

a small consolation for someone who had lost her husband and six of her children. She remained at The Poplars until her death in 1922.

George Reynold's battalion was part of the 1st Division, and they were also soon in action as the battle continued in the area of Albert and Mametz Wood. As



The grave of George Reynolds

they occupied the northern fringe of the wood, they came under constant bombardment from shrapnel, gas, tear gas and high explosives. George died of his wounds on Wednesday 19th July and was buried at the

Albert Communal Cemetery Extension.

On the same day, **George Loveridge's** battalion was making its way to the front line ready to attack Ovillers the following day. Another soldier in George's battalion recorded what they saw on their way to the front – a group of dead Lewis gunners on the side of the road,



British soldiers going 'over the top' on the Somme

a long winding trench littered with German corpses, and a line of soldiers from a Worcester battalion, many in a state of hysteria. Their headquarters on arrival had been a German dressing station - the floor littered with the "ghastly remnants thrown down by the surgeon." George

was killed in action the next day and has no known grave.

By this time the British had got through the second German defensive complex on the Somme, and had run into stiffening enemy defences in places like Longueval, High Wood and Pozieres. **Edgar Hill** was killed in action on 30th July, most probably in the attack on Pozieres. He was 21 years old and, like James Carnegy and George Loveridge, has no known grave but is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

The Battle of the Somme was to be one of the defining events of the First World War. More than a million men were wounded or killed, making it one of the bloodiest battles in human history. Although attention tends to focus on the huge losses on the first day, the Somme offensive lasted for 141 days with the German Army fiercely defending every inch of ground and the fighting continuing until the middle of November.

The Somme is summed up by an Australian soldier, Edward Lynch, who wrote "We live in a world of Somme mud. We sleep in it, work in it, fight in it, wade in it and many of us die in it. We see it,

feel it, eat it and curse it, but we can't escape it, not even by dying."

For further copies of this leaflet or if you have any information to add, please contact Di Landon on 01452 760531

Westbury Remembers - Part 10

James Carnegy, George Reynolds, George Loveridge and Edgar Hill

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and sponsored by

Westbury-on-Severn Parish Council



By July 1916, the two sides on the Western Front had been engaged in trench warfare for nearly two years, during which the front had hardly moved. A major offensive on the Somme was planned for the beginning of August, in the hope that the stalemate could be broken and the Germans could be pushed out of France. However, in June, Germany launched a massive attack on the French at Verdun, where a battle had been in progress since February. To relieve the pressure on the French forces, the British brought the attack on the Somme forward to July 1st.

For the week leading up to the attack, the Allies kept up a ferocious bombardment of the German lines. British soldiers were assured that the 18-mile German frontline would be flattened and that they would be able to walk across and take possession of the enemy trenches.

But things did not turn out as planned and four of the men commemorated on our War Memorial lost their lives in the fighting that followed. Although they all died in July 1916 in the same cause, these four men probably had little else in common.



Men of the Madras Army

James Carnegy had spent very little of his life in Westbury. He came from a military family and was born in July 1876 in West Bengal in India, where his father, Patrick Carnegy was a Major General in the Madras Army. James was the eighth child born to Patrick and his wife, Catherine, and while the family may have been prosperous, his childhood was marred by tragedy. He had three younger brothers and sisters, but each

died before the age of four. Two of his older sisters, both in their early twenties, had also died by the time James was 12 years old.

It is likely that his parents sent him back to England for his education and as he is also commemorated on the Cheltenham War Memorial, I think he may

have attended Cheltenham College or Dean Close School. His two older brothers both had military careers like their father, with Philip rising to the rank of Colonel in the Indian Army and Gerald serving as an officer in the 7th Bengal Cavalry. Around the turn of the century, James' parents returned to England and were living near Painswick when his father died in 1902. His mother, with two of his sisters moved to The Poplars in Broadoak and James

joined the British Army as a Lieutenant. By 1910 he was a Captain in the North Staffordshire Regiment and when war broke out in 1914, he was attached to the newly formed 8th Battalion.



The Poplars, home of Mrs Carnegie —now Stepping Stones

George Reynolds, by contrast, was born and bred in Westbury, as were his parents, James and Esther. George was born in 1883 and the family lived at Stantway where his father worked as a carpenter. By 1901, the census shows that both George and his older brother, Arthur, had left home, with Arthur in Torquay, where he was an assistant schoolmaster, and George in Bristol working as a railway clerk. By 1911, Arthur had married and was an elementary school teacher in London, but George had remained single, returned home and was working as a general labourer.

George Loveridge (spelt Leveridge on the memorial) was born in 1890 in Bulley, a parish that was at that time in the district of Westbury-on-Severn. He was the eighth of nine children of William and Elizabeth Loveridge, who lived at Lake Farm Cottage in Bulley. William was described as a stone-breaker or road labourer and life must have been hard, both at work and at home, with such a large family. By 1901 the family were listed as living at Yew Tree Cottage in Bulley, but when I went to photograph the cottage, I met a local resident who explained that the family had not moved, but the cottage (which was destroyed by fire in the 1960s) had been renamed. In 1911, 21 year old George, was the only one of

the children still at home and was working as a farm labourer.

Edgar Hill was born in April 1895 and was the son of David and Annie Hill who lived at North Walmore Common. His father had first been married to Mary Coleman and they had

three children. Sadly, Mary had died in October 1893, just six months after their youngest child, Oscar, was born. David married again in April 1894 and Edgar was their first child. He was soon to be followed by seven more children, making a total of eleven - a big family to support on a general labourer's wage. The children attended Walmore Hill School, where the log records that they were frequently late. By 1911, Edgar and his three older step-siblings had left home but I could find no trace of Edgar on the 1911 census so I do not know where he lived or what he did when he left school.

When war broke out in 1914, Captain **James Carnegie** went, with his battalion of mainly new recruits, for training on Salisbury Plain and then to Tidworth. On 18th July 1915 they sailed for France and served on the Western Front, taking part in a diversionary action during the Battle of Loos later that year

The record shows that **George Reynolds** enlisted, surprisingly, in Westbury and it is therefore likely that he signed up at the recruiting meeting that was held in the village early in 1915. He joined the 10th

Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment which at that time was billeted in Cheltenham. In April 1915 they too went to Salisbury Plain for training before sailing for France on 8th August 1915. They first saw action in September and October that year at the Battle of Loos and by the summer of 1916 were one of twelve battalions of the Glosters serving on the Western Front.

It is not clear when **George Loveridge** enlisted, but he joined the 1st/5th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment which landed in France in March 1915. **Edgar Hill** also enlisted in the Glosters, but he joined the 8th Battalion on 6th January 1915. At this time, the battalion was at Perham Down for training and in March 1915 moved to Tidworth. Having been inspected by King George V in June, they crossed the English Channel in July and assembled near St Omer. Their first action was at Pietre, in a diversionary action supporting the Battle of Loos.

So by 1st July 1916, these four men were all in place for the Somme offensive. But the artillery barrage had not achieved the expected damage to the German trenches, as they were very deeply dug. Worse still, the shelling had combined with

heavy rain to turn the ground to a quagmire in many places.

At 7.30am on 1 July 1916, thirteen divisions of British forces launched the offensive on a line from north of Gommecourt to the River Somme, while the French Army attacked south of the river. In the southern sector of the attack, the German defence crumbled and the British reached their objective by the end of the first day, but the rest of the German line held out and the British met with unexpected resistance from well-placed machine guns. British losses on that first day were unprecedented with approximately 58,000 casualties including 19,000 killed.

On 3rd July, **James Carnegie**, now a Major, was leading B company in an attack on a German trench at La Boiselle. A fellow soldier wrote that Major Carnegie had rallied a faltering attack by walking ahead of the men waving his stick and shouting, 'Come on Staffords'. He was killed by a German sniper. He was 41 years old

and is commemorated on the Thiépval Memorial, one of six memorials on the Somme dedicated to the 100,000 men who have no known grave. Although La Boiselle was a village of just 35 houses, 285 men died in the attack before it was eventually captured.

James's mother later collected his medals -



The Somme Battlefield