FARNDON DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Remembering the Men of Farndon and Coddington

THE WEAVER BROTHERS

Private 8106 THOMAS WEAVER
2nd Battalion Cheshire Regiment
Died 17 February 1915 Aged 28

Private W/1061 JAMES WEAVER
13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment
Died 15 May 1916 Aged 21

Private 26911 FRANK WEAVER
King’s Shropshire Light Infantry
Survived the war

plus a cousin

Private 210264 ALFRED WEAVER
2nd/4th Cheshire Yeomanry
Survived the war

The Weaver family lived in Barton Wells in the hamlet of Barton, a mile or so east of Farndon village. Situated on the sharp rise near the Cock o’ Barton Inn, the family had previously moved from local hamlet to hamlet for a number of years, as father Thomas followed the agricultural labouring work from 1902. One view of the brief family tree reveals their movements when looking at the birth places of the children. In fact, the Weavers were part of a larger extended family which have a direct lineage in Barton going back at least to their common ancestor, John Weaver, in the mid 1600s.

Below: Modern map of the Farndon-Barton area (modern O.S.).
Barton Wells faces the Barton Plantation (near the number 21)
Regarding Thomas’ wife Margaret, she must have had a torrid time, been pregnant and giving birth almost continuously from 1880 to 1902, during which time she gave birth to fourteen children. Several were lost in infancy or early childhood, as by 1906 only Thomas, Frank, Mary, James, Alice, and Edwin had survived.
Private 8106 THOMAS WEAVER

At the age of eighteen, after a few teenage years as a farm labourer, Tom junior decided on a life in the army. He headed up to Chester and signed on for nine years for the Cheshire Regiment on 11 January 1906. After a period of training in the depot at Chester, followed by Litchfield, then Fleetwood, he joined the 1st Battalion on 20 April 1906. He was transferred to the 2nd Battalion on 7 January 1908 and was posted abroad the following day, serving with the Cheshires in India for the next seven years. Tom arrived in Wellington in South India on 19 March 1908, joining up with the 2nd Battalion who had been there since 1904 after their tour of duty in South Africa in the Boer War.

It didn’t take young Tom long to breach army regulations when he was given 28 days detention in the barracks for ‘neglect to the prejudice of good order of military discipline’ on 29 July 1908. This was a catch-all offence to criminalise misconduct that was not specified elsewhere in the King’s regulations.

On 4 November 1908, the battalion were on the move again, posted to Secunderabad, in Hyderabad Province, before moves to Schwebo in Burma, then back to Jubbulpore in India in 1911. However, from August to September 1910 he spent 42 days in hospital, after contracting gonorrhoea. He was infected again three years later in November 1913 and hospitalised in Jubbulpore for a further 30 days.

Such infections were a major problem for the British Army, especially during the First World War, when VD caused 416,891 hospital admissions among British and Dominion troops. This was roughly 5% of all the men who enlisted in Britain’s armies during the war becoming infected. In 1918, there were 60,099 hospital admissions for VD in France and Flanders alone. By contrast, only 74,711 cases of ‘Trench Foot’ were treated by hospitals in France and Flanders during the whole of the war – and this total also includes those suffering from Frost Bite. Although Trench Foot has come to symbolise the squalor of the conflict in the popular imagination, a man was more than five times as likely to end up in hospital suffering from Syphilis or Gonorrhoea. Considering the desperate nature of...
ATTENTION OF

No. 8106 Name: Thomas Weaver
Corps: Cheshire Regt

Questions to be put to the Recruit before enlistment:

1. What is your Name? 
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? 
3. Are you a British Subject? 
4. What is your Age? 
5. What is your Trade or Calling? 
6. If you are once found out of your father's house for three years continuously living in the same place, or occupied a house or land of the yearly value of £10 for one year, and paid rates for the same, and, in either case, if, so, state where? 

You are hereby warned that if after enlistment it is found that you have given a willfully false answer to any of the following seven questions, you will be liable to a punishment of two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

7. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, for what period? and, when did, or will, the period expire? 
8. Are you Married? 
9. Have you ever been sentenced to Imprisonment by the Civil Power? 
10. Have you ever served in the Army, the Marine, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Imperial Yeomanry, the Royal Naval Reserve, or the Naval Reserve Force? If so, in what Corps? 
11. Have you ever served in the Army, the Marine, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Imperial Yeomanry, or the Royal Navy? If so, state which, and cause of discharge? 
12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Military or Naval Force of Crown? If so, on what grounds? 
13. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? 
14. For what Corps are you willing to be enlisted, or are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? 
15. Do you understand that although every endeavour will be made to perform your duties, you will be liable to be sent to another regiment to which you may belong? 
16. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you? 
17. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions provided His Majesty should so long require your services? 
 (a) For the term of 12 years, for the first three years in Army Service and for the remaining nine years in the First Class of the Reserve. If in the termination of such service, or in the case of your death in Army Service, you are serving beyond the sea, you will be sent home, with all convenient speed, to be treated as a soldier. 
 (b) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service a state of War exists, then, if so directed by the Competent Military Authority, to serve in Army Service for a further period not exceeding 12 months. 
 (c) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service, you are so required by a Proclamation from His Majesty of imminent national danger, or great emergency, then to serve in Army Service so as to complete your term of 12 years, for a further period not exceeding 12 months. 
 (d) By the above-mentioned term of 12 years expires while you are on service with the Regular Forces beyond the seas, or whilst a state of war exists with a Foreign Power, or ill, while the Regular Forces or in the Reserve are required by proclamation to continue in, or re-enter upon Army Service, and you, in accordance with such proclamation, have re-entered upon Army Service, then to serve for a further period not exceeding 12 months. 

I, Thomas Weaver, do solemnly declare that the above answers are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

A Magee Corp. Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I, Thomas Weaver, do make Oath, that I will bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity, and observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, and of all the Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions, he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and subscribed his Oath.
recruitment drives, these figures reflecting the numbers of men lost to active service are astonishing –
and kept young Tom Weaver in hospital for a total of seventy-two days. He was again lost to his
battalion in November 1912 for a further ten days with a mild bout of Malaria.

When war broke out, the 2nd Battalion were still in Jubbulpore, but their term was ended on 18
November 1914 when they set sail for home, arriving in Devonport on Christmas Eve. After a short
term of leave for the festivities, they joined 84th Brigade, 28th Division, at Winchester and proceeded
to France, embarking at Southampton and landing at Le Havre on the 17 January 1915, although Tom
took a little longer, and was docked ten days pay for absenting himself and being late back to roll call on 13 January 1915. The 28th Division were concentrated in the area between Bailleul and Hazebrouck and began preparing for the defence of the northern sector of the Front in Belgium, which would become known as The Second Battle of Ypres.

By 5 February 1915, the 2nd Battalion was occupying positions at Blauwepoort Farm, facing the Ypres Salient, just south of the town centre of Ypres (now Ieper). On trench maps, the farm name was spelt as two words - Blauwe Poort - and at that time there was a small moat around three sides of the farm buildings. Nos. 3 and 4 Companies were ordered forward to support the 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment in the front line.

It was here that Tom lost his life, killed in action on 17 February aged twenty-eight, in unknown circumstances and in, according to his war record, ‘a place not stated’. His body was never recovered. This, sadly, was far from uncommon in the battles that raged around the Ypres Salient, and his name was recorded on the Menin Gate in Ypres, in company with 55,000 others who were never found.
Blauwepoort Farm Cemetery, shortly after the war
Blauwepoort Farm Cemetery now occupies the former position of the Farm and the Cheshire positions in February 1915 (no.33, centre)
The battlefield of the Ypres Salient towards Passchendaele

Thomas Weaver’s medal card. The medals awarded to him; The 1915 Star, The British Medal, The Victory Medal
The Menin Gate
The Cheshire Regiment panel underneath the arch of the Menin Gate
Each evening at 8pm a short memorial service is held. Both ends of the Gate are cordoned off, buglers from the local fire brigade assemble and sound the Last Post, and Binyon's verse is read out. Students from The Whitby High School, on a Battlefield tour led by the author, read the exhortation and before laying the first wreath.
In Memory of
Private
Thomas Weaver
8106, 2nd Bn., Cheshire Regiment who died on 17 February 1915 Age 28
Son of Thomas and Marguerite Weaver, of Barton Wells, Malpas, Cheshire.
Remembered with Honour
Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
James Weaver was born in 1896, while the family were living for a short time in Handley, a small hamlet to the east of Farndon. By his early teens he was labouring on a local farm, but when the war broke out it is likely that he was an early volunteer, as he was trained and in France serving in the 13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment by 25 September 1915.

The 13th Battalion was unofficially known as the Wirral Battalion, having been originally raised in the Wirral - many of the original men coming from the Port Sunlight Works of William Lever, where it was formed on 1 September 1914 by Gershom Stewart, MP. (The 'W' in James service number refers to the Wirral). The Battalion then moved to Chester before being attached to the 74th Brigade in 25th Division in October 1914. By December 1914 they were in billets in Bournemouth, then moved to Aldershot in May 1915 for further training. On 25 September 1915 they landed in France on their way to the front.

James died on 15 May 1916 aged twenty-one, and given the date of his death it is likely that he lost his life during the intensifying artillery fire precluding the May 1916 battle on Vimy Ridge to the north east of Arras, the first action involving the 13th battalion. He is buried in Ecoivres Military Cemetery, around 4 miles north west of Arras in France. The loss of James must have come as devastating news to the Weaver family, who had lost his older brother Thomas only a year earlier.

Today Ecoivres is a pretty hamlet nestling below the ruins of the nearby Abbey of Mont St Eloi, and it is difficult to imagine the horrors of the battles fought around this picturesque area.

This cemetery is really the extension of the communal cemetery, where the French army had buried over 1,000 men. The 46th (North Midland) Division took over the extension with this part of the line in March 1916, and their graves are in Rows A to F of Plot I. Successive divisions used the French
military tramway to bring their dead in from the front line trenches and, from the first row to the last, burials were made almost exactly in the order of date of death.

The attack of the 25th Division on Vimy Ridge in May 1916 is recalled in Plots I and II. The 47th (London) Division burials (July to October 1916) are in Plot III, Rows A to H, and Canadian graves are an overwhelming majority in the rest of the cemetery, Plots V and VI containing the graves of men killed in the capture of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. Ecoivres Military Cemetery contains 1,728 Commonwealth burials of the First World War. There are also 786 French and four German war graves. The cemetery was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.
After the opening of the memorial, surrounded by a crater peppered landscape.

Commonwealth War Graves
Map showing No.34 - Ecoivres Military Cemetery to the north west of Arras.

Vimy is to the top of the map.

Vimy Ridge after the opening of the memorial, surrounded by a crater peppered landscape.
Vimy Ridge Memorial
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**Army record of James Weaver’s effects / pension (top line)**
Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont St Eloi
Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont St Eloi
Abbey of Mont St Eloi
In Memory of
Private
J Weaver

W/1061, 13th Bn., Cheshire Regiment who died on 15 May 1918 Age 21

Son of Thomas and Margaret Weaver, of Barton Wells, Malpas, Cheshire.

Remembered with Honour
Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont-St. Eloi

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Private 26911 FRANK WEAVER
King's Shropshire Light Infantry / Army Service Corps
Survived the war

Frank Weaver was born in 1891 in Waverton, and baptised on 4 October 1891 in Tattenhall Church, while the family were living in Gatesheath, a hamlet just to the west of the church. By the time the family had returned to Barton, Frank, now a teenager, was working as groom on a local farm. His war record no longer survives, but the Absent Voter's List for the Parish of Barton (Farndon Voting District, Eddisbury Constituency) for 1918 shows two more Weavers – Frank and Alfred. It also records his number and regiment. It is likely that he enlisted following the conscription of early 1916, and he was posted to the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry. The date he entered the theatre of war in France is unknown, as is the date he was transferred to the Army Service Corps. His new number, beginning T/4, gives an indication that he was serving in the Horse Transport section. T/4 was also used for men affected by the compulsory transfer in 1916 of men who were serving in ASC units of the Territorial Force on to regular army terms.

His further movements are unknown, but Frank was awarded the Victory and British service medals and survived the war, no doubt the great relief of his long suffering parents.

Below: The hamlets and farms to the north of Barton, including Gates Heath at the top right of the map. Surveyed 1895.
Above: Army Service Corps Horse Transport section in France

Left: Army Service Corps postcard
Above: Frank Weaver’s Medal Card

Left: The British Medal and Victory Medal
Alfred Weaver, the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Weaver, was born in Farndon in 1892, his direct ancestry going back to Weavers of nearby Tilston in the early nineteenth century, and although the link has not yet been made (despite an extensive Weaver tree having been researched) with the brothers above, it is highly likely he was a second or third cousin of James, Thomas and Frank.

Alfred’s father, after years of manual graft working as a labourer building local roads, died in 1907. By 1911, with just his widowed mother and older brother James at home, he was the main breadwinner working as a cowman on a local Barton farm. James had suffered from a weak spine from birth, so Alfred, still a teenager, had quite a responsibility on his young shoulders.

His war record has not survived, but due to his family circumstances, it is likely that he did not volunteer and was conscripted after early 1916. There appears to be no record of a medal card either. Alfred may not have made it abroad before the end of the war.

Alfred returned home after the war, living in the area until his death in 1954.
## Census of England and Wales, 1911

Before writing on this Schedule, please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the columns. The Schedule should be written in ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the purposes of Historical Tables.

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<table>
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<th>Name and Surname</th>
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<th>Occupation</th>
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<td>M</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The number of males and females is as follows:

- Males: 3
- Females: 2

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Census 1901 and 1911
Researched and written

by

Mike Royden

www.roydenhistory.co.uk