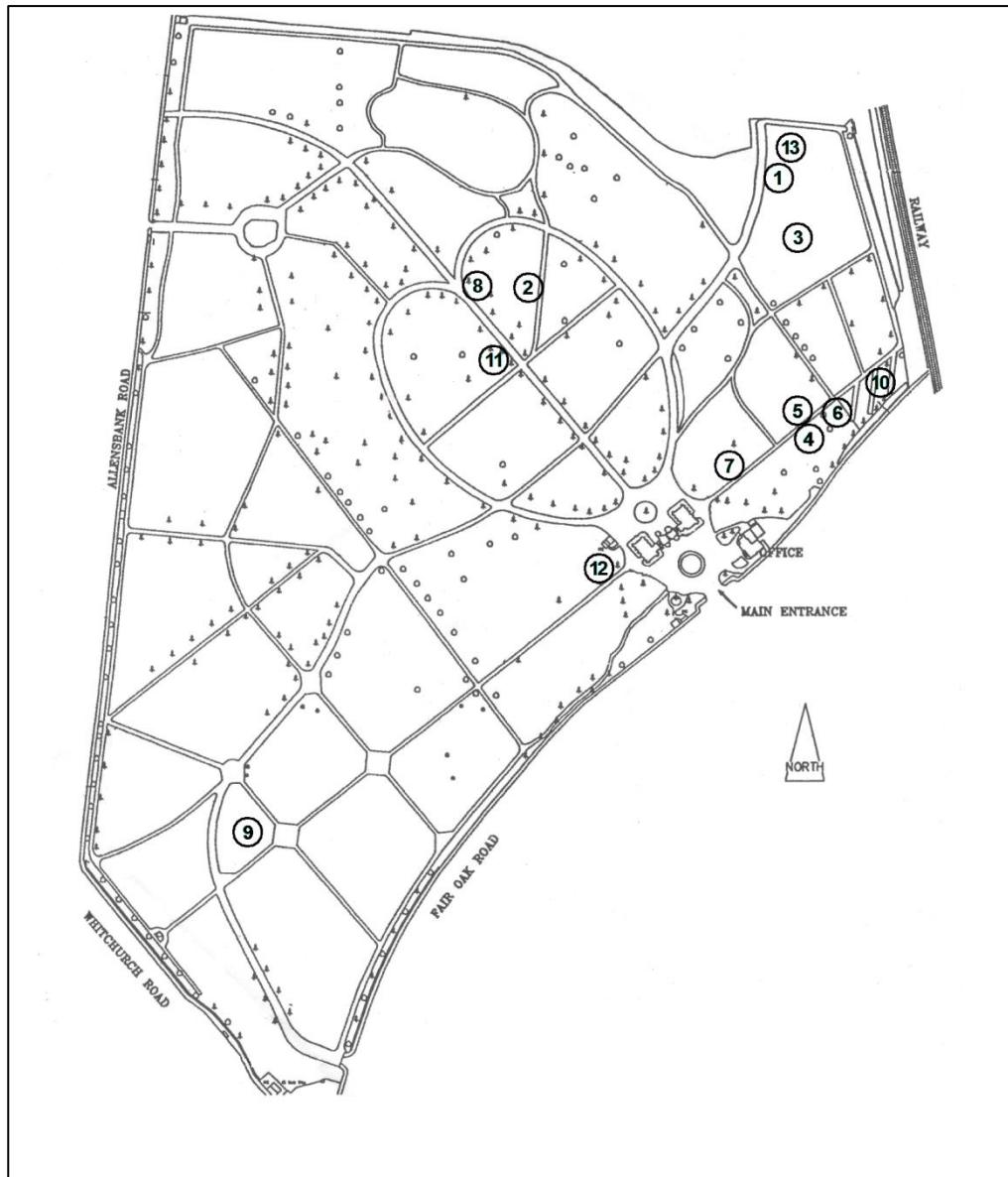


# First World War Soldiers Absent but Remembered



Jean Sanford  
The Friends of Cathays Cemetery





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# Introduction

The final death toll of men from Britain and her empire in the First World War was over one million.

Although some of these men were brought back to the UK on hospital ships, only to die of their wounds on home soil, this was only a small proportion of the total. Most died in France, Belgium, or further afield.

By the end of the war in 1918 the British government had already decided that bodies would not be repatriated. While some families, mostly the more well-off, were furious and deeply upset by this, it was the only sensible course of action. To return so many bodies to their home countries would have been an expensive logistical nightmare.

Fabian Ware, who was too old to enlist and spent the war in Europe with the Red Cross, was the force behind the setting up of the Imperial War Graves Commission ,( it did not change the word Imperial to Commonwealth until 1960.) The Commission appointed 3 of the most eminent architects of the day; Sir Herbert Baker, Sir Reginald Blomfield, and Sir Edwin Lutyens, to design the hundreds of cemeteries that would be needed abroad. The bodies of nearly 588,000 British soldiers were identified and buried in named graves, and over 187,000 unidentified remains were buried. Rudyard Kipling was invited to choose the language to be used for memorial inscriptions, and it was he who suggested the words "Known Unto God" for the graves whose occupants could not be identified, gravestones of white Portland stone all of uniform size and shape whether for a general or a private soldier. Huge memorials to the missing were designed and constructed; Thiepval in France on the Somme battlefield, Tyne Cot in Belgium near the village of Passchendaele, and the Menin Gate in the Belgium town of Ypres.

From 1919 there was a boom in pilgrimages to the battlefields of France and Belgium. Mothers, fathers, and widows were all desperate to see where their loved ones had fought and died, and if possible, to pay their respects at the graveside. Michelin, well known now for its maps and guides, produced illustrated battlefield guides and Thomas Cook was among many organising trips and tours.

With the graves of their sons so far away it is not surprising that so many families chose to remember them on family graves like these in Cathays cemetery.

# 1 Phillip Irahama T Davies (1898-1916)

Remembered on the grave of his grandparents  
Sidney and Mary Green - PLOT L3729

Phillip Davies was born in Cardiff in 1898, the son of William Davies a mason's labourer. The family lived in Canton, first in Daisy Street, then Severn Road, and by 1916 were living in Glynne Street.

Phillip joined the 7th battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, which arrived on the Somme in early July 1916 and was involved in the attacks on Carnoy and High Wood. For the first half of August the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry were in reserve trenches, but on 18th August they advanced in support of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the attack on Montauban. They sustained 130 casualties that day, including Private P. I. T. Davies. He has no known grave; his name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial in France, along with the names of over 72,000 soldiers of Britain and South Africa whose bodies were never found or identified.



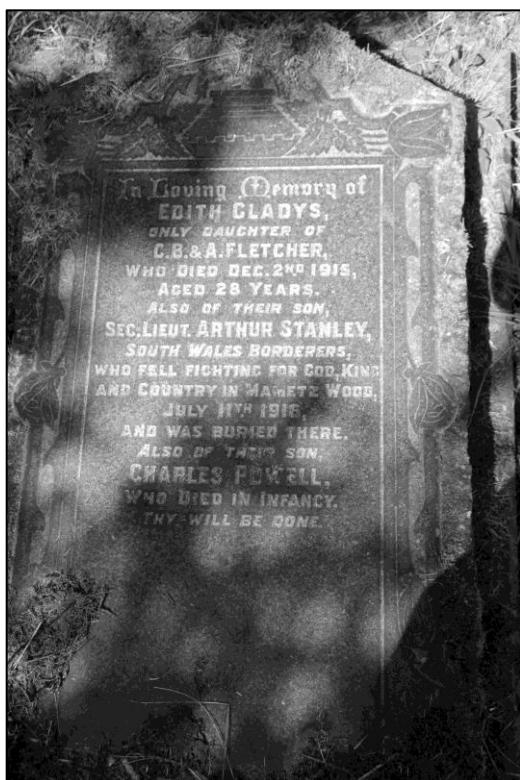
It might seem unusual that Phillip is remembered on the grave of his grandparents, rather than that of his parents, but his grandfathers' death just two years before Phillip would have presented the first opportunity for a memorial inscription.

## 2 Arthur Stanley Fletcher (1890-1916)

Remembered on the grave of his sister Edith Gladys and infant brother Charles Powell - PLOT I514

Arthur Stanley Fletcher was born in Cardiff in 1890, the second son of Charles Bolton Fletcher, a Railway cashier originally from Litchfield, Staffordshire, and his wife Annie. By 1911 Charles and Annie, along with their five children, were living near the top of Mackintosh Place. Arthur was working in Cardiff Docks as a clerk with Messrs Stewarts & Lloyd, manufacturers of iron tubes.

At the outbreak of war, Arthur joined the Honourable Artillery Company. This was an unusual regiment, having both infantry and artillery units. It was old too, having been in existence since 1087 and receiving a royal charter from King Henry V111 in 1537. Arthur gained his commission in 1915 and joined the South Wales Borderers as a Second Lieutenant.



At the end of June 1916, Arthur was with the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Wales Borderers in France. Several days were spent training in preparation for what has become known as the Battle of the Somme. They were not involved in the first days of the battle but on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, they twice attacked Mametz Wood. Both attacks failed with the loss of 128 officers and men. The battalion rested overnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> and on the 9<sup>th</sup> were again involved in fighting at Mametz Wood. Arthur was killed on 11<sup>th</sup> July. His body was not recovered and his name is on the Thiepval Memorial.

### 3 Henry Fry (1899-1918)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Charles and Clara Jane Fry, and his grandmother Sarah Fry – PLOT L2507

Henry Fry was born in Cardiff in 1899, the grandson of a blacksmith, and son of a newspaper stereotyper who would have worked for one of the many local newspapers published at the time. The family lived in Moy Road, Cardiff with Henry's grandmother Sarah and later moved to Gelligaer Street.



Henry joined the Cheshire Regiment as a Private and at some point was transferred to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

In August 1918, Henry was with the 16th battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment on the Somme, as they took part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Albert, at the start of the final “Big Push” which would end with the armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> August the battalion gained their objective for the day and captured 226 German soldiers and a large number of their guns. There were few British casualties that day, but Henry Fry was one of them. He is buried in Adanac Military Cemetery, 14 kilometres N.E. of Albert.

## 4 John Angel Gibbs (1880-1917)

Remembered on the grave of his wife Susan  
Gladys Gibbs - PLOT M461/M482

John Angel Gibbs was born into a prominent shipowning family in 1880. At the age of 10 he was sent as a boarder to Queens College, Taunton, where he was educated for 7 years. By 1911 he was living in Park Rd, Penarth with his wife Susan Gladys, only daughter of Sir Thomas Morel; shipowner and one time Mayor of Cardiff.

He enlisted as a trooper in the Glamorgan Yeomanry soon after the outbreak of war, but quickly got a commission as an officer in the Welsh Regiment and left for France.



Early in 1917 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and by mid 1917, having progressed to the rank of major, was fighting with the 9th battalion Welsh Regiment in the Battle of Passchendaele. On the night of the 19th/20th

September Major Gibbs was in command of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Welsh Regiment as they moved into their attack position for the following day, as the Lieutenant Colonel usually in command was away at Brigade headquarters. Gibbs was killed on 20th September 1917, leading an attack on the Menin Road ridge. He is buried in Kemmel Chateau Military cemetery 8 kilometres south of Ypres.

After his death, his wife Susan bought the Penarth Hotel and had it converted into a Methodist children's home, Gibbs House, now Headlands School, in memory of her husband.

## 5 John Reginald Hall (1897-1916)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Edward  
and Anna Hall - PLOT M544

Reginald John Hall was typical of so many young officers who died in the First World War. He was born in Cardiff in 1897, the son of Edward Hall, a marine surveyor originally from Durham, and his wife Anna. The family lived in Richmond Rd and were able to afford a live-in housemaid. Reginald was educated first at the Cathedral School, Llandaff, and then at Felsted, a public school in Essex. After leaving school he was employed by Messrs T.P.Thomas & Co., in Cardiff docks.

He enlisted with the Monmouthshire Regiment in the first weeks of the war. He rose to the rank of sergeant before obtaining his commission in the Welsh Regiment and on 7th June 1916 joined his battalion in France, just in time for the Battle of the Somme.

He was killed on 10th July 1916 while gallantly leading his men during the attack on Mametz Wood, he was 19 years old. His body was never found and his name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial, It has been said that the life expectancy of a junior officer on the front line in the First World War was just 6 weeks; this was sadly true for 2nd Lieutenant John Reginald Hall.



## 6 Frederick Jukes (1892-1911)

Remembered on the grave of this parents George and Elizabeth Jukes - PLOT VL7

Frederick was born in Cardiff in 1892, the son of George, a commission agent and employer, and his wife Elizabeth Ann Jukes. The family were fairly well-off, living in a three story house in Cathedral Road with two servants. After leaving school, Frederick was employed as a clerk.

Frederick joined the Welsh Regiment at some time in 1916 and by September was with the 9th battalion at the Battle of Passchendaele. On the night of 19th/20th September, with some difficulty as there was heavy rain, the Welsh moved to their assembly positions for the attack on the Menin Road ridge. The attack began at 5.40 am and at some time during the 20th September Frederick Jukes was killed. His body was never found and his name is on the Tyne Cot Memorial, along with the names of over 35,000 other British and New Zealand troops who died between August 1917 and November 1918, and has no known grave.



## 7 Robert Frederick Lewis (1883-1916)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Evan and Elizabeth Lewis - PLOT L1406

Robert was born in Cardiff in 1883, the son and grandson of a draper. By 1911 Robert's father had retired and was living in Park Place with his wife, 3 children, his mother in law and 2 servants. Robert himself had by now left home, was living in Bute St, and following the family line of business was a draper's assistant.



Robert joined the 17th battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps, a New Army battalion formed in London in 1915. The battalion sailed for France, landing at Le Havre in 1916. When he took part in the Battle of the Menin Road Ridge on 20th September Robert was attached to the 117th Light Trench Mortar Battery, a unit of about 45 men whose task it was to fire the Stokes Mortars. He was killed on that day and his body was never found, his name is on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

## 8 Vivian Llewellyn (1898-1918)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Lemuel Morgan and Isabella Llewellyn - PLOT 1955a



When Vivian Llewellyn was born at the end of the 19th century his family were living in Clifton Street Roath. By 1911 the family had grown, and appears to have gone up in the world. There were now 7 children and a servant living with Lemuel (now a coal foreman) and Isabella in a larger house near the top of Cathays terrace.

At some point in the war, Vivian joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers as a 2nd lieutenant and went to France. On the morning of 4th November 1918, the last major offensive of World War 1 began. 17 British divisions, including several battalions of the Royal

Welsh, advanced on a 40-mile front, the objective being to finally defeat the German army and thus end the war. This action came to be known as the Battle of the Sambre, after the local river. Vivian was killed on the first day of the battle, just one week before the armistice, and is buried in Forest Communal Cemetery, a small Commonwealth War Graves cemetery near to where he fell.

Buried in the family grave is Vivian's youngest brother Gordon. He died when his Handley-Page Hampden bomber crashed at Tusmore Park, near RAF Upper Heyford on 4th August 1940.

How sad for Lemuel and Isabella to lose a son in both world wars.

## 9 James George Palfery (1885-1917)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Frederick William and Emily Palfery - PLOT W1223

James George Palfery was not a typical young officer, straight from school, like John Reginald Hall. At the outbreak of the war he was a 29 year old draper living with his parents in St. John's Crescent, Canton. His father and two brothers were drapers so he had followed the family trade.

He joined the 16<sup>th</sup> battalion The Welsh Regiment, also known as the Cardiff City Battalion, which had been formed by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Cardiff in November 1914. Large employers encouraged their employees to join the battalion and Howells store guaranteed to keep jobs open for their men when they returned from the war. Could James George Palfery, a draper, have been one of these employees?

In August 1917, the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion were in Flanders, fighting in the Battle of Passchendaele. On the night of 26th/27th August the battalion moved through torrential rain to their starting positions for the following days' attack. They had to wait for 12 hours in a line of waterlogged shell holes until zero hour, 2pm on the 27<sup>th</sup>. During that wait, their presence was discovered and so what should have been a surprise attack was fully expected by the Germans. When they finally did advance, their progress was steady but slow due to the increasingly deep mud



which made them easy targets for the German machine guns. There were many casualties, one of which was Private Palfery.

His body was recovered and he is buried in Ypres Reservoir cemetery.

Sadly, the family gravestone is no longer in Cathays Cemetery; it was removed along with a large numbers of other in the 1980s in an attempt to tidy up the cemetery and make mowing and maintenance easier. It was a grey granite monument with kerbstones, which as well as commemorating Frederick William, his wife Emily and their daughter Mabel Annette who died in 1910, carried the following inscription “ In ever loving memory of James George Palfery their loved son who fell in action at Langemark August 27th 1917 in his 33<sup>rd</sup> year.” The replacement is a plain concrete grave marker, which records surname and dates of death, no mention of Private James George Palfery.

## **10 Stanley Earl (-1916) & Bruce Carlton Richards (-1917)**

Remembered on the grave of their parents David and Elizabeth Richards - PLOT VL75

The Richards brothers were born in Cardiff, the sons of Elizabeth Richards and her husband David, a commercial traveller originally from Cardigan. In 1911 the family, with the addition of a third son, Hugh, were living in Richards Terrace, Roath, a prosperous residential street full of accountants, clerks, master mariners, a fine art dealer and an income tax collector. Stanley and Bruce were also working as clerks; Stanley in a bank and Bruce in the timber trade.

At the outbreak of war Stanley was a private in the Inns of Court officer training corps, but then obtained his commission as a 2nd lieutenant and joined the 1st battalion Monmouthshire Regiment. This was a Pioneer battalion and primarily engaged in labouring such as repairing roads. From late July 1916 Stanley was with the battalion at Berles au Bois, a village behind the front line but often subject to heavy shelling. On 24th July Major General William Thwaites inspected the Monmouthshires , told them that they were an excellent battalion and the work they were doing was of vital importance.

Stanley died of wounds at no.20 Casualty Clearing Station on 29th August 1916 and was buried nearby in Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery. He was 27 years old.

Bruce Carlton Richards was also in the Officers Training Corps, but with the outbreak of war he took a different path from his brother, joining the Royal Field Artillery with the rank of lieutenant. From June to November 1917 British forces held the front line in Belgium from Sint-Joris north to the coast. Bruce was killed in action here on 11th July 1917 and is buried in Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery. He too was 27 years old.



## 11 William Henry Seager (-1916)

Remembered on the grave of his parents William Henry and Margaret Annie Seager - PLOT P982/P983



At the beginning of the 20th century, William Henry Seager was a prosperous shipowner, living in a substantial house in Cardiff's Newport Rd. By the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 his two eldest sons; John Elliot and William Henry junior (known as Willie to his family) were working in their father's shipping business.

Both brothers enlisted and joined the South Wales Borderers. The young William Henry, now a second lieutenant, left for France with the 10th battalion South Wales Borderers on 4th December 1915. Less than three months later, on 21st February 1916, William Henry was shot and killed by a German sniper at Neuve Chapple in north eastern France, he was 23 years old. The battalion diary for that day notes that the battalion were in the trenches and it was a "fairly quiet day. 2 wounded, 1 killed". He is buried in a Commonwealth War Grave at St Vaast Post Military Cemetery, close to where he died.

His elder brother John Elliot Seager survived the war, having won the Military Cross, and died at his home in Cardiff in 1955, aged 64. He is buried in Cathays Cemetery in plot O1106 not far from the grave of his parents.

## 12 Sydney Abel Trounce (1894-1917)

Remembered on the grave of his parents, Sydney and Mabel Trounce - PLOT M138d

Sydney Trounce was the grandson of ship owner William John Trounce, who was elected Mayor of Cardiff in 1893, and is buried next to Sydney and Mabel Trounce, in a rather more ostentatious grave than that of his son and daughter in law.

Sydney Abel, born in 1894, went to Albany Rd School and then attended the City of Cardiff Technical School. By 1911 the family were living in Amesbury Road, Penylan



and Sydney along with his brother Arthur, were employed as junior clerks.

Sydney was a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the 8th battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. In May 1917 his battalion was involved in the 3<sup>rd</sup> battle of the Scarpe, part of the Arras offensive. The battle was one of heavy losses for the British; their attacks on German positions failed with the loss of 6000 officers and men. Sydney was killed on 5th May 1917 at the age of 23 and is buried in Wancourt British Cemetery, 8 kilometres southeast of Arras.

## 13 Phillip Charles Wyatt (-1917)

Remembered on the grave of his parents Luther and Sarah Wyatt - PLOT L4051

The Wyatt family lived in Blanche Street, Roath, the father Luther was a labourer with Cardiff City Corporation.

As soon as he was old enough Phillip followed his two eldest brothers into employment with the Great Western Railway. During the First World War, large numbers of employees of the various British Railway companies volunteered for military service and Phillip was one of these. The Royal Engineers had their pick of these men and Phillip was assigned to the 262<sup>nd</sup> Railway Construction Company of the Royal Engineers. Once in France the men would join a construction train on which they, and their equipment could be transported to where they were needed, often having to lay railway tracks as near to the front line as possible.

Phillip arrived in France in February 1917. During the Battle of Passchendaele, his company were in the Ypres salient, behind the front line but well within reach of German artillery. He was wounded and taken to Number 3 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (basically a field hospital) at Lijssenthoek, 12 kilometres west of the town of Ypres, where he died of shrapnel wounds to the head on 31st October 1917. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery close to where he died.

As well as being remembered on the grave of his parents, his name is on the Great Western Railway war memorial plaque, which lists local GWR employees who died in the First World War. It can still be seen at the main entrance to Cardiff Central Station.



## 14 Three Men, One Day

Three of the men in these pages died on the same day, in the same battle, and probably within a few hundred yards of each other.

Major John Angel Gibbs and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Frederick Jukes served in the 9th battalion The Welsh Regiment. The battalion diary notes that the battalion began their attack at 5.40 on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1917 and encountered heavy machine gun fire from the German troops in Hollebeke chateau, which resulted in heavy casualties. The diary goes on to note that there were 204 wounded and 35 killed including Gibbs and Jukes.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Frederick Lewis was with his trench mortar party on the morning of 20th September 1917, somewhere to the left of the Welsh Regiment. His brigade captured their 1st and 2nd objectives but then had to form a defensive flank as the Germans counterattacked. 5 officers of the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion Kings Own Rifle Corps were wounded that day and one killed, that one was 2nd Lt Frederick Lewis.

These three men are remembered on their family graves within a few hundred yards of each other in Cathays Cemetery.



