

Herbert Palmer ADCOCK

Born	1889
Killed in Action or Died	28th April 1917 age 28
Commemorated	Bay 4 of the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
Unit	7th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 202280
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Herbert Palmer Adcock was born in Ely in the Autumn of 1889 to Samuel and Fanny Adcock. Herbert's father Samuel was a railway platelayer and had himself been born in North Creake, Norfolk, in 1863, while mother Fanny was a local girl from Soham. Fanny was born in 1866 as Fanny Palmer, and Herbert was given his mother's surname as his own middle name. Herbert was the second eldest of ten children, all born in Ely, with older brother John born in 1888 and younger siblings Ernest (1891), Dorothy (aka Dora) (1893), (Arthur) William (1895), Grace (1897), Alfred (1902), Reginald (1903), Lily (1906) and Jamie (1908).

In 1891 Samuel, Fanny, and the oldest three boys were living in Broad Street in Ely; unsurprisingly, given Broad Street's proximity to the railway station, many of the Adcocks' neighbours worked with Samuel on the Great Eastern Railway and included engine drivers, porters, and "railway servants". By the 1901 Census the growing family of parents and six children had moved, but not very far, into Lime Kiln Lane where, yet again they were surrounded by other GER workers.

In the March of 1903 Herbert was apprenticed to Anna Lake. The local Bishop Laney Charity's scheme paid both apprentice and master for the duration of the apprenticeship.

Moving on ten years, to the 1911 Census, Herbert was still living with his parents and seven of his siblings in a four roomed house in Annesdale. He had embarked on a career as a bootmaker, serving his apprenticeship at Legge & Son in Ely High Street, and was working for the local Poor Law Authority which meant chiefly making and repairing hard wearing shoes and boots for the inmates of the workhouse, Tower House. Herbert's father Samuel was still working as a ganger platelayer for GER at this time, and Dora and William were also bringing income into the household as a domestic servant and journeyman coach painter (probably for GER) respectively.

In February 1912 Herbert's three year old brother Jamie died.

On 23rd May 1915 Herbert married Ellen Harrison in Little Downham; Ellen was a year his junior and the daughter of a local labourer called Saunders Harrison. A year after Herbert and Ellen's marriage their only son Cyril J Palmer Adcock was born, although, unhappily, he did not survive very long. While Herbert was abroad Ellen lived with one of her sisters-in-law ("Mrs Johnson" - Dora) in Cemetery Lane.



Like many other young Ely men, Herbert attested at Ely under the Derby Scheme in early December 1915. Following the Military Service Act of 1916, he was then sent his call-up papers for the the army and joined the Suffolk Regiment (service number 4477 and later 202280) on 7th April 1916.

Herbert went to France early in 1917 with a labour battalion. They were on the Somme and part of the Arras Offensive. Herbert went missing on the 28th April 1917 in the Battle of Arleux, an action in which his Division attempted the capture of Roeux, but was beaten back under heavy shellfire and machine gun fire. His unit had made an attack at 4.30 a.m. on Bayonet and Rifle Trenches. Somewhere in this firestorm Herbert Palmer Adcock fell: his body was never recovered or identified, thus he is

commemorated on the Arras Memorial to those who have no known grave. Herbert was finally officially presumed dead in February of 1918.

At the time Herbert was listed as missing his younger brother Arthur William was recovering from his injuries in the military hospital in Ely.

Herbert was the only one of Samuel and Fanny's large family not to survive the Great War. His widow was sent his effects which amounted to £2 4s 5d and a further £3 10s in 1919. In the Autumn of 1921 Herbert's widow Ellen married Ernest King.

Herbert is commemorated on both the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Memorial in St Mary's Church.



This photograph of Herbert Adcock and his wife Ellen was displayed in the town of Arras in April 2017 together with 119 other portraits of men and women who took part in the Battle, as part of the exhibition they ran to mark the 100 year anniversary of the Battle of Arras - 'Eyes of the Battle of Arras'.

With thanks to Steve Adcock

Three of Herbert Adcock's brothers also served during World War One and survived; their photographs and biographies have been shared with us by Steve Adcock.



John Robert Adcock (1888 – 1974)
Grenadier Guards – Private No. 32592

Up until July 1910, John had been working in Ely as a shunter for the Great Eastern Railway. He then left Ely to join Norwich City Police, where he was serving as a constable at the outbreak of war in 1914.

He was deemed to have enlisted in 1916 but owing to his occupation, was not called up for service until April 1918. He was posted to France (3rd Battalion) in October 1918, where he served until January 1919.



Ernest Samuel Adcock (1891 – 1950)
Royal Marines

On 3rd April 1906 Ernest enlisted in the Royal Marines at Cambridge at the age of 15. Although actually born in 1891, his service record shows him to be a full two years older. Ernest had already served in the Royal Marines for 8 years before the outbreak of war in 1914. At the time he was serving on HMS Duncan, which joined the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow in September 1914, before being reassigned to the Channel Fleet in November 1914. Following an extensive refit of HMS Duncan in early 1915, he returned to the vessel in July 1915 and served aboard her in the main as part of the 2nd Detached Squadron Adriatic. Ernest transferred to HMS Champion in May 1917, a Calliope class light cruiser, upon which he served for the remainder of the conflict. He emigrated to Vancouver, Canada after demobilisation.



Arthur William Adcock (1895 – 1979)
Suffolk Regiment - No. 17032

Arthur was one of the best playing members of Ely City Football Club before the War. He reached the Front in August 1915 and rose to Lance Sergeant with the 13th Reserve Battery of the Suffolks during the conflict. In July 1916 he was wounded in the right arm and hand (which affected him for the rest of his life). In October 1916, whilst still recovering in Edmonton hospital, he married Elsie Ellen Smith in Strood, Kent, where he continued to live and work after the war.

Herbert (Bert) ARMSBY

Born	24th May 1894
Killed in Action or Died	19th July 1915 age 20
Buried	Grave II. B. 2, Calvaire (Essex) Military Cemetery, Ploegsteert, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium
Unit	7th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 9131
Awards	1914 –15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal,

Bert Armsby was born in Ely in 1894 to Frederick and Sarah Armsby, a couple who originated in Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire.

Frederick Armsby (1862 Kimbolton) married Sarah Eliza Gardiner (1863 Kimbolton) and together they raised four children of whom Bert was the youngest. Frederick had originally worked as an agricultural labourer in Kimbolton itself, where his daughters Mabel and Edith were born in 1886 and 1888 respectively; there was also a third daughter, Millie, who lived only a year. The family then moved to Ely where first William and then Herbert were born in 1892 and 1894.

In the 1901 Census the family of six was living in Newnham Street, Ely. Frederick then described his role as “rural postman”, serving the village communities around Ely. Herbert attended the local National School (i.e. the church school). The following year, 1902, Bert entered Needhams School on Back Hill, Ely. Needhams was a fee paying school for boys only, and there were approximately one hundred pupils at a time, of whom about a quarter would have received free places. The free places were offered to the seven or eight top pupils at each of the local primary schools. Bert was admitted on 24th May 1902 as a “free boy” with the annual intake of eight boys from his school. He left on 4th September 1908 and found work as an errand boy for the Dingles’ grocery store.

In the 1911 Census Frederick and Sarah, William and Bert, were still living together in Newnham Street. Frederick was still employed as a postman, while William was a tinsmith and Bert was continued to be employed as a grocer’s errand boy for Mr M. Dingle. Although Bert’s sisters were no longer at home, there were two other school aged children living in the household, namely Bert’s cousin nine year old Allan Armsby and an eleven year old boarder, Daisy Crosbie, both children were from London. The house is described as having four main rooms.

The family attended St Peters Mission Church in Broad Street, and here Bert was part of Harold Arthur’s Class. After the War Harold Arthur paid for a memorial in the church for the twenty-one young men from his St Peters Class who died, including Bert. This was also where Bert met up with the young men who, with him, later formed the Ely Dandies.

Late in May 1912 Bert lost his mother Sarah, who died at the age of fifty. His father remarried in 1915, just after Bert’s death, his new wife was Eleanor Sennitt (born 1874 Stretham).

Bert was well known in Ely and East Cambridgeshire as one of the “Ely Dandies” Concert Party and his fellow soldiers later commented: “ (he) always had a kind and cheerful disposition, and when on the march he was generally the first to commence a song”. The Dandies held popular concert parties throughout the area in all kinds of venues, but in particular in the pavilion at Ely after tennis parties. They were especially known for popular ragtime songs and comedy sketches. At Christmas time in 1912, for example, they gave a concert for the inmates of the workhouse which was described as “...most enjoyable, creating, as it did, much hearty laughter. One inmate of long standing remarked “That’s a capper master; we haven’t had a Christmas like this before.” A fortnight later they were performing to a rather different audience, the Linton Branch of the Eastern Branch of the Women’s Conservative Association where Bert’s two solo spots were singing “Masks and Faces” and “Any Rags”. Once War commenced the Dandies turned their talents to raising money for the War Fund with a successful social and dance in Trinity Parish Rooms on Boxing Day 1914.

Bert was also an amateur sportsman, and in 1913 was secretary of the Ely Invicta Athletics and



Cycling Club.

Bert was still working for the Dingles in their grocery store on Market Street, Ely, at the outbreak of the War.

Bert enlisted at Ely into the Suffolk Regiment and was placed in the 7th Battalion which formed up at Bury St Edmunds. After the completion of their training at Shorncliffe Camp in Kent and Aldershot, Bert and his Battalion crossed the Channel and landed at Boulogne in France on 30th May 1915 as part of the 35th Brigade in the 12th (Eastern Division). Bert was a popular member of his Company, both for his singing and as a sportsman, regularly taking an active part in the regimental sports.

On 23rd June 1915 the Division went into the line for the first time at Ploegsteert Wood ; by 15th July they held a 7000 yards line of the Front in the region of Armentieres. Records show that this was a quiet sector at this time, but in the trenches "quiet" is a relative word, as in July alone the Division lost 7 officers and 64 men killed, with a further 18 officers and 413 men wounded. One of the dead was Ely's

Bert Armsby, who had survived only a month at the Front and had not actually taken part in any major battle.

Back in Ely the Armsbys first heard the news in a letter from Fred Trundley, one of Bert's friends from Ely who explained that Bert was a scout and had been sent out to one of the listening posts midway between the British and German lines, where he had been shot just twenty yards short of the trenches. He was assisted back to the British trenches by another of the scouts but died a few minutes afterwards of his injuries. Bert's officer Lieutenant Bamkin was also shot when he attended to Bert's injuries, and the two soldiers were buried side by side.

Another letter was soon received from Bert's close friend Scout Orbell who wrote to Bert's sister Mabel: *"Well, as you know, Bert was a Scout and our work has been very hard and dangerous all the way along. On several occasions we went to within a very few yards of the German trenches whilst out scouting, it was very dangerous work, and we went out at one of the worst places on the line. We crawled out in the long grass, with the bullets hitting the top of the grass all the way, and to within about 20 yards of their trenches; then they opened fire on us and poor old Bert, next to me, called out. Of course I knew he had been hit, and the last words he said to me were 'I've been hit, Kid!' I passed it on to our brave officer, who immediately turned back to help me with Bert's wounds, and just as we were leaning over Bert to see where he was hit, our brave officer was shot too. This left us three, myself, Pte F. Davies and Pte H. Searle, to get the two in. Bert was splendid to the finish, and even tried to crawl back himself to help us, but of course that was too much for him; so we arranged to get them in between us. My job was more with the officer, so it was the other two who got Bert back, although I was with him when he was shot, and helped to carry him when we got into the trench. I can safely say Bert was a hero, and a brother you can be proud of. He was a good chum, especially of mine, and I was always about with him whilst in training in England, so you can imagine how I miss him. I was present at his funeral the next day. He was buried with every respect, and we collected some beautiful flowers to put on his grave."*

Bert was commemorated on the Holy Trinity Memorial as well as on the main memorial in the Market Place.



The Ely Dandies Concert Party:

In this sophisticated pose with their cigarettes, Bert is the Dandy seated holding what appears to be a piece of sheet music. The other seated figure is pianist Ernest Harlock Cooper. The standing Dandies from left to right are Vic Cowley, Clifford Cooper, Albert Cowley and Ernie Dunham.

Stanley Richard ASPLAND

Born	13th April 1891
Killed in Action or Died	3rd October 1918 age 27
Buried	Grave IV. F. 6, Laventie Military Cemetery, La Gorgue, Nord, France
Unit	B Company 61st Battalion Machine Gun Corps
Rank	Second Lieutenant
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal,

Stanley Richard Aspland was born in the Summer of 1891 in Bull Lane, Ely, to Richard Aspland (born 1858) and Fanny (nee Frances Watson 1861). The Asplands were a local Ely family of market gardeners who originally lived in West Fen Road, West End, although Fanny originated from Royston in Hertfordshire. Richard worked the area known as "Fieldside" which had been handed down to him from his father and grandfather. As well as Stanley himself, the family included his siblings Ethel (1883), Elsie aka Irene (1885), (Percival) Selwyn (1887) and Hilda (1897).

The Aspland family were regular attendees at Chapel Street Methodist Church in Ely.

On 19th May 1895 four year old Stanley began his schooling at Market Street Infants School in Ely.

As Stanley was born just a matter of days after the 1891 Census, the first census in which he appears is the 1901 Census when he was living with his family in West End and still at school. At this point his older brother Selwyn was working as an errand boy for a local shoe shop.

By the 1911 Census Selwyn had moved out of the family home and was first footman for the Bulkely family in a large household near Beaumaris in Wales. Stanley was still living with his family and commuting daily to Cambridge where he worked as a clerk in a Gas Shop. He worked for eleven years in total for the Ely Gas Company.

Richard Aspland was a member of the Star in the East Lodge (Ely) of the Royal Order of Ancient Shepherds for over 60 years, and as soon as his sons Selwyn and Stanley were of age they too became members of the Lodge. The Royal Order of Ancient Shepherds was a sickness and benefits society which also raised money for charity (similar to the more well known "Oddfellows") and at the time Stanley was enrolled national membership stood at about 134,000. Stanley was also an active member of the Liberal Club and acted as the Club's secretary before the War; newspaper reports also demonstrate he was a creditable billiards player and was placed in competitions at the Club.

In February of 1915 Stanley was sworn in as a special constable at the Ely Petty Sessions. Special constables would have carried out duties such as guarding water supplies or other public services which could have been vulnerable to covert attack by German infiltrators.

Like many other young Ely men, Stanley attested under the Derby Scheme early in December 1915. He was then called up with his group early in 1916, at which point Mr T Guyatt, the manager of Ely Gas Company, twice appealed to Ely Urban Tribunal for Stanley to be exempted service on the grounds that he was the sole clerk and general assistant at the works. This role included collecting money from gas meters—a task his employers were convinced could not be undertaken by a woman. Although Stanley was given a couple of temporary short term exemptions by the Tribunal, he eventually had to enlist.

During the War Stanley first served as a private in the East Surrey Regiment. In the autumn of 1916 Stanley then married Eva Carrie Fisk and they set up their family home in Soham, where their address was later given as "Hardcroft," Fordham Rd., Soham, Cambs. Eva had been born in 1890 into a Soham farming family. Stanley's leadership potential had already been recognised by the army, as he soon left Soham for officer training. In the London Gazette of 10th July 1917 Stanley was listed as one of the cadets who had been made temporary Second Lieutenants in the Machine

Gun Corps on the 26th April. However, it took several more months before Stanley arrived in France—on 16th January 1918.

By the autumn of 1918 Stanley was with the Second Army in the area of Bethune, along the La Basse Canal, on the Franco-Belgian border. On 3rd October 1918 the Germans were withdrawing from their lines between Lens and Armentieres to reform past La Basse; it was at this point that Second Lieutenant Stanley Richard Aspland was killed. He was killed with his Company Commander and several other officers by a German landmine as they were advancing through evacuated territory. The Great War was then moving swiftly towards its close, which occurred just five weeks after Stanley's death.

Stanley's will was proved at Peterborough on 30th July 1919 and he left £183 16s 9d while his effects from the Army amounted to £90 10s. His widow Eva applied for his medals in December 1921.

Sadly just over a month after Stanley died, and just as the War ended, the family also lost twenty-one year old Hilda. The Asplands were then living in Hills Lane.

In July 2014 Stanley's name was added to the Soham War Memorial, along with five other local men whose names had originally been omitted. He is also commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Memorial in St Mary's Church in Ely and on the Memorial Plaque in Ely Methodist Church.



Stanley Aspland (on the right) with his family

John Thomas ATKIN

Born	1894
Killed in Action or Died	7th September 1917 age 22
Buried	Grave I. F. 4, Tincourt New British Cemetery, Somme, France
Unit	11 th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 14672
Awards	1914-1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

John Thomas Atkin was born in Ely in the autumn of 1894 to John Atkin and Georgina (nee Lucas); his parents were both from Ely, being born in 1865 and 1871 respectively. John's father was for a time a regular soldier, but at the time of John's birth was working as an agricultural labourer. John was the eldest of four brothers; his siblings were Arthur (1896), Ernest (1907) and George (1911) He also had an older half sister, Georgiana Lucas, who had been born to his mother in 1892 before his parents' marriage. Three other Atkin babies did not survive (January 1892—unbaptised 3 day old child; June 1903—Arthur, one year old; March 1905—Leonard, 15 months).

The 1901 Census shows Georgiana Atkin and her two eldest sons living in Cambridge Road, Ely. John Atkin senior was in South Africa having enlisted to fight in the Boer War (possibly with the Grenadier Guards). John's half sister Georgiana at this point was living with her grandparents, Thomas and Ann Lucas, in Parade Lane; her grandfather was one of the local lamplighters.

By the 1911 Census John senior had returned safely to his family and was working as a labourer for the District Council. The Atkins were living in a four bedroomed house in Barton Road where baby George had been born just two weeks earlier (although at that point the family had not yet decided on his name). John's half-sister Georgiana had joined the family. John and his brother Arthur were working as farm labourers at Wood House.

In 1913 the Atkins lost two year old baby George.

At the outbreak of war John enlisted in the Suffolk Regiment on 1st September 1914 and, after training, he arrived in France on 25th July 1915. Through two years at the Front, John served with the 8th, 9th and, finally, the 11th Battalions of the Suffolk Regiment. He was wounded three times.

John fought on the Somme and in the Arras Offensive until eventually, badly wounded for a fourth time in his torso and limbs, he lingered for several weeks before he died of his wounds in a Casualty Clearing Station at Tincourt near Peronne. (His battalion had recently been part of the attack on Cologne Farm Ridge at Hargicourt and this is possibly the action in which John had been so badly wounded.) The news reached Ely in a letter from Private W Barber, who was a stretcher bearer in his company, and called him a "bright and smart lad".

John's parents lived at 83 Cambridge Rd., Ely, after his death. His mother Georgina was sent his effects of £10 17s 11d with a further £13 10s in 1919.

John is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Memorial in St Mary's Church.

