

IN MEMORY OF STEPHEN HAWTIN

DIED IN ACTION 25 SEPTEMBER 1915

Unknown Harbury address

NO PLAQUE

Stephen was born in the small village of Radway approximately eight miles south of Harbury in 1877. One of seven children, his father was Samuel Hawtin, a man who worked a range of jobs, as an agricultural labourer in 1881, a general labourer in 1889, a farm labourer in 1901, a keeper in 1902 and farm bailiff in 1903. Stephen's mother Mary had nothing near the same range of employment experience - living in a time when women were not expected to have careers - but she did go to Banbury Ladies' School. She was married to Samuel before she was 19.

By 1891 Stephen was living in Tysoe - working as a ploughboy. In 1907 he married Mary Ellen Gloster and by the time of the 1911 census he resided with his family in a two-roomed house in Ashorne, most likely tied to Stephen's occupation as general labourer on the estate. There is a suggestion that during this time he was a reservist for the Warwickshire Regiment, and served overseas in 1901. He was officially called up when war broke out in 1914.

His second child was born eight months later on 6 May 1915, in Harbury where Mary was living. On her birth certificate her father's occupations are listed as a labourer at the cement works and a private in the 2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. It is uncertain whether he ever saw his daughter, as he was killed when she was only four months old.

He went to France with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in November 1914. The Leamington Spa courier reports them on 12 February 1915 as suffering very heavy losses in the battle of Ypres. A German communiqué references another battle, Loos, in September of that year, saying that 'artillery actions along the entire western front have increased in intensity' with an attempted British attack breaking down before the German bombardment. The British eventually broke through the first line of the German defence and almost the second line - but the lethal chlorine gas they attempted to unleash on the German troops was directed back at them by a change of wind.

General Haig (who lived in nearby Radway at the time) called on the reserves to advance and Stephen, now a lance sergeant, advanced with his division across a coalfield. However, they had been positioned too far back, and as they advanced became tangled with men coming out of the line.

Stephen was wounded and taken to St Mary's dressing station, only to die of his wounds later that day. He was buried in the new St. Mary's Advanced Dressing Station cemetery. His is one of only 218 graves in that cemetery, compared to the 50,000 casualties of that battle.

Stephen is also remembered through the naming of Hawtin End off Bush Heath Lane.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

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

