

St. Michael at the North Gate – 1914–1918

BELL, Joseph https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/844610/bell,-joseph/	Born in Cockermouth, Cumberland in c.1878, Joseph Bell was one of eight children born to John Bell, a shoe and bootmaker, and his wife Mary, nee Wilkins. The youngest of five sons, Joseph was born and raised in Cockermouth, and in adult life he became a grocer. Still working as a grocer at the time of his wedding, Joseph was married at St. Peter in the East Church in Oxford on 26 December 1903, and his wife, Florence Helena Meeks, the daughter of Francis Meeks, a butler by profession, was living at the Examination Schools on the High Street. Almost three years later, their only child, Joseph Reginald, was born in West Kirby, on the Wirral Peninsular, on 13 September 1906, yet he was baptised at St. Peter in the East three months later. Still living on Merseyside in 1911, at the time of the Great War Joseph and his family had moved to Market Street in Oxford, and it's likely that he was working in the Covered Market as a grocer. Serving as a private with the 3/4th Battalion, the Queen's, (Royal West Surrey Regiment), Joseph served with the 62nd Brigade of the 21st Division, and by the late summer of 1917 he was serving in Belgium. Listed as killed in action at Passchendaele on 4 October 1917, sadly Joseph's body was lost on the battlefields of Flanders, and many years later his name was remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial (Ref: panels 14-17, 162-162a) near Ypres in Belgium. For his service in the Great War, Joseph was posthumously awarded the British War and Victory Medals.
CROSS, William Henry	Registered as William Henry Crossplant, (<i>the Crossplant surname originated from his grandfather's generation</i>) William Henry Cross was born at 6, Wesley Street in Oldbury, Worcestershire on 21 September 1887, and he was the third of fourth children born to Mary Ann and George Cross, who earned his living as a carpenter & joiner. Later living at Rugeley in Staffordshire, William became interested in the local church, and apparently a talented violinist, William was also interested in choral singing, and he eventually gained a position as a lay clerk with the Winchester Cathedral Choir. Whilst living in Winchester William married his wife, Dora Victoria Stanbrook, at St. Thomas Church on 29 August 1911, and by the summer of 1916 they had two children, Cyril Gordon, who was born in Southfield Road, Oxford, on 22 March 1913, and William Henry, who was also born in Southfield Road on 12 August 1916. Having relocated to Oxford, and landed employment as a lay clerk at New College, Oxford; soon after the outbreak



Above,
William's C.W.G.C. headstone,
St. Michael's Churchyard, Brereton,
Rugeley, Staffordshire.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/396021/cross,-william-henry/>

of war in August 1914 William joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, and initially at least he served with the 3rd Southern General Hospital at the former workhouse site in Cowley. Later serving as a medical orderly onboard a hospital ship, William was sent out to the Dardanelles, forming part of an evacuation mission, and on the voyage home he contracted pneumonia from which he never recovered. Transferred to the 1st Western General Hospital at Fazakerly in Liverpool on arrival back home in England, William died as a result of an abscess on his liver, and streptococcal pneumonia on 20 March 1916, and soon after his death, his body was taken to St. Michael's Church in Brereton, Rugeley, where he was finally laid to rest on March 24.

An obituary for William Henry Cross also appeared in the Oxford Chronicle on 24 March 1916: - *Pte W. H. Cross, R.A.M.C - The death took place on Sunday at Liverpool of Pte William H. Cross, R.A.M.C formerly of 117 Southfield Road, Oxford. Mr Cross, who was only 29 years of age, was at one time lay clerk at Winchester Cathedral, and during the five years prior to the war he occupied a similar position at New College, Oxford. In September 1914, he joined the R.A.M.C and was some time stationed at the 3rd Southern General Hospital. During the last few months, however, he was among a number of other men from the Oxford Hospital on a hospital boat plying between England and the Dardanelles. He was taken ill on board with Pneumonia, and his condition was so serious on arrival at Southampton, that it was found impossible to move him, and he was taken to Liverpool and placed in hospital there, where he died on Sunday night. Pte Cross leaves a widow and one child. The funeral will take place to-day (Friday) at Brereton Church, where he was formally a chorister, at Rugeley, Staffs.*

A week later the Oxford Chronicle also published a brief mention of his funeral service in an edition dated 31 March 1916: - *The Funeral of private W. Cross took place on Friday, with military honours at Brereton Church, Rugeley, Mr E. Jackson attended on behalf of New College, and among numerous wreathes was one from the Warden and Fellows of New College, and another from St. Michael's Choir, of which Cross was formerly a member.*

After the war, William's name was also remembered on a Great War memorial at New College, Oxford.

FORTY, Valentine James

One of only three St. Michael at the North Gate men born in Oxford, Valentine Charles Forty was born at Stow Cottage in Randolph Street, Cowley, on 14 February 1886, and he was baptised at the church of SS Mary and John on Cowley Road on May 25. One of nine children, Valentine was the son of Henry Cowling Forty, a carpenter by trade, and his wife Mary Forty, nee Jones. A pupil at the former



Above: Valentine James Forty
Oxford Journal Illustrated,
29 November 1916



Above: Grave stone, Lahana Military
Cemetery, Greece, Grave Ref: I.D. 2.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/333868/forty,-valentine-james/>

Central Boys School in Gloucester Green; at the time of the 1901 census Valentine had gained employment as a clerk, and ten years later he was working as an assistant at 'Gill & Co', the Ironmongers, who then had a shop on the Oxford High Street.

First attempting to enlist soon after the outbreak of war in August 1914, Valentine was rejected on medical grounds, and after more than one attempt in Oxford, he travelled to Bristol where he joined the Gloucestershire Regiment in May or June 1915. Despite an apparent lack of fitness, and after just a few weeks basic training, Valentine was sent to France on 13 July 1915, and he joined the 2nd Battalion as part of the 81st Brigade, 27th Division. After initially serving in France, Valentine and his comrades were transferred to the Salonika Front in late November 1915, and they had reached the front line by January 21 the following year.

Wounded in action on the Struma front on 31 October 1916, Valentine was taken to the 27th Casualty Clearing Station located near to the village of Lahana, where he later died his wounds on November 4. Valentine Forty was later buried at the Lahana Military Cemetery, (Grave ref: I.D.2) 56 km north-east of Thessaloniki in present day Greece.

Just three weeks later, Valentine's death was announced in the Oxford Chronicle on 24 November 1916: - *Pte V. J Forty - The death has taken place from wounds received in action at the front of Pte Valentine James Forty, (Gloucesters) whose Oxford address was 41 Randolph Street. For many years Pte Forty was an assistant at Messrs Gill in the High Street. Before coming to Oxford he had served in the Gloucester Territorials. At the out-break of war he offered himself for military service, and owing to the high standard of physical fitness that prevailed in those days he was several times rejected. He was however, determined to "do his bit" and he eventually succeeded in joining his old regiment at Bristol. After only six weeks training he was sent to France in August 1915. Three months later he was transferred to another front, where he was wounded on October 31st last, and he died on November 4. He will be greatly missed by many of his very numerous Oxford friends.*

After the war, Valentine Forty's name was remembered on memorials at St. Michael at the North Gate Church, and the former Central Boys School, which is now displayed at the Oxford Spires Academy on Glanville Road, Cowley. His name was also added to the Roll of Honour Books at St. Michael at the North Gate.

Also after the war, Valentine was posthumously awarded the 14/15 Star, plus the British War and Victory Medals.

PEARSON, Wilfred Hearne

Born at 3, Winchester Road in North Oxford on 18 April 1888, Wilfred Hearn Pearson was the third of five



Above:
Wilfred Hearne Pearson
Oxford Journal Illustrated
16 October 1918



Above:
Wilfred's headstone
Anneux British Cemetery,
France,
Grave Ref: II.A. 5

children, and he was born into one of Oxford's prominent families.

Baptised at the Wesleyan Chapel in New Inn Hall Street on 23 May 1888, Wilfred was the third of three sons born to Arthur Pearson, a Wesleyan preacher, hardware merchant, director of a drugs company, and the owner of 'Boswells' in Cornmarket Street. Also the son of Eunice Mary Pearson, nee Hearne, Wilfred was later educated at the Oxford High School in George Street, Magdalen College School (Oxford) and The Ley's School in Cambridge, and on the completion of his education he trained as a chemist. Joining the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Wilfred also attended the society's college in Bloomsbury Square, London.

Later living at 59, Banbury Road in Oxford, and now fully employed as a chemist, Wilfred married his wife, Daisy Beatrice Turrill, the daughter of Walter Turrill, a poulterer, at St. Michael and All Angels Church in Summertown on 7 October 1915. Eighteen months later they had their only child, Margaret Eleanor Hearne Pearson, who was born at 53, Lonsdale Road, on 15 March 1917.

Enlisting at the recruitment office on the High Street on 10 December 1915, Wilfred initially joined the army reserve, and it was March 1917 before he was mobilized, at which time he joined the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps, and was posted to the 14th Officer Cadet Battalion stationed at Berkhamstead. Gazetted as 2nd Lieutenant with the 2/1st Northern Cyclist Battalion in November 1917, Wilfred was later seconded to the Machine Gun Corps, and he was soon attached to 'B' Coy 57th Battalion. Arriving in France just a few weeks before his death, Wilfred and his battalion were serving with the 57th (2nd West Lancashire) Division, when he was killed in action assaulting the Hindenburg Line near Cambrai on 29 September 1918. After his death, Wilfred was laid to rest at the Anneux British Cemetery in France, (Grave ref: II.A. 5).

Just a month later, Wilfred's death was announced in the Oxford Times on 28 October 1918: - *Sec Lt. Wilfred Hearn Pearson, Machine Gun Corps, aged 30, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Pearson, Sherwood House, Banbury-road, has been killed in action. Educated at Magdalen College School, and the Leys Cambridge, at both schools he was in the first football teams. During his last term at the Leys, out of fifteen matches played against public schools and colleges, 14 were won by his Rugby XV. He was an experienced chemist, and a member of the Pharmaceutical Society, having studied chemistry at the Kelvin Laboratory, Cambridge, and at Bloomsbury Square, London. He married in 1915, Daisy Beatrice, daughter of Mr. Walter Turrill, of "Oakthorpe" Woodstock-road. He joined the Inns of Court O.T.C and proceeded to No 14 Officers Cadet Battalion. In November 1917; he was gazetted to the Northern Cyclist*

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/188097/pearson,-wilfrid-hearne/>

Battalion later transferring to the Machine Gun Corps. He had only been abroad four weeks and was killed in the great fight for Cambrai where the Hindenburg Line was broken. Lt. Pearson was the managing director of the Oxford Drug Company Limited, in the direction and expansion of which business he had been actively engaged for 10 years. He was of a genial and kindly disposition, and will be very much missed by a wide circle of friends. He leaves a widow and child.

After the war, Wilfred was remembered on memorials at the Oxford High School, Magdalen College School, the Leys School in Cambridge, Wesley Memorial Church in New Inn Hall Street, and St. Michael at the North Gate. His name was also included in the Roll of Honour Books at St. Michael at the North Gate, and Wilfred also has an individual brass plaque at St. Michael's.

Wilfred was posthumously awarded the British War and Victory Medals.

THOMAS, Reginald Anthony



Above:
Reginald Anthony Thomas
Oxford Journal Illustrated
6 December 1916

Born in the North Oxfordshire village of North Aston in 1896, Reginald Anthony Thomas was one of six children born to Frank Alfred Thomas, a lodging house keeper, and his wife, Christina Harriett, nee Cole. Baptised at the village church of St. Mary's on 3 May 1896, Reginald was partially raised in North Aston before his family moved to Oxford, where he attended the former St. Mary Magdalen School in Gloucester Green. (*Reginald was also a chorister at St. Mary Magdalen Church for many years.*) Living with his family at 4, King Edward Street in Oxford by the time of the 1911 census, Reginald had landed employment as a clerk by this time, and he was working as an apprentice at Blackwell's book shop in Broad Street.

Possibly an early conscript, Reginald joined the army in April 1916, and he was attached to the 3/4th Battalion, the Queen's, (*Royal West Surrey Regiment*). Later attached to the 1/22nd (*County of London*) Battalion, (*The Queens*) of the 142nd Brigade, 47th (*2nd London*) Division, Reginald had arrived in France by September 1916, and within a few weeks his unit moved north into Belgium. Wounded in action near Hill 60, Reginald was sent to the 10th Casualty Clearing Station at Remy Sidings south-east of Poperinge, where he died of his wounds on 23 November 1916. Soon after his death, Reginald was buried at the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium (Grave ref: X.C. 12).

Back home in Oxford, the Oxford Times published a death notice for Reginald on 2 December 1916: - *Died of Wounds, - Pte. Reginald Anthony Thomas, aged 20, Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regt: attached County of London Regiment, son of Mr and Mrs F.A Thomas, 19 St. Michael Street, died of wounds on November 23, and was buried in the military cemetery at Lijssenthoek. He joined the army last April, and went to the front on September 1. His earlier*



Above:
Reginald's headstone
Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery
Belgium
Grave Ref: X.C. 12.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/149843/thomas,-/>

education was received at North Aston, and afterwards he went to St. Mary Magdalene School. He was in St. Mary Magdalene Church choir for seven years. Before joining up he had served four years apprenticeship with Mr. B. H. Blackwell, Booksellers of Broad Street.

After the war, Reginald's name was remembered on two memorials at St. Mary Magdalen Church and St. Michael at the North Gate Church. His name was also included in the Roll of Honour books at St. Michael at the North Gate. His name was also included on his parent's grave stone at St. Sepulchre Cemetery in Jericho, Oxford.

At the time of his death, Reginald's parents were living at 19, St. Michael's Street, a University Lodging House.

After the war, Reginald was posthumously awarded the British War and Victory Medals.

WEBB, Walter

The oldest man to appear on the St. Michael at the North Gate Memorial, Walter Webb was born in the Berkshire (now Oxfordshire) village of Appleton in c.1877 (Registered March 1/4 1877 Abingdon R.D) and he was the third of six children. The son of Elizabeth (*nee Harwood*) and Edward Webb, Walter's father held various occupations during his life time, as he worked at vary times as an accounts clerk, an organist, a school master, and a music teacher. The Webb family is also known to have lived in Abingdon for some considerable time, and it was here that Walter must have been educated. Moving to Oxford by the time of the 1901 census, members of the Webb family were living at 19, Frenchay Road in North Oxford, and Walter had gained employment as a hosier's assistant.

Still working in the clothing trade in 1903, Walter married his wife, Phoebe Jane Prickett, at St. Giles Church in Oxford on 2 September 1903, and they eventually went on to have three children: (*two girls, one boy*) Phyllis Caroline, b. 15 December 1904, Kathleen Ruby, b. 5



Above:
Walter's headstone
Rose Hill Cemetery,
Oxford,
Grave Ref: 3.A. 114.

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/393181/webb,-walter/>

January 1906, and Edward Arthur Alexander, b. 22 May 1913. (*Tragically, Edward was killed during the Second World War, serving as a Lieutenant with 'B' Sqdn. 24th Lancers, Royal Armoured Corps. Edward was killed in France on 11 June 1944, just a few days after D Day.*)

Apparently living at 79, Warwick Street, off the Iffley Road, around the time of the 1911 census, and again working in the hosiery trade, oddly Walter and his wife were recorded as visitors on census night, and their two children born at this time were living elsewhere.

Certainly living at 85, Warwick Street in 1918, Walter was medically examined at 62, St. Giles Street in March, and he was passed fit for service. Mobilized for service as a gunner with the Royal Garrison Artillery at Plymouth on May 27, Walter was soon posted to the 3/3rd Siege Reserve Brigade on June 22, and he remained at home in England until his untimely death in November. At some point entering the Prees Heath Military Hospital in Shropshire; Walter died at around 10.30 a.m. on 26 November 1918, and his death resulted from acute pneumonia and heart failure. Sadly it's unclear if his wife was present at the time of his death, however, she had almost certainly arranged for his body to be returned to his family home in Oxford, as following a funeral service held in the local chapel, Wilfred was finally laid to rest at Rose Hill Cemetery on November 29.

Unfortunately it would seem that Walter's death was not recorded in the local newspapers, although on the first anniversary of his death, Walter's wife placed a memoriam in the Oxford Times on 21 November 1919: - *Webb: - In ever-loving and affectionate remembrance of my dear husband, Walter Webb, who fell asleep at Preece Health Camp on November 26, 1918: - From his sorrowing Wife and Children - Phyllis, Ruby and Sonny. "Sleep on my darling, and take thy rest, we loved thee well, but Jesus loved thee best; But he has bid us wait behind, to follow in his own good time"*.

Walter's name was remembered at St. Michael at the North Gate Church, but not recorded in the Roll of Honour Books.

As he had not served overseas, Walter was not awarded any campaign or service medals.

BEAUCHAMP, John Charles

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/770587/beauchamp,-john/>

Born at the former 'Waggon and Horses' public house at 14, Woodstock Road in 1882, John Charles Beauchamp was one of eight children, and he was baptised at the nearby St. Giles Church on 10 September 1882. The son of Eliza (*nee Dean*) and George Beauchamp, a butler, publican, (*George had also run the Coach & Horses P H in St. Giles*) and college servant, John was raised in the St. Giles, Observatory Road area, although by the time of the 1891 census his father had sadly died, (*George Beauchamp died in April 1889*) and the family had moved

	to Saunders Yard in Broad Street. It's not known what John did for employment soon after he completed his education, but at some point he joined the Militia, and by the census of 1901 he was stationed at Fort Gomer in Gosport. Possibly joining the army soon after this census was held, John's service number during the Great War was originally issued in July / August 1901, and this would suggest that he may have served with the Grenadier Guards some thirteen years before the outbreak of war in August 1914. Certainly living in Oxford in April 1911, John was then working as a college porter, and he was living at home with his mother at 9, Ship Street. His mother at this time was recorded as a lodging house keeper. Possibly recalled to the colours as a reservist, John served with the 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, and he was sent to France in 1916. Serving with the 1st Guards Brigade of the Guard Division, John wrote his (<i>informal</i>) will in July 1916, and first saw action on the Somme in August when the 2nd Battalion suffered heavy shelling throughout the month. Seeing further action in September, John must have been wounded during this period, as he died of his wounds on 25 September 1916, at the age of thirty-four. Almost certainly a battlefield casualty, John body was lost on the battlefields of the Somme, and many years later his name was remembered on the Thiepval Memorial in Northern France, Panel Ref: Pier & Face 8.d. It would seem that back home in Oxford, John's death was not reported in the local newspapers. After the war, John was posthumously awarded the British War and Victory Medals. Oddly it would seem that John's name was not originally remembered at St. Michael at the North Gate, as his name was not recited by Bishop Shaw, the Archdeacon of Oxford, at the Memorial Window unveiling ceremony in 1921. It would seem that his name was added to the Roll of Honour at a later date. John's name was also not included in the Roll of Honour Books held at St. Michael's.
AMOS, Albert Lewis	The last name to appear on the St. Michael at the North Gate Roll of Honour, Albert Lewis Amos was born in the rural Welsh village of Llanybri in Carmarthenshire on 30 December 1886, and he was one of seven children born to Thomas Amos, a school-master, and his wife Sarah Ann Amos, nee Lewis. As Albert's parents were both of Welsh origin, the Amos family was raised in Wales, and members of the family did not arrive in Oxford until 1914. Certainly educated in Wales, Albert trained as a teacher, and by 1908 he was working as a teacher at Hereford School. By the census of 1911, Albert was staying at York House in Ledbury, Herefordshire, and he was living in the home of a retired coachman, William Heath and his family. Also living at this same address, Harry Wildman, was an



Albert Lewis Amos
Oxford Journal Illustrated
2 February 1916 page 4

*(This same edition also carried
photographs of three of Albert's brothers
who all served in the Great War)*

ironmonger's assistant from Leicestershire; Edward Reed was a teacher, from Lincolnshire, Helena Greaves was a nurse from Hull, and lastly Barnard Dean was an outfitters apprentice from Herefordshire. Albert's parents at this time were living at Glasbury in Wales, and both Thomas and Sarah Amos were described as a schoolmaster, and an elementary school teacher. Still living at home with their parents, three of Albert's siblings were well into their advanced education, with both Florence and Ernest Cecil recorded as University students, and William Vincent employed as an elementary student teacher.

Following the death of his father in February 1914, Albert, his mother, and some of his siblings moved to Oxford, and they soon set up home at 4, Oatland Road in New Botley. Still working as a teacher, Albert had already seen at least twelve months service as a Lieutenant with the Territorial Hereford Cadet Battalion when he enlisted in Oxford on 5 September 1914. Considered fit for service with the Royal Fusiliers, Albert joined the 19th (Service) battalion (2nd Public Schools) which was formed in September 1914 by the Public Schools and University Men's Force, and he remained on home service until he was discharged to a commission on 1 March 1915. Gazetted to the 8th (Service) battalion the South Wales Borders as a second lieutenant; Albert was eventually deployed to Salonika as part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, where he was due to serve with the 67th Brigade, 22nd Division. Not arriving in Salonika until November 1915, it wasn't long before Albert found himself in serious trouble. Facing a General Court Martial at the 22nd Divisional H.Q. between December 9 – 24th 1915, Albert was charged with: "*when on active service Drunkenness, in that he, at a port on 14th November, 1915, when an officer of a Company which was furnishing the Town Guard, was drunk*". Pleading 'Not Guilty', Albert was found guilty, and he was '*to be dismissed from His Majesty's Service*', as announced on 24 December 1915. Confirmed on 21 January 1916, and gazetted early in March, Albert was discharged from the army in January 1916, yet his return to civilian life was to be short lived, as he soon re-enlisted as a private soldier in the Royal Fusiliers on 3 May 1916. Serving with the 26th Battalion, forming part of the 124th Brigade, 41st Division; Albert saw action in France & Belgium, and he was wounded at Passchendaele in 1917. Discharged from the army as a result of his wounds in February 1918, after a brief stay in Oxford, Albert went back to Herefordshire, and he again worked as a teacher.

After marrying his wife, Mary Jane Lilian Jones, in the Hay R.D. in the June quarter 1920, Albert and Mary had a son, Albert Thomas, on 21 March 1921, although by this time Albert had already died. According to the Roll of Honour at St. Michael at the North Gate, Albert had died as a result of his wounds, yet his death certificate confirms that he

	died in a cottage hospital in Ross on Wye, of appendicitis on 30 January 1921. Unfortunately, it's unclear where Albert was buried after his death, although presumably he was laid to rest near to Ross on Wye. As Albert had died as a result of a non-military cause, his name was not included on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Debt of Honour. For his war-time exploits as a private, 2nd Lieutenant, and lastly a Sergeant, Albert was awarded the 14/15 Star, plus the British War and Victory Medals. Unsurprisingly, Albert's name was not included in the Citizens of Oxford Roll of Honour Books at St. Michael at the North Gate,
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