

KINVER'S OWN HEROES



Kinver War Memorial in Jubilee Gardens

A tribute to those
who gave their lives
during 1914-18
and 1939-45

LEST WE FORGET



Kinver's Own Heroes

**A tribute to the men of Kinver who gave
their lives during the wars of 1914 - 1918
and 1939 - 1945**

Researched by members of

Kinver Historical Society

*This publication is intended to commemorate the
60th anniversary of the end of the World War II and to
ensure that this particular facet of history is not lost.*

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Sources researched include Kinver Parish Registers, The County Express newspaper and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Any mistakes are inadvertent and the team welcome any corrections or additional information.

We are very grateful for the assistance of the following who have contacted us with details of the men who died:

Beryl Bastock
Hilda Booth
M.E. Bourne
Brian Edwards
Doreen Fisher
Anne Francis
Brian Gittins
Joyce Glover
Margaret Glover
Edith Gristwood
Lynda Lane-Bowen
L. Lewis
Bob Marsh
Carolyn Merrett
Roy Peacock
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Terence Walton
Peggy White
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The Society were grateful to receive sponsorship from
The Ken Wrigley Memorial Charity

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Printed by Waterloo Design & Print plc
Birmingham Street, Halesowen B63 3HW

PREFACE

This publication is dedicated to and for those who made the supreme sacrifice in two World Wars. Many folk pass by the two war memorials in Kinver - one on Kinver Edge and one in Jubilee Gardens. It is not often that you see anyone stop, look at the names and perhaps give a thought to those whose lives were cut short. It all seems a long time ago, but without their sacrifice - and those of our Allies - it is doubtful we would be enjoying life as it is today.

It is true that an annual ceremony is held in Kinver on a date near 11th November - the day war ended in 1918. At one time, many years ago, all buses and cars used to stop. People stood in offices, factories, schools and in the street. A hush descended as they all waited for the chime of Big Ben. At the stroke of 11 a haunting stillness came over the country as it paid its respect. Two minutes silence followed. It is not too much to ask in honour of those who died so young.

We must not forget those who gave their lives in the second World War. The first war has more poignancy as it was avoidable and the waste of life therefore more dramatic. But huge sacrifices were made between 1939 and 1945 with particular gruesome effect against the Japanese.

The annual ceremony can become a ritual to some, but for those attending there is a poignant air about the service. We should never forget.

As one stands in silent contemplation there is a feeling that more information about the names on the memorial should be available. Did he have a family in Kinver? How old was he? What did he do in civilian life? When and where was he actually killed and where is he buried?

The first World War always seems to have a hypnotic effect in that it was a tragedy that should - or could - have been avoided. It was all a terrible waste of life, particularly as most folk just wanted to get on with one another. One incident of the first war that captures the imagination is the first Christmas on the Western front when both armies halted hostilities and greeted one another in No Man's land. Many people ask why the two sides did not say 'we've had enough' and then gone home. Perhaps Winston Churchill, writing in 1914, summed it up: "What would have happened, I wonder, if the armies suddenly and simultaneously went on strike and said some other method must be found of settling the dispute".

World War 2 had more relevance and there was little choice but to fight. It is not the purpose of this publication to wrestle with the origins of the conflicts or to analyse the steps taken throughout both wars. Our purpose is to pay tribute to those whose names appear on the Kinver war memorials and to shed some light on their background and what happened after they were killed.

This publication was compiled by a team from the Kinver Historical Society who have delved into records, scanned computer screens, and visited the churchyard. But above all, we have been greatly assisted by relatives of those who died. We are extremely grateful for their help and co-operation. It has been fascinating talking to them.

War Memorial on Kinver Edge



Kinver War Memorial on Kinver Edge was unveiled in September 1922 by Lieut. Colonel A.H. Moody CBE (Mayor of Stourbridge) and witnessed by hundreds of people. The memorial is of Cornish granite and on the three sides of the square pillar, which forms the base, are panels on which the names of the Kinver men who died in the wars are engraved. The cost was £200. The whole of the money, with the exception of a donation of £15-15s-0d which Major Harcourt Webb insisted on giving, had been raised by the villagers. The firing party stood at the 'Present Arms' and heads were bowed while Colonel Moody released the Union Jack which enshrouded the monument. Three volleys were fired over the memorial by the firing party and the band sounded the Last Post.

(Report from the County Express of 9th September 1922)

LEST WE FORGET

The heading may seem banal, but it pithily expresses one's feelings after visiting the battlefields of Flanders. After more than eighty years the Somme, Passchendaele, Ypres, Vimy Ridge, Arras and Beaumont Hamel have been sanitised. Although some trenches are still visible, with plenty of shell holes grassed over, it is still clear why so many died. The land is mainly flat, with little or no cover. The Germans possessed deep shelters and most of the ridges. Even after a massive bombardment by the Allies, it was easy for the Germans with their machine guns to mow down British and Commonwealth troops who were sent 'over the top' for one more push.

The top brass were often many miles behind the lines and seemed to many folk to have little knowledge or experience of the terrain. A matter of dispute that is still the subject of argument today.

Cemeteries are dotted about the countryside in France and Belgium - there being over 1300 in France alone. One of the most dominant is at Vimy Ridge which was taken after a long bombardment by the Canadian Corps commanded by General Byng on 9th and 10th April 1917. It commemorates the 60,000 Canadians who died in the battle and is known as Vancouver Corner.

The battle of Arras began in 1917 when some 13,000 prisoners were captured in the first stages of the allied advance. The Arras front was violently attacked in March 1918 by three German divisions that failed to break through the allied defences. In August the Allies attacked again and by September had caused a precipitate German retreat.

On the Somme the Germans had established themselves in strong positions and on 1st July 1916 the British 4th Army began what is known as the Battle of the Somme where there were 60,000 casualties on the first day. The mistakes of the commanders can be seen in cemeteries all over France and Belgium.

Another notorious battlefield is that of Passchendaele, site of the largest British war cemetery. Tyne Cott, with almost 12,000 war graves and a memorial to 35,000 missing soldiers is very impressive as one realises the extent of the sacrifice. Tyne Cott is built on the site of five bunkers that wrought such havoc on the Allies. Two Germans manning the machine guns are buried in the same cemetery.

At Essex Far cemetery is the grave of a VC holder and of the youngest soldier, aged 15. Soldiers were medically treated here in concrete bunkers and one of the surgeons was the poet John McCrae who wrote 'In Flanders Fields'. He later died of pneumonia, not helped by treating soldiers who had been gassed.

At Sanctuary Wood - or Hill 60 - there are the remains of trenches and shell holes and a graphic description of life there with the ever present mud and rats. Such was the devastation that to fall into the mud in places meant drowning. Those allowed to sleep needed a guard to stop the rats gnawing at fingers and ears.

At a remote spot called Dartmoor Cemetery there is a small memorial to tank crews. At another there are two graves side by side: Father aged 44; son aged 19, both killed at the same time.

In the same cemetery there is a grave with just a name and date, the burial place of a soldier shot at dawn. Many of those whose execution was confirmed by Haig are now known to have been suffering from shell shock and not cowardice.

There is also a German cemetery in the area which is somewhat gloomy and overwhelmed by large trees. It is not as well kept as those administered by the War Graves Commission.

Perhaps the most interesting and evocative day can be spent at Ypres in Belgium where the Cloth Hall was destroyed in May 1915, as was most of the town. It has been rebuilt - and very magnificent it is too. This is arguably one of the best museums of its kind and is called In Flanders Field. It is interactive and a half-day is needed to appreciate it. It contains the personal statements of common men and women, soldiers, civilians, young and old, friend and foe. Their message is clear to everybody: in a war, no matter where or when: everybody loses out.

During the four years of fighting, 500,000 soldiers on each side lost their lives. The dead are buried in 170 war cemeteries. The town is famous for its Menin Gate, an impressive and moving structure. The archway is a British Memorial to the missing and bears the names of 54,896 officers and men who died between 1914 and 15 August 1917.

At 8pm every evening - since 11 November 1929 - the local fire service has played the Last Post. It is a very moving but simple ceremony.

Farmers are still digging up shells and other munitions. The shells are deposited at the side of the road awaiting collection. An average of two farmers are killed each year whilst ploughing fields.

Many schoolchildren from Britain visit these battlefields as part of their education. They usually leave a wreath of poppies. A year or two ago one of our researchers saw a wreath inscribed "Thank you for sacrificing your lives so we could live."



1914

*4 August: War declared on Germany
Mons
The Marne
First Ypres battle*

War was far from the minds of folk enjoying a fine summer in 1914. Then the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire sparked a conflict that reverberates today. The lives of millions of young men were cut short. Many people thought the conflict would be over by Christmas of that year. Instead men on both sides became bogged down in the mud of Flanders and subjected to catastrophic decisions by their leaders.

This publication is concerned only with men who resided in Kinver and its surrounds. Looking at the war memorial in Jubilee Gardens it appears that the number listed is excessive in relation to the total population at that time of under 3000. There was great excitement as men rushed to join up and who, many anticipated, would be home for Christmas.

It was not to be. Whilst war was declared on the 4th August, the first major action took place on 23rd August amid the coalfields at Mons. It was the start of trenches stretching over 400 miles and an attempted breakthrough by German forces was stopped by the British and the French at the Belgium town of Ypres.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect in 1914 was the truce when British forces and Germans got together in no man's land to celebrate Christmas. It made no difference in the end. Another three years' fighting faced them all. But there had been a sliver of hope as British forces and Germans exchanged gifts and acquired souvenirs, sang carols and then returned to their trenches.

However, the troops did receive an unexpected Christmas present. On 14th October newspapers carried an advertisement inviting contributions to a 'Sailors & Soldiers Christmas Fund'. It was the brainchild of Princess Mary, King George V's teenage daughter. It met with an amazing response from the public and a triumph of industrial production.

A committee decided to spend the money on an embossed brass box. The box is about five inches long and three inches deep. On the lid is an image of the young princess, surrounded by a laurel wreath and flanked on either side by the 'M' monogram. At the top are the words 'Imperium Britannicum' (British Empire) with a sword and scabbard either side. On the lower edge is 'Christmas 1914' flanked by battleships. Around the edge are the names of the Allies: Belgium, Japan, Montenegro and Serbia (spelt 'Servia'), France and Russia, with furled flags.

The contents varied. Smokers got a combination of pipe, lighter, one ounce of tobacco and 20 cigarettes in distinctive yellow monogrammed wrappers. Non-smokers and boys received a bullet pencil and a packet of sweets. Indian troops often got sweets and spices and nurses were treated to chocolate. All the tins contained a small greeting card from the Princess, wishing a 'victorious new year'.



The first casualties

As war was declared late in the year it would take some time for volunteers to receive training and be transported to the war zone. The first few months of 1914 saw the British Expeditionary Force off to France but they needed reinforcements. There were hurried efforts to recruit, supply uniforms, train the novices and move them out to France as quickly as possible. The enthusiasm was evident and seemed to lift spirits from the mundane jobs many had in civilian life. Little did they know of the hardships they were to face.

The Kinver contingent was fortunate to escape unscathed during the tail end of 1914. However, as we turn to 1915, the casualty list lengthens.

1915

The Dardanelles The Landing at Gallipoli Second Ypres battle Loos



There were large Allied assaults during 1915 and the casualties mounted. In April the Germans used poison gas at Ypres. The battle of Loos started in September but ended in early October. The second battle of Ypres saw extensive use by the Germans of gas and there was no protection for the men. They tore at their throats, desperately seeking to breathe. A foaming liquid gathered in their lungs which would in effect drown the victim.

The battle of Loos in September and October saw heavy losses as troops went 'over the top' to face a barrage of German machine gun fire.

Gallipoli can only be described as a disaster. Whilst a landing was made, the troops suffered trench warfare and great hardship. They eventually made a humiliating retreat.

The first casualty appears to be **Sergeant Percy James Biddle** who died on 16 May 1915 at the age of 25. He was in the 1st Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment and he lies at the Le Touret memorial. His parents, John and Mary Biddle then resided at Lock Cottage, Kinver.

George Ernest Beresford, a Private in the 8th Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment, died on 20 October 1915 at the age of 17 and is buried at Birmingham Lodge Hill cemetery. He was the son of Pamela Mary of 19 High Street, Kinver and the late George Beresford.

Private John Jordan was with the 7th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and died on 9 August 1915 aged 18. His resting place is at Helles Memorial. He was the son of Joseph and Camilla Florence Jordan of Woodbine Cottage, Dunsley Rocks.

Private William Nicholls was with the 1st Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment and died on 25 September 1915 aged 21. He was the son of George Nicholls of Kinver and husband of Mary Ann of 9 South Road, Stourbridge. He is buried at La Brique Military Cemetery.

The Rochelle family had five sons in the army. Three were killed. Of the two remaining sons, one gained the DCM and the other the Military Medal. Their father had served in the army. His wife's father fought in the Crimean war and Rochelle's grandfather took part in the battle of Waterloo. **Sergeant William Rochelle** died on 24 November 1915. He was with the 7th South Staffordshire Regiment.

Private George Rochelle (39) was killed on 18 May 1915 and belonged to the 2nd Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment. He was the son of Richard and Caroline Rochelle. He is buried at the Le Touret Memorial.

Corporal Herbert Walter Henry Shaw died on the 25 November 1915 aged 19. He was a Corporal in the 7th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment and is buried at Alexandra (Chatby) Military and War Memorial cemetery. He was the son of William Joseph and Clara Shaw of Meddins Lane.

Private George Green was in a different sphere of battle when he was killed on 6 August 1915. He was in the infamous Gallipoli campaign and belonged to the 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. He is buried in the Helles Memorial. His parents were James and Mary Ann Green.

Detailing the deaths of those who fought in the two world wars does not encapsulate the horrors they faced. Our researchers unearthed a report in the County Express of 31 July 1915 headed 'Kinver soldier's wonderful escape'. This declared that Mrs J Baker, 11 Castle Street, Kinver had received a letter from her husband of the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment who described an hour in the trenches on 29 June from 5.30 to 6.30pm.

"We had", he says " had tea and started by letting off two mines in the German trenches. I was on the look-out to see what damage we had done. At first we could not see much for smoke. Then I saw Germans, chairs and wheel-barrows blown up in the air. All the time we were throwing bombs and firing rifle grenades. I am a bomb thrower and the men all along the line were firing like mad. Then the Germans started their artillery into our trenches. We thought it was hell let open. We then let the third mine up and it was a sight! After we had finished the German trenches were levelled like a ploughed field; it will be a long time before they are like trenches again. I think the third mine was too strong; it blew the corner of our trench. Sandbags, bricks and dirt went up for about 15 yards. I was just going to use the bomb catapult when someone shouted 'Look out, Jack' but I was not sharp enough to get away. There was such a bang at my back and a big burst; the catapult bomb-thrower was moved as were also the sandbags, and about half a ton of trench was lifted into the air. It was a miracle I was not killed, but I was not even touched, beyond being covered with dirt and I was all right in an hour. Four of our men had been in the dug-out, but when we went to look for them, we could not even see the dug-out. When we had got them out we did not know who they were until we found their pay books. We want more men to join the army to enable us to get our own back. I wonder what the slackers would do if the Germans go to our homes".



1916

Verdun The Somme

This is the year of the infamous Somme offensive in an attempt to relieve French forces under siege at Verdun. This prolonged battle epitomises the futility of the tactics used during many battles over four years. It has a particular resonance with those who fought and survived and has a haunting aura about it to those who see it as history.

The Germans had built a very strong fortified position with indestructible shelters. Their artillery positions lay well back and heavily camouflaged, but ready to reap havoc on attacking soldiers. This was the bloodiest battle of the war. The stench and squalor was bad enough but the troops were scythed down by machine-guns and became tangled in the barbed wire. Shells and shrapnel ripped men apart. They were then faced with flame-throwers and poison gas and drowning in shell holes. Those left alive suffered from hunger, thirst and exhaustion.

The Somme is like the Holocaust. It revealed things about mankind that we can never come to terms with and cannot forget. It can never become the past [Pat Barker on winning the Booker Prize 1995].

The British thought they could pulverise the enemy trenches, that barbed wire would be cut and a significant advance made. The bombardment lasted a week - and failed. German machine guns wrecked havoc on advancing troops. The counter-barrage by the Germans was used to devastating effect. On 1 July 1916 the British Army sustained 57,470 casualties of which 19,240 were killed or died of wounds. Tanks were used for the first time but with little impact as the number was small.

As fighting increased there was a heavier casualty list in 1916 with a seemingly disproportionate number in November 1916 affecting Kinver.



Private Harry Arthur Horton (left) of the 1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, was wounded in the Somme battle. He died on 10 July 1916 aged 18. He was the son of John and Mary Horton of The Paddock, High Meadows, Kinver. His father was a boatman. He is buried at the Thiepval Memorial.

Private Charles Henry Purcell died on 15 April. He was the son of George John and Sarah Anne Purcell of High Street, Kinver. Before the war he assisted his father in business as a fruiterer.

One person who came through the Somme battlefield, although wounded eleven times, was Lance Corporal **J. White** of the Canadian force. He was the son of Mr and Mrs J. White of

Meddins Lane, Kinver and in a letter from Perth's Royal Infirmary, Scotland to his sister Mary White he said:

"Am going on very well with wounds. I was hit in the right shoulder, two bad ones in the left shoulder, a shrapnel wound in the chest and one in the right side. I lost quite a lot of blood as I had to walk four miles to the nearest dressing station. It was hard walking in mud knee-deep. I have been on the Somme fighting nearly all the time. It was awful".

There were three fatalities in August. First was **Alfred Elliott Christer** a sergeant in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. He died on 21 August aged 36. He had been awarded a long service and good conduct medal. A son of Arthur and Ruth Christer, he had served with the Tibet Expedition in 1907. He was married to Emma and lived at 27 Foster Street, Kinver. His body lies in the famous Thiepval Memorial.

Louis Salter was a Corporal in the 1/8th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was killed in action in Flanders on 17 August 1916. He is buried at Thiepval Memorial.

cf Stourbridge **Private Phillip Talbot** was killed at Leipzig salient, Pozieres Ridge, but his body was not found. He was born in 1892 and was the son of Thomas and Sarah Talbot of 4 Foster Street who were shoe repairers in the High Street, Kinver. Phillip served in the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

Lance Corporal Walter Thomas Fox, formerly employed at Dunsley Hall farm, was killed in action some time between 14 and 17 September. He was with the 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards and was born in Prestwood. He is buried at the Thiepval Memorial

Second Lieutenant **Claude Fitzgerald Sedley Brown** died on 19 October 1916 aged 38. He was with the Royal Lancashires and formerly a Quartermaster Sergeant in the Coldstream Guards. He was the son of Thomas Brown who lived at 24 Foster Street, Kinver. His name is not on the war memorial.

There were six casualties in November, due no doubt to the Somme offensive. **Edgar Charles Postings** was a Private in the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment and died on 2 November in Flanders.

On the 7 November **Private Hugh John Fred Harding** died at the age of 25. He was a Private with the 7th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment and the son of William and Annie Harding of Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston. His wife was Hannah who lived at 20 Spring Terrace, Union Street, Stourbridge. He was laid to rest at the Thiepval Memorial.

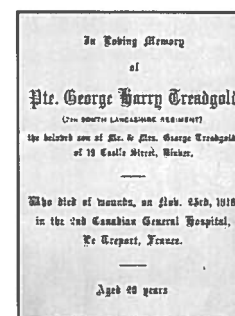
The following day - 8 November - **John Banes** was killed. He was a Private in the Worcestershire Regiment and is buried at Adanac Military Cemetery, Miraumont.

A slight gap, but then on the 20 November, **Private Frederick C.W. Letts** (19) a Private in the 55th Company, Machine Gun Corps, was killed. He lies in the Varennes Military Cemetery. He was the son of William and Louisa Letts of Blakeshall, Wolverley.

On the 18 November 1916, **Private George Jones** (20) was killed. He was with the 10th Battalion, Royal Worcestershire Regiment and is buried at Grandcourt Cemetery. He was the son of Thomas and Adelaide Jones of Newhouse Farm, Blakedown, but a native of Kinver.



Private George Harry Treadgold was 20 when he was killed on the Somme on 23 November 1916. He belonged to the South Lancashire Regiment (A Coy. 7th Bt). He was the son of George and Elizabeth Treadgold of 19 Castle Street, Kinver. He died of wounds in the 2nd Canadian General Hospital at Le Treport, France and is buried at the Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport. He joined the colours some six months before his death and had gone to France four months later. Mrs Treadgold had seven soldier nephews.



*'Good morning, good morning' the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
'He's a cheery old card', grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.*

Siegfried Sassoon—"The General" 1918

1917

Arras Messines Passchendaele Tanks in Cambrai

On the 9 April the British attacked at Arras. The Canadians captured Vimy Ridge and 19,000 Germans were taken prisoner. The breakthrough to the Belgium coast and capture of the ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend was the target in 1917. The plan was to attack the southern end of the ridge that dominated the Ypres salient - Messines Ridge.

On 31 July the offensive known as the Third Battle of Ypres or more commonly called 'Passchendaele' began. There was an artillery bombardment and air battles raged overhead. Unfortunately on the night of 31 July it rained and craters were filled with muddy slime. Many died in a man-made swamp.

As this attack petered out a surprise attack was launched on the German lines at Cambrai. 375 tanks were used. The German 'secret' weapon proved to be mustard gas.

Private Joseph Pound of the Worcestershire Regiment, son of Mrs Pound of 14 Stone Lane, Kinver, was killed in action in Mesopotamia. He was only 22 years old, was formerly gamekeeper to Mr Downing, Stourton Hall, and had been in the army two and a half years, having seen service in Gallipoli (where he was wounded) and in France. His brother Charles Pound was in India.



Private James Craddock (left) was killed during the second battle of the Scarpe. He was in the 4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment and is buried at the Arras Memorial. He was the son of Henry and Mary Ann Craddock. Born on 17 May 1895, he was admitted to Old Swinford Hospital School in December 1909 and later became a gardener for R.L. Matthews of Stourton from June 1909. [Details from 'Old Foleys remembered: Casualties of WWI']

James Craddock and Walter Lane (mentioned in 1918) were the great uncles of Lynda Lane-Bowen of Mamble, near Kidderminster.

To give some flavour of the hazards facing the troops the following is from the history of the Worcestershire Regiment.

Just as the first light showed pale over the crest of Infantry Hill, the British guns broke out in intense fire. The platoons of the 4th Worcestershire rose to their feet and charged forward down the slope through a storm of shells. The German front line was easily crossed, and the few survivors of the defence were killed or captured. The Worcestershire companies reached the bottom of the hollow and pushed up the slope. Officers and men fell at every step, but the enemy's second line was stormed and within half-an-hour from the start, they had advanced nearly a mile, had reached their objective and had commenced to entrench.

About 10am came the first German counter attack. Lieutenant Croom-Johnson sent up flares, and at that pre-arranged signal the British artillery put down an intense barrage which blotted out the attack, but the enemy were determined to regain the spur. A fresh advance encircled the right flank of the Worcestershire men and once again the enemy attacked the slope. The musketry of the defence held back the attack, but the German bombardment shattered the hasty entrenchments on the spur, and the fire of the Worcestershire platoons grew weaker as the soldiers collapsed or were killed or wounded. No support came. According to the plan a pause of seven hours was to have ensued between the first and the second phase of the attack.

At 4pm after a crushing bombardment by heavy howitzers, the Germans delivered an overwhelming attack. A great flood of the enemy poured up the slope. The remnant of the Worcestershire detachments which had defended the copse all day still fought to the last. Desperate hand to hand fighting ensued until the last of the Worcestershire lads had fallen and the copse was in the enemy's hands. On 22 April the battle strength of the battalion had been 17 officers and 520 rank and file. On 24 April, 2 officers and 64 men marched back.

Sergeant George Henry Wall died on 18 April and is buried at the Thiepval Memorial. He was with the 1st/7th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Private Thomas Newell was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Newell of 7 Stone Lane, Kinver. He was a Private in the 9th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and is buried at Railway Dugouts Burial Ground. His parents received a letter from Captain E. L. Browning in which he stated: "Newell was killed instantaneously and the same shell killed his friend and comrade named Richards who was of the same age as himself". The date was 28 April 1917. Newell enlisted in the previous September and was home at Christmas on leave. Before the war he was a farm labourer for Mr Roy Robinson, Lydiate Farm.

The battle of Arras claimed the life of **Sergeant Richard Frederick Horne** (26) who belonged to the 17th Division, 8th (Service) Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. He was killed on 23 April 1917 and is buried in the Arras Memorial.

Roy Peacock of Stourbridge was able to provide details of the hazards faced by Richard and his colleagues. "He was born at Bootle, Lancashire, but by the time of the war he was living in Kinver. He enlisted in the South Staffordshire Regiment and joined the 8th (Service) Battalion in the 17th Division. By 1916 this battalion had fought on the Somme and in March 1917 it was brought forward for the battle of Arras. The first day of the battle on the 9 April was remarkably successful and a second attack was planned for the 23 April with the 17th Division. By this time the German forces had been driven back to the Hindenburg Line. This was based on defence in depth with three trench lines heavily protected by barbed wire. The blue sheen of the fresh wire could actually be seen by the British troops from their own trenches. This wire was to be a terrible obstacle for the Staffords and for all the troops involved.

The battalion moved up to the prominent village of Monchy-le-Preux on the 18 April and took over hastily built trenches. Their first task was to give attention to making more secure defences. On the 23rd the battalion helped lead the attack and set off at 4.47am following a well organised creeping barrage. Unfortunately, much of the German wire had not been cut by the artillery and the leading troops were caught by deadly machine gun fire, notably from the left flank. Officers and NCO's died while

looking for gaps in the wire and companies became mixed up in the confusion. Colonel Barker, the Commanding Officer, went forward to reorganise his men and attempted another attack. This, too, was beaten back by intense German fire. A further attempt was made to use the artillery to silence the German positions, but the third attack met the same fate as the first two. The survivors retired to their original assembly line. Their opponents had been the German 216th Division, one of the enemy's best units. Casualties for the battalion amounted to 15 officers and 218 men".

Among those killed in action was Sergeant Richard Horne.

Private Percy Baker was reported missing and wounded on 2 July 1917 and then reported killed. He was formerly in the Stourbridge Territorials and had been in the army before the war. He re-enlisted at the outbreak of hostilities and joined the Wiltshire Regiment. Aged 26 and single, he had four brothers serving with the colours, one of whom came from Canada with the purpose to enlist. Their father was an old soldier who had served through the Boer War and had tried to contribute to the current conflict but had to give up due to bad health. He had a proud record of 17 years service. Percy was a former chimney sweep.

Private Harry Shingler of the 8th Battalion, Leicester Regiment and a former Head Gardener at Stourton Hall, died of his wounds in May 1917 at Liverpool Hospital. The funeral was at St Peter's Church conducted by the Reverend Cooper-Slipper. His wife was Florence W Shingler of Hyde Cottage. He is buried on the south east corner of the lower (East) ground of the churchyard.

Gunner Walter Lloyd died on 9 August. He was a Private in the Royal Horse Artillery and is buried at the Locre Hospice Cemetery. He was the son of Richard Lloyd of Stourbridge although Walter was born in Kinver.

Private John Morris, 2nd/5th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment, was killed on 21 October. He was born in Kinver, enlisted at Brierley Hill and lived in Stourton.

Private Jack Hubble died on 22 November 1917. He was in the 1st Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment and is buried at Tyne Cot Memorial. He was the son of Richard and Sarah Hubble.

Sergeant James Henry Micklewright (21) of the 10th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, died on 16 December 1917 and is buried at the Ribecourt British Cemetery. He was the son of Fanny Micklewright of The Acre, Kinver.

Two men who escaped the slaughter, although involved in the fighting were **Sergeant Henry Worrall**, of Hyde Lane. He was the first recruit to enlist from Kinver after the outbreak of the war. He was 22. In 1917 he was discharged from the army after being wounded three times.

The other soldier was **Lance Corporal F Mayo**, Worcester Regiment, who worked at Hyde Farm, Kinver. He was awarded the Military Medal for distinguished service while bomb throwing at the front in France.

**Breakthrough in Flanders
Breakthrough to the Marne
The second battle of the Marne
Battle of Amiens**

The final years of the war saw a massive attack by the Germans in March where they gained about 14 miles. The British were driven back to the old battlefields of the Somme. In August the British attacked and smashed through the German front line at Amiens to a depth of eight miles.

There were numerous other battles with aircraft and ships taking a significant part. There were other areas of conflict but the dominant battles were fought over a devastated countryside. Besides the fighting, soldiers had to cope with rain, mud, rats, cold, hunger. It is difficult to envisage the scene and the least we can do is pay tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice. Many lost their lives in the previous years, but it has always seemed so poignant and tragic to recall those who died in the closing months of the war, and particularly in the last few days.

Private J Postings (21) of the South Staffordshire Regiment was killed in action on 1 March 1918. He was the son of Mr and Mrs P Postings of Gothersley, Stourton. He enlisted three years earlier and had been in France for 13 months. He had been formerly employed by Mr Salter of Prestwood Hall. His name is not on the war memorial.

Private James Willis Brown (20), son of Mr and Mrs Brown of Highgate Farm, Enville, was killed in action on 24 March 1918 while holding out with a machine gun against advancing German troops. Like Postings, his name is not on the war memorial.

Private Benjamin Harrison of the 1/6th Manchester Regiment was killed in Flanders on 28 March 1918. He was the son of Joseph and Mary Jane Harrison of Manchester and he is buried at Gommecourt Woodnew Cemetery, Foncquevillers. [This information cannot be verified].

Captain Alfred Rochelle died on 14 April 1918. He was 37 years of age and was serving with the 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers. He had served in Gibraltar, South Africa, India and France. He is buried at Etaples Military Cemetery. His parents at the time were caretakers at the Edge View Hotel. His wife was Mary Rochelle, a native of Tottenhall Wood, Wolverhampton. She received a blunt telegram from the War Office:

Deeply regret Captain A Rochelle first Northumberland Fusiliers died of wounds in General Hospital Etaples fourteenth March. Army Council expresses sympathy.



Corporal William Edward Dorrell of the Worcesters was thought to have been killed in March 1918. It was subsequently established that he had been taken prisoner. He was 25 years of age, came from Enville and enlisted in September 1914 with the Worcestershire Yeomanry and subsequently transferred to the Worcestershire Regiment. Prior to enlisting he worked on his father's farm. He was the nephew of Miss Dorrell of the Bell Hotel, Stourbridge.

A letter from Captain Pearson with the BEF in France dated 29 July 1918 still exists and is addressed to Mrs Bourne. This informs her of the death of her husband **Gunner W.E. Bourne**. Her husband *"was killed by a shell on 31 May during a heavy shelling of the Battery. Death was almost instantaneous and he suffered no pain. Your husband had only been a short time with us, but it was long enough to endear himself to the Battery. We were all much shocked at his early death. The same day was a bad one for us as the Major and another officer were wounded in the afternoon. Gunner Bourne was buried on 2 June at Houchin Cemetery near Bethune with military honours....The Battery unites with me in heartfelt sympathy in your great trouble"*.

Many people will be familiar with the war poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. But Gunner Bourne made his own contribution, harking back from the trenches to Kinver where his thoughts lay. It was headed 'Kinfare'

In that small village of Kinfare,
I've spent a merry time;
And sat beneath a shady tree,
To hear the church bells chime.
The old folks, with their cheerful smiles,
Have often said to me,
'In this small village we have lived
A life serene and free'.

The beauty of the pretty spot,
Tiss in it's rocks and hills;
There's to be seen along the stream,
Some ancient water mills.
I've seen the water wheels at work,
And watched for many an hour,
The pleasure boats go up and down,
The narrow winding Stour.

How beautiful! How glorious!
The view on every side,
'Twas there I learned the light of love
And found my bonny bride;
Upon that beautiful great Edge,
With all the fields around,
The huntsman with his pack I've seen,
Ride o'er the hilly ground.

I've heard the nightingale sing there,
His sweet and merry song,
And chased the rabbits and the hare,
Thro' heather thick and long.
The pleasure of that pretty spot,
Long since I've left behind,
Some day I hope to go again,
Those pleasures all to find.

Private George Henry Riley (35) died on 8 August. He was in the London Regiment of the Royal Fusiliers and he is remembered at the Vis-en-Artois memorial. His wife was Maude E Riley of Hyde Lane.

Private William Boulton (18) was in the 9th Battalion of the Essex Regiment and died of his wounds on 19 September 1918. He was the son of Walter and Lily Boulton of 67 Newtown, Prestwood, Stourbridge. He is buried at La Chapelette British and Indian Cemetery, Peronne, a town approximately 20 km east of Amiens. Peronne was occupied by British troops on the 18 March 1917, lost on 23 March, and regained on 1 September 1918. Hundreds of people have visited the battle grounds of the First World War. Whilst it is very moving for those who have no relatives buried in the region, it is very much more poignant for those whose parents or grandparents were killed. One such visit was made by Edith Gristwood to the cemetery where William Boulton is remembered. This is her account:



The visit to the Vimy Ridge Canadian National Memorial and Park turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip. Apart from seeing the huge memorial, we wandered through the site of the trenches (which were incredibly close to one another) and went with a Canadian guide for an hour-long walk through the system of tunnels.

The Museum of the Great War in Peronne was very interesting and we spent some three hours there, including seeing a twenty-minute film. The cemetery at La Chapelette was quite moving. Like all the cemeteries we visited it was very well maintained. Edith placed a red rose on William's grave.

We added a visit to the huge crater at La Boisselle, which turned out to be quite impressive. We made a stop at Tommy's Cafe for a beer and a baguette. The 'garden' was laid out as a trench system, with countless rusting helmets, flasks, bits of guns, shells, and almost anything else one could think of.

We also visited Grandcourt, which has a link with Stourbridge through the British League of Help 'adoption' scheme.

Private William James Childe, born in Milford, Staffordshire but residing in Kinver, was only 23 years of age when he was killed in action on 28 September. He was the son of John and Phoebe and husband of Daisy who at the time was living in Wimbledon,

London. He is buried at Vis-en-Artois Memorial. The memorial bears the names of over 9000 men who fell in the period from 8 August 1918 to the date of the Armistice.

Private **Walter Lane** died on 29 September. He was with The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) and is buried at the Unicorn Cemetery, Vend'huile. Walter was born in Kinver in 1899. His parents were John Joseph and Harriet Sarah.

Private **James Welch** died of wounds on 1 October 1918 and belonged to the 17th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers. He was formerly employed as a carrier and is buried at Zant Voorde British Cemetery.

Private **Arthur John Beresford** was an air mechanic with the RAF (Royal Flying Corps) and died on 22 October 1918. He was only 17 and is buried at St Peter's churchyard extension, Kinver. He was the son of George and Pamela Mary Beresford of 19 High Street, Kinver and the brother of G.E. Beresford who was killed in 1915.

Private **Walter Eugene Germaine Purcell**, 1st Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment died on 7 November 1918 just four days short of the armistice. He is buried at Maubeuge-Centre Cemetery. He was the son of Walter and Florence Purcell of 19 Enville Road, Kinver.

Mention should be made of **Harry Walton**, a 38-year old farm worker, who volunteered to join the army. He was gassed in Mesopotamia and returned from the war. He was told to recuperate in the fresh air on Kinver Edge. But it would take him an hour to walk there from the High Street where he lived. He died after about six months. It is believed he was in the Worcestershire Regiment.

Private **Henry (Harry) Lewis** was killed by a sniper in France but the actual date and year is not known. He was the elder brother of Ethel and possibly lived in White Hill.

Regrettably, no information can be traced relating to **J.A. Taylor**.

Not only did the troops have to suffer cold, hunger, rats, shell-fire and mud, but one surprise for which they were unprotected was gas. We are familiar with seeing a line of soldiers with eyes covered and one hand resting on the shoulder of the one in front to guide them all to hospital. But it was not just the eyes that were affected. It was the choking gas affecting lungs. A poem by Wilfred Owen encapsulates the horror of this form of warfare:

Dulce et decorum est

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping behind.*

*Gas! GAS! quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest,
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

[Wilfred Owen, October 1917-February 1918]

Only the dead have seen the end of war

(Plato 5th century BC)



First World War Death Plaque

These large bronze medals were issued to the next of kin of members of His Majesty's armed forces who died in military service

*Hitler marches into Czechoslovakia
Germany invades Poland
Russia invades Finland
France and Britain declare war on Germany*

EPILOGUE: 1914-1918

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.*

*Take up your quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields*

[John McCrae, a Canadian medical officer during the second battle of Ypres in 1915]

By early 1939 war seemed inevitable. After Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia in March, Britain, France and Poland signed a mutual assistance agreement. Italy invaded Albania and compulsory military service was on its way.

Earlier in January of this year, Hitler was calling for the return of Danzig to Germany. By mid-January a law had been passed in Germany forbidding Jews to drive cars. A week later Gestapo officer Heydrich was asked to speed up evacuation of Jews from Germany. At the end of the month Hitler threatened the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe in case of war.

On the 15th March Hitler marched into Prague and Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. In May Hitler planned an assault on Poland, but said that war with Britain and France should be avoided. In July Churchill proposed a military alliance with Russia.

In August Hitler announced to his generals that the destruction of Poland would commence on Saturday morning. By the end of August Britain began the evacuation of civilians from London. On 23 August Hitler and Stalin signed a non-aggressive pact with general lines of partition of Poland drawn up. On 1 September Hitler invaded Poland. By 3 September Britain and France had declared war on Germany. By mid-September the Polish cause was lost. Hitler next had his eyes on Holland, Belgium, France and Norway.

Earlier, on 1 April 1939, an inauspicious date, Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet reversed its policy of appeasement and pledged Britain to defend Poland against any threat from Germany. Hitler treated this with disdain and on 1 September he marched into Poland. Britain and France had no other option.

About a year earlier Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister said "*This is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time*". Nearly twelve months later he announced: "*This morning, the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German government a final Note stating that, unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany*".

There were only a few short months of war in 1939 and Kinver servicemen escaped unscathed. The surprising feature is that there is no record of any deaths in 1942, the year of the famous Battle of El Alamein.

1940

Italy declares war on Britain and France
Evacuation of BEF at Dunkirk
France surrenders
Germany invades Norway and Denmark
Battle of Britain
Italy invades Greece

In April Hitler attacked Denmark and Norway and a month later France. Resistance did not last long and thousands of Allied troops were evacuated from Dunkirk. Churchill became Prime Minister. In June Italy declared war on Britain and France, but France surrendered to Germany.

By August fierce air battles were being fought over Britain and what became known as the Battle of Britain began on 11 August as 1000 German planes attacked coastal areas, including Dover and radar stations at Weymouth and Portland.

In September the London blitz started in earnest and on 15 September the biggest Luftwaffe daylight attack took place. The Germans then switched to night bombing. In October Italy invaded Greece and in November more than 500 German bombers attacked Coventry and later Birmingham for nine hours.

As we move into 1940 we find four casualties from Kinver. The first was **Kenneth Victor Thrift**, a Sergeant Observer in 102 Squadron of the RAF. He was killed on 20 May and is buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery. He was the son of Mr and Mrs G.E. Thrift who lived in Kinver. His niece - Mrs Anne Francis - was able to provide details of his life and death.

Kenneth Thrift was born on 28 October 1919. He was my mother's youngest brother, the youngest child of two full brothers and a sister and, I think, four or five step-brothers and sisters. He was killed three months before I was born. The family subsequently moved to Tettenhall from Brewood and then to Kinver where he attended Stourbridge Grammar School. He was always fascinated with planes and flying as his drawings of aircraft all over his school text books testify. He passed a very high number of subjects.

By 22 August 1939 his family were living in Stourton but he had already volunteered for the RAF, wishing to make this service his career. He was known at this time to have been stationed at RAF Aldegrove, Crumlin, Co. Antrim. I believe he joined the RAF in company with two other Kinver 'lads': Philip White whose parents had the Post Office at that time and his school friend, Michael Cooper-Slipper, whose father was then the Vicar of Kinver.

Sometime in May 1940 he was reported missing in action and on 20 May his Squadron Leader wrote to my grandmother the usual letter of condolence. Shortly after this the family moved to Stone Lane where my grandmother, who never recovered from his

death, remained until she too died in 1948. Ken apparently remained missing as far as the family were concerned until the British Red Cross wrote to his elder brother John on 29 April 1941 enclosing letters from members of his Squadron confirming his death on the night of 19 May 1940 when his aircraft was hit by an enemy anti-aircraft shell over Germany. The aircraft subsequently crashed in flames in Holland on to a farmhouse in a small town called Dearne, near Eindhoven. My uncle's remains were identified by a fellow crew member at the request of the German authorities.

He was buried with full military honours on 23 May 1940.

A few days later **William Henry Morris** of the 7th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, was killed on 26 May and is buried at the Dunkirk Memorial Cemetery. He was 20 years of age and was the son of William Henry and Rose Morris.

It was not until December 1940 that two more casualties were reported. **Reginald Palmer** of the Royal Welch Fusiliers died on 6 December and is buried in St Peter's Churchyard extension at Kinver. He was 29 years of age and the son of Harry and Isabel Palmer of East Ham, Sussex. His name does not appear on the Kinver war memorial.

Flying Officer **John Reginald Bellerby**, a pilot in the 13th Squadron of the RAF, is also buried in the same churchyard. He died on 18 December. He was the son of Reginald and Amy Bellerby of Dunsley Bank, Kinver.

1941

*Germany invades Russia
Rommel encircles Tobruk
Japan attack Pearl Harbor
Battlecruiser Hood and Ark Royal sunk
US declares war on Germany and Italy
Seige of Leningrad*

The war in the desert expanded as Rommel arrived in Tripoli. In March the Germans occupied Bulgaria and in April Germany invaded Greece and Yugoslavia. The German battleship Bismark was sunk in May. Allied troops evacuated Crete in June. On 22 June, Germany and its allies invaded Russia along a 1300 mile front.

September saw the first use of gas at Auschwitz and the seige of Leningrad began. The Ark Royal was sunk off Gibraltar in November. In December, the Germans were only five miles from the Kremlin in Moscow. The 7 December is a notorious date when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Italy and Germany declared war on the United States and this was reciprocated. Hong Kong surrendered after a 17-day seige.



*Just one of the reasons the
war was being fought.
Auschwitz*

There were only two fatalities during 1941. Both were RAF Volunteer Reserves, both served in 105 Squadron and were killed together on the same day - 22 March - and both are buried in adjacent graves at St Peter's Churchyard extension in Kinver.

The first was **Cyril Peter Dugdale** (20). He was the son of Lt.Col Walter Geoffrey Dugdale MC and Rosamond Shirley of Shrewsbury. The second was Pilot Officer **Ian Murray Shirlaw** (25) the son of Alan and Eva Margaret Shirlaw.

George Percy Riley, a Stoker, 1st Class, went down with HMS Hood on 24 May 1941. His name is not on the war memorial but he was probably related to first World War casualties Walter Lane and James Craddock.

1942

*Battle of the Atlantic
Japanese land on Singapore Island
British hold El Alamein
Singapore surrenders
Malta is awarded the George Cross
Battle of Midway
Battle of El Alamein: Rommel retreats
Tobruk falls
Germany 6th Army cut off at Stalingrad*

The year saw Rommel on the attack in North Africa and the first US troops arrived in Britain. By February, Singapore had surrendered. April saw Malta awarded the George Cross and the first air raids on Tokyo and Japan took place. Tank battles took place in North Africa. In June Tobruk fell to the Germans who continued their advance. The British held El Alamein despite fierce fighting.

The year actually began badly in almost every theatre of war. The Germans had a firm grip on occupied territories and were poised for further advances in Russia. Japanese forces seemed unstoppable. By the end of the year there was some improvement. The Germans were surrounded at Stalingrad and the American forces had won the Battle of Midway. Bombing of Germany had increased although merchant ship losses were high.

German U-boats began operations off the East coast of America. Heydrich announced the 'Final solution of the Jewish problem'. Rommel launched a second counter-attack in North Africa but was held at El Alamein.

In February 1942 a puppet government was set up in Norway under the treacherous Quisling. The German warships Scharnhorst, Prinz Eugen and Gneisenau escaped from Brest. Singapore surrendered with 80,000 Allied troops captured and 9,000 dead.

The Japanese were making major gains by occupying Batavia in Java and landings on the island of New Guinea. In April 78,000 US-Filipino troops were captured on Bataan - the largest capitulation in US history. Nearer home the German headquarters at Arras was attacked with hand grenades by the French resistance.

After intensive bombing the Japanese landed on Corregidor and they advanced into China along the Burma Road. The British retreat from Burma was completed as forces reached the Indian border.

In May the last of the British rearguard crossed from Burma into India. Molotov urged Churchill to open a second front. There were another two years to go before it took place. In the same month Czech patriots were parachuted into Prague by the British and

they shot and critically wounded Heydrich. He died on 4 June. Tobruk fell to the Germans and the British retreat continued and stopped at El Alamein.

By July Rommel had ordered his troops to 'dig in' after being reduced to 13 tanks in a final effort to break through. In August the Japanese landed in Guadalcanal.

One of the major turning points of the war was the second battle of El Alamein. Mid-October saw the great battle start with a 1000 gun bombardment. The Eighth Army gained ground on a six-mile front. By November, Rommel began a steady retreat as the Eighth Army advanced in Libya.

1943

*Russia wins battle of Stalingrad
Warsaw Ghetto uprising
Allied troops land in Sicily
Invasion of Italy
Tank battle at Kursk
Italy declares war on Germany*

A Soviet offensive around Stalingrad began and Leningrad was relieved. The Eighth Army continued its advance whilst the Japanese were routed in Papua. Paulus surrendered at Stalingrad and Russia started the big push back towards Germany.

By March the Russians had made large gains and an attempt to assassinate Hitler failed. The Eighth Army joined up with Patton's II Corps in Tunisia. In May Tunis was captured and the last of the Axis forces surrendered days later. The Dambusters raid on Möhne and Eder Dams took place.

Allied troops landed in Sicily on 10 July and the greatest tank battle in history took place near Kursk. In July Mussolini resigned and was arrested. In September the Allies started the invasion of Italy but Mussolini announced his return to power. On 13 October Italy declared war on Germany and on 28 October Japan opened the infamous Burma-Siam railway built by forced POW labour.

There is no page for fatalities in 1942 because there were no reported deaths of Kinver servicemen. There were two recorded deaths in 1943. The first was **Stanley Millard** who died on 25 April at the age of 22. He was with the 1st Battalion of the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry and was the son of James and May Millard of Kinver.

The other was **Edward Bragger** a Private in the RAOC (18th Division, Ordnance Workshops). He was 36 years of age and was killed on 30 August. He is buried in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.

An intriguing story concerns a fatality, not in any overseas theatre of war, but in Enville. The tragic death of **John Henry Edwards** (known as Jack) was due to what one may now class as 'friendly fire', but was deemed by a coroner to be accidental death.

Jack was a Home Guard sergeant who was killed on 13 October 1943 by a piece of steel from a plate on which a sticking bomb had been exploded at Enville. He was 28 years of age. Captain Cyril Cotton of the 39th Battalion Staffordshire Home Guard, said that he gave a demonstration of bombing with sticky bombs to two platoons who stood at a certain distance from a steel plate on which a bomb was exploded. This passed off satisfactorily and he then proceeded to explode another bomb on a double piece of

plate. The class was still standing at the same distance away and he was walking away and was only five yards from it when the bomb exploded.

He turned round and saw Sergeant Edwards lying on the ground supported by a corporal. He had been struck by a piece of metal from the steel plate. The Captain acknowledged that he had not read the regulations which specified the distance waiting throwers should be from the bomb which was about to explode.

Jack was a brother of Madge, Nancy and Mary. Nancy became Nancy Bills and was the mother of David, John and Anne - David Bills being the recently retired pharmacist. Jack was married to Olwen Edwards (also her maiden name) and they had two children - Brian and Sheila. Brian is currently a District and County Councillor.

1944

*Seige of Leningrad is lifted
Capture of Cassino monastery
Allies enter Rome*

*D-Day: Allies land in Northern France
First V1 and V2 flying bombs on Britain
Assassination attempt on Hitler
Rommel commits suicide*

The tide turned, but it was still a long haul. In January the Russians launched a new offensive around Leningrad and its seige was lifted. In March the Chindits crossed Chindwa in Burma. The Russians reached the Czech border and continued advances into Romania.

By May the Russians had captured Sevastopol and the British had captured the Cassino monastery. Rome was entered by Mark Clark's Fifth Army and on 6 June the Allies landed in Northern France. The first V1 flying bomb hit Britain.

On 20 July an assassination attempt was made on Hitler and on 25 August the German garrison in Paris surrendered. On 3 September the British liberated Brussels. The first V2 rockets hit London and Paris. The Russians reached the Polish and Czech borders. There were airborne landings at Arnhem but they were overwhelmed at Arnhem bridge.

There were advances on all fronts and on 14 October Rommel committed suicide. The Germans staged a fight back at the Battle of the Bulge and broke through Allied lines. A counter-offensive was launched near Bastogne.

As the war was in its final stages the number of Kinver deaths increased. There were four in 1944 and five in 1945.

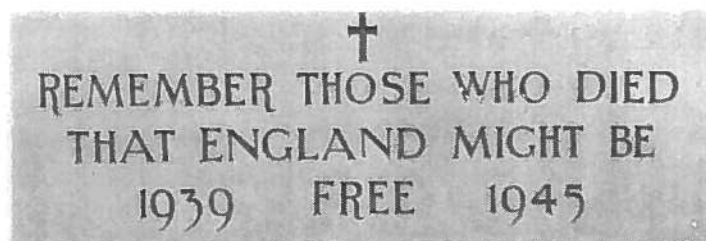
Harold C Mosedale (34) was killed on 28 June. He was a Staff Sergeant (Mech) in the RASC. The son of Edward and Rose Mosedale, he is buried at Caserta War Cemetery.

The following month saw the loss of **Henry William Hoskins** a Flying Officer (Nav/W.Op) in 256 Squadron. He belonged to the RAF Volunteer Reserves. Aged 27 he was the son of Henry and Vida Geraldine Hoskins and husband of Joyce of Amblecote. He is buried at Biguglia War Cemetery.

August saw the demise of **Ernest George Boucher** a Pilot Officer in 174 Squadron of the RAF on 5 August. He was the son of Cyril Benjamin and Margaret Anne Boucher who lived in Kinver. Ernest is buried at Caligny (La Chapelle Notre Dame du Chene) Grave.

The final fatality of 1944 was **John Scott** (31) who was a driver in the RASC. The son of Albert Ernest and Amy Elizabeth Scott and husband to Elizabeth, he was killed on 27 October and is buried in St Peter's Churchyard extension.

Also recorded in 1944 was **John Henry Lewis**, a nephew of Henry (Harry) Lewis killed in the first World War. He was a Guardsman who had previously been wounded and was eventually killed in Normandy. He was the son of Elizabeth Lewis and lived in White Hill with his grandmother. He was the husband of Freda and father to Keith and Audrey Jean. Audrey was born after his death.



Memorial Stone - St Peters churchyard, Kinver



1945

*Warsaw is taken by Russians
Russians liberate Auschwitz
Roosevelt dies: Truman takes over
British army takes over Belsen
Allies liberate Colditz POW camp
Hitler commits suicide
VE Day
Atomic bomb on Hiroshima: 6 August
Atomic bomb on Nagasaki: 9 August
Unconditional surrender of Japan
VJ Day*

By mid-January the Russians had captured Warsaw and by the end of the month had liberated Auschwitz. British and Canadian forces reached the Rhine at Millingen. The most destructive raid of the war in Europe was on Dresden by the RAF and USAAF. United States marines landed on Iwo Jima. In March the US 9th Armoured Division made a dash across the bridge at Remagen and US troops entered Bonn. The assault across the Rhine was made by Allied forces.

The US fleet off Okinawa was hit by the first suicide raid on 12 April. President Roosevelt died and Harry Truman took over. In April the Russians occupied Vienna and the British Second Army took over Belsen.

The Canadian First Army captured Arnhem in April and the Allies liberated Colditz POW camp. By 21 April the Russians were in the Berlin suburbs.

Russian and US troops met 60 miles from Berlin. Mussolini and his mistress were shot while trying to escape. Later in April the German armies in Italy signed surrender terms. On 30 April Hitler committed suicide with Eva Braun. Goebbels also committed suicide in Berlin and he had poisoned all six of his children before shooting his wife and himself.

In May the German garrison in Berlin surrendered as did the German army in Italy. There was still heavy fighting in Okinawa. The 8 May saw Victory in Europe Day and on 5 June the four Allied powers signed a declaration of defeat of Germany.

The fight against Japan continued until two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, followed by the unconditional surrender of Japan.

Only one day of the year had passed when **Geoffrey Lomax Russell** (24) was killed. He was a Flying Officer (Pilot) with 150 Squadron of the RAF Volunteer Reserves. The son of Henry Lomax and May Russell and husband of Hilda Eunice of Kinver, he is buried at St Peter's Churchyard extension.



Charles Alec Picken (left) died on 16 February and is buried at Jonkerbos War Cemetery. He was a Lance Corporal in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. The son of Thomas Charles and Harriet Picken, he was the husband of Irene May.

Charles was born in Enville in 1915 and educated at Enville School. His last known employment was as a lorry driver for Priest's Haulage, Wordsley. He was married to a Wollaston girl and they had one daughter.

Just over a week later on 25 February saw the loss of **Stanley Owen Postings** (23), (right) a driver in the RASC. He was blown up by a land mine in Belgium. He went to Kinver school and first worked for an engineering firm in Brierley Hill. A greetings card was the last communication his family received. He lived in a house now called Mansfield and next door to the Stourton post office run by a Miss Foreman. He was the son of Ernest and Mary Louisa Postings of Stourton and is buried at Heverlee War Cemetery.



As the war was in its final weeks there were two more fatalities. The first was **Edward Jabez Baker** (22) who died on 18 April. The son of Bert and Lilian Baker, he is buried at Runnymede Memorial Cemetery.



The second and final one was **Samuel Thomas Hadley** (left) a Leading Aircraftsman in the RAF Volunteer Reserves. At 41 year of age he must have been not only the last on the list but also the oldest. He was the son of Samuel Thomas and Margaret Hadley and husband of Marjorie from Kinver. He is buried at Tehran War Cemetery.

There is little information available about **Anthony Davidson**. He was the son of Mrs Davidson who farmed at Prestwood and Stapenhill. There is conjecture that he died when his ship sank whilst on convoy duty to Russia.

Although **Douglas Shaw** and **Dennis Farmer** are not listed on the War Memorial, it was felt by the Shaw family that mention should be made about their war time experiences. Whilst they did not suffer the ultimate sacrifice, their time as prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands merits recognition. Douglas Shaw was born at Holy Austin Rock in 1918 and worked on the Burma railway. He was a prisoner for three-and-a-half years. He returned to Kinver emaciated, but recovered sufficiently to live until 1990. Dennis Farmer was also in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

LAST POST

**They shall not grow old as they that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.**

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