

## LANCE SERGEANT ALFRED JOHN LUXTON RAMC (1890 - 1916)

Alfred John Luxton was the eldest surviving son of agricultural labourer Alfred Luxton and his wife Anna. The family had lived in Thelbridge and West Worlington but by 1901 their address was The Village, Newton St Cyres. By 1911 father Alfred was working as a carter and 21 year old son John, still living at home was a domestic gardener. Five of the family's seven surviving children were living at home in a five- roomed house.

In the spring/early summer of 1915 Alfred John married Ethel Wreford.

Alfred John Luxton was a member of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance Corps. The Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit (not a vehicle) of the Royal Army Medical Corps. They were responsible for setting up and operating a number of points along the casualty evacuation chain. Regimental aid posts were on the front line, bearer (stretcher) relay posts may be as much as 600 yds back. Further back were the advance dressing stations and then further again the main dressing station.

The Field Ambulance Corps came under the command of an Army Division. In the case of the 73<sup>rd</sup> it was the 24<sup>th</sup> Army Division. During August 1916 the 24<sup>th</sup> were fighting on the Somme battlefields attempting to take the higher ground of Delville Wood, a militarily vital observation point. The sixty three acre wood became choked with the dead of both sides.



Lance Sergeant Alfred John Luxton died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1916. As he went 'over the top' to retrieve injured soldiers, a German shell landed on him. He is buried in the Bronfay Farm Cemetery, three kilometres NE of Bray sur Somme. Bronfay farm was the site of the XIV Corps main dressing Station during the Battle of the Somme. He had been in the theatre of war since early September 1915.

Canon Boles, the Vicar of Newton St Cyres at the time, writing in the Ruridecanal Magazine says of him '*He died as he lived, beloved and respected by all who knew him, doing his duty.*'

The Western Times published a photograph of him twelve days after his death with the added sentence *'to die on an errand of mercy is an ending sad, indeed; but nevertheless, one to be proud of.'*

Alfred John Luxton is remembered on the plaque and in the Memorial Window of Newton St Cyres Church.