, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, and the relief of Kimberley and that he also held the King's South African medal with two clasps.

A photograph survives of John's other brother, George Done Doorbar, in military uniform – but as yet it has not been possible to find any information on this brother's military service. Perhaps John was encouraged by his older brothers' exploits and adventures and so enlisted at the Biddulph recruiting office in the late summer of 1914 - joining the local company of the 1/5th Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment. Training was initially at the Butterton Hall camp near Newcastle under Lyme in drill, marching and discipline. Following this the battalion then moved to the Harpenden-Luton area for their intensive training.

Training complete the pals were now attached to the 46th North Midland Division, where they were inspected by King George V in February 1915. On 14th March, they embarked at Southampton to cross the English Channel. John and his many Biddulph pals were now on their way to foreign parts and war, arriving at Le Havre to move forward to their concentration area for the final preparation for the battlefield.

Events were moving fast at the front with the division ordered to the Ypres salient where the 2nd Battle of Ypres was to be fought. By July the division held positions adjacent to the railway cutting near the village of Zillebecke, preparing for an attack on Hill 60. The 1/5th North Staffords in which John served in "A" Company, No 3 platoon, were now a close target of the vicious enemy field guns and the brave men were in newly dug trenches which were far from ideal for their protection.

On Sunday 25th July 1915, as a result of heavy shelling, John Ernest Doorbar sadly lost his life. He had served only five months at the front. He died the day after his 34th birthday. Near to where he fell at the now beautiful Larchwood Railway Cutting Cemetery, Private Doorbar lies at rest. In August, an account appeared in the Chronicle that reported: *"Two Biddulph soldiers namely Private C Wilshaw and Lance Corporal Robinson were part of the burial party"*.

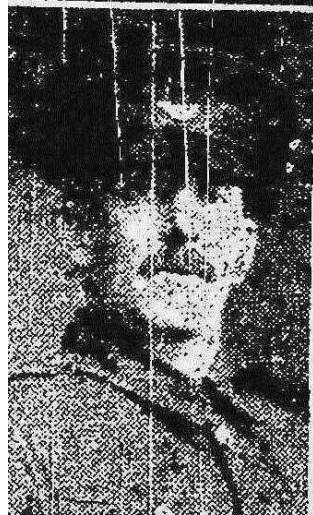
On August 28th 1915 the Sentinel printed a letter from Pte. A. Wallett, a Brown Lees man, who went out with some of the Butterton Hall contingent in the 1st-5th North Staffords. *"All of his company"* Pte. Wallett said, *"felt the death of Pte. J.E.Doorbar. They had placed a cross, with his name burned on it, over his grave."*

By October Lance Corporal Robinson had also fallen on the field at the infamous Hohenzollern Redoubt attack.

John Ernest Doorbar is commemorated on the Biddulph churchyard memorial and the cenotaph on the High Street.

Kathleen Walton & Michael Turnock

Cottrell
Private William Herbert Cottrell
2493, 1st/5th Bn., King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
Killed in action on 26th July 1915 Age 29



Born in Biddulph c. 1886, William Herbert Cottrell was the son of Herbert, a coal miner and his wife, Frances (nee Wilshaw). By 1911 the family resided at 'Ivy house', 31 Tunstall Road, Biddulph. William was a coal miner, aged 25, and single.

At some point between the 1911 census and the outbreak of war, William moved up to Goldthorpe, Yorkshire, in the search for work. He had made the move with his friends –William Henry Shallcross and Jack Wilshaw. All were to perish in the war.

Soon after the start of the Great War, William enlisted at Doncaster joining the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Training complete the men of the 1/5th KOYLI were to join the 49th Division on its move to France in April 1915. After disembarkation the battalion moved forward where in May they saw their first action of the war at Aubers Ridge. By July, the pals had travelled north into Belgium where they were to fight in the 2nd Battle of Ypres.

Here again, after only a few short weeks, sadly another local soldier was to fall in battle. On the 26th July 1915 Pte William Herbert Cottrell was killed in action and now rests in the Talana Farm Cemetery, Ypres.

Biddulph Soldier Killed

"An intimation was received this week by Mr. H. Cottrell, Slater Street, Biddulph, from the War Office, that his son, Private W.H.Cottrell, 5th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, had been killed in action on Sunday July 25th. Private Cottrell was a collier, and enlisted in October at Goldthorpe, Yorkshire, where, with several other Biddulph men, he had gone to work. His pal, Private Jack Wilshaw, who went to the front at the same time, and Private W. Shallcross, two other Biddulph colliers who enlisted from Goldthorpe, have both previously fallen in action."

Staffordshire Sentinel August 7th 1915

William Herbert is buried at Talana Farm Cemetery, Belgium and is commemorated on the St. Lawrence churchyard cross and memorial board and also on the Biddulph cenotaph. Locally his surname is inscribed as 'Cottrell' – however the CWGC uses the spelling 'Cotterill'.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Byrne
Private John Byrne
20182 2nd Wiltshire Regiment
Killed in action 25th September 1915 Age 18

Details about John Byrne are 'sketchy'. Perhaps the main contender is John, born 1897 who in 1901 was residing with his father Bernard and mother Mary Ellen at Furlong Road, Tunstall. By 1911 the family were living on Stadmoreslow Lane – a stone's throw away from Brindley Ford. This census records John as aged 13 and born at Brindley Ford. His father was an ironworker.

If this is the correct 'John Byrne', then his medal card and the details available from 'Soldiers Died' suggest that he was Private 20182 in the Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire Regiment), 2nd Battalion.

He had initially joined the North Staffords (8379), enlisting at Burslem, and then the Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery (87311).

We have been unable to locate any service records but the CWGC reports that he died on 25th September 1915. John would have been only 18 years of age. He is remembered on the Loos memorial and on the Brindley Ford war memorial.

Elaine Bryne

Farr
Lance Corporal Thomas Farr
15223 King's Own Scottish Borderers – 8th Battalion
Killed in Action 25th September 1915 Age 22

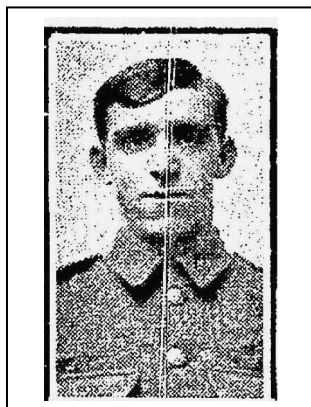
In 1901 Thomas was living with his mother Sarah and step-father Frank Harrison at 14, High Street, Brindley Ford. By February 1911 he had joined the 3rd Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment and is shown in the census of that year at Whittington Barracks, Lichfield. Private Farr (9471) was single, aged 18 and born at Newchapel. In 1912 and at St. James, Newchapel, he married Jennie Clutton and at some point after his marriage and before the outbreak of war, Tom and his wife had moved to Methley, Leeds, probably because of employment in the mines there.

Tom appears to have enlisted at Castleford and joined the King's Own Scottish Borderers, 8th Battalion – number 15223. The 8th KOSB trained at Bordon, Winchester and Salisbury and left for France in July 1915 as part of 15th Scottish Division. They were to fight in the Battle of Loos and it was here that Thomas lost his life. Service records have not been found but we know that Tom died on 25th September 1915 and is remembered on the memorial at Loos, the Brindley Ford

memorial and also the war memorial at Methley. His widow Jennie remained at Methley.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Edwards
Private Leonard Edwards
18307, 2nd Bn., East Yorkshire Regiment
Who died on 4th October 1915 Age 21



Leonard was the son of William Edwards and Sarah Frances (nee Stoddard) who had married in Biddulph in February 1891. Leonard was born in 1894 and appears to have been the couple's second son. His father, William, originated from the West Midlands presumably coming to Biddulph to work in the iron industry. He was employed in 1901 as a 'Blacksmith Striker' and Leonard was to follow his father into the iron industry, giving his occupation as ironworker, when he enlisted on 31st August 1914.

The family was large. His mother, on the 1911 census recorded that she had given birth to ten children with only one child having died. The family lived at 62, Railway Cottages, Black Bull in 1911 and by the start of the war, had moved to 10, Newpool Terrace.

Only weeks after the beginning of the First World War, at the age of 20 years, Leonard joined the army at Biddulph. Enlisting into the North Staffordshire Regiment, he was now 9495 Pte Edwards. Just a short while after, he was transferred to the 2nd battalion East Yorkshire Regiment and became 18307 and continued his training at Winchester.

This battalion as part of 28th Division went to the Western Front in January 1915, they concentrated at Hazebrouck. In April and May the division bravely fought in the 2nd Battle of Ypres. By late summer the troops moved south, arriving on 27th September for the opening of the Battle of Loos. Going straight into battle the men fought at the Redoubt and Fosse Alley. Only a few days into this battle on the 4th October 1915 sadly Leonard was to fall on the battlefield of Loos.

Having no known grave he is remembered on the Loos Memorial and at home on all of the Biddulph memorials and also the Brown Lees memorial.

Michael Turnock

Booth
Private John Thomas Booth
3333, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 21

John Thomas Booth was born c. 1894 – the son of Joseph Booth an iron worker and his wife, Ann Marie. Both of his parents originated from Buglawton but John was born in Biddulph - the youngest of eight children. His early years were spent in the Lodge Barn area as his family resided there at the time of the 1891, 1901 and 1911 census. They were later to move down into the village as by 1914, at the time of enlistment, the family lived at 177 John Street. By 1911 John's occupation was given as coal miner and on enlistment he stated that he worked at Chatterley Whitfield.

John Thomas was another soldier who joined the army soon after the war commenced. His surviving service records tell us he enlisted into a local regiment at Biddulph on 11th September 1914. Training was initially at Butterton before moving to Bishop Stortford and leaving for France on 27th June 1915 - as a draft attached to 46th North Midlands Division.

It's believed he first went to Belgium in July before moving south, where his battalion, the 1/5th North Staffordshire were to fight in the Battle of Loos. This battle was fought amongst the mining villages of northern France, not dissimilar to north Staffordshire.

This was no home from home; for on the afternoon of the 13th October the North Stafford's met their darkest day. The 1/5th North Stafford's were one of the battalions of 46 Div. who were ordered to attack the *Hohenzollern Redoubt* in an attempt to retake this strong German defence. The 13th October was certainly a black day for North Staffordshire; the attack was a blind assault across no-man's land - the men left their trenches but immediately ran into murderous machine gun fire, with many of the North Stafford men being shot down.

Sadly on that afternoon 1/5th Battalion had over 500 casualties, with 219 killed in action including Pte Booth -one of eight brave Biddulph men to fall that day. John Thomas Booth fell in battle and it is believed, as his headstone states, that he was recovered from the battlefield and now rests the St Marys ADS Cemetery at Haisnes along with a local pal, James Casey, of the same battalion.

The words on his headstone read;



Their Glory shall not be blotted out.

Joseph and Ann must have been devastated to lose their youngest child. A letter, sent from Joseph, in January 1916 requesting information on personal belongings recovered, still survives. There is no evidence that anything was returned. In May 1919 an attempt was made, presumably by the War Office, to locate the whereabouts of John's parents and surviving correspondence from the local police constable sadly reports that his parents '*now reside at Meadow Style Hospital, Brown Lees*'.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Camm

Private Jonathan Washington Camm 3334, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment Killed in Action on 13th October 1915 Age 24

The son of Robert William Camm and Harriet (nee Washington) he was one of nine children. Jonathan was born c 1891 and was one of the first local men to enlist – doing so on September 11th at Biddulph. Jonathan would have been a popular figure as his occupation was given as '*cinematographic operator*'. This would have been at Barber's Picture Palace - without doubt a popular venue. At enlistment he gave his address as 4, Slater Street. In 1911 the family had lived at 3 Lower John Street.

Jonathan's '*burnt service records*' have survived, providing us with a more detailed account of his military history. A few weeks after hostilities commenced on 4th August 1914, Jonathan enlisted at Biddulph into the 1/5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment and training was undertaken in Bedfordshire - at camps in Luton, Saffron Walden and Bishops Stortford. Training complete and now attached to the 46th North Midlands Division, a move into war was made on 3rd March 1915.

Sailing from Southampton the troops landed at Le Havre, moving forward they spent the first few months in the Ypres salient, enduring at the end of July, the enemy's liquid fire attack at Hooze. Early October saw a move to the battlefield of Loos where the Stafford's were met with a landscape similar to that at home,

with mining villages set in the countryside. Jonathan served in No 4 platoon, "A" company, in his battalion.

On the 13th October 1915 the 1/5th North Stafford's were one of the battalions of 46 Div. who were ordered to attack the *Hohenzollern Redoubt* in an attempt to retake this strong German defence. This was a black day for North Staffordshire; the attack was a blind assault across no man's land. The men left their trenches but immediately ran into murderous machine gun fire, resulting in many North Stafford's being shot down.

Sadly, on that afternoon 1/5th Battalion had over 500 casualties; 219 killed in action including eight brave Biddulph men, one of whom was Pte Camm. Private John Thomas Booth, another Biddulph soldier who had also enlisted on the 11th September – presumably immediately before Jonathan as his regimental number was 3333 (Jonathan's being 3334) also died that day. Perhaps they had been pals in Biddulph - enlisting and dying together.

At the age of 24 years Jonathan Washington Camm fell in battle. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial. He is also remembered on all of the Biddulph war memorials.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Casey
Private James Arthur Casey
3938, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 22

James Arthur Casey was born c. 1893; his birth was registered in this year at Sandbach although his place of birth was given as Mow Cop in the census returns of 1901 and 1911. He was the son of James Bason and Sarah Casey, who married in 1902. In 1901 he was living with his mother at the home of his paternal grandparents, Thomas and Hannah Bason at Copeland's Row, Mow Cop. By 1911, James Arthur and his parents resided at 47 Newpool Terrace, Brown Lees -the home of his cousin, Harry Booth. James was now aged 17 and a labourer at the Iron Forge.

James enlisted on the 14th December 1914 at the Shelton Drill Hall into what was known then as the "Biddulph Company" of the 1/5th battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. Initially James trained at Butterson Hall camp near Newcastle under Lyme, before receiving further training at the Bedfordshire camps.

Moving to war in June 1915 the battalion, now part of 46th Division was to serve in the Ypres area of Belgium until a move in early October took them south to Loos. James would have been familiar with some of the other soldiers in his company- many being his pals from Biddulph. They were to fight in the Battle of Loos, a battle which like many to follow gained very little.

The Hohenzollern Redoubt and the trench system known as Fosse Alley and Big Willie was their target on the 13th of the month. The 1/5th North Stafford's, one of many battalions of the 46th Division to attack this strong enemy position leading with an assault across no man's land. It was disastrous, exposed to machine gun

fire and shelling from the redoubt many of the pals soon fell. This was indeed a 'Black Day' for Biddulph and Staffordshire.



Private Casey, at the age of 22 years was to become a casualty of this battle along with seven other brave Biddulph men who fell on the battlefield on October 13th 1915.

The battalion suffered over 500 casualties with 219 killed in action. James Casey's headstone in the St Marys ADS Cemetery at Haisnes states he is believed to be buried there. Set in a separate row, he and another pal, Pte John Thomas Booth, rest together.

The words on the headstone read;

Sleep on dear son and take thy rest, for us you always did your best.

James is remembered on the war memorial in St. Lawrence churchyard and the board inside the church, the cenotaph in the High Street and also on the Brown Lees memorial.

Michael Turnock and Elaine Heathcote

**Kennerley
Lance Corporal William Henry Kennerley
3366, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 26**



Born c. 1890, William Henry Kennerley was the son of Anne Jervis. We don't know his father's name as by 1901, his father had died and his widowed mother, Anne, had remarried a William Jervis. In this year the census places William with his mother and step-father at Ridgway. By 1911 William had married Ann Bailey and was residing with his in-laws at 16, Lower John Street. It must have been something of a 'squash and a squeeze' as a total of five adults and seven children shared the five roomed house. William and Mary had already been married for two years and of their two children, a son had died in 1909. When William enlisted on 15th September 1914 at Biddulph the couple had three children; William Stanley, Althea and Gertrude – all under five years of age, and Mary was expecting again. They were resident at 87 Congleton Road. William was a coal miner working at Chatterley Whitfield.

Was it the posters that helped to attract another Biddulph man into the ranks when William Henry enlisted at Biddulph in the early days of the war in September 1914? The 1/5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment became his unit. From their house in Congleton Road, he said goodbye to his wife Mary. William was to join his pals at Butterton Hall camp for their basic training, before intensive training was carried out at Luton, Harpenden and Bishops Stortford.

The family experienced again the tragedy of a child's death as in May 1915, their nine week old daughter died. At the inquest this was attributed to accidental suffocation by her mother whilst sharing a bed.

By June 1915, with training almost complete the battalion attached to 46th North Midland Division, having made ready for war and with inoculations behind them, the men commenced embarkation at Southampton. It would have taken five or six hours to sail the English Channel, a dangerous crossing. Landing at Le Havre the division proceeded to their concentration area.

We know from the local war memorial that 73 men did not return from the Great War, each with their own story to tell. On the 13th October 1915, eight soldiers from Biddulph had similar stories; they lived, worked, trained, went to war and died together, all from the same unit, the 1/5th Stafford's.

This is the story of one of those eight:

The division served in the Ypres area until October when they were ordered to the Loos region of the Western Front. The Battle of Loos was being fought north of the mining town of Lens. On the afternoon of the 13th October battalions of 137th Brigade 46 Div. were to retake at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, the trenches of Big Willie and Fosse Alley.

This was a disaster as within the first fifteen minutes they were shot down by relentless machine gun fire and shelling. That attack across no man's land sadly cost the North Stafford men dear, losing 219 brave soldiers with many more wounded. William Henry fell in battle that afternoon along with seven others from Biddulph. However, it was not until the end of March 1916 that Mary received the official news of his death as the Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel of April 8th 1916 reported:

"Official information was received on Thursday March 29th by Mrs Kennerley of 87, Congleton Road, Biddulph that her husband, who had been missing since October 13th 1915 has been killed in action on that date."

Rex and Carole Downing have letters sent by William from the front. In one dated 9th October (1914) William writes:

"I guess you will be surprised to see as I was Pte as I have given my stripe up – I have enough to do to look after myself here" and "I must say I am not in the Company I should like to be in. I want to get in D Company if possible, this is the Company that Spencer was in" and he finishes with "PS Tell mother not to get downhearted xxx and if she can send me a parcel I should be very pleased as I am with a lot of strange lads in this Company and we are not overfed."

His closing words in a last letter home end *"God be with you till we meet again xxxxxx"*. The margins of this letter were filled with drawings of forget-me-not flowers.

Records show that by May 1919 his widow had re-married and had become Mrs Mary Challinor of High Street, Brindley Ford. Private William Henry Kennerley, like many more, has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial close to where he fell. He is also commemorated on all of the Biddulph memorials.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote
With thanks to Rex and Carole Downing

Morris
Private William Morris
3343, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 25



In 1901 the Morris family resided at 'The Huts', Brown Lees. George Morris was a coal miner and he and his wife, Hannah, had five young children. William, at the age of 10, was their eldest. The family were not local – like many of the families in this part of Biddulph, they had arrived from South Staffordshire to work in the iron industry. William had been born in Great Bridge c. 1890. It would seem that the family were happy to move again as there is no trace of them in the 1911 census. George and his son William appear to have crossed the Atlantic to a place called Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. They must have done this prior to December 1906 as on 6th of that month, Hannah and the rest of the family, left Liverpool on the 'Silvia' to join them in Nova Scotia. What a journey that must have been for Hannah and her now increased family of seven children - including baby Lucy. The family appear on the 1911 Canadian census residing at Annapolis, Nova Scotia. They seem to have made a number of return trips to Biddulph. In October 1913, Hannah is recorded on a passenger list returning to Nova Scotia. Perhaps

she and William had returned to Biddulph for a visit and William had decided to remain, as on the 12th September 1914 he enlisted at Biddulph, giving his address as 6 Newpool Terrace and his occupation as a miner for R. Heath and Son.

An article in the Staffordshire Sentinel of January 9th 1915 reports that "*Mr. George Morris, formerly a local preacher of the Bradley Green Circuit, who used to work at the Chatterley Whitfield Colliery, Fegg Hayes, but emigrated to Nova Scotia, Canada, nine years ago, has four sons who have joined the colours.*"

William joined the 1/5th Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment and basic training began at Butterton Hall camp near Newcastle under Lyme. William would have then transferred to the Luton and Bishops Stortford areas for more intensive training. His service records are available and tell us his battalion went to France on 5th March 1915 soon after his division the 46th had been inspected by King George V on the 19th February. Orders were received to prepare for war and with kit bags bulging William and his mates would soon have their first experience of war and foreign parts.

Landing at Le Havre they first saw action in the Ypres salient where the battalion fought until October when they were ordered to fight in the Battle of Loos, a battlefield in the mining area of northern France. Their target the Hohenzollern Redoubt was to become ignominious with the army top brass. The 13th October 1915 was to bring a terrible toll on the 1/5th North Stafford's, now attached to 137 Brigade 46th North Midland Division. They were ordered, along with other battalions, to retake this redoubt and the fortified enemy trench systems of Big Willie and Fosse Alley.

This attack across no man's land at once ran into terrible shell and machine gun fire resulting in the loss of eight Biddulph soldiers. The battalion as a whole suffered losses of over 200 dead and with many more wounded. Twenty five year old William Morris was sadly one of these casualties. What had been a beautiful autumn day now became a black day for Staffordshire; the villages of Brown Lees, Brindley Ford and Bradley Green were in deep mourning that October.

William was unmarried according to his enlistment form, but surviving pension records mention his widow Annie and two children, Ellis (born 1911) and Edna (born 1913) – all residing in 1919 at Guy Street, Sydney Mines. His parents, George and Hannah along with his siblings are all named on the same form and residing at Main Street, Sydney Mines.

Private William Morris is one of six local men without known graves and now remembered on the battlefield at the Loos Memorial. He is also remembered on the Brown Lees memorial board and also on all of the Biddulph memorials.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Reeves
Lance Corporal John Robert Reeves
3353, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 27

The son of a church clerk, John Robert Reeves had been born in West Bromwich in 1887. His parents, Samuel and Fanny, had lived in the same street - Bull Street,

West Bromwich, since the 1890s. In 1901, at the age of 14, John was already employed as a 'roll turner' in the iron industry and it was this skill that took him to Biddulph. In the 1911 census, John - still employed as a roll turner, is a lodger with the Caddy family at Childerplay.

1914 started well for John as on the 19th January he married Gertrude Caddy at St. Lawrence. In April, their son Samuel was born. With the declaration of war, John was to leave his young family at 23, New Buildings, Brindley Ford, as on the 13th of September he enlisted at Biddulph joining the 1/5th North Staffordshire Regiment.

Along with other men from the Biddulph area, John trained at Butterton Hall camp and then Luton and Harpenden. Pte Reeves was made Lance Corporal on the 24th June- just prior to joining his pals for embarkation at Southampton on the 28th, sailing to France and to war. The draft troops landed at Le Havre and John joined his battalion on the 23rd July serving in "B" company; his service records have survived to give us these details. They travelled north to the Ypres area of Belgium as part of 46th North Midland Division. By early October the division was on the move again when they were ordered south to the Loos area. Travelling aboard trucks of the French Railways, with over thirty men to a truck, they commenced their long slow journey to the battlefield.

The North Stafford's arrived soon after the Battle of Loos had opened, moving forward to take up their position in the front line trenches. The 13th October 1915, was a sunny autumn day, when the 1/5th North Stafford's, one of the battalions of 137th Brigade, were ordered to attack the *Hohenzollern Redoubt* trenches of Big Willie and Fosse Alley - in an attempt to retake this strong German position. This was a black day for North Staffordshire; the attack was a blind assault across no man's land. The men left their trenches but immediately ran into horrendous machine gun fire which resulted in many North Stafford's shot down.

On the afternoon of 13th October 1915, sadly 1/5th Battalion had over 500 casualties - 219 killed in action, including eight brave Biddulph men, one of whom was L/Cpl Reeves. Falling in battle at the age of 27 years, John Robert Reeves has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos memorial. Locally his name appears on the Biddulph memorials and also the Brindley Ford memorial.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Bryne.

Robinson
Lance Corporal David Robinson
3492, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 25

David Robinson was a Lancashire lad, born c. 1890 at Oldham, the son of James E and Agnes Robinson. In 1901, he and his older brother Joseph were lodging with relatives, the Hammersleys, at 3 Duke Street, Biddulph. At this time David was only 11 years of age and Joseph was already married and working as a labourer. It would seem that David left his brother in Biddulph and at some point moved back to Lancashire, as in 1912 at Oldham he married Edith Marian Tawse.

Perhaps his brother was able to find him work in Biddulph and David and Edith returned and on the 26th September 1914, David enlisted in the 1st/5th North Staffords. He gave his address as 6 Well Street, Biddulph and his occupation as a collier with R. Heath & Sons. Nine months later, his daughter Edith Alice was born; but David would never get to meet his daughter.

Service records reveal that David was not a stranger to Army life as on enlistment he stated that he had served in the 10th Manchester Regiment. The Chronicle reported that Robinson had four years of experience with the Manchesters. Basic training was to begin at Butterton Hall camp near Newcastle under Lyme, with physical fitness, drill and marching. Four to six weeks later the men transferred to Luton and Bishops Stortford to continue their training. David's service records tell us he was made up to Lance Corporal on the 10th October 1914 and served in "B" company. In March 1915 the battalion was at full strength and the King had inspected their division, the 46th North Midland, in February. It was now time to entrain to the channel port, crossing to Le Havre and arriving in France on the 5th March.

For their final preparation for war the division moved inland to their concentration area before moving into Belgium; the Ypres salient was the divisions' destination. The troops were to spend eight months at Ypres, fighting the enemy and then out of line for more training until ordered to move south to join the Battle of Loos.

This battle was significant in that it achieved nothing and had a very high casualty rate in a single day; in other words 13th October 1915 was a black day for North Staffordshire. In Biddulph the loss of eight of its soldiers was a devastating blow. L/Cpl David Robinson was one of the eight to fall during an attack at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, where the 1/5th advanced across no man's land in a blind assault towards Big Willie and Fosse Alley enemy trenches. The battalion ran into horrendous machine gun fire and shelling which resulted in the near annihilation of the battalion - with over 500 casualties including 219 killed in action.

A surviving soldier of the battalion Pte Sydney Richard said after the battle --- *"It was absolute hell with the lid off. Dying and wounded all over the place, I shall never forget this day"*.

Lance Corporal Robinson was never recovered from the Loos battlefield and has no known grave, and is now remembered on the Loos Memorial and the Biddulph memorials.

The surviving records for L/Cpl Robinson contain a letter from his widow, Edith, to the War Office. Edith was concerned that she has not received any personal effects or any financial help:

2330
16 Well St Biddulph
24 Victoria St
69218/84 Brindley Ford
Stake as I was
Is there anything effects
belonging to Lance Corporal
David Robinson B Company
3492-1st 5th North Stafford
who was killed Oct 13
I have not received anything
belonging him and don't I
receive no money from the
office for his death hoping
you will oblige me
I remain
yours truly
Mrs Robinson

The letter above is undated but presumably prior to July 1916 when she was granted a pension for one child of 15/- per week.

Edith moved to Brindley Ford and in 1917 she remarried and became Mrs. Charles Heath. The family resided at 21 Bourne Street, Brindley Ford.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Sherratt
Private Robert Sherratt
3330, 1st/5th Bn., North Staffordshire Regiment
Who died on 13th October 1915 Age 20

Robert Sherratt was the youngest son of Edmund and Elizabeth Sherratt and was Biddulph born and bred. His father was an office clerk at the iron works of R. Heath & Sons -as was his older brother, Gerald. By 1911 the family had moved to 'Oaklands' Mill Hayes from the Knowle Style area of Biddulph. Robert was to follow his father and brother into the employment of R.Heath as in 1912 he was

taken on as an engineering apprentice for a term of 5 years. The future looked good for Robert.

With the outbreak of war, Robert and Gerald enlisted together on the 11th September 1914 at Biddulph. Gerald's initial regimental number was 3328 and Robert's - 3330. Both joined the locally formed Biddulph Territorial Company. Robert's mother must have been torn between pride for her two sons and fear for their future. The 1911 census records that she had given birth to four and had already lost two children.

Both brothers appeared in the Weekly Evening Sentinel of October 3rd 1914 in what seems to have been something of a propaganda exercise - chastising those men who have not come forward to fight:

Striking Sermon by Vicar of Endon at Biddulph Moor

A striking sermon on harvest time and the war was preached by the Rev. J. S. Morris, Vicar of Endon, at the harvest festival in Christ Church, Biddulph Moor, on Sunday evening.

The sermon was of particular significance, if only on account of the lack of patriotism shown by the dwellers on Biddulph Moor in responding to their country's call for men. With the exception of two reservists, very few men from off the Moor have responded to the national call for King and country, and the stirring address of the Vicar of Endon must have come as a rude awakening.

The service created a profound impression. There was a packed congregation with visitors from Biddulph and Knypersley - including Privates Gerald and Robert Sherratt, the two sons of Mr. Edmund Sherratt, Knypersley, on leave with the Biddulph Territorial Company from Butterton Hall.

Like the other new recruits of the 1/5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment, Robert was to start his basic training of drill, marching and discipline at Butterton Hall camp. Then the men travelled south to receive more intensive training, at camps in the Luton and Harpenden area.

By early summer the following year this new draft was ready for the Western Front. Embarkation took place at Southampton on 28th June 1915 and after crossing the channel they moved inland to their concentration area near St Omer, before joining the 46th North Midland Division in the Ypres salient. Robert served in "C" company of 1/5th battalion attached to 137th Brigade. Fighting and out of line training continued until October when the division received orders to transfer to the battlefield at Loos.

Arriving early in the morning, the 46 div. was to relieve the Guards Division who were already fighting in the Battle of Loos. Although new to the terrain the battalion went into battle that same day, the 13th. They were to attack across no man's land towards the Hohenzollern Redoubt, a strong enemy defence and take the trench system of Big Willie and Fosse Alley. Within the first ten to fifteen minutes the North Stafford's ran into murderous machine gun fire and shelling.

There were over 500 casualties in the battalion with the sad loss of 219 brave infantry men, which included eight of our local soldiers. The 13th October 1915 was a black day for Staffordshire and Biddulph. At the age of twenty, Pte Sherratt

was one of the fallen and his body was never recovered from the battlefield. Later the soldiers had a saying: "*as quiet as the Loos dead*".

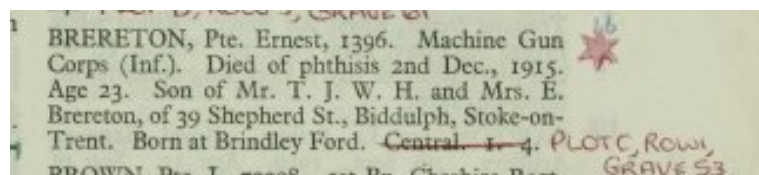
Robert Sherratt has no known grave and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial and also the Biddulph churchyard memorial and board and the cenotaph.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

Brereton
Private Ernest Brereton
1396 Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)
Died of wounds 2nd December 1915 Age 23

Ernest was born in 1892 at Brindley Ford, the son of Thomas and Eliza. In both 1901 and 1911 the family resided at 17, High Street, Brindley Ford. Thomas was described as a blacksmith at the ironworks and Ernest as a printer/ lithographer in the 1911 census.

As it has not been possible to locate either service records or a medal card for Ernest, it is difficult to piece together where he met with his injuries. However it appears that he was sent back to England for treatment and died in this country. Recent information on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site indicates that he may not have served overseas – dying of phthisis (tuberculosis) and not of wounds received.



Private Ernest Brereton is at rest at St James Church, Newchapel. Ernest's name does not appear on the St. Lawrence churchyard memorial but he is remembered on the additional 1990s plaque on the cenotaph at Biddulph. He is also commemorated on the Brindley Ford memorial.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote