

IN MEMORY OF FREDERICK CHARLES FIELD

DIED IN ACTION 27 MAY 1918

Lived at 4 Park Lane Terrace
PLAQUE No. 10

Frederick Charles Field was born on 8 November 1898 and baptised in Harbury Church on 18 December. His father, Robert, was an agricultural labourer born in Harbury. His mother, Sarah Elizabeth Field, had been born in Bascote Heath. Robert was 38 and Sarah one year younger, with six children already by the time they had Frederick. They would go on to have four more, the family living in 4 Park Lane Terrace.

This is basic data obtained from census records and official documents, the bare bones building a picture of their lives. But for Frederick there is more than a yellowed document bearing only his name. He was admitted to Harbury School on 26 May 1902, and transferred to the mixed-sex school in April 1906. His time here is recorded by school photographs, lines of boys in black and girls in pinafores, staring solemnly at the camera. In one photo he stands to the front, bottom left, with his arms folded, head tilted slightly to the side and a curiously wary expression on his face. There's something almost confrontational about the greyscale boy. In the other photograph the shaggy mop of cropped hair from the first has changed to almost curly fuzz, but his expression of sceptical challenge is the same. The women who taught him and worked in the school were, at this time, Edith Wiltshire, Amelia Lie and May Bird (see Charles Bird). He was still in school aged 12 according to the 1911 census, possibly living with relatives in Binswood End.

After these portrait plays of shadow and light there's a deficit of information about Frederick. His next mark on the history records is his entry into the war, when he became a Private in the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment (74th Brigade, 25th Division). They landed in Rouen on 16 August 1914, and were immediately hurled into the

actions of the Western Front. In 1914 the men fought in the Battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and more, pushing forward into battle after battle, including the Somme, as the years went on.

Frederick's unit was sent for rest on 9 May 1918, to Fismes. This respite did not last long, however. When intelligence suggested that an attack was imminent they were moved up the line - only to be nearly wiped out by an attack on 27 May, as the German army began the third Battle of the Aisne.

The previous two battles had begun through allied attacks against the Germans, yet this one was started by a cacophony of 4,000 German guns opening fire on a 24-mile stretch, before advancing twelve miles into the French lines and demolishing four French divisions. The German army launched a gas attack along with the bombardment, in order to disable defensive gun crews. The attack was meticulously designed and lethal, taking the allied forces by surprise and gaining the Germans 15km of territory. This was yet another instance in the war where a German victory seemed inevitable. Only issues with supplies and troop fatigues halted the advance.

It was in this battle that Frederick died - one of 29,000 British casualties. The Royal Leamington Spa courier and Warwickshire Standard of 2 August 1918 reports him and T. Morris of Harbury as missing.

He is remembered on the Soissons Memorial, a monument of clean white marble, preserving on pure stone the memory of men who fell.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

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

