



Serjeant Harry John Shrimpton



Just over 100 years ago, Harry Shrimpton left our house and boarded a troop ship for France. Having served with distinction for 15 months, he died of his wounds on 30th August 1916 after ferocious fighting at the Battle for Delville Wood.

A century later, my wife Hilly and I left the same house and boarded the Dieppe ferry. And on the exact centenary of Harry's death, we were able to honour his memory in a simple ceremony at his grave in Rouen.

We are the current custodians of the Victorian terraced cottage in Thame where Harry, his wife Gladys and three young children lived before the Great War began. (ed. Harry had married Gladys Gwendolyn Smith in Thame in 1909.)

Nowadays, as we carry out our daily routines, it's easy to imagine our predecessors grouped around the fireplace or passing us on the stairs, or to glimpse a fleeting shadow through a doorway. And we can picture the scene as Harry gives his wife Gladys a farewell hug on the doorstep in Park Street, before he entrains with the Oxon & Bucks Light Infantry.

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Groves Family Visit

In early July the Groves family went to the Somme, France to follow the footsteps of Private Jesse Millham of the Royal Sussex Regiment, who had fought at the Battle of the Somme and although wounded had survived. Jesse was the grandfather of Stuart Groves who now lives in the Upper High Street, Thame. Stuart had asked if there was a Thame Remembers Cross that they could deliver during their trip. We were pleased to allocate them the cross to Pte Ralph Eaton of Oxf & Bucks Light Inf who had died during the Battle of the Somme.

Stuart said "It was a privilege to be allowed to honour a man from Thame in this way and so close to the centenary of his death. The cemetery is one of the small battlefield type that is found in this region and is in the middle of a corn field. Its very size makes it such a special place and to visit a specific grave made the visit very moving. Thank you Thame Remembers for making this possible."



Stuart with his mother, uncle and sister at Martinpuich Cemetery, Somme.

Crosses Recently Delivered

7 July 2016

Private
Ralph Eaton
Oxf and Bucks Light Inf
Stuart Groves
Martinpuich Cemetery,
Somme France

8 July 2016

Sub-Lieutenant
Henry Bennett Cook
Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
Tim Green, Sam Green
Jeannette Matelot Green
& James Green
Lee-on Solent Memorial,
Gosport, Hants

30 August 2016

Serjeant
Harry John Shrimpton
Oxf and Bucks Light Inf
Nick & Hilly Carter
St Sever Cemetery,
Rouen, France

Serjeant Harry John Shrimpton (cont)

Would he have had a last couple of pints on the previous evening at the Wenman Arms next door, or the Four Horseshoes opposite the house? Neither of these names exist now, but they would have been his local pubs back in the day.

It became important for Hilly and me to say our personal thanks to Harry for his selfless heroism and ultimate sacrifice. We made the commemorative trip accompanied by our dear friend Mike Dyer, one of the organisers of the unique 'Thame Remembers' project.

This nationally recognised project is Mike's passion, and he did a lot of research before our trip. He talked us through the battle of Bellewaarde Farm, near Ypres, where Harry had been awarded a Military Medal, the third-highest decoration for non-commissioned ranks. And in the manner of a war historian, Mike gave us a detailed account of the bloody struggle to take over Delville Wood, in which Harry, newly promoted to Serjeant, had been mortally wounded at the age of 34.



Despite the company of such an experienced visitor to the war cemeteries of France and Belgium, nothing really prepares the novice for the sight of 3,000 white headstones standing shoulder to shoulder as if in the serried ranks of a

parade ground. Hilly and I stood open-mouthed as we took in the scene and contemplated our route through Rouen's beautiful St Sever cemetery to Harry's grave.

In lovely late-August weather, we were able to carry out our promise to the house where Harry and his family had once been happy. On the exact 100th anniversary of his death, we placed the 'Thame Remembers' cross in front of Harry's headstone, recited the 'Ode of Remembrance' in tribute, and joined hands in heartfelt prayer. Thank you, Harry: for as

long as our house stands and Thame exists, you will indeed be remembered.

Nick Carter



St Sever Cemetery Historical Information

During the First World War, Commonwealth camps and hospitals were stationed on the southern outskirts of Rouen. A base supply depot and the 3rd Echelon of General Headquarters were also established in the city. Almost all of the hospitals at Rouen remained there for practically the whole of the war. They included eight general, five stationary, one British Red Cross, one labour hospital, and No. 2 Convalescent Depot. A number of the dead from these hospitals were buried in other cemeteries, but the great majority were taken to the city cemetery of St. Sever. In September 1916, it was found necessary to begin an extension. St. Sever Cemetery contains 3,082 Commonwealth burials of the First World War. There is also one French burial and one non war service burial here.



Lottery Grant



Supported by

The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

We are delighted to record that the Heritage Lottery Fund have received our End of Grant report and replied with the following :-

"our records are now closed and the project has been recorded as complete".

All WW1 Heritage Lottery Fund projects must be completed within two years. That is we must be able to show that the grant money has been spent, against the criteria that were agreed at the start of the project, within two years. Mike and I did agonise for a few weeks over the report which we thought must give justice to the project and ensure that HLF were aware that our project does not end after two years but goes on until 11 November 2018. In the end HLF had no problems and accepted the report first time.

Oxfordshire County Council was our other major funder and set the criteria that their grant of £8000 should be spent within the first year. They saw the huge community benefit and the success of the project as sufficient justification to accept that their funding was well spent.

Our project goes on, with another two years to run, and we can assure all that the remaining funds will be spent as diligently as previously, although now we have only to report periodically to the Town Council and Museum Trustees about the remaining funds and the progress of the project.

The full HLF report is available on our website.



This newsletter is printed and published by Thame Museum Trust and distributed free to all

This paper is intended as a digest of news items about the Thame Remembers project to keep the people of Thame up to date with what is happening.

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Battlefield Tour

There are still some places available on our Battlefield Tour. We know it's still a long way off but we would be pleased if anyone thinking of joining us on this moving trip could book now with Spear Travels in Greyhound Walk.

We will be taking in all of the main memorials (Menin Gate, Tyne Cot, Vimy Ridge, Thiepval, etc) as well as visits to the preserved trenches at Beaumont Hamel on the Somme and at Hoog near Ypres, Lochnagar Crater, and the Wellington Tunnels at Arras, plus visits to CWGC cemeteries where the tour party will place crosses at the graves of men from Thame. A poignant highlight will be a visit to Talbot House in Poperinge, where soldiers went for R&R and where Toc-H was founded. A link on our website enables you to watch four BBC South features from our 2015 tour, which will give a flavour of what to expect"

Battlefield Tour

Only
£419*

19 -23 May 2017



**Fully guided tour
visiting;
Ypres, Poperinge,
Arras, Vimy
and the Somme**

**2 nights in Mouscron,
Belgium and
2 nights in Arras, France**

Book now at:

Spear Travels, Greyhound Walk, Thame

* Approximate cost per person. Based on two people sharing a room.
Bed & Breakfast accommodation. £120 single supplement



www.thameremembers.org

Thame Remembers is a project of Thame, Oxfordshire to commemorate the centenary of World War One by researching those from Thame who fell in all conflicts worldwide, and remembering them by placing a Thame Cross on their grave or memorial wherever in the world that may be. If you feel that you can help please contact Dave on 01844 21 5178.