

ASHFIELD-CUM-THORPE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

1914 - 1918

1939 – 1945

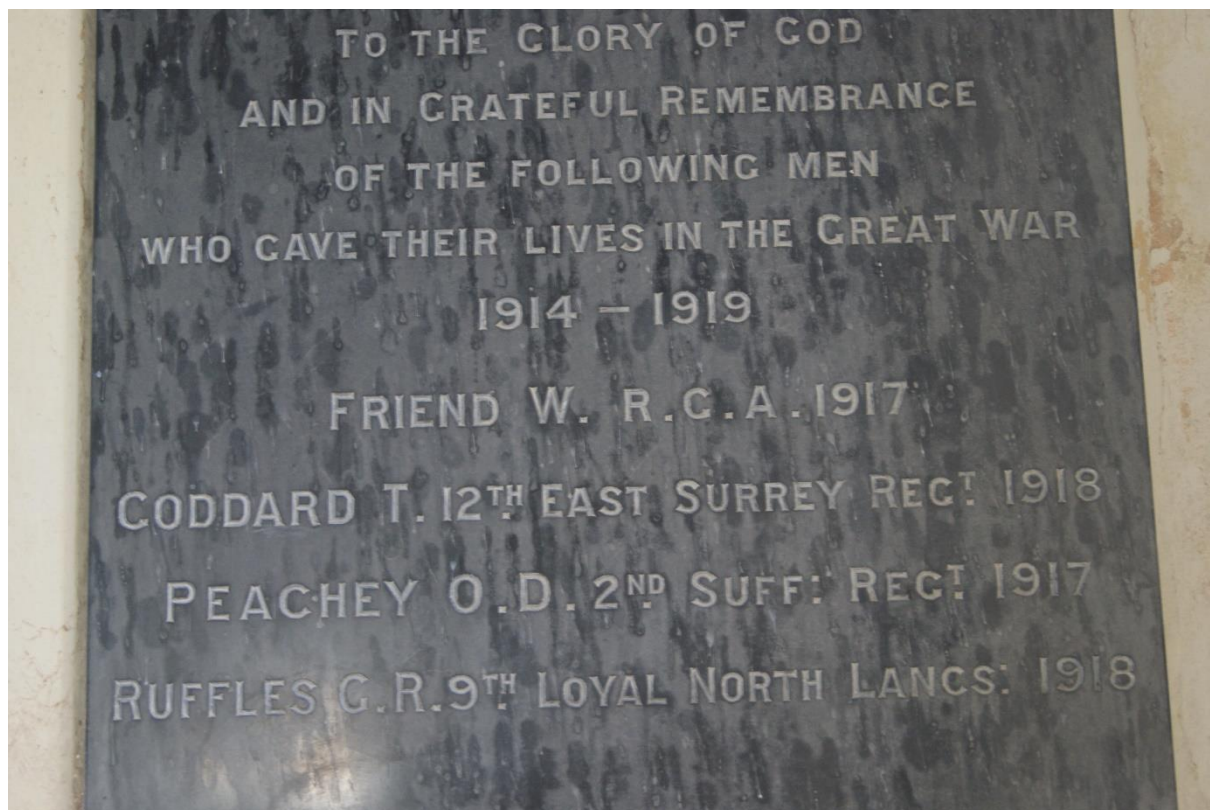
Chris Pratt

ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH

ASHFIELD - CUM – THORPE



WORLD WAR ONE MEMORIAL PLAQUE IN ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH ASHFIELD



MEMORIAL PLAQUE
IN ST MARY'S ASHFIELD TO
6013690 PRIVATE WILLIAM FRIEND
1ST BATTALION SUFFOLK REGIMENT
KILLED IN ACTION 6TH JANUARY 1945



In Honoured Memory of

85962 Gunner WILLIAM FRIEND

155th Battery Royal Garrison Artillery

Who Died of Wounds, aged 24, on 18th February 1917

He was the son of Arthur and Sarah Friend of Ashfield

He is Buried in Trois Arbres Cemetery France

**COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**



**85962 Gunner WILLIAM FRIEND
155th Siege Battery Royal Garrison Artillery
Who Died of Wounds, aged 24, on 18th February 1917**

British War Medal

Victory Medal

The 1911 census states that William Friend, then aged 18, is living at home in Ashfield with his parents Arthur and Sarah Friend two brothers and two sisters. It also states that he was born in Earl Soham and is working as a Stockman on a farm.

We know he was living in Debenham when he enlisted, in Ipswich, though we do not know when.

Private Friend's Medal Index Card shows that he was not awarded any Stars so he must have crossed over to France after 1st January 1916. 155th Siege Battery (SB) RGA went to France on 29th August 1916 so Friend may well have crossed with them. 155th SB was armed with four 6 inch howitzers. (see below)



It is difficult to follow the activities of individual units of the RGA as they were moved about as and when required. Private Friend's battery joined 32nd Heavy Artillery Group (HAG) on 3rd September 1916. A month later, on 5th October, it transferred to 5th HAG then, on 1st November, to 52nd HAG before, on 24th November, it transferred to 71st HAG where it remained for the rest of the year. On 6th January 1917 it returned to 52nd HAG.

Unfortunately, the History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery makes no mention of either 155th Siege Battery or 52nd Heavy Artillery Group so we are unable to establish the circumstances surrounding Gunner Friend's death.

In Honoured Memory of

48293 Private THOMAS GODDARD

12th (Bermondsey) Battalion East Surrey Regiment

Who was Killed in Action, aged 22, on 1st October 1918

He was the son of William and Louisa Goddard of Grove Farm
Ashfield

He is Buried in Perth Cemetery (China Wall) Belgium

**COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**



48293 Private THOMAS GODDARD
12th (Bermondsey) Battalion East Surrey Regiment
Who was Killed in Action, aged 22, on 1st October 1918

British War Medal

Victory Medal

The 1911 census shows that Thomas Goddard, then aged 15, is living at home, at Grove Farm Ashfield, with his parents William and Louisa Goddard, a brother and two sisters. The census shows that he was born in Easton and is working on a farm.

We know that Private Goddard enlisted at Bury St Edmonds though we do not know when. He did not enter theatre until after 1st January 1916 so he may have gone across with his battalion on 2nd May 1916.

12th Battalion East Surrey Regiment was formed on 24th May 1915 and given the designation Bermondsey. Its first Commanding Officer was Lt Col LF Beatson of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The 12th was assigned to 122nd Brigade (Brig Gen FW Towsey) in 41st Division (Maj Gen TB Lawford). The other units in 122nd Brigade were 15th Battalion Hampshire Regiment, 11th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment and 18th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC).

In October 1915 the division moved to Witley Camp in Godalming Surrey. Over the next few months training took place at Witley and Aldershot. On 14th February 1916 the battalion was in Marlborough Lines, Aldershot when a draft of 500 men joined from four other East Surrey battalions. It may be that Private Goddard was amongst them. At the end of March Col Beatson left the battalion and was succeeded by Major HH Lee DSO of the Cameronians.

At 5.15 am on 1st May 1916 1,018 officers and men of the 12th paraded and marched off to Farnborough Station. The battalion embarked later that day and landed at Le Havre the following day. Travelling by train and on the march it moved via Godewaeravelde and Outtersteene to its training area around Steenwerck where it arrived on the 9th. It remained in this area for the next nine days.

On 28th May 41st Division took over from 9th Div and the East Surreys relieved 7th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders the following morning in the Convent Position in Ploegsteert (Plug Street). There followed a period in and out of the front line.

Whilst further south their comrades were engaged in the first battles of the Somme the battalion received some casualties from shellfire and trench raids including, on 14th July, its CO who was wounded in the foot whilst doing his rounds near the Messines Road. The 2i/c, Major HJ Walmisley-Dresser took over command as an acting Lt Col. During July the battalion sustained 39 casualties of which just 1 man was killed.

On 9th August the battalion left Plug Street and went into reserve. Six days later it set off for the Somme travelling via La Creche, Meteren, Fletre, Thieushouck. 28th August saw the battalion on the move again travelling by train from Bailleul to Longpre and then on the march to Mouflers. The next few days were spent in training for attacks, consolidating positions and fighting in woods.

Once again the battalion was on the move and on 6th September it entrained at Longpre for Mericourt then marched to Fricourt.

On 14th September orders were received for the battalion to prepare to play its part in the great battles of the Somme. At 4.30 in the morning it set off and went into trenches near Longueval and north west of Delville Wood.

The Battle of Flers-Courcellette took place between 15th and 17th September. It was the first time that tanks were first used en masse with forty nine going into action. Of these, seventeen broke down or got bogged down, nine reached the front line and got ahead of the infantry and nine kept pace with the infantry. One got astride the German trenches at Flers and raked them with heavy fire helping in the capture of 300 prisoners.

The East Surreys were in action on the first day of the attack and suffered significant losses. Of the seventeen officers who attacked sixteen became casualties including the CO Lt Col Walmisley-Dresser who was fatally wounded. 634 officers and men went into action. As well as the officer casualties 288 Other Ranks were killed, wounded or missing. The total casualty roll for 122nd Brigade was 1,200 out of 1,800.

On 16th September Major Blakeney arrived with 6 officers and 60 ORs to take command. Two days later the battalion was relieved by 4th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and moved via Montauban and Mametz to a camp near Dernancourt, not far from Albert. Maj CH Kitching of 15th Hampshires arrived on 19th September to take command and the rest of September was spent in reserve.

Early October saw the battalion back in the front line when, on the 3rd, it took over the line near Flers in Gird Support Trench north of Factory Corner. .

The following day saw the beginning of the Battle of Transloy Ridge which lasted until the 10th. The 12th was in action on the 7th when it moved forward to Goose Alley reinforcing 11th Royal West Kents in the captured enemy line.

The next few days were spent in Switch Trench near Mametz Wood where, on the 14th and 15th October, new drafts of 450 men came in from the Middlesex Regiment and other East Surrey battalions. Lt Col HH Lee DSO also arrived to take command.

Setting off on 17th October and travelling via Oisemont, Huppy and Pont Remy the battalion made its way to the Ypres Salient where it would spend the few months spent in and out of the line.

The first few months of 1917 were relatively quiet. On 22nd April Col Lee handed over command to Major E Knapp, a member of the South African Defence Force serving with 23rd Battalion Middlesex Regiment

The Battle of the Messines Ridge went on from 7th to 14th June and the 12th took 268 prisoners in their part of the battle.

The next month was spent in and out of the line until 31st July when the battalion took part in the Battle of Pilckem Ridge. The battalion was now commanded by Lt (Temp Maj) R Pennell. Perhaps this reflects the losses sustained by the officers of the battalion.

August was spent out of the line with the battalion moving via Roukloshille, Caestre, Hondeghem, Staple and Zuypteene to Zudausques. On 23rd August 41st Division was inspected by the CinC Sir Douglas Haig. A month later, between the 20th and 22nd September the battalion took part in the Battle of the Menin Road in which 301 out of 465 officers and men were rendered hors de combat.

For the moment 41st Division's fighting days in France were over. On 28th September the battalion was transported by lorry to the Belgian coast in the area of La Panne. Command of the battalion moved to Lt Col CF Stallard MC on 16th October and two weeks later the battalion moved by bus to Coudekerque on the French frontier.

7th November saw the 41st Div ordered to Italy and on the 12th entrainment began at Loon Plage. By the 18th the division was in its concentration area around Mantua and on the 30th the battalion went into the line behind the Piave

The next three months were spent holding the line in the area of Montello in northern Italy. The division saw no major action in its three months in Italy.

On 1st March 1918 entrainment for France began and a week later the division had completed its move and was concentrated in the area of Doullens and Mondicourt. It was now attached to IV Corps 3rd Army in Army Reserve. On 17th March Lt Col GL Brown of the Middlesex Regiment took command of the 12th. During this period 11th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment left the brigade.

22nd March saw the beginning of the 1918 Battles of the Somme starting with the Battle of St Quentin. On the morning of the 22nd 41st Division was ordered into Corps Reserve in the area of Favreuil. The other brigades of the division took an active part in the Battle of St Quentin with the 122nd involved in patrolling forward to contact the enemy.

The battalion was, however, in the thick of the action on the 24th and 25th in the Battle of Bapaume. The battalion faced a strong enemy attack and 'C' Company particularly took the brunt of the assault. Being completely surrounded Colonel Brown and 16 men attempted to slip through but of these only the Colonel and a Lance Corporal were able to get back to the British lines. 'C' Company was lost but the 12th Battalion history states that *"the gallant defence put up by them was something of which they could all be proud. Through their stand they saved 60 guns at Aichet-le-Grand from capture....."*

On 26th March the battalion was withdrawn to Bucquoy before moving to Bienvillers and Fonquevillers over the next few days. The battalion's casualties for March amounted to 3 officers and 59 Other Ranks killed in action and 6 officers and 91 Other Ranks wounded. The history lists 130 officers and men subsequently found to be prisoners of war.

The battalion left the scene of their latest battles on 3rd April and entrained for Poperinghe. Once more the battalion was back in Flanders and over the next few days drafts of reinforcements arrived to fill the gaps. The rest of April was spent in and out of the line and in the Reserve Trenches behind Ypres and between the Brielen and Poperinghe roads.

May and June was a period of comparative calm. On 8th June Brig Gen SVP Weston took over command of 122nd Brigade.

On 1st July the battalion moved into reserve positions at Reninghelst taking over from the French 103rd Infantry Regiment. July was spent on working parties and holding the line as well as helping to acclimatise newly arrived American troops to front line activity. During July the CO left for England for a period of leave and command devolved to Major Williams. The beginning of August found the battalion back in Divisional Reserve at Wippenhoek but any thoughts of a reasonable spell out of the line were dispelled when, on the morning of the 3rd, orders were received to prepare to relieve the 4th Battalion Canadian Mounted Rifles in the line at La Clytte. Four days later the battalion was relieved by the 18th KRRC and moved into support trenches.

8th August 1918 is known in the German Army as the Black Day when, in the Battle of Amiens, the British 4th Army and French 1st Army attacked in what became a turning point in the war. 122nd Brigade with the 12th Battalion was heavily involved in the attack and in the subsequent week the battalion sustained 45 casualties.

Once again, on 28th August, the battalion left for the reserve area around Esquerdes. Thoughts of a period of rest were, again, dashed when the battalion was ordered to the front and marched to the area of Abeele and Wippenhoek, arriving on 1st September. Over the next few days the battalion and its comrades in 122nd Brigade were under regular high explosive shellfire and gas attack before being relieved on the night of the 5th and moving into Divisional Reserve between Reninghelst and Lijssenthoek. In the first 5 days of

September the brigade sustained 691 casualties of which the 12th Battalion figure was 243.

The rest of September was spent in training with particular reference to attacks on strong- points and machine-gun nests.

The final Advance to Victory now began and, on 28th September, the battalion moved to Ravine Wood to the east of Hill 60. 41st Div's role was to support the later stages of the attack by XIX and II Corps. The following day the battalion left the wood and crossed the Ypres-Comines Canal to a concentration area south east of Koortewilde. On 1st October the battalion moved, as the advance guard of the division, in the direction of Menin. The 12th was held up by a strong line of machine-gun posts south east of Gheluwe but managed to occupy a position a few hundred yards west of the village. The 12th Battalion War Diary tells the story:-

"1/10/18 The Battalion moved at 5am as Advance Guard for the Division in the direction of MENIN via GHELUWE. 1000 yards SW of GHELUWE the Battalion was held up by a strong line of M.G.Posts. Attempts to advance only partially succeeded and the Battalion suffered casualties. Lt Edgar and 2/Lt Targett, 2/Lt James, Lt Bell, 2/Lt Topham, 2/Lt Paviour were wounded".

The War Diary makes no mention of Other Rank casualties but the History states that many ORs were wounded and 12 are named as having been killed including Private T Goddard. A total of 84 officers and men were put of action that day.

We do not know when Thomas Goddard arrived in France or which company he was in but the 12th Battalion saw a considerable amount of service and Private Goddard may well have been involved in many of its actions.

In Honoured Memory of

40921 Private OLIVER DAVID PEACHEY

2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment

Who Died of Wounds, aged 25, on 16th July 1917

He was the son of Mr DJ Peachey of Red House Farm Ashfield

He is Buried in Duisans British Cemetery Etrun France

**COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**



40921 Private OLIVER DAVID PEACHEY
2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Who Died of Wounds, aged 25, on 16th July 1917

British War Medal

Victory Medal

The 1911 census shows that Oliver Peachey, aged 19, is living at home in Ipswich Road, Grundisburgh with his parents David and Agilina (?) and three brothers. The census states that he was born in Old Newton, Suffolk and is working as a cowman on a farm. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show that Oliver was the son of Mr DJ Peachey of Red House Farm Ashfield. The records do not mention his mother and I have been unable to establish if his mother died between 1911 and 1917.

Soldiers Died in The Great War confirms that Oliver was born in Old Newton and that he enlisted in Framlingham though we do not know when. As he was not awarded any Stars we must assume that he did not enter theatre (France and Flanders) until after 1st January 1916.

The 2nd Suffolks (Lt Col CAH Brett DSO) was a Regular Army battalion which, on outbreak of war, on 4th August 1914 was based at the Curragh, Ireland. It was part of 14th Brigade (Brig Gen SP Rolt CB) in 5th Division (Maj Gen Sir Charles Fergusson Bt CB MVO DSO). The Division was serving in II Corps (Lt Gen Sir James Grierson KCB CMG CVO ADC). Their comrades in 14th Brigade were 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment, 1st Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and 2nd Battalion Manchester Regiment. Having mobilised on the 5th the division was ready to embark for France on the 10th August.

A year later, on 22nd October 1915, the battalion was transferred to 76th Brigade (Brig Gen E StG Pratt) staying with 3rd Division (now commanded by Maj Gen JAL Haldane). Their new comrades in 76th Brigade were 8th Battalion King's Own, 10th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders.

On the last day of the year Major G.R. Crosfield 4th Battalion Prince of Wales's Volunteers assumed temporary command of the battalion whilst Lt.-Col. D'Arch Smith was admitted to field ambulance.

On the night of 21st/22nd January after a brief break from the line a huge mine was exploded just in front of the battalion's trenches. Although this was not followed by an attack an immense amount of damage was done to the trenches which had been laboured on over many weeks and they were nearly a hundred casualties. In a communiqué after the explosion Major-General Haldane, GOC 3rd Division stated "*.....The conduct of the battalion was excellent, all ranks behaving in a soldier-like manner, so that here the position, which might easily have become serious, was never in danger*".

On 7th February 17th Division took over from the 3rd and the 2nd Suffolks went

into camp at Poperinghe. Three days later, on the 10th, the battalion reached Houle where it went into billets around a large brewery, the plan being to remain there for two months. However, with the loss of the Bluff the 76th Brigade was recalled to Poperinghe and after only six days rest the battalion was back in the reserve trenches at Ypres though this time the reserve trenches were the front line. Following the loss of the Bluff 17th Division had made several attempts to recapture it without success. It was decided that 76th Brigade, reinforced by two 17th Division battalions, would be given the task of recapturing the Bluff. The 2nd Suffolks, 8th King's Own and 1st Gordon Highlanders were detailed as the attacking force and accordingly, on 23rd February, the battalion withdrew to Reninghelst to prepare.

On the night of 1st March the Suffolks moved into the assembly trenches ready for the attack which was timed for 4.30am the following day. At the appointed time the men rose from the trenches and a huge barrage of rifle and machine-gun fire spewed forth from the brigade on their right. This led to a shower of enemy Very lights which lit up the sky as if daylight followed by a heavy artillery barrage. Despite this barrage the attacking troops were into the enemy trenches and though the barrage lasted throughout the rest of the day and night the line held and the Bluff was back in British hands. This was probably the first major action that Private Warne was in and he was fortunate in not being one of the 250 casualties out of the 500 men who took part. After another day of almost permanent shelling the battalion was back in its billets at Poperinghe on 4th March.

Messages of congratulation came in from all levels of the army command including, from the Commander-In-Chief *"To the Officer Commanding 2nd Suffolk Regiment - I have heard with great pleasure the good news of the capture of the Bluff and trenches north of the canal. I have been informed from day to day of the careful and methodical preparation which has been devoted to this enterprise. Please convey to all ranks concerned my hearty congratulations and thanks"*.

Following a week's rest at Poperinghe the battalion was back in the line for just a few days. On 27th March a series of mines were exploded at St. Eloi and the following day the battalion was despatched from Ouderdom via Dickebusch to occupy the craters. On the way up Lt.-Col. D'Arch Smith, back in command, was injured and command of the battalion fell to Captain G.C. Stubbs. Over the next few days continuous shellfire led to a number of casualties and on the 31st the battalion was relieved and returned to Reninghelst. Two days later the battalion moved to the V Corps rest area at Pinceboom before, three days later, moving to Caestre and then to Vierstraat. Over the next couple of months the battalion moved around mainly out of the line. On 12th June it entrained for St. Omer for divisional training in open warfare spending the latter part of June at Nortbecourt.

On 1st July 1916, the first day of the great battle of the Somme, the battalion left St. Omer and headed for the Somme. The following day the CO was

invalided out and Major G.C. Stubbs took over command of the battalion. On 6th July the battalion reached Les Celestins Wood and within the hour Major Stubbs was slightly wounded but remained in command. Around this time the 3rd Division was transferred to XIII Corps (Lt.-Gen. W.N. Congreve VC) attached to 4th Army (General Rawlinson). Here the 2nd Suffolks joined their comrades in the 8th Battalion.

On 8th July the battalion bivouacked in Carnoy and one company went straight into the line. Six days later began the Battle of the Bazentin Ridge. The 76th Brigade was in reserve with the 2nd Suffolks moving to the southern end of Caterpillar Wood. On the afternoon of the 18th, after four days fighting, the Germans put in a very heavy counter-attack forcing their way into Delville Wood and the northern end of Longueval. Two companies of the Suffolks were sent up to Longueval Ridge to support the 1st Gordon Highlanders' attack on Longueval and the rest of the battalion moved from the wood into Caterpillar Valley itself. Unfortunately we do not know in which company Private Warne was serving.

On 20th July the whole battalion took part in renewed attacks on Longueval and Delville Wood. After very bitter fighting the 33rd Division, containing the 4th Suffolks and Lance Corporal Geoffrey Martin (see his entry), gained a foothold in High Wood and was able to link up with this attack on Longueval.

"Tracing British Battalions on the Somme" by Ray Westlake quotes the "Official History of The Great War" on the attack on Longueval *"the 2 leading companies with their right flank exposed, pressed on with great resolution and were almost entirely lost"*. Also quoted is the Suffolks War Diary which noted *"heavy mist on left caused second line to lose direction - machine gun fire from junction of Duke Street and Piccadilly made movement across open impossible"*.

Having taken heavy casualties, on 21st July, the battalion returned to Breslau Trench and then a few days later moved out of the battle zone to the Bois des Tailles.

The 2nd Suffolks' War Diary for 28th July 1916 shows that a draft of 160 Bantams joined the battalion. On 1st August the battalion celebrated Minden Day (Regimental Day) at Mericourt being joined by 4th Battalion from Dernancourt. After two weeks rest at Mericourt the battalion went back into the line south-west of Trones Wood near Maltz Horn Farm.

At 5.40am on 16th August 1916 the battalion took part in a successful attack on part of the enemy's line at Cochrane Alley and a significant part of the trench, running as far as the Hardecourt-Gillemont Road, was captured.

The History of the Suffolk Regiment states:- *"After a heavy bombardment the battalion moved forward upon the heels of the barrage.....On the right the attack was successful; some 250 yards of Cochrane alley, together with a party of men belonging to the German 124th Regiment, being*

captured; but on the left it was brought to a standstill by heavy machine-gun fire, and at night the battalion withdrew to its original line".

The 2nd Suffolks War Diary gives details of the attack: -

"The left company Z got forward about 120 yards, but met with Machine Gun fire from its left and lost all its officers and Platoon Commanders, and the remainder of the company remained in Shell holes until dark, when they fell back to SHUTE TRENCH. Their casualties were 3 officers and 90 Other Ranks".

"The right company met with machine gun fire from aboutand reached first objective with groups of men in shell holes". Actual gain of ground was 250 yards of COCHRANE ALLEY, capture of six Germans 124th Regiment, including one officer".

In this action and the following two days 2nd Suffolks suffered 281 casualties.

During the three days of 16th to 18th August a number of attacks went in against the German trenches in concert with the French. Although initially the attacks failed, gradually the hard pressed enemy's resistance weakened and parts of the enemy trenches at Cochrane Alley were captured. During this period of intense fighting a French officer from the 418th Regiment sent the following report to Major Stubbs, CO of the 2nd Suffolks:- *"No. 10265 Pte. W., Waterson, 2nd Suffolk Regiment. Soldat tres courageux et extremement adroit. S'est distingue au combat a la grenade et a tue 17 Allemands a lui seul"*. From *"The History of the Suffolk Regiment"*. Private Waterson was awarded an immediate DCM. The Germans turned a battery of five-nines on to the trenches in an attempt to dislodge the Suffolks and during the night they were relieved, assembling at Talus Bois before marching back to Happy Valley. 281 casualties had been sustained in these few days fighting. Having marched back to the Loos sector the battalion reached Mazingarbe at the end of the month taking over a quieter part of the line.

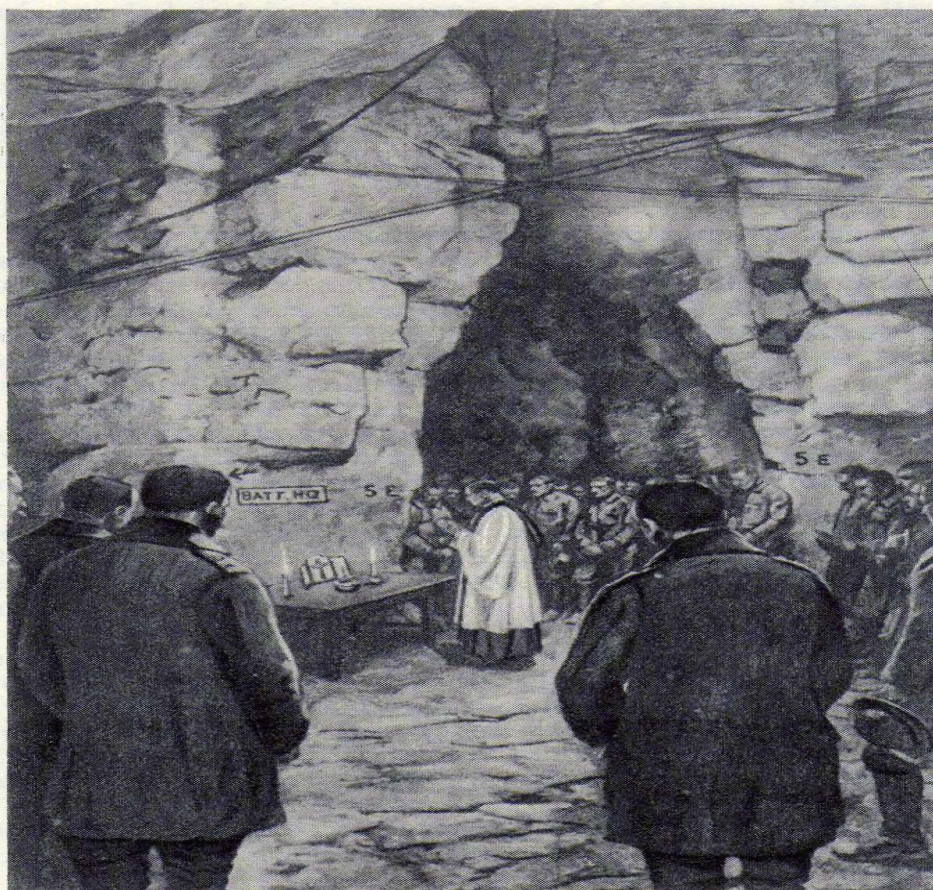
At the end of September Brig.-Gen. R.J. Kentish handed over command of 76th Brigade to Brig.-Gen. C.L. Porter. The next few weeks were spent in training at Enquin-les-Mines before the battalion moved to the Serre sector in the middle of October. After a number of cancellations due to the appalling weather, at 5.45am on 13th November, the Battle of the Ancre began with the attacking troops fighting their way through a sea of mud which made any forward direction almost impossible. Despite the appalling conditions and with all the officers of the leading companies casualties some of the Suffolks reached the German second lines. However they had to fall back and, having reorganised in their original front line, the battalion marched back to Courcelles the following morning. The battalion sustained 272 casualties in this failed attack. This was the final battle of the 1916 Battle of the Somme. *"The History of the Suffolk Regiment"* states that *"It was ruefully remembered by those present as the least successful and most dispiriting engagement in the history of the 2nd Battalion in France"*. The remainder of the year was spent relatively quietly with sickness and drowning in the often

waist-deep trenches causing more casualties than enemy action. Having spent Christmas in Bus-le-Artois the battalion was on the move again on 7th January.

1917 began with the battalion travelling by bus and by foot via Bertrancourt, Puchevillers, Halloy-Pernois, Chelers and Hauteville before finally reaching Arras on 16th February after periods of rest in each of these places.

The 2nd Suffolks were still part of 3rd Division (Maj.-Gen. C.J. Deverell) but now part of VI Corps (Lt.-Gen. Haldane) and 3rd Army (General Allenby). For the month following its arrival in Arras the battalion was employed as a labour battalion working on dugouts, tunnels and railway construction. On 16th March it moved to Denier to the south east of Arras. After a period of training at Denier and Wanquetin the battalion returned to Arras on 6th April.

On Easter Sunday, the eve of the start of the Battle of Arras, the chaplain to the 2nd Battalion, Rev. G.C. Danvers, held a Communion Service in the Chalk Caves at Arras. Lt. W.J. Allum made a sketch which appeared in the Illustrated London News and is reproduced here.



THE CHALK CAVES AT ARRAS, EASTER SUNDAY, 1917
DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER FROM THE ORIGINAL SKETCH BY W. J. ALLUM.
Reproduced by permission of the " Illustrated London News "

On 9th April the battalion emerged from the caves and moved into its

assembly trenches. In this attack, to become known as The First Battle of The Scarpe, the battalion was attached to 9th Brigade in support of 4th Royal Fusiliers's assault of the German position known as the Harp. The Fusiliers advanced and, having reached a predetermined line, the Suffolks passed through them and, though under a considerable barrage from enemy 5.9s, the enemy feature was soon in our hands with battalion HQ moving onto the Harp by noon. No counter-attacks came and that evening the Suffolks returned to their own brigade positioned on the Hindenburg Line.

Two days later, with very short notice, the battalion was ordered to prepare for an attack in the village of Guemappe, part of The Second Battle of The Scarpe. With the objective hidden by an intervening ridge the battalion set off into a storm of lead as described in "The History of the Suffolk Regiment" *"On account of the terrific enfilading machine-gun fire from the right everyone edged off a little towards the other flank, the troops advancing with their steel helmets tilted over to the right and their heads awry, as though they were marching through a hailstorm. Certain progress was made, but our men - with totally inadequate artillery support - being unable to cross the long forward slope to cover, swept as it was by a tornado of bullets from front and flank, crept into shell holes as best they could"*.

From their shell holes many of the men witnessed a gallant but fruitless cavalry charge on Monchy-le-Preux by some of the 3rd Cavalry Division. Another battalion tried to take up the attack with no success and finally at midnight the battalion was relieved, marching back to trenches near Tilloy having incurred 124 casualties. Two days separated a well organised successful attack and an unplanned complete failure. On 13th April the 3rd Division was relieved by 29th Division and the Suffolks returned to billets in Arras.

On 23rd April the battalion, now in corps reserve, moved into trenches on the Harp and the following day it moved into Shrapnel and Pick trenches which had been completely destroyed by enemy artillery action. The battalion spent the first half of May 1917 in the Monchy defence lines before returning via Duisans and Lattre St. Quentin to Denier.

On 1st June the battalion was on the move again heading for Arras and on 12th June it took over trenches near Monchy-le-Preux before moving, the following night, into its assembly positions ready for an attack on Infantry Hill.

On 14th June at 7.30am the attack began and within ten minutes Hook trench had been captured with the remainder of the trench system on the hill being taken an hour later. At 5pm the enemy counter-attacked and a violent bombardment fell on Hook, Tool and Long trenches. A further attack at 2am on the 18th caused heavy casualties in Hook and Long trenches. Between 13th and 18th June the battalion sustained 250 casualties. The Suffolk's CO, Lt.-Col. Stubbs received a bar to his DSO for his leadership in this attack.

Following the attack on Infantry Hill the battalion returned to Arras and spent the rest of the month in Famechon.

On 3rd July the battalion arrived at Fremicourt having marched via Doullens and Bihucourt. Here it remained for two months. In the usual No Man's Land patrolling contact with the enemy was never established in this area where the front lines were up to a mile apart.

On 9th July Lt.-Col. Stubbs DSO handed over command of the battalion to Major J.L. Likeman to take up an appointment as an instructor at the Senior Officer's School at Aldershot.

We do not know in which of the many 2nd Battalion actions Private Oliver Peachey took part but he died of wounds on 16th July 1917, possibly as a result of the 18th June attack.

In Honoured Memory of

29351 Private RUSSELL GEORGE RUFFLES

9th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

Who was Killed in Action, aged 29, on 16th April 1918

He was the son of Dennis and Emma Ruffles of Ashfield and the
Husband of Ethel Ellen Ruffles of Ashfield

He is Remembered with Honour on the
Tyne Cot Memorial Belgium

**COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**



29351 Private RUSSELL GEORGE RUFFLES
9th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment
Who was Killed in Action, aged 29, on 16th April 1918

British War Medal

Victory Medal

The census for 1911 states that Russell G Ruffles, aged 22, is living in Ashfield with his parents, Dennis and Emma, and two brothers. The census also mentions a Thomas Coppen being a grandson of Dennis Ruffles. Russell is shown as a Farm Labourer. Find My Past (FMP) shows that he was born in Framdsen during the last quarter of 1888. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) records show that Russell is the husband of Ethel Ellen Russell of Ashfield. FMP shows that they were married in the second quarter of 1911 so, as his wife does not appear with him on the 1911 census, held in April, it is likely that they married soon after the census was taken.

The military records pertaining to Private Ruffles show that he did not serve all his time with the 9th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (9th LNL). Soldiers Died in The Great War (SDGW) confirms that he was born in Framdsen, lived in Ashfield and that he enlisted in Ipswich. It also shows that he was previously no 16532 in the Lancers of The Line. The Lancers of The Line was a holding unit in which cavalrymen would serve before being sent to a specific regiment. Both CWGC and SDGW confirm that he was killed in action with the 9th LNL. However, Private Ruffles's Medal Index Card (MIC) shows that, as well as serving with the 9th LNL, he also served as no 85022 in The King's (Liverpool Regiment). Members of the Great War Forum have suggested that the likely course of his service would have been enlistment into the cavalry followed by transfer to The King's and then transfer to the LNL prior to being sent overseas.

As his MIC shows no entitlement to a Star we must assume that Ruffles went overseas after 1st January 1916 though we do not know when. In order to get some idea of his likely service we will follow the story of the 9th LNL on the Western Front.

On 13th August 1914 the raising of six new divisions was authorised and 25th Division would be one of them. A month later the first General Officer Commanding (GOC), Maj Gen F Ventris, was appointed. 74th Brigade was one of four brigades in the division and the first GOC was Brig Gen AJW Allen. At its formation 74th Brigade consisted of 11th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, 13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment and 8th and 9th Battalions LNL.

25th Division moved to an assembly area to the west of Salisbury. It lacked experienced officers, instructors and uniforms. On 4th November the division moved into billets in Bournemouth where it would spend the next few months. By February 1915 half the division was still without equipment. At the beginning of May it moved to Romsey and then at the end of the month to Aldershot for final training. On 27th May Maj Gen BJC Doran took command of the division. In August their service rifles finally arrived.

On 25th September 1915 entrainment for the move overseas began and the following day the 9th LNL landed in Boulogne and moved into their concentration area around Nieppe. A month later, on 26th October, 8th LNL exchanged places with 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles from 7th Brigade in 25th Division.

25th Division saw no action in 1915 or the early months of 1916. There were some changes in 74th Brigade with Brig Gen Allen being replaced by Brig Gen GN Going on 7th February 1916 and then, on 16th May, Brig Gen GA Armytage taking command.

The first action the division and the 9th were involved with was the German attack on Vimy Ridge on 21st May 1916 though I have been unable to establish the 9th's role. On 4th June 1916 Maj Gen EGT Bainbridge took over command of 25th Division.

1st July 1916 saw the opening of the Battles of the Somme. On the 3rd the 9th LNL moved forward from Warloy to Bouzincourt and took part in operations around Ovillers. That day their comrades in 75th Brigade made a costly and unsuccessful attack in the area of Thiepval. The 9th first saw action in the Somme battles when, on 5th July, 74th Brigade was detached for duty with 12th (Eastern) Division at La Boisselle where it took part in an attack on Ovillers. Three days later 25th Division took over the front held by 12th Division. The division took part in small scale operations in the Ovillers area during the Battle of the Bazentin Ridge between 14th and 16th of July though I do not know the extent to which the 9th was involved. Few gains were made at a heavy cost in casualties. On the night of 16th/17th July the division was relieved by 48th (South Midland) Division and moved to Beauval. The end of July found the 9th Battalion in trenches in the Beaumont-Hamel sector.

The first half of August was spent moving around from village to village on an almost a daily basis till, on 19th August, the battalion found itself in Thiepval Wood. On 21st August 7th Brigade made history when, for the first time in an attack, it used a device known as a "push pipe mine" to destroy enemy defences before the infantry went in. Throughout the rest of August the 9th was on the move again arriving back at Ovillers on 28th August.

The battalion saw action on 3rd September in a large scale attack on Mouquet Farm in support of 4th Australian Division. Eight days later 25th Division was relieved by 11th (Northern) Division and moved by bus to Abbeville. After a couple of weeks break the battalion was on the move, again, on an almost daily basis until, on 26th September, 74th Brigade took over a part of the line at Forceville south of the River Ancre. The end of September and the first week of October were spent in small scale raids and operations but, on 9th October, a major attack was made by the whole division that captured the northern face of Stuff Redoubt. German counter attacks were beaten off, before another attack went in to capture "The Mounds" just north of Stuff Redoubt. Further attacks were made on Regina Trench until its capture on

21st October. The following day the division was relieved and moved to the area around Doullens. During this period Brig Gen HK Bethell took over command of 74th Brigade.

On the night of 22nd/23rd the division was relieved and moved to the Doullens area. On the 29th the 9th entrained at Candas for Caestre and, at the end of the month, the four brigades took over the Ploegsteert sector.

The first five months of 1917, in the Ploegsteert sector, was a period of relative quiet though with frequent raids and minor operations.

This was to change when 25th Division was chosen as the assaulting division in the Battle of Messines which took place between 7th and 14th June. The division held the line between the Wulverghem-Messines and Wulverghem-Wytschaete roads with 74th Brigade to the right. I do not have the story of the 9th's involvement in this successful attack which came at a heavy price. Total casualties for the division amounted to 145 officers, including 24 company commanders, and 2,907 men killed, wounded or missing in action.

On the night of 22nd/23rd June the division was withdrawn from the front line to a rest area in Bomy near St Omer. In the first week of July it moved to Ypres in preparation for the next big offensive.

31st July 1917 saw the start of the Battle of Ypres but 25th Division were in Corps Reserve so took no part in the early days of the battle. However, on 10th August, 74th Brigade took part in a renewed attack and captured Westhoek though at considerable cost. 47 officers and 1,244 men were killed, wounded or missing. The rest of August was a period of heavy localised fighting until, on 9th September, the division was withdrawn to the Bethune area. On 31st August Brig Gen HM Craigie-Halkett took command of 74th Brigade.

The latter months of 1917 saw no significant action for the division. On 4th October it moved to the Givenchy sector where it remained for seven weeks. During this time there were changes in the makeup of 74th Brigade with the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment joining the brigade on 10th November and, on the 13th, the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles leaving. 1st December saw the division on the move again, this time by train, to Achiet le Grand where it relieved 2nd Division south of Bullecourt.

1918 brought further changes when the 13th Cheshires was disbanded on 6th February. A week later the division left Aichet le Grand to the area north west of Bapaume and become IV Corps's reserve division.

In anticipation of an enemy attack both 74th and 75th Brigades were moved close to the front at Fremicourt and Biefvillers where they spent their time laying cables.

The Great German Spring Offensive (Operation Michael) began on 21st March 1918 and between then and the 23rd the Battle of St Quentin saw the

various units of the division being split up to help other hard pressed divisions with 74th Brigade and the 9th LNL in support of 51st (Highland) Division on the Bapaume-Cambrai road. The 24th and 25th March saw the Battle of Bapaume when the German offensive continued to push the British forces back and the division carried out a fighting withdrawal before, on the 26th, being relieved and moving via Pommier to Couin. Two days later the division was out of harm's way south of Doullens.

The five days of almost continuous action had cost the division 318 officers and men killed, 1,496 wounded and 1,588 missing.

During the 30th and 31st March the division moved, by train, to Caestre where a large number of reinforcement joined bringing the division up to strength though many of the reinforcement were newly trained 19 year olds.

On 9th April the division was holding the front line near Ploegsteert when the enemy attacked again. 74th Brigade was in Divisional Reserve and was ordered to join the defence south of Steernwerck holding on, though with great difficulty. This Battle of Estaires lasted for two days. On 13th April the Battle of Bailleul began with the 74th established on high ground east of Bailleul. The brigade came under bombardment from 9.30am onwards and two hours later was attacked by infantry. Heavy fighting continued all through the 13th and 14th until, on the 15th, the high ground and the town of Bailleul fell to the Germans.

Five days of continual fighting had left the division shattered and broken with heavy losses.

The 9th Battalion's War Diaries show that on 9th April at 5pm the battalion, consisting of 13 officers and 880 ORs, attacked south of Croix Du Bac. Early the following morning, at 1am, the battalion again attacked with the intention of pushing the enemy over the River Lys. The attack reached Brickfield Post and at 9am the battalion attacked Brickfield Post and Norfolk Post. Good progress was made but then a heavy enemy counter attack across the Croix Du Bac-St Maur road forced the battalion to withdraw. On the 11th another heavy German attack forced a further withdrawal and the following day the battalion reached the high ground south of St Jans Cappel. Here the battalion remained, digging in and consolidating its position.

The War Diary for 16th April 1918 reads:-

St Jans Cappel – Battalion moved to Brigade HQ at MT. NOIR. 5pm Battalion moved in support to 11th Batt LFs (Lancashire Fusiliers) S of ST JANS CAPPEL coming under orders of the 34th Division.

There is no mention of any action or casualties. It is possible that Private Ruffles was killed during the move to support the Fusiliers perhaps having come under enemy shellfire.

In Honoured Memory of

6013690 Private WILLIAM FRIEND

1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment

Who was Killed in Action on 6th January 1945

He is Buried in Venray War Cemetery Holland

**COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**



6013690 Private WILLIAM FRIEND
1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Who was Killed in Action, aged 25, on 6th January 1945

The Keeper of the Essex Regiment Museum, Ian Hook, has been able to confirm a few details of Private Friend's service. He enlisted into the Essex Regiment on 15th November 1939 and was given his army number 6013690. On 9th June 1940 he was transferred to 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment following basic training at Warley Barracks, near Brentwood. Many of his draft were transferred to 4th Battalion Suffolk Regiment and ended up in Singapore and as prisoners of the Japanese. Whilst the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has Private Friend's age as 25, without more information, I have been unable to establish his parental details.

The 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment was a Regular Army battalion which, in 1939, was based in Malta. In July 1939 the battalion returned home landing at Southampton. It was stationed at Devonport under the command of Lt Col EHW Backhouse. On 27th August Lt Col EG Fraser took command. Col Fraser would die of wounds received on 20th May 1940.

On 1st September the battalion was mobilised to Axminster as part of 8th Infantry Brigade (Brig Frank Hole Witts) in 3rd Division (Maj Gen Bernard Law Montgomery). 3rd Division was known as the "Iron Division"

At the outbreak of war 8th Brigade consisted of 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment, 2nd Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment and 2nd Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment (Glosters). On 5th February 1940 the 4th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment replaced the 1st Glosters and was, in turn, replaced by 1st South Lancashire Regiment on 11th June 1940.

On 1st October the 1st Suffolks left Axminster and during the first week of October embarked on SS Bruges at Southampton to sail to Cherbourg. On 12th October the battalion moved forward to take over French frontier defences on the River Saar in the Lille area. There followed a quiet two months before, in January 1940, 8th Brigade took over French Army outposts on the Maginot Line in the area of Halstroff. The brigade remained in the area until May. This was a monotonous period with some patrolling and the occasional artillery fire in the distance. However, there were opportunities for periods of leave in England. Added to the monotony was the weather which was best described as mud and rain.

On 10th May 1940 Germany invaded France and the Low Countries. Two days later the Suffolks moved by transport to the area of Louvain. 8th Brigade was in Divisional Reserve behind Louvain with the Suffolks in the Eiken Bosch Wood. To the right of the line our lines came under a heavy cannonade and enemy attack but the line held.

With the French and Belgian army giving way on their flanks, at 1 am on 17th May the brigade began its retreat from Belgium. Travelling through Brussels

the battalion moved to Leewe Brusse on the River Dendre and by 8am on the 17th had settled in to new positions. Here the battalion had its first contact with the enemy as snipers fired across the river into its positions. Over the next few days the withdrawal continued until, on the night of 19th/20th May, it took over the line in the area of Pecq having crossed the River Scheldt. On the morning of 20th May Lt Col Fraser was hit by an enemy sniper and wounded in the head and leg. He was able to appraise the 2i/c, Major FA Milnes, of the situation but died whilst being evacuated to England.

Having held the line for three days the battalion retired to Watrellos on the Belgian/French border.

On 26th May the evacuation from Dunkirk began and at 9pm on the 27th the battalion withdrew to the line of the River Yser taking over the line from 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment. Three days later, on 29th May, the battalion came under a concentrated German attack and at 6.30pm began to withdraw to the Furnes Canal. In this day's fighting and the withdrawal 205 officers and men became casualties. Over the next two days the battalion was under regular attack. At 8pm on the 31st the Suffolks began to withdraw to La Panne. With La Panne under systematic shelling and with thousands of men already on the beach waiting to be evacuated Lt Col Milnes set off with the battalion for Dunkirk.

At 10am on 1st June they reached Bray Dunes thinking it was Dunkirk which was still five miles away. They marched on to Dunkirk where the Ben Macree was waiting for troops to board. Having boarded her, the Ben Macree set sail at about 1pm.

The 1st Battalion had repeated the feats of the 2nd Battalion in 1914. In the First World War the 2nd had retired from Mons and been overwhelmed at Le Cateau with the remnants, 100 men, retreating to the River Marne. Twenty six years later the 2nd had fought their way from the Scheldt, the Yser and the Furnes Canal before being evacuated.

The 1st Suffolks would spend the next four years in England waiting for the chance to return to France.

Lt Col RE Godwin took the battalion back to France on 6th June 1944.

On 30th May 1944 marshalling of the battalion into its various ships and landing craft began. On 3rd June those men going over in LSIs (Landing Ships Infantry) began boarding. At 8.45pm on 5th June the LSIs weighed anchor and headed down the Solent. Between the hours of 6am and 7am the Suffolks hit the beaches on Sword Beach at Hermanville sur Orne. "The History of The Suffolk Regiment 1928 – 1946" gives a graphic account of the actions of 'D' Day. The battalion secured all its objectives at the cost of 2 officers and 5 ORs killed and approx 25 ORs wounded. The History lists all the officers who landed on 'D' Day, a total of 36. Of these, 9 would be killed in action, 21

wounded in action and 1 sent home sick. Just 5 officers would be unscathed in whole campaign.

On 9th June, the day Friend joined the battalion, a major attack was made on Cambes, Calmanche, St Contest and Malon which was partially successful. Unfortunately we do not know whether Friend joined his battalion in France or in England, subsequently being brought across as part of reinforcements after this attack. In the attack the CO was severely wounded in the shoulder whilst reconnoitring in his carrier. His Intelligence Officer, Lt P Keville was killed by the German 88 Anti-Aircraft Gun. Col Godwin was evacuated to England but would return to command the battalion again at the end of the year.

There then followed a couple of weeks pause for reorganisation and regrouping of forces in preparation for the next drive forward.

On 27th June at 1600 the battalion, now under the command of Lt Col JGMB Gough, moved out of Cazalle in order to follow through the South Lancs and East Yorkshires and capture Epron. The battalion came under heavy shell fire and, with the South Lancs held up, the decision was made to hold their positions in the cornfields between Le Mesnil and La Landel. At 4.07am a barrage was directed at the enemy forces and after eight minutes it lifted and the battalion moved forward to attack the Chateau De La Londe. Two previous attacks by other battalions of the brigade had failed but, after heavy fighting and many casualties, the chateau was captured at a total cost of 161 officers and men killed, wounded or missing.

The battalion stayed in the Chateau De La Londe area until the night of the 16th/17th July when it concentrated near the village of Beauville.

As part of 'Operation Goodwood', on 18th July, the battalion went forward to attack and capture Sannerville and exploit to Bannerville. This attack was completely successful but under appalling rain the battalion came to standstill. The battalion remained in place until the 31st when it recrossed the River Orne to Beauville. The following day the battalion celebrated Minden Day with a small supply of beer and a trip to the cinema.

Having moved via Caumont, La Beny Bocage, Le Reculy and Montishanger the battalion found itself, on 10th August, overlooking Vire. Its role now was to help close the gap south of Falaise. Between the 11th and 14th the battalion successfully pursued German parachutists along the Vire-Tinchebray-Flers road, entering Flers at midday on the 16th. This action had not been without cost. 168 officers and men became casualties. Amongst the casualties was the CO, wounded when a shell landed in Brigade HQ. Command of the battalion passed to Maj FFE Allen (Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry). The Suffolk's History states that following this action Maj Allen received a letter from the Brigade Commander, Brig EEE Cass in which he wrote:-

"Please inform all ranks that it was a very good show and really shook the Boche. I am very sorry indeed that you lost so many officers and men; but I am quite sure that it has not impaired your fighting efficiency".

On 28th August Lt Col RW Craddock DSO MBE (The Buffs) took command of the 1st Suffolks.

Reinforcements now brought the battalion up to strength of 925 officers and men. On 3rd September the whole of 3rd Division crossed the Seine. The Suffolks went into billets in the village of Farceaux just north of the river. The next move would be a long journey, in two stages, by motor transport. The first stage took the battalion to Soignies between Mons and Brussels and the second to Peer, just short of the Meuse-Escault Canal which was still held by the Germans.

On the 18th September 3rd Division crossed the canal but made little further progress against a strong German defence in and around a marshy wooded area. The East Yorkshires fought hard to clear the Germans out and having done so, on the 20th, the Suffolks moved through the Yorkshire's positions and went on to capture Hamont. The battalion met little resistance and captured sixty Germans of whom only three were NCOs. It appeared that they had been deserted by their officers. The following day the advance continued and the battalion crossed the Dutch border and captured Weert.

Over the next three weeks the battalion was constantly on the move protecting the supply route through Eindhoven to Nijmegen. On 8th October the Suffolks arrived at Rijkevoort.

The battles for Overloon and Venray began at 12noon on 12th October and finished at 11.30am on 19th October. It was the role of 8th Brigade, with the Suffolks, to capture Overloon allowing 9th Brigade to pass through and capture Vernay. At 7.30am the battalion marched out of Rijkevoort to its assembly area where mugs of tea were drunk to the accompaniment of medium bombers and Typhoon fighters roaring overhead to attack targets between Overloon and Verbay. 'A' and 'B' Companies moved off first and made steady progress under spasmodic enemy mortar and small arms fire. However, by 2pm there was no news coming back from 'A' Company and the CO went forward to establish what the situation was. He discovered that the Company Commander, Major Ellis, and half a dozen men had been killed by sniper fire and that the other two Company officers had both been wounded. CSM Leatherland had taken command of the company. 'B' Company was on its objective so the CO ordered 'C' Company through 'A' Company's position to continue the attack with 'A' Company following up. 'D' Company was then brought up and by 5.30pm all objectives had been taken. Enemy casualties were twelve killed and sixty prisoners. Unfortunately we do not know which company Private Friend was in but all four companies saw a great deal of action that day. For the next three days the battalion, the most forward unit in this part of the front, held its positions under

considerable enemy fire. On 15th October orders were received to attack Venray.

At 3.30am on the 16th the battalion marched out of Overloon to its assembly area in preparation for the attack. 'B' Company was the first company to attack, at 7am. It came under heavy machine-gun fire, the Company Commander being wounded and the attack held up before it could cross the Molenbeek. 'C' and 'D' Companies were brought up and, by 10.45am, the river had been bridged and all three companies had crossed. The CO went forward to catch up with his leading troops and, having crossed the Beek, he was crossing a field when he stood on a Schu-mine which blew his foot off. Once again the 2i/c, Maj Allen, took over command. For the rest of the day the battalion was under fire as it protected the engineers as they built a tank bridge across the river. At 10.30pm it was at last possible to bring up a hot meal and rum ration. The day had cost the Suffolks their CO, three rifle company commanders and forty five ORs killed or wounded. That night orders were received to continue the attack on Venray the following morning. During the next two days the battalion attacked through the woods to the west of Venray and over the night of the 18th/19th the town was finally captured. The battles for Overloon and Venray had cost the battalion one officer and 18 ORs killed and ten officers and 144 ORs wounded. With Venray in British hands the battalion rested there for four days allowing time for leave in Brussels.

On 26th October the battalion left Venray for Overloon and then Rouw where it remained for the next month. After an absence of five months Lt Col Goodwin returned to the battalion to take command. The now Lt Col Allen left the Suffolks for command of a 53rd Division battalion where he continued his courageous actions twice earning the DSO for conspicuous gallantry.

The next stage of the campaign was to clear the left bank of the River Maas. The village of Geijsteren on the river's bank had been cleared apart from the castle which was still held by the Germans. It was the job of the Suffolks to clear the enemy out of the castle. At 2.30pm on 25th November 'D' Company began the attack on the castle with Typhoons rocketing and bombing to support the attack. The Suffolks' history tells of the effort to capture the castle.

"For the next four days the Castle was bombarded fairly continuously by Typhoon aircraft; by heavy and medium artillery; by tanks at close range and by mortar fire; while the Battalion snipers kept watch on it throughout the hours of daylight and claimed several victims".

In the early hours of the 30th the castle was secured. The enemy had withdrawn leaving many of their weapons behind.

Through December, January and early February the battalion held the line on the River Maas.

December was the quietest month for the 1st Suffolks during the whole campaign with the battalion billeted in or near the villages of Hegilson, Megelsum and Blitterswick.

The 1st Suffolks War Diaries for the first week of 1945 show that the battalion was under almost continuous enemy shell fire. Though casualties were relatively light the entry for 1st January states that *"At 0420 'C' Company patrol to the village at 875276. Came under mortar fire and one man was wounded"*. The following day the diary states that *"At 0330 Fairly heavy shelling occurred between BLITTERSWIJK and WANSSUM causing four casualties to 'D' Company"*. The diary for 6th January makes no mention of any action affecting the Suffolks but an appendix to the diary states that on the morning of the 6th, following a failed attack by the 1st South Lancs, the battalion was warned to carry out a further attack not later than the morning of 8th January. The attack would go in with the support of 3rd/4th County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters) in their Shermans. I was privileged to serve with their successor unit, The Kent & Sharpshooters Yeomanry in the 70's.

As there is no mention of casualties on the 6th it is possible that Private Friend was killed in an isolated incident of shell fire or possibly, as he is buried close by in Venray, he was one of those wounded on either the 1st or 2nd January and was registered as killed in action rather than died of wounds.

He was one of the 215 men of the 1st Suffolks killed in action during the Second World War.

There are memorials to the battalion at Colleville-Montgomery, commemorating the attack on Strongpoint Hillman on 6th June 1944, and at the Chateau de La Londe commemorating the attack of 27th June 1944.

MEMORIAL TO 601390 PRIVATE WILLIAM FRIEND

1ST BATTALION SUFFOLK REGIMENT IN ST MARY'S CHURCH ASHFIELD



COLLEVILLE-MONTGOMERY MEMORIAL TO 1ST BATTALION SUFFOLK REGIMENT



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PUBLICATIONS:-

"12th (Bermondsey) Battalion East Surrey Regiment in The Great War" by John Aston and LM Duggan
"Order of Battle of Divisions 1914-1918" compiled by Ray Westlake
"The History of The Suffolk Regiment 1914 – 1927" By Lt Col CCR Murphy
"The History of The Suffolk Regiment 1928 – 1946" by Col WN Nicholson CMG DSO
"Tracing British Battalions on The Somme" by Ray Westlake

WEBSITES:-

www.1914-1918.net – First World War website
www.amis-du-suffolk-rgt.com – copy of photo of Colleville-Montgomery Memorial
www.cwgc.org – Commonwealth War Graves Commission
www.findmypast.co.uk – 1901 & 1911 census
www.military-genealogy.com – Soldiers Died in The Great War
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www.roll-of-honour.com – compilation of all war memorials in the UK
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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES:- War Diaries:-

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WO 95/2634/3 – 12th Battalion East Surrey Regiment
WO 95/2246/1 – 9th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment
WO 95/1437/1 – 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment
WO 171/5277 – 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment

GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE:- registers of births and deaths

REGIMENTAL MUSEUMS:-

Essex Regiment Museum – Keeper – Ian Hook

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