

LET US NOT FORGET

30 June 1916 - 'The Day Sussex Died'

Arthur Brown, William Reed and John Goldsmith were all members of the 11th, 12th, and 13th Southdown Battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment. These had been raised by Lt. Col. Claude Lowther of Herstmonceux Castle, the Member of Parliament for Eskdale, Cumberland. They were comprised mainly of Sussex men and affectionately known as "Lowther's Lambs". The battalion mascot was Peter, an orphaned Southdown lamb from Church Farm, Coombes in the Adur valley.

The first taste of action of the Southdown Battalions was the Battle of the Boar's Head at Richebourg L'Avoue, Pas de Calais, on 30 June 1916. This became known as 'The Day Sussex Died' when the three battalions lost 17 officers and 349 other ranks and nearly three times that number were wounded.

SD/4950 Private Arthur William Brown, 11th (1st Southdown) Battalion

Born in Westmeston, East Sussex, in 1883, Arthur was the eldest child of James Arthur Brown, a shepherd and farm labourer, and his wife Mary Ann (or Annie), née Small. The 1911 Census shows the family living at Perching Hill Cottages, Fulking when Arthur was a farm labourer. He enlisted in Brighton and was killed in action on 30 June 1916. He was buried in grave III. A. 9 in St. Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoue, Nord, France. He is commemorated on the Edburton and Fulking War Memorial and the Roll of Honour in St Andrew's Church, Edburton. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

SD/3772 Lance Corporal John Edward Goldsmith, 13th (3rd Southdown) Battalion

John was born in 1895 in Chart Sutton, Kent, the second child of John Edward Goldsmith, a shepherd, and Eliza Goldsmith, née Pressnail. By 1911, the family were at Hill Barn, Annington Farm, Bramber when father and son were both shepherds and John's elder sister, Eliza May was also a farm worker.

John enlisted in Hove soon after the outbreak of war and his battalion landed in France on March 6 1916. The Sussex Daily News on 18 August 1916 reported the following:

'Twenty-one years of age on 29th June, Lance-Corporal J.E. Goldsmith, Royal Sussex Regiment, has been missing since 30th June. A single man, Lance-Corporal Goldsmith joined up soon after the war started. His people sent him a ring and some cigarettes for his coming-of-age but do not know if he received them. Cigarettes have also been sent out since and although the family do not hear from him, they hope that if he had not received them, some others of the soldiers may have done so'.

In fact, John was killed in action on Friday 30 June 1916, aged 21. Having no known grave, he is commemorated on the Loos Memorial (to the missing), in Dud Corner Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. His Medal Index Card shows that he was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal. John is commemorated on Bramber War Memorial.

SD/4938 Private William Reed, 12th (2nd Southdown) Battalion

William was the son of James William Reed, a gardener and his wife Julia, née Langridge. He was born in 1883 in Fletching, near of Haywards Heath. William, who was also a gardener by trade, then moved to the Upper Beeding / Steyning area when he met and married Alice Annie Hole, from Steyning.

William enlisted in Hove on 20 September 1915, giving Claremont, in Upper Beeding High Street as his home address, and was sent to France on 4 March 1916. He received gunshot wounds to his hip and arm on 30 June 1916 and died, aged 29, the following day. He was buried in Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France.

William is not remembered on any of our local war memorials but is commemorated on the village war memorial in his home village of Fletching and on that church's own memorial inside the church. He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Research by Pat Nightingale and Ken Wilson-Wheeler of Beeding and Bramber Local History Society