

Gunner Charles Arden and Gunner George Arden

Charles Died 3rd May 1919 aged 37

George Died 22nd March 1918 aged 29

These two brothers came from a farming family in Lower Wood, just beyond All Stretton. Their parents, John and Margaret, moved from Berrington and Wolverhampton respectively, but settled at Lower Wood where they went on to raise 10 children.

Charles was their eldest son, being born in the spring of 1882. By the age of 18 he was working as a gardener and was employed at Henley Hall, Bitterley. He lived with the other outdoor servants in the stable block.

In 1914 he married Elizabeth Law and they went on to have a son, also called Charles, in 1915.

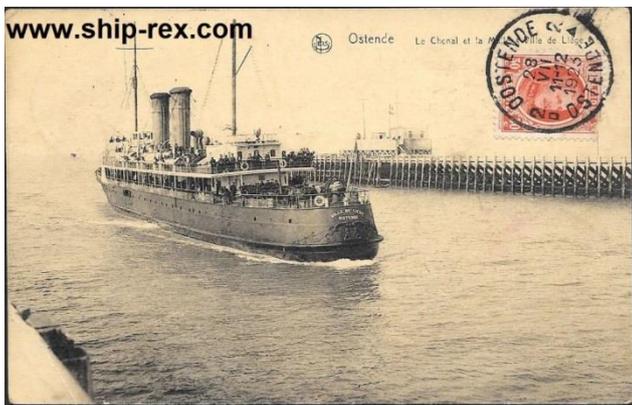
Meanwhile his younger brother, George, who was born in 1888, found work as a butcher's assistant and lodged in Church Stretton at The Kings Arms pub.

Charles enlisted in Church Stretton on 31st August 1916. He was still working as a gardener up to this time, and his army medical found his health to be good, apart from some shortness of breath and tachycardia. He was recommended for the Army Reserve class B.

There was a spike in the number of recruits in 1916. The volunteer numbers had dropped by 1915 and Lord Derby came up with a scheme, commonly known as The Derby Scheme, or The Group Scheme, which allowed men to attest but not necessarily be called up for immediate service.

Charles joined The Royal Garrison Artillery as a gunner. The RGA developed from fortress-based artillery located on British coasts in the 19th century to grow in 1914 into a very large component of the British forces. It was armed with heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power.

He was posted to France in February 1917 as part of the 110th Heavy Battery. Unfortunately his health suffered and over the next year he had admissions to hospital for scabies and boils before becoming much more seriously ill in April 1918 with a typhoid-like fever. He was transferred back to England on the army transport ship "Ville de Liege" and taken to Addington Park War Hospital in Croydon. This was a hospital which was set up in a stately home and used to house and treat soldiers suffering from infectious diseases including typhoid.

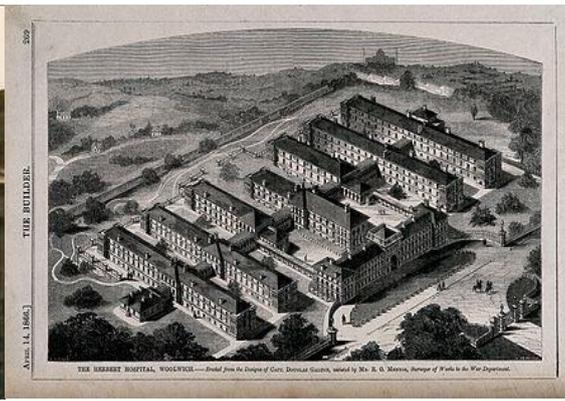


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In October he was moved to the Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich. This hospital had been built as a restoration facility for soldiers from the Crimean War.



Addington Park Hospital



Royal Herbert Hospital

Charles went before the War Pensions Assessment Board in December where he was judged to be no longer fit for military service and was discharged from the army. His ill health was attributed to the war and he was considered to be 40% disabled and awarded a pension for the next 12 months.

Unfortunately his health did not improve on his return to his family in Church Stretton and Charles died on 3rd May 1919, aged 37. He is buried in the Cunnery Road Cemetery in town.

Meanwhile George had also enlisted as a Gunner but he was with the Royal Field Artillery. He was in the 106th Brigade A Battery which was placed under the command of the 24th Division. The unit was armed with four 18 pounder field guns.

The 24th Division took part in the first phase of the Battles of the Somme 1918 and it was on 22nd March 1918 that George was killed. The division were involved in the defence of a village called Le Verguier which the Germans were trying to take as part of The Spring Offensive. The Battle of Verguier started on 21st March. There is still a street in the village named after the 24th division. The Battle was considered to be one of the turning points of the war.

George is commemorated on The Pozieres Memorial in Picardy, a memorial that commemorates 14657 British and South African soldiers killed between 21 March and 7th August 1918 during The Spring Offensive, and the period of Allied consolidation that followed. It forms the perimeter walls of a Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery containing the bodies of the men killed in The Battle of Pozieres and The battle of the Somme in 1916.



Pozieres Cemetery

The Arden family continued to live and farm at Lower Wood after the war, and some of their descendants remained in the area for many years.

Sources:

Census, WW1 pension records and other records courtesy of Ancestry.com

Images courtesy of <http://www.ansichtskarten-center.de/transport-verkehr>

Image of Addlington Palace hospital <https://www.slideshare.net/Realsmartmedia/brendan-kelly-shell-shock-3615-presentation>

Image of Royal Herbert Hospital

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Herbert_Military_Hospital,_Woolwich;_the_silhouette_of_t_Wellcome_V0013880.jpg