

Corporal Leonard Cadwallader

Date of death 18 September 1918 Age 22

The Baptismal Register of the Bishop's Castle Chapel records Leonard's date of birth as April 22 1896 and date of baptism as 7 June 1896. These dates confirm the accuracy of the entry in the 1901 census taken on 31st March that records his age as 4. Like his father, Edward, he was born in Ratlinghope (colloquially named Ratchup) but on the 1901 census the family is recorded as living at High Park, All Stretton.

Edward is described as a farmer on the 1901 census. He, and his wife Elizabeth, had six living children and Leonard had 3 elder brothers and one elder sister and a younger, 2 years old, brother so he had plenty of company whilst growing up but not as much as in some other families at this time. Living at All Stretton the family would have experienced the highs and lows of rural life at this time but would have been able to enjoy the beautiful countryside surrounding them.

In 1911 when Leonard was 14 he had returned to his birthplace and was working on the farm of the Rowson family near Ratlinghope. The name of the farm is given as The Coates and was of a size to employ 3 mature male workers as well as Leonard and a 16 years old female servant.



Coates Farm April 2018



The Coates Farm – a long way from what came next in Leonard's life.

In 1911 Leonard's parents and their three youngest children still living at home had moved to Minton Oaks, Hamperley which is part of the Little Stretton division of Church Stretton township. This explains why Leonard's name is on the Little Stretton memorial.

Leonard was 18 in April 1914 so he was old enough throughout the whole of the war to enlist but it has not been possible to discover exactly when he joined up. In 1918 he was 22 and serving in the 8th Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He had been promoted to corporal by then and, taking that even in wartime moving from private to corporal requires extended service time, Leonard could have been in the army for 4 years by the time of his death on 18 September 1918. The entry in the Soldiers' Effects Register tends to weaken this theory as he is described as private (acting corporal).

The British Salonika Force (BSF) included the 8th Battalion of KSLI and was part of an allied force made up of soldiers from many countries that had been facing the Bulgarian army for three years in a very harsh environment. Communications were extremely difficult and many parts of the lines could only be reached by mule trains. Accommodation consisted of tents and simple bivouacs and disease was responsible for thousands of casualties. This area was the worst area in Europe regarding the curse of malaria.

In 1918 a new Allied commander, General Louis Franchet d'Esperey, planned an ambitious offensive. On 15 September, French and Serbian divisions attacked Bulgarian positions in mountains east of Monastir. Within three days they broke through the defences and continued to advance northward. In support of this operation the BSF again attacked the strong Bulgarian defences at Doiran on 18 September – the day Leonard was killed.

Weakened by malaria, influenza and the withdrawal of units to the Western Front, the BSF had been strengthened by the arrival of the Greek 'Crete' and 'Serres' Divisions. These formations played a lead role in two days of hard fighting at Doiran. Suffering more than

7,000 casualties, the British and Greek troops failed to dislodge the Bulgarians despite determined efforts and the capture of front line trenches. However, the attack achieved its main objective of preventing Bulgarian troops from leaving to help their comrades attempting to halt the advance of French and Serbian forces.

On 20 September, with their lines of communication threatened, the Bulgarian Army was forced into retreat along the entire front. Pursued by Allied troops and bombed in mountain passes by the Royal Air Force, the retreat became a rout. With foreign troops on Bulgarian soil, peace negotiations began and an Armistice came into effect on 30 September 1918 but Leonard could not share in the celebrations.

All war deaths are a waste and it is rare that individual ones can be directly linked to critical changes to the flow of history. It is possible to argue that one exception was the actions of Fighter Command in 1940 that many historians argue stopped a possible invasion of England. When the death occurs within a couple of months of the end of the conflict there is an added sense of loss and this is further exacerbated if, as is possible, Leonard had already survived four years in the army before dying a few weeks short of the end.

Doiran Military Cemetery contains the graves and memorials of more than 1,340 servicemen of the British Empire of whom nearly 460 remain unidentified. Close to the cemetery stands the Doiran Memorial which bears the names of some 2,170 servicemen of the United Kingdom who died in Greece and have no known grave. Leonard is commemorated on this memorial in the north of the Greek mainland but the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's website does not indicate the existence of a grave.



Image courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

On 27th March 1919 a gratuity of £10-6-7 was paid to Leonard's mother who was described as the sole legatee in spite of the fact that Leonard's father, Edward, lived until 1939. On 9th December 1919 his mother received a further £19-0-0.