

IN MEMORY OF FRED PADBURY

DIED IN ACTION 15 AUGUST 1917

Lived in Cooperative Terrace, now Ivy Lane, but exact number unknown

PLAQUE No. 7

Fred Padbury was born at Kingston Cottages, Chesterton, on 7 October 1892. He would live there, with his father William, a shepherd, and his mother Mary, for most of his life, along with his four siblings.

A school photograph of him during his childhood shows a boy with close-cropped hair, and arms tightly folded, as though to keep out the cold. He stares at the camera with a searching, almost sad look, his mouth gaped minutely open, as though he is about to speak.

By 18 he had left school, and was working as a farm labourer, still living at home with all of his siblings.

He did not stay long, joining the 1st/5th battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and going to France in December 1916. He was wounded at St Julian on 13 August 1917. Although he was listed as a Private, when wounded he is reported as a Lance Corporal.

The battle in which he was injured was particularly gruesome. The Battalion history begins by calling it a 'great day', yet this contrasts sharply to the misery undergone by the soldiers. The men of the battalion lay in reserve the night before the battle, knee deep in mud. Dawn brought bombardment, as soldiers raced forward to fight. Thousands fell for every few hundred yards gained, as Fred's battalion waited in the darkly named Slaughter Wood. They waited in slime and shellfire, with shallow brooks turning to

swamps under their boots, the land around them scattered with debris and carnage. Though they did not engage many Germans hand to hand, the shellfire was constant, and intense casualties were sustained - Fred among them.

He died of his wounds in a casualty clearing station on 15 August 1917, to be buried in Dozingheim Military Cemetery, Belgium, surrounded by 3,174 other graves.

Fred's brother, Albert, returned home, despite being wounded twice. His nephew, Mr Ray Padbury, remembers him as a reclusive man who never married. 'Uncle Bert' was just another of those who survived the war deeply scarred by what they had seen, done, and lived through.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

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

