

Lives of the Men on the War Memorial St Martin's Church, Addiscombe

by Stephanie Offer



St Martin's Church, Morland Road

Introduction

St Martin's Church started its life as a mission hall on the corner of Morland and Stretton Roads, set up by St James' Church, Sydenham Road. On the 22nd May 1902 it was consecrated by the Bishop of Islington and was called *The Addiscombe College Memorial Chapel*. A few months later on the 14th October 1902 it was visited by Earl Roberts, then Commander in Chief of the Army, who had studied at the Addiscombe College. It acquired its own parish in 1927

In 1994 the church was declared redundant and the parish added to that of St Mary Magdalene. With their own church no longer existing it is all the more important that we remember them.

The big difference with St Mary Magdalene is that while that was a memorial for the whole parish, this seems to be a memorial for the men who belonged to the congregation or whose families did, thus explaining its relatively modest list of names. St James' church, Sydenham Road seems to have fulfilled the role of memorial for the wider parish, with 133 names listed.

They are an equally brave and interesting group of men, among them is the youngest man the two memorials to enlist and a winner of the Military Cross. With one exception they tend to be less well off than the men on the St Mary Magdalene memorial; fewer men have secondary education and only one, Edgar Williamson, attended university. This is then reflected in their army ranks, with only one commissioned officer and four non-commissioned officers.

Again this has felt like a process of bringing these men back to life, but it has also felt like a process of remembering the wider church congregation and community of St Martin's Church. As with the memorial at St Mary Magdalene I can only hope that I have done their lives justice.

Stephanie Offer
Addiscombe
November 2021



Baines, Arthur

Arthur Baines, born in Tooting in 1888, to Spencer George Baines, a dairy man and his wife Mary, of 57a Lower Addiscombe Road. His father ran a dairy based at 121 Lower Addiscombe Road, which got its milk from Hooley Farm. Educated at Oval School and worked as a boot maker. Had a younger brother, Leonard, who served in the Royal East Surrey Regiment, but survived the war. Enlisted as a Private in the Royal Fusiliers 3rd April 1916. Wounded 13th November 1916. Died 2nd August 1917 of wounds received 31st July 1917. Buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium.

Chevins, Walter

Walter Henry Chevins, born in Croydon in 1899 to Henry Chevins, a brewer's drayman and his wife Ellen, of 3 Edward Road, Addiscombe. One of six children. Educated at Davidson Road School. Enlisted as a Private in the 1st London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers), Artists' Rifles Battalion September 1915 aged only 16. Killed in action 15th September 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial.

Kent, Percy

Percy Kent, born in Cheam, 26th September 1884 to George Kent, a general labourer and his wife Martha, of 25 Duppas Hill Lane. One of six children. Educated at Parish Church School, Croydon. Worked at Post Office Sorting Office, East Croydon for 19 ½ years. Lived 42 Rymer Road, Croydon. Married Lily Botting 16th September 1885 and had two sons. Raymond born in 1909 and Gordon born in 1915. Enlisted as a Signaller in the Royal West Surrey Regiment 28th July 1916. Missing, presumed killed, 23rd March 1918. He has no known grave but is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, France.



King, George Frederick

George Frederick Hamilton King, born in Houghton, Northumbria, 28th February 1897 to George Sims King, a publican and house steward and his wife Grace, of "Close House" Houghton, Northumbria. Educated at Mantua Street School Clapham and worked as a Banker's Clerk. Lived at 16 Alexandra Road, Addiscombe. Married Gertrude Mary Lousia Picken, one of his neighbours in Alexandra Road, 1st June 1907 at St James, Sydenham Road. Had a daughter, Muriel Mary, born 25th July 1908 and two sons, Harold Archibald born 22nd June 1911 and Frederick born 22nd August 1911. Member of Croydon Dolphin Swimming Club. He had previously served four years in the Queen's Westminsters, a regiment in the territorial army. Enlisted 1st August 1916 into the Royal Garrison Artillery and served as a Lance Bombardier. Killed in action in France 3-4th November 1918. Buried at St Souplet, near Le Cateau.

McQuat, Hugh

Hugh McQuat, born in Manor Park, Essex in 1892 to John McQuat, a farm waggoner and travelling draper and his wife Sarah, of Exeter Road, Croydon. One of six children. Worked as a servant at a gentlemen's club in London, then as a Captain's servant and waiter on various ships on the Orient Line of Royal Mail Steamers, making trips to and from Australia. As a result he enlisted in the 10/20th Battalion Australian Imperial Force in Salisbury, Wiltshire on 14th April 1916. He served as a private in the 1st Battalion Australian Imperial Force. He was serving at Hill 60, Ypres Sector in March 1918, the Germans were shelling them with gas shells, unbeknown to McQuat and two fellow soldiers a gas shell had gone off in the dugout they went to sleep in on the evening of 6th March 1918. The other two men recovered but McQuat was badly affected, Private R H Ward recalled carrying him out and taking him to the Aidpost. From there he was taken to 2nd Clearing Station where he died at 11.30am on 16th March 1918 from the internal effects of the gas. Buried at Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension, France by Rev. Gilbert Harding.

Page, Richard William

Richard William Page born 18th May 1879 in Pertenhall, Bedfordshire to Alfred William Page, a wheelwright and carpenter, and his wife Hannah. One of seven children. Lived at 88 Rymer Road, Addiscombe. Married Harriet Sigary at St James' Croydon on 4th June 1901 and they had one son, William Sigary Page, born 5th September 1902 and baptised 2nd November 1902. Worked for Messrs Hall & Co, Coal Merchants, Whitehorse Road, Croydon. Enlisted in Royal Army Service Corps October 1916, served as a Rifleman in the Royal Irish Rifles and killed in action 7th August 1917. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

Peters, Walter Charles

Walter Stanley Peters, born 1898 in Fulham to Walter Peters, a carpenter and his wife Martha, of 10 Zermatt Road, Thornton Heath. His older brother Charles Robert Peters served in the police in India. Educated at Whitgift Middle School 1912-13 and worked as a clerk at Scotland Yard. Enlisted as a private into the Civil Service Rifles (15th London Regiment) in 1917 and fought in France and Flanders from 21st September 1917. Killed in action 9th August 1918. Buried at Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, France

Playsted, Lionel Henry William

Lionel Harry William Playsted, born 1896 in Croydon to Henry Smith Playsted an assistant foreman in joinery for a builder and his wife Florence, of 6 Amberley Grove, Croydon. An only child. Attended Whitgift Middle School 1909-1913 and worked for the British Petroleum Company, Fenchurch Street. Enlisted into the 6th London Regiment of the Territorial Army, and served as a Corporal and then Lance Sergeant and fought in France and Flanders from 26th January 1917. Killed in action by a German sniper while leading his platoon in an attack on 20th September 1917. His men buried him in the spot where he fell, although this is not marked, so he is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

A fellow soldier described him as, "wonderfully popular, and his men would have gone through anything for him. He was 'Leo' to everybody, and was thought a great deal of by all ranks. He had manfully taken his part through the thickest of the fighting we have been in at various times... His repeated escapes in situations of the greatest danger made him confident; he was coming through this affair all right, but, alas, Fate has decreed otherwise... For myself, I will always carry the memory of a splendid fellow and a dear pal." His father, in a letter to his son's old headmaster described himself as heartbroken and closed the letter by writing, "Oh, God, the blow seems cruel, being our only one, but we must look forward to that great day of re-uniting."

Ray, William Wood

William Wood Ray, born 24th March 1888 in Edinburgh to William Wood Ray, a soldier, Sub Postmaster and Grocer and his wife Elizabeth, of 6 Addiscombe Avenue, Croydon. One of six children. Worked as a commercial traveller in soap and tea. Emigrated to Canada in 1913 to become a farmer. Married Lilian Olivia Maraton Etherington at St Andrew's Croydon 22nd November 1915. Served in the Territorial Army before the war, first in the 3rd Sutherland Highland Volunteers for five years, then the Royal West Surrey Regiment for six years, before joining the 79th Cameron Highlanders of Canada. Enlisted 27th November 1914 into the Canadian Over-seas Expeditionary Force in Winnipeg. Served as Company Sergeant Major in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Killed in action in an attack at Courcellette, 16th September 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial, France.

Riminton, Ernest

Ernest William Riminton, born October 1891 in Lewisham to William Riminton, a clerk and his wife Jessie of 83 Woodside Green, Croydon. Educated at Priory School, Catford and St Dunstan's College 1901-1906 where he won a cricket prize and later joined the Old Dunstonian Rugby Club. Swam in the Croydon Swimming Association. Worked as a clerk in the timber trade. One of six children. His younger brother Percy served in the Queen's Westminster Rifles and died in 1916. He served as a Rifleman in the 1/5th Battalion, London Rifle Brigade, part of the territorial army and was in active service in France from 4th November 1914. Died of wounds 30th April 1915. Buried Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

Riminton, Percy H

Percy Henry Riminton, born 1897 in Lewisham to William Riminton, a clerk and Freeman of the City of London and his wife Jessie of 83 Woodside Green, Croydon. Attended St Olave's Grammar School, Tooley St. E.C. and worked for Prudential Assurance Company. One of six children. Served as a Rifleman in the 16th Battalion (London regiment) Queen's Westminster Rifles. Killed in action 18th September 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, France.

Smith, Albert Edward

Albert, Edward George Smith, born 5th November 1892 to George William Smith, a house painter and his wife Emily Phoebe of 126 Handcroft Road, Croydon. Had two sisters. Educated at Mitcham Road School, Croydon and worked as a grocer's assistant and house decorator. Baptised age 19 in 1911 at St John's church, Croydon. Married Susie Cooper, Christchurch West Croydon 11th April 1915 and lived at 28 Albion Street, Croydon. Enlisted in the Royal West Surrey regiment 7th November 1914 and later transferred to the 13th Battalion, Tank Corps and achieved the rank of Lance Sergeant. Killed in action at Kemmel Hill, 25th April 1918. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Tyne Cot memorial, Belgium.

Streeter, George Henry

George Henry Streeter, born 1896 to Joseph Streeter, a builder's labourer and his wife Kate, of 59 Exeter Road, Croydon. One of thirteen children. His oldest brother Edward served in the army and survived the war; his older brother William served in the Royal East Surrey Regiment and died in 1914. Attended Davidson Road School and worked as an errand boy and labourer. Was a member of the Church Lads Brigade, South Norwood. Enlisted as a Private in the 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment in 1913. Entered active service in France 19th September 1914. Wounded France April 1915. Killed in action 23rd July 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, France.



Streeter, William Joseph

William Joseph Streeter born 1894 in Croydon to Joseph Streeter, a builder's labourer and his wife Kate, of 59 Exeter Road, Croydon. One of thirteen children. His oldest brother Edward served in the army and survived the war; his younger brother George served in the East Surrey Regiment and died in 1916. Worked as a plumber's mate. Was a member of the Church Lads Brigade, South Norwood. Enlisted as a Private in the East Surrey Regiment in 1913 and served in the British Expeditionary Force in France from 16th August 1914. Killed in action 23rd August 1914. Buried at Hautrage Military Cemetery, Mons, Belgium

Williamson, Edgar Rowe

Edgar Rowe Williamson, born 1895 in Oncordia Entre Rios, Argentina to William Rowe Williamson, an accountant and his wife Emma, of 33 Vincent Road, Croydon. One of four children. His brother William Henry Rowe Williamson served in the Royal Garrison Artillery as an Acting Captain and Adjutant, but survived the war. Educated at Repton, the University of London and the Institute of Actuaries. Enlisted as a Private in the 5th London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade) soon after the outbreak of war and arrived in France 24th January 1915. Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant 6th February 1915 and was later made an Acting Lieutenant. Won the Military Cross on 1st July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The Edinburgh Gazette recorded that it was, "For conspicuous gallantry in action. He took charge of a section which had lost its officer, and did fine work reconnoitring, bombing and rallying straggling men." Killed in action 10th September 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France

Winter, Richard Bertram

Richard Bertram Winter, born 1892 in Willesden to William Winter, a School Inspector, and his wife Julia, of 60 Moresby Road, Upper Clapton. One of four children. Lived at 64 Northampton Road. His older brother James Frederick Winter served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Garrison Artillery and Royal Engineers and was killed in action 28th October 1918. Worked as a 2nd Division Clerk, Civil Service, Post Office. Served in France as Private in the 15th (County of London) Battalion, (Prince of Wales Own Civil Service Rifles) Regiment 2526 from 18th March 1915. Killed in action 19th September 1916. He has no known grave but is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France.

Thanks and acknowledgements:

Thank you to my mother for the use of her ancestry and British Newspaper Archive accounts, without these this would have been impossible.

Thank you to my father for his sterling work proof reading. And to both of them for their encouragement.

Thank you to Rev. Amanda Johnson and everyone at St Mary Magdalene for their support and enthusiasm.

Thank you to William Ward, Whitgift Archivist and Laurie King, Trinity School Archivist for the information they shared about their respective schools.

Thank you to Tony Skrzypczyk of Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society for the information on Frank Marshall Roberts.

And finally thanks are due to Hilary McKay, whose *Skylarks* helped spark my curiosity about these war memorials

Source Material and Further Reading

H. W. Moore and W. C. Berwick Sayers, *Croydon and the Great War*

<https://archive.org/details/croydongreatwar00moor>

Ronald Cox, *At The Going Down of the Sun... An account of Croydon's War Memorials*

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

Imperial War Museum, Lives of the First World War

<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/>

Imperial War Museum, War Memorials Register

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials>

A Street Near You

<https://astreetnearyou.org/>

Hilary McKay, *The Skylarks War*

Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*

Rachel Mann, *Fierce Imagings: Ritual, Memory and God*