

# NEVER FORGOTTEN



**The stories behind the names on  
THE WAR MEMORIAL  
HUNTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

Mike Gibson for  
Hunton Local History Group  
December 2014 (slightly amended, February 2024)

## THE INSCRIPTION

(South East Face)

1914-18

This monument was erected in memory of the undermentioned heroes who fell in the Great War

George Terry

Arthur Hodgson

Blythe Pickersgill

George Hunter

William Atkinson

Thomas Shaw

Robert Auton

Their name liveth for evermore

(South West Face)

1939-45

David Matthews

Eric Smith

Arthur Hillary

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*In this booklet, the biographical facts about each serviceman are given in chronological order of the dates of their deaths. These facts are given in good faith and are taken from publicly available documents and from information provided by some of the families of the men. We hope that this booklet will stimulate further interest and lead to more information being discovered. Please contact us if you feel that there are any significant omissions or errors which need to be corrected or if you can provide any additional information.*

## The War Memorial

Hunton's War Memorial stands on a small, roadside green near the quoits pitch between the Countryman's Inn and the Methodist Chapel (Grid Ref. SE190925). It takes the form of a tapered stone obelisk about 2.5 metres high, set on a plinth and enclosed by a low wall topped by railings. The memorial shows the symbol of a laurel leaf, a traditional form of commemoration, and inscriptions in raised letters.

Despite a search of all known, relevant village records and some local newspapers from the time, it has not yet been possible to discover how or when the memorial was funded, designed, built, dedicated and unveiled; how much it cost or how it was decided which names would appear on it. However, it is most likely that the memorial was erected during 1920 or 1921 and that, like all others in the country (apart from the Cenotaph in London), it was funded by public subscriptions raised by and from the local community. The opening is likely to have taken the form of a religious service together with the unveiling by a local dignitary.

It is important to realise that decisions on the names to be included on any war memorial were made by each individual community and that the criteria might well have been different from place to place. What is clear is that all of those named were felt by their own communities to be casualties of war in one way or another. Some memorials included the names of all those who went to war and not just those who died. Collation of names for inclusion was usually done by the committee responsible for a memorial's erection, using a number of methods including door to door enquiries, leaflets posted through letter boxes, announcements in church, articles in the local newspaper and word of mouth.

Names could be omitted very easily for a variety of reasons, both deliberate and accidental. For example, if a family had already left the area then their relative may have not been recorded. Alternatively, relatives did not always want names inscribed – where a loved one was missing, some families still hoped that they would return. To have the person's name placed on the memorial was an admittance that they were never going to return and that was something which the family just couldn't contemplate. As the accounts of the individual servicemen make clear, it is perfectly possible for one person's name to appear on a number of war memorials in different places.

Today, as it has done since it was built, the memorial commemorates individual sacrifice and is a constant reminder of the consequences of war. It is a focus for both individual and collective remembrance and links the past with the present.

*Much of the general information on this page was taken from the website of the Imperial War Museum's War Memorials Archive.*

## **GEORGE TERRY**

**Saddler / 1727**

**2<sup>nd</sup> / 1<sup>st</sup> West Riding Brigade, Royal Field Artillery**

**Died 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1915**

George Terry was born sometime in the last few months of 1888 at Bainbridge in Wensleydale and baptised at St. Oswald's Church, Askrigg on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1889. He was the eldest son of Ralph, a farmer, and Martha (nee Hammell) who eventually had eleven children. Since their marriage in 1882, his parents had been living in Addlebrough House (now Rook Hill), Bainbridge which was owned by Ralph's father, George, who farmed nearby at Cravenholme. There is a family story that Ralph and his father quarrelled about the ownership of the house in 1900 which led to Ralph, his wife and children being forced to quit (See 'The Barden Biography' by Peter and June Underwood, 2004). By the time of the 1901 census, they were living at Cock Robin near Marsett in Raydale and Ralph was working as a carter on a farm.

In early 1904, Ralph and his family moved to a cottage at Arrathorne where they continued to farm in a small way. George eventually became a saddler journeyman. He joined the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> West Riding Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (Territorial Force) probably in early 1915. This acted as a reserve unit in which recruits were trained and from which replacements were sent to the front line. George was given the rank of Saddler to make use of his special skills in a regiment which relied on horses in the movement of medium calibre guns and howitzers. In some documents, he is described as a driver or a harness maker. Around this time, his parents seem to have moved to 55 Low Petergate, York to live with one of their daughters, Margaret Ann, who was working as a baker and confectioner there. George must have joined them, however temporarily, as this is given as his last address.

There is no conclusive documentary evidence to prove that George ever left England to fight. His part of the Brigade was not deployed abroad until 1917, there appears to be no record of campaign medals being awarded to him and his family announced his death in the local newspaper in the 'Deaths' column rather than that of the 'Roll of Honour' which listed men killed in action or who died as a result of wounds or illnesses sustained overseas. Whatever the truth, George undoubtedly died as a result of the war. The exact circumstances leading up to his death are unknown but family memory is that it was a result of being trampled by one or more horses.

Whatever the cause, George died in Reckitt's Military Hospital in Hull on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1915, aged 26 years, as a result of hyperpyrexia (extreme increase in body temperature) and acute rheumatism (i.e. rheumatic fever) and was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Hornby (near Bedale) three days later. He left a fiancee, a girl in Hunton. His grave lies very close to that of his parents.

Other memorials where George's name is recorded are inside St. Mary's Church, Hornby (a dedicated window with inscribed plaque beneath), on the memorial at Bainbridge and also in the 'King's Book of York Heroes' which is usually on display in York Minster.

## **ARTHUR HODGSON**

**Private / 27283**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment**

**Died 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1917**

Arthur Hodgson was born on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1891 at Hunton and was baptised at St. Patrick's Church at Patrick Brompton on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1892. He was one of nine children born to William and Mary (nee Simpson) who moved to Hunton from Brompton on Swale in about 1886. William was a native of Arrathorne. The family lived for many years at Ivy Cottage, next door to Old Fox Cottage at the opposite end of the main street from Church Bank. Here William carried out his trade as a shoemaker from his workshop on the first floor which was entered by a set of external steps at the rear of the building. Arthur attended Hunton School from 1896 to 1905 and at the time of the 1911 census was working as a cartman for Arthur Hobson at Constable Burton Mill.

In early 1916, Arthur married Mary Bagley, the daughter of George and Hannah Bagley. George was a gamekeeper on the Hauxwell estate. Arthur and Mary had two children – Wilfred, born in 1916, and Arthur, born in 1917 less than a month after his father's death and, presumably, named after him.

Following enlistment, Arthur joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment (known as Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment or, less formally, as the Green Howards). The Battalion spent the war on the Western Front seeing service at the Battle of the Somme amongst others. The Battalion's war diary records that during June and July 1917, it was resting at Zouafques in France but late in July moved up to Dickebusche Huts, a few miles south-west of Ypres (now Ieper) in Belgium, to prepare for a daylight raid on the German front lines. The raid, in which it is very likely that Arthur took part, was carried out on 26<sup>th</sup> July under an intense enemy barrage and the raiding party had to come back without any artillery protection allowing the Germans to fire heavily on it. One German officer and ten of his men were brought back as prisoners but two British officers and nine of the men were killed, 34 wounded and two were missing. Arthur's body has never been found. He was 25 years old.

As well as at Hunton, Arthur is commemorated on Panel 33 of the Menin Gate in Ieper. This is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which covers the area known as the Ypres Salient and carries the names of more than 54,000 men whose graves are not known. Even now, at 8 p.m. every evening the traffic is stopped and the Last Post is played. Arthur's name is also recorded in the Yorkshire Regiment's Roll of Honour which is kept in the Green Howard's Regimental Chapel in St. Mary's Church, Richmond.

Further tragedy struck his family in December 1918 when Arthur's son Wilfred died at the age of 2 years and 4 months. Wilfred is buried in a grave with his maternal grandparents in the churchyard of St. Oswald's, Hauxwell.

## **ERNEST BLYTH (E) PICKERSGILL**

**Lance Corporal / 201203  
5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment**

**Died 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1917**

Blythe Pickersgill was born in 1887 at Lombard's Wynd, Richmond just behind St. Mary's Church in which he was baptised on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1887. His parents were Francis Maxson and Esther Ann (nee Blyth), and he was the fourth child of six. Francis worked variously as a farm labourer or a farmer mainly at Brokes Farm near Hudswell. After his death in 1908, Esther, along with some of her children, moved to Hunton where she continued to farm. The precise property where she lived is unknown but is likely to have been somewhere between the Oddfellows' Arms (now the Countrymans' Inn) and Chapel (now Church) Bank.

At the time of the 1911 census, Blythe was working as a horseman on the farm at Topcliffe Manor House near Thirsk but seems to have kept a connection with Hunton as the village is given as his address in both 1915 and 1917 even though his mother, Esther, died in 1913.

Sometime after the outbreak of war, Blythe joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Yorkshire Regiment (informally, the Green Howards) although he did not fight abroad until at least 1916. The Battalion served on the Western Front (i.e. north-east France and Flanders). He died of wounds, received in action, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1917 in the area of Ypres (now Ieper), Belgium. He was 30 years old. It is not possible to be certain about the exact incident in which he sustained his wounds but the battalion war diary describes various actions around this period.

In early December, the Battalion had been at rest and training for almost a month before being moved up the line to Erie Camp, Brandhoek, Belgium. On 10<sup>th</sup>, a bomb from a German aircraft landed in the Transport Lines killing one man and injuring five men and twenty horses. On 12<sup>th</sup> the Battalion advanced and relieved the 5<sup>th</sup> Durham Light Infantry resulting in a further death and five more wounded. From 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, they were supplying working and carrying parties to the front line. On the day of Blythe's death, another man was killed and five more wounded.

Blythe was buried at the Potijze Chateau Grounds Cemetery (Grave I.C.67), north-east of Ieper. His closest relative, and his sole beneficiary, was his sister, Daisy who lived in Hunton and was married to Francis Lockey. She was pregnant at the time of her brother's death and her daughter, born on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1918, was named Ypres (sometimes written as Eypres).

Apart from the Hunton memorial, Blythe is remembered in the Yorkshire Regiment's Roll of Honour which is kept in the Green Howard's Regimental Chapel in St. Mary's Church, Richmond.

## **GEORGE EDWARD HUNTER**

**Private / 23485  
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment**

**Died 24<sup>th</sup> August 1918**

George Hunter was born at Hunton on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1898 and baptised at St. Patrick's Church, Patrick Brompton on 25<sup>th</sup> September of the same year. He was one of about nine children of George Edward (Senior) and Alice Ann (nee Airey). Alice was also born in Hunton. George (Senior) seems to have had a variety of jobs over the years including those of labourer, farmer, road contractor and butcher. The family lived for some time in Bridge House, opposite the Methodist Chapel. George attended the village school from 1901 to 1912. His occupations are unknown.

George enlisted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment but, late in the war, he joined the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment. This may have been because his original Battalion disbanded in February 1918 or because he was reassigned after being ill or wounded (as was sometimes the case) but it is not possible to be sure. Both Battalions served on the Western Front in France and Flanders.

In the summer of 1918, his Dorsetshire battalion was engaged in actions north-east of Amiens in northern France as part of the plan to push back the German forces through a series of attacks over a wide area rather than at a single point. George was killed in action on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1918 near Pozieres during this campaign which led directly to the advance to victory in Picardy and Artois. He was 19 years old, dying the day before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Battalion's war diary for this date reports intense fighting in the face of heavy machine gun fire and bombs. Enemy posts had to be dealt with as they were met. A late counter-attack by the retreating Germans was repelled but only with heavy losses. During late August, enemy defences were broken. Battalion casualties during the operations of 21<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August were 53 killed, 172 wounded and 25 missing.

George has no known grave but he is remembered on Panel 7 of the Vis-En-Artois Memorial in the British Cemetery there, a few miles south east of Arras, France. The Memorial lists over 9,000 men who, like George, were killed in the time from this advance to the Armistice on 11th November and who have no known graves.

## **WILLIAM ATKINSON**

**Farrier Corporal / TS 9645  
Horse Transport, Army Service Corps**

**Died 17<sup>th</sup> October 1918**

William Atkinson was born at East Cowton in early 1885 and was baptised at All Saints' Church in that village on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1885. He was the elder son of John Thomas and Mary Ann (nee Rycroft) who had five children in all. John worked as a labourer until the 1890s but then became an innkeeper sometimes along with doing some farming. Amongst other premises, he kept the Black Bull Hotel at Middleham and then, from at least 1909 to 1919, the Oddfellows' Arms (now the Countryman's Inn) at Hunton. At the time of William's death in 1918, his parents' address is given as School View, Hunton. It is unlikely that William himself ever lived in the village as all available records show him residing in East Cowton until the end of 1915. After some time working as a bricklayer's apprentice, William became a blacksmith and, in particular, a shoeing smith.

William married Ellen Marshall on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1909 at Hemsworth Register Office near Wakefield and they went on to have two boys and a girl, all of whom were born in East Cowton.

William had been a member of the volunteer Territorial Force. He enlisted at Northallerton on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1915 and was assigned to the Horse Transport section of the Army Service Corps presumably to make best use of his skills. The role of the Army Service Corps was to ensure that soldiers on the front line of the fighting were provided with food, ammunition and any other supplies that they required. He began his service in France in late December 1915. In early 1916, his wife and children moved to Skelbrooke, near Doncaster, to live with Ellen's parents while William was away.

In France, William joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Auxiliary Pack Train and was soon promoted to Corporal. He served in France until November 1917 and then was one of the 200,000 Allied troops sent to Italy as reinforcements following the major defeat of the Italian Army by the Austrian Army at Caporetto on 24<sup>th</sup> October. His unit was based in north-east Italy between Lake Garda and the River Piave. However, they were soon moved further north to the Asiago area to counter a likely Austrian spring attack where they had to adapt to Alpine terrain. Conditions were very difficult and the company had to swap their horses for mules in order to better negotiate the ground. A large proportion of the men in William's Pack Train spent periods in hospital, often as a result of influenza.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1918, only 18 days before the Austrian armistice, William died of 'broncho-pneumonia contracted on active service' at the 39<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station which was located at the village school in Dueville, north of Vicenza, Italy. He was 33 years old.

William is buried at the Montecchio Precalcino Communal Cemetery Extension (Plot 7, Row B, Grave 1) 10 miles north of Vicenza, Italy. Apart from the Hunton memorial, William is also remembered on the war memorials located in front of All Saints Church, East Cowton and inside the church of St. Michael and All Angels, Skelbrooke.



## **THOMAS SHAW**

**Private / 55775  
11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers**

**Died 27<sup>th</sup> October 1918**

Thomas Shaw was born at Egton, in Eskdale near Whitby, on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1897 and was baptised at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Hedda's, Egton Bridge only four days later. He was the eldest child in a family of six born to John and Elizabeth (nee Hedlam) who were both from the Whitby area. John was described at different times as a farmer and a farm labourer.

The family seems to have moved around fairly often and lived, amongst other places, at Egton, Roxby near Staithes, Ormesby, Great Ayton and Newby Wiske. Thomas's parents lived in Hunton from at least 1915 to 1921 but it is not known whether Thomas himself ever lived there. Neither is there any record of any of his occupations as he was still at school at the time of the 1911 census.

On enlisting, Thomas served first in the Army Service Corps and then in the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, 'A' Company. He did not serve abroad before 1916. His Battalion spent much of the war in France and Flanders but was moved to Italy in November 1917 as part of Allied reinforcements following a disastrous defeat inflicted on the Italian Army by the Austrians at the Battle of Caporetto.

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1918, Allied Forces moved from the Asiago area and took over part of the front along a stretch of the River Piave which they bridged during the following few days to try to force back the Austrian Army. On the night of 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, in pouring rain, the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion waded the river under continuous shell fire. Its attack east of the river began early on 27<sup>th</sup> when it was also subjected to a heavy machine gun barrage and rifle fire. The enemy's wire defences were left uncut by the Allies' own bombardment and negotiating these caused many casualties. The Battalion lost over 250 men in one day. Most of the Officers and NCO's were injured or killed and yet still the Battalion's objective was reached. Thomas was killed a few yards in front of the bank. He was 21 years old. In a letter to Thomas's father, his platoon officer said that 'He was one of the keenest, hard-working and most dutiful men in my platoon and carried out his duties nobly to the end.' In the days following, the Austrians continued to be pushed back until their Armistice on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

Thomas is buried at the Tezze British Cemetery (Plot 3, Row B, Grave 10) in a village in the Province of Treviso, a large town north of Venice, Italy.

## **ROBERT AUTON**

**Leading Airman / 148797  
30 Squadron, Royal Air Force**

**Died 14th November 1921**

Robert Auton was born at Hunton on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1894 and was baptised at St. Patrick's Church, Patrick Brompton on 8<sup>th</sup> July in the same year. He was the second of a family of at least four children, and the elder son, of George Henry and Ada Jane (nee Ellerton). Ada had also been born at Hunton. George worked as a farmer and a labourer at various times and also served as a Parish Councillor in Hunton.

The family lived in Hunton throughout Robert's life and occupied a number of properties in this time including Blewery Grange where it is likely that he was born and then Prospect House at the top of Church Bank. Robert attended the village school from March 1898 to 1908 and after leaving he worked on the farm with his father.

Immediately before he joined the Army in January 1917, Robert had been employed as a quarryman. He spent a month in the Army Service Corps and was then transferred to the Territorial Reserve for basic training before being assigned to an active service unit. In July 1917, Robert transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment and served with it in Mesopotamia (an area now mainly within the borders of Iraq) for six months. At the end of that year, he joined the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) 30 Squadron which was also serving in Mesopotamia. He was given the rank of Air Mechanic 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and carried out work as a motorcyclist. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918, the Royal Air Force was formed from the RFC and the Royal Naval Air Service and Robert was transferred to it (still as a member of 30 Squadron), becoming a Leading Aircraftman in April 1919.

The Mesopotamian Campaign was fought mainly between British Empire forces and the Ottoman Empire and the British role was to protect oil refineries and pipelines. RFC squadrons provided reconnaissance and air support and transported supplies including food and ammunition. In March 1917, the Allies took Baghdad but the advance then stopped, re-starting almost a year later. The final offensive took place in October 1918 during which much of the Ottoman force was captured. After the war ended, the RAF was given a policing role in Mesopotamia as the Arab countries of the old Ottoman Empire were put under the control of the Allies. Britain assumed responsibility for Palestine and Iraq under a League of Nations mandate. This arrangement led to widespread unrest and a developing Arab nationalist movement. The Kingdom of Iraq was founded in August 1921 but still under British administration and was not granted full independence until 1932.

In August 1919, Robert had suffered a gunshot wound in his left shoulder, an injury which required intermittent treatment for the rest of his life. He left the service on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1920 (officially discharged on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1920) and seems to have returned home and worked on a farm (probably Village Farm – now Village House – which was occupied by his grandparents, the Ellertons). However, he developed tuberculosis in the upper bone of his arm near the site of the wound and, eventually, tuberculosis of the lungs. He died in the Ministry of Pensions Hospital in Leeds (formerly the 2<sup>nd</sup> Northern General Hospital or Beckett's Park Military Hospital) on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1921. He was 27 years old.

Robert is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Hornby (near Bedale).

## **DAVID CHARLES JAMES MATTHEWS**

**Serjeant / S/94330  
Royal Army Service Corps**

**Died 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

David Matthews was born in Graig Road, Llantrisant, Pontypridd, Glamorgan in 1911. He was the only son, along with three sisters, of David and Elizabeth (nee Welch). David (senior) was a coalminer. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, David (junior) was working as a Grocery Manager at the NAAFI at Catterick Camp and lived for a while at Marne Lines.

David married Sarah Jenkins at Richmond Register Office on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1938. They had one daughter who was born in 1940 only two months before her father's death. In Hunton, they lived in what is now Meadow View, the middle one of the five terraced cottages opposite Manor Farm.

Very early in the war, David joined the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), which carried out transport and supply functions, and served in the France and Belgium campaign of 1939/40 supporting the British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

The BEF was sent to France to help defend the French border with Belgium while the Allies built up their resources. The RASC supported the BEF but from a considerable distance as, due to the risk of air attacks, bases were established away from the likely main areas of fighting. Equipment and stores were sent to Brest, St. Nazaire and Nantes. It wasn't until 10<sup>th</sup> May 1940 that the German Army began its invasion of France and the Low Countries. Allied defences were over-run. The BEF was cut off from its bases and an evacuation from Dunkirk was ordered. Two weeks after this evacuation of a third of a million soldiers, Operation Ariel was launched to bring back both the remaining troops, some of whom had been driven south by the advancing German Army, and any remaining British civilians from France which was now on the point of collapse. On 15<sup>th</sup> June, the RASC, still taking in supplies, had orders to evacuate within 24 hours. Most of them, including David, left for embarkation on the former Cunard liner, HMT Lancastria. On the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940, overloaded with passengers, the ship lay in the Loire estuary, five miles off St. Nazaire, waiting to begin its journey home. Coming under attack from German aircraft, the Lancastria suffered direct hits from three bombs and sank within 20 minutes. No one knows for certain how many people were on the ship but estimates range from 4,000 to 9,000. There were only 2,477 survivors. This incident is Britain's worst ever maritime disaster bringing the highest ever loss of life in the sinking of a single British ship and the single largest loss of life for British forces in the whole of World War Two. David was amongst the casualties. He was 29 years old.

David is buried at Les-Moutiers-en-Retz Communal Cemetery, six miles south-east of Pornic in France. This cemetery contains stone, carved panels on a screen wall which commemorates all of the casualties of this tragic event. David is remembered on Panel 35. Lack of space prevented the erection of individual headstones. In addition, there is now a memorial to all of the victims of this tragedy on the sea front at St. Nazaire.

## **ARTHUR HILLARY**

**Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class / 1369694  
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**

**Died 13<sup>th</sup> April 1941**

Arthur Hillary was born in early 1907 at Hornby (near Bedale) and baptised at St. Mary's Church, Hornby on 3<sup>rd</sup> March of the same year. His parents, Robert and Elizabeth (nee Franklin), had a large family of at least seven children. From about 1902, Robert worked as a carter on the Hornby estate, and later, as a labourer.

Arthur married Frances Eliza Blanchard at Leeming on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1931. They had three children, two boys and a girl, during the 1930's. The family lived at Hackforth for some time and later moved to a cottage at South View, Hunton. Arthur worked variously as a rabbit catcher and a labourer.

In either 1939 or 1940, Arthur joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve with the rank of Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and was stationed at Blackpool where the RAF had located what was reputedly the biggest military training centre in the world.

In April 1941, Arthur was enjoying a period of leave back at home with his family. According to the Darlington and Stockton Times' contemporary report, he failed to return from a rabbit catching expedition on 13<sup>th</sup> April. The next morning, a local search party was assembled and Arthur's body was found in Birkcarr Wood, Hornby. He had suffered a gunshot wound to the head which had resulted in his death. He was 34 years old.

The Coroner returned a verdict of accidental death as the evidence suggested that Arthur had been striding forward when he caught his leg on the trigger of the gun.

Arthur is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Hornby (New Extension, Grave 9) where his grave is marked with a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

## **ERIC EDWARD SMITH**

**Guardsman / 2669727  
Training Battalion, Coldstream Guards**

**Died 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945**

Eric Smith was born at Clint, near Harrogate, on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1927 and was baptised at St. Thomas a Becket's Church, Hampsthwaite on 20<sup>th</sup> March of the same year. Eric was the eldest son in the family of five children of Albert Edward and Amelia (nee Hodgson). Albert was a chauffeur at the time of Eric's birth but eventually went into business as a haulage contractor. By 1929, the family had moved to Hunton, Amelia's home village. (Amelia's brother, Arthur, had been killed in the First World War). They lived first at Rose Dene and then at Collingwell House before settling at Richmond House on the junction of Ratten Row and the Bedale road.

Eric attended Hauxwell Council School and, after leaving, worked with his father in the haulage contractor's business which was run from Ratten Row on the site now occupied by the houses named Carradale and Waysides where then there were garages and petrol pumps.

At the age of 18, Eric enlisted in the Army and joined No.2 Company, Training Battalion of the Coldstream Guards with the rank of Guardsman, based at Pirbright Camp near Woking in Surrey. He was still in training when, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945, only ten days before the end of the war with Germany, he was one of 20 men riding in an Army lorry which was returning to Pirbright. The Surrey Advertiser reported that on Wanborough Hill, on a straight stretch of road and with no other vehicles involved, the lorry zigzagged for a considerable distance, struck a water channel at the side of the road and turned completely upside down. Some of the men were thrown out of, and under, the vehicle. Eric and three of his fellow soldiers were killed and the rest were injured. The Coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death. Eric was still only 18 years old and had been a soldier for only six months.

Eric's funeral was held in St. Patrick's Church, Patrick Brompton on 26<sup>th</sup> August. It was reported that the church was completely full and that almost every house in Hunton was represented. Eric is buried in the churchyard of St. Patrick's (Row M, Grave 23).

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*For Arthur Hodgson*

Eileen Chapman; Bryan Crowe

*For Blythe Pickersgill*

Mavis Hodgson; John Horseman; David Lawrenson; Brian Lockey; Trish Tibbles

*For George Terry*

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- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- War Graves Photographic Project
- Imperial War Museum's War Memorials Archive
- Great War Forum
- Lancastria Association of Scotland
- Ancestry