

Robert MANN

Born	May 1890
Killed in Action or Died	9th November 1914, age 24
Commemorated	Panels 10 & 11, Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
Unit	1/1 st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 3/6523
Awards	1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Robert Mann was born in 1890 in West Fen Row, Prickwillow. His father William Mann (1853 Burnt Fen) was a farm worker and his mother was Mary Elizabeth (nee Bidwell, 1854 Littleport); she was usually known as Elizabeth in the family. He had older siblings Emily (1880 West Fen Row), William (1882 Redwell, Suffolk), Annie (1885 Redwell) and Emma (1886 West Fen Row) who were living in the family home in 1891. Robert's older siblings Henry (1873 West Fen Row), Harriet (1874 West Fen Row) and Sarah (1878 West Fen Row) had already left home.

In 1901 the Manns were living in Hazelwood Road, Walthamstow, Essex where William and his oldest son Henry had found work as navvies at the local reservoir. William's younger brother David Mann (1864 Burnt Fen) had also joined the family to work at the reservoir. Robert and his sister Emma were still living with their parents at this stage, and there was another sister called Mabel (1895 Burnt Fen).

In 1911 Robert was no longer with his family, he was working as a general labourer and living at Mile End, Prickwillow, in the household of local farmworkers James and Matilda Gathercole. William and Elizabeth had also returned to the area, and were living at Kenny Hill with Mabel and their nephew Henry Mann (1907 Islington, London). Probably the house at Mile End was nearer to the farm in which Robert was working than was his parents' home.

Robert's father died in 1914.

Robert must have enlisted in the army between 1911 and 1914 as he was sent to France with the Bedfordshire Regiment as the War broke out. The 1st Bedfords were in Ireland when the war started but were soon enroute for France, arriving at Le Havre aboard the SS Oronosa from Belfast on 15th August 1914.

The British and German forces were engaged in what is usually called "The Race for the Sea" as they tried to outflank each other. Robert was probably a part of several key battles, including The Battle of the Aisne and The Battles of La Bassee and Messines 1914. He appears to have been killed in action in The First Battle of Ypres; twenty-six of the battalion were killed on the same day, only three of whom now have identifiable graves.

Robert is remembered on the Le Touret Memorial to the Missing which commemorates 13,402 British soldiers who were killed in this sector of the Western Front from the beginning of October 1914 to the eve of the Battle of Loos in late September 1915 and who have no known grave. He is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Prickwillow Memorial and also the Kenny Hill Memorial.

Robert's effects after his death came to £5 7s 1d; the money was shared between his parents and his sisters who each received 15s 3d or 15s 4d.

C W MANNING

It has not been possible to identify a soldier C W Manning.. He is remembered on the Market Place Memorial and also on the Ely Holy Trinity Church list as 11th Battalion Suffolk Regiment, but cannot be found in the Regimental list of dead.

However, it is probable that the memorial should in fact read "C R Manning" and refers to (Reginald) Charles Manning, a resident of Ely whose death is recorded in the official casualty list published in the Ely Standard of 24th August 1917. It is this man's details which are shown below.

Reginald Charles MANNING

Born	1892
Killed in Action or Died	14th July 1917, age 24
Buried	Grave Sp. Mem. A. 3., Sunken Road Cemetery, Fampoux, France
Unit	10th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment)
Rank	Private, Service Number 73366
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Reginald Charles Manning was a man with family links in Bedfordshire and whose death is also commemorated on the Goldington War Memorial where he is listed as C R Manning—an indication his family called him Charles (or, more likely, Charlie). (The village of Goldington is now within the boundaries of the town of Bedford.)

Charles was born late in 1892 in Sandon in Hertfordshire. He came from a family of farm workers, his father being John Manning (1857 Sandon) and his mother Sophia Gatward (1861 Therfield, Herts); he had an older brother, William (1886 Therfield, Herts), and a younger sister, Mabel (1902, Buntingford Herts).

In the 1901 Census the four Mannings were living in Buntingford, Hertfordshire, and William had followed his father into farm work. However, it appears that Charles wanted a more adventurous life, as in the 1911 Census he is boarding at a house in Gamlingay (Stevenage), Hertfordshire, and his employment is listed as "travelling showman's labourer".

Charles stopped travelling for a short period when he met and married Florence Gray and they settled in Ely. The Mannings had three children: Violet (born in the Summer of 1914 in Ely); Irene (born in the summer of 1915 in Ely); Charles William (born October 1916 in Chatteris). *It may be that the fact Charles' son is called Charles William helps to explain why the initials C W appear on the Ely memorials.*

By 1916 the Mannings had moved out of Ely and were living in a van in a public house's yard—the Spade and Becket Yard on Chatteris High Street (now the Upp in Arms). Charles was then working as a "marine store dealer"—at this period this was the term used for a scrap merchant. However, by April 1916 they were back in Ely at Annesdale, as this was where Charles was when the group in which he had been placed was called-up. Charles appeared before the Ely Urban Tribunal late in April with a request to be exempted from serving; he was unsuccessful.

Charles joined up at Ely in November 1916 (under his official registered name of Reginald Charles Manning) and, rather than give his home address as a travelling van, gave his home as Goldington, which was probably where his parents were then living. It appears the Mannings had moved back to Chatteris and the van for the birth of their son, and Charles had managed to keep out of the way of the recruiting team up until that point.

Five months later Charles crossed to France, where he served for over a year. His battalion took a part in the Battles of Arras and Vimy Ridge, and Charles was then killed in action on July 14th, 1917, when they were holding Roeux.

Florence received £2 5s 8d as Charles' effects, with a further £3 in 1919.

Edward MARTIN

Born	31st March 1887
Killed in Action or Died	1st October 1918, age 31
Buried	Grave D8, Moeuvres British Cemetery, Nord, France
Unit	Anti-Aircraft Battery, 8th Canadian Field Artillery
Rank	Gunner, Service Number 77778
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Edward Martin was an orphan; he was the illegitimate son of nineteen year old Ellen Martin (1868 Pymoor, Cambridgeshire) and born in the Ely workhouse. Ellen died as her son was born. In the 1891 and 1901 Censuses Edward can be found as a boarder in the household of Henry Newell and his wife Emma in Cambridge Road, Ely. In 1891, as well as "Teddie" Martin, the Newells had a second child, ten year old Phoebe Sallis, boarding with them. Henry was a horsekeeper, and no doubt looking after young children supplemented the family income.

In 1901 Edward had left school and was working as an errand boy for Mr James Graven, a local agricultural engineer. The Census took place on Edward's fourteenth birthday, and just two days later he enlisted in the 4th Suffolk Regiment, the Militia, at Ely. At this point he was described as 4 feet 11 inches tall with a fresh complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. In his attestation papers he gave his next of kin as his uncle George Hammond of Broad Street—this was probably the George Hammond who was born in Wilburton in 1853 (although he lived in Cambridge Road, not Broad Street). Edward took the oath at Bury St Edmunds on 29th June 1901 and was given service number 2283. He was first based at Colchester, and took his 3rd and 2nd Certificates of Education in the Army.

On 23rd June 1902 Edward was appointed as a drummer, then after his 18th birthday he became a private in the regiment from 20th November 1905 (service number 5803). In February 1903 his Battalion was sent to Karachi. In March 1905 he moved to Madras (now Chennai) in India, where he suffered from dehydration and digestive problems—and was fitted with dentures at the expense of the Army. He also had to be placed on the syphilis register, a problem which was to result in his requiring hospital treatment several times over the next few years. On 9th October 1907 Edward was transferred to the 61st Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery at Aden as a Gunner (service number 27808). When the Brigade moved on to India he deserted at Calcutta on 9th February 1908, but later rejoined his unit on 13th July; after a month his trial was dispensed with, but it was agreed that he would lose allowances for all his earlier service. On 8th May 1911 Edward was posted to the 80th Company of the Royal Garrison Artillery and was stationed first at Singapore, then in Hong Kong, followed by Peking. (In the 1911 Census he is at Victoria Barracks, Hong Kong.) In the Far East he was hospitalised several times with bouts of malaria. Although he had originally signed up for 21 years of service he was actually discharged after 12 years at Peking on 24th February 1914. In Peking he had again deserted for a period but was re-engaged on 21st January 1913, again dispensing with the trial.

Edward did not return to Ely once he was discharged, instead he headed for Canada where he became a miner and served with the militia (the 88th Regiment of the Victoria Fusiliers). He enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Victoria, British Columbia, on 10th November 1914. On his papers he named his next of kin as his uncle James Gee (1857 Ely), of Kansing, Allajee, Iowa, USA. Edward was now described as 5 feet 8 1/2 inches tall. Probably because of his previous service with the Royal Garrison Artillery, Edward was transferred to the Anti-Aircraft Battery of the 8th Canadian Siege Battery which was formed in the autumn of 1916. He was killed in action just over a month before the Armistice in the area of Cambrai.

Edward is commemorated in the Memorial Room of the Peace Tower in Ottawa's Parliament Buildings. In Ely he is remembered on the Market Place Memorial and the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church.

Edward Martin

William John MAYLE

Born	1880
Killed in Action or Died	9th August 1916, age 37
Buried	Grave VII. A. 9. , Courcellette British Cemetery, Somme, France
Unit	7 th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 26650
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

William “Willie” John Mayle (1880) was the eldest son of a family of farm labourers from Stuntney; his father Walter Mayle (1859) and Elizabeth aka Lizzie Fretwell (1861) were also both Stuntney born. William’s younger siblings were Ada (1881), Eliza (1882), Beatrice May (1884), George (1888 Barway), Walter (1890 Chettisham) and Charlie (1893 Stuntney).

In the 1881 Census the young Mayle family was living in Stuntney, but as a farm labourer Walter had to follow the available work, and the family moved to Barway and then to Chettisham. In the 1891 Census the Mayles were one of three large families of farm labourers lodging in the Blue Boar Inn at Chettisham—twenty-five people in all. Willie Mayle attended Stuntney Junior Middle and Infants School from 1887, but by 1891 he had already left school and was working as a farm labourer with his father in 1891—he was eleven years old.

In 1901 the Mayles were back in Stuntney and all four sons were still living with their parents, while the girls had gone into domestic service. Walter, Willie and George were all working on local farms. Ten years later, in the 1911 Census, the family situation remained the same, except by this point all the young men of the family were farm workers, while their father Walter is specifically described as a cowman.



In 1903 Willie’s sister Ada married Henry William Saberton; Henry Saberton and Wille Mayle ended

up fighting with the same battalion of the Suffolk Regiment in the War and both were killed in France.

In 1906 Eliza married Samuel McGee of Stuntney who was the eldest of six brothers, and, although her husband survived the War, she was to lose four of her brothers-in-law, two of whom served with Willie. Finally, in 1910, Beatrice married John Murrell. Neither Willie nor George Mayle married, but Walter junior married Annie Carpenter just before the outbreak of the War, and Charlie married another Carpenter sister in 1916.

When the call up to fight came Willie enlisted at Ely in the 7th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. He was one of several Ely men to fight and die on the Somme Battlefield in the region of Cambrai. His battalion was then in action in the Battle of Poizieres, making an (unsuccessful) attack on "Fifth Avenue". He was remembered on both the Ely and Stuntney Memorials and his photograph (below) included in the book of "Stuntney Heroes".



Willie's mother Lizzie died in May 1918.

Bertie Parker McGEE, Edward Parker McGEE, James Parker McGEE and Thomas Parker Mc GEE

In 1916 the Ely Standard began to tell the story of what was to become a family tragedy for the Parker McGees of Stuntney who lost four sons in the Great War:

"On October 12th, 1916, Thomas Parker McGee died in France of wounds received three days before. On the same day his two brothers, James and Bert were missing. Through the Red Cross Enquiry it has now transpired that on that day Pte. H. Jackson, Suffolk Regt., lately in hospital in France, thus reports: "We made our advance towards evening, and I saw Pte. Bert Parker McGee killed by a high explosive shell on No Man's Land.". There is as yet no news of James...."

"On Monday Mr. Parker McGee heard officially from the War Office that his son James had been "missing" since Oct. 12th, the very day his other son, Thomas had died of wounds. A third son, Bert, has since been reported missing. Thus great anxiety is added to their recent bereavement..."

"Information has reached us this week of the death, from wounds received in action, of Pte. Edward Parker McGee, Northumberland Fusiliers, son of Mr. and Mrs. Parker McGee of Stuntney. The gallant private, who was 25 years of age, leaves a wife and one child, who reside at Witchford. Much sympathy is felt for them and also the parents, who have now lost four sons in the war...."

Born Bertie	1898
Killed in Action or Died	12th October 1916, age 18
Commemorated	Pier and Face 1 C and 2 A Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France
Unit	7 th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 23227
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Born Edward	1892
Killed in Action or Died	9th August 1917, age 25
Buried	Grave A. 21,. Adinkerke Military Cemetery, Furnes, De Panne, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
Unit	16 th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
Rank	Private, Service Number 37064
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Born James	1895
Killed in Action or Died	12th October 1916, age 20
Buried	Grave IX. G. 2. , Bancourt British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France
Unit	7 th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 23158
Awards	British War Medal and Victory Medal

Born <i>Thomas</i>	1893
Killed in Action or Died	12th October 1916, age 23
Buried	Grave IV. B. 5 ., Contay British Cemetery, Contay, Somme, France
Unit	1 st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 2645
Awards	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

In 1878 pregnant seventeen year old Sarah Paynton (1861 Stuntney) married Henry Mc Gee. The couple's baby John was born early in 1879, but did not survive the year. Another short lived male child followed in 1880, and then at last two babies who survived: Edith (1881) and Samuel (1882) . In the 1881 Census Sarah can be found with her baby Edith living in her parents home in Stuntney; it was a full household as five of Sarah's younger siblings were also present. Next door to the Payntons lived the Parkers, another family of farm workers; fifteen year old Thomas Parker was to play an important part in Sarah's story. There is no sign of Henry Mc Gee in the Stuntney household, or in the immediate locality, and it appears that he disappeared from the scene entirely, probably at some point in 1882.

Sarah McGee was not in a position to divorce her husband, but once he had abandoned her she set up home with Thomas Cave Parker (1870 Stuntney); Thomas is shown as a "lodger" in the 1891 Census, but the fact that the large family of children born thereafter all have the middle name "Parker" tells the true story. In later censuses Thomas and Sarah did not even bother to try and cover up their relationship and they listed themselves as "reputed" husband and wife, with Thomas' "reputed" children. The family of "Parker McGees" was made up of: Lily (1885), Jane (1886 died as a baby), Sarah (1887 died as a baby), Joseph (1888), Rhoda (1890), **Edward** (1892), **Thomas** (1893), **James** (1895), **Bertie** (1898) and William (1902). Sarah's father, James Paynton (1838 Stuntney) also lived with the family. As time progressed the boys of the family all joined their father working on local farms.

Members of the family began to marry and leave home: Lily married Arthur Nunn in 1905; in 1906 Samuel married Eliza Mayle; Rhoda married Reginald Smith in 1907; Joseph married Edith Baulk in 1909; Edith married gas stoker Edward Cross in 1910; and finally Edward married Sarah Jane Newell in 1913. In 1915 Joseph and Edith had a daughter whom they called Beatrice. In 1917, within days of Edward's death, Sarah gave birth to Gladys.

In 1911 the children left living in the four roomed house in Stuntney with Sarah and Thomas were Thomas, James, Bertie and William. Joseph and his wife Edith were at Blockmoor, Soham, where Joseph was working as a farm labourer. Edward was living with his sister Rhoda and her husband on Nornea Farm and was working with Reginald as a milkman on the farm. Once Edward married he moved to Alderforth Farm, Witchford, to live and work. Thomas was certainly working for Mr Cole Ambrose of Stuntney Hall when he enlisted, and as the Cole Ambroses owned several large farms locally it is probable his brothers were employed by the same family.

With the outbreak of the War, Bertie, James and Thomas were the first of the McGee brothers to volunteer. Thomas, as the oldest, was the first to enlist with the local regiment, and went out to France in February 1915. Bertie and James probably enlisted together in the Suffolks when they were old enough to do so; they were both added to the Roll of Honour in Stuntney in December 1915.

Bertie, James and Thomas all died on the Somme on the same day, 12th October 1916. Although Bertie and James went through the War together in the Suffolk Regiment they are not buried together as Bertie's body was never found and he is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. (One of his company who was hospitalised stated: "I saw Private Bert Parker McGee killed by a high explosive shell in No Man's Land".) James' body was originally buried where they both died, near Geudecourt. The battalion had here been making several unsuccessful attacks on

Bayonet Trench. On the same day Thomas died of wounds, which he had suffered on 9th October, about twenty miles away from where his brothers were fighting. During those three days he dictated a message to his mother, telling her he was wounded, but she was not to worry as he hoped to pull through..... His battalion meanwhile was preparing for what was to be their most famous engagement—the attack on the Schwaben Redoubt.

Once other young men began to be called up for service in 1916 the other McGee brothers attempted to resist the call, and the Cambridge Independent Press of 27th October 1916 records Edward and his brother Joseph being refused exemption from service by the Ely Tribunal. The same copy of the newspaper carried the first news of the Parker McGee tragedy: *"Pte T. Parker McGee of Stuntney has died of wounds received in action on October 9th. Pte. McGee enlisted in the Cambs. Regiment shortly after the outbreak of war, and went out with the regiment to France in February 1915, and has only had seven days in England since. He was formerly in the employ of Mr Cole Ambrose of Stuntney Hall. Pte. McGee has two brothers in the Suffolk Regiment, also serving in France."* (Obviously the news of the deaths of Bertie and James had not reached home.)

Samuel Mc Gee became the landlord of the Anchor Inn at Stuntney, as well as working for Mr Cole Ambrose at Stuntney. The local newspaper records how he raised £1 19s at Christmas 1915 which was spent on tobacco and cigarettes for the 15 Stuntney men then serving at the Front, including his own half-brothers. In November of 1916 Mr Cole Ambrose tried to get exemption from service for several of his remaining farmworkers including Samuel and his brother-in-law Reginald Smith. Samuel was granted exemption until March 1917 and Reginald had to attest immediately. The newspaper account includes the information that two of Samuel's brothers had already died in France which suggests the family was still anxiously waiting for news of James. In fact James' name was not officially included on the list of those killed in action until March 1918.

Edward fought first with the Northamptonshire Regiment (service number 39993), then with the Northumberland Fusiliers in Flanders, severely injured on 8th August 1917, he lingered for twenty-four hours and then died of his wounds at either the 24th or 39th Casualty Clearing Stations near Adinkerke.

The Commonwealth War Grave Commission records show that Thomas was buried under the

surname Parker (the name under which he had enlisted) while his brothers are all Mc Gee. All four brothers are commemorated as McGee on the Stuntney and Ely Market Place Memorials and in the Stuntney Book of Heroes. Of the three McGee graves only one has an additional personal message added; on Edward's grave are the words. "Gone but not forgotten—from his wife and daughter".



Bertie



James



Edward



Thomas

In 1919 the Parker McGees inserted an "In Memoriam" notice in the Ely Standard to remember the young men and to coincide with the death of three of their sons:

**We often think of days gone by when we were altogether,
A shadow o'er our life is cast, our dear ones gone for ever.
Their King and country called them, that call was not in vain,
On England's Roll of Honour you will find our dear boys' names.**

Harold Thomas MODEN

Born	10th November 1893
Killed in Action or Died	27th March 1918, age 24
Commemorated	Panel 25, Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France
Unit	B Company, 7 th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Lance Corporal, Service Number 325104
Awards	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Harold Thomas Moden (1893 Ely) was the second son of Edward Moden (1869) and Elizabeth Ann Stubbins (1862 Stuntney). He had an older brother and sister Elizabeth (1890 Soham) and George (1891 Ely) and a younger sister called Mary (1897 Ely).

Harold entered Market Place Infants School on 26th April 1897, at this time the family was living in Newnham Street, Ely.

Harold's father, a farmworker, died early in 1900, and so in the 1901 Census Harold's widowed mother is shown working as a sack repairer to support her children. The family were living in Raby's Yard, Waterside, Ely. By 1911 the family had moved to Victoria Square and Elizabeth was working as a charwoman while George and Harold had found employment in the local brewery.

Harold was already a member of "H Company" of the local Cambridgeshire Territorial Regiment (service number 1213) at the outbreak of the War and so was mobilised immediately, leaving for France with many other Ely men in February 1915. He fought with the Cambridgeshires in France and was later transferred to the Suffolk Regiment. The Cambridge Independent Press of 27th October 1916 reported that Harold was wounded (probably in the famous attack on the Schwaben Redoubt) and back in England: "*...(he) has been wounded, being hit with a piece of shrapnel in the right leg above the knee. He is now in the 1st Western Hospital, Fazakerley, Liverpool, he is in the Cambs. Regiment and went out in February 1915..*"

The Cambridge Daily News of 15th May 1918 recorded: "*Lance-Corpl. H.T. Moden of the Suffolks, youngest son of Mrs Moden, Victoria Street, Ely, is reported missing. He is 24 years of age, and was wounded in October 1916, when serving in the Cambridgeshires. He was in the Territorials before going to France.*" In fact when the newspaper printed this announcement Harold had been dead for more than six weeks, having been killed in action on the Somme. This was a period of chaos and crisis as the German Fifth Army rapidly pushed the Allied Forces back across the ravaged Somme Battlefields, and thousands of British soldiers were never seen again. Harold's battalion had been rushed to help defend the Albert Bridge, which they lost, although they held a defensive position a few hundred yards back from the bridge for a further two days. In all the heavy casualties, and lost and gained ground, Harold Moden's body, like thousands of others, was never recovered.

Harold was commemorated on both the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Holy Trinity Roll of Honour.

John Henry MODEN

Born	1894
Killed in Action or Died	20th June 1916, age 24
Buried	Grave C. 31., Agny Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France
Unit	9 th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps
Rank	Lance Corporal, Service Number R/14430
Awards	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

John Henry Moden was born in Long Acre, Bloomsbury, London, but his parents John Freeman Moden (1863) and Sarah Martin (1862) had both been born at Coveney near Ely. The Modens married in London in 1889 where John was working as a brewer's labourer in Bloomsbury. Sarah was John Moden's second wife, as his first wife, Mary Ann Meekins, had died in Bury St Edmunds in 1886, leaving him with a young daughter Ethel (1886 Bury St Edmunds).

John and Sarah had their own daughter, Ellen, in 1890. More children followed: Arthur in 1892 (Clerkenwell), **John Henry** (known to the family as Johnny) in 1894, Grace, known as Dolly, in 1897 (Kings Cross, London), and finally Hilda in 1901 (King's Cross). In the 1901 Census the Modens were living at 26 Affleck Street, Clerkenwell. Sarah's brothers, Fred and Alfred Martin, were boarding with the family and working with John as labourers at the brewery. Two of the children are missing from the home, one was Ellen who had died aged four, the other was Ethel who had been sent back to her father's home of Coveney in 1893, where she went to the village school and later became a servant in the house of Henry Westcombe who was the village's grocer and postmaster.

The Modens moved back to Cambridgeshire where a last child, Ada, was born in 1908 when they were living in Witchford. By the time of the 1911 Census they were at 6 St John's Place, Ely and father John was working as a farm labourer. John Henry had found employment in the packing department of Ely's jam factory. Arthur was also working as a farm labourer at this time, but he was living with his uncle Arthur Martin's family at Crowland near Peterborough. Meanwhile Ethel had returned to London and was a parlour maid in Chelsea in the house of a stock exchange jobber. After about five years working in the jam factory John moved in 1913 to work for Charles Gimbert in his tobacconists shop in Ely's High Street.



John was particularly well known in Ely as he was a member of the City of Ely Band. The Band had been formed in 1908 when the Ely Militia was disbanded and the City purchased the old instruments. The Band was in great demand at all kinds of social events and the newspaper records their playing at half time during local football matches, at agricultural shows, flower shows, local dances and, of course, raising money for the District War Fund or as part of the annual Hospital Parade.

John enlisted at Ely in the King's Royal Rifle Corps in July 1915. He was at the Front for about three months before he was killed in action near Achicourt in June of 1916. He was hit in the head in three places by shrapnel from an exploding shell –death was instantaneous. His parents were told by CQMS Wagerfield: "he was a good reliable young NCO, with every prospect of rapid promotion."

Following his son's death John senior was sent his effects of £4 7d, and a further £3 in 1919.

John Henry Moden is commemorated on both the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church.

Roland Ethelbert MORRISS and Thomas Arthur William MORRISS

Born <i>Roland</i>	1899
Killed in Action or Died	7th April 1916, age 17
Buried	Grave VI. P. 9. , Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord, France
Unit	1 st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 1648
Awards	1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Born <i>Thomas</i>	29th September 1892
Killed in Action or Died	22nd November 1915, age 23
Commemorated	Panel 10, Basra Memorial, Iraq
Unit	2 nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment
Rank	Lance Corporal, Service Number 8624
Awards	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Henry Youngs Morriss (1868 Ely) and his wife Sarah Ellen Kent (1866, Gateshead, Durham) raised a large family of children in Ely, but they lost two of their seven sons in the War. The Morriss children were: **Thomas Arthur William** (1892); Gladys Sarah (1894); Albert (1896 died young); George Golightly (1896); Ethelbert Kent (1898 died as a baby); **Roland Ethelbert** (1899); Reginald Youngs (1901); Edgar Youngs (1905); Robert Alwyn (1906); and Albert Edward (1910). Sarah's father was named Ethelbert Kent, and this explains the slightly unusual choice of middle name for Roland.

Henry and Sarah married in Ely late in 1891, but, as at the time of the 1891 Census Henry was in Ely and Sarah in Newcastle, it can only be guessed how they met. In 1891 Henry was living with his parents and siblings in Chiefs Street, Ely, and working as a carpenter. By 1901 Henry and Sarah's family was living at 2 West End and Henry had set up his own building business with his brother—Messers R and H Morriss. In the 1911 Census Thomas was working for his father as a bricklayer—the other children were all still at school.

Thomas was a member of the local Territorial Army Brigade, the Cambridgeshire Regiment, from the age of seventeen (from 4th April 1909), and after three years with them he determined to enlist as a full time soldier. He attested in the Norfolk Regiment in March 1912 for seven years. His service record describes him as 5 feet 4 inches tall with a fresh complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. He was appointed Lance Corporal on 11th December 1914, although the record shows that he did not receive additional pay befitting his new rank until 27th May 1915.

Thomas and his battalion were serving in India from 12th September 1913, until they were redirected to the Mesopotamian Theatre of War on 5th November 1914 as part of the 6th Poona Division. Thomas was hospitalised just weeks after his arrival in India with gonorrhoea. In Mesopotamia Thomas was hospitalised three more times, twice in Basra in March and then April 1915, then in May at Amarna, probably as a result of the unhealthy climate. He rejoined his colleagues just in time to take part in the action in which he was killed.

Thomas was a keen letter writer and several of his letters home from the war were printed in the Ely Standard. This was sent to his sister Gladys and was printed on 10th September 1915:

"What about fat rabbits? I bought a couple the other day, about three parts grown, for 8 annas, equal to 8d. In English money. They are black and white ones, and my chum and myself are having rabbit

pie tomorrow. We have just had some grapes; and we buy some tinned Nestle's milk (10d a tin) and make some milk when we are dry. Grapes, dates, oranges, figs, and bananas grow in abundance here. The dates are coming on nicely, and they will soon be fit to pull. Well, I can tell you a few of the places I have been to since we have been on active service, and places that my regiment has been the first to enter and to keep the old flag flying. We landed on Turkish territory on Nov 15 1914, entrenched ourselves there for that day (Sunday) and the next. On Tuesday, the 17th, at 4 a.m., we went out to make an attack. We marched 10 miles. Half-way up to our knees in mud, and then came in contact with the enemy. We were all fatigued and practically done in—"fed up" as we say—before they opened fire on us. Our chaps had been grumbling all the while they were marching along, but, as soon as the terrible Turks opened fire they left off grumbling and put their heart and soul into their work. We drove the attack home, and finished by a charge on their trenches, and drove them out. We took many prisoners. Two days after we were sent on board a river boat, called the Blossie Lynch, and advance to Busra, landed and occupied the town, capturing many hundreds of rifles and munitions of war that the enemy had left. Some time after this we advanced some 40 miles up the river, and fought for a place called Kurna, putting the enemy to flight from there. We occupied the place, and then fortified it. Kurna, I might mention here, is supposed to be on the site of the Garden of Eden. Then we came back to Busra, stopped there a short while, and then proceeded to a place called Shaiha, and it was here that we suffered heavy losses. After that we again returned to Busra, and from there again we made another start to upset the Turks, and, by gum, we did shift them. We embarked on river steamers, and went as far as Kurna, and there we had a little bit of exercise. Then we pushed on again, up the river until we reached a place where Ezra's tomb is supposed to be. We stopped there all day and night, and then pushed on again still chasing the Turks, who were in full retreat, more or less a disorderly mob. We arrived at a place called Amarah, about 90 miles from Busra, and this is where we are now...."

The last letter from Thomas was his pre-Christmas 1915 letter which was received and published after his death. In it he tells how he is travelling to rejoin his regiment following his latest stay in hospital—he had already been three days on a river boat and estimated there was still another nine days to go before he would catch up with them. He added; *"I think we are forgotten by the people at home for the simple reason they don't hear anything about us...it takes some sticking when it is 125 in the shade... you see seven or eight fellows die in a day through the heat...it is getting as cold as it was hot a little while ago..."* His last message to his family was: *"I really intended to send you a Christmas card with this letter, but I have never had the chance of getting one, as we are shifted so quickly. I may be able to get some when I get to the regiment. If so, I will send you some on. They are very decent cards. They have on them the coat of arms of the I.E.F.D, which a private suggested is a shark, fly, mosquito, beetle, flea and the sun, and it has a nice verse on it too in any case. I will wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, although I don't suppose there will be much happiness in a good many homes."*

Thomas was killed in action at Ctesiphon on 22nd November, although the telegram to this effect was not sent to his family at home until 15th December. The Battle of Ctesiphon took place as the Allied Army was marching along the banks of the Tigris River with the aim of capturing Baghdad. The Allies, with an extended supply line, and without the support of their gunboats because the Tigris was mined, sustained heavy casualties in a two day battle before they and the Ottoman forces both withdrew. Thomas was killed on the first day of fighting and his body was one of the many left behind on the battlefield. His total service with the Norfolks was reckoned as 3 years and 254 days.

Like his brother, Roland had signed up with the local Territorial Army, the Cambridgeshire Regiment, and with the outbreak of war, still aged sixteen, he found himself in France on 14th February 1915. Roland and his brother George enlisted together. Roland survived less than two months in the cold and mud of the trenches, and as the Spring Offensive of 1916 opened he was badly injured by shrapnel when the trenches in the Pont de Hern Sector were being bombarded by the Germans. The shrapnel entered his shoulder and travelled to his spine—he died a day later in either the 7th or 54th Casualty Clearing Station at Merville. Roland's brother George was present at his burial. The Ely Standard also reported on how his parents were actually expecting Roland home on leave when they heard the news of his death.

Roland's father was sent his effects of £10 6s 10d, with a further £7 1s- in 1919.

The two brothers are commemorated together on the Ely Market Place Memorial and on the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church. Roland is the youngest soldier named on these memorials.

Roland Ethelbert Morriss



Thomas Arthur William Morriss



Henry MORTISS

Born	1878
Killed in Action or Died	18th June 1917, age 38
Commemorated	Bay 4, Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
Unit	2 nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment
Rank	Private, Service Number 3/9020
Awards	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

The Cambridge Daily News of 27th August 1917 reads:

"Pte. A. Mortiss, son of Mr Mortiss, West Fen Road, Ely, has been killed in France. Pte. Mortiss, who was 38 years of age, and attached to the Suffolks, joined up soon after the outbreak of war, and went to France with the First Expeditionary Forces. He was in the employ of the Ely Rural District Council, and laboured on the roads previous to which he worked at the Eagle Foundry, Ely. Pte. Mortiss leaves a widow, now residing in London, whom he married whilst home on leave from the front."

Henry Mortiss was born into a large Ely family in 1878. His father was John Mortiss (1837), a general labourer, and his mother was Mary Ann Courtman (1841). Henry first appears in the 1881 Census as one of six children living in the family home in Church Street, Ely. His siblings were John (1864) who was working as a baker, Susan (1867), Robert (1870), Caroline (1876) and Annie (1881).

In the 1891 Census father John Mortiss with Caroline, Henry and Annie can be found at Parsons Yard off St John's Place, Ely, and John was working as a farm labourer.

Henry first worked as a labourer, but also joined the local branch of the Territorial Army (the Suffolk Regiment) and then, when he was eighteen, attested in 1895 for a period of seven years with the Regiment (service number 22374). Henry's service papers show that he signed his surname as Mortis. Henry was transferred into the Army of Reserve on 27th November 1903, but soon rejoined the colours in February 1904. On 15th April 1904 Henry was made a Lance Corporal, but relinquished his appointment that September in order to transfer to the Army Service Corps. He was discharged on 4th August 1908 after he suffered a fractured pelvis on 11th May, an injury which resulted in a court of inquiry.

Back in Ely in 1911 Henry was boarding with the widow Ann Denton in Barton Road and working at the Eagle Foundry, while his widowed father was living with Robert.

With the outbreak of war Henry was recalled to the Suffolk Regiment as a reservist and by 10th October 1914 was in France. The battalion fought in battles such as the Aisne, Ypres, Bellewaarde, St Eloi, the Somme in 1916, and the 1917 Battle of the Scarpe. Henry was finally killed in action in one of the Battles of Arras, when his battalion was attempting to take Infantry Hill near Monchy-le-Preux in the face of a heavy artillery barrage and heavy German counter-attack.

Henry is commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing.

Henry had married Ella Burton in London in 1915. Ella received £8 16s 11d from the Army on Henry's death and a further £13 10s in 1919.

Henry is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church.

