

## Henry William SABERTON

<b>Born</b>	1880
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	8th November 1915, age 35
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 37 and 38, Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais
<b>Unit</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 18257
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Henry William Saberton** was named after his father Henry William Saberton (1855 Witcham, Cambridgeshire). His mother was Sarah aka Sally Read (1855 Mepal). Henry himself was born in Mile End, London, but his parents had clearly not spent too much time in the capital, as Henry's older sister Florence had been born in Witcham in 1877, and by the time of the 1881 Census the whole family was back in Cambridgeshire and living in Sutton High Street. Henry senior was a farm worker.

When the 1891 Census was taken Henry and Florence was staying with their maternal grandparents Lot and Mary Ann Sawyer who ran a public house in Witcham High Street. Sadly the children's father Henry had died two years earlier at the young age of thirty-five. Their mother Sarah was living further up the High Street with their younger brother and sister Beatrice (1884 Witcham) and Lot (1887 Witcham) and trying to make ends meet by working on a farm. Next door to Sarah lived her brother and sister in law William and Emily Saberton and their family of seven children.



Henry married Ada Mayle in Sutton in 1903. At the time of the 1911 Census Henry and Ada (1881

Stuntney) were living at Half Acre, Little Thetford and Henry was a farm worker. The family moved around the local farms, wherever Henry could find work, as can be seen from the birthplaces of their children who were Charles William (1903 Little Downham), Doris Ada (1905 Manea), Alice Maud, (1906 Manea) Gladys Beatrice (1907 Manea) and Walter (1910 Soham). More daughters followed: Florence (1912 Soham); Elizabeth (1913—did not survive); Elsie (1914 Burnt Fen); and Amy (1915 Stuntney—born just before her father's death, although he never saw her).

The Ely Standard of 14th January 1916 summarises Henry's war service:

*"Pte Henry William Saberton, 7th Suffolks, of Stuntney, has been killed in action, but beyond the bare*

*official announcement, the widow has received no news of how he came by his death, which occurred a few weeks ago. Letters written home by Soham and Stuntney men leave no doubt that he was killed by a shell.*

*The reason the deceased man gave for joining the Forces was that he would not wait until he was fetched, and he deemed it his duty as a man to help his King and country. He enlisted on Feb. 1st, 1915, and went out to France in August.*

*Besides the widow he leaves eight children under 13 years of age to mourn their loss."*

Although Henry is listed as being killed on 8th November he almost certainly died between 3rd and 5th November when the Suffolks were in the Front Line opposite the Hohenzollern Redoubt and under heavy shellfire. It was not until the 8th November that they were back behind the lines and there was an opportunity to call the roll and confirm their losses of 58 men killed, injured or missing, which included Henry. Ada waited several weeks for certain news about what had happened to her husband, and it was only when other Ely and Stuntney men arrived home on leave that she heard eyewitness confirmation of his death in the shelling.

After Henry's death Ada moved the family into Ely where they lived at 65, Newnham St., Ely and once Gladys was married she and her family lived next door to her widowed mother. Henry's body was never found and so he is commemorated on the Loos Memorial to those who went missing in this battle. He is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Stuntney Memorial, he is also pictured in the Stuntney Book of Heroes.

When news of Henry Saberton's death was printed in the local newspaper a woman residing at Ten Mile Bank, who did not actually know the family, wrote Ada a letter of condolence:



*I feel it is my duty to write a line and express my sorrow in your sad bereavement at the loss of your husband. It is a terrible loss to you and your little ones, but the Great God above will supply all your needs. I hope it will be a lesson to young single men who knew Mr Saberton, that he was no slacker, but died like a true Briton can die fighting for right. What a dreadful calamity this war is, and may peace be once more declared. You and your family have my sincere sympathy, as we women can absolutely do nothing, only hope against hope. Don't be too downhearted, but look on the bright side. The Lord will help you with His outstretched hand, an ever present help in time of trouble.*

## John SABERTON

<b>Born</b>	1891
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	14th April 1916, age 24
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 31 and 33., Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Corporal, Service Number 17059
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**John Saberton** was born in Fieldside, Ely, in 1891. He had the misfortune of losing his father John Saberton (1858 Ely), a brewer's labourer, in the winter of 1892 when he himself was only a year old. In the 1901 Census John is found living with his widowed mother Naomi (nee Harwood 1862 Littleport) and his two older brothers William (1886 Ely) and Arthur (1888 Ely) in Walpole Lane, Ely. Fourteen year old William was then the only wage earner in the family and was a railway goods clerk with Great Eastern Railways. Ten years later, in the 1911 Census, John was still living with his mother, this time in Silver Street, and was working as a gardener, while Naomi herself was a charwoman. Later that year John's mother married Leon Gilbert (1876 Littleport).

John went to Hertford where he later enlisted in the Bedfordshire Regiment and reached France with them on 30th August 1915. He was posted as missing early in May 1916, but had actually been killed in action on the Ypres Canal on 14th April.

John's effects were divided between his two brothers who each received £2 12s 11d, and William received a further £8 in 1919.

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

## John Philip SADLER

<b>Born</b>	1893
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	9th April 1917, age 23
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. H. 8., Tilloy British Cemetery, Tilloy-les-Mofflaines, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 3/8535
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**John Philip Sadler** came from a family of Ely farmworkers. His father was Philip James Sadler (1862) and his mother Fanny Bates (1864). Although his surname is frequently spelt as "Sadler", he and his family used the spelling "Saddler" when registering their births and marriages. The family lived for many years on Bohemond Street in Ely. They attended St Peter's Church in Broad Street where John was a member of Harold Archer's confirmation class and so can be found named with some of his friends on the memorial that Harold sponsored.

John (1893) was the Sadler's oldest son and his younger brothers and sisters were Harry (1895), Jessie (1897) and Bertha (1900). He also had two older sisters Rose (1887) and Ellen (1889).

The 1911 Census record shows that John followed his father into farm work. At this time he was the oldest child still at home, and his brother Harry had started work as a grocer's errand boy.

John was a member of the Territorials and as part of the Army of Reserve he reached France on 3rd December 1914; somewhat ironically he and his fellow reservists had been promised the War would be over by Christmas...

The Cambridge Daily News of 27th April 1917 carried a summary of John's War:  
*"Pte. J. Sadler, Suffolk Regt., son of Mr and Mrs Sadler, Bohemond Street, Ely, was killed in action on April 9th. He was a Reservist, and was called up at the outbreak of War. Wounded at Ypres, and also at Hill 60, he was sent to England suffering with a wound in the thigh. He was in hospital for four months, and had a finger amputated. After five days leave, he returned to France, where he had been for the last 16 months. He was 23 years of age."*

John died in the Battle of the Scarpe, which was the opening engagement in the Battle of Arras. He was in the area of the Harp Redoubt, as this was where he was originally buried.

John's father Philip was sent his effects of £35 3s 2d, with a further 10 guineas in 1919.

John is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Holy Trinity Memorial, and the Memorial in St Peter's Church.

## John Thomas SADLER

<b>Born</b>	1896
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	28th May 1917, age 21
<b>Buried</b>	Grave XXV. E. 5A., Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Sergeant, Service Number 15889
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal



**John Thomas Sadler** was born in Stretham in 1894; his parents John Henry Sadler and Clara Ann Rowell were both born in Stretham in 1875. The family were farm workers and consequently moved around the local area. A second son, George, was born in Stretham in 1899 and died aged two. The family was in Little Downham in 1899 and 1902 when Ethel and Harold were born, then in Ely itself in 1903 and 1905 for the births of Henry and Leslie. By the 1911 Census they were in Lark Bank, Prickwillow, where John senior was the head horseman on a farm and his son John worked with him.

John was part of the 11th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment, a territorial battalion which reached France in January 1916. The Battalion fought in battles such as Albert, Bazentin Ridge, Pozieres Ridge, the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe, and Arleux. John was wounded in the Arras Offensive, perhaps while his battalion was attacking Roeux or at Ivergny, and died a number of days later of those wounds at No 11

General Hospital, Etaples.

John's father was sent his son's effects of £20 2s 10d and a further £14 10s in 1919.

John is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Prickwillow Memorial.

## George Reginald SAUNDERS

<b>Born</b>	1899
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	29th August 1918, age 19
<b>Buried</b>	Grave VI. F. 15., Combles Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 42179
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**George Reginald Saunders** was born in Great Ellingham in the Wayland District of West Norfolk in the summer of 1899. He was the youngest son of carpenter and builder George Saunders (1859 Great Ellingham) and his wife Hannah (nee Leeder, 1859 Great Ellingham). George senior had his own business and employed several workmen. The family were Primitive Methodists.

Although George and his parents were all natives of Great Ellingham, the family had lived for some time in Suffolk as George senior was learning his trade and acquiring enough money to start up his own business. George's siblings Edith (1885) and William (1887) had both been born in Lowestoft while Sidney (1891), Clara (1892) and Ethel (1897) had been born in East Bergholt.

In 1901 the Saunders family was living in Church Street, Great Ellingham, they then moved into The Street (1911) and by 1920 were in Long Street. In 1911 just Clara, Ethel and George junior were living with their parents. George himself was still at school, but Clara had become a school teacher and there was another boy of George's age living with the family—this was his cousin Michael Spencer Saunders (1900 East Bergholt). Michael's father William Saunders had died a month earlier and Michael had been sent to Great Ellingham to live with his extended family.

George and his brother Sidney came to Ely to work; Sidney can be found in the 1911 Census lodging on Great Shell Farm at Prickwillow and working as a clerk for Great Eastern Railways and George probably later joined him in his lodgings. George may also have been looking for employment with GER, but does not appear to have been successful if this was the case. It is possible that instead he worked for his landlords, the Martins, on their farm.

When called up to fight George enlisted at Newmarket with the Bedfordshire Regiment. In 1918 his battalion fought in the Battle of Albert and then the Second Battle of Bapaume. George was killed in action on the opening day of the conflict at Bapaume. He was one of four regimental casualties incurred when the troops were establishing a new line on the Morval spur.

George's effects were sent to his mother Hannah, they amounted to £4 11s 2d with a further £4 10s in 1919. She requested that the inscription on his gravestone should read "Death Divides But Memory Clings".

George is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Prickwillow Memorial. He is also remembered on the War Memorial in St James' Church, Great Ellingham where, alongside his name, is that of his cousin Ernest Saunders who had been living at Benwick when he enlisted and was killed in action less than a fortnight before George.

The In Memoriam column of the newspaper "The Primitive Methodist Leader" of 28th August 1919 commemorates George but also gives the sad news of the death of his brother Sidney who had managed to survive the War:

*"SAUNDERS— In loving memory of our dear boy George, who was killed in action August 29th, 1918. Also of Sidney Saunders, of Ely, who passed to the Homeland May 17th, 1919, aged thirty. Both sons of Mr and Mrs George Saunders of Great Ellingham. "Reunion our abiding hope.""*  
Sidney is buried in Ely Cemetery.



### Oliver Edward SCOTT

<b>Born</b>	1886
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	26th August 1914, age 28
<b>Commemorated</b>	La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre Memorial, Seine-et-Marne, France
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 8438
<b>Awards</b>	1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Oliver Edward Scott** was born early in 1886 in Bury St Edmunds. He was one of the younger sons in a family of seven boys and two girls. His father was Robert James Scott (1857 Cuckfield, Suffolk) and his mother Charlotte Anne Crick (1853 Cuckfield, Suffolk). The children were all born in Bury St Edmunds, where their father worked as a baker. Oliver's siblings were: Bertie (1875); Ada (1877); William (1879); Ernest (1881); Herbert (1884); Percy (1885); Sidney (1891); and Violet (1896). The family home for many years was 61 Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

Oliver married Emily Dolby (1887 Ely) in Ely in the autumn of 1910. They set up home near Oliver's parents at 36 Southgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. At the time of his marriage Oliver was working as a manservant.

Although Oliver's service record is now lost, he must have enlisted in the Royal Lancaster Regiment, at Blackburn, before the outbreak of the War, and on 4th August was stationed with them at Dover. It appears that Emily moved back to Ely while her husband was away on service. The Royal Lancasters were soon mobilised once war was declared, and arrived in France on 23rd August 1914. Within days they were in bitter action at Haucourt, in the Battle of Le Cateau, where Oliver fell. The battalion sustained many casualties, killed, wounded and also taken prisoner of war in the first months of the war. Oliver is now commemorated on the La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial with the 616 other soldiers (53 of them from his own regiment) who fell with him on that day and have no known graves.

Oliver's effects were sent to his wife and amounted to £2 1d with a further £6 10s in 1919. Late in 1917 Oliver's widow Emily married John Beezley and they set up home at 52, Newnham Street, Ely. It would have been at Emily's request that her first husband was commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and Holy Trinity Memorial.

## Reginald SEEKINGS

<b>Born</b>	1897
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	20th November 1916, age 19
<b>Buried</b>	Grave V. C. 19., Dernancourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Yorkshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 5248
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Reginald Seekings** was the youngest son in a family of Fenland farm workers. His father (John) William (1862) was originally from Haddenham and his mother Martha Hills (1862) was born on the Suffolk Fens. Reginald's older brothers Robert (1884) and John (1887) were born when their father was working at Feltwell in Norfolk, Albert (1890) and Reginald himself were born on Burnt Fen.

Reginald attended both day school and Sunday school in Queen Adelaide. He was a chorister at the local church and a member of the Bible Class. He was described by those who knew him as "of a quiet and very unassuming character, he was very popular with his associates".

The 1901 Census shows the Seekings living and working on Kettleworth Farm, Chettisham, and in the 1911 Census they are at Wade's Farm, Middle Fen. By 1911 Reginald had left school and he was working with his father on the farm. The 1911 Census also gives the information that William and Martha had lost five out of their nine children in infancy.

Reginald's father William died early in 1915. His mother Martha married James Taylor (1865 Prickwillow) late the same year. James was a widower and another local farm worker, and probably a friend of her first husband.



As a Territorial, Reginald had enlisted in the local Cambridgeshire Regiment (service number 1031) at the outbreak of war, but was later transferred to the Yorkshire Regiment. He had a record as an excellent marksman with the Territorials.

Reginald had three days leave to attend his father's funeral, but soon afterwards came home to meet up with one of his brothers who was then home from the Front (this was probably John who was a regular in the Suffolk Regiment). He was spotted by the police and arrested in Stuntney as a deserter. He appeared before Ely Police Court and was then kept in custody until collected by his regiment. Reginald's "excuse" was: "I knew I had done wrong, but I thought I should have got back before they sent for me." It is perhaps worth remembering he was still a seventeen year old at

the time, had just lost his father, and was probably missing his family.

Reginald reached the Front in September 1915. In 1916 his battalion fought in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the Battle of Morval, and the Battle of the Transloy Ridges. Although he survived these battles, Reginald was later seriously wounded in the head, hand and thigh, and died of his injuries at the XV Corps Main Dressing Station.

Reginald's effects were divided amongst his mother and three brothers who each received 13s 1d. His mother received a further £10 in 1920.

Reginald is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Holy Trinity Memorial. He was also listed on the Roll of Honour in St Etheldreda's Church in Queen Adelaide—this church is now a private dwelling.



## Charles SHELTON, Fred SHELTON and Thomas SHELTON

*Three of the sons of Thomas and Elizabeth Shelton perished  
within four months of each other in 1916.*

<b>Born</b> Charles	28th January 1896
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	4th July 1916 age 20
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. B. 15., Laventie Military Cemetery, La Gorgue, Nord, Franc
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> /1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment Attached to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Australian Mining Company
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 2415
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

<b>Born</b> Fred	6th January 1892
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	2nd November 1916, age 24
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. G. 12. , Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovillers-La Boisselle, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	"D" Coy. 10th Battalion, Essex Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 312834
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

<b>Born</b> Thomas	1880
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	12th October 1916, age 36
<b>Commemorated</b>	Pier and Face 1 C and 2 A. Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	9th Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 44025
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

The Cambridge Independent Press of 8th December 1916 records the tragedy of the Shelton family of Ely:

*"Pte. Thos. Shelton, Suffolk Regiment, son of Mr and Mrs Shelton, Chiefs Lane, has been reported wounded and missing. He joined the Yeomanry nearly two years ago, during their stay at Ely, and was afterwards attached to the Suffolks. He had been at the front about a month or six weeks. Pte. Fred Shelton, another son, is reported to be killed, official notification to this effect giving been received by his wife residing in London. It will be remembered that Mr and Mrs Shelton lost a son five months ago, he being killed in action on July 4th."*

Thomas Shelton (1851 Ely) and his wife Elizabeth Alfrey (1853 Haddenham) lived for many years at 6 Chief's Lane, Ely, Thomas worked as a bricklayer's labourer. Their large family of children consisted of: John (1877); **Thomas** (1880); William (1882); Hannah (1884); Elizabeth (1887); Alice (1889); **Fred** (1892); and **Charles** (1896).

Fred was a pupil at Market Street Infants School and was then selected to be given a free place at Needhams School on Back Hill which he joined on 2nd May 1899. When he left the school on 2nd August 1905 he first went to work at Hall's Brewery. Charles attended the National School (church school) and he too was offered a free place at Needhams which he joined on 15th May 1905. When he left the school he first went on to be a grocer's errand boy.

As the family grew and the older children left home Thomas Shelton senior became a farm worker. By the time of the 1911 Census he and Elizabeth had just the two youngest children left at home; these were Fred who was still a labourer at the brewery (for a time working with his brother William) and Charles, who was still a grocer's errand boy. Thomas Shelton junior had married Sarah Ann Sells in 1906 and they were living in Silver Street. Thomas was working as a general labourer. When Thomas went to War Sarah moved back in with her parents in Broad Street.

Fred moved to London for work and found employment as a waiter. He married Constance Longland in Haverstock Hill, Camden, London on 4th April 1915; at the time of his marriage he was living with Constance's family at 47 Grafton Terrace, Maldon Road. He and Constance later lived at 3, Park Hall Rd., Fortis Green, London. Oldest brother John was also in London; he died in St John's Hospital in Lewisham in June 1917 (he was buried in Ely Cemetery).

As more men were called up to fight Charles and Thomas enlisted in Ely and Fred in London.

Charles was the first of the brothers to die. He fought first with the local Cambridgeshire Regiment but at the end was attached to the 3rd Australian Mining Company. Mining companies literally fought from underground, tunnelling under enemy emplacements and destroying them by exploding strategically placed mines. Charles' record simply shows that he was "killed in action" and does not indicate whether or not this was as a result of mining, however, as his body was recovered for burial this is perhaps a sign that he was in the open. It was the fourth day of the Battle of the Somme and Charles died in the area of Aubers Ridge.

Meanwhile Fred had a very narrow escape. The Ely Standard of 4th August 1916 reported that Fred was serving as an "officer's servant" to a London clergyman / chaplain. A shell exploded beside them, blowing Fred in the air and giving him a "severe shaking" - he ran back to his officer and found him mortally wounded.

Thomas attested under the Derby Scheme on 7th December 1915. At this point he appears to have decided to join the Suffolk Yeomanry (which he joined when they were billeted at Ely) but then went to the Front with the Suffolk Regiment. He arrived on the Somme about four months after Charles had been killed, and just over a month later he himself was wounded. He fought in the Battle of Morval but disappeared, presumed dead, during an attack on Zenith Trench in the final major Somme battle—Le Transloy. As the newspaper article shows, it was almost a full year after his death before his family were certain he had been killed. In fact the Shelton family of Ely appear to have heard about the death of Fred before that of Thomas. Fred had died of wounds which he has received as his battalion attacked the Ancre Heights.

When news of the third Shelton death appeared in the Ely Standard, the newspaper wrote: *"We feel sure that the sympathy of all our readers will go to the parents and relatives. The War has indeed cast a dark shadow over their homes."*

The Shelton brothers are commemorated together on Ely Market Place Memorial, and on the Memorial in St Mary's Church. Charles is also remembered on the Memorial Plaque in Ely Methodist Church which he attended.

Thomas Shelton



## James SIMPKINS

<b>Born</b>	1896
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	1st November 1914, age 18
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. C. 19., Divisional Collecting Post Cemetery Extension, Boezinge, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 10771
<b>Awards</b>	1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Although most of his family was born in the village of Witcham, **James** (1896) and his younger brother John (1900) were born once the Simpkins family moved into Ely. James' father was Charles Simpkins (1852), his mother Rebecca Ann Maltpress (1854) and his older siblings were Tom (1874), Emily (1876), Ellen aka Nell (1878), Walter (1880), Charles (1882), Ralph (1884), Jemima (1886) and Bertha (1888).

In 1900 Emily married George Sindell who was a brewery labourer. In 1901 the family were living in Parade Lane, Ely, which could be James' birthplace. Charles senior was a horseman on a farm, and Ralph was also a farm worker, while Tom, Walter and Charles were all platelayers with Great Eastern Railways.

The Simpkins attended the Countess of Huntingdon's Free Church in Chapel Street, Ely.

In 1904 James' brother Walter married Florence Saberton who was the older sister of Henry William Saberton; she was to lose both her brother and brother-in-law in the War. Walter's job as a platelayer for Great Eastern Railways involved his moving his family to Whittlesey.

James' mother Rebecca died in October 1908 when he was fourteen.

In the 1911 Census all the Simpkins men in the Barton Road home were in work. Father Charles was a yardman on a local farm and James was working with him as a "yard boy" while his three older brothers were all labourers—Tom was still with Great Eastern Railways as a platelayer, Charles was working for a butcher and Ralph was working for a gardener. Later that year Charles married the widow Alice Scott (nee Rumbelow) - Alice's brother Frederick Rumbelow was also a casualty of the War. (Alice herself was to survive three husbands and lived to be one hundred!)

The Cambridge Independent Press of 20th November 1914 tells what happened to James next: *"The relatives of Pte. James Simpkins, Coldstream Guards, have been notified by the War Office that he has been killed in Belgium. Pte. Simpkins, who was only 18 years of age, joined the Army in June last, having previously been employed by Mr Samuel Cross, New Barns Farm. The young soldier was stationed at Windsor until about three weeks ago, when he proceeded with his regiment to the front, and took part in the fierce fighting against the Germans."*

James had decided on a career in the Army and enlisted on 15th June 1914, quite possibly without any real idea that the War was so close at hand. The Coldstream Guards were mobilised on 13th August and were part of the Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, the Battle of the Marne, the Battle of the Aisne, and the First Battle of Ypres. They were then pinned down in shallow trenches in extremely wet weather for about three weeks. James was killed in action at Rendel near Ypres and buried initially in the trench where he was fighting. After his death his father Charles was sent his effects of £2 5s 11d with a further £5 in 1919.

James' name was included in De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour as one of the original casualties of the British Expeditionary Force. He is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Memorial in St Marys Church, as well as in the Countess Free Church.

## John William SINDLE

<b>Born</b>	March 1881
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	20th June 1915, age 34
<b>Buried</b>	Grave I. B. 104., Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 2635
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

The Sindle family of Ely had one of those surnames that people never quite knew how to spell, including themselves, and so **John Sindle** (1881) will be found in various records as Sindell and Sindall—we know that he himself spelt his name as Sindle when he enlisted, but his official birth registration uses “Sindall”.

John's father Henry (1850) was a bricklayer. His mother was Matilda Tingay (1853) and his siblings were Matilda (1873), Sarah (1874), Henry (1878), Thomas (1883), Jessy (1884), Herbert (1889), Louisa (1890) and Harold (1896).

John was born in the family home on Back Hill, but by the 1891 Census the Sindles had moved to Chiefs Lane. John's father Henry died in 1900, probably in West End, which was where Matilda and most of the younger members of the family were still living at the time of the 1901 Census. John had been one of those who had moved out of home, but was not far away, lodging with George and Eliza Galley in West Fen Road. Like many of those living in this area on the outskirts of the City, John was a farm worker.

By the 1911 Census little had changed for John; he was still working on local farms and he was living in widow Sarah Ann Hawes' boarding house on Hills Lane, Ely. Meanwhile his mother Matilda had been working as a charwoman and as a washerwoman to support herself and her youngest children. She had moved into a smaller house in Ingrams Yard aka Ingrams Square in West End and still had Thomas, Harold and Herbert with her.



John enlisted in the Cambridgeshire Regiment at the outbreak of the War, along with many other Ely farmworkers. Together they arrived in France in on 14th February 1915 where they famously fought in the action of St Eloi, and the Second Battle of Ypres. John appears to have survived these two major battles but was badly wounded later by German shelling when his arm was blown off.

The Cambridge Independent Press of 9th July 1915 carried a letter written by the chaplain at the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station at Balieul to John's widowed mother, although he made the unfortunate mistake of thinking that he was writing to John's wife:

*“Dear Mrs Sindle,*

*I am sorry to have to give you very bad news of your husband, Pte J. Sindle, 2635, Cambridge Regiment. He was brought into this hospital with his arm blown off by shrapnel shell. It was at once seen to by the doctors, and the best that could be done was done. Unfortunately it was torn away very high up, and certain blood vessels right inside were injured. Nobody expected him to live many hours, but he made a wonderful recovery and appeared to be getting quite well. He was the cheeriest patient we had in the hospital. For days he sat up and took his food and appeared to be going on splendidly; but on the night of June 20th he complained of feeling unwell, and in his sleep he finally passed away. The final cause of his death was internal haemorrhage. He was a splendid man. I have never seen anyone more plucky and more truly brave. We all got very fond of him. I buried the dear man in Ballieul Military Cemetery on June 21st*

*in grave no.1375. a cross has been erected over his grave with a suitable inscription. This will be terrible, blow for you, for I am sure he must have been a good husband. I pray that God will comfort you, dear Sindle met his death while doing his duty bravely and like our Master he gave his life for the sake of others. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*  
*Yours in deepest sympathy,*

*Arthur G Fletcher, Church of England Chaplain"*

John's effects were distributed amongst his family and his mother Matilda received £3 10s 9d and his brothers Henry, Herbert, Thomas and Harold were each given 14s 1d (although Thomas formally requested his share be given to their mother). Matilda was sent a further £3 in 1919, but she died in March of that year.

The issues about the spelling of John's surname followed him beyond the grave, as the Army unfortunately sent his family his 1914-15 Star with his name on it spelt as "Swindle"; naturally they demanded it was re-issued.

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

## Abraham SMITH

<b>Born</b>	1897
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	19th April 1918, age 20
<b>Buried</b>	Grave I. A. 3., Suffolk Cemetery, La Rolanderie Farm, Erquinghem-Lys, Nord, France
<b>Unit</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 15784
<b>Awards</b>	Military Medal, British War Medal and Victory Medal



**Abraham Smith** (1897) and his brother Matthew William (1898) were both born in Ely but their parents John William Smith (1875 Ely) and Elizabeth Ann Lee (1875 Ely) took them to London where John found work as a tram driver. In the 1901 Census the family was living at 90 Bury Road, Wood Green, Edmonton. However London was not to be the family's permanent home and by 1905 they were back in Ely where Frederick Lee was born, followed by Albert Victor in 1910. John set himself up as a small farmer and by the time of the 1911 Census both Abraham and Matthew were working with him on their farm. They were all living in West Fen Road, although they later moved to 13 Chiefs Street. Then, by 1917, they went on to run the Three Blackbirds public house in Ely's Broad Street.

Abraham went to France with the Suffolk Regiment early in 1916 at the age of eighteen and was awarded a Military Medal in 1917 for his skill as a sniper during the battalion's operations on 26th August. In 1917 and 1918 Abraham's battalion fought in the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe, the Battle of Arleux, the fighting at Hargicourt, the Third Battles of Ypres,

the Battle of St Quentin, and the Battle of Estaires. There is some uncertainty regarding the date of Abraham's death, but it seems most likely that he was killed in action at Erquinghem where the Suffolks were holding the line to block the Germans' advance on the Channel ports. He is buried in a small cemetery with his companions from the Suffolk Regiment.

The Cambridge Daily News of 3rd May 1918 records Abraham's death:

*"A letter has been received from one of Pte. Abraham' Smith's friends, stating that he was killed in action on April 10th, but up to the present the young soldier's parents, who reside at the Three Blackbirds, Broad Street, have had no official notification. Pte. Smith was in the Suffolks and was twenty years of age. He had been in France two years and four months. it may be recalled that he was awarded the Military Medal in August last for good work as a sniper in the operations about that time." As can be seen, this letter places Abraham's death more than a week earlier than the date recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves site—although one must allow for the Ely Standard possibly being a typo.*

Abraham's effects amounted to £8 19s 11d.

Abraham also left a bereaved young lady who may have been his fiancée—Violet.

Abraham's parents asked for his gravestone to carry the words "He Hath Fought The Good Fight". He is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial and Holy Trinity Memorial.



## James Charles SMITH

<b>Born</b>	1886
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	6th April 1918    age 34
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 25., Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France
<b>Unit</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private,    Service Number 19721
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**James Charles Smith** was born in Mildmay Park, Islington, London, early in 1886. His father, Alexander Thomson Smith (1858) was a shoeing smith (also described as a farrier or blacksmith). James' mother was Elizabeth Brownlee Holden (1857 ); he had older siblings May (1880 Islington), and George (1882 Stratford), Charles (1884) and a younger brother Alexander (1887 St Pancras).

James' father were originally from Edinburgh in Scotland, but he had married a London girl and they had raised their family in London. In the 1891 Census, the first in which James features, the family was living in Brownlow Mews in the St Pancras District of London. In 1901 Alexander and Elizabeth with some of their sons can be found in Lambeth, running a family blacksmith business. James himself was then in Hove, Sussex where he was working as a servant or "steward's boy".

Back in London, James married Mabel Minnie Mountain (1881) in Lambeth in 1908. Mabel was originally from Peterborough. It is noticeable that in the next Census her age is noted as the same as her husband's, whereas she was actually five years older than him—did James himself know that?

By 1911 James and Minnie had moved out of London and were living on Forehill in Ely, although they later moved to 27 Waterside, James was working as a labourer for a "rod merchant", that is supplying "rods" for basket making.

When called up James enlisted at Newmarket in the 4th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. They were engaged throughout the Battles of the Somme 1918 and on the Avre where James was killed in action around Bois L'Abbe or Cachy. He is numbered amongst the missing on the Pozieres Memorial and on the Ely Market Place Memorial.