

week later launched an offensive which reached its first objective with comparative ease. However, they then came under a heavy artillery barrage in which 160 men were killed, missing or wounded. Jack Hanna was one of those men killed, while Ernest Hayward died later that day of the wounds he sustained. They were both just 20 years old.

Jack is commemorated on the Tynne Cot Memorial for those who have no known grave while Ernest was buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery at Poperinge.

Albert Hulls was born in Westbury in January 1878. His parents lived at Goose Lane House, Walmore Hill. His father, Joseph, was a lime burner and he and his wife Eliza had seven children, of which Albert was the sixth. He seems to have had a hard time at school as at the



Karasouli Military Cemetery

age of nine, the headmaster said that he still had "no idea of writing an intelligible piece of composition." Albert became a lime burner like his father and by 1901, his siblings had left home, his father had died and Albert was living with his widowed mother. After his mother's death in 1908, he went to live with his niece, Alice Grey, and her husband and four young children, who also lived

at Walmore Hill.

When war came he enlisted as a private in the 9th Battalion of the Glosters and landed in France in Sept 1915. His battalion was then sent to Salonika in Macedonia (or Muckydonia as they called it) in November 1915 as part of a large Allied expeditionary force for operations against pro-German Bulgaria. As on the Western front, there was an extensive trench system and while there were some major battles, the greatest threat was from disease, especially malaria.

By the end of the campaign, more than 10,600 British soldiers had died in Salonika, many from disease rather than enemy action. Albert would have taken part in the Battle of Lake Doiran, in which Frank Tombs from Broadoak was killed, and was probably involved in the Bulgarian counter attacks which took place in May. He died of malaria on 24th September 1917 and is buried in the Karasouli Military Cemetery in Greece.

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

Westbury Remembers

Part 16 - Ernest Hayward, Jack Hanna and Albert Hulls



Written by Di Landon
and sponsored by



Westbury-on-Severn Parish Council

In just one tragic week in September 1917, three of Westbury's young men lost their lives. Albert Hulls died in Greece, while Ernest Hayward and John (or Jack) Hanna both died in the fighting in the Ypres salient in Flanders.

The name of Passchendaele has come to symbolise the very worst horrors of the Great War, for not only were over ½ million Allied and German troops killed, wounded or lost in this battle, but they fought and died in the most horrendous conditions. Over 50,000 British and Commonwealth troops were buried without being identified, and 42,000 were never recovered from the ocean of mud which had once been the green fields of Flanders.

Ypres had been the site of two previous battles, and by 1917 General Haig was determined to push back the German line and re-take the Belgian ports from which German submarines were threatening the British war effort.

Ernest Hayward was born in Westbury in July 1897. At that time, his father, Henry, was a labourer, and he and his wife, Kate, were living at 'The Gravel' (now Gravel Farm) in Cleeve. Ernest was their fifth child and when he was 4 years old, the family moved to Hayden Farm, where I now live, where Henry was employed as a carter. By 1911, they had three more children and Henry was a farm bailiff. We know that the children attended Westbury School as there is a record of Ernest's sister, Gertrude, being punished with two strokes of the 'light cane' on the hand for "refusing to obey an order."

By contrast, I have been unable to find any direct connection between **Jack Hanna** and Westbury, apart from the fact that he enlisted in Newnham and his name is on the war memorial. He was born in Faringdon, Berkshire, in the same month as Ernest Hayward and he and his brother and sister lived in Comp-



Ernest Hayward's grave in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium

ton Beauchamp in Berkshire with their grandparents, who were also looking after another 10 year old grandson. Jack's mother must have died soon after his birth and his father was serving in the Navy. By the time Jack was 14, his father was a Naval Pensioner who also worked as an agent for the Prudential Assurance Co. He had re-married and the 1911 census shows that Jack now had two step sisters, Kathleen and Margaret. Jack's stepmother, Alice, and her daughter, Margaret, were both born in Gloucestershire but I have been unable to find out how Jack came to enlist in Newnham or where or when he lived in Westbury.

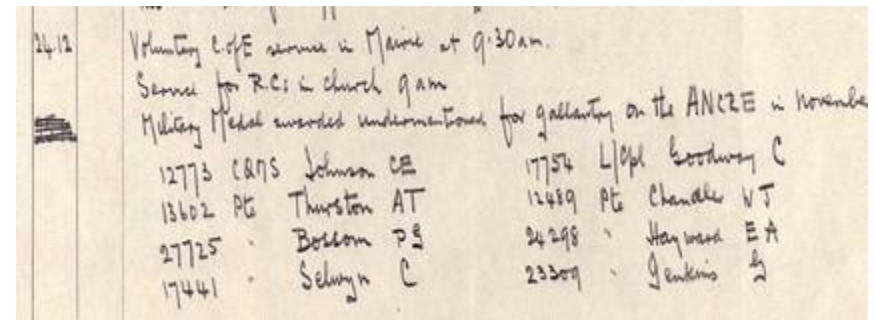
Ernest and Jack were both only 17 years old when war broke out and as their service records have not survived, we have no record of exactly when they enlisted. We only know that they both signed up as privates in the 8th Battalion of the Glosters, with Ernest enlisting in Lydney and Jack in Newnham.

At the start of the war, men could join the army at the age of 18, but could not be sent overseas until they were 19. However, Kitchener's announcement that "Your Country Needs You", led to 250,000 under-age soldiers answering his call. Few people had birth certificates at this time so it was easy to lie about your age, and as recruitment officers were paid two shillings and sixpence (about £6 in today's money) for each new recruit, they did not always question a recruit's age.

Hopefully, they were not sent overseas until July 1916, by which time they would have been 19 years old and would have had a period of training in England. The War Diary of the 8th Battalion, who were at this time in action in the Battle of the Somme, mentions the arrival on 7th July of seven new "other ranks," so this may have included Ernest and/or Jack. If so, they would have been thrown straight into some of the fiercest fighting of the war as, a fortnight later, their battalion sustained 186 casualties during the attack on High Wood and 160 more the following week during another attack.

As the Battle of the Somme continued into November 1916, the 8th battalion attacked a section of the line near the village of Grandcourt. They 'went over the top' at 06.10 am on the 18th November in the dark, with sleet falling and the ground a sea of mud, and successfully stormed the German trenches on a front of three hundred yards. Twelve officers and 283 other ranks were killed or injured and it was in this action that Ernest earned the Military Medal (the other ranks' equivalent of the Military Cross) which was for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire. This was presented to him on Christmas Eve 1916.

In a lull in the fighting they were able to celebrate Christmas Day with dinner in a large marquee, and spent Boxing Day practising



The War Diary record of Ernest Hayward's award of the Military Medal

bomb throwing, musketry and bayonet fighting.

The War Diary shows that they remained in the area of the Somme until May 1917 when they moved to Belgium. "Interminable boredom punctuated by moments of terror" seems to accurately describe their lives at that time as inspections, parades, drills, working parties and training were interspersed with time in the front line.

The line around Ypres had hardly changed since the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915 and the Germans still held the high ground of the Messines Ridge to the south. Its capture was the objective of a battle in June 1917, in which the 8th Glosters took part, losing 23 of their men with 90 more wounded. They achieved their



Stretcher bearers at Passchendaele

objective which raised Haig's confidence, as preparations for the Ypres offensive began.

As on the Somme, a heavy bombardment preceded the attack but here too it failed to destroy the heavily fortified German positions. Previous battles and constant shelling had smashed the drainage systems and churned up the clay soil. The infantry attack began on 31 July, but within a few days, the heaviest rain for 30 years had turned the area into a quagmire. Many men, horses and pack mules drowned, tanks were immobilised and rifles clogged with mud. Little progress was made until the weather improved in September. The British

then began to advance, gradually inching closer to the Passchendaele Ridge.

On 13th September the 8th Battalion moved into the front line near Kimmel and a