

Bicester Stories

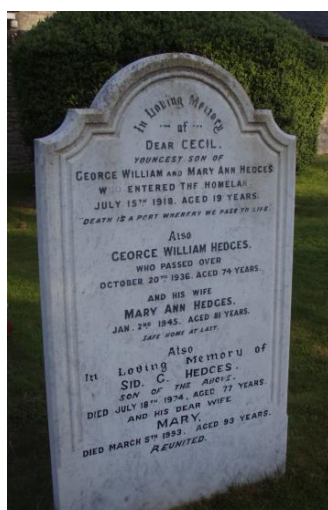


Albert E King was a private in C Company 1st/4th Battalion Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry. He was born in 1888 in Bicester, Oxfordshire. He was the son of Charlie Berry (King).

In 1901 Albert was living with his father in his grandfather and grandmother Charles and Henrietta Spencer's house in Fringford, Oxfordshire.

On 13th August 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, the 1st/4th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry moved forward through Albert to a reserve position near Usna Redoubt. Later that day and into the following night, elements of the battalion prepared to support or relieve lines facing severe enemy counterattacks near Pozières. Albert was killed in action on 13th August and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

Cecil Egerton Hedges was a private in the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.



He was born in Bicester, Oxfordshire in 1899. He was the son of George William and Mary Ann Hedges (McKay). His father was born in Bicester, and his mother was born in Oxford.

In 1901 Cecil was living with his parents and brothers William and Sidney in Bicester. His father was a draper's assistant.

In 1911 Cecil was living with his parents and brothers William and Sidney at 41 Market Square, Bicester. His father was a draper & outfitter.

For a short time before the war Cecil was a teacher at his local Sunday School.

Cecil joined the army in March 1917 enlisting in the Oxford Hussars Cyclist Corps. He was later transferred to the Worcestershire Regiment and sent to France in April 1918. He became part of a trench mortar battery.

Cecil died on 15th July 1918 following a tragic accident. Whilst serving in France he was swimming with some members of his regiment when he dived into the water striking a comrade who was swimming beneath the water. They collided with such force that Cecil seriously injured his spine. His parents were notified that he was dangerously ill on 27th May, and on 5th June he was brought to King George hospital in London, where he seemed to be making some recovery, though unable to use his right hand or his legs. But his condition soon began to rapidly decline on the 16th June, and on the 23rd he was moved to a hospital in St Albans, where he passed away a few weeks later. He is buried in Bicester Town Cemetery.

His brother Sidney Hedges (Sid G Hedges) went on to become an author, with more than a million books sold, many of which were about swimming.

Harry Parker was a private in the 2/4th Battalion Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry.



He was born in Bicester, Oxfordshire in 1889. He was the son of J Parker.

In 1911 Harry was living with a housekeeper Nellie Freeman and her daughters Elizabeth and Florence in Wills Yard, Bicester. He was a labourer at the time.

Harry landed in France on May 24, 1916, as part of the 184th Brigade in the 61st (2nd South Midland) Division and moved into the nursery trenches near Armentières and Laventie by late June 1916. On 29th June 1916, the 2/4th Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry experienced its "baptism of fire" in the front-line trenches near Lavantie, France, after arriving in the theatre just a month prior. Harry killed in action on 29th June 1916 and is buried in Lavantie Military Cemetery, Le Gorgue, Nord, France.



John Howard Grimsley was a Sergeant in B Company 1st/4th Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry. He was born in Bicester, Oxfordshire in 1895 and was baptised on 15th September 1896 in Bicester. He was the son of Sergeant Claudius Herbert and Fanny Grimsley (Long). His father was a builder born in Bicester, and his mother was born in Brocklesby, Lincolnshire.

In 1911 John was living with his parents and sister Ethel at 17 King's End, Bicester. His father was a builder's manager, and John was an apprentice carpenter.

Before the war John took a great interest in the YMCA and besides being a member of their band since its formation, did much good work for that institution. He was a staunch supporter of the Primrose League, a member of the Bicester Rifle Club and the Bicester Football Club.

He joined the Territorials in 1913, was mobilised on the 5th August 1914, went to France in March 1915, and from there to Italy. He was killed in action on 15th June 1918 and is buried in Boscon British Cemetery, Asiago, Provincia di Vicenza, Veneto, Italy.

His parents received the following letter - *The enemy had made a big push and had succeeded in breaking through. A counterattack was launched, and it was during this that Sergeant Grimsley met his death. At that time the English were fighting against odds of four or five to one. The unfortunate soldier met his death almost instantaneously, having a machine gun bullet through his side, one through his leg, and another through his head. He was buried in a British cemetery two days later.*

Another letter, this time from one of his officers, said: *As I have been his platoon officer for the last ten months I knew him very well, and I have never met a more honest, brave and staunch supporter. The Austrians attacked our positions at dawn, and your son was in the thick of it, and fought to the last against greatly superior numbers. He was killed instantaneously by a machine gun bullet, and his death is a great loss to me and to the platoon.*

Name		Corps		Regt. No.	
GRIMSLEY		B Co 1st/4th O & B LI		1919	
John H.				200260	
Rank		File		Page	
Sergeant		L/106 B8		1680	
15		do		do	
STAR		Wund 162		K in A	
Theatre of War first served in		(1) France			
Date of entry theatre		29-3-15			



Thomas George Ayres was a Sergeant in the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade. He was born in Bicester, Oxfordshire in 1892. He was the son of George Thomas and Selina Ayris. His father was born in Bicester, and his mother was born in Marsh Baldon, Oxfordshire.

In 1901 Thomas was living with his parents, brothers Albert, William and Walter and sister Florence at 36 New Buildings, Bicester. His father was a domestic gardener.

Before the war Thomas was a reserve in the Berkshire Regiment and in June 1909, he enlisted in Winchester in the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade.

On 24th October 1916, the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade was finally relieved at 11:00 PM after holding forward positions under heavy fire during the Somme offensive. Days earlier on 23rd October, the

battalion had attacked near Zenith and New Trenches, suffering over 250 casualties. Thomas was killed during a heavy bombardment on 24th October 1916 and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

Thomas Pitts King was a Rifleman in the 8th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. He was born on 9th August 1897 in Bicester, Oxfordshire and was baptised on 31st October 1897 in Bicester. He was the son of Charles and Sarah Emma King (Rawlins). Both his parents were born in Bicester.

In 1901 Thomas was living with his parents, brother Jack and sister Kate and Daisy at 219 Bardwell Terrace, Bicester. His father was a thatcher. His mother died in 1903.

In 1911 Thomas was living with his father, brother Ernest, sister Emily and her husband William at 15 Bardwell Terrace, Bicester. His father was a house thatcher and Thomas was a butcher.

Thomas enlisted in Stafford on 27th May 1915 in the 8th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps.

On 22nd August 1916, the 8th (Service) Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC), part of the 41st Brigade in the 14th (Light) Division, was operating south of Longueval on the Somme battlefield, having moved down from positions near Pommiers Redoubt and Delville Wood. The battalion went into positions in York Trench and came under artillery fire from enemy lines. Thomas was killed on 22nd August 1916 and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

William Jenkins was a private in the 13th Battalion King's (Liverpool) Regiment. Before the war William worked for Messrs. Layton & son. They were a local establishment and undertakers based in Bicester, Oxfordshire, frequently documented in contemporary regional records during World War I for handling local military funerals and employing local servicemen.

During the First World War William enlisted in the King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

On 29th March 1917, the 13th (Service) Battalion of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment was part of the 9th Brigade in the 3rd Division, actively preparing and positioning on the Western Front for the major upcoming Arras Offensive. William was killed by shell fire near Arras on 29th March 1917 and is buried in Douchy-les-Ayette British Cemetery in Pas de Calais.

William Ernest Richardson was a Lance Corporal in the 2nd/7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was born in 1899 in Bicester, Oxfordshire. He was the son of Ernest and Louise Richardson. His father was born in Stratton Audley, Oxfordshire and his mother was born in Nash, Buckinghamshire.

In 1901 William was living with his parents and sister Mabel at 193 Crump Buffs, Bicester. His father was a butcher.

In 1911 William was living with his parents and sisters Mabel and Elsie at 83 Sheep Street, Bicester. His father was a butcher's assistant.

During the First World War William enlisted in the 7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. On 24th October 1918 the 2nd/7th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment took part in heavy fighting during the Battle of the Selle as part of the 61st (2nd South Midland) Division. The battalion advanced from billets at Rieux with the objective of capturing the village of Sommaing and overcoming stiff local resistance. They were engaged in the final British offensive crossing the Selle river lines against entrenched German positions. William was killed in action on 24th October 1918 and is buried in Canonne Farm British Cemetery, Sommaing, France.

His parents were living at 31 Edith Road, Grandpont, Oxford at the time.