



Extracts from

Diaries of the Reverend Andrew Clark 1914-1919
as held by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

as published in

Echoes of the Great War
The Diary of the Reverend Andrew Clark 1914-1919
 Oxford University Press

as they relate to those commemorated on
 The War Memorial of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin
 Great Leighs, Essex

a companion to the War Memorial documentation available at
www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1368867

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The Diary of the Reverend Andrew Clark 1914-1919
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Introduction

From 1914 – 1919, the Rector of Great Leighs, Essex, the [Reverend Dr Andrew Clark](#), maintained a daily record of the latest news on the First World War and its relation to the Parish. This resulted in ninety-two diaries, now held by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, which were edited in 1985 by James Munson and published by Oxford University Press.

These extracts are a companion to the page on the Geograph website at:

www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1368867

which documents the War Memorial at St. Mary the Virgin Church, Great Leighs, Essex and provides links to Commonwealth War Grave Commission casualty details; memorial certificates and grave or memorial inscription photograph pages.

The entries in the diaries relating to those casualties listed on the Great Leighs War Memorial tablet are shown below with a Bodleian Library shelfmark reference (e.g. MS. Eng. hist. e. 126). The pages upon which they appear in *Echoes of the Great War* are also listed (e.g. *Echoes p223*). *Echoes Page 292* includes the full listing of names.

Acknowledgments

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Diary extracts for those commemorated on the Gt. Leighs War Memorial

CHARLES CLOUGHTON

Sunday 16 December 1917. Charlie Cloughton, Welsh Guards, has been killed. Son of old Walter Cloughton. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 157, *Echoes p223*)

Wed 18 December 1918. 11am Mrs Selina Cloughton called to have her pension paper signed (in respect of her son Charlie Cloughton...) (MS. Eng. hist. e. 157, *Echoes p268*)

ERNEST GEORGE CLOUGHTON

Sunday 16 Aug 1914 – Royal Navy, Ernest Cloughton, HMS Recruit (MS. Eng. hist. e. 89, *Echoes p6*)

Monday 3 May 1915 – In this morning's paper the sinking of the Recruit was noted. Serving in this ship was Ernest Cloughton, son of Fred Cloughton, shepherd on Lyons Hall farm. This afternoon his father received a telegram (official) informing him that his son was among the drowned. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 102, *Echoes p60*)

Thursday 6 May 1915 – Reports from the village represent it in a very depressed state of mind: (a) the sinking of the Recruit just off Clacton-on-Sea, a place well known to many villagers here, in which Ernest Cloughton was drowned..... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 103, *Echoes p60*)

CHARLES COOK

Sunday 16 Aug 1914 - Territorials, Charles Cook, 8th Essex Cycling Corps (Private) (MS. Eng. hist. e. 88, *Echoes p7*)

Mon, 13 Nov 1916 – Charlie Cook, who worked for Major William Brown at Bishop's Hall, has been killed. He was slightly wounded and sent back into the trenches with his hand bound up. This time he was wounded 'from top to toe', and died either as he was being taken to hospital or just after he was admitted. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 138, *Echoes p167*)

CHARLES JOSEPH DIGBY

Sun 6 Oct 1918 – News came today that Chas. Digby, junr. Has been killed; was married; has three quite little children; worked for Herbert Simons, of Little Leighs Hall. He had been a soldier and had served his time before the war. His younger brother, Ernest Digby, was wounded and is a prisoner-of-war. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 170, *Echoes p252*)

ERNEST DIGBY

Thu 11 April 1918 – 'Ernie' Ernest Digby, Gubbions Green, is reported by the War Office as missing. His nephew is in the same battalion, and has written that, when he got back from a charge, Ernie's chum told him that Ernie, wounded, carried off as a prisoner. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 162, *Echoes p231*)

Mon 22 April 1918 – Old Chas. Digby has just heard officially from the War Office that his son Ernest Digby is 'wounded and missing'. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 162, *Echoes p233*)

Sat 25 May 1918 – Old Chas. Digby has now been told officially that his son, Ernest, is wounded and a prisoner-of-war. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 163, *Echoes p237*)

Wed 10 July 1918 – Ernest Digby, son of old Chas. Digby, wounded and taken prisoner on 21st March, has written home. He is in a prisoners' camp at Lemberg, and is getting better. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 165, *Echoes p241*)

Sun 10 November 1918 – Ernest Digby, wounded, prisoner-of-war in Germany, died there in May. His father (old Charles Digby) did not receive notice of his death till yesterday. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes* p257)

WILLIAM DUKE

Mon 13 Dec 1915 – Bill Duke (choirman) and George Ketley (who both work at Lyons Hall) were sent back as medically unfit from recruiting offices. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 116, *Echoes* p101)

Sat 21 Oct 1916 – ‘Bill’ Duke has been called up and left this morning. He was called up before and then rejected, as unfit for service, because of bad feet. He managed the electric light apparatus at Lyons Hall, and since the household was reduced owing to the war, has cleaned boots and done other housework. He has been, since he came here, a most faithful member of the choir.

8p.m. Major James Caldwell called: he is furious with ‘Bill’ Duke. He ought to have told the officers at the recruiting station that he was a skilled electrician. In that case he would have been put into the Royal Engineers, given work he is well capable of, and had 5s. to 6s. more weekly pay than he will have in the RGA [Royal Garrison Artillery] to which he has been attached and in which he will be of no manner of use. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 137, *Echoes* p163-4)

ARCHIE FITCH

Only mentioned on Echoes p292, the memorial listing.

ARTHUR FITCH

Mon 4 Jan 1915 – Arthur Fitch, of this parish, is supposed to have gone down with the *Formidable* [sunk in home waters by a German U-boat on 1 January]. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 96, *Echoes* p41)

Tue 5 Jan 1915 – Arthur Fitch had been nine years in the Navy. Mrs Fitch says he was the kindest of all her family to her.

Sun 10 Jan 1915 – twelve Noon. Memorial Service: in memoriam Captain Alan George Tritton, Coldstream Guards. Private Richard Fitch, Essex Regiment. Private Arthur Fitch, RMLI [Royal Marines Light Infantry], *HMS Formidable*. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 96, *Echoes* p42)

DICK FITCH

Wed 14 Oct 1914 – Mrs Sophia Fitch, wife of Walter Fitch, agricultural labourer, near Dog and Gun, came to have their application signed for the effects of their son, Dick Fitch, of Second Essex Regt. Killed in action. Dick Fitch was a lad of just nineteen and enlisted so recently as a year ago last June. Mrs Fitch has had twelve children; Dick’s is the first death in the family. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 90, *Echoes* p22-3)

see **10 Jan 1915** entry for Arthur Fitch (MS. Eng. hist. e. 96, *Echoes* p42)

GEORGE BENNETT FITCH

Only mentioned on Echoes p292, the memorial listing.

FREDERICK MANSFIELD

Fri 10 Dec 1915 – I am told that two lads (Charlie Rayner, son of the tenant at Lowleys [C.W.Rayner p45]); and Fred Mansfield (brother of the foreman at Rochesters) and one Little Leighs lad (Jim Lewin, drives bread-cart for Fred Mann, baker) have gone into Chelmsford today to enlist.

Sun 12 Dec 1915 – Of the Great Leighs men: Jim Turner has not passed the doctor; Charlie Rayner and Fred Mansfield have passed. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 116, *Echoes* p100)

Sat 6 May 1916 – Yesterday morning was the biggest call of men from the parish that has yet been.So is Fred Mansfield, of Rochester's farm, formerly in Essex Yeomanry. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 125, *Echoes p128*)

Thu 10 Oct 1918 – Fred Mansfield ...was killed on 29 Sept. when he was dying on the battlefield, he took out his pocket-book and asked his mate to send it to his twin-sister Tessie Mansfield, now of Little Leighs. He was unmarried. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes p252*)

CHARLES JONATHAN RAYNER

Mon 13 Nov 1916 - The official intimation that Charles Rayner was 'missing' stated that he was 'missing' on 7th September, but mentioned no place. 7th September was the date of the last letter they had from him. The probability was that he was killed, but there is a bare possibility that he may be wounded and a prisoner. The Rayners had a story that a woman had an ordinary field postcard from her relative at the front; and, on that day year, had a postcard from him, a prisoner in Germany, saying he had not been allowed to write before. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 138, *Echoes p167*)

Wed 13 Jun 1917 – Mr C.W. Rayner had a letter from the War Office asking him to send the last letters received from his son, Charlie, 'missing' in France. When they returned them they said they had, after minutest enquiry, been unable to find any trace of him. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 149, *Echoes p197*)

Fri 10 Aug 1917 – On Su. Morning 5 Aug. Mr C. W. Rayner received official intimation that his son, Charlie Rayner, long 'missing', was now considered killed – missing since Oct. 1916. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 151, *Echoes p205*)

25 Oct 1917 – Mr. Chas. Wm. Rayner called to have attested his application to the War Office for the effects of his son (supposed killed in action). (MS. Eng. hist. e. 155, *Echoes p216*)

HARRY SARGEANT

Wed 9 Sep 1914 – Harry Sargeant, son of Thomas Sargeant (head-gardener at Lyons Hall) an employe at the Marconi works in Chelmsford, told his mother he wanted to enlist. She took her tape-measurer and told him that his chest measurement would cause his rejection. When he came home he reported that he had been to the recruiting-office in Chelmsford, where it was found that his chest was 33 ½ and not the minimum 34. But he had bought a pair of dumb-bells, and in a fortnight was going to offer himself again. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 89, *Echoes p17*)

Sun 5 Dec 1915 – Miss Annette Tritton has lengthened her list on the Church door, of men in service: Leonard Cook, Essex Yeomanry; Thomas Sargeant, Royal Flying Corps; Harry Sargeant, Rifle Brigade. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 115, *Echoes p98*)

Mon 21 Aug 1916 – Harry and Tom Sargeant, sons of Thomas Sargeant, gardener at Lyons Hall, are both in the army, Tom being a cook in the RFC [Royal Flying Corps] and Harry in the infantry. The two brothers had not met for five years. Last week Harry wrote home to his mother from France, saying that he thought Tom had passed him in a motor car but could not be absolutely certain. Yesterday he wrote again to say it was Tom, just back from the trenches; and, curiously enough, they had both been sent to the same base. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 131, *Echoes p152*)

Fri 22 Sep 1916 – Thomas Sargeant, gardener at Lyons Hall, had an official message this morning that his second youngest son, Harry Sargeant, had been killed in France, on Mond. 4 Sept. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 135, *Echoes p158*)

ALAN GEORGE TRITTON

Sun 9 Aug 1914 – J. Herbert Tritton, Esq., Lyons Hall, confirmed report of British Expeditionary Force. He told me that his son's regiment – the Coldstream Guards – was under orders, but that his son, Captain Alan Tritton, did not know on what day, or from what station, or from what port, or to what destination the regiment would go. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 88, *Echoes* p5-6)

Sun 16 Aug 1914 – Here is a list given me of those in Great Leighs parish who had gone on service...Army – alan triton, Captain, Coldstream Guards (MS. Eng. hist. e. 88, *Echoes* p7)

Tuesday 10 November 1914 - [Letter from Mrs J. Herbert Tritton to Mrs Andrew Clark] of 9 Nov 1914 – I am touched by the kindness of the dear Mothers in the Mothers' Meeting in offering to help with the work for the soldiers in Alan's regiment. His last letter says that the cold is intense at night in the trenches. I think the most needed things at the moment are mufflers and mittens...Poor things, I am afraid they can get very little sleep as the shells are constantly breaking around them at night, but Alan says his men are magnificently brave and cheerful though it is a tremendous strain. He evidently thinks one side or the other will be done up before long, but he adds, 'I do not think it will be us.' I had a charming letter...from a friend who has one of the wounded Coldstream men in her charge. He says he (Alan) took a Lieutenant with him to fetch a pail of water that the men might wash, and that he is always so thoughtful for them. He arranged a voluntary service for them on Sunday week, when they had a short time off and the men wound up saying 'Our captain is such a good gentleman and a splendid leader' ... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 91, *Echoes* p30)

Tue 17 Nov 1914 – [Letter from Mrs J. Herbert Tritton to Mrs Andrew Clark] of 16 Nov 1914 – We are deeply thankful again for good news of Alan to-day although he is still, of course, in great danger at Ypres. He was eleven days in the front row of trenches within 200 or 300 yards of the Germans. Now he has moved to the second row, but I do not think there is much more rest there as they are shelled apparently night and day still.... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 91/92, *Echoes* p31-2)

Wed 30 Dec 1914 - 9.15 a.m. morning post [from J. H. Tritton]: of 29 Dec 1914 – the blow has fallen – killed in action Dec. 26th. Is the brief official – and only – communication. We shall doubtless hear particulars soon. We give thanks to God for him and ask prayers for ourselves... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 95, *Echoes* p40)

2 Jan 1915 – Letter from Miss Elizabeth Tritton:our loss is so great – Alan was such a perfect son and brother, as you know, and the blank can never be filled in this life. But we are very proud of him, and we look back on the happiest memories. We have had beautiful letters about him...a long one from his Colonel and he did not suffer the least. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 96, *Echoes* p41)

Sunday 10 Jan 1915 – Twelve Noon. Memorial Service: in memoriam Captain Alan George Tritton, Coldstream Guards.... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 96, *Echoes* p42)

Tue 29 Oct 1918 – J. Herbert Tritton has working for him on Lyons Hall farm a man named Wilkins, now in a Labour battalion, formerly in the Coldstream Guards. He was with J.H.T.'s son, Capt. Alan Tritton, in the South African campaign. He was also in the Mons campaign.... (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes* p255)

Tue 17 Dec 1918 - J.H. Tritton had recently working on one of his farms a soldier who was in the Coldstreams and with Capt. Alan George Tritton. This soldier has now got his discharge, and is to be permanently at work on Lyons Hall farm. One of the J.H.T.'s Daisley Lane cottages is being fitted up for him and his family. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 173, *Echoes* p268)

Epilogue – J. Herbert Tritton, who had retired from Barclays in 1919, died in September 1923. The uneasy partnership between low-church squire and high-church parson was a thing of the past. The new squire was the eldest son, Major Leslie Tritton. J. Herbert Tritton's four daughters never married. They took a house in Finchingfield and turned one corner of

their sitting-room into a virtual shrine to their brother Alan, killed by a sniper's bullet in 1914. (*Echoes p293*)

ALFRED REGINALD WARD

Mon 13 Dec 1915 – Report in the village that Reggie Ward has frozen feet. He has been out only about three weeks. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 116, *Echoes p101*)

Wed 16 Oct 1918 – Reggie Ward, son of Harry Ward, Lyons Hall chauffeur, has died of influenza and pneumonia, at Salonika. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes p253*)

CHARLES HENRY WARD

The Trittons were in residence and at the Rectory, Andrew Clark's groom gardener, Charlie Ward. Got the pony cart ready to drive Dr Clark to Chelmsford to catch the up-train to Liverpool Street Station.... (*Echoes p xix*)

Tue 15 Sep 1914 – My groom-gardener, Charles Ward, bemoans deficiency of stature and of chest-circumference which shuts him out from enlisting and being paid to see Egypt or Malta or Gibraltar or France or Germany. There is a great village feeling against lads who are of age and physique to enlist and who have not done so. (footnote: Charles Ward came to the Rectory in 1909, a lad of fifteen. He looked after the pony and drove the trap when required. He was also responsible for the paddock, kitchen garden, orchard and lawns. For this he got 16s a week. He was devoted to Andrew Clark. Reg Ketley remembers him as a 'regular ol' country boy'. His sister was Mrs Mary Cope.] (MS. Eng. hist. e. 89, *Echoes p18*)

18 Dec 1915 – Chas. H. Ward, my man, says that, after the battle of Loos, the Daily Mirror published a picture of a girl, found in the pocket of a wounded soldier, who lost his memory, and whose identification disc had been lost, in the hope that his relations might see it. The lad's father (who is Chas. Ward's uncle) recognised the picture to be that of his daughter, which his son had taken with him. He wrote to the Daily Mirror and the lad was traced to Notley Hospital, where he still lies, never having recovered his memory. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 116, *Echoes p101*)

Wed 23 Feb 1916 - 9 a.m. Morning's post late by reason of snow. Delivered a letter to my man – Charles Henry Ward to appear 6 March [to 'join service with the Colours' under provision of the 1916 Military Service Act].

Sun 27 Feb 1916 – I had written to the Recruiting Office, Chelmsford, asking notice of holding of Tribunal to ask exemption or postponement of service of my lad, Charles Henry Ward. I had by this post very courteous letters in answer. C.H.W. is a very useful lad, in the house – where everything has to be done by hand – water pumped from a deep well, drains flushed weekly, as well as the garden tilled and the pony attended to. The place cannot do without a man. On the other hand he has not stamina for service. To take him out in wet would be to send him to hospital with chest trouble, and I do not imagine that recruiting is intended to provide inmates of hospitals. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 121, *Echoes p113*)

Thu 9 Mar 1916 – Went to the Recruiting Tribunal office; waited three-quarters of an hour beyond time; and was refused leave to keep my man, Chas. Henry Ward, till a later date. The tribunal consisted of a dozen or more county people – with military assessors – told off to compel them to refuse exemptions. [Footnote: Mrs Mary Cope remembers that the Rector's appeal against her brother's call-up made the local press. It was asked how his groom-gardener could be strong enough to do all the work he described, but too weak to stand army life. In the event Charlie did have a weak chest and would spend much time in hospitals.] (MS. Eng. hist. e. 122, *Echoes p116*)

Sat 1 April 1916 - 12.50 a.m. My lad, Charles Henry Ward, had his call this morning. He is to present himself at Chelmsford on Su. Apr. 9th. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 123, *Echoes p121*)

Sat 8 April 1916 – My lad, Chas. Hy. Ward, went off my service, at 5.30 p.m., being called out for service. I have no one to take his place, and shall have to undertake personally most

of the outside work. This an end to studies. Happily, after being in arrears with my war clippings, I have got fairly abreast this evening. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 123, *Echoes p123*)

Tue 11 April 1916 – My lad, Chas. Hy. Ward, has been 'passed for general service' and assigned to a driver's post in RFA [Royal Field Artillery]. He was to sleep at Warley last night, and go on to Woolwich today.

Sun 15 April 1916 – My lad (Charles H. Ward) has written home to his mother at Endway that he has been promoted. Four hundred at Woolwich were paraded to supply 'raiders' for the Royal Horse Artillery. Seven were taken and he is one of the seven. He has been once in the Riding School. The way in which the men swear at each other and at their horses is shocking.

Tue 18 Apr 1916 – 9 a.m. morning post brought a letter-card from my lad [Driver Charles H. Ward]: Dear Sir hoping This will find you all quite well as I am not feeling very well at present I have been inoculated this morning they have allowed me 48 hours off I stayed at Warley one night and at the RFA Depot one night the Major picked me and 7 more out and put us in the RHA I have had a rough time and they tell me it will be more rough yet I am in the riding school and they don't half put you through it I think this is all I have to say now kind regards to all Charlie. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 124, *Echoes p123*)

Sat 1 July 1916 – Charles H. Ward got home for first time on week-end leave. He got home last night, and has till Monday.

Sun 2 Jul 1916 – 5 p.m. Charles H Ward called, looked very smart in his RFA uniform, which is a particularly nice shade of khaki, He has till Wednesday. The Sergeant-Major told him that they would be going out next week or week after next to France or to Egypt. As riding-instructors at Woolwich they have a good many 'rough riders' – Australians. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 128, *Echoes p139*)

Mon 21 Aug 1916 – Charles Ward was home for the week-end. But he lay so long in bed on Sunday that he had not time to come and see me. He was always a grand hand at a long-lie on Sunday, and I myself or other member of the household had often to go of a Sunday morning to Bishop's Hall for the milk. Since Charlie has left the milk is fetched by Mrs Sarah Digby, of the Almshouses. She charges 3d. a week. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 131, *Echoes p152*)

Thu 16 Nov 1916 – Mrs Harry Ward has today a letter from her son, Charles H. Ward. He is in hospital, but she does not understand whether he is there because sick or wounded. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 138, *Echoes p168*)

Tue 21 Nov 1916 – Charlie Ward is, his mother thinks, suffering from eczema to which he has always been subject. He has not been in the firing-line but has been helping to build stables. He writes home that it is worth being ill to have the comfort of sleeping in a bed again. He was always a great hand for bed and was often late for his work here by delay in getting up.

Sat 25 Nov 1916 – Charlie Ward has written home that he is better and out. It is very cold. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 138, *Echoes p169*)

Fri 29 Dec 1916 – Charlie Ward is out of hospital. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 141, *Echoes p173*)

Thu 1 Feb 1917 – My sometime groom-gardener (Chas. H. Ward) is again in hospital – rheumatism in the knees. It was in the week before Christmas that he last came out of hospital. I told the tribunal when he was called up that he had not the stamina for campaigning, but they would not listen to me. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 143, *Echoes p179*)

Sat 10 March 1917 – Men of the Colonial forces in France are very keen to have a girl-correspondent in this country. Pte. Humphries, of New Zealand, was recently in hospital with Charles H. Ward. C.H.W. showed him the photo of Ethel M. Gooday. He at once wrote to her home address in Bocking asking her to correspond with him. A reply went off to Pte. Humphries today. Charlie Ward is probably glad you have Ethel Gooday corresponding with someone else. Although he flirted with her and writes her occasionally from France, his real flame is Ruth Fuller, formerly housemaid at this Rectory. C.W.'s mother says that if he comes back, he and R.F. 'may make a match of it'. [Footnote: Charlie's sister remembered in 1984

that his real flame was Ethel May Gooday. Ruth Fuller only really took up with Charlie when her boy-friend, Herbert Wright, was reported killed.] (MS. Eng. hist. e. 145, *Echoes p186*)

Sat 11 Aug 1917 – Morning's post also brought me an official letter from F.J. Cooper asking information about length of service with me, date of leaving, and wages and allowances of Charles H. Ward, taken from my service for army duty. His father, Harry Ward, a most steady and trusted workman on Fulbourne's farm, is now wholly incapacitated for work, and, in fact, is slowly dying of a painful malignant internal growth. The mother had made a claim for 'Separation Allowance', now being 'dependent' on her son. It is a most deserving, as well as necessitous case. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 151/152, *Echoes p205-6*)

Wed 26 Sep 1917 – Charles H. Ward today called. He has ten days leave. He was looking well, but, if possible, more boyish-like than ever. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 154, *Echoes p212*)

Fri 19 Oct 1917 – Village gossip has it that Chas. H. Ward is engaged to Ruth Fuller, formerly housemaid here. [Footnote: On his last leave, Charlie had got his mother to give him £2 from his savings (which came to £20) in order to buy a fire-screen for his recently married sister. However, when he arrived at Liverpool Street Station from Great Leighs, Ruth Fuller, a waitress at the Commercial Hotel in Waterloo Road, met him. She 'wheedled' the money for an engagement ring. Charlie's sister remembered that Ruth would have been 'far too expensive for my brother': she dressed to equal the Trittons' and even had her own calling cards printed. She eventually married an older man with some money.] (MS. Eng. hist. e. 155, *Echoes p216*)

Tue 11 Dec 1917 - Afternoon's post brought Harry Ward, Endway, word that his son Charles Henry Ward, RHA, had been killed on 16 Nov. The letter was from his major:

"30 November 1917 – Dear Madam, I much regret that I have been unable to write before to you to express my deepest condolences with you on the death of your son. All of the officers, NCO's and men join me in deepest sympathy with you in your great loss. He was a most excellent soldier and much liked by all ranks in the battery, who miss him very much. His death was entirely accidental and absolutely instantaneous. He stepped onto the step of a truck while it was moving out of the station and the step came away, throwing him under the train. We had to leave him at the station with his sergeant as the battery was en route for Italy.

The French doctor of the village made all arrangements for the funeral and the whole population turned out to mark their respects and they gave your boy a very fine funeral and covered the coffin with flowers. A cross was erected to his memory by the battery. He was buried in the village cemetery at Seurre, Cote d'Or, France on the 17th Nov. 1917, the day after his death on the 15th. Owing to the move of the battery we have been unable to send letters off till the present moment.

Again let me express my own personal sorrow in the loss of your very fine son who gave his life for his country no less than if he had died in battle. Yours truly, R.F. Adam"

Charlie Ward was twenty-five last April. His last letter (received at his home S. 17 Nov., the day, as it proved, of his funeral) was written on M., 12 Nov. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 157, *Echoes p220*)

ERNEST WRIGHT

Please note: There are two "Ernest Wright"s mentioned in the Diaries. The image of "Ernest Wright, Essex Yeomanry" in the book shows what is thought to be a Middlesex Regiment cap badge. Compare with "Reg Ketley, Essex Regiment" which is thought to be the correct badge. As the Ernest/"Ernie" Wright listed on the Memorial (killed in 1918) was in the Royal Fusiliers, then it is possible this image is "Ernest Wright, Con. Wright's boy", whose regiment is not mentioned in this book and is not recorded as a casualty.

Ernest W. Wright – different person (W=Wilsher?) (*Echoes p114*)

Sun 21 May 1916 – They tell me that 'Ernie' Wright – Major Leslie Tritton's gardener – is called out. He is a married man with several children. Also that his younger brother, Albert

Wright, just moved from Bishop's Hall to Lyons Hall work, has been called out. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 126, *Echoes p130*)

Sat 12 May 1917 - Ernest Wright is in hospital in France – ill, not wounded. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 148, *Echoes p192*)

Tue 27 Nov 1917 – Ernest Wright is very ill in France – bronchitis and pneumonia – too ill to write home. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 156, *Echoes p218*)

Thu 16 May 1918 - Ernest Wright, son of Con. Wright, is also called up next week – different person (*p154* describes Con. Wright as “a ‘dealer’ i.e. buys and re-sells pigs and poultry). (MS. Eng. hist. e. 163, *Echoes p235*)

Fri 31 May 1918 – Ernest Wright, Con. Wright's boy, went off yesterday – different person. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 163, *Echoes p238*)

Thu 3 Oct 1918 – News was received this morning that ‘Ernie’ Wright has been killed. He leaves six quite young children, and a wife who is not always quite in her right mind. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 170, *Echoes p251*)

Mon 11 Nov 1918 – Ernest Wright expects to be sent to Malta – different person. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes p259*)

Wed 18 Dec 1918 – 12 noon Eliz. L.M.Tritton called ...⁽ⁱⁱ⁾As regards the widow and children of Ernest Wright, Daisley's Lane: her father and brother (Major H. Leslie M. Tritton) are paying what is needed over the allowance as a child of a deceased soldier to bring up the eldest girl, Beatrice, at Halstead Industrial School. The Trittons are sending the eldest boy, Ronald, to a training-school from which he will pass to the Arethusa training ship. Mrs Wright and the four younger children are going to Higham Green just outside Bury St. Edmunds in a cottage next to Mrs W's father and mother. The cottages and the estate there belong to Major Robin Barclay, secretary of the YMCA, a great friend of Major H.L.M. Tritton. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 173, *Echoes p269*)

Note: a 2009 enquiry to the “Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa” charity revealed no record of a Ronald Wright joining the training ship Arethusa.

HERBERT GEORGE WRIGHT (see in Appendix for additional notes)

Wed 19 May 1915 – The village is much agitated about the heavy loss reported in the Essex Yeomanry, and anxiously waits for details. Practically everyone has relatives or intimate acquaintances in that regiment. Albert Wright did not know whether his brother, Herbert, was with the Essex Yeomanry at the fatal action. [in which Col. Deacon was killed] (MS. Eng. hist. e. 103, *Echoes p63*)

Mon 24 May 1915 – Mrs George Wright had a letter from her son's depot officer. Her son Herbert ('Hubby') Wright had been searched for everywhere, since the late disastrous action, and was still missing. The officers fear he was killed. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 104, *Echoes p65*)

Tue 8 June 1915 – St Great Leighs Post Office today, the wife of an Essex Yeoman was making enquiry for her husband. She had been told by the authorities that he could not be traced. In one of his letters he said he was friends with a labourer (Wright by name) from Great Leighs. This must be Herbert G. Wright, son of George Wright, who is ‘missing’. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 105, *Echoes p67-8*)

Mon 28 Jun 1915 – It is characteristic of the village mind that it is too feeble to accept a simple fact. It must add legendary details. Thus, in the case of Herbert G. Wright, of the Essex Yeomanry, reported ‘missing’ at the time of the ‘charge’ of that battalion: village reports have been (a) that he was blown to pieces by a great shell, without his comrades seeing it; (b) that he was buried in the trench by the blowing in of its edge. On Saturday there ran a confident report along the Great Road that his father, George Wright, had had a letter telling

how his son had been wounded, had crawled three miles to ambulance, and died there. Only a lie; no letter of any kind received. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 106, *Echoes* p71)

Mon 5 Jul 1915 – [report of Mrs Deacons husband being a prisoner]. Major Brown said that this gave hope that some of the privates of the Essex Yeomanry (missing since then) including Herbert Wright, might also be prisoners. On the other hand, He had been told by a man who was present that [as] he had seen some of the Yeomanry 'blown to smithereens', he could not tell who they were, but they could never be identified. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 106/107, *Echoes* p73)

Tue 22 Feb 1916 – Mr George Wright has only yesterday received definite news of the death of his son Herbert ('Hubby') who has been 'missing' since the 'charge' of the Essex Yeomanry. A comrade, who was in the action, was wounded at the same time and says that Herbert Wright died of wounds the day after the action. He, himself, has been so ill, that it is only now that he is able to write. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 121, *Echoes* p112-13)

Mon 6 Mar 1916 – 3.40 p.m. Miss Ethel Wright called about her brother, Herbert George Wright. Her father had received an envelope containing a white folio printed sheet with reference to 1656, Pte. Wright, Herbert G., 1/1 Essex Yeomanry who had not been heard of since 14.5.15 and is now assumed to have died on 14.5.15 or soon after and that his relatives should claim his effects according to the form which would be sent. Enclosed was a printed slip with lithographed signature: 'The King commands me to assure you of the true sympathy of his majesty and the Queen in your sorrow. Kitchener.' Miss Ethel Wright said the singular thing was that the same post which brought the official presumption-of-death certificate brought also a letter from the only friend her brother had made in the Yeomanry. In this letter he said that he was certain that Herbert Wright was a prisoner in Germany. Herbert's fiancée, Ruth Fuller (formerly housemaid here at the Rectory; now in London) had been to see them. Her people live in Felsted – and at Felsted she had seen a letter from a man who said that he knew for a certainty of one officer and some men of his unit who were prisoners in Germany and not one of them had been allowed to write home. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 121, *Echoes* p115)

Thu 15 Feb 1917 – Fred Fuller's son had been out ever since the battle of the Somme. On Monday 5th Febr. He was taken very ill. On Sat. 10 Febr. He was at the Military Hospital at Colchester. He told his father that out in the trenches the mud is so terrible that he had seen horses absolutely sink out of sight. He is inclined to think that several people who have not been traced (e.g. Colonel Deacon, Herbert ('Hubby') G. Wright), and have long been reported missing may have disappeared in this way. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 144, *Echoes* p181)

footnote, see Charles H Ward entry (*page* 186)

Tue 25 Mar 1919 – Mr & Mrs George Wright, cottage behind Malting's, are still in hope that their son Herbert ('Hubby') Wright, 'missing' since the 'charge' of the Essex Yeomanry and never heard of, may yet turn up as a returned prisoner. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 176, *Echoes* p281)

LOUIS WALTER WRIGHT

Thu 3 Oct 1918 – Mrs Louis Wright, High Road, has not heard from France from her husband for a long time. She supposes that, being in the cavalry, he is moved about fast from place to place. Their son, Louis Wright, has been in hospital with severe bronchitis but is now better and expects to be home soon on draft-leave. His mother can't think what good a lad with so weak a chest will be in France in the winter. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 170, *Echoes* p251)

Fri 11 Oct 1918 – Louis Wright, son of Louis Wright, High Road, Great Leighs, is at home on final leave. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes* p253)

Sat 26 Oct 1918 – Louis Wright is still home on leave. In his khaki he looks very diminutive. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes* p255)

Mon 11 Nov 1918 – 2 p.m. Young Louis Wright, aet. 19, died in hospital at Sheerness today of double pneumonia. His mother was told yesterday that on Sat. at 9 p.m. he was

dangerously ill. Being herself ill and her daughter ill, with influenza, she was unable to go. His uncle, Ernest Wilsher Wright went (at 10.30 a.m.) this morning, but arrived at Sheerness only at 4 p.m., too late. Louis was the only son. They are bringing the body home for burial. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 171, *Echoes* p259)

Wed 13 Nov 1918 – Louis Wright's body was expected at Chelmsford today. It was to be brought from the station to Great Leighs by a gun-carriage from the camp at Great Baddow. (Word came to Great Leighs this afternoon that it would not be brought to Great Leighs till 8.30 a.m. tomorrow) (MS. Eng. hist. e. 172, *Echoes* p260)

Fri 15 Nov 1918 – The authorities are giving young Louis Wright a military funeral – gun-car and firing party from Baddow. Louis Wright, his father, got back to Great Leighs this evening. (This was a false report.)

Sun 17 Nov 1918 – Louis Wright, the father, did not arrive last night. He has not been heard from for about three weeks. Mrs Louis Wright is very anxious about him. The rumour in this district is that there were heavy casualties (yet unpublished) in the last days of the fighting and, in particular, that the Dragoons in which he is now serving (but he is in the 9th Lancers) had been 'badly cut up'. Telegrams to him about his son's funeral have brought no answer. Louis Wright was a short lad, but his coffin was 6ft 2in Geo. Taylor, the undertaker in Great Leighs (who had charge of the funeral) says that at hospitals and other places where there have been many deaths they do not measure for coffins. They stock the coffins in two sizes – one size for men, one for women and fill up any vacant space with cotton wool. The party of soldiers was half-hour late at the Wrights' house. The military party seemed to be 'RF' (Royal Fusiliers), and consisted of six bearers; a firing party of fourteen; a bugler; and the sergeant in charge. The firing party stood in two ranks. They fired three volleys in the air. I had never seen a firing-party before, and did not think it at all a solemn proceeding. There was too much hoarse shouting of orders by the sergeant. Just as the firing-party moved off, the bearers stepped forward and picked up the spent cartridges, before falling into the line of march. I thought this very undignified, but Major Caldwell says it is always done – the spent cartridges being taken back to be re-filled. After the volleys had been fired, the bugler, who stood beside the sergeant just behind the firing-party, sounded 'the last post'. Order was then given to fix bayonets; shoulder rifles; to march off two-abreast. The bearers (who carried no rifles) fell in behind the others. The funeral was to have been at 3 p.m. but the cortege did not reach the Church-gate till 3.45 p.m. There was a very large crowd of young people waiting all the time at the gate. It was a very dull, cloudy afternoon, with a very cold N.E. wind. (MS. Eng. hist. e. 172, *Echoes* p262)

Appendix

1. Additional Notes on HERBERT GEORGE WRIGHT

[From: www.essex-yeomanry.org.uk]

"On 13th May, 1915, during the Second Battle of Ypres, the Essex Yeomanry made a dismounted bayonet charge at Frezenburg Ridge which recaptured the front line trenches. The Commanding Officer, Lt Col E Deacon (of Halstead) and 69 were killed and 91 wounded; a total of 161 casualties from 302."

(War Diaries Part 1)

Brielen

10/5/15 Rested during day. Night dug trenches by Yperlee Canal.

11/5/15 Rested. Draft of 12 horses arrived to B echelon.

12/5/15 Southend Dunmow and Tiptree troops and a few OR's total 68 joined regiment under 2nd/Lt Holt. Regiment rested by day and at night proceeded on foot to dig connected trenches N of Hooge.

13/5/15 Retired from digging the GHQ line of trenches E of Potijze strength of Regiment in trenches 302 all ranks including 17 officers. Very heavily shelled from dawn to 6am. Part of 7th Brigade holding advanced trenches shelled out during morning 8th Brigade ordered to make a counter attack and retake them. Started 2.15pm. 10th Hussars on left EY centre Blues on right. EY and 10th doubled all the way to enemy trenches about 1000 yards distant. Germans retired before Brigade reached trenches. Regiment could not get into touch with Blues on right. Germans bombarded retaken trench until dark. 10th and EY less B Sqn retired to line of dugouts in front of GHQ line about 6pm thence to GHQ lines after dark. Capt R Brise and Lt Thompson with about 10 men held advanced position by ruined houses lying in shell holes till after dark. They kept back the German infantry the whole afternoon retiring after dark to rejoin rest of Regiment. Regiment held GHQ trenches during night in conjunction with company of Durham Light Infantry. Remainder of A echelon went up from Le Croquet to join Lieut Wedd's command.

14/5/15 Occupied GHQ trenches until relieved at 9pm by 2nd Cav Div to A Huts S of Vlamertinghe arriving about 11.30pm.

Casualties May 13th/14th

Killed Wounded Wounded & Missing Missing

Officers 4 5 1 -

Men 29 95 15 11

Total 33 100 16 11

Total all ranks= 160

The following were the Officer casualties:-

Lieut Col E Deacon wounded and missing

Maj F H D C Whitmore wounded (night of 12th/13th)

Maj A Roddick killed (while leading charge)

Capt (Adjutant) Steele wounded (severely)

Lieut R Edwards wounded (lay out for 24 hours)

Lieut V Hine wounded (morning of 13th slight)

Lieut G S Johnson killed

2nd/Lieut G Reid killed (MG Officer)

2nd/Lieut P Holt wounded (severely)

2nd/Lieut Swire killed

[From: Wikipedia, [Second Battle of Ypres](#)]

The Germans had moved their artillery forward and put three Army corps opposite the 27th and 28th divisions on the Frezenberg ridge. The battle began on May 8 with a bombardment that disrupted the 83rd Brigade holding trenches on the forward side of the ridge but the first and second assaults by German infantry were repelled by the survivors. The third German assault of the morning pushed the defenders back. While the neighbouring 80th Brigade stopped the advance, the 84th Brigade was broken giving a two mile gap in the line. Further advance was stopped through counterattacks and a night move by the 10th Brigade. On the 9th the German attack was across the Menin road against the 27 Division. On 10 May the Germans released another gas cloud but made little progress. The battle ended after six days of fighting with a German advance of 2000 yards.

[From the Price Albert's Own Yeomanry, [Leicestershire Yeomanry War Diary](#)]

"At 2.30 (pm) our guns opened a heavy shell fire on the German trenches and continued to shell till 3.30 when the Royal Horse Guards, the 10th. Hussars and the Essex Yeomanry advanced from General Head Quarter Lines - 1000 yds - to retake the trenches lost by the 7th Brigade.

2. Notes on Albert Wright , a non-casualty, brother of Ernest and Herbert George Wright:

Tue 8 Sep 1914 – It is reported today that Albert Wright, one of the strongest young farm-hands in the village, is going to volunteer. (*Echoes p16*)

Wed 19 May 1915 – Albert Wright did not know whether his brother, Herbert, was with the Essex Yeomanry at the fatal action. (see Herbert George Wright above). (*Echoes p63*)

Thu 27 May – report in the village that bombs were dropped last night on Southend. Albert Wright and George Taylor believe they heard the explosions. PC Cole saw the flashes. (*Echoes p65*)

Thu 9 Dec 1915 – At the Council School last night, 6.30 p.m., only four are said to have turned up. Albert Wright, son of Geo. Wright and brother of Herbert G. Wright, was one. Albert Wright is horseman at Bishop's Hall, and a very reliable member of Great Leighs choir. (*Echoes p99*)

Sat 11 Dec 1915 – [re: medical inspections] Albert Wright was passed on Wednesday. He is head horseman for Major Wm. Brown. Major Brown said he could not be spared, unless the farm was to be stopped. (*Echoes p100*)

Tue 28 Dec 1915 – Fragment of a theological discussion heard in Bishop's Hall farmyard between two of the hands: Albert Wright (who has been 'converted') 'There is nothing my God cannot do. His 'unconverted' mate – 'Yes, there is. He can't make an uphill without making a downhill.' (*Echoes p102*)

Sun 23 1916 - Jan 7.30 p.m. coming out of the Mission Room service I found it so dark that I could not see the step at the railing, into the road, but stumbled down it. Soon afterwards I found myself in the grass by the roadside and had to shuffle with my feet to find the road again. Here a young fellow (Albert Wright by his voice, because I could see neither his face, nor his form) offered me his hand, and brought me to the Rectory gate. Albert Wright thought it would rain in the night because 'the stars looked very sickly', which is a bad sign. (*Echoes p109*)

Sat 18 March 1916 – Albert Wright, horseman to major Wm. Brown, is a starred man, in a privileged occupation. He married a week ago, and is now reported to be glorying over the

unmarried labourers that every one of them will have to go before he is called out. (*Echoes p116*)

Sun 21 May 1916 – They tell me that ‘Ernie’ Wright – Major Leslie Tritton’s gardener – is called out. He is a married man with several children. Also that his younger brother, Albert Wright, just moved from Bishop’s Hall to Lyons Hall work, has been called out. (*Echoes p130*)

Fri 9 Jun 1916 – Albert Wright is exempted, driving Mr Tritton’s new motor-plough. (*Echoes p134*)

*Compiled by Trevor Wright, www.trevorwright.com,
Great Nephew of Ernest Wright and Herbert George Wright,
Grandson of Albert Wright*

~~~~~ END ~~~~~