

IN MEMORY OF HARRY GARDNER

DIED IN ACTION 16 NOVEMBER 1914

Lived at Childyke Cottage, beyond the end of Mill Lane (no longer standing)

PLAQUE No. 2

Harry was born in 1894, and according to the 1901 census spent his childhood at No. 3, Doctors Cottages with his parents Edward and Sarah, his older brother John (12), younger sister Ada (4) and his little brother William (2).

The cottages where they lived are no longer standing. Instead a stretch of green field adjacent to the railway covers over the buried foundations of the houses. They were described as 'old' even in 1913, so may have dated from the early 19th century. The property survey of 28 May 1913 shows each cottage having four main rooms, two bedrooms on the first floor, and a living room and a pantry on the ground floor. Though this may seem small, especially for a family of six (the four children presumably crammed together), the houses had large gardens, where families could grow vegetables, fruit trees, and even bright bursts of flowers.

Harry would most likely have attended primary school in the village, but not been educated past a basic degree of literacy and numeracy. He went on to work as a labourer in the cement works until 17 July 1912, when he enlisted as a private in the 1st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment, aged 18.

Though they were originally held back in Britain in case of an attack against the country, on 22 August 1914 the battalion was moved to France. They arrived in time to provide infantry reinforcements at the battle of Le Cateau, desperately needed as the artillery, engineers, field ambulances and mounted troops still had not arrived. Harry's Battalion went on the fight in the battles of Marne, Aisne, and Messines in 1914, and in 1915 in the second battle of Ypres. In 1916 they moved to take part in the battle of the Somme.

Harry did not see these later, bloody conflicts. He died of wounds on 16 November 1914, most likely due to the shelling the battalion endured in the days before. The war diary in the period leading up to his death shows the troops being attacked by sniper fire, heavy artillery and shell fire, through cold snowy days.

He is buried in the Bonjean Military cemetery, Armentieres.

His mother, Sarah, received a total of £11.15.1 from the army, in the years following his death.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

Remembering the men of Harbury parish who fell during the first world war in service of their country.

