



| History: | |
|-----------------|---|
| Topic: | Hargrave WWI Soldiers – The Untold Story. |
| Date of Record: | December 2023 |
| Author: | Nicholas Newman |
| Notes: | The untold story of Hargrave soldiers who are not remembered on the WWI memorial. |

WWI Hargrave Soldiers - The Untold Stories

Whilst Ernest Copping, Joseph Nunn, Oscar Plummer, Frank Pearson, George Phillips, Thomas Phillips, Eric Pettitt, Horace Race and William Stevens, paid the ultimate sacrifice in World War I, and are rightly honoured on a plaque at St Edmund Church, Hargrave, theirs is only part of the heroic story of Hargrave villagers who played their part in the conflict.

For those nine, limited family backgrounds, regiments they served with, details of their passing and the locations of their war memorials, are listed in the article 'WWI Soldiers' in the Memories section of this website.

Through the local press releases during the war, this article pieces together elements of their service, and that of at least 30 other Hargrave men who also volunteered or were conscripted into active duty. After basic training many went to France and saw the horrors of Flanders Fields, whilst others went further afield to the Middle East.

For obvious reasons, at that time, government sources published little detailed information on the location and success of operations of the various regiments that they served in. Soldiers letters home were also censored by their officers, so that if they were intercepted by the enemy no sensitive material fell into their hands.

On the death of a soldier The War Office would notify his next of kin by telegram or letter. Later followed by an individually named memorial plaque and citation.

Telegrams were also often used to notify a family that their relative had been missing in action, captured, wounded or ill in hospital. The term "casualty" also covers some of these situations. Soldiers could die from their wounds many months after action, but a term in hospital could also be due to frostbite, typhoid, yellow-fever, malaria, pneumonia or influenza depending on their theatre of war. Many men also suffered mental trauma from 'shell shock' (PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), although it was not properly recognised at first and some attributed it to moral weakness or even cowardice.



An army was also weakened by lack of sleep and poor diet, incidents of gas poisoning, plus the more common medical issues such as scabies, sexually transmitted diseases and infections of cuts and abrasions. There was also 'trench foot' where due to prolonged immersion in water filled trenches, a soldier's feet would become swollen and blistered and a lack of circulation could result in the onset of gangrene and the need for amputation. Then was also 'trench fever' or typhus, thought to be spread by head and body lice, which for the former could be restricted by shaving the head, but the latter would hide in the folds of uniforms.



The symptoms were irritation of the skin which could then lead to a more serious recurring debilitating fever. Lastly there was 'trench mouth' caused by poor oral hygiene and smoking and which would result in bleeding and ulcerated gums, swelling of the glands in the throat and neck, and difficulty in eating and swallowing.

At the Front each battalion had their own medical officer assisted by stretcher bearers, and he would make any initial assessments, if necessary, the casualty would then be transferred by Field Ambulance to the Field Hospital. They were usually located in tents or makeshift buildings about 15km behind the front line and would be large enough to treat around 200 patients. Largely run by the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), assistance came from sisters and nurses of the voluntary aid detachment (VAD), and male orderlies. They had their own form of heroism having to deal with a conveyor belt of horrific injuries resulting from the battlefield, and new techniques for the treatment of soft tissue shrapnel wounds and bone fractures from shells and exploding bullets had to be developed. Improved aftercare also led to innovative work on artificial limbs, facial reconstruction and plastic surgery.



So, to the press clippings below. They probably reflect the situation in most villages, and apart from the confirmation of 'killed in action' there are also numerous notifications of wounding and illness resulting in hospital treatment at the front or recuperation at home. There is also the odd instance of a soldier missing in action or confirmation that he was in a prisoner of war camp. The only relief came from the home visits reported, an opportunity to catch up with friends and family and also a break from the horrors and monotony of war.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 30th January 1915.

HARGRAVE,

ROLL HONOUR. —A lithographed, framed, roll of honour, on which are the names of old scholars of Hargrave School who are now serving in His Majesty's Forces, has been presented by Mr. G. B. Candler, Chief Attendance Officer, Bury St. Edmund's, and hang in the Church porch. The gift is much appreciated.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 13th March 1915.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER RECOVERING.

It is with satisfaction that we hear of the favourable progress towards recovery of Private George Gooch, Grenadier Guards, who was seriously wounded on November 5th at Ypres. Not only did he receive a gunshot wound to the back, but was buried up, with other comrades by a "Jack Johnson" when the trench fell on them. When dug out the man beneath him was found he dead, and the other above had sustained a broken neck. Private Gooch is still hospital, undergoing treatment for his arm, which was rendered powerless by being buried beneath the weight of earth.

Note: A "Jack Johnson" was the nickname for a German 150mm howitzer shell, named after Jack Johnson (1878-1946) the first black world heavy weight boxing champion in 1908, referencing the black smoke thrown up when such a shell landed.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 13th March 1915.

HARGRAVE MAN KILLED IN ACTION.

It was with deep regret that the parishioners of Hargrave learned on Tuesday morning week, that Private Frank Pearson 1st Company, 1st Suffolk Regiment, had been killed while in action on Sunday February 21st. The deceased who was much respected, was in his 24th year and had served with his Regiment in Egypt several years' previous the outbreak of war. When ordered home for active service he spent a few days in his native village before proceeding to the front. The sad news was conveyed to his parents by a comrade who was with him when he fell, and much sympathy is felt for the family in their sad bereavement. On Sunday the Rector (Rev. P. Wilson), made sympathetic reference to the sad event, and at the end of the service Chopin's "Funeral March" was played by the organist.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 20th March 1915.

HARGRAVE

WOUNDED THE WAR. Another young soldier of this village, Prvt. Charles Steele belonging to the 1st Suffolk Regiment who had been fighting in the trenches at Ypres, has had to be convoyed to hospital suffering from frost-bitten feet.

KILLED ACTION, The sad news has been officially confirmed of the death of Private Frank Edward Pearson, second son Mr, and Mrs. T. Pearson, Knowles Green, who was killed in action in South Ypres accompanied by a letter from Lord Kitchener, containing the following message. "The King commands me to assure you of the true sympathy His Majesty, and the Queen in your sorrow."

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 31st July 1915.

HARGRAVE

ROLL OF HONOUR. —The latest addition to the list of those serving is the name of Mr. J. D. Todd, youngest Mrs. M. Todd. School House, and the late Mr. Geo. Todd, H.M. Inland Revenue. Mr. Todd has joined the Royal Naval Air Service, and holds the rank of 1st Air Mechanic, having passed first grade in the mechanical theory and practical test. It may be added that that 1st Air Mechanic J. D. Todd was among the first 200 to offer his services at the outbreak of the war, but was not accepted account of very recent operation for appendicitis. He is the third of Mrs. Todd's sons to offer their services. While

following the scholastic profession, Mr. Todd was connected with the County School (Mathe.) Ripley College, Hargrave School, and the Guildhall Feoffment Boys' School, Bury St. Edmund's. A keen footballer, he played for the Guildhall Feoffment Old Boys Team, and occasionally for the now defunct St. Mary's 2nd XI.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 22nd January 1916.

HARGRAVE MAN AT THE FRONT

STORY OF BRITISH VICTORY

ENEMY BARRICADE KNOCKED DOWN AND GERMANS CAPTURED

MEETING WITH HIGHAM AND OUSDEN MEN

Mrs. J. Buxton, of Hargrave, has received letter from her brother, Section Signaller Albert McGuire, 5th Canadian Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade, B.E.F., serving in France. He also forwards her copy "A Christmas Garland from the Front," an illustrated publication produced by the Canadian Division in France and Belgium, descriptive of the part played the Canadians in and around the second battle Ypres. The publication is cleverly and admirably got up, being quite literary a work of art in its way.

In addition to the details (excellently printed good paper), there are several photographs of officers—singly and in groups—and scenes and incidents, whilst a feature of the publication are the clever and delightful sketches and cartoons interspersed amongst the letterpress. These display much originality of thought, skilful design, and talent in depiction and characterisation. The verses, personal notes, and other contributions are highly entertaining, and show that the writers to this "war magazine" include many who are gifted in the use of the pen. The design the cover and from page are typical and noteworthy.

In the course of his letter to Mr. Buxton, Section-Signaller McGuire says: -

"What kind of weather are you having? We are getting it very wet, and the mud is something fierce; but still, it is as bad for 'Fritz' as for ourselves. We pulled off a little stunt the last time, which has got the battalion great praise. While we were out the Germans erected a barricade which gave cover for snipers to fire at our men in the rear of the trenches, so we got a little scheme to work with the result that we knocked the barricade down flat and captured the men holding it. Another unit tried this, but were unsuccessful, but our boys made a great job of it. There has been great bombardment going on this last two days on our left. The Germans have been using gas, as we have noticed the fumes away back here in reserve. I think we have won a big fight alright. We shall get details later. I saw Bert Whitmore today. He has been very ill, and is expecting to go home to England. He asked me for your address, which I gave him, as he lives at Higham, so if he gets over he will go to see you. King of Ousden, is well, and I ran across Mathews, who came from Lidgate. He remembers his brother going to the mill to catch rats, so perhaps you might remember him."

The following item was printed in the Bury free Press on the 5th February 1916.

HARGRAVE

SOLDIER'S VISIT. – During the last few days a visit has been paid by Gunner W. J. Last to his native village before returning to his duties abroad. Gunner Last has been abroad for a considerable time. The best of good wishes go to him from his numerous friends and acquaintances.

The following item was printed in the Bury free Press on the 25th March 1916.

HARGRAVE

VISIT OF SOLDIER. - During the last few days a visit has been made to his relatives by Prvt. G. Mace, 9th Suffolk Regiment, after being in hospital suffering from frost-bitten feet. contracted in the trenches. Prvt. Wane has now returned to duty, accompanied by the good wishes his friends.

The following item was printed in the Stowmarket Weekly Post on the 17th June 1916.

HARGRAVE.

DIED OF WOUNDS. —It was with much sorrow that information was received by Mrs. John Buxton from the Chaplain of the Military Hospital in France of the death her brother, Prvt. Thomas McGuire, of the 60th Canadians, of wounds received during the recent severe bombardment of the Canadians last week, and died last Tuesday. Prvt. T. McGuire, who had been through the Boer war, had rejoined the forces during the last few months, while in Canada being an old soldier, with the determination to do his share in helping to win the war. Prvt. McGuire has also a brother, Prvt. Albert McGuire, serving with the 5th Canadian Signal Section. Much sympathy is felt for the family in their bereavement.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 29th July 1916.

HARGRAVE.

RECOVERY OF SOLDIER, --The gratifying news has reached Mr. and Mrs Alfred Pettitt of the recovery of their son, Lance-Corporal Fred Pettitt, 5th Suffolk Regiment, from dysentery, after being in hospital in Alexandria. Lance- Corporal Pettitt has been in a Convalescent Home, at Montazah in order to complete his recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 5th August 1916.

HARGRAVE MAN IN THE GREAT ADVANCE.

SIGNALLER McGUIRE WOUNDED

Much sympathy is felt for Signaller A. McGuire, 5th Battalion Canadians, brother of Mrs. John Buxton, The Mill House who has been wounded in the face during the great advance. Signaller McGuire has been conveyed to the Base Hospital, Boulogne.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 2nd September 1916.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL.

News has been received that Prvt. Charles Steele, 7th Suffolk Regiment, son of Mrs. Arthur Ruse, of Hargrave, has been admitted into hospital in France, suffering from shock after taking part in the recent Great Advance.

The following item was printed in the East Anglian Daily Times on the 21st September 1916.

Official information was received on Tuesday by Mr and Mrs. R. Smith, of Chevington that their son, Lance-Corpl. H. Smith, of the Suffolk Regiment, had died from enteric fever on September 15th, death taking place at the 26th Stationary Hospital, Ismaha (Egypt). The deceased joined the Army in July, 1915, at a recruiting meeting at Hargrave, an adjoining village. Previous to enlistment he worked at the foundry of Messrs. Johnson Bros. at Barrow.

The following item was printed in the Stowmarket Weekly Post on the 5th October 1916.

HARGRAVE.

Information has been received by his relatives that Pte. Sidney Bailey, 1/5th Suffolk Regiment, is in hospital in Alexandria, Egypt, suffering from an attack of dysentery, and that Pte. Frank Frost is also in hospital suffering from the same complaint. Much sympathy is felt for them by their friends, who wish them a speedy recovery.

A visit has been made by Corp. George Frost, 2nd Bat., Suffolk Regiment, to his relatives in this village, after being in France for some time. He has been taking part in the recent severe fighting on the Somme. Corporal Frost and some of his companions were granted ten days' special leave for good work in the field. Corporal. Frost, who enlisted before the war. has been wounded on four different occasions.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 21st October 1916.

HARGRAVE.

WOUNDED SOLDIER. —information has been received, in official letter from the War Office, by his parents that Prvt. Hubert Phillips, 2nd Suffolk Regt., is in hospital in Salonica suffering from wounds.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th October 1916.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER WOUNDED

Information has been received by his mother that Prvt. Charles Steele. Suffolk Regiment, is in hospital, having been wounded for the fifth time. He has been serving in France for some months, and seen severe fighting during the great advance.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 23rd December 1916.

HARGRAVE.

SOLDIER MISSING. communication has been received by the parents of Prvt. Oscar Plummer, of the Royal Fusiliers, from the Infantry Record Office, Hounslow, stating that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that he has 'been reported missing since November 13th. Much sympathy is felt for the parents in the anxiety they are experiencing concerning his fate. They would be very grateful if any his comrades, or those who were with him, could give them any information concerning him.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 24th February 1917.

HARGRAVE.

SOLDIERS ON LEAVE. —A visit has been made in the past week by Prvt. W. Stevens and Prvt. C. Steele, both the Suffolk Regiment, youngest son of Mrs. Ruse, on the occasion of his marriage. Both men have been on active service for a considerable period, and appear to be in the best of health and spirits. Their friends unite wishing them the best of luck and a speedy return.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 24th March 1917.

DISTRICT INTELLIGENCE.

HARGRAVE.

ACCIDENT. —information has been received of a somewhat serious accident which has happened to Lieut. Boldero Egypt. While riding a somewhat restive horse he was thrown and kicked in the knee. Lieut. Boldero was conveyed to hospital in Cairo, where he still is. The greatest sympathy is felt for him, and also his relatives in their anxiety. He has the best wishes of his numerous friends for a speedy recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 5th May 1917.

HARGRAVE.

WOUNDED SOLDIER—A communication has been received by Mr. and Mrs. Simon Last, late of Stone Hall Farm, that their eldest son, Prvt. Simon Last, native of this village, has been admitted into hospital, suffering from severe gunshot wounds in both legs and right foot. Much sympathy is felt for him, and his friends unite in wishing him a speedy recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 12th May 1917.

HARGRAVE

WOUNDED SOLDIERS. —Several soldiers belonging to this village serving abroad are in hospital suffering from wounds. Information has been received that amongst those recently wounded are Prvt. William Stevens, wounded in head, shoulder, and leg; also Prvt Charles Pearson in hospital, severely wounded arm and leg. Both men have the sympathy their old friends, who unite wishing them all a speedy recovery.

The following item was printed in the Stowmarket Weekly post on the 19th July 1917.

Four Hargrave Soldier Brothers

ONE KILLED IN ACTION



The above photographs are all sons of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Pearson., of Knowles Green, of Hargrave. The first is that of Pte. Frank Pearson, who was serving with the Suffolk Regiment in Egypt on the outbreak of war. His was amongst the first infantry regiments that was sent to France in 1914, where unfortunately he was killed in a terrible rush against the enemy, and was one of the brave boys who made such a gallant stand against, tremendous odds.

Pte. Albert Pearson (second photo) joined the 5th Suffolks in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for men, and is serving with the forces in Egypt. Prvt. John Pearson (third) also joined the 5th Suffolks at the same time as his brother Albert and is also in Egypt. Pre. Charles Pearson anxious to do his bit, joined at an early age, but was sent home until he was old enough. This brave young lad has seen service in France with the Suffolks, and is at present in hospital suffering from gunshot wounds in the left arm and leg.

The following item was printed in the Stowmarket Weekly post on the 16th August 1917.

Hargrave Roll of Honour.

1914 15 16 17

The following is the roll of honour for this parish :—

Boldero, 2nd Lieut. Keith, Hertfordshire Yeomanry.

Boldero, Guy S., A.S.C.

Bailey, Prvt. Sidney, 1/5th Suffolks.

Bailey, Prvt. Herbert, Suffolks.

Cross, Prvt. Arthur R, A.V.C.

Cross, A. M. Lawrence H.B.F., R.F.C

Cross, Prvt. George, Suffolks.

Cross, Prvt. Henry, Suffolks.

Copping, Prvt. Ernest, Suffolks.

Frost, Prvt. Frank, 1/5th Suffolks

Frost, Corpl. George, 2nd Suffolks.

Gooch, Prvt. George, Grenadier Guards wounded.

Hurst, Prvt. James, Suffolks.

Hurst, Prvt. Walter, Suffolks.

Last, Gunner William J., R.G.A.

Last, Prvt. Simon, 1/4th Suffolks.

Murkin, Prvt. Charles, Suffolks.

Pettitt, Le. -Corpl. Fred, 5th Suffolks.

Pettitt, Prvt. Eric W., 7th Suffolks.

Pearson. Prvt. Frank, Suffolks (killed in action).

Pearson, Prvt. Albert A., 5th Suffolks.

Pearson, Prvt. John, 5th Suffolks.

Pearson, Prvt. Chas., Suffolks.

Phillips, Prvt. George A., Suffolks.

Phillips, Prvt. Hubert, 2nd Suffolks.

Phillips. Prvt. Fred W., Signal Section 7th Suffolks.

Phillips. Prvt. Herbert. Suffolks.

Plummer. Prvt. Levi, Transport Section.

Plummer, Prvt. Oscar, 7th Royal Fusiliers (killed in action).

Plummer, Prvt. Gerald, Suffolks.

Race, Prvt. Horace, Suffolks.

Rutter, Prvt. Ernest, Suffolks.

Seeley, Prvt. Arthur, M.T., ASC.

Seeley, Le. -Corpl. Chas. A., Hertfordshire Yeomanry.

Steele, Prvt. Chas., 7th Suffolks

Smart, Prvt. William, 27th Batt. Winnipeg Rifles, Canadians.

Stevens, Robert, Royal Marines.

Stevens, Prvt. William, 7th Suffolks.

Todd, 1st Class Air Mechanic Gerald B., R.N.A.S.

Todd, 1st Class Air Mechanic J., Duncan R.N.A.S.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 17th August 1917.

HARGRAVE

The following are a few extracts from letters received by Mrs. Simon Last, of the Queen Inn, Chedburgh, from her youngest Gunner W. J. Last. of the Royal Garrison Artillery, written before the great offensive. Mr. and Mrs. Last have both their sons serving, the other son, Private S. Last. being in the 34th Suffolk Regiment, in France. In addition to having their two only sons serving, both their daughters, Miss Dorothy and Ida Last, are engaged in munition work.

In one the letters sent home he says: "That fellow that told you the war would last another 12 months, was talking out of the back of his neck; we have got them properly whacked, beaten to the wide world; they have not got a dog's chance. In fact, every round we fire we are expecting to be the last."

In another letter he writes, "At the rate we are going now they cannot last much longer; this summer will them off easy. I shall be getting a few days' leave before long, as the company I am in has put in for it, so we shall not be so long now. I cannot tell you where we are, but I might tell you it is just such a place as Denham, where I used to go for nuts on Sunday morning, although not quite so quiet as that."

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 18th August 1917.

HARGRAVE.

HOME ON SICK LEAVE-During the last few days two wounded soldiers, native of the village, and wounded in action, have been home on ten days' leave —Prvt. Geo. Phillips, Suffolk Regiment, oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phillips, who was severely wounded in the hand and in hospital for three months, and Prvt. Charles Pearson, Suffolk Regiment, fourth son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Pearson, Knowles Green, who had been wounded by shrapnel in the arm and leg, and in hospital for a long time. Both men were wounded in action. Also 1st Air Mechanic J. D. Todd. R.N.A.S., youngest son of Mrs M. M. Todd, the School House, who had sustained a badly broken arm, has been home on sick leave after leaving hospital. All their old friends unite in wishing them a speedy and complete recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 25th August 1917.

HARGRAVE MAN DIES OF WOUNDS. *It is with much regret and sympathy that we learn that the following letter of sympathy has been received by Mrs. J. Nunn, of the death of her husband, of wounds. Prvt. J. Nunn, Norfolk Regiment, was the youngest son of Mr. R. Nunn, The Fields, Hargrave. Prvt. J. Nunn had been on a visit only a few weeks ago, and the news of his death came as a late great shock to his friends. Much sympathy is felt for his sorrowing widow and little child and his relations.*



The following is a copy of the letter received by his wife:-

No. 19 Casualty Clearing Station, B.E.F., August 5th, 1917.

Dear Mrs. Nunn, —Prvt. J. Nunn, 29323, was admitted to this Station very badly wounded—shrapnel wounds in abdomen and fractured leg. All that was possible was done for him, but he died August 3rd, 1917. He was hardly conscious any of the time, so I am afraid I have no message for you; but it may of some comfort to you know he was gently laid to rest and buried in our British Cemetery. His grave is marked with a cross bearing his name and number. His belongings will be sent to you later. Please accept my sincere sympathy. —P. BAILEY, Sister in charge.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 1st September 1917.

CASUALTIES TO HARGRAVE SOLDIERS.

An intimation has been received Mrs. W. Stevens that her husband, Prvt. W. Stevens, Suffolk Regiment, was severely wounded in action in France. Much sympathy is felt for him, also for his wife and mother, in their anxiety. It is sincerely hoped he may soon be restored to his former health. Prvt. W. Stevens has been in France for some time.

A letter has been received from Canadian headquarters by Mrs. John Buxton, the Mill House, Hargrave, informing her that her brother, Prvt. Albert McGuire, Signal Section, Canadian Battalion, has been admitted into hospital suffering from the effects of gas shells. Much sympathy is felt for him, and his friends are united in wishing him a speedy recovery.

The following item was printed in the Stowmarket Weekly Post on the 27th September 1917.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER SEVERELY WOUNDED

Information has been received by Mr. Walter Plummer, Hargrave, that: his youngest son Prvt Gerald Plummer, 9536, 11th Suffolk Regt., was admitted into a general hospital in France, suffering from severe gunshot wound to the left leg. Much sympathy is felt for the sufferer, and his old friends unite wishing him complete recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 20th October 1917.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER KILLED IN ACTION.

It is with feelings of regret that we have to report the death of Prvt. William Stevens, Suffolk Regiment, who was killed in action on August 9th. After some weeks of uncertainty, the news of his death was received by Mrs. Stevens on Sunday morning. Deceased was 33 years of age. Prvt. W. Stevens had been in France nearly three years. He died a hero's death, loyally doing his duty for his King and country. He was well liked and respected by all who knew him, and his death is felt very much. The greatest sympathy is felt for them and his mother and family.

We hope to reproduce his portrait next week.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 3rd November 1917.

HARGRAVE.

VISIT FROM THE FRONT. -A visit has been paid during the last few days by Prvt. Eric Pettitt, who is serving on active service in France. All his old friends were pleased to see him looking so well, and he has their best wishes for good luck and a safe return.

MILITARY MEDAL. Information has been received by Mrs. J. Buxton that her brother. Signaller Albert McGuire, Signal Suction, Canadian Regiment, who was recently on a visit to this village, has been awarded the Military Medal for service rendered and devotion to duty on the field, during the recent Canadian activities around Lens.

The following item was printed in the Suffolk and Essex Free Press on the 14th November 1917.

WOUNDED.

Suffolk Ret. - Steel 8127 Lce-Cpl C (Hargrave)

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 5th January 1918.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER A PRISONER OF WAR.

Information has been received Mrs. Ruse, Hargrave, that her youngest son, Prvt. Charles Steel, is a prisoner of war in Germany. Prvt. C. Steel has been wounded several times, and has served seven years in the Army. He was married last year. Much sympathy is felt for his young wife and his mother. Mrs. Ruse has suffered considerable anxiety during the war. The husband of her eldest daughter was killed in action quite recently, and her oldest grandson, Prvt. William Steel, who formerly resided in the parish, and who is not yet 19 years of age is in hospital in England seriously wounded, for whom much sympathy is felt.

The Following item was printed in the Haverhill Echo on the 26th January 1918.

WOUNDED. Suffolk Regt.: Pte. S. Bailey (Hargrave);....

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 6th April 1918.

HARGRAVE MAN DIES OF WOUNDS.

It is with deep regret we announce that a telegram was received on Saturday evening by the mother of Prvt. Horace Race, conveying the sad news of the death of her only son and sole support of wounds in France received during last week's engagements. Much sympathy is felt for her in her sad bereavement. The news came as a great shock, as no news of his being wounded had been received until the telegram came stating that had died of wounds.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 25th May 1918.

HARGRAVE

SOLDIER REPORTED MISSING. We regret to state that Prvt. George Phillips, No. 24730, 11th Batt, Suffolk Regiment, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phillips, Hargrave, is officially reported missing since April 9th. Prvt. Phillips had returned to France, after being wounded, only a short time ago. Much sympathy is felt for his parents, who would very grateful if any of his comrades could give them any further information concerning him.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 13th July 1918.

HARGRAVE.

VISIT OF SOLDIERS. —During the last few days visits have been made to their relatives by Lawrence H. B. Cross, R.F.A., and Sapper F. Miller, R.E., who are both on active service.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 20th July 1918.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER MISSING.

It is with much sympathy we learn that Mrs. Hurst, of Hargrave, has received information that her son, Prvt. Sidney Hurst, 1/6th Northumberland Fusiliers; with the B.E.F. in France, has been posted missing from May 27th, 1918. Much sympathy is felt for his mother and sisters, who would be very grateful for any information from those who were with him or who could give any news concerning him to relieve their anxiety.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 3rd August 1918.

HARGRAVE MEN IN CAPTIVITY.

Much relief was felt by Mrs. John Hurst, of Hargrave, the mother Pte. Sidney W. Hurst, who had been reported missing, receiving a post card from the British Red Cross and Order of St. John, which says: "We are very glad to inform you the name of Pte. S. W. Hurst, Northumberland Fusiliers, has come through to us on a list of prisoners of war in Germany; well; camp unknown."

Mrs A. Ruse and Mrs. C. E. Steele have heard from L/Cpl. Charles Edward Steele, Suffolk Regiment, a prisoner of war in Germany. He is receiving the parcels of food sent to him through the Red Cross Society.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 14th September 1918.

HARGRAVE LANCE-CORPORAL WOUNDED.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Long, Robbs Hall Farm, Cavendish, and late of Great Southwood Park, Hargrave, have had a report from the War Office that their only son, Lce.-Corpl. A. E. Long, Royal Fusiliers, att. Trench Mortar Battery, has been wounded in the right shoulder. He was admitted to the 2nd Canadian General Hospital, Le Treport, on August 23rd, and is going on well. Lce.-Corpl. Long has been on active service 2 years and 2 months in France.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th September 1918.

HARGRAVE

SOLDIERS ON LEAVE. —During the last few weeks visits have been made to their homes by several soldiers on active service, including Lieut. K. Boldero, from France; L. Corpl. F. Frost, from Palestine; and L.-Corpl. L. W. Phillips, Sig. Section, who is recovering from the effects of being gassed.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 19th October 1918.

HARGRAVE.

SOLDIER IN HOSPITAL. —A communication has been received by Mr. Walter Plummer from the War Office, conveying the news that his son, Prvt. Gerald Plummer, Suffolk Regiment, is in hospital in France, suffering from fever. Much sympathy is felt for him, and all his old friends unite in wishing him a speedy recovery.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 26th October 1918.

HARGRAVE SOLDIER FALLS IN BATTLE

Official intimation has been received by Mr. Geo. Copping of Knowles Green, formerly of Wickhambrook, that his son, Ernest Copping, London Regiment was killed in action in France on Sept. 19th. The deceased soldier had served for 18 months in Egypt with the Rifle Brigade, and was only 25 years. Much sympathy is extended to the family in their bereavement.



The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 26th October 1918.

HARGRAVE MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service was held in the Church on Sunday afternoon, in memory those men of the parish who have fallen in the war.

Their names are: Frank Pearson; William Stevens; Oscar Plummer; Joseph Nunn; Horace Race; and Ernest Copping

The service commenced with a solemn voluntary, "Blest are the departed" (Spohr), and in the process the choir the Jack was carried draped with crepe. The special psalm was the 23rd. A lesson from the Book Wisdom was read by the Rector (Rev. W. Cyprian Floyd), who officiated throughout. The address was on "Progress in the Future World."

After the Blessing, the National Anthem was sung. At the close of the service, Chopin's "Funeral March" was rendered by Mrs. M. M Todd, who was at the organ. The hymns chosen were "Thy Will done," "They whose course on earth is o'er." and "Peace, perfect peace."

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 23rd November 1918.

ANOTHER HARGRAVE HERO.

With regret we record another Hargrave sorrow, the death, of Pte. Joe Phillips, Machine Gun Guards, eldest son Mr. and Mrs. H. Phillips, was only 21. and much sympathy is felt for the parents and the young wife. The deceased had not been in France long, and Sergt. Beaney writes that he was killed by a stray shot some little distance behind the lines less than hours before the armistice came into force. Death was instantaneous, and the funeral was at Mauberge. A most sympathetic letter has been received from his comrades.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 21st December 1918.

HARGRAVE.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE For the late Pte. Joseph Thomas Phillips, 4th Machine Gun Guards, who was killed and buried at Maubeuge less than 24 hours before the Armistice was signed, was held in the Parish Church on Sunday afternoon amidst signs of deep sorrow and regret. The deceased, who was a native of this village, was only 26 years of age, and much sympathy is felt for his parents and young widow. The Rev. C. W Cyprian Floyd officiated. The service opened with a solemn voluntary, "Blest are the departed" (Spohr), Psalm xxiii, was sung, and the hymns were "Art thou weary." "Those whose course on earth is o'er," and "Peace, perfect peace." After the Blessing, the National Anthem was sung, followed by Chopin's Funeral March rendered by the organist (Mrs. M. M. Todd), the congregation remaining standing, There was a large gathering of friends and parishioners.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 1st January 1919.

HARGRAVE

MILITARY MEDAL – We are pleased to record the news that Prvt. W. H. Smart, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, has been awarded the Military Medal for meritorious service. Prvt. Smart had been with a party carrying out special work during the recent big attacks which for some time preceded the armistice. All his old friends heartily congratulate him on the honour. Prvt. Smart is a native of this village.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 13th November 1920.

IN MEMORIAM

PHILLIPS—in ever-loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte. Thomas Joseph Phillips, Machine Gun Guards, son Mr. and Mr. Herbert Phillips, Hargrave, who was killed in France, November 10th, 1918, aged 25 years.

How often we prayed for the safe return,

Of the son and brother we loved so dear,

But not the way all hoped,

Did Our Father answer our prayers.

But it's hardest of all for mother,

*For it's only a parent who knows the sorrow,
It's only his mother who knows the pain,
Of losing her son she loved dearly,
And knows will never come back again.
"Not dead, but gone before."*

From his sorrowing Mother and Father, Sisters and Brothers, Hargrave; and Brother in law, George and Rose, Barrow.

Appendix – Related Press Releases

These final two press items are not specifically directed at Hargrave soldiers but they are probably relevant to some of their experiences. The first does not have a full attribution but is said to reflect the stories told by a young Laxfield soldier of the Suffolk Regiment on his first home leave. It is a mix of aggressive patriotism and almost off hand graphic descriptions of life at the Front. Whether it is a true report of one soldier or an enhancement of several stories by the author is for the reader to determine.

The second is a rather apologetic letter to the editor of the Bury Free Press, with the writer expressing his dismay at the lack of respect and abuse received by discharged soldiers on the streets of Bury St Edmunds. A sad reflection of the other side of human nature.

The following item was printed in the East Anglian Daily Times on the 30th December 1915.

HOME FROM THE WAR

LAXFIELD SOLDIER'S THRILLING EXPERIENCES.

OVER A YEAR AT THE FRONT

Many of those of our brave soldiers who formed part of the original British Expeditionary Force, and who so courageously fought against the Germans when they invaded France are now enjoying their first leave in this country. Those who have come back during the last few days are to be allowed to have Christmas home. Among this number are numerous Suffolk soldiers, most of whom went out to the front with the 2nd Suffolks, who, it may be remembered, fought with great gallantry at Mons. There are others belonging to cavalry and other regiments who are spending Christmas in their Suffolk homes. Without exception, they have thrilling experiences to relate, and probably if they were to occupy the whole of their all too short leave in recounting all that has happened during the period intervening between their departure and arrival back in this country they would require the whole of it, and then at the end of it all would not have exhausted what they might say concerning the terrible things that have occurred at the front.

Many of these returned heroes, like the young Laxfield soldier who set foot in his native place last Wednesday, can joyously relate the many hairbreadth escapes they have encountered, but, alas, while gleefully mentioning these happenings, they don't forget to give a thought to those of their friends and comrades who have given their lives for their King and country. And so, it happened last week when the young Suffolk soldier was traveling the last few miles of his long journey from the front to Laxfield. Evidently delighted at the opportunity of relating how he had escaped almost certain death on not one

but on several occasions, he did not forget to give a thought for those gallant men hailing from the same place as himself whose bodies now lie buried in French soil. Unhappily, too, most of those whose names were familiar to his hearers are numbered amongst the slain. First, he would tell how "poor old —" came to be killed, and then how another chum, evidently a mutual friend of his attentive listeners, was slain. Exhibiting a German bullet from a pocket filled with war relics, he said it was such a one that killed a comrade, a man well-known in the Laxfield district; the poor fellow was struck on the bridge of the nose when standing close by the returned warrior, and was killed instantly. But another man, who had a German bullet through his mouth survived, and is back in the ranks today, although it was one of an explosive character. His references to departed and wounded friends were concluded with an amusing incident concerning an unexpected meeting with a former acquaintance who had, quite unknown to the war-worn soldier, enlisted. Immediately he espied his friend he greeted him with a cheery Suffolk expression and a thumping blow., As might he expected, to use the man s own phrase, the new comer at the front was "half-tunned."

Nothing of what this cheerful optimist fresh from the front had to tell was of more absorb- Ing interest than a description of life in the trenches at the commencement of the campaign. One can well imagine that present-day experiences in the first line trenches are not comparable with what they were at the outset of the war. The trenches to-day, he says, are drawing-rooms to what they were a year ago, but he was afraid even the greater comfort of trench life to-day was far less pleasant than even what a good many people at home still imagine. In the early days of the war, when once the trenches were entered it was never known when they would be relieved. After barely one day's experience in the trenches, no one ever expected to get out alive again. German shells of every description, from "Jack Johnsons" to shrapnel, rained down in those days upon the occupants of the trenches and it was simply the British infantry against everything the Germans had. "My word, ain't things changed," he added, "You should see our guns to-day." Now if the Germans fired a shell, they had five in return. The havoc the English shells wrought was terrible, and the almost sickening sights were impossible to conceive. Then he described what happens when the British artillery gets to work, and, to more graphically picture what happened when our gunners begin, he instanced the effect of some shells upon a wood occupied by the Huns, No sooner had the British guns been brought into play than legs, arms, heads, rifles, and other things were flying in the air.

This fair-complexioned youth, sturdily built, and looking none the worse for 12 months active service, naturally had quite a number of interesting personal experiences to relate, but these mostly concerned the charmed life he led. Bullets had struck him on both shoulder straps, on the cap badge, on the arm and on the leg, but he was unscathed except for a scratch on the right shoulder from a piece of shrapnel. What he regarded as one of his luckiest escapes was when a shrapnel bullet struck him on the right leg, but was deflected by the knife and spoon

which he had tucked into the top of his puttees. This, he said, was the handiest place to keep them without losing them when in the trenches. Once, he said, the Germans were the principal sufferers in one of their gas attacks, and the 2nd Suffolks, whose trenches they had to storm, suffered little in consequence. The Germans were fairly hoist by their own petard. At the time that a large quantity of gas was let loose little or no wind was blowing, but directly the cloud of gas approached the trenches a breeze suddenly sprang up and carried it clean down the trenches. The Germans, thinking their foul work had been successful and that the trench was full of gassed men, charged in massed formation. However, the Suffolks, who were quite unharmed, were ready for them, and they just let them have it, There were heaps of dead from the Suffolk's rifle-fire, and the Germans in that attack lost over 3,000 men.

In decrying the barbarous methods of the Huns, particularly in regard to their treatment of their own men, this young soldier had a great deal of sympathy for the German boy recruits, who literally shrieked for mercy if they happened to be captured. Perhaps nothing was more thrilling than what happened when the Suffolks had orders to take at costs a trench which had been lost. Being at the head of the machine-gun section, and having to take a not unimportant part in the attack, the Laxfield soldier displayed that coolness and nerve which is so necessary at such times. One by one the men of his section disappeared, and he was left alone with the gun, the tripod carrier being killed. However, although in the direct line of fire of the Germans, he got the gun fixed, and ultimately used it with deadly effect. Although men were falling all around him, he kept at it, and discharged three rounds of 800 shots in each. His only thought at the time he said, was of defending himself.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 22nd June 1918.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' BADGES. TO THE EDITOR OF THE "BURY FREE PRESS"

Sir, —I hope no offence in sending in these few lines to you, but what I wish to ask is, do you think it legal and right for a discharged soldier to see young ladies of this town walking about with a discharged soldier's badge pinned the front of their blouse a brooch? I think it is not fair to us who have served our King and Country to see this sort of thing going on, and I sincerely hope it will stopped. I have seen several young ladies wearing these badges lately, and have wondered why our officers of military importance allow this to go on, but I am led to think a discharged soldier is thought nothing of now-a-days, and all you can hear in the street is: Go back in the army, or when are you going to join up? Such is the sort of thing I have to hear and bear. But I hope people of this sort will soon know better and that this may all be put a stop to. Trusting I have done no harm in speaking like this,

I remain yours very sincerely,

AN INQUIRER.

Bury St. Edmund's,

June 16th. 1918.

Also see 'Charles Steele – A Soldier's Story' in the History Section of this website.

**Nicholas Newman
December 2023.**