

PRIVATE ROBERT GEORGE HEAMAN 1877 - 1915

Robert George Heaman was born in 1877 the eldest surviving son and third surviving child of George and Elizabeth Heaman of Burrington. His father was an agricultural labourer as was his grandfather. In the first quarter of 1898 he married Frances Jane Williams from Morthoe and by 1901 they were settled in Kings Nympton where Robert too, was working as an agricultural labourer. By 1911 they had three daughters and one son and had lost one child (their eldest son died as a baby). They had moved house but were still in Kings Nympton.

Private Robert Heaman, service number 15510, may have enlisted in Crediton and was a member of the 2nd Battalion, Devonshire Regiment. He died of wounds on the 28th August 1915 aged 38 years, after being in the theatre of war since late May of that year. He is buried in Merville Communal Cemetery, Department du Nord, France. This is about 20 km from the border with Belgium and was a billeting and hospital centre from 1915 until April 1918 when it was retaken by the Germans. The Second Battalion seem not to have been involved in any major battle at this time but would have been frequently taking their turn on The Front Line. He left a widow and four children who were to receive £2 1s and 8d outstanding pay and a £3 gratuity later. His widow Frances would also have received a Private's widows weekly pension of 13s and 9d with added allowances for children under sixteen.

It has been a surprise to find a Kings Nympton man on the Newton St Cyres War Memorial. He was still on the electoral roll for Kings Nympton in 1914. However Kings Nympton does not have its own war memorial. Many of the men on our war memorial were not living locally at the time of their deaths, but they came from village families or their parents had moved here.

Ron Nethercott of Shuttern Close, Newton St Cyres may well provide the answer. Research into the marriages of Robert Heaman's sisters found that Bessie (2 years Robert's senior) had married Jesse Nethercott and the youngest of her six children was Albert, Ron's father. Thus Bessie Heaman was in fact Ron's grandmother. In 1911 the

Nethercott's were living in Kennford where Jesse was a waggoner. We have yet to find when they came to the village.

Albert Nethercott was to marry Florrie Weeks daughter of Florrie and Frank Weeks the village shopkeepers during WW1 (Ron's other grandparents). Grandmother Florrie was a sister of the very personable Walter Knowles who died later during the war (and was of similar age to Robert Heaman) and is remembered with his nephew Leslie on the Memorial. They will be featured later. Walter Knowles was the youngest son of Maria and James Knowles who had run the village shop earlier. Thus the Weeks family were prominent in the village at the time of WW1.

Robert George Heaman is also on the Shobrooke memorial but we shall leave that one for them to untangle!