



The Valley Remembers





The Valley Remembers

CONTENTS

Contents	2
Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	4
The Valley in 1914	5
The Memorials	
Alwinton	13
Alnham	18
Netherton	21
Hepple	25
Thropton	30
Rothbury	36
The Valley in Wartime	69
We will remember them	81





The Valley Remembers

FOREWORD

By

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Chairman Rothbury Branch
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Within the boundaries of today's Parish of Upper Coquetdale stand the churches and places of worship of former parishes of the Church of England and of the other denominations in the Valley. In each of these were to be found memorials of one sort or another to those who served in the Great War of 1914-1918. Today, some of these have been closed or converted to other uses, but there remains evidence of their memorials along the Coquet Valley and throughout the Parish. In addition, other memorials are to be found elsewhere in the Valley, some are formal monuments, others take the form of more utilitarian community buildings and yet others provide less formal passing reminders of those who served.

This book presents a picture of the memorials as they are today and attempts to 'get behind the names' of some of those who served and fell. It is hoped that it will offer a fitting memorial in itself to the losses of the community in those dark days. It has been made possible by members of those families who have been able to provide letters, postcards and photographs of their forebears, to complement the researches of the small team which has worked to produce it.

The memorials were lovingly and reverently designed and realised, the costs generally being borne by public subscription, with all the effort that conceals. The communities of the Valley came together, with the aim of honouring those who experienced the unspeakable horrors of war and who made the ultimate sacrifice. In the early 1920s, they did not choose to glorify that dreadful war - nor do we a hundred years on from its outbreak. Today, as then, we honour the memory of the dead and of those who served bravely and loyally and we seek to learn by remembering their suffering.

Lest we forget.





The Valley Remembers

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The production of this book would not have been possible without the support of a number of people from the Coquet Valley and beyond. Generous financial support has been provided by the publishers of Over the Bridges, by the W A Handley Trust, the Sir James Knott Trust and the Rothbury Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Equally generous and unstinting has been the advice and technical guidance willingly given by the staff of the Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn and, especially, by the North East War Memorial Trust and its inspirational advocate, Mrs Janet Brown. Miss Vera Mallon of the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick has been tireless in identifying much of the material contained in these pages. We are especially indebted to Dr Richard Lomas of Durham University for his scholarly introductory essay about life in the Valley in 1914.

Many individuals in the Valley have unearthed collections of material relating to members of their families and, without their help, the book could not have been produced. In particular, Mrs Mary Scott has allowed access to her archives and has toured the Valley to provide photographs for the book. The Rector of Upper Coquetdale, Michael Boag, has been a constant inspiration and has provided encouragement at every turn. The staff at NE Print & Design have cheerfully provided advice and reassurance throughout the production of the book.

Most of all, the dedication and tenacity of our two researchers, Mrs Freda Walker and Duncan Glen, have underpinned all of our work and theirs must be the credit for any success the book may enjoy. Much detective work has been required and provided, cheerfully and in great volume, by these two indefatigable individuals.

Our warmest thanks are due to them all.





The Valley Remembers

THE COQUET VALLEY IN 1914

The outbreak of war in 1914 signalled not only the horrors of protracted attritional trench warfare, but the beginning of social, political, economic and industrial changes which, although slow, would prove to be irreversible. Even the remote reaches of the Upper Coquet Valley would be so affected. The declaration of war on 4th August 1914, saw the first of the soldiers of the Territorial Force called to arms, notably members of local regiments and battalions such as the Northumberland Hussars and the 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers. In the years that followed, many more volunteered or were conscripted, some never to return and others to come home profoundly affected by their experiences. Nor was the Valley exempt from demands upon its womenfolk, many of whom served as nurses or in unfamiliar industrial work. The effects of mechanisation would be felt increasingly in all aspects of rural life such as farming and transport.

The Valley that its sons and daughters left behind had known a very stable and predictable way of life for many years. Admittedly, twenty-six years previously revolutionary changes had taken place in local government. In 1888, County Councils were created, and six years later Urban District, Rural District and Civil Parish Councils were added. All were elective.



Old Rothbury

For West Coquetdale, this meant that the ancient parishes of Rothbury,





The Valley Remembers

Alwinton, Holystone and the extra-parochial district of Kidland were brought together as Rothbury Rural District, within which was Rothbury Urban District. Their area covered just over 102,000 acres, of which the Urban District accounted for a mere 970 acres. In creating these two distinct administrative units, those responsible recognised the evident differences between urban Rothbury and its rural hinterland.

The Rural District was sparsely populated, the 1911 census recording 2006 people dispersed between thirty-five townships, an average of only fifty-seven in each. Moreover, virtually all these people were directly engaged in farming, either as farmers or the hinds and shepherds they employed.

There were at least ninety-four working farms. Those at the western end of the dale beyond Alwinton, and those in Rothbury Forest to the east, were largely and in a few cases exclusively, pastoral, rearing sheep and cattle as appropriate. In between, along the haugh lands bordering the Coquet, farms had arable as well as pasture. The principal crops grown were spring cereals (barley and oats) and turnips. Only at Thropton were wheat and potatoes mentioned. Farming in Coquetdale may not have been hugely profitable : only at Thropton, Snitter, Caistron, Flotterton, Warton and Whitton did value exceed £1 an acre.



Old Thropton





The Valley Remembers

Most farms were tenanted, ownership belonging to large landowners, most notably the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Armstrong, Thomas Fenwicke-Clennell, Sir John Buchanan-Riddell and Lt. Walter Selby RN. Three were resident : Armstrong at Cragside, Fenwicke-Clennell at Harbottle Castle and Buchanan-Riddell at Whitefield House in Hepple. Selby could have been, at Biddlestone Hall, but chose (or was required) to live in London. In 1914, he sold his estate.

Other than those directly engaged in farming there was a miscellany of other people numbering between sixty and seventy. Possibly twelve men and women were persons of independent means, but twenty almost certainly depended for their livelihoods on custom from the farming community : six bootmakers, five blacksmiths, four shopkeepers, two tailors and a dressmaker, a wheelwright and a carpenter.

Travel was by foot or horse, although there were a few carriers for mail and bulky goods. And a postal service existed, with seven sub-post offices at Alwinton, Netherton, Hepple, Harbottle, Sharperton, Thropton and Pauperhaugh, those at Alwinton, Hepple, Harbottle and Thropton also having telegraph and money order facilities. In addition, letters could be posted in wall boxes at Alwinton, Biddlestone Hall, Tosson, Thropton and Snitter.

Education seems to have been at a discount. Elementary school functioned in five places. Four were Church of England foundations: Hepple, Holystone, Harbottle and Lee Ward; the other two, at Holystone and Thropton, were council schools. Their combined capacity was 386, but in 1910 average attendance was only 211, a mere fifty-five percent. This suggests a lukewarm attitude to schooling, although it is well to remember the imperative of seasonal demands for labour in farming communities. There was no provision for post-elementary education and, according to David Dippie Dixon, some hostility towards it.

There was little scope for off-duty activity. Churches were few : the ancient Church of England parish churches at Alwinton and Holystone, plus a recently built church at Hepple. Otherwise, there were Roman Catholic churches at Biddlestone and Thropton and Presbyterian chapels at Thropton and Harbottle. In sharp contrast, perhaps, were the eight public houses : two at Thropton (Three Wheat Heads and Cross





The Valley Remembers

Keys), Pauperhaugh (Crown and Thistle), Snitter (Half Moon), Alwinton (Rose and Thistle), Holystone (Salmon Inn), Netherton (Star Inn) and Harbottle (Star Inn). As well as catering for the locals, these hostelries would also accommodate visitors, particularly anglers. Other than these institutions, the only notable occasion on which the community came together was the Alwinton Sheep Show, held in the autumn. One explanation for this paucity may have been the fact that very few townships had more than a handful of residents, apart from the farmers and their hinds. The only exception was Thropton, which had twenty-six resident households.



May Day 1910 in Rothbury

Rothbury Urban District was in marked contrast to Rothbury Rural District, in that its population was concentrated, not dispersed; and it was increasing in size, whereas that of the rural areas was shrinking. The figures recorded by the 1911 census indicate that its inhabitants constituted 22% of the population of Upper Coquetdale.

Three broad categories of inhabitants appear in the 1910 directory. Those hardest to pin down were around thirty whose residences suggest a degree of wealth, although without noting any evidence of its sources. Some appear to have owned or rented free standing properties a little out of Rothbury, while others were in terraced houses in roads such as Silverton Terrace and Whitton Terrace.





The Valley Remembers

Then there were the professionals, whose roles demanded superior education, and subsequent training. Twenty-four can be identified : three doctors, one vet, four clergymen, five local government officers, four Poor Law officers, the high school master and mistress, two bank managers, two solicitors and an auctioneer. There were two glaring absences, a dentist and an undertaker, the nearest being in Alnwick, ten miles away. Of slightly lower standing were several men and women whose roles demanded training and a high sense of responsibility: station master, post mistress, matron of the cottage hospital and convalescent home, police sergeant and constable and the non-graduate teachers of the elementary school.



Stepping Stones

The third group, which numbered over forty, were men and women who sold goods and services from shops and workshops, mainly on High Street and Bridge Street. Five grocers, two butchers, two bakers, one confectioner, one fruiterer, a dairyman and two undefined shopkeepers were purveying foodstuffs. Also, there were four bootmakers, three tailors, two drapers, a milliner and a dressmaker. Repair and maintenance of property was supplied by two builders, two blacksmiths, two joiners, an ironmonger, a painter and a chimney sweep. There were a further seven miscellaneous businesses : a glass and china





The Valley Remembers

shop, a newsagent, a monumental mason, a watch maker, a chemist, a photographer and, curiously given the absence of a dentist, a maker of false teeth.

As well as these essentially one-person businesses, there were others larger in scale: two corn merchants, two coal merchants and an agricultural implements dealer. There were four even larger enterprises, all registered companies : Rothbury Aerated Water Co., Rothbury Gaslight Co. Ltd., Rothbury Water Works Co. and George Storey & Co., Maltsters.



County Hotel

David Dippie Dixon, who was an Urban District Councillor, writing in the early years of the twentieth century was in no doubt that Rothbury had grown in size and importance since 1870. Nor was he in doubt as to the reasons. Most obvious was the arrival of Sir William (later Lord) Armstrong in 1863, who bought Debdon, and subsequently several other places in the dale. His creation of the extensive wooded estate, in which he built Cragside, the house designed by Norman Shaw, were developments that continued over the following thirty years and provided considerable economic stimulus. Dixon also identified as significant, the establishment of branches of Lloyd's Bank and the





The Valley Remembers

North East Banking Co. in 1869 and 1871, respectively. The latter year saw the creation of a sheep and cattle mart by the auctioneer, Robert Donkin, which Dixon claimed had become the largest in the county.

Donkin's enterprise was made viable by the arrival of the railway in 1870, built by the North British Railway Co. of Edinburgh. In 1860, this company had secured control of the Border Counties Railway, and from its line at Reedsmouth, built a line to Morpeth. The branch to Rothbury left this line at Scot's Gap and was intended to continue to Coldstream, an ambition that was never fulfilled.

The railway not only facilitated the movement of livestock and other bulky goods, it also stimulated the tourist trade, Rothbury, according to Dixon, becoming something of a health resort. His claim is supported by the amount of accommodation for visitors recorded in the 1910 directory: four hotels (County, with 70 rooms, Queen's Head, Station and the Temperance), as well as fifteen private residents with rooms to let. As well as people seeking a healthy holiday, Rothbury offered one special attraction, angling. Fishing rights in the Coquet belonged to the Duke of Northumberland as lord of the manor, but he generously leased them to an angling association on very modest terms, which was thereby empowered to regulate the activity and keep poaching to a minimum. The popularity of angling was well advertised by the presence of two fishing tackle dealers in Rothbury.

Not that angling was the only available leisure opportunity. The golf club was already in existence, and also the Floral and Horticultural Society, whose annual show, held at Craggside, was a major event in the calendar. So too, was the race meeting at which the Coquetdale Steeplechase was run on Rothbury Racecourse. The Jubilee Hall Institute housed the library founded in 1850 by the Rector, Vernon Harcourt, and had a reading room and a billiard room. For those seeking more convivial recreation there were four public houses : Newcastle House, Turk's Head, Blue Bell and the Sun Hotel.

For the education of children of school age (below 14), who may have accounted for up to a third of the population, there was the Church of England elementary school, founded in 1720 by Dr. John Tomlinson, Rector of Rothbury (1679-1720). His bequest, which was managed by a board of trustees, was augmented by his successor, Dr. Thomas Sharp (1720-58). In 1910, the school had a capacity for 100 boys





The Valley Remembers

and 150 girls. Average attendances, respectively 80 and 130, were notably higher than in rural schools. In 1896, however, part of the trust's funds were assigned for a High Grade school for 20 boys and 16 girls. Its purpose was to offer education beyond the elementary level and was staffed by two teachers, one male and one female, both university graduates.



By 1914, Rothbury had all the hallmarks of a small town with up to date facilities, which included a garage and some motor transport. Evidence of the latter is the guarantee by the three hotels that guests arriving by train would be met and transported by omnibus. It was also one of the nodal administrative centres of Northumberland. As well as having the two district councils and their officials, the petty and quarter sessions were held at its court house; and it was the base from which the police and postal systems operated. It was also the centre of one of Northumberland's twelve Poor Law Unions, with a Workhouse for fifty inmates recently built on Silvertown Lane. This edifice of modernity rested upon foundations from an earlier age. Rothbury had been a royal centre of the Kings of Northumbria and then became one of Northumberland's wealthiest parishes. In 1914, its Rector, who lived at Whitton Tower, was still a person of great importance and influence.

Since the First World War, Rothbury has continued to grow in terms of population, but changes in the way British society functions and is governed, have lessened its importance as a centre of government and administration. It remains the focus of a thriving rural community, today's Parish of Upper Coquetdale.



The Valley Remembers

THE WAR MEMORIALS

ALWINTON

Lying near the head of the Coquet Valley, Alwinton is the largest of its 'townships' and, inevitably many men of the surrounding area are remembered on the memorial plaque housed in the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Low Alwinton. In all, fourteen names of the fallen of the First World War are recorded on a fine rectangular bronze plaque, under the inscription:

**To the Glory of God
and
in proud memory
of the
men of Alwinton Parish who
made the Supreme Sacrifice
in the
Great European War
1914-1918**



The memorial was erected by public subscription at a cost of £10/7/6d, a sum worth today in the order of £650.

The names recorded on the memorial plaque are:

Captain T P E Fenwicke-Clennell	Lothians & Border Horse
Private John Dawson	
Private William Forster	3rd Royal Fusiliers (City of London)
Private Richard Glendinning	King's Own Scottish Borderers
Private George Hateley	7th Bn Northumberland Fusiliers
Trooper Robert R Kidd	Northumberland Hussars
Corporal Henry T Kidd	Northumberland Hussars
Private William Nichol	7th Bn Northumberland Fusiliers
Private James Robson	
Sapper George Rutherford	Royal Engineers
Gunner William Pringle	Royal Field Artillery
Rifleman George Stephenson	21st Bn King's Royal Rifle Corps
Private Clement Stephenson	8th Bn East Yorkshire Regiment



The Valley Remembers



Besides the memorial in the church, a single Commonwealth War Graves' Commission headstone stands in the churchyard, marking the grave of **Clement Stephenson**, an unmarried farm labourer who was born in Netherton and lived in Rothbury. He had enlisted in September 1915, served in France from September 1915 and died at home on 13th May 1916, a sufferer of Hodgkin's Disease. His widowed mother lived variously at Great Ryle, Scrainwood and Ellilaw and had five other children who lived and worked in and around Belford, Glanton and Whittingham. Clement was her youngest son and seven months after his death another son, **George Stephenson**, a shepherd, died of nephritis while on active service in France. Another brother, John Robert Stephenson, also served on the Western Front.

Private **George Hately** of the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, was born in Ford but by 1911 was living in the Valley aged 17, working for the Tully family of Alnham. He was the brother of Mrs J A Smith of Long Row North, Radcliffe, Morpeth. He, like Sergeant James Robert Richardson of Rievers Well, Cragside, and Private Robert Gutherson of Thropton, died in the Battle of





The Valley Remembers

the Somme, at Warlencourt on 14th November 1916. He is Oremembered also on the Netherton Memorial Hall Plaque, along with others from the Alwinton Memorial.

Not all of those who fought in the 1914-18 War and whose names are recorded on the Alwinton memorial served in France. One of these was Captain **Thomas Percival Edward Fenwicke-Clennell** who was born at The Garth, Cockerton, in August 1886, the first son of Thomas Fenwicke-Clennell and his wife, Helen Mary Ann, née Cheese, of Houghton le Skearne, both places now suburbs of Darlington. He lived initially at Cockerton with his two older sisters, Constance and Frances Amy, but the family was established at Harbottle Castle by 1901, with the addition of his two brothers, Geoffrey and Christopher, both born at Alwinton. In the census of 1911, aged 24, single and described as being of private means, he shared lodgings with several other young men in the home of Miss Robson of Gowan Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne, a stone's throw from the Jesmond cricket ground.

Thomas joined the Lothians and Border Horse Yeomanry, a cavalry regiment, two of the squadrons of which left France in November 1916, for the Salonika area of Northern Greece. There they were engaged in patrolling and reconnaissance, besides periods of static, defensive warfare. From November 1917 until the collapse of the opposing Bulgarian Army in Autumn 1918 they took part in attacks and 'raiding'. It was during this period that Captain Fenwicke-Clennell died on 20th February 1918 aged 32. He lies in the Mikra British Cemetery, in the Kalamaria municipality of Thessaloniki, alongside nearly 2,000 others who died in Salonika in the First World War. By the time of the Armistice, his brothers, Geoffrey and Christopher were both serving, the former as a Captain in the 107th Pioneers and the latter as Lieutenant in the 166th Pioneers, both infantry battalions of the Indian Army.

Lance Corporal William Nichol

In 1908 for the first time, the Holystone Rifle Club presented the "Short" Challenge Cup which in 1909, 1910 and 1913 was won by William Nichol. He had been born in Elsdon in 1890, the son of Andrew and Jane Nichol and lived, first, at Heddershope West and, later, at Grasslees where he became a shepherd. After enlisting at Alwinton, he joined the 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers in which,





The Valley Remembers

as befitted a champion shot, he became a sniper. Ironically, it was a sniper's bullet that killed him on 17th June 1916, during a short period in the trenches when he and three others fell.

The War History of the 7th Northumberland Fusiliers, described the trenches and conditions at the front facing the Wytschaete Ridge in the Kemmel area SW of Ypres as more horrible than any others, with the enemy trench mortars more active than ever. An obituary appeared in the Alnwick & County Gazette:



Quite a gloom was cast over the Coquet Vale last week when the news was confirmed relating to the fact that Lance Corporal Wm. Nichol had been killed in France. He was the eldest son of Mr & Mrs Nichol, Grasslees, and before the war broke he was a shepherd. He was a Territorial and a crack shot with the rifle, so marked indeed that the military soon picked him out as a sniper. He was a very quiet chap but a good companion and his loss is greatly mourned by his comrades in the trenches. Much sympathy is felt for his bereaved father & mother & family. Mr & Mrs Nichol have a younger son at the front who went out later & strange to say was sent direct to where his brother was. It may be mentioned that William took great care of his little brother (who was very young) & great sympathy is felt for Robert who is now left to fight the world himself & it is the earnest prayer of all that he may be spared to come home to comfort his bereft parents with the news of how his brother laid down his life for his country.



The Valley Remembers

Young Robert did return safely, to raise a family of his own, but to die, tragically young in a motor cycle accident on his way to work.

On September 9th 1916, the Gazette carried another moving tribute to William Nichol, a letter written by someone who described himself only as 'His One Time Friend':

We were sorry to learn a few days ago of the death of Lance-Corporal-Nichol who died a hero's death in France. I had sent to me a copy of the Alnwick Gazette and then I beheld the news of my one time friend. In the early days of the war I had the pleasure of serving with him in England. He went out to France in April 1915 and distinguished himself by being chosen as a sniper by the military. Many must have been his weird experiences in the great struggle over there in France.

To hear of him being a sniper and to meet him as a personal friend, I could not put the two together to make a natural combination. By nature he was of kindly temperament, and one of the things he hated was the idea of war. He had no love for the destruction of life, but he had the true spirit of justice. His motive (which was the right one) for going out to fight the Hun was that we were engaged in a just war and that he felt it his duty to obey the call, which was to strike for the liberty of civilisation and the homeland.

How hard it seems for the sons of peace-loving people to leave their much loved haunts to die upon the battlefields of Europe, and yet on the other hand we can see the wonderful heroism exemplified in such characters as those of the type of Lance-Corporal Nichol. He died a hero's death for a cause which shall render to posterity a blessing, possessing as he did the true spirit of a Briton. His friends in Coquet Vale will ever feel proud of him despite the keen sorrow which they must feel in his loss. Our sincere sympathy goes out to his parents in their moments of true sorrow and bereavement.





The Valley Remembers

ALNHAM

Given its position near the head of the River Aln, Alnham may more correctly be regarded as being in Whittingham Vale, rather than in the Coquet Valley, but following to a reorganisation of parish boundaries, it is now a thriving part of the Parish of Upper Coquetdale. On 24th December 1920, a simple ceremony was held at which the door of the Memorial Hall, built to commemorate the seven Alnham men who fell in the Great War, was unlocked by Mrs Adam Scott. The Hall was commissioned by the Village Hall Committee and built on land provided by the Duke of Northumberland at an annual rent of one shilling. It cost over £1,100, not far short of £70,000 in today's prices and was designed by a local architect, Mr Nichol of Thropton.

Building the Hall had been a real community effort. Money being tight, it was not possible to employ a paid contractor to lead the stone from the quarry and local volunteers set to work. It is recorded that 60 loads of stone were brought by them to the site and that picnics were held there and at the quarry, thus sustaining the spirits of the work force. The result was a building with pitched roof and a stone porch, above which was incised in the lintel the simple inscription:

Alnham War Memorial

At the turn of the 21st Century, the Hall had fallen into disrepair and was sold for conversion into a house. When the Hall was originally opened, it had contained a fine wooden Roll of Honour, bearing the full names of the seven men who had died as well as those of nineteen from the Alnham area who served and survived, including the only woman to be found on the Memorials of Upper Coquetdale:

ALNHAM ROLL OF HONOUR Men of the Parish who gave their lives for King and Country In the Great War 1914 – 1918





The Valley Remembers

William Johnson
John Mather
John McKenzie
Charles Robinson

G Henry H Scott
Clement Stephenson
George Stephenson

Their Name shall live for ever The following also served

James Robinson
John Armstrong
John H Chrisp
Alexander Crerar
James Gowenlock
Robert Hall
Adam Little
James MacDonald
Thomas Mather
William Moore

Margaret Oliver
Charles Robertson
Thomas Robinson
Robert Rogerson
George A J Ross
David Sabourne
Adam Scott
Stephen Thompson
William Trotter
Pro Patria

The Roll of Honour stands over four feet tall and is of dark oak, bearing the names in four panels surrounded by carved decoration on the top and bottom edges and Tudor roses raised in half relief on each side. It was designed by Mr Bertram of Newcastle College, to be executed by the Alnham wood carving class which, according to local information, was under the direction of the village schoolmaster, Mr Williamson. In 2000, it was removed from the Memorial Hall for safe keeping and refurbished by Mr Mellentin of Netherton. It is now to be found in the ancient Church of St Michael and All Angels in which there is also a simple plaque bearing the names of the seven who died and the inscription:

**Sacred to the memory
of the men from this parish
who laid down their lives
in the Great War 1914-1918
"Pro Patria"**





The Valley Remembers

Several of the names from both memorials are repeated on the Netherton Memorial including those of the Stephenson brothers which also appear on the Alwinton plaque.



In the south wall of the nave of St Mary's Church, Lesbury, is an ornate brass plaque bearing the name of **Captain George Henry Hall Scott**, the badge of the Queen's Regiment and the Latin Motto 'Patriam Amo', 'I love my Country'.

In Honoured memory of
George Henry Hall Scott
Captain, 7th Battalion The Queen's Regiment
who fell near Montauban in the first attack
of the Battle of the Somme 1st July 1916,
this brass is erected by his brother officers.

Pristinae virtutis memor

His name is also inscribed on the two memorial plaques now in the Church of St Michael and all Angels in Alnham. Henry Scott was born the second son of the later Sir Henry Hall Scott of Alnham House and





The Valley Remembers

his wife, Henrietta. His parents hailed from Scotland and his father was a substantial farmer and coal owner, farming 4,400 acres and employing more than 50 men. The family later moved to Hipsburn and had estates at Eilanreach near Inverness.

George was educated at Aysgarth and Charterhouse and became a consulting mining engineer, a director of collieries in Derbyshire and at Newbiggin. He enlisted in September 1914 and was gazetted Lieutenant in the Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment). In July 1915 he was sent to France as a Captain in the 7th Battalion of his Regiment. On the 1st July 1916, he was killed in action at the age of 34, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. His Battalion had successfully gained and held its objective Montauban. He is buried in Dantzig Alley British Cemetery, Mametz, France.

George Scott's brother, Adam, served in the Army and survived the war and it was his sister-in-law who unlocked the Alnham War Memorial Hall in a quiet ceremony on Christmas Eve.





The Valley Remembers

NETHERTON

Like the Alnham War Memorial Hall, the Village Institute in Netherton was built by public subscription and was designed by a local architect, Mr G Nichol of Thropton. Its cost was similar, some £1,028 and it was built on land at the junction of the Rothbury and Whittingham roads, a freehold gift of Mr G Blakey of Netherton Buildings Farm. Its construction, however, was unlike that of the Alnham Hall and it was reported that:

“Owing to the great inconvenience of getting stone and the enormous expense, the Committee had to forego the original idea of a stone building and erect a wooden building on concrete foundations, lined with asbestos and plaster, and covered with red asbestos roof.”

In 1920 it was reported in the Northern Echo that a ready-made solution had been chosen for the erection of the Hall:

“Owing to the high cost of material and labour it has been decided to purchase a former hospital hut and erect a permanent building at Netherton for a War Memorial Reading Room and Hall, on substantial foundation, with suitable roof. The original intention was to erect the building with stone.”



The resulting red-tiled, Swiss chalet style Institute contained a reading





The Valley Remembers

room and a large entertainment hall. Fundraising for the Hall was given absolute priority and by the Summer of 1921, only £300 was outstanding, or over £18,000 at today's prices. By then, in May 1921, it had been opened by Lady Armstrong and a bazaar held on 12th August 1921 raised £200 which, along with a cheque from Mr Farquhar Deuchar, a brewer who had bought Biddlestone Hall from the Selby family in 1914, cleared the Institute's debt. Mr Deuchar's son, Robert had died in May 1915 when serving as a subaltern in th Scottish Horse.

In the Memorial Hall, a handsome brass plaque mounted in an oak frame lists the names of the 12 men of Netherton and District who fell and of 20 who served and returned. It was unveiled in May 1921 by Lord Armstrong and dedicated in 1996 by the Rev John Wylam, then Vicar of Alwinton. It's design is attributed to Edward Thew of Newcastle upon Tyne and John Gutherson, a partner in the firm of George Nichol & Co of Thropton. The plaque is surmounted by a central arch and bears a border of two parallel lines, culminating in a fleur-de-lys at each corner. The name "Netherton" curves around the central dome and the names of the soldiers who both died and served are arranged in three columns, with the inscriptions:



Netherton War Memorial

**In honoured memory of
those who have fallen and served
from this district during
the Great War 1914-1918.**

Fallen

**A Chisam
T Cowans
W Forster
A Hall**

**G Hateley
H T Kidd
R R Kidd
J Milburn**

**J Murphy
W Pringle
G S Stephenson
C Stephenson**



The Valley Remembers

“Greater love hath no man than this”

Served

W Atkinson	J Foggon	J Mole
G Dagg	J J Forster	W Nichol
J Dagg	T Forster	J N Waldy
J Davison	G F Foster	R Wealleans
J M Foggon	C Grey	J A White
J S Foggon	W K Haggie	M F Willcox
J R Foggon	T Milburn	

The Memorial Institute is in fine condition, having recently been refurbished and is in regular use by groups from the local community.

Of the twelve who are recorded on the Memorial Plaque who died in WWI, two pairs of brothers are listed, the Kidds of Burradon and the Stephensons, whose widowed mother lived at Scrainwood and, later at Ellilaw.

Gunner William Pringle was born at Burradon, the son of John and Elizabeth Ann Pringle. His father was a stonemason and, later, the family moved to Netherton. At the outbreak of war, William was just sixteen and, on enlisting, he joined the 304th Battery, a unit of the XLIV Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. This brigade saw service, first in France until it was withdrawn to England in early 1917, to prepare for transfer to Egypt where it took part in the invasion of Palestine. However, a move back to the Western Front took place in April 1918. There it played a role in the so-called Hundred Days Offensive in which the Allies rolled back the German armies, eventually pushing them out of France. It took part in the Second Battle of the Somme and the Battle of the Hindenburg Line and it was in this period that Gunner William Pringle met his death. He lies now in the Commonwealth War Graves' Commission cemetery at Roisel and is remembered on both the Alwinton and Netherton Memorials.



The Valley Remembers

Private William Forster

Although William Forster lived for much of his short life away from the Valley, Burradon was the family home. It was in the ownership of his father who had been born at Scrainwood, son of Thomas Forster of Scrainwood and Burradon. He practised as a solicitor in Newcastle until his appointment in 1916 as Clerk of the Peace and Clerk to the County Council of Northumberland.

William was born in Jesmond in 1892, the second son of Charles Davison Forster and his wife, Annie, daughter of Thomas Thornton of Felton House, St John's Wood, London. He was one of eight surviving children. At the turn of the century, the family was living in Glanton but, by 1904, William was at school at Downside and in 1910 was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge where in 1913 he graduated BA and LLB. He was then an articled clerk in the London law practice, Coward and Hawksley, Sons and Chance, a forerunner of today's global firm, Clifford Chance. He was living in Harrow, until his enlistment into the Royal Fusiliers in February 1916 at St Paul's Churchyard.



The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) raised 47 battalions for service in the First World War only 4 fewer than the Northumberland Fusiliers with which, with other Fusiliers regiments, it amalgamated in 1968 to form today's Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. A fine memorial to the 22,000 men of the Regiment who perished in the Great War stands in Holborn. One of these was William Forster who fell on 7 October 1916, near Guendecourt during the Battle of the Somme in which so many lives were lost. He was serving in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers and having no known grave is therefore commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. His name is also listed on the Alwinton and Netherpton Memorials and there is a stained glass memorial window in his memory in the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints in Thropton.

William Forster's two brothers both survived service in the Great War, Thomas a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers and John as a Conducting Officer at Camp 16, Le Havre.





The Valley Remembers

HEPPLE

In Hepple, the Memorial to the Fallen of the Parish and to those who served in the Great War took the very practical form of a refurbishment of the church. It is simply described in *The History of Christ Church, Hepple*:



The painting of the woodwork and the Altarpiece and of the Screen and the Roof of the Chancel, were executed as a part of a scheme of decoration carried out under the direction of Major Hubert Adderley of the Coldstream Guards during the years 1922-1925, as a thank-offering for the victory vouchsafed to the nation in the Great War (1914-1918) and as a memorial of the men from the district who served in it.

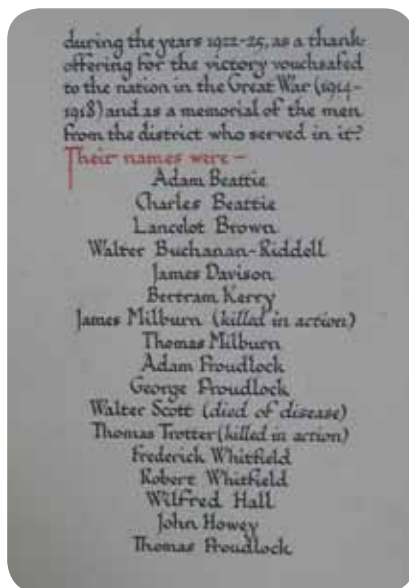




The Valley Remembers

The names of these men, sixteen in all, of whom two were killed in action and one died of disease, are listed in the History, in fine calligraphy:

Adam Beattie
 Charles Beattie
 Lancelot Brown
 Walter Buchanan-Riddell
 James Davison
 Bertram Kerry
 James Milburn (Killed in Action)
 Thomas Milburn
 Adam Proudlock
 George Proudlock
 Walter Scott (died of disease)
 Thomas Trotter (killed in action)
 Frederick Whitfield
 Robert Whitfield
 Wilfred Hall
 John Howey
 Thomas Proudlock



As with the other memorials of the Valley, only fragments of information about those names have been found.

Private James Milburn served with the 144th Company of the Machine Gun Corps, in the 144th (Gloucester and Worcester) Brigade of the 48th (South Midland) Division. He was killed in action on 7th April 1917. He had lived in Hepple with his parents, Thomas and Ann Milburn, two brothers and a sister. The family later moved to Netherton. He was 20 at the time of his death and appears also to have served in the Royal Field Artillery. His elder brother, Thomas, survived the war as a Private in the 3rd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

It is believed that **Private Thomas Murray Trotter** had also served in two regiments. He had enlisted originally in the Northumberland Fusiliers in June 1915, but was discharged on medical grounds within 16 days as 'not likely to become an efficient soldier'. He had in any case requested that he be transferred to the Army Service Corps (Remounts), the units of which were charged with the acquisition and management of horses for the Army, an understandable request for a





The Valley Remembers

'farm servant'. Later, however, he was accepted and served in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (The London Regiment), the same unit in which Private William Forster of Burradon had died a year earlier. Thomas Murray Trotter was the son of Ralph and Jane Trotter of Little Tossion and Castron and was killed on 26th October 1917, at the age of 22 and has no known grave. He is remembered on the Tyne Cot memorial.



A Commonwealth War Graves' Commission headstone marks the last resting place of **Private Walter Scott** of the Northumberland Fusiliers who died of disease on 16th November 1918, less than a week after the Armistice. He was only 18 and had served in a training battalion. He was born in Elsdon, the eldest of three sons of George and Mary Scott and the family farmed at Herdlaw, Elsdon. Confusingly, at the time of the 1911 Census, Herdlaw lay within the Civil parish of Woodside, in the Ecclesiastical parish of Elsdon, of the Rural parish of Rothbury and the Parliamentary division of Hexham. This may explain why

Walter Scott is remembered both in Hepple and on the Memorial Plaque in St Cuthbert's Church, Elsdon.

Of those from Hepple who served and survived, most is known about the Beattie brothers, Adam and Charles.

Adam Beattie served both in the South Staffordshire Regiment and the Royal Fusiliers. He survived his time in France unscathed and later said that the best job there had been laying wire in no-man's land! He was selected to become a sniper and had applied to join the Royal Flying Corps as the war ended. The son of Andrew Beattie of Hepple Whitefield, he later lived and worked in at Hepple as a farmworker, mechanic and garage owner where he and his wife raised three daughters. Adam Beattie died in 1996, just short of his 98th birthday.





The Valley Remembers

Charlie Beattie was a farm worker, at one time in the employ of William Storey of Hillend, Longwitton. Born a year before Adam, he died at the age of 91. He had enlisted in February 1917, joining the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers for training, before going to France where on 7th June 1917 he was severely wounded by shrapnel at Messines. His progress through the Army medical system took him rapidly to a Field Ambulance, then in quick succession, to a Casualty Clearing Station, a Field Hospital and within two days to the 7th General Hospital at St Omer where he underwent surgery. Finally, he spent the months of August and September at No 1 Northern General Hospital, Armstrong College, Newcastle upon Tyne. He was then transferred to the Leinster Regiment in Ireland, where he served for a further 13 months and left the Army with a disability pension and a shrapnel wound which 'was in his arm for years then just popped out'!



Charlie, Adam & Bob





The Valley Remembers

THROPTON



On the main street running through Thropton stand three buildings, each of which serves, if only in part, as a memorial to the dead of The Great War. On entering the village from the East, the first to be seen is the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, a listed building dating from the late 18th or early 19th Century. Within the church is to be found a stained glass window in memory of **Private William Forster** of Burradon who is also remembered on the memorial plaques in the church of St Michael and All Angels in Alwinton and in the Netherton Memorial Hall. In the churchyard stands a Commonwealth War Graves' Commission headstone to **Corporal Joseph Murphy**, son of Michael Murphy of Biddlestone who is buried there.

A little farther to the West stands the former Presbyterian Church, another Grade II listed building, built in 1863 by F R Wilson and until recently the home of the Thropton United Reformed Church. While still active, the church contained two memorials to the fallen of the Great war. The first is a fine brass domed plaque, three feet high and two feet wide, with a double-lined border





The Valley Remembers

culminating in a fleur-de-lys at each corner and a plain red cross encircled by a wreath in the central dome. It bears the inscription:

**To the Glory of God
And
in proud and grateful memory of
THE MEN OF THIS CHURCH
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914 – 1919**



Lieutenant	Samuel Thornton Donkin	Rothbury
Trooper	Ephraim Hall	Trewitt Steads
Private	Simon Dunn	High Trewitt
Private	Robert Fordy	Newcastle
Private	Robert Gutherston	Thropton
Private	James Mactear	High Trewitt
Private	Robert William Renton	Tosson Tower
Private	Robert Rogerson	Thrum Mill
Private	Thomas Murray Trotter	Little Tosson
Private	James Walker	Thropton
Private	Douglas Bolam Weatherburn	Great Ryle

**“Greater love hath no man than this that a
man lay down his life for his friends”**

“Ye that have escaped the sword remember the Lord”

In 1939, a slender oak font standing four feet high was presented to the church, bearing a brass plate with the inscription:



**TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF
ROBERT GUTHERSON
WHO WAS LOST IN THE GREAT WAR
14th NOV 1916
PRESENTED BY HIS WIDOW AND FAMILY
DEDICATED 28th MAY 1939**



The Valley Remembers

Today, the church being closed, the Memorial Plaque has found a home in the Thropton Memorial Hall, some 250 metres to the West and the Gutherson Font is to be found in the Rothbury United Reformed Church.

The foundation stone for the Thropton Memorial Hall was laid in 1920 by Lady Armstrong whose husband had donated the site to the village for the purpose of building this memorial. It was built by public subscription, an extension in stone to the wooden recreation hall, a former Army hut, provided by Lord Armstrong and opened by him in 1920. The Memorial Hall was opened in 1924 by Major General Sir C L Nicholson KCB CMG on 6th December 1924 when a memorial plaque was also unveiled. The building of the Hall, as at Alnham and Netherton was by Messers Geo Nichol of Thropton, and cost £1,100, or £70,000 in today's currency.



Above the entrance to the Hall the names of the fallen are incised in a rectangular stone panel:

R ARRIS 1914	THE GLORIOUS DEAD	1918 W MARSDEN
THOMAS COWANS	EPHRAIM HALL	JAMES RICHARDSON



The Valley Remembers

SIMON DUNN	WILLIAM HOBSON	WILLIAM RICHARDSON
PHILIP DOWNIE	JAMES D McTEAR	ROBERT ROGERSON
GEORGE GRIEVES	JAMES MILBURN	THOMAS M TROTTER
ROBERT GUTHERSON	ROBERT W RENTON	JAMES WALKER

BEHOLD WE COUNT THEM HAPPY THAT ENDURE. JAMES V:11.

Private William Marsden met a tragic end only four months after his discharge from the Army. He was called up in March 1917 aged 27 and was medically graded B1, fit for garrison duties overseas, a grading in part due to a shipyard accident in 1915 which left his left leg 2 inches shorter than the right. His mother, Isabella, was listed as his next of kin, her home being at 174 Byker Street, Walker on Tyne. William enlisted into the Army Service Corps and by May 1917 was in France at an Army Service Corps depot from which in June, he obtained a transfer to the 7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, the 'Alnwick Battalion'.

He was attached to 171 Tunnelling Company (Royal Engineers) carrying out the highly dangerous work of tunnelling under the front line to place huge quantities of explosive under German positions. The actual digging was done by skilled coal miners, assisted by temporarily attached infantrymen, one of whom was William Marsden. Members of these companies were prone to illness, with fatigue and poor food contributing to illness and a high mortality rate. William reported sick after Christmas 1917 and was taken to Chichester War Hospital, where he remained until April 1918, when he was transferred to No 1 Northern General Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. There he was found to have an inoperable cancer and was discharged from the Army on 23rd May 1918. His condition, while not attributable to his war service, was described as having been aggravated by debility caused by the strain of active service in France.

William came to his brother's house in Thropton, unable to resume his former work as a stone mason and in October, having been given a new lamp, went fishing one night in the Wreigh Burn and never returned. He was found dead two days later, the death certificate recording his accidental drowning. William Marsden was buried in the Rothbury Cemetery by Canon Rees on 26th October 1918 and his name is recorded on the WWI plaque at the Thropton War Memorial Hall.





The Valley Remembers

Of all the Memorials in the Valley, none is more poignant than one that might not be noticed by the passer by. It takes the form of a glass panel bearing the name 'Warlencourt' above the front door of a house in Thropton. It was there that Barbara, the widow of **Private Robert Gutherson** lived and brought up her three children in the house and shop she had built in the centre of the village. Robert died just two days short of his 34th birthday, on 14th November 1916 during an attack on the Butte de Warlencourt, in the final stages of the 1916 Battle of the Somme.

Robert Gutherson, a fine looking soldier, was the son of the late William and Isabella Gutherson of Thropton. He had married Barbara Laidler in 1910 and she bore him three children, Annie, William and Catherine. He was employed as a postman and joined the 1st 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, in which he was serving in France at the time of his death. Postcards addressed to 'Master Willie Gutherson' during his time in training at Marske before going to France show him to have been a devoted father, and in one of these he advised his three year old son:

"When Daddy is away, you will have to look after Mummy"

The Butte de Warlencourt is an ancient burial mound in the Somme département of northern France. The hill had earned an evil reputation during the battles of WWI, because it dominated the British lines and was used for artillery observation by the Germans. It was very strongly defended and a number of attempts to capture it had met with heavy casualties. The Commanding Officer of another North East battalion said later:

"The Butte itself would have been of little use to us ... but it had





The Valley Remembers

become an obsession. It loomed large in the minds of the soldiers in the forward area ... so it had to be taken."

Zero Hour on 14th November 1916 was in the early morning and, by late evening, the attack had failed and the Battalion had withdrawn with heavy casualties. One of these was Robert Gutherson. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, one of over 71,000 men of the British and South African armies who perished in the battles of the Somme and have no known grave. His name appears on a number of the Valley's Memorials and a font in his memory was to be found in the former Presbyterian Church in Thropton.

Like a number of other men from the Valley, **Gunner Douglas Bolam Weatherburn** found himself in the Royal Artillery, serving in France with the British Expeditionary Force until his death. He was born in Rothbury, the son of John and Mary Weatherburn of Elilaw and Great Ryle, and brother of Eleanor Annie Ross of the Chirnells. Before enlisting, he was employed as a horseman and ploughman. From October 1916, he spent nearly a year on Home Service, before being posted to France as a member of the 204th Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery. Such batteries, equipped with heavy guns, fought the long-range duels between the artillery of both sides and, although generally located further to the rear, were by no means free of danger. Douglas Weatherburn was killed on 6th October 1917, less than three months after arriving in France. His personal documents give little information about his service, but detail the daily trivia of Army life, for example, a 'deficient clothing statement' recording the loss of his overseas kit after an unexplained stay in hospital. A final entry notes the dispatch to his parents of his few 'personal effects' – identity discs, letters, handkerchiefs, razor, wallet, cigarette case, a coin and, most tantalisingly, a lock of hair.

Each of the men whose names are recorded on the memorials in Thropton left the Valley to 'do his bit' and is remembered today, 100 years on from the outbreak of that terrible war, not only on the Memorials of the Valley, but in fragments of their stories which have survived.



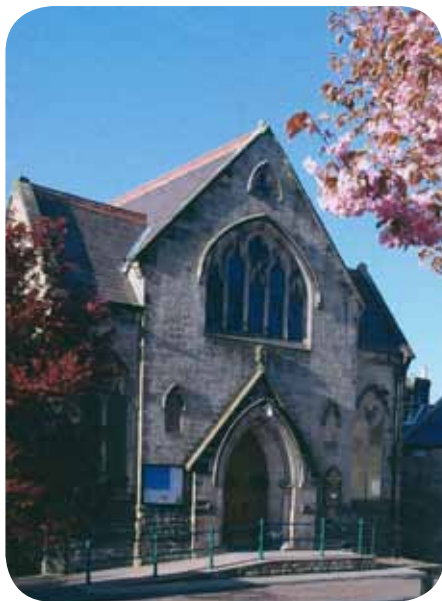


The Valley Remembers

ROTHBURY

Perhaps inevitably given Rothbury's size, the village has more than one memorial to the fallen of WWI. As is the case elsewhere in the Valley, some duplication is evident, with names listed in All Saints Church, in today's United Reformed Church and on the village centre War Memorial itself.

The former Congregational Church, now the home of the United Reformed Church, houses one of the memorials, a communion table bearing the names of nine soldiers, listed on the table top in two columns. The table, originally of dark oak, but since stripped and repainted, bears a dedication, sprays of Tudor roses and leaves and gilt lettering. These names are repeated on the organ panels in All Saints and on the obelisk memorial on the High Street.



The Valley Remembers



Forty names are inscribed on the All Saints organ panels which bear the inscription of the words of Lawrence Binyon's poem, For the Fallen and a prayer for those who died:

*Lord of mercy and of love
we remember before thee
the men of this Parish
who fell in the Great Crusade
1914-1918*

The panels and their associate silvered dummy organ pipes, were designed and executed by Ralph Hedley and Charles Errington of Newcastle, and were dedicated in August 1920 by the Bishop of Newcastle, along with a Chapel of Remembrance in the South aisle of the church. The chapel was commissioned by family members and regimental comrades and, with its oak panelling and altar table and with the embellishment of the organ panels, cost in the order of £500 – around £32,000 in today's prices – an amount raised by public subscription.

Also displayed in the chapel is a fine Book of Remembrance in a glazed wooden case, both gifted by the Rothbury Branch of the Royal British Legion and its Women's Section. Bound in red leather, lavishly tooled and gilded, the book's cover bears the ancient arms of Northumbria surrounded by Tudor roses. The cover was designed and made



The Valley Remembers

by Mr Peter McLeish and the names of 40 servicemen of the First World War and of 26 of the Second were inscribed by Miss Clare Evans. In the penultimate page of the book are to be found the words:

Jesus said:

*Greater love hath no man than this,
That a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Sadly, there are inconsistencies between the organ panels, the book and the village memorial itself which lists the names of forty one who fell. It seems unlikely that these will ever be reconciled.

Rothbury's most visible War Memorial is a fine sandstone obelisk, standing on the High Street where it divides to form a high and a low road to the West – the gateway to the Coquet Valley. Built of sandstone from Denwick quarry, the memorial stands overall 7 m and consists of a 2 m square column surmounted by a short cross on the front of which is a bronze sword. At the base of the Memorial, front and back, are drinking troughs now filled with bedding plants. It bears the names of the 41 men who perished in WWI, listed in two columns on its front face with a single name, set centrally, that of Douglas B Weatherburn.

*To the memory of
those of this Parish who gave
their lives for their country*

Column 1 - Left Hand:

William G Atkinson
Reginald G Avery
Jacob C Bell
Norman E Charlton
Thomas Cowans
William Dawson

John Dawson
Thomas Davison
Samuel T Donkin
Joshua Graham
Thomas Gregory
Robert Gutherson
Ephraim Hall
Robert Hounam

Royal Queen's Own West Kent Regiment
Durham Light Infantry
Central Ontario Regt
Northumberland Fusiliers
East Yorkshire Regiment
Northumberland Fusiliers
(Tyneside Scottish)
Northumberland Fusiliers
Royal Army Service Corps
Northumberland Fusiliers
Northumberland Hussars
Lancashire Fusiliers
Northumberland Fusiliers
King's Hussars
Australian Infantry



The Valley Remembers

James F Hood	Northumberland Fusiliers
Robert R Kidd	Northumberland Hussars
Henry T Kidd	Northumberland Hussars
John Littlefair	Northumberland Fusiliers
John R Mavin	Northumberland Fusiliers
Douglas B Weatherburn	Royal Garrison Artillery
William Pringle	Royal Field Artillery

Column 2 – Right Hand:

Henry Mason	Loyal North Lancashire Regiment
John Mason	Northumberland Fusiliers (Tyneside Irish)
James Milburn	Machine Gun Corps
James McTear	Northumberland Fusiliers (Tyneside Scottish)
Thomas Murray	Cheshire Regiment
William Nichol	Northumberland Fusiliers
William Potts	Northumberland Fusiliers
James B Richardson	Northumberland Fusiliers
William Richardson	Northumberland Fusiliers
James S Richardson	Northumberland Fusiliers
William R Ridley	Serbian Red Cross
Robert W Renton	Northumberland Fusiliers
Charles Robson	South Staffordshire Regiment
Robert Rogerson	Northumberland Fusiliers (Tyneside Scottish)
Joseph Scott	Army Service Corps
George Trotter	Northumberland Fusiliers
Thomas M Trotter	Royal Fusiliers (The London Regiment)
William Turnbull	Durham Light Infantry
John T Wintrip	East Lancashire Regiment
Douglas B Weatherburn	Royal Garrison Artillery
Charles Pearson	Unknown

European War
1914-1918

A War Memorial Committee commissioned the Memorial which cost £600, raised by public subscription. It was designed by Reavell and Tebbs of Alnwick and erected by Muckle and Sons, builders in Rothbury. The eight guinea cost of the bronze sword, designed by





The Valley Remembers

H H Martin & Co of Cheltenham, was borne by Lord Armstrong, Dr Hedley and others. Lord Armstrong unveiled the Memorial on 23rd January 1921, stepping into the breach due to the delayed arrival of Major General Sir Percival Wilkinson KCMG CB, who was Colonel of the Northumberland Fusiliers from 1915 to 1935.





The Valley Remembers

The Bell Ringers

Not all of those who went to war at its outset survived, but an unusual trio of soldiers did so and returned to Rothbury older and no doubt sadder and wiser. Over many years, the All Saints' bell ringers have made a familiar and much valued contribution to life in Rothbury. The All Saints bells, belfry and ringing room date back to 1893, a gift of Miss Mary Dawson in memory of her late brother William who died at Thropton Hill. She commissioned the casting and installation of eight bells by the Whitechapel Bell Founders and the work was overseen by Doctor Barrow, the local doctor who also undertook the training of the band. At Easter 1893, the bells were dedicated by the Bishop of Newcastle and rung by an invited band of ringers from Newcastle Cathedral.

The original Bell Ringers Guild Record Book, still in use, reflects Dr Barrow's long standing association with the All Saints' bells, noting his death in 1948 at the great age of 95. It also makes frequent reference to the impact of war on the Band, recording:

Aug 2nd (sic): War was declared with Germany.

Aug 5th Our Territorials left for Camp and with them the following three members of the Peal:

J Ballantyne

J Mackay

W Bell

Pro Patria et Honore

A service was held in Church before leaving.

The Record Book makes occasional reference to the War and to its effect on Rothbury and the Band:

Dec 22. Some 1300 Troops came here, billeted all over, to drill and on April 21/1915 they left.

We were very short of ringers, often only 4, at times one of the Troops from Ryton came and helped

Sunday 18th April 1915. Our Territorials left England.

One of the troops quartered here often helped us – as far as he could.

By 1917, the shortage of ringers had clearly become acute, with entries in the Record Book in 1916 stating that there had been very irregular ringing when only four or even three bells could be rung. Drastic action





The Valley Remembers

had to be taken: an appeal was made for volunteer lady ringers!

In reply to an appeal from the Rector, 8 young ladies attended practices and on Easter Sunday, 5 were able to take part morning and evening. 8 bells rung again.

Although, nationally, lady ringers had begun to ring in the late 1800s, this had not been without controversy, even to the extent that it was demanded that they wear hats while ringing. And in Rothbury, initial enthusiasm recorded in the Book by 1918 had become rather muted:

The ladies gave considerable support throughout the year, but could not manage the Change Ringing. Often the peal had to consist of only 4.

The signing of the Armistice and subsequent rejoicing were also described in the Record Book:

November 11th at 5 am the War Armistice was signed by the Germans.

Austria and Turkey and Bulgaria before this

Sunday November 17th 1918. Two peals of 8 were rung, lighting restrictions and others being off.

The three original members of the band who were seen off to war with a service in All Saints in August 1914 all came home safely.

John Douglas Ballantyne was 25 at the time of the 1911 census, living at Tosson Mill with his father and working as a cartman for a contractor. In 1918, he was registered as an absent voter living in Maltings Yard. He had served in the 4th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, reaching the rank of Company Sergeant Major.

Joseph Slater Mackay had been an apprentice plumber, living with his parents before the War. His address in 1918 was recorded as Bridge Street and he had seen service in France, a Sergeant in the 4th Army Corps Cyclists Battalion.

William Bell lived in 1911 at Silverton Terrace with his parents, Thomas and Ann, aged 20. He was a grocer's assistant. By 1918, his address was given as Mount Terrace and at the end of the War, he was a Cadet in an Officer Training Battalion.

All three survivors returned to bell ringing, Ballantyne until his death in 1941 and Bell and Mackay until resigning in 1931 and 1956 respectively.





The Valley Remembers

Major William Robert Ridley

The first man from Rothbury to die in World War One was William Robert Ridley about whom until recently little was known, except that he died on active service, with the Serbian Red Cross. He was the grandson of William Ridley, a shepherd born in Bellingham who was living at Low Angerton, Hartburn at the time of the birth of Robert's father, John. John Ridley was working as a bank clerk in Burleigh House, the Rothbury Branch of Hodgkin, Barnett, Pease, Spence & Co., a private bank. He married Mary Catherine Farrage, the daughter of Robert and Sarah Jane Farrage, chemist and bank manager. She bore him four sons, the eldest of whom, born in 1881, was Robert and by 1891 the family lived on the High Street, along with two servant girls. John Ridley progressed steadily in the bank, first becoming Cashier and, by 1901, Manager. In 1903 the Bank was absorbed by Lloyds Bank Ltd. By then William was studying medicine at Edinburgh and his brother, John, was a solicitor's articled clerk.



After graduating M.B. Ch.B.(Edin), William Robert Ridley held appointments in Leith and Sunderland infirmaries and at the Newcastle upon Tyne Dispensary. Within a month of the outbreak of the War, he left to take charge of a field hospital in Serbia, a member of the British Red Cross Mission to Serbia, thus explaining the description of him in Parish records as a member of the Serbian Red Cross. He died there from an attack of dysentery on 3rd November 1914. Many tributes were paid to him, noting his ability and great promise, besides his genial and kindly disposition.

After his death, his parents received 'a striking eulogy of his work and high devotion to duty' from the Serbian Government. He was the first of many men of Coquetdale to perish and is remembered on a number of the Rothbury memorials, including the beautiful communion table in the former Congregational Church.





The Valley Remembers

The Hounam Family

Of course, many from the Valley had perished by war's end and among them was one of six brothers from the Hounam family of Prospect House, Rothbury, who served during the War. This obviously close family, although separated by great distances in peace and in war, kept in touch, especially by writing to their sister, Dorothy.

A short article in the Alnwick & County Gazette dated 15th May 1915 told some of the story of the Hounam family of Rothbury under the heading A Loyal Family. It read:

Out of nine members of the family of Mrs Hounam, of Rothbury, no fewer than seven are at this moment aiding in one capacity or another in the defence of their country. Her daughter Dorothy is a Red Cross Nurse; one of her six sons, John, is at sea in a naval transport vessel and Harry is in the St. John Ambulance Corps. Robert is in the Australian Army and Emmerson is working in a munitions factory in Tasmania. Leslie and Hugh are serving in the 7th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. Although other families have done their best, the above, we imagine, is a record number from one household for this district.

Little is known about the wartime careers of the two oldest Hounam brothers, John and Henry (Jack and Harry), although both were at some time seafarers. Jack was born in Rothbury in 1881 and, thirty years later was living with his wife, Beatrice Mary, in South Shields and working as a carter. His brother Emmerson, at that time a joiner, lived with the family. In 1915, Jack was reported to be at sea but, by the time of his brother Bob's death on the Somme in 1916, was said to be in the Army in France.

Harry was a year or so younger than Jack and enlisted in the Royal Navy in October 1914. At that time he was employed as a railway gangman for the North Eastern Railway, married to Teresa with two children and living in Blaydon on Tyne. On enlistment he was described as being 5'5" tall with dark brown hair and blue eyes and distinguished by a scar above his left eye and a tattoo on his left arm of H H.

He served first in HMS Vivid, a shore training establishment in Devonport, before being drafted to HMS Albion which took part in the





The Valley Remembers

Dardanelles campaign. He was reported as having been 'on a hospital boat' at the time of the Dardanelles, but returned to HMS Vivid in 1916 and appears to have left the Navy at that point.

Throughout the War, as before and after, members of the family were great correspondents and many of their postcards to their sister Dorothy have survived, revealing their affection and closeness as a family, no matter how widely scattered they were across the globe. Doss, or Dossie as she was known, seems to have been the hub of the family and the one to whom many confidences were given. The nature of the surviving messages casts light on the individual members of the family and their reaction to the huge dangers and stresses to which several of them were exposed. Doss herself served first as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse in the No 1 Northern General Hospital at Armstrong College, Newcastle upon Tyne and later volunteered for service in France. Her brother, Emmerson wrote from Tasmania:

I expect by now you are at the front with the Red Cross. Well, Doss, I think that you are a very brave girl to do so. It is noble work and I am glad you have taken it up. ... I hope that God may give you strength in this great work.

Emmerson had emigrated to Tasmania, following his brother Robert and worked at the outbreak of war in a munitions factory. His efforts to enlist were frustrated by the initial medical examination:

There was a great recruiting meeting here on Sat. Night. I tried to get through but was rejected again through my teeth.

But try again he did and enlisted at Claremount Tasmania in April 1916. He was 28 and his trade was carpenter, specialising in benchmark. A later postcard, in October 1916, gives the news that **Private E T Hounam** of the 3rd Reinforcement Cyclist Battalion AIF had landed in England and was in training at Bovington Camp, Dorset, a camp, he reported, for 50,000 men, half Australian and half British. As with all soldiers, food loomed large :

We have had very good tucker so far.

On 3rd March 1918, he wrote again to say that he was in France, at Le Havre, by now having transferred to the 11th Field Company Australian Engineers, carrying out all the usual combat engineer tasks ranging from building bridges and fortifications to clearing unexploded





The Valley Remembers

munitions. Emmerson survived the War and returned to Australia in September 1919. His messages to his sister, Dossie, were invariably cheerful and matter of fact, but there is no concealing his affection for her.

Most of those from the Valley who perished in World War One lie far from home, buried near the battlefields on which they fell, but none lies farther from an adopted home than **Sergeant Robert Hounam**. He died a member of the 47th Australian Infantry Battalion which he had joined on enlistment in Claremont, Tasmania. At the turn of the 20th Century, Robert had worked as a servant at Star House, Rothbury and later he served a five year apprenticeship as a draper with Dixon Bros in Rothbury. In one of his cards to his sister, he reported his pleasure at having received a long letter from David Dippie Dixon, his former employer.

At some time before 1911, he emigrated to Australia, setting up home with his wife Phoebe and daughter Joan, in Queen Street, Burnie, Tasmania. He enlisted in September 1915, aged 28, 5'5" tall and weighing 8st 10 lbs. He is described as being of fair complexion, with blue eyes and dark brown hair and as having a tattoo on the ring finger of each hand.



Within a year of enlistment, in September 1916, he had been promoted Sergeant and only two months later he died on 18th November. His Battalion had been involved in the battle of Pozières, a two week struggle for the village of that name during what was known as the Battle of the Somme 1916. This was to be primarily remembered as an Australian battle, a place 'more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'. The Somme was also the place of sacrifice of a young life from Rothbury and the Coquet Valley. Robert Hounam's last resting place is on the Somme, in Bulls Road Military Cemetery, near the village of Flers. He, too, had written warmly but in a calm and positive way to his sister, clearly accepting the dangers facing him:

*Just a card to let you know I have landed somewhere here alright.
The boys are up in the line, not good news to come back to but it is a
soldier's life. With love from Brother Bob.*





The Valley Remembers

On 14th October 1948, the Burnie Advocate, the local newspaper of the town in Tasmania where the two Hounam brothers had settled after emigrating to Tasmania, recorded the death on 12th October of Phoebe, dearly loved wife of Emmerson Thomas and mother of Joan.

Two more Hounam brothers also served at the front in the Great War, both surviving the horrors of life as infantrymen in the trenches. Both had been wounded. **Hugh Aynsley Hounam**, the younger of the two was born in 1895 and served in the 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, reaching the rank of sergeant and, briefly, warrant officer. He was an apprentice shoemaker before enlistment and later worked as a shoe repairer for Rogersons of Rothbury. In all his correspondence, Hughie was a lively, cheerful correspondent. Even when wounded, he was at pains to make light of his situation:

This is a view of the Aux. Hosp. I'm in at present, rather like Cragside, ain't it!?

Love, Hughie.

Clearly less able to shrug off the horrors of war by which he was much affected was **Leslie Stephen Hounam**, who like many other Rothbury lads was attested into the 7th Northumberland Fusiliers, a Territorial Force Battalion, in 1913. He was born in 1892 and lived with his family in Prospect House and worked as a postman before the war, returning to the Postal Service after the Armistice to work in Darlington, Sheffield and Leeds in various grades as a sorting clerk and telegraphist. In late 1917 he married Bertha Johnson in Sunderland and his address on discharge from the Army was in Darlington.

Leslie served through the entire war, first with his original Northumberland Fusilier Battalion and, later with the West Yorkshire Regiment. He was injured on more than one occasion being buried, and was finally discharged in January 1919, with a disability pension due to 'shell shock and injury while buried'. He was awarded the Silver Wound Badge on 21st October 1919.

He did not always enjoy good fortune, even when training in England. As a Lance Corporal in the 7th Battalion, he was one of the Fusiliers mentioned in an article on 27th March 1915 in the Alnwick and County Gazette. They were travelling home on leave and found that the train from Rothbury had not arrived at Morpeth Station because of heavy snow, so they set off at 8.00 p.m. to walk home. After three hours of





The Valley Remembers

struggling through the snow they asked for help at a house but were refused, not even allowed to sleep in a stable. They eventually found a hay shed and spent the night there suffering agony with the cold. They continued their journey at day-break then were given a cup of tea at another house where they called before arriving home at mid-day. They had not passed another soul on their journey, only abandoned carts, just visible in the snow drifts.

Injured in France in the Spring of 1915, he wrote home from a hospital in Rouen:

After some awful days travelling, we landed in hospital, and after getting nicely settled what did the Germans do but shell us out - the cowardly brutes. Fancy tracking the wounded like that; but we are nice and comfy this time. I lay for seven hours buried in the soil, my head dug right in, as the Germans were firing on the wounded, and shells falling all around me. I saw several killed while lying helpless. The villages and farms around the firing line are all knocked to pieces. The ruin is awful. When we advanced, we met hundreds of poor people flying from home, and saw several killed while flying for safety. Beautiful churches are shelled to pieces. I was in one large house, a beautiful place full of silver. This and a lovely silver crucifix which you could hardly lift had all been abandoned. Our lads captured a German sniper who had killed about six of our chaps in two hours. He howled for mercy, and shouted 'Me Saxon, no kill.' Well, he was a murderer as war goes, so his curtain was drawn down.

The first battle we were in I was taking cover in a large hole made by a shell. I popped my head up and down again, and believe me, two blades of grass were clipped off by a sniper's bullets, where my head had been a second before. You bet I was careful after that. One fellow was running to get into our shelter and he was killed by the same sniper about a yard from safety, but our lads got the sniper about an hour after, and we made some good tea in the trench without being interfered with. Gordon Ainsley and I entered a deserted house and made some tea (close to the firing line). Well we had a good wash and feed and left.

No sooner had we departed than it was hit right and left by shells, too near for us. We joined another lot in a trench. We fell asleep, and in the night the shell fire got so heavy, that the other chaps left, and





The Valley Remembers

Gordon and I were left sleeping. We were never touched thank God, but we had an awful job to get away. Gordon was nearly hit; we had to walk half a mile to safety. Gordon is a brave little lad to be so young. It is marvellous what you go through here in a short time. You should just see the battlefield at night. The Germans light huge torches just like a lovely display of fireworks. There are scores of them lit together. They do it for fear our men advance and surprise them.

They seem frightened of the British at night. It is awfully warm here, but quite peaceful after the din of the firing line, and we are well looked after. Everyone is so kind and attentive.

His tone in later messages was more sombre.



A postcard showing the ruins of Ypres and addressed to 'Dearest Doss', bore the words in his neat hand:

Weep for poor Belgium.

His message said:

I have marked the spot where we were standing at 12 midnight getting our first dose of fire...the shrapnel was bursting all round & a piece hit my rifle. Fifty lads were hit that night in April and the space in front of the church was covered with dead men & horses it was horrible. Just out of the picture to the right I nearly fell over a dead civilian I'll never





The Valley Remembers

forget it love & xxx to all Leslie

And between the lines of the main message, he wrote:

For goodness sake send the cigs by return. I have none, Tie well up and address plainly.

I hear Trotter is killed hope not.

Another card, this time to his mother, had the same mixture of practical matters and anxiety:

..I have a lot of cigs so don't send more until I tell you & Mother don't send things to the front as we have little chance of getting them all you need send is a few tabs now and then as for soap you never get a wash in the line if you go back for a rest it is supplied you. Had a letter from Miss Douglas the postmistress she say she is proud of me (ha ha) I am getting quite cheerful now but in the line you cannot look on death all day & be cheerful can you we were all dazed and mad a bit. I have grave doubts of J Littlefair but say nothing to his poor mother he may have got off love & xxx to all Leslie

And as a postscript:

Hope Doss likes this card I wish her luck when she comes out she will not be near the line

And Doss, who had received and kept countless postcards from the men of her family, received many others from one **Jack Phillips**, another Northumberland Fusilier whom she was to marry at the War's end. These mainly chart his progress in training through places with names familiar to all military men. In many, he refers to Cragside with nostalgia. Jack Phillips distinguished himself in action and as a Sergeant in the 18th Battalion, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, one of only two to be won by men from the Coquet Valley. The London Gazette of 17 April 1918 recorded the award. Later, he was

18/233 Sjt. J. Phillips, North'd Fus. (Seaton Delavel).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He has done excellent work during a long period, particularly during an important engagement. He has shown the greatest coolness and courage on all occasions.





The Valley Remembers



commissioned in the field, a rare distinction, and served as a Second Lieutenant in the 10th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers. During that period of his service, his future brother in law, Hughie, referred almost enviously to Jack's luck in being on a home posting.

To have called the Hounams *A Loyal Family* may be a massive understatement in some ways but theirs was the spirit of sacrifice and loyalty that moved many other families of the Valley to bear the burdens of war with such stoicism and quiet pride. What is clear is that the central figure in the family was the one who received and treasured so many communications addressed to *Dearest Dossie*.

John Thomas Wintrip and the Charleton Brothers

Private John Thomas Wintrip was 35 when he was killed in Flanders in November 1917. He was born in Rothbury, the son of George Wintrip, a Cartwright and Joiner who worked at Warton Burn. He and his wife, born Eleanor Rutherford, lived at Model Buildings at the turn of the century with their five children and Eleanor's parents. John, known as Tom to his family and Jack to his friends, worked first in Rothbury as a draper's assistant but by the outbreak of war had married and was living in Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, where he worked as a tailor's shop assistant for Bainbridge's, claimed to be the world's first department store, with a staff of 600 by the end of the 19th Century.

Jack was a highly respected colleague and, interestingly, by the time of his death was one of the longest serving members of the Newcastle Branch of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, a forerunner of today's USDAW. A tribute in a January 1918 edition of *The Shop Assistant* said that:



The Valley Remembers



All who came into contact with him loved him for his worth as well as his work. ... He was a typical Northumbrian, not possessed of flowery language, but clean logical reasoning. His sincerity of purpose was always manifest, a hater of shams and all which was wrong, he would express his mind and nothing could move him from what he deemed was right. ... Our loss, keen as it is, is not so great as to the little girl left behind, the mother having died shortly after her birth.

Little is known of his Army service, save that he served in the 4th East Lancashire Regiment and that he was killed in action at Zonnebecke on 27th November 1917, in the centre of the

Ypres Salient in an area completely destroyed in the fighting. He has no known grave and his name appears on the panels of the Tyne Cot Memorial. He is remembered, too on his parents' gravestone in Rothbury Cemetery, a much loved son who had known tragedy in life and in death.

The mother of **Jack Charleton** of Snitter was John Thomas Wintrip's sister and Jack and his brother, **Billy Charleton**, survived the Great War, both serving in the Northumberland Hussars. Both survived, although Jack was injured in

East Lancashire Regiment
Adj. Form B. 104-82
Record Office
27th Nov 1917
It is my painful duty to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office verifying the death of:-
(No) 2272 (Rank) P.I.
(Name) John Thomas Wintrip
(Regiment) 4th East Lancashire
which occurred on the 27th November 1917
The report is to the effect that he was killed in action
By His Majesty's command I am to forward the enclosed message of sympathy from Their Gracious Majesties the King and Queen. I am at the same time to express the regret of the Army Council at the soldier's death in his Country's service
I am to add that any information that may be received as to the soldier's burial will be communicated to you in due course. A separate 'wallet' dealing more fully with this subject is enclosed.
I am,
Your obedient Servant,
AS7200
OFFICER IN CHARGE, RECORDS SECTION, WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT



The Valley Remembers

France on 11th April 1916. He spent some time in hospital, but ended the War, commissioned into the Gordon Highlanders. In 1917, his battalion, the 1st Garrison Battalion, was sent to India and the young Second Lieutenant J Charleton found himself in unfamiliar surroundings and in an unfamiliar uniform. He never lost the love for horses that had earlier taken him into the Northumberland Hussars.



Billy Charleton



2nd Lieut Jack Charleton Front Row, 3rd from R

Private Robert Douglas

Like several of those from the Valley who fought in the First World War, **Robert Douglas** did not serve in his County Regiment. In his case, he went to the Front as a member of the 6th Battalion, the Highland Light Infantry at the age of 22. He had enlisted in 1916 and was on Home Service until February 1917 when he was posted to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. His home was at Netherton Buildings, Rothbury, and he was employed on a farm as a horseman. His mother, Jane Douglas of the same address was listed as his next of kin. In 18 months on the front line, he was wounded twice, once seriously. He described the circumstances of his first injury in a letter: "*On the 19th May 1918 at the Brickfield, I was getting ready for the trenches...I*





The Valley Remembers

fell over an iron stake and wire and putting out my hand to safe (sic) myself, I accidentally cut my left hand little finger on a broken jar". On 30th August he did not get off so lightly and a letter to his mother, now living at Caistron, informed her that he had sustained a gunshot wound to his left leg. This was serious enough for him to be brought back to England, first to the Reading War Hospital and subsequently, in February 1919, to the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, near Southampton – a large military hospital built after the Crimean War and criticised by Florence Nightingale herself! Robert Douglas was demobilised on 15th March 1919 and returned to Northumberland, setting up home in Beadnell.

Lieutenant Samuel Thornton Donkin

Even today, the name Donkin is familiar to the inhabitants of Rothbury, although none of that family survives in the village. Robert Donkin was a prosperous local businessman who in 1871 set up the sheep and cattle mart of Donkin & Sons. The Donkin Lamp of three lights stands close to the present United Reformed Church, not far from Haw Hill House, the home in which the family lived comfortably with three living-in domestic servants. It was the gift of Robert Donkin and was erected "To mark the Coronation of their Gracious Majesties King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra on August 9th 1902". Twice married, one of his two sons died in the service of his country in WWI and a grandson survived active service on the Western Front.



Samuel Thornton Donkin was born at Haw Hill House on 3rd August 1894, the son of Robert Donkin's second wife, Margaret Ann Thornton of Hartburn. He was educated at Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh and by 1914, he was a student at Armstrong





The Valley Remembers

College, in the Newcastle Division of Durham University where he was “learning farming”. At both institutions, he was a member of the Officers’ Training Corps. On 16th September 1914 he was attested at Haddington as a Trooper in the Lothians and Border Horse, a Yeomanry regiment of the Territorial Force. In March 1915, he successfully applied for a commission and became a Second Lieutenant in the 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers. By then his father Robert had died at the age of 83 not long after the outbreak of war.

On 23rd December 1915, 7NF relieved its sister 5th Battalion in the front line trenches, opposite Hill 60, an artificial hill to the South East of Ypres and the scene of bitter fighting earlier in the year, in what became known as the Ypres Salient. It was there, on Christmas Day 1915, that Samuel Thornton Donkin was killed in action. He is remembered on more than one memorial in the Valley and on that of his old school. The first was in the former



Source : The Sphere 26th Feb 1916

Presbyterian Church in Thropton, the memorial plaque from which is now in the Thropton Memorial Hall. His name appears also on the panels in All Saints Church, in the Book of Remembrance and on the War Memorial in the centre of the village.

Robert Donkin’s first wife, Jane Wood also bore him a son, Robert who, like his father, was an auctioneer, living at Pennistane, Rothbury. He and his wife Margaret Ann of Shillmoor had a son, **Thomas Ord Donkin** who served as an officer in 7NF in France. At the War’s end, he was a Temporary Captain, serving in that battalion.

The Hood Brothers

An undated entry in the Roll of Honour of the Alnwick & County Gazette announced:

*Missing since 15th September 1916 now officially reported killed, **Sergeant. James Frederick Hood** (1,415), N.F., dearly beloved third son of James and Isabella Hood, Front Street Rothbury, and grandson of the late William and Barbara Woodcock, Denwick Mill. Deeply mourned.*





The Valley Remembers

James was a member of the 7th Battalion which had had a fierce baptism of fire on arrival in France on 21st April 1915. He had been a Territorial soldier at the outbreak of war and had risen rapidly to hold the rank of Sergeant, although only 20 years of age. He died on a day on the Somme battlefield when use was made of tanks, in an attempt to break out from trench warfare. It was a day on which the Battalion took heavy casualties, suffering 43 officers and men killed, 74 missing and no less than 226 wounded.

Another soldier of the 7th Battalion who was lost on that day, was **Private Albert Chisam** of Yetlington. He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial and on the Memorial Plaque in the Netherton War Memorial Hall. He was only 17 years of age.

Originally posted missing, James Frederick Hood found his last resting place in the Combles Communal Cemetery Extension, in the Somme Department of the Picardie region of Northern France, where some 1,500 lie buried, in an extension to the local or 'communal' graveyard.

Sergeant William Adam Hood, always known as Will, was six years older than his brother and lived at 18, Addycombe Cottages, Rothbury. He was employed as a motor mechanic with J T Lee, Motor Engineers of Rothbury. On enlisting in 1915 aged 25, he was placed in a Motor Transport Company of the Army Service Corps, taking advantage of his civilian occupation and experience. He completed ASC initial training at Grove Park, Kent, a former workhouse and until 1994 a NHS hospital. He served at Bulford Camp on Salisbury Plain, before being posted to France and the Motor Transport Section of 117 Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Later, he was transferred to the Ammunition Column of 248 Siege Battery RGA as a Sergeant and served until 1919, in France, Belgium and Germany. Throughout his service he was troubled by dental problems, but clearly was a most effective soldier. The London Gazette of 19th July 1919 records that he was awarded a Mention in Despatches for his services, a high honour.

John Robert Crewther

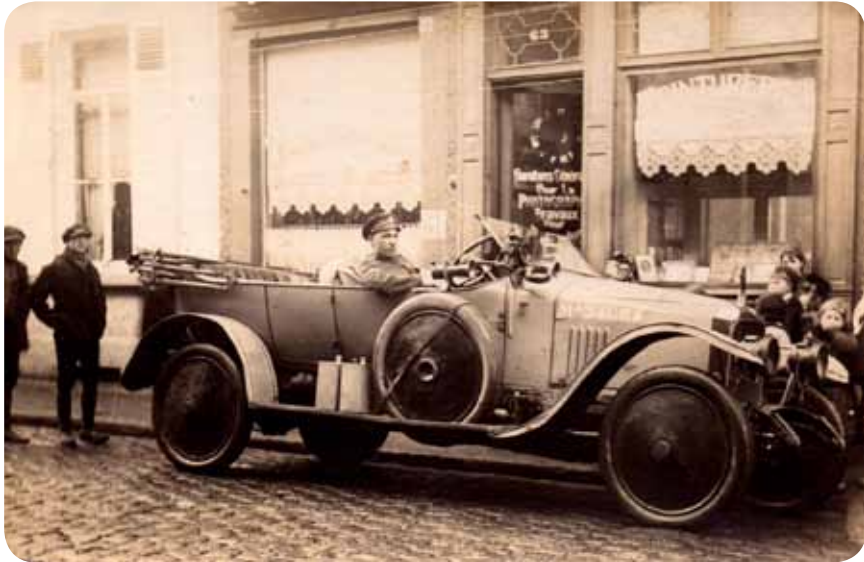
Another who survived and whose war service was closely connected with motor vehicles was John Crewther. He was born in Glanton, and was named after his father, John, a quarryman. His mother, Ann Elizabeth Crewther, had been born at Flotterton. The Crewthers had





The Valley Remembers

six children in all. John worked as a bootmaker, while his older brother George was a drainer. After enlistment, he served in the Army Service Corps as a driver, training first at the ASC Mobilisation Training Camp, in the former Grove Park Workhouse in Kent. There the rudiments of driving and maintaining everything from staff cars to buses and lorries were taught. He went to France in 1915 and appears to have been employed as a staff car driver in the 36th (Ulster) Division, a formation which distinguished itself particularly on the opening days of the battle of the Somme in 1916.



John Crewther

The Mason Families

Thomas Mason was born in Yetlington and lived at Silverside, Snitter and later at Addycombe Cottages in Rothbury. His wife Mary, born at High Trewitt, bore him two daughters and two sons. Jack Mason was seven years older than the youngest member of the family, James, and by 1911 was working as a cowman at Thropton Demesne and living there with George and Jane Howey.

Early in the War, it was clear that special efforts were needed to recruit the enormous numbers of soldiers needed at the front. The 'Pals' battalions were raised, comprising men raised in local recruiting drives, with the promise that they would be allowed to serve alongside friends,





The Valley Remembers

neighbours and work colleagues. This gave good military results, but often devastating effects on communities. One such unit was the 27th (Service) Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish) Northumberland Fusiliers, raised by the Lord Mayor and City of Newcastle, in which **Private Jack Mason** served at the front. It was in this battalion that he died during the Arras Offensive, on 15th March 1917. He found his last resting place in the beautifully tended Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery in Arras.



Jack's young brother, **Private James Purves Mason**, enlisted late in the War and was initially a member of one of the Highland Cyclists' Battalions, second line training units in which younger soldiers were often held, pending transfer to the front. James saw action after the end of the War, in North Russia, for which The Russia Relief Force had been assembled in April 1919. This Force was sent in support of the 'White Russians', to fight the Bolsheviks, or 'Reds'. The 45th Battalion of the Royal Fusilier (The City of London Regiment) was formed in April and was disbanded in December 1919, after a strenuous campaign on the River Dvina front. It included men from all over Great Britain and many Australians, all volunteers. It was as a member of the 45th Royal Fusiliers that Private J P Mason won one of only two Distinguished Conduct Medals awarded to men of the Valley, for his bravery in action. The citation reads:

"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On two occasions, whilst No 1 of Lewis gun, he engaged enemy gunboats, and, although heavily shelled, he kept firing till he silenced the enemy fire."

Despite the gallantry of those involved, the so-called 'Intervention' did little more than delay the inevitable and the Bolsheviks were eventually victorious and went on to establish the Soviet Union. James Mason followed in his father's footsteps as an agricultural contractor, threshing, sawing and steam-rolling. He was always known as 'Brother' Mason, it was suggested as a result of his habit picked up in Russia of addressing people as 'Brother' or 'Comrade'!





The Valley Remembers

A surviving photograph shows James P Mason in the company of **Stoker Thomas Pagon** of the Royal Navy, James in the uniform of the Royal Fusiliers and wearing on his left forearm the proficiency badge of a Lewis Gunner First Class. Thomas Pagon's cap tally shows that he was a member of the crew of HMS Fearless, a 'Scout Cruiser' which on



James P Mason in the company of **Stoker Thomas Pagon**





The Valley Remembers

1st February 1918 achieved notoriety by ramming and sinking a British submarine, K17, in the Firth of Forth, in what became known as the Battle of May Island.

The Pagon family was well known in Rothbury and District. Thomas's grandfather, Richard Pagon was born in Gloucestershire and was a farmer and carrier, living with his wife, Isabella Oliver from Byrness, at Fairground Cottage, Hillside, Rothbury. Born in 1900, by the outbreak of war young Thomas was living with his widowed grandmother who carried on the family businesses of grocer and carrier, with premises on the High Street in today's chip shop. Thomas survived the war.

Another Mason who died in the Great War, no relation to the Mason brothers, was **Private Henry Horsley Mason**. At the turn of the 20th Century, John Horsley Mason and his wife Christina were living, in Drisdale Cottage at Townfoot, Rothbury and by the outbreak of war, their family numbered four. They had three daughters and an only son, Henry Horsley Mason, who was only 14 years of age in 1914. John Mason was a carter and flour merchant and his father in law, a coal merchant, and brother in law, a drayman, also lived with the family.

In 1918, Henry Horsley Mason, previously a member of the Sherwood Foresters Regiment, was serving in France as a member of the 9th (Service)

Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment which had been raised in Preston as part of Kitchener's Third New Army. In 1918 the battalion was engaged in the Battles of the Lys.

The German General Ludendorff had launched its final, last-ditch offensive against allied positions along the River Lys near Armentières and fierce battles ensued before the German advance was halted. On 31st May 1918, Henry Horsley Mason succumbed to wounds sustained in the fighting.





The Valley Remembers

The following month, probably because of losses sustained, the 9th Battalion was merged with the 8th Border Regiment, to form a composite battalion.

Captain Thomas Murray

Thomas Murray was born in Alwinton in 1885, the son of John Murray, a quarryman and Isabella Eleanor Murray. The family home was in Market Square, Rothbury and was shared with a boarder, John Turnbull, a gardener from Roxburghshire. In 1911, Thomas was single and described as a student, studying for the Church of England. By the time of his death, he was married to Dora and living in Woodfield Road, Tonbridge Kent. He enlisted in September 1914, was gazetted in the same month and in December, was promoted captain, a case of very rapid advancement which may suggest previous military experience. By 1916, he was serving in the 11th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment at the time of the first Battle of the Somme.

On the morning of the 3rd July, the 11th Cheshires attacked the German positions from their front line trenches just north east of Authuille, alongside the 8th Border Regiment and the 2nd South Lancshires, the



Cheshire Regiment Trenches July 1916





The Valley Remembers

three together forming the 75th Brigade of the 25th Division. They attacked the line on the left of what was called the Leipzig Redoubt, many men were cut down in front of the wire and the few who did get into the German line were killed or captured. The 11th Cheshires lost 321 men in the attack, including 14 officers, the Commanding Officer and all Company Commanders. One of these was **Captain Thomas Murray** from Market Square, Rothbury who was reported missing. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme which lists 72,191 British and South African soldiers who perished in the Battles of the Somme and have no known grave.

The Sons of Rievers Well

Private Reginald George Avery was the son of William Avery, gamekeeper to Lord Armstrong at Cragside. In his late teens, he was living with his father and mother, Mary-Ann, at Rievers Well, Rothbury and was then working as a hotel bus driver. By the time of his enlistment into the Army in September 1914, he was 33 years of age and married to Mary Elizabeth Rainton and living in West Stanley, County Durham. He was variously described as a colliery labourer surface worker and horseman. He enlisted into the Durham Light Infantry and went to France to join the 2nd Battalion in mid August 1915. He was briefly in hospital in Hazebrouck in December of that year, suffering from scabies, but rejoined his battalion on 18th December, two days before he fell. The Alnwick & County Gazette of 8th January 1916 reported that the inhabitants of Rothbury and district had heard with deep regret that Private Avery had been killed in action on 20th December and that deepest sympathy was with his father Mr W A Avery, keeper at Cragside and to his widow.

Mary Elizabeth Avery remained with her surviving children at Beaconsfield Street, West Stanley. In May 1915, George and she had suffered the loss of their infant son, Randall, from pneumonia. She was awarded a pension for herself and her children of twenty shillings and sixpence per week, worth today around £65. In his will, George left all his possessions to Mary and his personal effects, including his Army paybook, were later returned to her.

The Richardson Brothers

Andrew and Jemima Richardson of Rievers Well, Cragside, had a family of six, the eldest their daughter Jane, and five sons. In 1911,





The Valley Remembers

both Andrew and his eldest son, William, were employed as coal miners (hewers) and the family home was at Wingates. Ten years earlier, Andrew had been employed as an assistant gamekeeper, a profession to which a son would later return at Cragside.

In the Summer of 1913, the Territorial soldiers of the Northumberland Fusiliers were in camp on the outskirts of Redcar, near Marske in North Yorkshire. It was from there that a postcard, postmarked 'Darlington' was sent to Master A Richardson of Wingates. The card was entitled '8 wild men from Rothbury' and showed the eight soldiers in light hearted mood outside a group of bell tents. Addressed to 'Dear Andy', it probably came from William, the eldest brother. By the time that the Great War was in full swing, the family was living at Reivers Well Lodge, Cragside and it was there that Andrew and Jemima heard of the death of two of their sons.



Sergeant James Robert Richardson, a member of the 1st/7th Battalion the Northumberland Fusiliers, died at the age of 20 on 14th November 1916, in the same battle for the Butte de Warlencourt that claimed the lives of Robert Gutherson of Thropton and Private George Hateley who lived and worked in Alnham. All three have no known grave and are remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.





The Valley Remembers



The Thiepval Memorial





The Valley Remembers

Sergeant William Richardson of the 12th (Service) Battalion the Northumberland Fusiliers died at the age of 26 on 22nd February 1917. His death came a fortnight after the start of the German move to the Hindenburg Line, described by the Allies as a 'retreat' and by the Germans as a 'strategic withdrawal'. Preparations for this move included the felling of trees, the pollution of water supplies, the laying of mines and the putting out of action of railways and roads, all to impede Allied pursuit. William Richardson fell as these operations began, leaving a widow, Isabella, of the New Inn, Longframlington. He is buried in the Vermelles British Cemetery.

Private John Riddle Soulsby and his brother, **Guardsman William Soulsby**, both survived the war. John Riddle Soulsby and his wife, Mary, had five children, daughters Mollie, Bessie and Ella, and the two boys, Jack and Willie. Father Soulsby was a fishing tackle dealer on Front Street, Rothbury, a business later carried on by his daughter, Mollie.

Jack Soulsby enlisted into the 11th (Service) Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers. This battalion fought in France in 1917 as part of the 23rd Division, in the thick of the Third Battle of Ypres. In November 1917, it left for Italy to fight there alongside other battalions of the Fusiliers and the Durham Light Infantry. During that time, he was injured in the neck. Demobilisation took place in the first months of 1919.

Willie Soulsby enlisted on 31st January 1917 at the age of 17. He joined the 3rd Reserve Battalion of the Scots Guards and was mobilised on 25th May of the following year, serving until February 1919 when he was demobilised in London. Nothing is known of his mobilised service, but he was a victim of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918, spending time in Bermondsey Hospital. He was proficient in 'musketry, gas, bombing and the Lewis gun' and was a first class shot. His commanding officer





The Valley Remembers

described him in glowing terms: "This man is sober, honest, trustworthy and clean and has done his work well with the battalion".

After the war, Jack became a motor engineer, running a garage on his own account in Rothbury. He became Secretary of Rothbury Racecourse and of the Golf Club. His own son, Sergeant William John Riddle Soulsby RAF perished in WWII. Willie became a lorry driver and transported gravel in the early days of the Castron gravel works. Mollie continued her father's fishing tackle business and toy shop on Front Street and her devotion to the upkeep of the Rothbury War Memorial and its garden was recognised in May 1961 by the presentation by the Royal British Legion of a fine testimonial certificate.

The Graham Brothers

Richard and Jane Anne Graham lived at North High Moor Felton where all eleven of their children were born. Richard farmed at Bockenfield and in the early 1900s gained the tenancy of Pauperhaugh. There, their three sons, Joshua, Christopher (Kit) and Joseph (Joe), all good horsemen, joined the Northumberland Hussars, C Squadron of which was at Rothbury. All three went to France, but only Kit and Joe returned unscathed. In July 1917, a party of the Hussars was sent forward to Ypres, to undertake hazardous work by night, laying telephone cable in the forward area. On the night of 12th July, Ypres was shelled heavily by German artillery firing a new mustard gas shell. A British gas shell dump was hit, with the result that 'practically every living man in Ypres' was knocked out. **Corporal Joshua Graham** was one of 135 casualties from the Northumberland Hussars. Blinded, he died of his wounds on 29th July 1917. At the end of the War, Kit and Joe returned to Pauperhaugh where the continued farming.



Kit Graham





The Valley Remembers



Kit, Joshua and Joe Graham

Sergeant William James Atkinson

Possibly the last man from the Valley to die and be remembered on the Valley War Memorials was **Sergeant William James Atkinson** of the 1/4th Battalion, the Royal West Kent Regiment. He was the son of the late James Atkinson and his wife Margaret of Model Buildings Rothbury. His death came on 12th January 1920, tragically as he travelled by train in India to be demobilised. He succumbed to pneumonia and is buried in the Hosur Road Cemetery, Bangalore.





The Valley Remembers



Sergeant William James Atkinson





The Valley Remembers

THE VALLEY IN WARTIME

The 7th Battalion

The first men from the Valley who set off to war in August 1914 were Territorial soldiers of the 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers who mustered outside the Jubilee Hall under the gaze of friends and families. The members of F Company of 7NF were led to war by Captain the Hon Gerald Wellesley Liddell, later the 6th Baron Ravensworth and Second Lieutenant the Hon William Watson-Armstrong, later the 2nd Baron Armstrong. After a service in the Parish Church conducted by the Rector, Canon Blackett-Ord, they marched to the railway station, led by the Rothbury Brass Band, under its conductor, Mr G Grey.



Captain Liddell

Soldiers from the Coquet Valley served with many regiments and corps of the British Army but, inevitably, a large number of them joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, a regiment which raised no less than 51 battalions during the Great War, a number exceeded only by the London Regiment. Of these battalions, it was the 7th Battalion in which many of the men of Coquetdale saw service and in which several perished.



F Coy 7 NF Muster in Bridge Street





The Valley Remembers

Sometimes known as the 1st 7th Battalion, this unit of the Territorial Force was embodied in August 1914 and formed part of the 149th Infantry Brigade of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

The Battalion – 7NF - landed in France on 21st April 1915, after training in England. Within four days they had been thrown into the second battle of Ypres where in the attack on St Julien they and the 149th Brigade fought bravely against:

'... an enemy greatly superior in numbers, overwhelmingly superior in artillery, and elated with the success of a devilish gas attack. Under the circumstances it was a massacre by the German artillery and machine guns, rather than a man to man fight. It laid the foundation of battalion tradition, and it gave the British line, tottering and almost broken, a breathing space in which to consolidate and reform'.

'A regular officer described their part in the attack on St Julien as one of the finest feats of arms he had ever seen, but the casualties were heavy'.

One of those badly injured in the attack on St Julien was Lieutenant Watson Armstrong of Cragside who, after convalescence, returned to 7NF in Flanders on 3rd July 1916.

The Battle of the Somme, began in July 1916 and 7NF moved up to the line as part of the Brigade in August, after a miserable and eventful winter in the trenches. In September it took part in a 'grand assault' which was remembered as one of the most successful of the first battle of the Somme. However, in November, came the attack on the defences of the Butte de Warlencourt:

'Of all the Battalion's experiences, this was surely the most bitter and heart-breaking. You will find no account of this affair in official histories, but there are those who will not forget the brave men who perished gloriously but fruitlessly on the Ancre heights'.

Sergeant James Robert Richardson of Reiver's Well and Private Robert Gutherson of Thropton were two who fell and have no known grave. Another who fell that day, and is buried in the Warlencourt British cemetery, was Private George Hatley who had lived and worked in Alnham and is commemorated on the Alwinton Memorial.

In the opinion of the Commanding Officer of another North East Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel R B Bradford VC of 1/9th DLI, these





The Valley Remembers

attacks were scarcely worthwhile:

'The Butte itself would have been of little use to us for the purposes of observation. But the Butte de Warlencourt had become an obsession. Everybody wanted it. It loomed large in the minds of the soldiers in the forward area and they attributed many of their misfortunes to it. ... So it had to be taken. It seems that the attack was one of those tempting, and unfortunately at one period frequent, local operations which are so costly and which are rarely worthwhile. But perhaps that is only the narrow view of the Regimental Officer'.

The 7th Battalion continued to endure all the miseries and dangers of trench warfare:

'The Battalion wallowed in the mud and misery of the forward battle area, now holding the line, now carrying stretchers and working, till everyone was weary almost to death'.

In 1917, it took part in the first Battle of Arras, where hopes of mobile warfare were dashed with a return to trench-to-trench fighting. Then, in October 1917, 7NF took part in the battles raging in the Ypres Salient for the possession of the Passchendaele Ridge and took part in a 'grand attack', in the area of the Houthulst Forest:

'It proved to be an attack across a swamp against a strong line of unbroken pill-boxes, and the rain came down unceasingly. As a result, the Brigade lost over 1,000 casualties without being able to retain any of the ground that they gained. As for the Battalion (7NF), all of the officers (save one) and over 100 men of those who took part in the assault were killed'.

In February 1918, 7NF moved out of the line, prior to being transferred to the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, as a Pioneer Battalion, but pressure on the section of the line held by the Division resulted in 7NF being used again in the trenches, as an infantry unit. Thereafter, from April 1918, it was employed in the construction of defences, roads and bridges during the rapid advance of the Allies from August onwards. At the time of the Armistice on 11th November 1918, it was quartered in Hautmont from which it went on to Charleroi in December.

Demobilisation was begun on 23rd December and the final handful of troops finally sailed from Antwerp for the United Kingdom on 14th April 1919.





The Valley Remembers

On the War Memorials of the Valley are the names of many who served with this fine Battalion.

The Refugees

In August 1914, faced with the need to knock France out of the war before Russia could fully mobilise, the Germans put into action the so-called Schlieffen Plan. This involved the invasion of neutral Belgium as part of a wide 'right hook' through neutral territory, aimed at France. On 1 August the German government sent an ultimatum to Belgium, demanding passage through the country and German forces invaded Luxembourg. Two days later the Belgian Government refused German demands and the British Government guaranteed military support to Belgium.

On 4 August the German government declared war on Belgium, troops crossed the border and attacked Liège. By the end of August, many atrocities had been committed against the civilian population and the result was a flood of refugees seeking safety elsewhere. Between late August 1914 and May 1915 some 250,000 Belgian refugees came to Britain. It was the largest influx of political refugees in British history.

On 17th October 1914, the Alnwick & County Gazette reported the arrival by train in Rothbury of nineteen Belgian refugees, women, children and two men. They were conducted to Oak Tree House, lent by Mr Livingstone for occupation by the refugees. Seven bedrooms of the house were kindly furnished by Lord and Lady Armstrong, the remainder of the furniture kindly lent by sympathetic friends in the neighbourhood. The refugees were to be provided for by a fund organised locally for the purpose. Many locals promised vegetables and groceries to help feed the guests. Among the refugees was a man who, in the rush for boats missed his wife and two children and had not seen them since. One woman lost her husband. This fine example of Coquetdale kindness and hospitality was by no means unusual and was mirrored in the voluntary work done by the women of the Valley in tending the injured and in the provision of 'comforts' for the troops at the front.

The 18th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers & The Trenches

Throughout the Great War, soldiers from many regiments came to





The Valley Remembers

Rothbury to train for active service on the Western Front. The bugle cap badge of the Durham Light Infantry was later to be seen on parade in the High Street, but it was another Northumberland Fusilier battalion, the 18th (Service) Battalion, which left a permanent mark upon the area, and a memorial to those who trained here for war. In December 1914, the Alnwick and County Gazette carried a report that:

The 18th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers arrived in Rothbury to be housed in schools, several hotels, and the Jubilee and Congregational Halls. Rev. Hastings is showing pictures twice nightly and the shopkeepers are appreciating their patronage. Rumours of German spies on the Simonside Hills have caused no small excitement. At Christmas the men received special fare, and were relieved of ordinary duties. Games of football were indulged by several and friendly matches played.



Sergeants of 18 NF at the County Hotel

The Battalion had been formed as recently as 14th October in Jesmond, by the Mayor of Newcastle and the City and trained initially at the County Cricket Ground before the move to Rothbury. In January 1915, the men of the Battalion were informed that they were to become Pioneers, responsible for the construction of defences and what was known as 'field engineering'. As many of them were ex-miners, they were well suited to such tasks and on 18th February, the unit was officially designated 18th (Service) Battalion (1st Tyneside Pioneers) Northumberland Fusiliers. While in Rothbury, they trained in





The Valley Remembers

infantry skills, besides those of their Pioneer specialism. In so doing, they left a lasting mark on the Rothbury countryside.



The Practice Trenches Today

The Battalion's history records that:

Lord Armstrong kindly made us free of the moorland above the town, a position on which was selected and each Company was given a length of front to prepare for defence.

In plain English, the Battalion dug practice trenches in the area of the Carriage Drives, a task which they would perform repeatedly, as the Western Front settled into the horrors of static warfare.

Today, nearly 100 years on, these practice trenches are clearly visible from the air and are in a remarkable state of preservation. It is still possible to see the successive lines of the front and support trenches and the communications trenches joining them. And the visitor may walk in the footsteps of the young men who dug them in 1915, in the relative tranquillity of the Valley that was so unlike conditions awaiting them at the Western Front.

In June 1915 the 8th Battalion left Rothbury for Cramlington to continue training as the Pioneer Battalion of the 34th Division which included





The Valley Remembers

Brigades of the Tyneside Irish and the Tyneside Scottish. They arrived in France in January 1916. Today, the trenches dug by men of the Battalion at Rotherbury offer, in their way, an enduring memorial to them and, especially, to those of their number who hailed from Coquet Vale.

7NF and Recruiting

Given the scale of losses in action, local recruiting campaigns were of great importance, even by 1915. The 7th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers had suffered heavy losses in fighting immediately after their arrival in France, as was reported by the son of Lord Armstrong. Lieutenant The Hon W Watson-Armstrong was one of the young men from the Valley serving in the 1/7th Northumberland Fusiliers, who arrived in France on 21st April 1915 and, within days was in action. He describes the Battalion's arrival in Ypres in terms similar to others, notably Lance Corporal Leslie Hounam, writing:

We approached Ypres and were brought to a halt in the grand square opposite the cathedral. Shells were bursting all round us. The cathedral was on fire and made a glorious but sad spectacle. We moved on and found a field where we lay down and rested.

The Battalion was thrown immediately into the Battle of St Julien, a battle in which German artillery and machine gun fire caused heavy casualties, one of whom was Lieutenant Watson-Armstrong:

We began our last advance and made two or three short rushes. I had just finished the last of these when I felt a staggering blow on the back and fell forward. I suffered agonising pain, and soon felt another blow on the back, also extremely violent. I began to find difficulty in breathing, and wondered if I would ever leave this spot. Any moment I expected would be my last. I felt faint, and called to a soldier nearby to give me some water. He came at once, but in doing so was unfortunately wounded in the leg.

The man who befriended me said there was a ditch close by, and if I could crawl on my stomach, he would try and pull me along by the leg. Every movement was agonising, but at last we managed to reach the ditch and I lay there exhausted. Soon, others began to crawl into the ditch. I was told afterwards that when I had finished my painful trek the man I was with pushed me into the ditch only to be blown to pieces





The Valley Remembers

immediately after by a shell. There were two dead men lying beside me though I was unaware of these facts.

After a long wait, I crawled for about fifteen yards over an especially dangerous zone, then was helped up and supported by an officer and a soldier and reached a field dressing station. From there I was taken to a dressing station nearer Ypres where I received an injection of morphine to deaden the pain and anti-tetanus serum.

Eventually I was placed in an ambulance and taken to Poperinghe, several miles from the Front. Another ambulance took me to Hazebrouck on the French side of the border where I spent a month. At first I was very ill, but a visit from my father cheered me up. After about a month I was moved to hospital in Boulogne. Again I became ill as blood poisoning intervened and nearly ended my life. I had to have an operation to get the empyema (sic) out of my chest, and another to draw the abscess which had formed on my leg which fortunately threw off the septicaemia.

Despite the severity of his wounds, Watson-Armstrong made a slow recovery, aided by his return to the Coquet Valley, and he returned to the front a little over a year later:

I landed in England on June 25th and stayed in hospital in London until early September, then in lodgings for the final three weeks of treatment. At the end of the month I was able to leave London for Craggside. I spent a pleasant convalescence, and joined the 7th Reserve Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers stationed at Alnwick at the end of January 1916. I left home on July 3rd to rejoin the old first line of the 7th in Flanders.

Watson-Armstrong was Mentioned in Dispatches in 1917. The severe casualties of the Battle of St Julien resulted in a recruiting drive to make good the losses, in which Lord Armstrong played a prominent part. On 15th May 1915 it was reported in the Alnwick Gazette that he had addressed a recruiting meeting in the Jubilee Hall at which many of the men of the 9th DLI then stationed in Rothbury for training were present. The Band of 7NF played 'several fine military selections'. Lord Armstrong spoke of his



Captain
Watson-Armstrong





The Valley Remembers

experiences during a recent visit to France, describing his admiration for the English hospital centre in Boulogne and at Hazebrouck, only 15 miles from the firing line where he had visited his wounded son:

He felt proud at the brave manner which the wounded bore their troubles with such hope and fortitude, with the greatest nonchalance possible. After the battle of Neuve Chapelle, 13,000 wounded passed through the Hazebrouck hospital.

He spoke of the horrors of gas warfare and of the need for the production of munitions (in which his Elswick works had done well in producing shells etc). But recruiting was his theme:

More men were required to fill up the gaps at the front. Men of England had nobly responded and Rothbury was no exception. But there were still eligible men in the district who might come forward to sustain their country's freedom.

He added:

Those who go will be remembered as those who played their part well. Those who come back wounded will carry their scars with pride and those who come back safe will hold their heads high amongst their fellows; but those who refuse to go will in the future be looked upon as cowards.

His Lordship appealed for volunteers, when the following went forward to join the ranks, viz, Wm. George Foggon, William Archbold Atkinson, William Bolam Cummings and I Crowther, all of Rothbury.

On the following day, at the conclusion of the stock sale at the Auction Mart, Lord Armstrong, Lieutenant Harbottle and other officers of the 7th Northumberland Fusiliers were present as Mr Donkin:

...addressed the farmers and their sons in vigorous terms upon the slackness of so many of the young men without responsibilities in not having joined the colours. He appealed to them to come forward and fill the places of the local men who had been wounded, but the appeal was practically without result.

A fortnight before these meetings, The Alnwick and County Gazette had reported:

Rothburians will deeply regret casualties to two of their officers. Lieutenant W Watson-Armstrong, son of Lord Armstrong of Cragside,





The Valley Remembers

Rothbury, with the Ashington Company of the 7th was shot through the chest. Lieutenant Tom Donkin, son of Mr Robt. Donkin, auctioneer of Rothbury, who is with the 7th was wounded in the foot by a shell.

There is little wonder that both fathers spoke with such passion at the two recruiting meetings.

The Harbottle Forestry Camp

Before the Great War, Britain used some 900,000 tons of home grown timber annually, to which was added over 11 million tons imported via the Baltic ports. The outbreak of war resulted in the cutting off of these supplies and arrangements were made, first to import timber from Canada and, later, to have Canadian specialist workers harvest forests in UK and France. Demand had increased dramatically, for the provision of duckboards, crates and shoring timbers for the trenches of the Western Front. In 1916, the Canadian Forestry Corps of military lumberjack units was formed and sent overseas. Although soldiers of the Corps were widely used in France for labour duties and even in the front line, those in Great Britain were employed to cut, saw and square the timber felled in the forests, especially of Scotland and the North of the England.

The Canadian Forestry Corps had its companies in operation at Chillingham and Thrunton, and at Harbottle, where the 115th Company set up a camp. There, early mechanisation was in evidence, including the use of 'caterpillar' tractors, an unusual sight in those times.



Canadian Forestry Camp at Harbottle





The Valley Remembers

15TH NORTHUMBERLAND V A HOSPITAL

In 1915, two of the seventeen 'V A Hospitals' set up to care for servicemen injured at the front were established just outside the boundary of the present Parish of Upper Coquetdale. These were the 15th & 17th Northumberland V A Hospitals, at Brinkburn High House, Pauperhaugh, and at Callaly Castle respectively. In common with many of the other hospitals, the premises were private homes, these belonging to the Fenwick and Browne families.



Mrs Lancelot Fenwick

Others nearby were at Linden Hall, Hetton House, Fowberry Towers and Etal Manor.

In 1910, the British Red Cross Society had been given the role of providing supplementary aid to the Territorial Force Medical Service in the event of war. In order to provide trained personnel for this task, county branches of the British Red Cross Society organised units called Voluntary Aid Detachments. All Voluntary Aid Detachment members, who came to be known simply as "VADs" were trained in First Aid and Nursing.



Patients at Brinkburn

The 15th Northumberland V A Hospital was staffed and supported by a very active Red Cross Branch in Rothbury. Its Commandant was Mrs Lancelot Fenwick, in whose home the Hospital was established, the Honorary Medical Officer was Dr Arthur Hedley, the Charge Sister (Trained) was Sister A W Joss and the Quartermaster Mrs C Wilson. A team of nine so-called 'General Duty' volunteers staffed the wards and Miss J McCullagh was the all-important Cook:

General Duty:

<i>Miss S Renton</i>	<i>Miss F Robinson</i>	<i>Miss A Robson</i>
<i>Miss N Short</i>	<i>Miss A Wilson</i>	<i>Miss E Proudlock</i>
<i>Miss E Robinson</i>	<i>Mrs M Robson</i>	<i>Miss M J Proudlock</i>

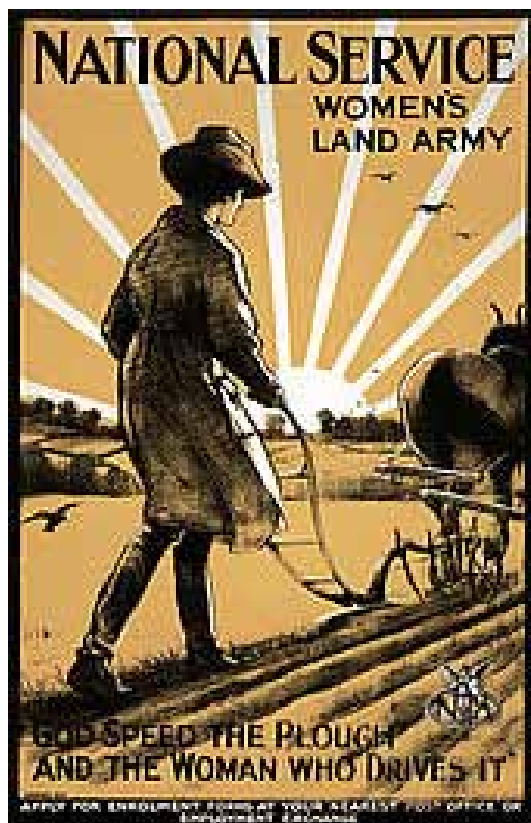




The Valley Remembers

Keeping the Home Fires Burning

It is clear that the women of the Coquet Valley bore the burdens imposed by war with great courage and dignity. Theirs was the task of continuing to look after their families, to which in many cases, was added the further role of replacing the labour of the absent men, on the farms and elsewhere. During the Great War, many women found themselves in the unaccustomed surroundings of factories, helping to satisfy the huge demand for munitions and other materiel. Some from the Valley even found themselves bound for France as nurses. Sadly, there remains little evidence of these activities but it is certain that theirs was a contribution without which families would have ceased to function, as they continued to do throughout four long years of hardship, worry and grief.





The Valley Remembers

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

The 20th Century

The outbreak of war in August 1914 saw the start of what was nearly a century of unparalleled warfare and violence, the product of political negligence and ambition, with cruel consequences felt throughout Europe. Its effects were seen in every corner of the continent, reaching into its remote hills and valleys in a way never before experienced. It is hard today to imagine the patriotic enthusiasm with which young men set off to the war, encouraged by their families and buoyed up by loyalty and by the belief that it would 'all be over by Christmas'. Nor is it possible today to comprehend the disillusion and despair that reached even into rural communities like the predecessor parishes of today's Upper Coquetdale, as casualties mounted and the realities of modern warfare became apparent.

The Dead Man's Penny

In the Coquet Valley, as elsewhere, the families of those who had lost sons or brothers received recognition of their loss through the presentation of an individual memorial plaque. Such Memorial Plaques were issued after the First World War to the next-of-kin of all British and Empire service personnel who were killed as a result of the war. The plaques, more strictly described as 'plaquettes', were made of bronze and hence became known popularly as the "Dead Man's Penny" because of their similarity to the smaller penny coin. In all, 1,355,000 plaques were issued, using a total of 240 tonnes of bronze. They continued to be issued into the 1930s, to commemorate people who died as a consequence of the war.



The plaques were about five inches (120 mm) in diameter and were





The Valley Remembers

cast in bronze, to a design picked from submissions to a public competition. This was won by the sculptor and medallist, Edward Carter whose design, Pyramus, won him a prize of £250, over £15,000 in today's money. Around the face of the plaque runs the legend, "He died for freedom and honour", suitably amended for the six hundred plaques issued to commemorate women who died. Each plaque was dispatched to next of kin in a pack with a letter and commemorative scroll from King George V. To this day, families in the Valley treasure these reminders of the sacrifice of their forebears.

Our Memorials

After the War, the communities of the Valley were quick to create lasting memorials to their dead. Today, the War Memorials in one form or another remain important as a focus for the annual acts of Remembrance on 11th November, what was once, appropriately, described as 'Armistice Day'. It has been clear in recent years that the public appetite for 'remembering' has increased and the care and attention devoted to the Memorials over the years has preserved them in a fitting condition for this important task. They serve both to remember the sacrifice of those who fell and as a warning to succeeding generations of the costs and consequences of war.

The Mystery Man

On almost every one of the Valley's Memorial are names about which uncertainties have had to be resolved and this has been possible in most cases. One unresolved mystery remains, however, namely the story of Charles H Pearson whose name appears on the Rothbury village War memorial, on the organ screens in All Saints Church and in the Book of Remembrance. It is interesting to record that his name did not originally feature on the Memorial, as is to be seen in a photograph dating from the 1920s. Similarly, it was clearly a late addition to those incised on the organ panels, being in a different font size and in slightly different paint colours to the others. The mystery deepens, and uncertainty remains about where and in which regiment Charles Pearson served; some sources suggest the 12th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, while others the 20th (Tyneside Scottish) Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers. The Book of Remembrance states baldly 'Military unit unknown'. As if that were not enough by way of uncertainty, nothing has been discovered about the Pearson family





The Valley Remembers

and its connections to Rothbury and the Valley. Whilst it is unsatisfactory to admit defeat – so far – the story of Charles Pearson will continue to be investigated in the years ahead, along with others where there is little or only incomplete information. What is certain is that he and his sacrifice will not be forgotten.



War Memorial without Charles Pearson

Remembering the Centenary

In the Centenary year of the outbreak of the Great War, members of the Valley communities have generously contributed to the project of which this book forms a part. It appears alongside a memorial flower festival, exhibition and concert in Rothbury Parish Church, and the re-dedication of the memorials in Thropton where much work has been done to refurbish the War Memorial Hall and its plaques. In Alwinton, a further concert will take place, to present for the first time a piece



The Valley Remembers

written to commemorate the fallen of the Valley.

Memorial for the fallen and lost, 1914-1918



Memorial, a work for choir, two soloists and percussion was composed and scripted by Professor John Casken, a resident of Holystone and Music Director of the Coquetdale Chamber Choir. Created as a unique artistic contribution to Upper Coquetdale's commemoration of the Centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, its world première in St Michael's & All Angels Alwinton on 2 August 2014 was planned as part of a weekend of commemorative events. Memorial is a tribute to the men from the Valley who fell during the War and were lost, those who perished and were never found, their names alone recorded on the many memorials of stone. The text also alludes to WW1 poetry, Remembrance Day prayers and cites the names of twelve men lost, and their ages. It incorporates fragments of a harrowing account of the battle of Mametz Wood written by Cpl. Briton Smallman of the Northumberland Fusiliers, two of whose relatives are today resident in Thropton and Harbottle. The text of Memorial expresses the sacrifice of war and the loss felt in the close communities of the Valley.

And in Another Valley

If it is sometimes easy to forget the huge loss of life suffered by Britain's allies during the First World War, it is even easier to dismiss the fact that great suffering was also experienced in Germany, not for



The Valley Remembers

the last time in the 20th Century. Inevitably in war, the consequences of decisions made by politicians and generals of all countries are felt by civilians and soldiers alike. Just as in Coquetdale, in many of the valleys of rural Germany stand memorials as permanent reminders of the devastating effects of war on communities.



Lenne Memorial

**Im Frieden begraben
die Söhne ihre Väter
und im Krieg begraben
die Väter ihre Söhne**

In peace, the sons bury their fathers
and in war, the fathers bury their sons

The Lenne Valley in North Rhine Westphalia is a valley much like the Coquet Valley, with its communities dependent on agriculture, forestry and tourism for their livelihoods. There, as here, young men were called to arms, fought bravely and many did not return. Although different in style, the Lenne's village memorials to the Fallen offer a very similar message to our memorials in England: These words sum up the waste, loss, futility and horrors of war. In the last years of the 20th Century, much effort went into the reconciliation of former enemies. Former soldiers of all sides speak not of 'enemies', but of





The Valley Remembers

'opponents', against whom they were pitted by political failures. In Germany, as in England, the memorials serve not only to honour those who fell, but to offer a very visible warning to future generations. Across Europe and beyond, people of goodwill remember their dead and their sacrifice. They remember, too, that politicians make wars but soldiers must fight them.

Lest we forget



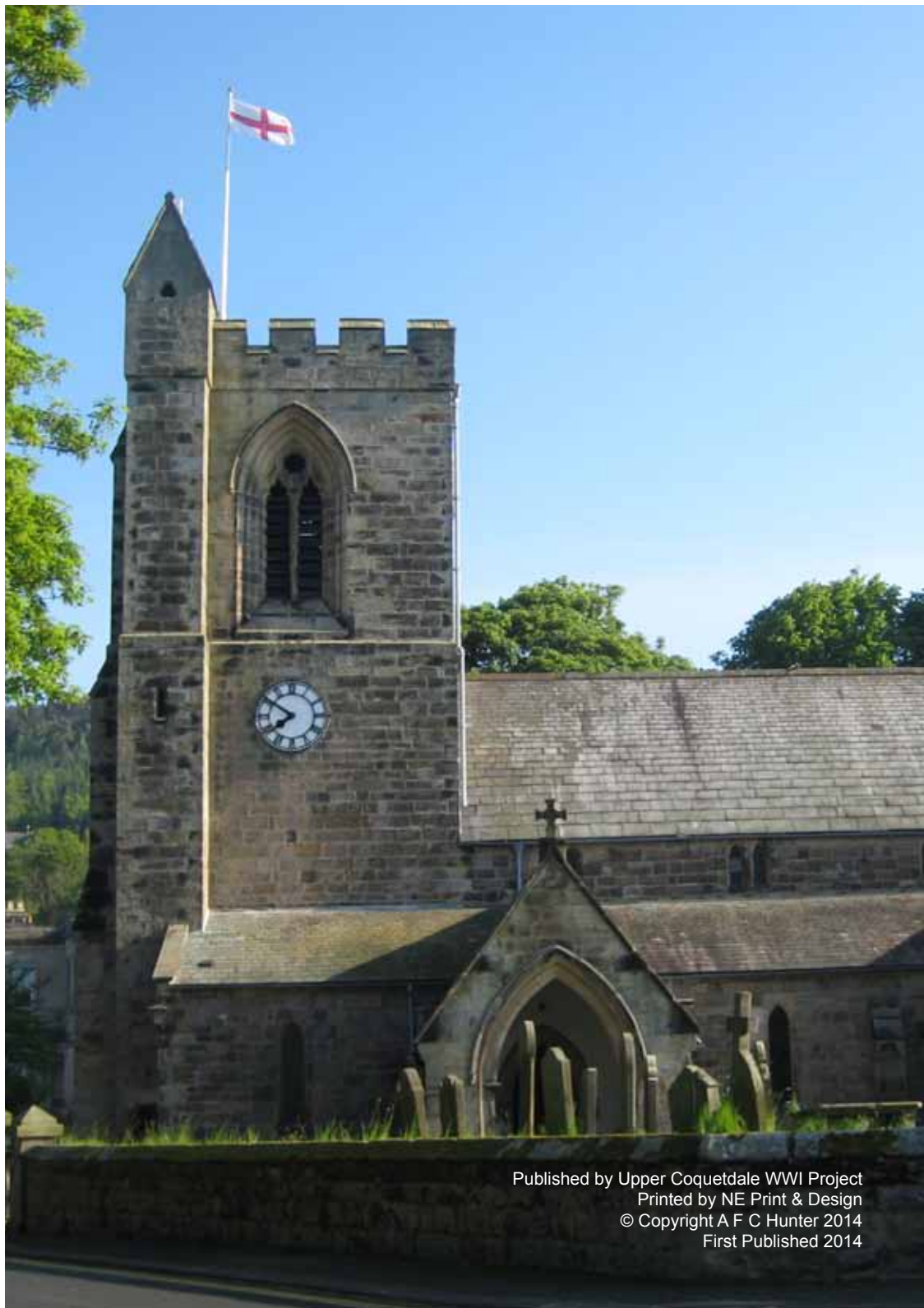
Lenne Memorial Chapel





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