

## Herbert George WHITE

<b>Born</b>	1887
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	24th April 1915, age 28
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 21, Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 18051
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Herbert George White** (1887 Ely) was a member of a large family of farm workers. His parents John White (1862) and Susannah Grace Childs (1864) were not local to the Ely area as their birthplaces were Spitalfields, London, and Coton, Cambridgeshire respectively. John and Susannah (who may have been better known as Grace) married in Ely and lived for a period in Ely district at Shippea Hill, where their first three children William (1885), Herbert (1887) and Grace Althea (1889) were born. They then moved on to Prickwillow where the rest of the family were born: Thomas (1892); Elsie (1894); Florence (1896); Albert (1898); Elizabeth (1900); and Frederick (1903).

In 1891 the family was at Shippea Hill and John White was working as a groom.

In 1901 the family were living at Mile End Drove in Prickwillow; father John was a yardman on a farm and Herbert was also a farm labourer. William had found employment at the local hemp factory which a decade later would be run by Cecil Keenlyside, another soldier who is commemorated on the Ely Memorial.

In the 1911 Census the family were still to be found on Mile End Drove. By this stage Thomas and Albert had also become farmworkers, and even the older girls, Elsie and Florence, were field workers. The three eldest children had moved out of the family home; William, for example, had married and was working on a farm at Stow Bardolph in Norfolk.

Herbert married Lilian Elizabeth Juliann Tomblinson late in 1911; their children were Albert (1912 Ely) and Florence (1913 Ely).

Herbert's name appears on the newspaper list of those who enlisted at Ely between 18th and 28th January 1915. He soon reached France with the Suffolks on 11th March 1915, but his time at the Front lasted only about six weeks. The news that Herbert was missing in action was shared in the Ely Standard of 23rd July 1915. The Army presumed Herbert had died on or since 24th April 1915, as this was the last day his companions saw him alive. It was August of 1916 before he was officially listed as "missing presumed dead". His widow Lilian was finally sent his effects of £1 5s 8d in December of 1916, with a further £3 in final settlement.

The date of Herbert's disappearance is that of the Second Battle of Ypres when the Germans first used chlorine gas, and many of the Allied troops were poisoned, dying within minutes, while others were incapacitated and then killed by the advancing Germans. It is possible that this was Herbert's fate.



Herbert's widow Lilian became Mrs Charles Day late in 1920, after the birth of her and Charles' son John a few weeks earlier. There was a second son, Denis, born in 1924 who survived just three months. At the time the war memorials were created the Days were living at 12a Prickwillow Rd., Ely and Herbert's parents at The Shell, Prickwillow Rd, Ely.

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

## Samuel WILDING

<b>Born</b>	1894
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	31st March 1916, age 22
<b>Buried</b>	Grave VI. E. 9., Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.
<b>Unit</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 16254
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

The members of the Wilding family were born and lived at various places in the Fens around the area of Littleport and Prickwillow—most of them gave Littleport as their place of birth. The parents of the family were Elijah Wilding (1867 Lakenheath) and Rebecca Sparrow Handley known as “Reb” (1870 Ely). The children were John (1890), Kate (1893), **Samuel** (1894), Emily Rose (1895), Rebecca (1899), Elizabeth (1900), Charles (1902), Elijah (1904), Albert (1908), Emily Rosa (1910), and Percy James (1912). The census records (including the 1911 form filled in by Elijah personally) indicate that the family wrote their name as **Wilden**, but the various children’s births were registered under more than one spelling of their surname—Samuel happens to be registered as “Wilding”.

The family is found living at addresses such as Cross Bank, Burnt Fen (1891), Burnt Fen Common (1901), and Redmere Farm, Burnt Fen, Soham (1911). Although Samuel Wilden / Wilding gave Littleport as his birthplace on his papers, he was actually born at Brandon Bank. Elijah worked as a farm labourer, including (1901) as an engine driver on a farm. John and Samuel, like their father, became farm workers.

Samuel joined the 11th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment which, as it was a territorial battalion, was initially on home service, and in 1915 he would have been at Ripon, then Perham Down and finally Warminster. On 9th January 1916 the battalion reached Boulogne and Samuel was badly injured less than three months later in the trenches around Armentieres. He was transported to the 23rd General Hospital at Etaples where he then died. Samuel had just had his twenty-second birthday; the Commonwealth War Grave record which shows his age as seventeen is inaccurate.

Samuel’s effects were sent to his father Elijah and amounted to £5 2d with a further £5 10s in 1919.

Samuel is remembered under the surname Wilding on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Littleport Memorial, and the Prickwillow Memorial. He is also listed under Redmere on the county memorial in St George’s Chapel in Ely Cathedral (there is no memorial at Redmere itself).



## Edward WILKIN

<b>Born</b>	October 1893
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	11th May 1916, age 22
<b>Buried</b>	Grave II. B. 84., Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Sergeant, Service Number 8820
<b>Awards</b>	1914 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal



The Wilkin family lived in a railway carriage on Quaenea Drove off Stuntney Road, where Edward Wilkin (1859 Ely) farmed. Edward's wife was Mary Lee (1862 Burnt Fen) and the couple had four surviving boys Tom (1889), **Edward** (1893), who was named after his father and grandfather, William (1899), and Ernest (1902). The couple had lost four children: Edward Thomas (1886-87); Florence (1888-90); Edith (1896-98); and Mary (1907—lived four days). The boys became farm workers like their father.

Edward junior joined the Suffolks before the outbreak of the War and was already a corporal by August 1914. He reached France on 3rd December 1914 with the regiment which was then involved in such actions as the two Attacks on Bellewaarde, the Actions of Hooze, and divisionary attacks around the Ypres Salient, including the Action of the St Eloi Craters. Edward was then wounded on 9th May 1916 when a shell burst outside his dugout and he was hit in the left arm and hip as well as being badly shaken. His arm was later amputated at one of the casualty clearing stations and he died of his wounds two days later in the hospital at Bailleul.

Edward's effects amounted to £16 10s 2d which was sent to his father Edward, followed by a further £13 in 1919.

Edward is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Holy Trinity Memorial and the Stuntney 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.

*Edward's brothers Tom and William also served in the War and both were awarded the Military Medal for bravery in combat. They survived, although William was permanently disabled by an ankle injury.*

## **George WISE**

This soldier appears on both the Ely Market Place Memorial and the Prickwillow Memorial but has been difficult to identify. He was possibly a farm worker who came into the area post 1911.

The casualty's first named is confirmed as George from the 1921 list of men of Prickwillow to be included on the memorial boards in Ely Cathedral. There are nine possible George Wises listed on the CWGC website, but none of these records contain sufficient evidence to identify them with Ely.

## Alfred WOODBINE

<b>Born</b>	19th January 1896
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	28th December 1915, age 19
<b>Buried</b>	Grave IV. C. 30A., Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Durham Light Infantry
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 11691
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Alfred Woodbine** (1896, Ely) was the son of William John Woodbine (1871 Kings Lynn, Norfolk) and Cecilia Lucinda Hill (1870 Walsoken, Norfolk); he had an older sister called Beatrice (1893 Ely) and a younger brother Charles (1901 Ely). William Woodbine had been a soldier with the Suffolk Regiment and this brought him to Ely where he married his pregnant girlfriend Cecilia and they then brought up their family. Following their marriage they lived in Hills Lane, Ely, for several years before moving to West End in 1901. William had left the army by this stage and was a general labourer.

Alfred's father William died at the age of thirty-seven in September of 1908 in the family home at Fieldside, Ely. On Christmas Eve 1910 Alfred's mother Cecilia married Charles Woodbine (1866 Ely). Alfred's stepfather was a railway labourer, but Alfred himself became a farm worker, while his sister Beatrice went into service.

Alfred went on to become a baker, but he also signed up as an army reservist with the Suffolk Regiment on 15th October 1913. The following year he went to Bury St Edmunds where he was attested into the Regular Army, into the Durham Light Infantry, and joined them at Birchfield in February of 1914. He signed up for seven years of service, followed by five years in the reserve. His papers describe him as just 5 feet 3 inches tall, with a fair complexion, hazel eyes and light brown hair.

Alfred was with the 2nd Battalion of his regiment at South Shields until he was sent to the Front on 10th July 1915. He spent two periods in hospital with attacks of scabies—an extremely irritating infection caused by body mites which hospitalised more than 6% of the Army at various times. Alfred probably fought in the action at Hoge in July 1915, the battle at which the Germans used flamethrowers, which had a hugely demoralising effect on the British troops. However worse was to follow when Alfred was gassed at Wiltje on 19th December 1915; he lingered for a further nine days before dying painfully of gas poisoning at No. 10 Casualty Clearing Station at Lijssenthoek. This had been the first time the Germans had used their new chlorine/phosgene gas combination against the British.

Back home in Cambridgeshire Charles and Cecilia had left Ely to live in Weasanham Lane, Gatehouse, Wisbech, where they were nearer Cecilia's friends and family. Alfred's brother Charles was also at this address, but Beatrice had moved to live and work in Bournemouth. Cecilia was sent Alfred's effects, which amounted to £16 8s 1d, with a further £5 10s in 1919.

Alfred is remembered on the Ely Market Place Memorial.

## Thomas Edward Tasman WOODROFFE

<b>Born</b>	27th July 1880
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	15th November 1917, age 37
<b>Buried</b>	Grave D. 202., Ely Cemetery
<b>Unit</b>	'V' Company., Royal Army Service Corps
<b>Rank</b>	Company Sergeant Major, Service Number F/26661
<b>Awards</b>	Territorial Efficiency Medal

On 23rd November 1917 the Cambridge Daily News carried a detailed article on the funeral of Sergeant-Major Thomas Woodroffe which also gives considerable details about his life:

*"A military funeral, arranged on an imposing scale, took place at Ely on Tuesday, when the remains of the late Sergt.-Major T.E.T. Woodroffe of the A.S.C. were conveyed to their last resting place. The sergeant-major, who was in the 36th year of his age, was taken ill about a month ago, and died on Thursday. His career was an interesting one. He was in the Cathedral Choir School for about seven years, and was leading soloist for some two years, completing his education at Soham Grammar School. He joined the old Territorials (3rd Cambs. Volunteer Battalion Suffolk Regt.) when he was quite young. He was corporal from 1897 to 1906, being made in sergeant in the latter year, and he held the long service medal having belonged to the Force for very many years. He was always a good shot, and during his association with the Territorials in 1912 and 1913 his section (No. 4) won Colonel Launcelot Reed's Challenge Cup.*

*Sergt.-Major Woodroffe was called up on mobilisation with the Ely Territorials, but just before his regiment departed for France he was discharged as unfit for overseas service. He was the first instructor of the old Ely V.T.C. (now Cambs. Volunteer Force). Subsequently he joined the Army Service Corps, first holding the rank of Staff-Sergeant, and afterwards that of Sergt.-Major, which up to the time of his death he held for about two years. He was a prominent member of the Ely Conservative Club, being a member of the committee. He possessed two medals given by Lord Roberts which he won in competitions on the Miniature Rifle Range at the club. He also won the billiard challenge cup on one occasion. Sergt.-Major Woodroffe was a good all round sportsman, being a member of the City Football and Cricket Clubs in past days. He belonged to the old City of Ely Fishing Club, and won a challenge cup there, and as a breeder of dogs, gained prizes at the Royal Show in London. About six years ago the Sergt.-Major took over the business of painting, glazing, sign writing, etc., which had been carried out for many years in the Fore Hill."*

**Thomas Woodroffe** was born in Ely in the summer of 1880 on the north side of Ely's Waterside. His father Albert Morrells Woodroffe (1859 Ely) was a house decorator and his mother Susannah Elizabeth (nee Moorhouse 1855) is listed on the census records as being born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Susannah's father was a captain in the 87th Regiment and was killed in the Indian Muntiny soon after her birth. The family was wealthy enough to afford a servant. Thomas had a younger sister, Ida Blanche, who was born in 1891. There had also been another three Woodroffe girl babies who had not survived: Gertrude (1879); Ethel Maud (1885-86); and Eva May (1889).

Thomas was a chorister at Ely Cathedral from 1891 to 1896.

The papers from Thomas' attestation in the Suffolk Regiment in April 1908 are still in existence and show that at that in this year the family were living at Crown Point in Ely. It conforms that Thomas first enlisted in the Territorials on 6th December 1897 when he was seventeen and served with them until 31st March 1908. He re-engaged with them for a year, then a further four years starting on the 5th April 1910. He was made sergeant on 28th July 1912. Newspapers accounts from 1915 show that he was a good shot, and even shot for the Ely Conservative Club Team in a challenge match against the Suffolk Yeomanry.

By 1911 the Woodroffes had moved to Fore Hill and Albert was running a plumbing and decorating business with Thomas assisting him in the firm. As Thomas' grandfather Albert Woodroffe (1840-1909 Ely) had previously owned a painting and decorating business on Ely's Fore Hill, it appears that Thomas' father, Albert junior, had taken over the family business and property. It was probably later

that same year that Thomas took on his own glazing and sign-writing business on Fore Hill that is described in the newspaper article.

With the outbreak of the War Thomas immediately attested with the Cambridgeshire Regiment on 5th August 1914, intending to serve abroad, but a month later, on 7th September he was stood down. Nevertheless, in the Cambridge Independent Press of 25th December 1914 a list is given of the nineteen cathedral choristers already serving with the colours and Thomas is listed as serving with the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment.

Unable to serve abroad, Thomas played a significant role in working with the Ely Volunteers and from 1915 with the Army Service Corps on home service. He remained in Ely and occasionally appeared in the newspaper for his sporting prowess. His hobbies, however, could sometimes get him into trouble as the Cambridge Daily News of 8th June 1917 recorded: “

*“Thos. E.T. Woodroffe a sergeant-major in the Army Service Corps, of Fore Hill, Ely, was summoned for keeping three dogs without a licence.*

*Defendant did not appear.*

*Acting-Sergt. Green gave evidence, and the defendant was fined 15s in each case, or in default 14 days imprisonment.”*

One assumes he paid the fine!

At the time he died Thomas was engaged to Miss Olive Clark, the daughter of the Mayor and Mayoress of Bury St Edmunds.

As befitted a former chorister and local figure, Thomas' funeral in November 1917 took place at Ely Cathedral and was attended by local dignitaries including the Mayor and Mayoress of Bury St Edmunds and their daughter Olive, local Aldermen, and detachments from the Royal Flying Corps, the Army Service Corps, Ely Volunteers, wounded soldiers and large numbers of local people. The funeral was conducted by Archdeacon Hodges and the coffin was transported on an A.S.C wagon to Ely Cemetery where another large crowd of locals attended the committal, which included the firing of three volleys over the grave and the sounding of the Last Post.

Thomas' gravestone bears the message “For King and Country He Did His Best”. His mother Susan was buried in same grave when she died in March 1919—the unhappy lady had lost not only her son, but also three of her brothers in the war.

As Thomas never served abroad he was not technically eligible for any of the British Campaign Medals issued to participants in World War One.

Thomas is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial; the Holy Trinity Memorial, and the Choristers Memorial in Ely Cathedral.

## Eric Charles WOODROW

<b>Born</b>	19th January 1900
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	22nd September 1918, age 18
<b>Commemorated</b>	Panel 4 and 5., Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 42135
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Eric Charles Woodrow** was the youngest child of Ishmael Robert Woodrow (1854 Tibenham, Norfolk), and Emma Louise (nee Crane, 1858 Fordham). The couple had lived briefly in Lancashire where their eldest surviving child, Florence, was born in 1879. However, they then came to Ely, where the rest of the family were born: Lillie (1884); Essie Ada (1888); Bertram (1890); Archibald Eli (1898); and finally Eric himself (1900). Ishmael was a master bootmaker and repairer. The family lived first on Back Hill (1891 Census) and thereafter for many years at 36 Victoria Street, Ely.

The Woodrows were Methodists and Eric was baptised at Ely's Primitive Methodist Chapel on 28th January 1900.

Eric's two oldest sisters had left home by the time he was born, as Lillie was a live in housemaid with the Grangers on the Market Place and Florence had married William Nunn. The Nunns later moved to Redhill in Surrey where William worked as a motor body maker; Bertram later lived with them for a period and worked with his brother-in-law.

In the 1911 Census it is interesting to see that, despite their Primitive Methodist upbringing, both Archibald and Eric were then cathedral choristers. Eric served in the choir from 1908 until 1915.

In the month of November 1915 first Bertram and then Archibald enlisted with the Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment and went away together to the Front in November 1916. Both of them survived the conflict, although in August of 1917 Ishmael and Emma received news that Bertram was in Netley Hospital with a shrapnel wound to the foot.

Eric joined up January 1918 when he reached his eighteenth birthday and went to France on June 27th, where he survived for less than three months. He would have fought with the Bedfordshires at the Battles of Albert, Second Bapaume and Epehy, as the Allied Armies forced the Germans into retreat. It was at this point that Eric was killed in action near Ronssoy and is now recorded on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial to the Missing.

Ishmael was sent his son's final effects of £1 10s with a further £3 in 1919. Eric is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Holy Trinity Memorial, and the Choristers Memorial in Ely Cathedral.



## Percy Bond WOODS

<b>Born</b>	1899
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	25th October 1918, age 19
<b>Buried</b>	Grave B.1., Querenaing Communal Cemetery, Nord, France
<b>Unit</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 41239
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Percy Bond Woods** was the second son of George Bond Woods (1871 Ely) and Rosanna Harwood (1875 Littleport). George was one of Ely's basketmakers, and the family lived at 60, Broad St., Ely, opposite the school. The children of the family were all born in Broad Street: William George (1897); Percy Bond (1899), Frank (1902), Olive May (1904), Joe (1905), Reginald (1908-1909); Lilian Mary (1911), Reginald (1913), and Dorothy (1916).

The family attended St Peter's Church in Broad Street, and it was here that Percy was a member of Harold Archer's catechism class. Percy was also for a period a chorister at Holy Trinity Church.

The 1911 Census shows that Percy's older brother William had found work on leaving school as a messenger boy for the Post Office rather than joining the basketmakers. Percy himself later found employment at C H Gimbert's tobacconists in Ely's High Street.

Percy's father George was stationed at Gravesend during the War.

When he was old enough to fight Percy enlisted at Newmarket in March of 1917 and was placed in the Royal Lancaster Regiment. He was unfortunate enough to be killed in action less than three weeks before the termination of the War as his battalion took Querenaing as part of the final advance of troops into Artois. Rosanna received news that he had been wounded, followed by a message the day later that he was dead, but which included a statement this might be a mistake and Percy was just wounded—it was a false hope. Percy was described as "always cheerful, no matter under what circumstances" by his officer.

On 11th November 1918 the battalion was still at Querenaing where they and other troops created a small cemetery holding just twenty-one casualty burials, including Percy. Percy's mother asked for his final gravestone to carry the message "Christ Gathereth His Lambs To The Fold".

Percy's mother Rosanna received a total of £17 6s 9d as his effects.

Percy is commemorated on the Ely Market Place Memorial, the Holy Trinity Memorial and on the memorial donated by Harold Archer in St Peter's Church.



## William Ernest WRIGHT

<b>Born</b>	1892
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	22nd March 1918, age 26
<b>Commemorated</b>	Bay 4, Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France
<b>Unit</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment
<b>Rank</b>	Private, Service Number 29281
<b>Awards</b>	British War Medal and Victory Medal

The records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission show this soldier to be William Horace Wright, born 1886-7 and son of George Wright of Prickwillow Road, Queen Adelaide. The soldier's service record shows that he was born in Ely and this is where he enlisted. Although this information looks as if it should lead to an easy identification of the young man in question this is not the case! William Wright is a common name in the Ely Registration District in this period but those William Wrights born in the right year, according to the military record, do not have fathers called George, with the exception of a John William Wright born in Sutton who appears to have been normally known as William. No baby boy is registered at birth as William Horace Wright. The most likely candidate to be the William Wright of the Ely Market Place Memorial and Prickwillow Memorial is **William Ernest Wright** born in Prickwillow to George Wright (1852 Prickwillow) and his wife Elizabeth (nee Sakins, 1852 Prickwillow) in 1892. The confusion over the soldier's age is understandable if his father inadvertently gave the authorities the birth year of his son John, rather than that of William.

George and Elizabeth's children were: Charles Edward (1883); Harriet (1885); John (1887); Milly (1888); Thomas George (1890); William Ernest (1892); Frederick Walter (1893); Elsie Maud (1898). At the time of William's birth George Wright was a platelayer for Great Eastern Railways, and the family lived at Adelaide Bridge. This was the home for a number of GER labourers, as there were five adjacent dwellings there which were owned by the railway and occupied by railway platelayers and signalmen and their families. The sons of these families tended to find work on the local farms and the 1901 Census shows William's eldest brother Charles working as a cattleman.

The 1911 Census shows the Wright family living on Witcham Farm at Manaea. At this point the household consisted of John and Elizabeth with Charles, Harriet, John, Thomas, William, Frederick and Elsie, with the addition of a five year old granddaughter, Violet Wright, who was also born at Prickwillow. All of the men of the family, including George himself, are shown as farm workers. The family later moved back to Clayway, Prickwillow Road, Queen Adelaide. William worked for Mr Samuel Cross on his farm at New Barns, Ely. He was an assistant shepherd and responsible for about 300 ewes.

When called up to fight with other men of his age group William's employer sought to have him exempted and appeared before the Ely Urban Tribunal to plead his case. The Tribunal was only prepared to grant two months exemption in order to cover the farm's lambing season. Along with many Ely farm workers, William enlisted in the local Suffolk Regiment, on 16th May 1916, and went to France on 8th December. He came home once on leave in December 1917. On 21st March 1918 the Germans launched an enormous bombardment along the Western Front followed by a great push which sent the Allied forces back and forced them to regroup and defend new positions. On the day William was killed they 11th Suffolks were successfully defending Henin Hill, until they were ordered to pull back when the regiments on either side of them were broken. A chaotic withdrawal by the British then took place which resulted in many soldiers' bodies being "lost". With hundreds of his fellow troops, William is remembered on the Arras Memorial to the Missing.



William's father George was sent £18 17s as settlement of his effects.

As well as being commemorated on the Ely Market Place memorial, William was also listed on the Roll of Honour in St Etheldreda's Church in Queen Adelaide—this church is now a private dwelling.

## Thomas Owen YARROW

<b>Born</b>	14th March 1894
<b>Killed in Action or Died</b>	16th October 1916, age 22
<b>Buried</b>	Grave IV. C. 13., Warloy-Baillon 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 1214
<b>Awards</b>	1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

**Thomas Owen Yarrow** was one of the three sons of Thomas Kempton Yarrow (1862 Little Thetford) and Catherine Sarah "Kate" Kempton (1863 Ely). The three boys, who were all born in Little Thetford, were Frank Kempton (1890), Harold Frederick (1892), and Thomas Owen (1894). There was also a younger sister called Kathleen Mary (1895). Thomas' middle name of Owen was after his grandfather; grandfather Owen Yarrow (1830-1916), and later Thomas' uncle Frederick, were for many years landlords at the Three Horseshoes Public House in Little Thetford which must have been a popular gathering place for Yarrow family occasions. Owen Yarrow was also a farmer, an ex-chorister of the cathedral and a member of the Crystal Palace Handel Festival Choir and in great demand for concert performances across East Anglia. As Thomas' own father Thomas died in March 1898 at the age of thirty-five (when Thomas himself was just four years old), the Yarrow grandparents must have played a significant role in his life.

Thomas first appears in a census record in 1901, which shows him living with his widowed grandmother Elizabeth Kempton (1836 Ely) in her house on St Mary's Green off St Mary's Street. Elizabeth was "living on her own means" and kept a servant. Thomas was then being privately educated. On 29th April 1901 Thomas became a pupil at Needhams School on Ely's Back Hill. He was still living with his grandmother, as his parent's name on the register is give as Eliza, not Kate. Pupils were supposed to be at least eight years old when they entered the school and the register shows that Eliza appears to have told the school that her grandson had been born in 1893, not 1894. Clearly the family felt Needhams was not suited to Thomas (or did the school recognise the deception?), as he left the school a few weeks later, on 24th May, to be educated at Slough.

Meanwhile Kate had taken her other three children to live with he unmarried brother Herbert Charles Kempton (1873 Ely) in Silver Street, Ely. Herbert was a baker and also had a corn dealership and Kate and her eldest son Frank later assisted him with the business. By 1911 Thomas had become an engineer, and moved to live with the rest of his family. (In the 1911 Census the family also have two lodgers, one a G.P.O, surveyor and the other a student from the nearby theological college, so it is clear that the arrangement for Thomas to live with his grandmother had not been entered into because of lack of space in his uncle's home.) At this time Thomas was becoming a prominent member of Ely's Operatic Society and appeared in several of their productions in the Public Rooms; he was "well known to very many in the city". He was also a member of Ely Constitutional Club (at least 47 members of the Ely Constitutional Club were in the forces by January 1917 and, of these, Cecil Keenlyside, George Ling, Corporal and Thomas Yarrow laid down their lives).



Thomas volunteered to fight with the local Cambridgeshire Regiment. His battalion reached France on 14th February 1915, and Thomas was able to come home at least once on leave—in April of 1916. The Cambridgeshires fought at St Eloi, and on the Somme, Thiepval Ridge and the Ancre Heights. It was during the Battle of the Schwaben Redoubt, on 14th October 1916, that Thomas was fatally wounded with shrapnel in his back and a compound fracture of the left leg.. He was taken to No. 2/1st South Midlands Casualty Clearing Station, where he lived on for only two more days.

The Cambridge Independent Press of 27th October 1916 announced the news of Thomas' death: *"Pte. T.O. Yarrow, Cambs. Regt., has died of wounds at the front. Pte. Yarrow, who is a son of Mrs Yarrow, and a nephew of Mr H.C. Kempton, Silver Street, Ely was admitted to hospital on October 13th with shrapnel wounds of the back and a compound fracture of the right leg, and died two days later. These facts were given in a letter from the hospital, and an earlier message stated that he was "desperately ill" that he was a "very dear lad, very patient and good" and "everything was being done that could be done for him". Pte. Yarrow, who was 22, went out to France in April 1915, and had been home once on leave –in April last."*

The newspaper of the following week added to the story of Thomas' death, as it revealed that he was in a dugout with another Ely man, Oliver Thurmott, when they were shelled. Oliver had a total of seven shrapnel and bullet wounds, but had survived and was recovering in an Exeter hospital. The battalion had about 200 casualties (killed and injured) on this day alone.

Thomas' effects were divided equally amongst his mother and three siblings who each received £4 5s 1d. In 1919 his brothers and sister received a further £3 3s 4d each.

When Thomas' mother Kate died on 12th April 1918 her gravestone in Ely Cemetery was carved with the additional words *"In loving memory....of Thomas Owen Yarrow, 1st Cambridgeshire Regt. The dearly loved son of the above who died of wounds in France (and is interred at Warloy-Baillon near Albert) Oct. 16th 1916. aged 22 years."*

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