

The First World War and Goldington, 100 years on August 1918

Continuing the occasional series of articles to add some detail to the scant information on the First World War memorial in the church porch and to mark one hundred years since each individual soldier fell:

The name of **Private Arthur Joseph Spavins** of the 7th Royal Fusiliers appears on no fewer than four war memorials in Bedford. As well as the two Goldington war memorials (both the one in the church porch and the one on Goldington Green) he is also listed on the Bunyan Free Church war memorial and he is one of only three employees listed on the war memorial of the 'Frederick Charles Fuller and Son Brewery'.

Arthur was born to Samuel and Elizabeth Spavins in Goldington around 1879, the eldest of five boys. Samuel was an agricultural labourer from Goldington whilst Elizabeth (nee Kirby) was a lace maker originally from Great Barford.

Arthur married Mary Elizabeth Odell in the first quarter of 1908. (Two of Mary's brothers have already been subjects of this series).

The 1911 census shows the couple living in Goldington with their first child aged 11 months. They had five children in total. Arthur is shown as a carter or cart-driver but there is no indication whether he was working for the brewery at this time.

Arthur joined the Royal Fusiliers (a London regiment) and seems to have been moved about between battalions. He landed in France on 14 December 1916 with the 8th Royal Fusiliers before being transferred to the 26th Royal Fusiliers early in 1917. He seems to have left France between 24 March 1917 and 2 January 1918, possibly wounded?

On return to France in early 1918 Arthur settles into the 7th Royal Fusiliers where he spent the remainder of his service.

The 7th Royal Fusiliers at this time were posted to the Somme area which saw a lot of action. In the spring of 1918 a large German offensive pushed the Allies back. By the summer of 1918 the tide began to turn and the Allies began what would become known as their 'Advance to Victory'.

On the morning of **21 August 1918** the 7th Royal Fusiliers were engaged in an attack north of Ancre to gain the line of the Arras-Albert railway. Hampered by fog, the soldiers advanced and achieved their objectives after some difficulty. However, Arthur did not survive the assault and was killed in this action, aged 38.

He is commemorated on the Vis-En-Artois Memorial at nearby Haucourt.

Arthur's youngest brother Sidney also saw service during the war. He was amongst the very first soldiers to land in France on 16 August 1914 as part of the 1st Bedfordshire Regiment. He later transferred to the Royal Flying Corps.

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