

## James DALTON

<b>Born</b>	1888
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	31st January 1917, age 28
<b>Buried</b>	Grave X. D. 44., Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 7843
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**James Dalton** was born in Watton Road, Shipdham, Norfolk, in 1888 and was the youngest son in a large family of farm workers. At the time of his birth James' father, James Dalton senior (1851 Merton, Norfolk) was a thrashing engine driver. His mother was also from Norfolk; she was Mary Ann (nee Jenney, 1851 Ovington, Norfolk). James and Mary Ann had raised their family in Ovington for more than ten years, as this was the birthplace of all James' older siblings: Jesse (1875) (this was Jesse Jenney a half-brother); Jeffery (1877); Ellen (1879); Agnes (1880); William (1882); Fanny (1884); and Nettie (1886). In the 1901 Census both Jesse and Jeffery had left school and started working on the farms.

In 1901 the family had moved into Shipdham High Street and, along with James himself, Jeffery, Fanny, William and Nettie still lived with their parents. William had gone against the family trend, and was then working as a postman; James was just completing his schooling.

In Shipdham James and Mary Ann took on the care of two illegitimate granddaughters called Ivy (1905) and Ada (1907), but more of their own children were leaving home. James' mother died early in 1910. The 1911 Census saw James living in and working in Jubilee House, Downham West ("Downham West" was then the official name for the rural, rather than the urban, area of Downham Market). James was working as a horseman on a farm, and living in the home of the farmer, Arthur Thorpe. Later that year James was on the move again and arrived in Ely where he married Alley (sic.) Howlett. Alley or, as she was also called, Alice Victoria Howlett (1891 Ely) was the daughter of widowed gardener John Howlett (1862 Wicken) and lived with him and her siblings in Bull Lane, Ely (now Lisle Lane). On their marriage James and Alley also lived in Bull Lane, quite possibly with the rest of the Howletts. Their son James was born in the summer of 1912 and a daughter, Edith, in 1917 (whom James probably never met). James was employed by Mr Albert J Cross, a coal merchant based in Station Road, Ely.

Along with many of Ely's young men, James enlisted with the Cambridgeshire Regiment for the Great War. He joined up on 18th August 1916 and reached France on 14th December. His career was a short one as about six weeks later, early in 1917, he breathed his last at the casualty clearing station at Lijssenthoek. James died not of wounds but of bronchitis, no doubt brought on by the appalling winter conditions in the trenches. The chaplain kept Alley in touch with her husband's condition and wrote "He was scarcely able to speak, but he sent you his dearest love and also to the two children...he became unconscious in the evening, remaining so until he passed away this morning..."

In November 1917 James' widow Alley married George Speechley at Whittlesey and had another three children: Doris (1919); Sylvia (1923); and George (1926). Alley also lost her youngest brother, George Dixon Howlett, in the War and he figures with her husband James on the Ely War Memorial. Alley was sent James' effects of £2 8s 2d, with a further £3 in 1919.

James was commemorated on both the Holy Trinity and St Mary's Rolls of Honour, as well as the Ely Market Place Memorial.



## Thomas Charles DANN

<b>Born</b>	1895
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	12th April 1918, age 23
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 11, Ploegsteert Memorial, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	40 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Corps
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 123130
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Thomas Charles Dann** was the only son of William Henry Dann (1859 Ely) and Alice Rebecca (nee Brand 1859 Shippea Hill, Ely). He had one older surviving sister called Minnie Rebecca (1888 Chatteris), his older brother William Henry had lived just two years and died about the time Thomas himself was born. Thomas' father William Dann was a colour sergeant in the Militia—Suffolk Regiment (12th Foot) -and his grandfather, another Thomas Dann, had also been a career soldier. William was a well known figure in Ely as “a thorough all-round musician and excellent drill instructor” who made frequent recruiting tours in the villages around Ely, “his fine physique being a factor in his success”. William was discharged from his regiment in May 1899, after eighteen years of service, due to ill health and moved his family to run the Dog and Gun Inn on Cambridge Road. Unhappily for his family he died at home one year later on 5th May 1900. Thomas was just five years old.

In the 1901 Census Tom's widowed mother Alice is shown still running the beerhouse called “The Dog and Gun” at 56 Cambridge Road, Ely. The family also took in boarders, and at this time had a labourer and GER platelayer in the house. In 1911 they were in the same eleven roomed establishment, this time with three boarders. Tom had left school and was working as an errand boy.

Tom was later employed in Ely Post Office for five years and “had numerous friends and acquaintances in the City”. It was later said that in this role he “won the esteem of all with whom he was brought into contact”.

Given Tom's background, it is not surprising that he became a volunteer reservist and was in the Territorials at the beginning of the War, However he was discharged from the Suffolks as unfit to fight and was not finally called up until August of 1917.



*The photograph shows Tom (on the right) in his Territorial days with his friends Billy Cole, Fred Mallion, and Billy Tunnell— Billy Cole also did not survive the war.*

In August 1917 the Ely Standard proudly recorded Thomas' sporting prowess in a military regatta at Mytchett Musketry Camp (near Farborough); he had secured first prize in the tug-of-war and had been leading in the sculling race until he broke a rowlock!

Thomas went to Bury St Edmunds to enlist and was placed first in the Post Office Rifles in the London Regiment (Service Number 375831). He went out to France just before Christmas 1917 with the Machine Gun Corps. The Machine Gun Corps was formed on 14th October 1915, as before this date each infantry battalion had its own machine gun section of an officer and twelve men; to be selected for the Corps, Thomas' proficiency with guns had obviously been recognised. The Machine Gun Companies were reconfigured into Battalions just before Thomas was killed.

At the time of his death Tom's battalion was in the region of Ervillers in France, and in fact only three weeks earlier a Lance Corporal in his battalion received the Victoria Cross for recovering two of the battalion's machine guns which had been lost to the enemy under heavy fire. The battalion was under similar heavy attack in April. The Machine Gun Corps suffered greatly in the War; of the 170,500 officers and men who served in the MGC, by the end of 1918 62,049 of them were killed, wounded or missing. By the end of the intense fighting on 12th April 1918 Thomas Charles Dann was missing presumed dead, along with 1095 soldiers who perished in the same area on the same day and were never found.

Tom's Commanding Officer wrote to the family: *"he was with his gun team in action and when last seen was unwounded"* and held out the hope that Tom had been captured rather than killed. He added *"I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of your son, who could always be relied upon to do his job and do it well."*

Tom's body was never located and it was not until late in May 1919, more than a year after his death, that his mother received the official communication to say that her son was presumed killed on the date he disappeared. His cousin remembers that for the rest of her life Alice Dann never went to bed until the last train had arrived in Ely, just in case Tom was on it—she died in 1937.

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

## John William DAY

<b>Born</b>	9th December 1897
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	28th May 1917 age 19
<b>Buried</b>	Grave XII. B. 26A., Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 326630
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**John William Day** was born in Prickwillow in December 1897; he was the only son of James Day (1863 Ely) and Lehannah Cross (1876 Ely). He had one older sister Mary Jane (1896 Ely). John was baptised at Prickwillow on 9th January 1898. James was a farm labourer and John followed his father into the same line of work.

In 1901 the Days were living at White Wing in Stuntney and in the 1911 Census the family of four was living in a fairly large cottage of six rooms at Middle Fen Bank, Prickwillow; by this time John had left school and begun working on the farms. It was Leehannah Day who filled out the census form and James authorised it with his mark, a sign that John's father was unable to read and write.

John's mother Lehannah died in the first days of January 1915, at Old Bank, Prickwillow.



As soon as he could enlist in the War John went to Cambridge and was attested into the Cambridgeshire Regiment (originally as service number 4154). He went out to France on 7th October 1916. He fought alongside the other men from Ely on the Somme until he received a severe abdominal wound from a shell on 27th May 1917 while in the lines at Hill Top Farm, North-East of Ypres. He died one day later at the casualty clearing station at Lijssenthoek.

John made his sister Mary his legatee; she received his effects of £511s 11d and a final 10s in 1919.

John was the nephew of George Albert Cross, who lost his life in the War almost exactly a year earlier, and so is commemorated with him at Ely and Prickwillow.

## Edward Henry DENNIS

*The soldier E. Dennis has not been identified with absolute certainty, the information here seems to be the most plausible identification based on readily available materials:*

<b>Born</b>	1890
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	1st July 1916 age 26
<b>Commemorated</b>	Pier and Face 2 A 2 C and 2 D, Thiepval Memorial
<b>Unit</b>	2nd Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Sergeant, Service Number 8975
<b>Awards</b>	1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

E. Dennis on the Ely Memorial may *possibly* be Sergeant **Edward Henry Dennis** (1890 Norwich) of the West Yorkshire Regiment. The 1921 list of men of Ely on the county memorial confirms this soldier's name as "Edward Dennis".

Edward was killed in action on 1st July 1916 on the Somme. Although he did not have a personal link with Ely, his widow Maria Sarah Payne and her second husband George Hunt were living in Railway Cottage, Sedge Fen, at the time the Ely War Memorial was constructed, so it is not impossible that Maria put her first husband's name forward for what the inhabitants of Sedge Fen considered to be their local memorial.

Edward was the son of James Dennis (1861 Norwich) and Elvina Adelaide Woods (1865 Norwich). His father was a hawker and his mother a tailoress. He had an older brother James (1887 Norwich) and younger sisters Christina (1893 Norwich) and Roseanna (1895 Norwich). By the 1901 Census Edward's father James had become an auctioneer's porter, while Elvina was working from home as a boot machinist. Edward's brother had also got a job making boots at this point, but Edward himself was still at school.

Edward clearly did not want to work in the Norwich shoe industry and instead became a career soldier; he can be found serving with the West Yorkshire Regiment in the 1911 Census when they were in barracks at Colchester.

As a serving soldier with the West Yorkshire Regiment, Edward would have been based at Malta with the 2nd Battalion at the outbreak of the War. The battalion returned briefly to England before reaching France in November 1914. In 1915 they fought in the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, and the action of Bois Grenier.

Edward married Maria Payne (1888 Norwich) in Norwich late in 1915 while home on leave. Maria worked in the Norwich shoemaking trade. His own family was at this point living at 90 Magpie Road in Norwich, but had earlier lived in the same area as the Paynes. The marriage was a short lived one, as less than a year later Edward was killed in action on the first day of the Somme. He is commemorated with many thousands of others who fell on that day on the Thiepval Memorial.

Maria received Edward's effects, which amounted to £17 4s 3d with a further £13 10s in 1919. She married George Hunt in 1920 and they moved to Sedge Fen. This second local marriage suggests that she was already resident in the Ely area, and so she and Edward could have moved here after their 1915 marriage. She may have felt particularly moved to place Edward's name on the Ely memorial, knowing that the main memorial in their Norwich home was not going to include any names.

## Horace DENNISS

<b>Born</b>	1892
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	11th April 1917, age 25
<b>Commemorated</b>	Bay 4, Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Lance Corporal, Service Number 30741
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Horace Denniss** and his family were members of Ely's Primitive Methodist Church and lived at Portley Hill, between Ely and Littleport. Horace was baptised at the church on 25th September 1892.

Horace's parents were Robert Denniss (1850 Littleport) and Elizabeth (nee Baker 1853 Littleport). Horace was the twelfth child of a family of thirteen, and the youngest boy. His siblings, like himself, were all recorded as born in Littleport, which probably meant Portley Hill on the Ely Road: Kate (1873); John (1875); Susan (1876); Robert (1877); Charles (1879); George (1881); Alice (1883); Sophia (1885); Walter (1887); Hugh (1889); Maud (1891); and Hettie (1894).

Horace's father Robert was a brickmaker, as were his grandfather William Denniss (1816 Littleport) and his father's older brother William (1827 Littleport). In the 1881 Census Robert and his family are shown living next door to his brother and sister-in-law and next door to them were Robert's father William and his stepmother Mary Ann. William senior was the foreman of the brick kiln and his sons were both brickmakers. By the 1891 Census it was Robert Denniss who was foreman at the brickworks; the oldest boys of the family were employed chiefly as farm workers although John drove a hackney carriage. By the time of Horace's birth all of his older brothers who were old enough to work were at the brickworks with his father, so it is perhaps surprising to see in the 1911 Census that only Robert senior was still a brickmaker while Horace himself and those brothers still single and at home (John, Robert, George and Walter) were all farm workers.

On 20th February 1914 Robert died, leaving his widow and family £772 5s 11d. His son John was granted probate and here it is stated John was a brickmaker. This may be an indication that Horace and his brothers were in fact all both brickmakers and farm workers, moving between the two roles according to season and demand.

At the time conscription of single men for the Front became mandatory Horace was working as a horsekeeper for Mr S Covill. In March 1916 his employer requested the Ely Urban Tribunal to exempt Horace from service, as the farm had already lost seventeen men to the War and he was struggling to cope. Horace was refused exemption and Mr Covill took the matter to the Isle of Ely Appeals Committee; exemption was still refused and Horace was directed to enlist on 1st May 1916.

Lance Corporal Horace Denniss went to the Front early on 1917. He fought with the Suffolks on the Somme but was killed in action as the Arras Offensive of 1917 opened in the First Battle of the Scarpe. From 9th April to 16th May, the British, along with Canadian, South African, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and Australian troops attacked German defences near Arras. There were major gains on the first day, followed by stalemate. Over the five weeks of this conflict the British suffered approximately 160,000 casualties and the Germans about 125,000. 18,389 of the British casualties are commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing; of these 327 were soldiers of the Suffolk Regiment, including Horace Denniss.

Elizabeth was sent her son's effects of £3 18s 11d with a further £3 in 1919.

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

*Horace is not the only member of the Dennis family to be commemorated in St Mary's Church as his great grandfather John Dennis was a leader of the Littleport rioters and was hanged at Ely and buried in St Mary's churchyard.*

## George Samuel DEXTER

<b>Born</b>	2nd February 1897
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	22nd August 1918 age 21
<b>Buried</b>	Grave I. G. 6., Ribemont Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> /1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 326209
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**George Samuel Dexter** was actually registered and baptised as Samuel George Dexter, but it is clear from other records that he and his family used the name George, probably because his father was also called Samuel. George was born in South Tottenham, London, but his baptism took place in Market Deeping, Lincolnshire six months later on 5th August 1897. His father Samuel Dexter (1868) was originally from South Luffenham in Rutland but his family had been living in Market Deeping for many years so George was baptised in the paternal home. George's mother Clara Sarah Kriens (1865) was originally from Prescott in Lancashire and she and Samuel had met and married when they were both working in London. George was the only boy of the family, but he had three sisters called Gladys (1893 Stoke Newington), Laura (1900 West Green, London) and Barbara (1902 Bury St Edmunds).

It is clear that George's family was frequently on the move and this is explained by the fact that in the 1901 Census Samuel describes his employment as plumber and a tinker. In 1901 they were in Orchard Street, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, and a year later they were in Bury St Edmunds when Barbara was born. By 1911 they were living in Silver Street in Ely and Samuel was working as a painter and plumber; George himself was no longer in school but he is not shown as in employment. The family must have finally finished wandering and settled in Ely, as they were still there a decade later when the War Memorial was commissioned.

George enlisted in the Cambridgeshire Regiment in Cambridge (originally service number 3259) with many other young men from Ely. In the local newspaper he is included in the list of former members of Ely's Scout Troop who had volunteered/

George would have seen service on the Somme and Passchendaele. On 28th September 1917 he was injured with shell wounds to the right buttock and head. After recuperating he was returned to the Front until, tragically, he was killed in action, as the War was moving towards its close, in the Battle of Bapaume. On the day George died his battalion was advancing to take the Bray –Meaulte Road. The night before the Germans had filled the intervening valley with gas shells and during the first hundred or so yards the British attack was straight into the face of very heavy shelling and machine gun fire during which the Cambridgeshires suffered about 60 casualties. The expected tank support did not arrive. George may have survived long enough to see the rare sight of a cavalry charge against the Germans but, like the cavalry, he did not survive.



George is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and in St Mary's Church.

Clara was sent George's effects of £24 16s 10d, with a final settlement of £20 15s 6d the following year.

## Bert DORLING

<b>Born</b>	1897
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	25th August 1918 age 21
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 6, Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 235616
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Bertram "Bert" Dorling** was born in Prickwillow in 1897 and was the son of John Dorling (1868 Ely) and Sophia Matilda (nee Barrett 1867 Brandon, Norfolk). John Dorling was a farm worker and this was the career Bert also followed.

Bert was the oldest son of John and had an older sister Violet (1895 Prickwillow) and three younger siblings called Hilda (1898 Prickwillow), Wilfred (1901 Ely) and Matilda (1905 Ely). The family had moved out of Prickwillow onto accommodation on Oakey Farm, Lynn Road, Ely, by 1901 and John was working there as a horsekeeper.

Shortly after Matilda's birth, Bert's mother Sophia died early in 1906.

Bert's father remarried in 1910 to (Ruth) Victoria Bragg (1888) and in the 1911 Census the family were together at 22 West Fen Road, Ely and there was a new baby in the family, Bert's half brother John William Dorling (1910 Ely) - Victoria had been heavily pregnant at the time of her marriage. By this time Bert had left school and was working on the local farms.

The family must have attended St Peter's Church in Broad Street, as Bertram appears on the church's memorial, but at some point they also attended the Countess of Huntingdon's Free Church in Chapel Street, Ely.

In the autumn of 1913 Bert's sister Violet married George Gage (1890 Mildenhall), another local farm worker and quite possibly a friend of Bert. Two of George's brothers can also be found commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial alongside Bert, although George himself survived the War.

Bert's twelve year old brother Wilfred died in March of 1914

There were more untimely deaths in the family as baby Emily was born and died after nine days in May of 1913 at the family home in Lynn Road. However, John and Victoria did have more healthy children together: Victoria in 1914, Mary in 1918 (who died at nine months), Bertram in 1921, May in 1923 (who died aged one month) and Rhoda in 1926. Baby Bertram was clearly named after his older half-brother Bert who had died three years earlier.

Bertram (who enlisted in September 1915 at Cambridge as just "Bert") fought first with the Yorkshire Regiment (with the service number 7598) and then with the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment). Bert's battalion fought on the Ancre and in the Arras Offensive. He was killed by a shell near Bapaume during the "Advance to Victory" as his Battalion was moving on the villages of Behagnies and Sapignies; he was just one of 9,829 men who fell in the period from 8th August 1918 to the Armistice and whose burial place is unknown.

John was sent his son's effects, which amounted to £18 5s 10d, with a further £14 in 1919.

Bert is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and in St Mary's Church as well as in the Countess of Huntingdon's Church. This casualty also appears on the St Peters memorial as Bertram Downing of Lynn Road, Ely. The street name on the memorial helps us confirm that the name on the St Peters memorial should in fact be that of Bert Dorling.



## Arthur DRAKE

<b>Born</b>	1883
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	1st July 1916, age 33
<b>Commemorated</b>	Pier & Face 1c & 2A, Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.
<b>Unit</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 17162
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Arthur Drake's** name is on the Ely Market Place Memorial and in St Mary's Church and his aged parents Frederick (1840 Chippenham) and Frances (nee Howard, 1843 Cavenham, Suffolk) lived at Orwell Pit, Downham Road, Ely from at least the time of the 1911 Census to their deaths in 1918 (Fanny) and 1927 (Frederick). Arthur's father was a farmworker and even in 1911 at the age of seventy he was still working on farming tasks such as hedging at the Pits.

Arthur was the youngest of the Drake family; his older siblings were William (1863 Cavenham, Suffolk), Walter (1866 Durham), Alice (1869 Soham) and George (1880 Chippenham). Arthur himself was born when the family returned temporarily to Dipton in Durham in 1883. When in Durham Arthur's father Frederick was working as a coalminer, and the 1871 Census shows that Arthur's uncle Alfred Drake and his family had also migrated to the area and Alfred was working with Frederick in the mines.

The family returned to Cambridgeshire and lived for a period in Ely when Arthur attended Silver Street Infants School. By the 1891 Census the family were living in Stuntney, and Frederick had returned to farmwork. The household in Stuntney at this time was made up of Frederick and Frances, youngest sons George and Arthur, as well as William with his wife Jane and their own young son Frederick Isaac; Arthur had become an uncle at the age of four.

In the 1901 Census George and Arthur were still living with their parents, but by this time were at Malting Yard, Exning, Suffolk. The three men of the family were all farmworkers.

In 1903 Arthur married local Exning girl Lillian Ellen Crane (1881). The 1911 Census shows them at Landwade near Exning with three children, namely Frederick (1907 Little Downham), Sophie (1909 Landwade) and Reginald (1910 Landwade). The record also shows that Arthur and Lillian had lost their first three daughters in the early years of their marriage; these were Lilian (1903), Frances (1904) and Alice (1906). Arthur worked for six years for Colonel Baird and afterwards for the estate of Lord St Davids.

Arthur enlisted with the Isle of Ely's Territorial Force Battalion, the Suffolks' 11th Service Battalion, at Newmarket on 13th September 1914 and joined the colours in December. . The Battalion was mobilised on 9th January 1916 and headed for Boulogne. Arthur was in the battalion's grenade section. The first significant engagement in which Arthur's battalion took part was the Battle of Albert and the advance on La Boiselle, a thirteen day battle which was the opening of the Somme offensive. At the end of the day Arthur was amongst the missing, but the letter finally confirming his death was not sent until five weeks later, on 10th August. In fact Arthur had indeed died on the very first day of the Somme; he is one of 19,308 men commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing from this Battle; 276 of these were from the Suffolk Regiment.

From Landwade the Drakes moved into St Mary's Street in Ely, and so Arthur is remembered on the Ely memorial.

Lillian was sent her husband's effects of £4 5s 8d with a further £6 10s in 1920.

