



## ELLESMERE PORT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

**Corporal / Sapper WILLIAM GRIFFITHS**  
**135656 Royal Engineers**  
**W/R 501584 Inland Water Transport Corps**  
**Died 22 January 1922**

**William** Griffiths was born in Frodsham, the son of Griffith Griffiths an agricultural labourer, who was originally from Hendre Fawr near Ruthin where his father ran a farm. Griffith met and married his wife Maria Ainsworth who was from Frodsham, in 1879 in his home parish, and together they found work on a farm in Little Sutton, lodging in the farmer's house. A couple of years later they moved on to the farming hamlet of Aston-by-Sutton, a couple of miles east of Frodsham, where their first son, George was born in 1882, followed by Lowe in 1883, who was baptised there on 25 November. In 1884 they moved into Frodsham village into Cliff View Terrace (*below*), probably to be closer to Maria's aging parents living further down the lane in Marsh Green Cottage (*right*). Their family continued to grow and **William** was born in 1886, followed by Griffith junior (1889), Daisy (1890), Maude Anne (1896) and Anne (1900).



The following year they had moved away, into 29 Crescent Road in Ellesmere Port (*below*), where there were more opportunities for work as the children were moving into their teens. Griffith senior found work as a labour in the adjacent iron and steel works, while his teenage sons James and William worked on the dock estate as an engine greaser and general labourer. Later, Griffith junior, who moved out to 14 Briarfield Road nearby, would join his father in the iron works.

In 1909, **William** met Ann Roberts from 3 Back Union Street, a row of Shropshire Union Canal Company cottages on the dock estate where her father worked as a flatman on the barges. (William's brother Lowe later moved into that house with his family, while Anne's brother Joseph was still there as a boarder from 1911). They married on 31 July that year in Christchurch, the local parish church opposite the dock estate and





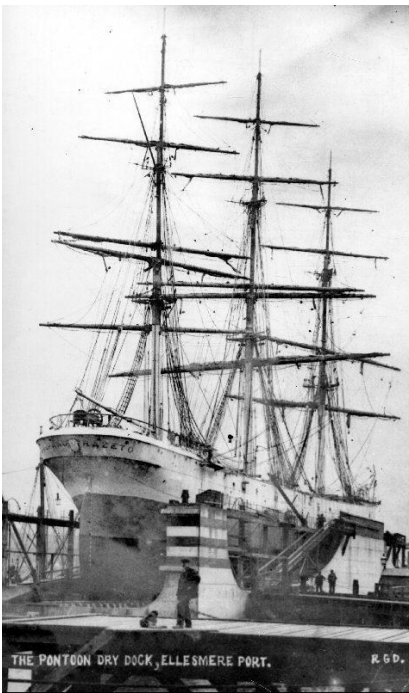
they moved into 7 Nelson Street close by. Their first child, Daisy Florence was born on 9 June 1910, while William found work with the Dry Dock Company, which operated a floating pontoon facing the Manchester Ship Canal. Two more children followed, William on 5 October 1911 and Elsie on 30 December 1915.

1899 Marriage solemnized at *the Parish Church in the Parish of Ellesmere Port* in the County of *Cheshire*

| No. | When Married.                   | Name and Surname.        | Age.      | Condition.      | Rank or Profession. | Residence at the time of Marriage.        | Father's Name and Surname. | Rank or Profession of Father. |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 293 | <i>July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1899</i> | <i>William Griffiths</i> | <i>23</i> | <i>Bachelor</i> | <i>Labourer</i>     | <i>29 Crescent Rd<br/>Ellesmere Port</i>  | <i>Griffith Griffiths</i>  | <i>Labourer</i>               |
|     |                                 | <i>Ann Roberts</i>       | <i>20</i> | <i>Spinster</i> | <i>—</i>            | <i>3 Back Union St<br/>Ellesmere Port</i> | <i>John Roberts</i>        | <i>Flatman</i>                |

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *or after* *banns* by me, *Wm James (Priest)*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { *William Griffiths* } in the Presence of us, { *Joseph Green.*  
*Ann Roberts* } *Daisy Griffiths*



Above left: Mersey flatmen on the Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn.

Above: The Pontoon owned by the Dry Dock Company.

Left: Bargemen alongside the Canal Tavern, Ellesmere Port, with the Dock Estate in the background.

When the war came, William, now a bargeman, did not volunteer straight away, having a new wife and two infant children with another on the way, plus many transport workers were encouraged to stay in their profession where they were needed. However as the war went into late 1915, there was mounting pressure for more recruits, due to the high casualty figures, and conscription was now only a couple of months away. William travelled to Liverpool on 26 October to sign on. He attested and was posted to the Royal Engineers and after three months training, Sapper 135656 Griffiths was in France on 23 January 1916. The war relied on engineering and without engineers there would have been no supply to the armies, because the RE's maintained the railways, roads, water supply, bridges and transport. They also operated the railways and inland waterways, they maintained the telephones, wireless and other signalling equipment, plus they designed and built the front-line fortifications, so it was little wonder that the Royal Engineers grew into a large and complex organisation. So with William's experience he continued to work as a bargeman, and would have been at work on the canals in France helping to maintain the supplies to the front line.



Above: 7 Nelson Road (right, behind telegraph pole), looking towards the M53 motorway, with the dock estate just behind).



By the end of the war, in addition to all the supplies and other essentials, over 70,000 casualties had been carried to safety by the I.W.T.D. barges.



He was ill early on during his time in France and was treated in the Lahore General Base Hospital in Calais (formerly Marseilles) between 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916. The illness is unknown, but he may have been showing signs of the chest complaint that he was eventually discharged for. On the 16<sup>th</sup> he was discharged to base at Boulogne and from there he was sent to No 4 General Base Depot for Royal Engineers at Rouen. Base Depots were established at the Channel Ports in France and at other places on the lines of communication. Goods arrived in bulk by ship and were broken down into wagon-loads and sent on by rail to the Regulating Stations. General Base Depots were the centres for collecting, sorting and despatching reinforcements. They became places of considerable industry, with hospitals, workshops, stores and so on, and were manned and operated by the A.S.C., often working closely with the Labour Corps and Royal Engineers.



William was promoted to Lance Corporal on 27 April 1916, and Acting Corporal on 2 February the following year. Between 3-9 September 1916 he was back in hospital again, but again the illness is unknown.

There was a huge reorganisation of transport in 1917 as result of the Geddes report. As a result, large numbers of men were drafted to the railways and the Inland Water Transport to which the Docks were added. Units in these organisation were came under the umbrella of a new organisation Transportation Troops. In March 1918, all these men were given a number with the WR prefix which denoted them as Transportation Troops. This also included road construction and quarrying units. William found himself part of this reorganisation, and still within the Royal Engineers he was moved into Inland Water Transport Corps and reassigned a new army number - W/R 501584.

|            |        |                            |          |                    |
|------------|--------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| W.T.       | B.E.F. | Inclay arrest              | epd      | 11.4.18 to 16.4.18 |
| P.O. D. 34 |        | Tried by G.P.M.            |          | 17.4.18            |
|            |        | for being concerned in the |          |                    |
|            |        | disposal of tin of meat    |          | 10.4.18            |
|            |        | Reduced to the ranks       | Sapper   |                    |
|            |        | Confined by Base Command   | Dumfries | 18.4.18            |

William was progressing well through the lower ranks, being made full Corporal on 13 April 1918. However, later that summer he blotted his copybook after achieving his promotion, when he was arrested by the army authorities on 11 July 1918, then tried on 17 July, for 'being concerned in the disposal of a tin of meat belonging to the public'. The army certainly took the pilfering of supplies very seriously and William was reduced to the ranks, once more becoming a sapper, which would affect his pay and possibly his pension too.

IF FOUND, please drop this Certificate in a Post Office letter box. Army Form Z 11

**NOTICE.**—This document is Government property. It is no security whatever for debt, and any Person being in possession of it, either as a pledge or security for debt, or without lawful authority or excuse, is liable under Section 156 (9) of the Army Act to a fine of twenty pounds (£20) or imprisonment for six months, or to both fine and imprisonment.

**PROTECTION CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY**  
(SOLDIER NOT REMAINING WITH THE COLOURS).

Dispersal Unit Stamp and date of dispersal

Surname: **GRIFFITHS**  
(Block letters)

Christian Names: **William**

Regtl. No. **501584** Rank **Spr** Record Office **London**

Unit **W.T. R.E.** Regt. or Corps **R.E.** Pay Office **W**

I have received an advance of £2. Address for Pay **7 Nelson Rd**  
(Signature of Soldier) **W Griffiths** **Ellsmere Port**

The above-named soldier is granted 28 days' furlough from the date stamped hereon pending (as far as can be ascertained) which will date from the last day of furlough after which date uniform will not be worn except upon occasions authorized by Army Orders.

Theatre of War or Command **Cheshire**

Born in the Year **1886**

Medical Category **A**

Place of rejoining in case of emergency **Sanctuary**

Specialist Military Qualification

† As this is the address to which pay and discharge documents will be sent unless further notification is received, any change of address must be reported at once to the Record Office and the Pay Office as noted above, otherwise delay in settlement will occur.

This Certificate must be produced when applying for an Unemployed Sailor's and Soldier's Donation Policy or, if demanded, whenever applying for Unemployment benefit.

Date **23/4/19** Office of Issue **Dumfries** Policy issued No. **27.043084**

(3)

Left: Protection Certificate issued to William on discharge, showing proof of identity and war service, essential when applying for work or financial support.

On 25 May 1919, William finally received his discharge, his army service was over, and he was able to return home. He was given a Class Z certificate, a provision that had been authorised by an Army Order of 3 December 1918. There were fears that Germany would not accept the terms of any peace treaty, therefore the Government decided it would be wise to be able to quickly recall trained men in the eventuality of the resumption of hostilities. Soldiers who were being demobilised, particularly those who had agreed to serve 'for the duration', were at first posted to Class Z. They returned to civilian life but with an obligation to return if called upon. The Z Reserve was abolished on 31 March 1920.

However the war years had taken a toll on his health and he was not a well man, suffering from bronchial illness, which may well have been tuberculosis. Also, the influenza pandemic had peaked in the UK around the beginning of 1919, although it was still claiming victims months later. Due to the constant exposure to bad weather and poor conditions, bronchitis and pneumonia were often prevalent, but whatever the precise illness [awaiting death certificate], William was in terminal decline. His time at home with his family was short and he passed away on 27 January 1922, aged only thirty-six.

He was buried in Overpool Cemetery, Ellesmere Port, (where his wife Ann would later be laid to rest alongside him when she died in 1966 aged 77). However, there is no Commonwealth War Grave headstone, despite the fact that he was discharged with an illness partly attributable to war service (stated on his war record). The 'cut off' date for qualification was 31 August 1921. Yet he served until May 1919 when others discharged much earlier still qualified, despite serving less time. He served his country for five years and was not honoured as others were. He was on a 30% war disability pension when he died, although this expired on 20 June 1922, leaving his wife and children without support.

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His father Griffith died the following year and his mother in 1928. Lowe died in 1947. Both his sisters Maude and Daisy married, and moved to Middlesbrough living in the same road in South Bank. Annie married Alfred Adey, whose brothers Sidney and Frederick Adey both died in the war and are recorded on the War Memorial.

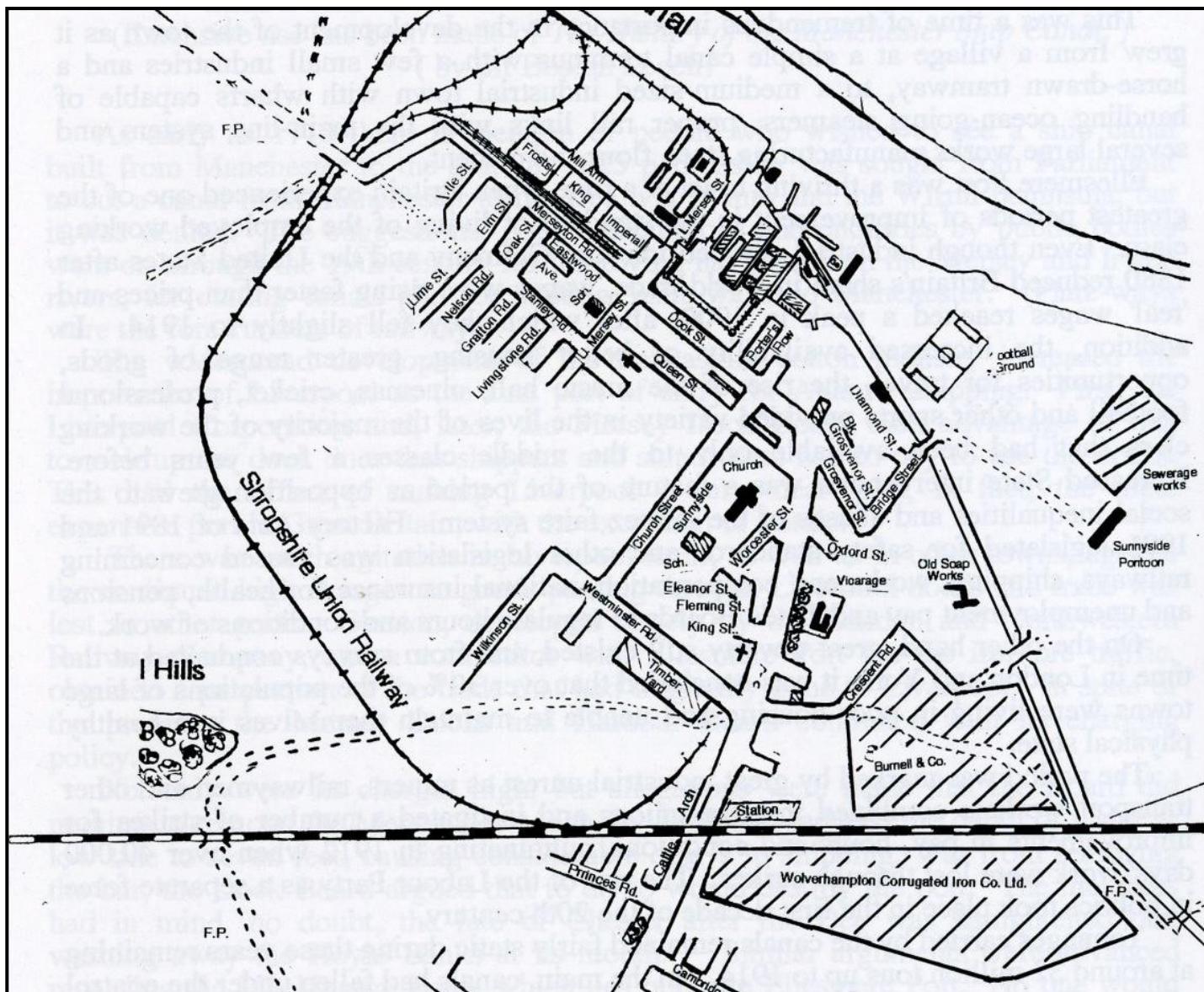


***Crescent Road still exists today although both Burnell's, formerly on the left, and the Wolverhampton (Merseyside) Iron Works have long been demolished.***



***Shropshire Row - Canal workers cottages on the dock estate. Back Union Street was to the rear.***





*Above: Ellesmere Port in 1910. Crescent Road can be seen skirting around Burnell's Iron Works (bottom right), and Nelson Road is centre top.*

*Below: Wolverhampton Iron Works, with Burnell's to the extreme left.*



G/2

7 Nelson Road  
Llunsmere Port

I cannot understand Medal  
form coming to my husband now  
as he passed away in January 27  
1922 through war service and  
forms have been put through for my  
pension but I have not received  
thing paper yet.

I remain

Yours truly

Ann Griffiths  
Widow



9

236380 59 129

### Memorial Plaque Verification

Before the plaque was issued to the family, army authorities had to be sure that it was going to the correct recipient. The form to be filled in is overleaf, which is quite detailed, and had to be signed by a minister or magistrate. One can see the frustration and distress this has caused William's widow Ann, still trying to come to terms with the death of her husband six months earlier.



9/236380

Army Form W. 5080.

Regiment **ROYAL ENGINEERS**

To be filled in by  
Officer in Charge of  
Records.

*W. R. 1584 W. Griffiths* deceased

**STATEMENT of the Names and Addresses of all the Relatives of the above-named deceased Soldier in each of the degrees specified below that are now living.**

**NOTE**—Against those degrees of relationship in which there is no relative now living the word "none" is to be inserted. If the answers are not filled in, much correspondence and delay may be occasioned by the neglect.

| Degree of relationship                               | NAME IN FULL of every relative now living in each degree enquired for (see note above).  | ADDRESS IN FULL of each surviving relative opposite his or her name.  |
|--|--|---|
| Widow of the Soldier ...                             | <i>Ann Griffiths</i>   | <i>7 Nelson Road Ellesmere Port, Wirral.</i>  |
| Children of the Soldier and dates of their births... | <i>Daisy Florence 9/6/10</i><br><i>William 5/10/11</i><br><i>E. Lacie 30/12/15</i>   | <i>7 Nelson Road E.P.W.</i><br><i>7 Nelson Road E.P.W.</i><br><i>7 Nelson Road E.P.W.</i>   |
| Father of the Soldier ...                            | <i>Griffith Griffiths</i>  | <i>29 Crescent Road Ellesmere P.W.</i>  |
| Mother of the Soldier ...                            | <i>Maria Griffiths</i>   | <i>29 Crescent Road Ellesmere P.W.</i>  |
| Brothers of the Soldier                              | Full Blood ... <i>John Griffiths</i><br>Half blood ... <i>None</i>   | <i>35th Union Street Ellesmere P.W.</i><br><i>14 Brimfield Road Ellesmere P.W.</i>  |
| Sisters of the Soldier                               | Full blood ... <i>Daisy Florence Green</i><br><i>Maud Elizabeth Edwards</i><br><i>Annie Aday</i><br>Half blood ... <i>None</i> | <i>30 Beech Grove Normanby Road South Bank</i><br><i>27 Beech Grove Normanby Road South Bank</i><br><i>23 29 Crescent Road Ellesmere P.W.</i> |

**If no Relatives in the degrees above are now living the following particulars should be given:—**

|   | Names of those now living. | Addresses in full. |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Grandparents of the Soldier ...   |                            |                    |
| Nephews and Nieces of the Soldier ...   |                            |                    |
| Uncles and Aunts by blood of the Soldier (not Uncles and Aunts by marriage) ... |                            |                    |

**DECLARATION.**

I hereby declare that the above is a true and complete Statement of all the Relatives of the late Soldier now living in the degrees enquired for.

*Ann Griffiths*

Signature of the Declarant.

Relationship to the Soldier *Widow*  
Address in full *7 Nelson Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire.*

I hereby certify that the above Statement and Declaration made by and signed in my presence is complete and correct, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated at *Ellesmere Port* this *28th* day of *June* 19 *22*

Signature of Minister or Magistrate. *Arthur Baguley*

Qualification *Minister*

Address *6 Presbury St.*

*Ellesmere Port.*

5527. W.L. W. 933. G.P. 1814. 1,000,000(9). 2/10. S.O. 2/14.

*REV 5073.1P*



# OVERPOOL CEMETERY, ELLESMERE PORT



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ELLESMERE PORT & WHITBY  
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REGISTER

Register of Burials in the OVERPOOL CEMETERY provided  
under the Public Health (Interments)

| Reg.<br>list<br>No. | Date<br>of<br>Burial    | Name of Person Buried            | Sex    | Age | Description<br>of<br>Person Buried<br>(Trade or Profession, &c.) | Date<br>of<br>Death     | Place or Parish<br>where Death occurred | Place or Parish<br>from which the Body<br>was removed |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|-----|--|-------------------------|---|---|
| 349                 | 1922<br>January<br>17th | Barbara and<br>Lilian Sheringham | Female | 1   | Infant of 1 year<br>and 10 months<br>and 10 days                 | 1922<br>January<br>14th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 350                 | 1922<br>January<br>25th | Minnie Kent                      | Female | 20  | Housewife  | 1922<br>January<br>19th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 351                 | 1922<br>January<br>1st  | William Griffiths                | Male   | 35  | Labourer   | 1922<br>January<br>27th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 352                 | 1922<br>January<br>2nd  | Kathleen Vale                    | Female | 17  | Housewife  | 1922<br>January<br>29th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 353                 | 1922<br>January<br>3rd  | Amelia Taylor                    | Female | 23  | Housewife  | 1922<br>January<br>30th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 354                 | 1922<br>January<br>5th  | Edward Watkins                   | Male   | 77  | Joiner   | 1922<br>January<br>3rd  | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 355                 | 1922<br>January<br>15th | John Humphries                   | Male   | 53  | Labourer   | 1922<br>January<br>15th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |
| 356                 | 1922<br>January<br>23rd | George Carlough                  | Male   | 1   | Infant of 1 year<br>and 10 months<br>and 10 days                 | 1922<br>January<br>20th | Ellesmere Port                          | Ellesmere Port  |

OF BURIALS.

OVERPOOL CEMETERY.

by the URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF ELLESMERE PORT & WHITBY  
Act, 1879 (42 & 43 Vict. cap. 31).

| By whom Certificate<br>was given under<br>Act, 1879 | Public<br>or<br>Private<br>Grave | Place or Burial                                 |                 | Grave Burial Insurance                          |                   | By whom the<br>Ceremony was performed | Signature of Person<br>making entry of Burial |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-----------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
|   |                                  | Commenced Ground<br>Situation of<br>Grave Space | No. of<br>Grave | Commenced Ground<br>Situation of<br>Grave Space | No. of<br>Grave   |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 8<br>J                                  |                 | 6   | W. Upright        |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 19<br>L                                 |                 | 97  | A.B. Upright      |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 78<br>7                                 |                 | 86  | W. Upright        |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 25<br>7                                 |                 | 200   | Thomas<br>Moguire |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 33<br>L                                 |                 | 65  | Harold Gurney     |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 32<br>7                                 |                 | 200   | Harold Gurney     |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 40<br>7                                 |                 | 201   | Adonis Moguire    |                                       |   |
|   | Public                           | Section 40<br>L                                 |                 | 172   | W. Upright        |                                       |   |

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**Researched and written**

**by**

**Mike Royden**

[www.roydenhistory.co.uk](http://www.roydenhistory.co.uk)

**Many thanks to Paul Hancock who discovered William's war record and let me know of its existence. The precise identity of 'W. Griffiths' on the war memorial had been unknown until this discovery.**