1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

George Addis Adamson

George was born in 1899 in Ardrossan, Ayrshire, Scotland. His father, Robert, was 33 years old at the time and his mother, Robina, 34.

George grew up in a large family. He had five brothers: Robert (° 1894), Alan (° 1896), Henry (° 1900), Alistair (° 1902) and Graham (1909).

The Adamson family was quite affluent. They had a maid and lived in St. John's Manse, Eglinton Street, Ardrossan.

In addition to his regular schooling, George was a cadet in the Ardrossan Academy between 1910 and 1912, undergoing military training.

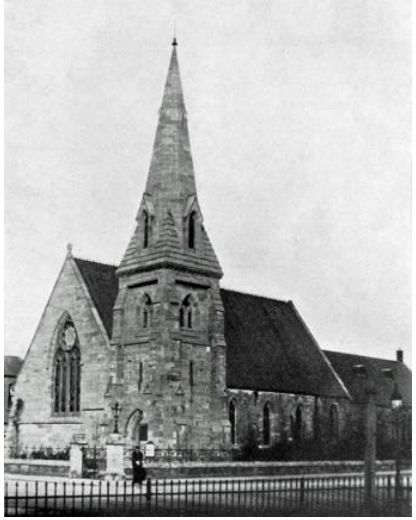
In 1916 George began studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh. In the same period he registered for training to become an officer. In September 1917, George was sent to the front.

When Britain went to war in 1914, the country controlled an empire. The motherland consisted of England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland.

Britain initially had a small but well-trained and well-equipped professional army of 160,000 men. From 1915 the first volunteers arrived on the battlefield and in 1916 Britain, like France and Germany, introduced conscription.

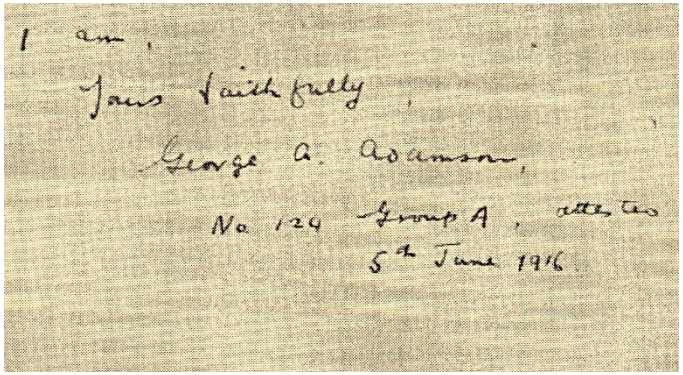
Ardrossan had about 6,000 inhabitants at the outbreak of the First World War. It is located on the rugged Scottish west coast and owes its importance as a port town mainly to the export of coal and pig iron. Shipbuilding was a major industry in the early 20th century.

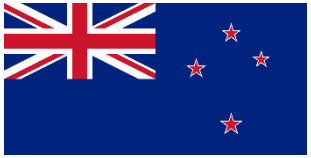
St. Johns Church. ↓



Robert Adamson, George's father, served as minister of St. Johns Church from 1892 to 1937. George therefore grew up in a family where traditional Protestant norms and values were of paramount importance. The Adamson family also played an important social role in Androssan.

When George was conscripted for his officer training, his conscription forms recorded that he was signing up for "A Temporary Commission in the Regular Army." Officers are in command of a body of men. In the British Army they were initially drawn exclusively from the aristocracy and the upper middle class. However, the magnitude of the First World War required tens of thousands of officers to be recruited from lower social ranks. George was such a person; as an ordinary citizen he would temporarily strengthen the army as an officer. The war was now a matter for the masses, no longer for the elite alone.


I am,
Yours faithfully,
George A. Adamson,
No 124 Group A, attested
5th June 1916



1914-1918: Dominion of New Zealand

Arthur Heather
Aitken

Arthur was born on 28 September 1884 in Auckland, New Zealand. His father, Alexander, was 34 years old at the time and his mother, Isaline, 24. His parents were Scottish immigrants.

Arthur had one brother, William (° 1883), who married in 1908 and had two children. His father died in 1913, when Arthur was 29 years old.

The Aitken family settled in Morrinsville, in the north of New Zealand, where they ran a farm.

The Aitkens were Presbyterians, adhering to a form of Calvinism that originated in Scotland and England.

In addition to his regular schooling, Arthur had been a cadet for some time, undergoing military training. He afterwards worked as a bank clerk. Shortly before the war, he worked with his brother as a farmer.

In 1916 Arthur was conscripted into the New Zealand army. After training he left for the European front in June 1917.

At the outbreak of World War I, New Zealand, a British dominion, occupied the German colony of Samoa, located in the Pacific, without firing a shot.

Together with Australia, the country formed the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). The New Zealanders were first deployed in Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915, after which the men were sent to the Western Front.

Morrinsville was founded in 1873 when a Scottish settler in Auckland, Thomas Morrin, bought land from the locals, the Māori. The area's cultivation began at the end of the New Zealand Wars, a series of armed conflicts between the British and the Māori, who opposed colonization by the British.

Arthur's father was of Scottish descent, like the founder of Morrinsville. His wife was born in New Zealand. Their farm, Kereone Estate, had been in use for some time when they purchased it. It was mainly focused on animal husbandry.

Research workshop Passchendaele Archives – Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917

↓
Alexander (left) and Isaline (centre), the parents of Arthur (right) and his brother William (centre) (Morrinsville Museum)

→ Bringing in hay on the Kereone Estate and a flock of sheep. This photo shows part of the Aitken family's farm. In the picture at the top left, Arthur is sitting on the hay wagon.

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

James Edward Anderson

James was born in 1886 in Sturry near Canterbury, Kent. Very little is known about his parents and education.

James grew up in Islington, London. He married Charlotte 'Lottie' Lowe on 2 January 1910. The Anderson family then moved to St. Pancras, which is now part of Greater London.

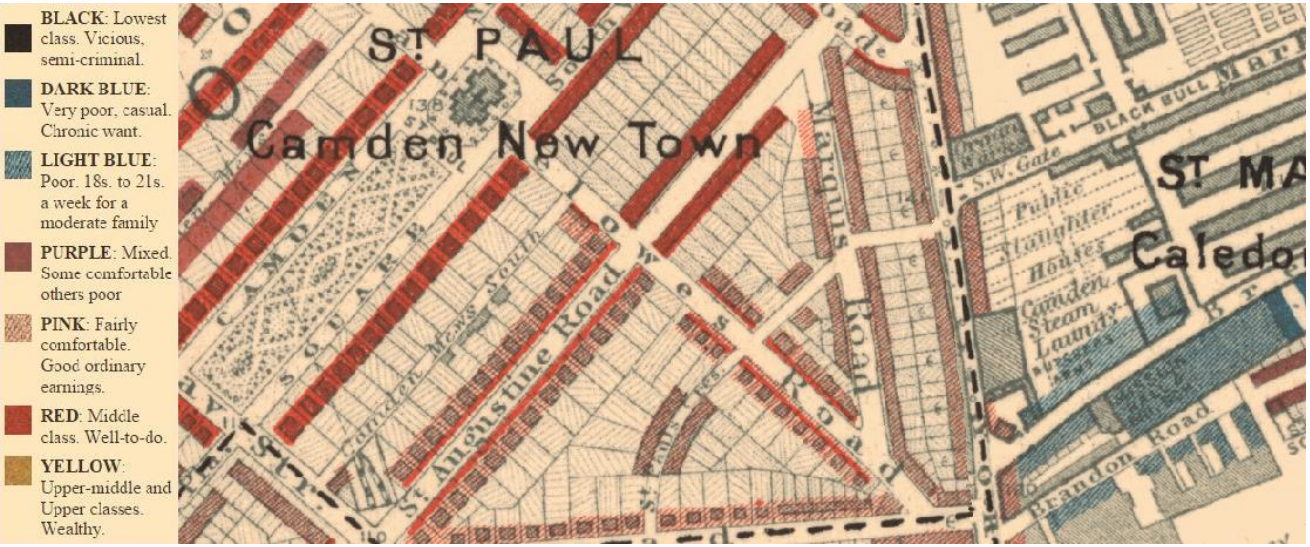
Together with Lottie, James had two daughters: Irene (May 21, 1910) and Dorothy (October 15, 1916).

At some point the Anderson family moved to nearby Camden Town, also part of present-day Greater London. James worked on the railways, in a warehouse and in 1914 as a bartender.

James volunteered for military service early, in September 1914. In December 1915 he returned home wounded. But a few months later, he went back to the battlefields.

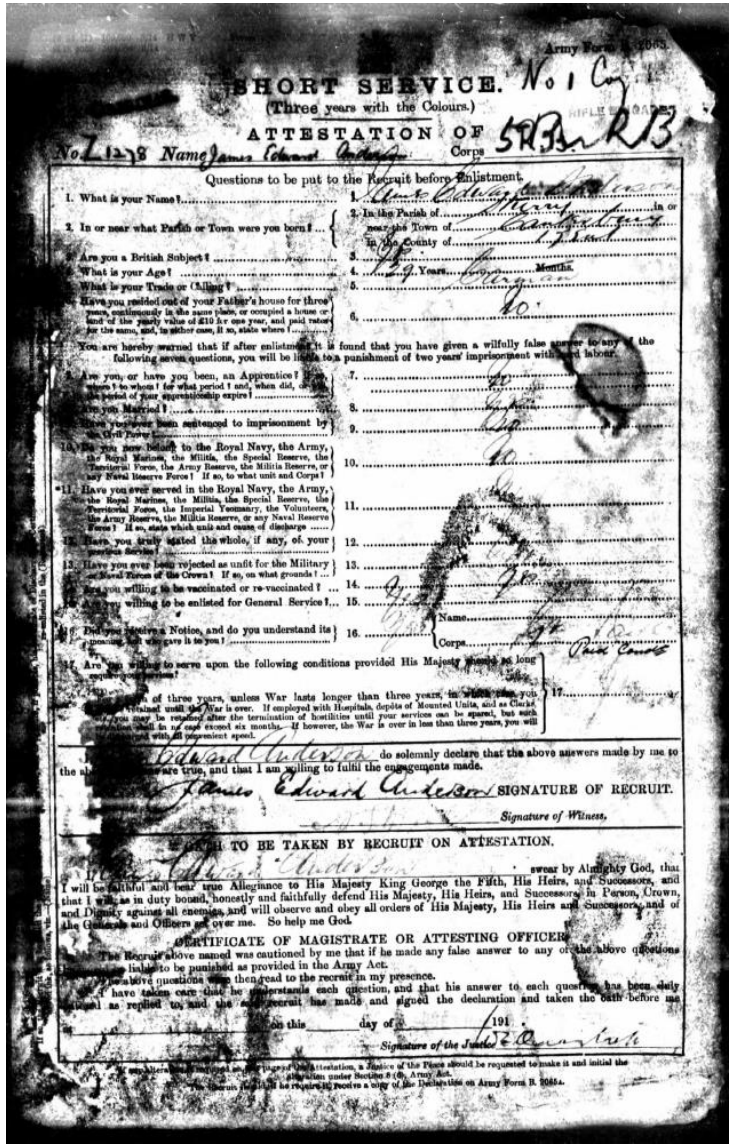
When Britain went to war in 1914, the country controlled an empire. The motherland consisted of England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland.

Britain initially had a small but well-trained and well-equipped professional army of 160,000 men. From 1915 the first volunteers arrived on the battlefield and in 1916 Britain, like France and Germany, introduced conscription.



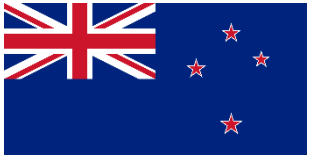
When World War I broke out, London had been experiencing growth and general prosperity for many years. By 1900, one in five Britons lived in London. The city had more than 7 million inhabitants in 1911. However, the capital of the British empire was still plagued by the extreme inequalities that had characterized Victorian London. Certain neighborhoods suffered from extreme poverty. The Anderson family lived on Marquis Road. As the above map from the early 20th century shows, residents there generally had a slightly better than average standard of living.

Unfortunately, about 60% of all World War I military personnel files kept in London were lost in World War II because of German bombing. The exact number of British soldiers who enlisted is therefore unknown. An estimated one third of the files, about 2 million, were saved from the flames. These papers are known as the "Burnt Records". Fortunately, James's military file, which begins with his registration, has been preserved. It is the only source that today provides insight into his military career.


SHORT SERVICE.
(Three years with the Colours.)
ATTESTATION OF
Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.
SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.
CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

↓ James Anderson's enrolment document in his service record. (National Archives, WO 363).

↖ London Poverty Map, detail (London School of Economics and Political Science)



1914-1918: Dominion of New Zealand

Neville Henry
Arden

Neville was born on 5 January 1889 in New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand. His father, Francis, was 48 years old at the time and his mother, Fanny, 30.

Neville had a half-brother, Henry (°1875), born during his father's previous marriage, in Australia. Francis died in 1899, when Neville was 10 years old.

The Arden family lived in New Plymouth, in the North Island of New Zealand. The family was wealthy. Neville was an avid rifle shooter and liked to play cricket.

After his regular school education, Neville started working as an architect. He quickly built a successful career.

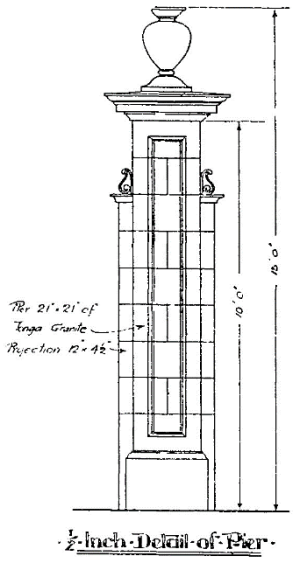
In April 1915, Neville answered the call and voluntarily joined the New Zealand army. After training, he was first deployed in Egypt. Then he left for the battlefields of Europe.

At the outbreak of World War I, New Zealand, a British dominion, occupied the German colony of Samoa, located in the Pacific, without firing a shot.

Together with Australia, the country formed the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). The New Zealanders were first deployed in Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915, after which the men were sent to the Western Front.

In New Plymouth, where Neville grew up, the Arden family owned a spacious country house: Ardendale. In the photo on the left, the family poses in the grounds, presumably with some friends. Neville is the boy sitting down.

Neville's background gave him good opportunities in life. As an architect, he won several prizes for his work. The illustration (right) shows a detail of a gate that won first prize in a national competition in 1912.



Neville started his military career in a training facility. At first he was a regular soldier, but his abilities quickly saw him promoted to a higher rank and he left the country as a lieutenant.

In November 1915, Neville arrived in Suez. Egypt was in the hands of the Allies at the time. He remained in the region for several months and was deployed in the vicinity of Cairo, at Alexandria and at Marsa Matruh, on the Mediterranean coast. He was probably involved in logistical and security assignments.

In April 1916, Neville was transferred to France, where he participated in practically all major battles involving the New Zealanders. He was praised for his dedication and drive and became a captain in 1917. Neville was very popular with his men. They described him as someone with good qualities who stayed cheerful in all circumstances.

Neville Arden in Ardendale (Coll. Puke Ariki) →

1914-1918: Commonwealth of Australia

John Nicholas Crowley

John was born in 1866 in Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia. His parents, Michael and Bridget, were Irish immigrants.

The Crowley family moved several times in New South Wales while John was growing up. Eventually they settled in Temora, around the time of John's fifteenth birthday.

John married Elizabeth Roberts in 1893. He had eight children with her: six sons and two daughters, although two sons and both daughters died at a very young age. John also lost his wife in 1910.

At the outbreak of war, the Crowley family was living in West Wyalong, near Temora. John was a judge and coroner, a journalist and owner of a local newspaper. He was also a rifle shooting champion.

In late 1916, John registered for military service. He lied about his age and said he was 44 years old, just below the maximum age. John left for Europe on 25 November 1916, from Sydney.

Australia's first action as a dominion of Great Britain was to take the German colony of New Guinea in September – November 1914. Together with New Zealand, the Australian Imperial Force formed the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC).

The ANZACs were first deployed in Gallipoli (Turkey) in 1915 where they suffered heavy losses. Australian troops were then deployed to the Western Front and in the Middle East. In Europe they participated in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the Battle of Messines and the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

The Wyalong Star.

AND TEMORA AND BARMEDMAN ADVERTISER.

VOL I. NO. 37. FRIDAY, AUGUST 3. 1894. PRICE 3d.

Royal Exchange Hotel, Hoskins and Lovtus Streets.

Medallists at all the Principal Exhibitions for OWN TANNAGE SOLE LEATHERS and Other Leathers.

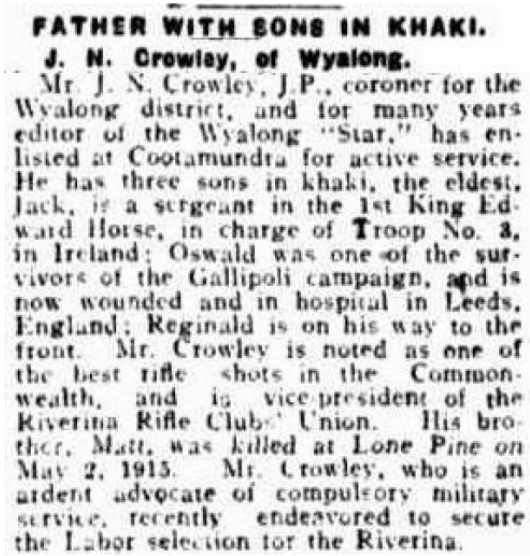
Goodlet & Smith, Ltd.,

VICTORIA HOTEL. Corner of Blyth and Mallee Streets, WYALONG. JOHN APPS - - - Proprietor.

Half of John's children died very young. Unfortunately, infant mortality was common everywhere in the early 20th century. In 1900, the Australian infant mortality rate for children up to one year old was 112 per thousand births. This meant that of all babies born in 1900, more than eleven percent did not reach their first birthday. The mortality rate for children under five was 172 that same year: about 17 percent fail to reach their fifth birthday. Limited medical knowledge and inadequate infrastructure was a major cause of the high death rates.

Conscription was a controversial topic in Australia during the First World War. Military service was mandatory for Australian men, but not in overseas conflicts. In 1916 and 1917, the extension of conscription was rejected in referendums. John Crowley was a strong supporter. He said that unless conscription is extended, he “prefers that the bones of himself and his three sons should remain in France."

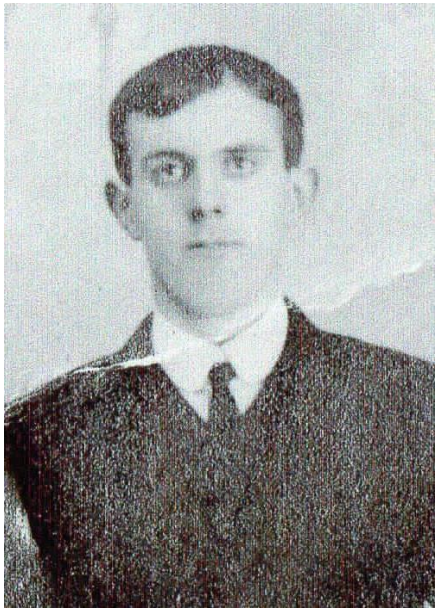
↓
The Wyalong Star and Temora and Barmedman Advertiser was originally published by John's brother, James Crowley. Co-owner John mainly focused on editing.



FATHER WITH SONS IN KHAKI.

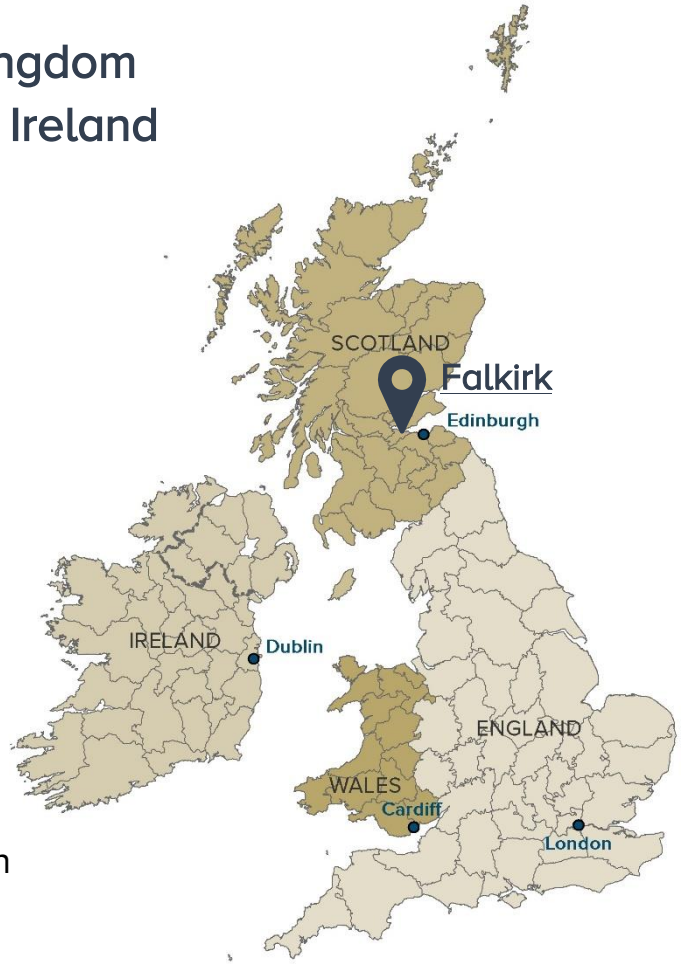
J. N. Crowley, of Wyalong.

Mr. J. N. Crowley, J.P., coroner for the Wyalong district, and for many years editor of the Wyalong "Star," has enlisted at Cootamundra for active service. He has three sons in khaki, the eldest, Jack, is a sergeant in the 1st King Edward Horse, in charge of Troop No. 3, in Ireland; Oswald was one of the survivors of the Gallipoli campaign, and is now wounded and in hospital in Leeds, England; Reginald is on his way to the front. Mr. Crowley is noted as one of the best rifle shots in the Commonwealth, and is vice-president of the Riverina Rifle Clubs' Union. His brother, Matt, was killed at Lone Pine on May 2, 1915. Mr. Crowley, who is an ardent advocate of compulsory military service, recently endeavored to secure the Labor selection for the Riverina.



1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

William Waterstone Dick



William was born on 26 August 1887 in Bonnyrigg, near Edinburgh, Scotland. His father, John, was 30 years old at the time and his mother, Marion, 22.

William grew up in Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland. He had a brother and a sister, Mary (° 1894) and James (° 1900).

The Dick family was not poor, but neither was it high on the social ladder. Father John made a living as a blacksmith in an iron foundry. Little is known about William's education. He certainly went to school until the age of 13.

A nephew, James Nelson, lived with the family for some time. He may have been an orphan entrusted to their care. One John Barday also lived with them for a while as a boarder, paying rent for his food and shelter.

We don't know how long William lived with his family. Like his father he went to work in the iron industry and became an iron moulder, making moulds into which molten iron was poured. At some point, William joined the army.

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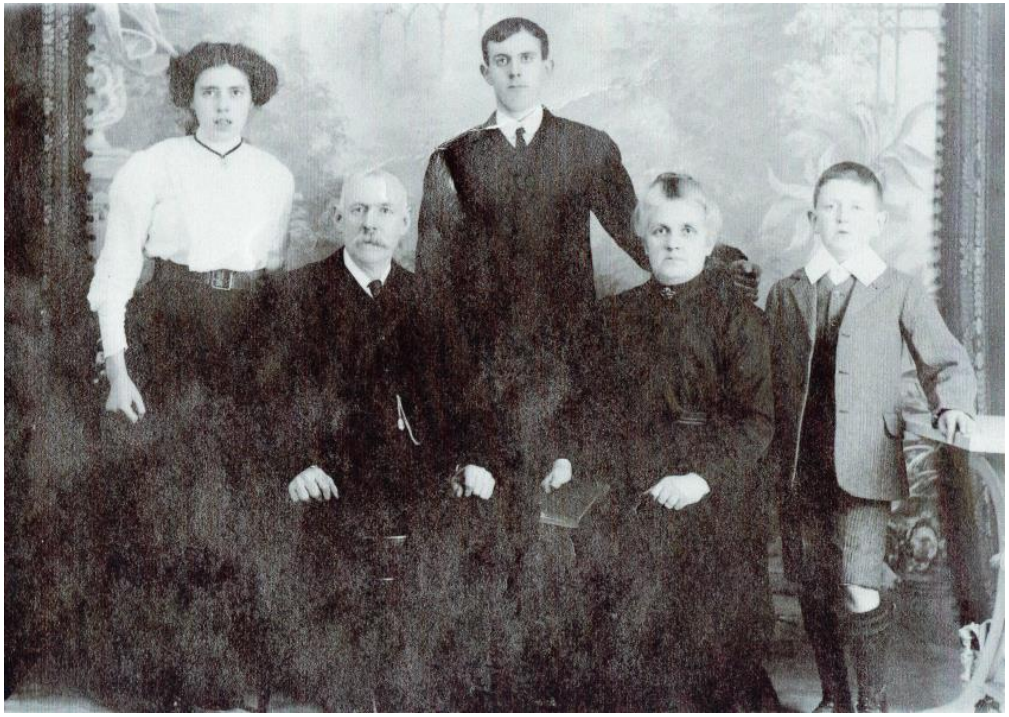
Britain initially had a small but well-trained and well-equipped professional army of 160,000 men. From 1915 the first volunteers arrived on the battlefield and in 1916 Britain, like France and Germany, introduced conscription.

Falkirk lies at an intersection of roads and canals, which ensured that the city became a centre of heavy industry during the industrial revolution. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Falkirk was an important centre of the British iron and steel industry. Many workers lived in the city, sometimes in dire conditions.

The largest factory was Carron Iron Works, on the north side of Falkirk. It was one of the largest iron smelting facilities in Europe. When World War I broke out, the company switched to the production of ammunition.

↑ Carron Iron Works in the second half of the 19th century.



William's family moved regularly in their home city. According to the Scottish census of 1911, they occupied a house of which only two rooms had one or more windows. This indicates that their residence was not very large. The census also reports that in their street, almost all families depended on the iron industry.

Much of the Scottish working class lived in poverty and insecurity, but the living conditions of the Dick family were probably relatively good. They could even afford a professional family portrait photograph.

→ The Dick family shortly before WWI.

1914-1918: Dominion of Canada

Edwin Patrick Fitzgerald

Edwin was born in 1874 in Darke, Ohio, in the United States. His father, John, was 26 years old at the time and his mother, Martha, 18.

Edwin had a difficult childhood. It is said that his father was so cruel to him that he ran away from home and joined the circus at a very young age.

Edwin served in the Spanish - American War of 1898, which led to the independence of Cuba and the American annexation of Puerto Rico.

In 1904, Edwin worked in the metal industry and married Effie Macy. A year later he re-joined the army. By 1912 he was stationed in Platts-burgh, New York, and remarried to Mabel Adele Murphy. Edwin had five children with Adele. Only two survived childhood: Ethel (° 1912) and Marian (° 1913). The family lived in Norwood, New York

In 1916 Edwin enlisted the Canadian Army in Toronto. He lied about his age and said he was 35 years old to ensure he would be accepted. In June 1917 he left for Europe.

As a British dominion, Canada also participated in the First World War. During the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, the Canadians had to deal with the first gas attack in history. In June 1916 they were involved in the Battle of Mount Sorrel, near Zillebeke.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force built up an excellent reputation. In April 1917, it launched its first attack under Canadian command at Vimy, France. During the Battle of Passchendaele, it was the Canadians who took Passchendaele.

The Dominion of Newfoundland, which was added to Canada only in 1949, was deployed separately from the Canadians during the First World War.

The United States entered the war only on April 6, 1917. As a result, thousands of Americans migrated north in earlier years to enlist in the Canadian army. It is estimated that about 40,000 Americans joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, more than 6 percent of its total number of enlisted soldiers. Some had a Canadian or British background, but the vast majority were born in the US.

The reasons so many Americans joined the Canadian side range from personal conviction to opportunism. Many Americans felt they had social, economic and political links with Canada, and public opinion had been sympathetic to the Allied cause from the start of hostilities.

Before the Americans entered the war, the US was strongly committed to providing aid to the ailing populations of France and Belgium. The Commission for Relief in Belgium was established in January 1915 by the future President Herbert Hoover. By December 1918 it had shipped no less than 3.2 million tons of food to Belgium.

→ Edwin, his wife Mabel and their daughters Ethel and Marian.

↗

A 1917 American poster addresses Yiddish-speaking migrants: "Food will win the war - You came here seeking freedom, now you must help to preserve it - Wheat is needed for the Allies - waste nothing." (Library of Congress)

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Edmund Gray

Edmund was born in 1890 in Mullaghglass, Newry, Ulster, Ireland. His father, Willam, was 29 years old at the time and his mother, Lucy, 26.

Edmund grew up in Bessbrook, a village with both Protestant and Catholic residents. The Gray family was Presbyterian, a form of Calvinism that originates from Scotland and England.

Edmund had two brothers and four sisters: John (° 1889), Mary (° 1892), Thomas (° 1893), Lucy (° 1897), Anna (° 1899) and Emma (° 1903).

From the age of 14, Edmund followed in his father's footsteps and worked in the local linen mill, part of a major industry in Bessbrook.

In 1915 Edmund said goodbye to his fiancée, Sadie Alderdyce. He joined the army and left for the battlefields of mainland European.

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Britain initially had a small but well-trained and well-equipped professional army of 160,000 men. From 1915 the first volunteers arrived on the battlefield and in 1916 Britain, like France and Germany, introduced conscription.

The Catholic Irish had already been striving for self-government within the United Kingdom for several decades by the outbreak of the First World War. In 1912 the Home Rule Movement succeeded in the British Parliament in extracting more autonomy on the island of Ireland.

Unionists in the predominantly Protestant province of Ulster were opposed to any form of Irish self-government. They were a paramilitary force and threatened to oppose the establishment of a parliament in Dublin with violence. Irish nationalists responded by establishing their own volunteer army. Both sides were starting to arm themselves, but the outbreak of WWI ended the "Home Rule Crisis" for the time being.

↖ The Gray family. Edmund, also called ‘Eddie’, is in the middle at the back.

Edmund, a unionist and active member of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteers, is believed to have enlisted in the British Army in September 1914. A year later he was sent to mainland Europe. Edmund was very sociable, which may have led to his promotion to lance corporal. He eventually rose to the rank of sergeant.

Over time, the war began to weigh heavily on Edmund. In letters he sent to his sisters he increasingly wrote that he was tired of the war and was looking forward to coming home. In late 1916, he wrote, “I am feeling ashamed for what I done." We don't know for sure what he meant but, according to a family story, at some point Edmund was mentally broken and refused service. It led to him being downgraded to the rank of a stretcher bearer, whether voluntarily or otherwise.

Sadie and Edmund. →

1914-1918: Dominion of Canada

William Daniel Holborne

William was born on 1 December 1887 in Hinton Charterhouse in the United Kingdom. His father, Edwin, was 29 years at the time and his mother, Sarah, 26.

In rural Hinton Charterhouse, William grew up in a large family with three sisters and four brothers. At the age of 20 he lost his mother. His sister Ellen died in 1914.

On 30 September 1909, William emigrated to Canada. He left from Liverpool in a ship bound for Quebec and Montreal.

William settled in Vernon, British Columbia, Canada. He worked there as a gardener. In 1909 he married Blanche Beer, who had emigrated to Canada with him. Together they had two children: Richard (° 1915), who died before his first birthday, and Ernest (° 1916).

In March 1916, William enlisted in the Canadian Army. He stated that in recent years he had served for several months in the 30th Regiment, British Columbia Horse, which was responsible for domestic defence. In October 1916 he left for Europe.

As a British dominion, Canada also participated in the First World War. During the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, the Canadians had to deal with the first gas attack in history. In June 1916 they were involved in the Battle of Mount Sorrel, near Zillebeke.

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The Dominion of Newfoundland, which was added to Canada only in 1949, was deployed separately from the Canadians during the First World War.

From the mid-19th century, Canada, like the United States, attracted many immigrants. Just before the First World War, the migration wave reached its peak: in 1913, more than 400,000 people poured into the country. In 1909, the year William Holborne arrived in Canada, the number was approximately 175,000. At that time, the colonization and exploitation of Western Canada was promoted. The immigrants mainly came from Eastern and Southern Europe, but many British people were also looking for a better life.

The Canadian government saw English-speaking people from the British Isles as perfect migrants. They needed to establish themselves as independent farmers in the west. In order of preference, lists were drawn up, with "ideal" settlers at the top: after the British and Americans came Western Europeans, such as the French, Belgians, Dutch and Scandinavians. Undesirables included Italians, Russians, Greeks, Syrians, Asians, Jews and Roma. However, the need for settlers forced migration services to put aside their prejudices and allow these groups to enter as well.

Emigration was often a true ordeal. William Holborne sailed across the ocean on the Megantic, a vessel of the White Star Line, a shipping company best known for the Titanic disaster.

On arrival, William still had a journey of 4,000 kilometres ahead of him. He travelled by train across Canada.

1914-1918: Commonwealth of Australia

Clarence Smith Jeffries

Clarence was born on 26 October 1894 in Wallsend near Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. His father and mother, Joshua and Barbara, were both 21 years old at the time.

Clarence was their only child. After his regular schooling he went to university in Newcastle, a city north of Sydney.

After graduating, Clarence worked as a surveyor at the Abermain coal Mines, where his father was general manager. Clarence played cricket, excelled at horse riding and had an interest in horse breeding.

In July 1912, Clarence joined the 14th (Hunter River) Infantry Regiment as a conscript for internal defence. A year later he was promoted to sergeant and in 1915 he became a lieutenant. When World War I broke out, Clarence was tasked with training war volunteers. In 1916 he joined the Australian units in Europe

Australia's first action as a dominion of Great Britain was to take the German colony of New Guinea in September – November 1914. Together with New Zealand, the Australian Imperial Force formed the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC).

The ANZACs were first deployed in Gallipoli (Turkey) in 1915 where they suffered heavy losses. Australian troops were then deployed to the Western Front and in the Middle East. In Europe they participated in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the Battle of Messines and the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

In the mid-19th century, a gold rush caused a wave of migration to Australia, which proved disastrous for the Aboriginals. Most immigrants came from the United Kingdom. The sailing time from the UK. was 80 days, often in dire circumstances.

Thomas Steel (1842-1908) and Hannah Dronsfield (1850-1931), Clarence's maternal grandparents, emigrated to Australia during this period. They came from the north of England.

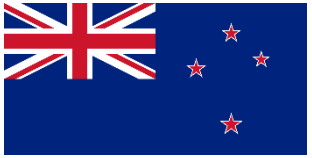
Australia's mineral wealth ensured that mining became an important industry. Abermain is located in the coalfields of South Maitland. When Clarence lived and worked there, it was the most productive coalfield in New South Wales.

↓
Thomas Steel and Hannah Dronsfield.

↓
The coal mine at Abermain.

After Clarence arrived in England at the end of June, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. At the end of November 1916, his unit was deployed to the front for the first time, but it was not until June 1917 that he took part in a major battle, the Battle of Messines, near Mesen. Clarence was evacuated with a bullet wound to his thigh. During his recovery in London, he was promoted to the rank of captain on June 26.

Clarence S. Jeffries. →



1914-1918: Dominion of New Zealand

Athol
Kitchen

Athol was born on 15 February 1894 in Killarney, Queensland, Australia. His father, James, was 18 years old at the time and his mother, Elisabeth 'Eliza' Carey, 21.

Athol grew up in Toowoomba, west of Brisbane in Australia. His father was a maltster in a brewery. Athol had two brothers and one sister: Harold (° 1892), Ashley (° 1895) and Fanny (° 1899).

In 1906, the Kitchen family emigrated to Terrace End, a suburb of Palmerston North, in New Zealand.

Athol worked in Palmerston North as a driver at Meadley and Gardner, an industrial bakery, making daily bread deliveriesin his ward.

When Athol registered with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in 1916 to fight in Europe, he had been in military service for several months. Athol left for Great Britain on October 11, 1916. From there he made the crossing to France in February 1917. In the same period, his brother Ashley also registered for military service.

At the outbreak of World War I, New Zealand, a British dominion, occupied the German colony of Samoa, located in the Pacific, without firing a shot.

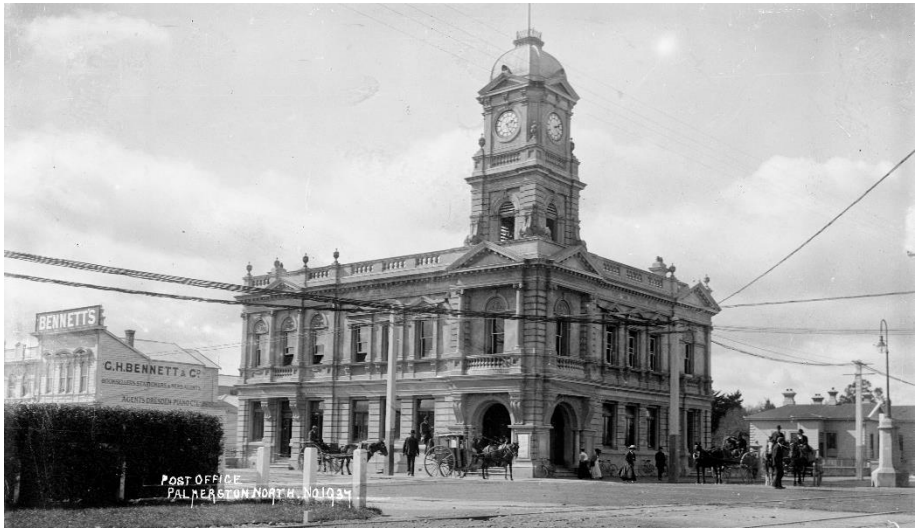
Together with Australia, the country formed the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). The New Zealanders were first deployed in Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915, after which the men were sent to the Western Front.

In the mid-19th century, a gold rush caused a large wave of migration to Australia. Tens of thousands of migrants settled there in the following decades. The Australian interior was opened up and exploited for agriculture and mining, which was disastrous for the Aboriginal people.

Most immigrants came from the UK, like Athol's parents. His father was born in England, his mother in Dublin, Ireland. Emigration to Australia took several weeks, making it less attractive than North America. In addition, the conditions on board the ships were often appalling. Athol's mother, Elisabeth, lost her half-sister Louisa during the sea voyage. She was buried in 1883 on the banks of the Suez Canal.

Palmerston North was founded around 1870 after the government bought the land from the local Māori, the Ngāti Rangitāne. The colonization of the area started at the end of the New Zealand Wars, a series of armed conflicts between the British and the Māori, who opposed colonization by the British.

When the Kitchen family arrived in Palmerston North, it was a modern and prosperous city with several thousand inhabitants.



↑ The post office in Palmerston North, early 20th century.

1914-1918: Dominion of Canada

Hugh MacInnes

Hugh was born in 1893 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father, Hugh, was 40 years old at the time and his mother, Flora, 37.

Hugh grew up in the hamlet of Kilbride near Oban, a town on the rugged Scottish west coast. He was part of a large farming family, with four brothers and two sisters.

Very little is known about Hugh's childhood. We do know that his family was well off financially and that Hugh received a good education in Oban.

In 1911 Hugh emigrated to Canada. He worked there as a banker. Later his parents also moved. However, they remained in Scotland and settled in Ibrox near the city of Glasgow.

In April 1916, Hugh enlisted in the Canadian Army. When registering he stated that he was staying in a hotel in Winnipeg. He also reported that he has served locally with the Canadian 181st Battalion for two months. He did not leave for Europe until 1917.

As a British dominion, Canada also participated in the First World War. During the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, the Canadians had to deal with the first gas attack in history. In June 1916 they were involved in the Battle of Mount Sorrel, near Zillebeke.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force built up an excellent reputation. In April 1917, it launched its first attack under Canadian command at Vimy, France. During the Battle of Passchendaele, it was the Canadians who took Passchendaele.

The Dominion of Newfoundland, which was added to Canada only in 1949, was deployed separately from the Canadians during the First World War.

From the mid-19th century, Canada, like the United States, attracted many migrants. Just before the First World War, the migration wave reached its peak: in 1913, more than 400,000 people poured into the country.

Canadian Bank of Commerce headquarters in Toronto, built in 1907. ↗

Hugh arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, on 5 January 1911 and started working in the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Toronto four days later. The passenger list shows that he was travelling with a banker and a group of young Scotish graduates who all indicated that they intended to work in the banking sector.

The Canadian government saw Britons who spoke English as perfect immigrants. In order of preference, lists were drawn up with "ideal" settlers at the top: after the British and Americans came Western Europeans, such as the French, Belgians, Dutch and Scandinavians. Undesirables included Italians, Russians, Greeks, Syrians, Asians, Jews and Roma. However, the need for settlers forced migration services to put aside their prejudices and allow these groups to enter.

Until the end of 1916, tens of thousands of Canadians enlisted for military service, indicating that many believed they would be fighting a just war. Others only succumbed under pressure from public opinion and propaganda. More than 1,700 Canadian Bank of Commerce employees eventually enlisted.

Hugh proved a creditable soldier. He was quickly promoted and became a sergeant. But he suffered from rheumatism and pneumonia, so a year went by before he was sent to the battlefields in Europe.

→ Recruitment poster for French and English-speaking Canadians, with an emphasis on Canadian successes in St. Juliaan (near Ypres) and Festubert (France).

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Harry Moorhouse

Harry was born in 1869 in Wakefield, Yorkshire. His father, John, was 29 years old at the time and his mother, Emma, 28.

Harry grew up in Flanshaw near Wakefield. He had three sisters and two brothers. The Moorhouse family was wealthy; Harry's father owned a textile factory and lived in a stately home with servants.

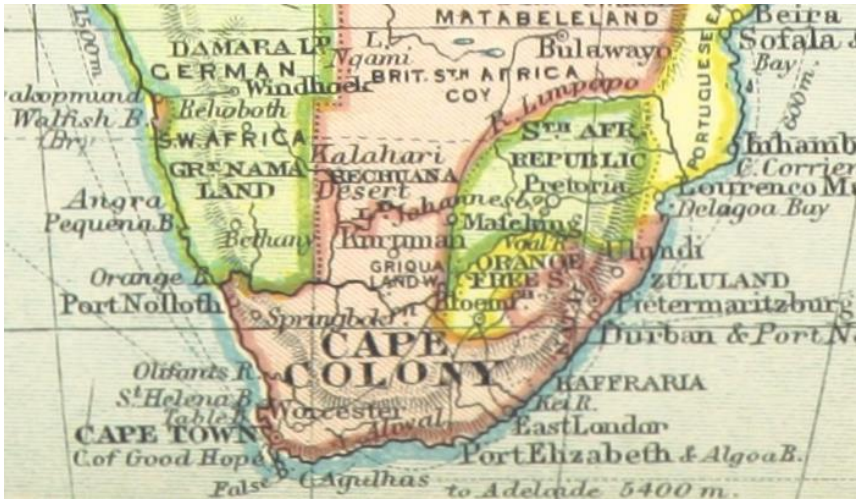
After attending the prestigious Wakefield Grammar School, Harry studied at the University of Leeds. On graduating, he followed in his father's footsteps and became a wool-spinning manufacturer in Wakefield.

In 1892 Harry married Susannah Marsdin. Together they had three children: Alan (° 1893), Ronald (° 1895) and Lydia (° 1898).

Just before his wedding, Harry left the army. During the South African Boer War, he rejoined to serve as a major in the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. At the outbreak of the First World War, Harry Moorhouse again rejoined his unit. He left for the battlefields of France and Belgium, as did his son Ronald.

When Britain went to war in 1914, the country controlled an empire. The motherland consisted of England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland.

Britain initially had a small but well-trained and well-equipped professional army of 160,000 men. From 1915 the first volunteers arrived on the battlefield and in 1916 Britain, like France and Germany, introduced conscription.



↓
Southern Africa, 1899.

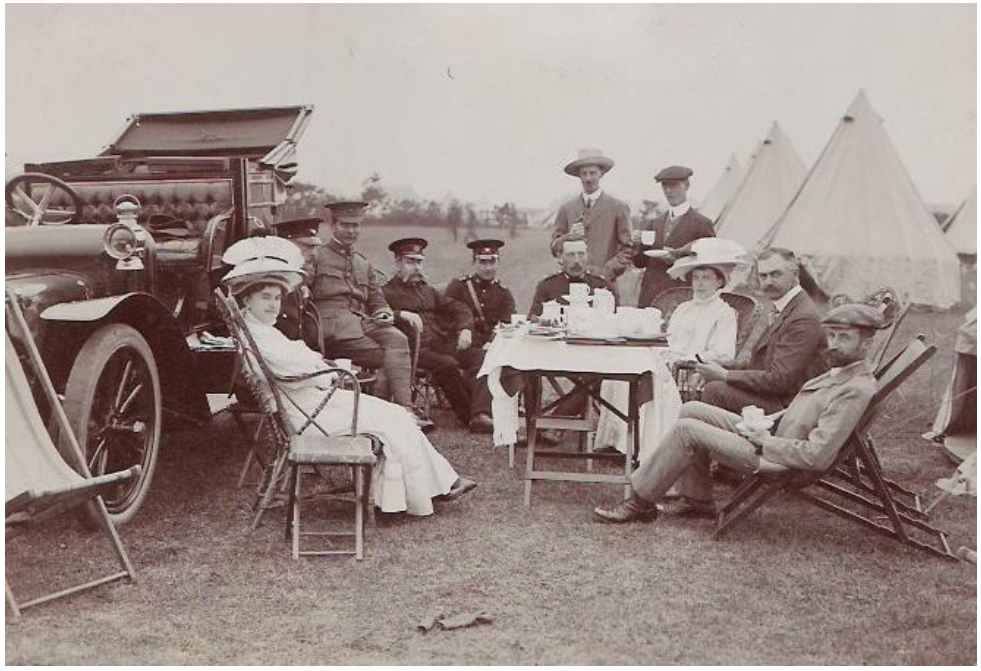
The Boer War was fought from 1899 to 1902 between the British Empire and two independent “Boer” states: the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. The conflict arose mainly over the possession of rich gold and diamond seams and British colonial expansionism.

The war initially went well for the Boers, who were mainly white South Africans of Dutch descent. British reinforcements eventually turned the tide. The Boers refused to surrender and started a guerrilla war. The British army command responded with harsh measures; soldiers were ordered to destroy farms and intern farmers and their families in concentration camps. Many civilians died of hunger and disease.

After he graduated, Ronald Moorhouse had no desire to work in his father's factory like his brother. He preferred to become a farmer, but the First World War put paid to his plans.

Ronald decided to enlist and followed his father's unit to the battlefields in France and Belgium.

→ Ronald Moorhouse.



Harry (third from left) at camp with the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, shortly before World War I. →

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Ronald Moorhouse

Ronald was born in 1895 in Wakefield, Yorkshire. His father, Harry, was 26 years old at the time and his mother, Susannah, 29.

Ronald grew up in Flanshaw near Wakefield. He had a brother and a sister, Alan (° 1893) and Lydia (° 1898).

The Moorhouse family was wealthy; Ronald's father was a manufacturer of woollen yarn and his grandfather also had a textile factory.

After graduating, Ronald Moorhouse had no desire to work in his father's factory like his brother. He preferred to become a farmer, but the First World War put paid to his plans.

Ronald's father had a lot of military experience and he rejoined his unit at th outbreak of the First World War. Ronald also decided to enlist and followed his father to the battlefields in France and Belgium.

When Britain went to war in 1914, the country controlled an empire. The motherland consisted of England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland.

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Ronald's father was active in the local textile industry. During the industrial revolution, Wakefield grew into an extremely important centre for textile production. At the beginning of the 20th century there were several factories in the area.

Harry Moorhouse, Ronald's father, served as a major in the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in the South African Boer War from 1901 to 1902. Ronald grew up in a family where military honour was of paramount importance. He proved a creditable soldier and became an officer.

↑ Textile mills along Alverthorpe Road near Flanshaw, Wakefield.

One of Ronald's postcards to his mother, 1915. ↓

CARTE POSTALE

Correspondance

Dear Mother.

Just a line to let you know we are both quite well. I am sorry I have not written a letter for a letter but will write a long one to morrow. We are still having lovely weather. I got Marjories letter yesterday so will write to you all to morrow. Hoping this will find you all well. With Love & kisses to all,

Ronald Your Loving Son

Adresse

Mrs H. Moorhouse
Springfield House
Flanshaw
Wakefield
England

PASSED CENSOR No 1513

FIELD POST OFFICE A MY 5 15 3.W.R

Ronald with a friend, Betty. ↓

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Frederick George
Nash

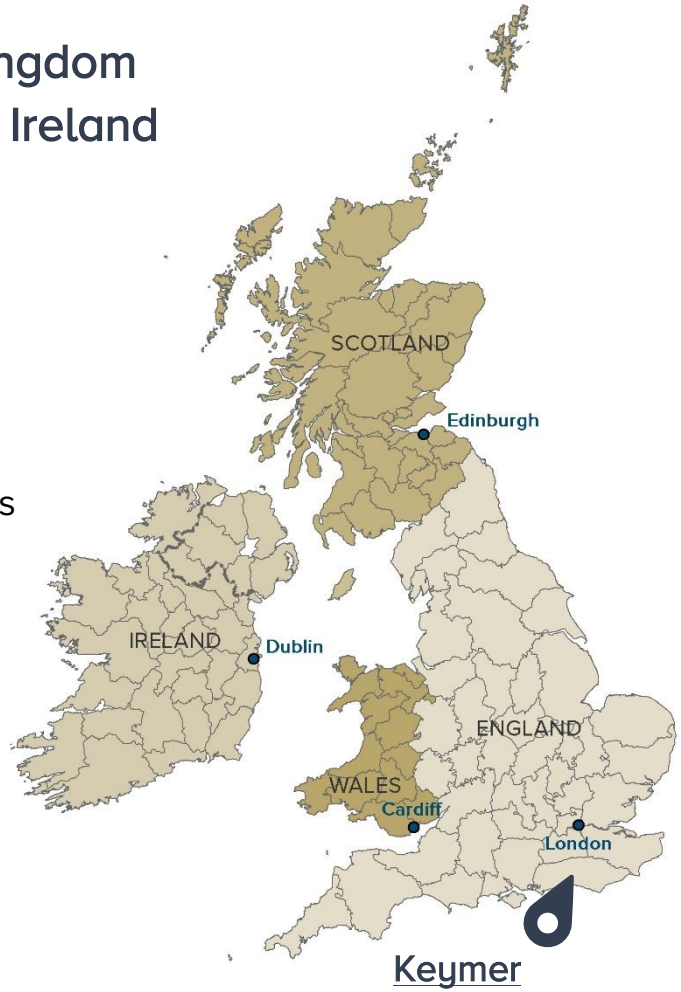
Frederick was born on 6 July 1893 in Sandhurst, Kent. His father, James, was 42 years old at the time and his mother, Harriet, 29.

Frederick had six older sisters. He grew up in the village of Sandhurst, where his father James was a rope-maker.

Little is known about Frederick's youth and education. He had left home by the time of his 18th birthday.

Frederick moved to Keymer, Sussex, where he found work as a clerk in a tobacco shop owned by William and Kate Absell, with whom he lived. He would also have worked as a farmer just before the First World War.

Frederick entered military service early, in 1914. In 1915 he returned home injured after fighting in Turkey. In 1917 Frederick returned to service and left for the battlefields of France and Belgium.



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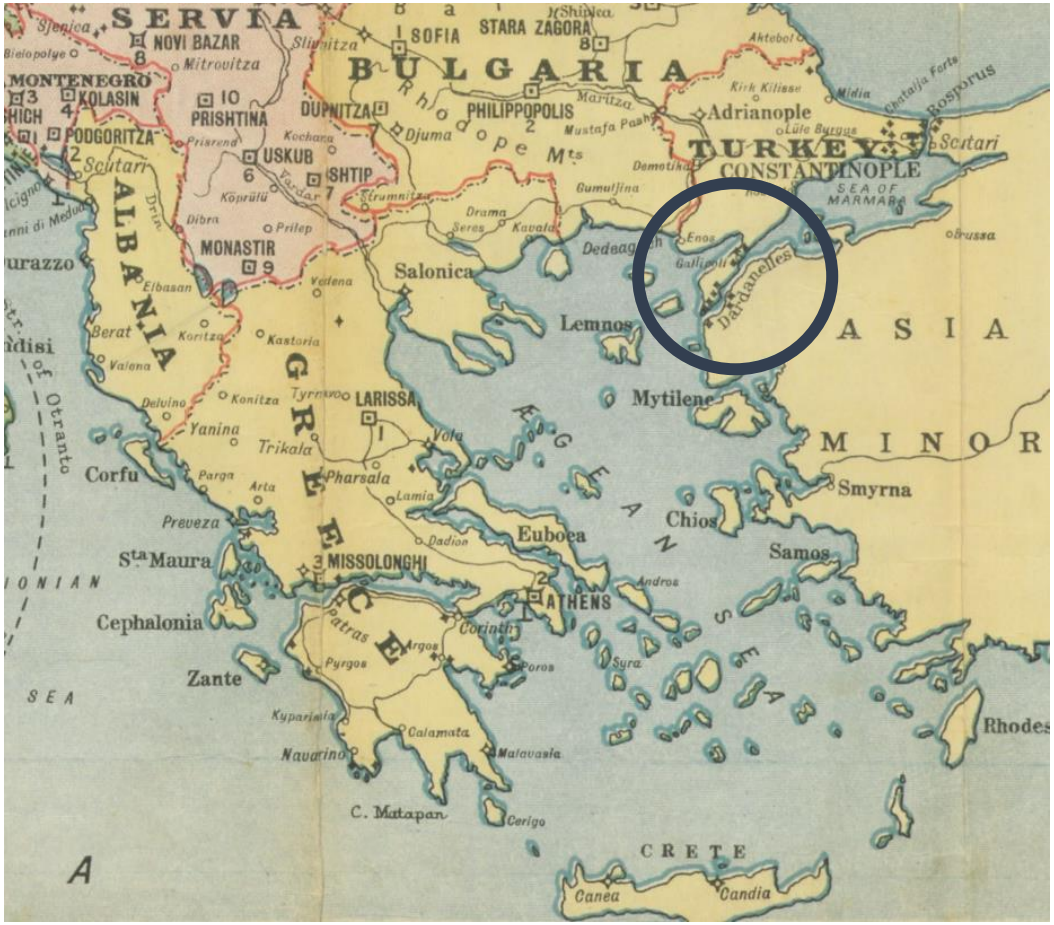

During the First World War, the fighting was not limited to France and Belgium. Frederick was deployed in the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915, called the Battle of Çanakkale in Turkish (Çanakkale Savaşı). The battle was fought from 17 February 1915 to 9 January 1916 in the Dardanelles, a strait between Europe and Asia Minor. The Allies were trying to weaken the Ottoman Empire, one of the central powers, by opening the strait as a supply route to Russia.

In February 1915, an Allied attack on Ottoman fortresses controlling access to the strait failed. An amphibious landing on the Gallipoli peninsula followed in April with the aim of conquering the Ottoman capital Constantinople (Istanbul). This attack also failed, leaving more than 500,000 men killed, injured or missing. The campaign is considered a major Ottoman victory.

Frederick was wounded on 30 August 1915. He was sent home and stayed in England for two years. However, he went back into service in 1917, although there were still two bullets in his lung from his military service in Turkey, the doctors having been unable to remove them safely.

In the summer of 1917, Frederick arrived in France. After a week at the front, he fell ill. But after three weeks, on 11 August 1917, he was fit enough to join his unit at Ypres.

1914-1918: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

William
Rhodes

William was born on 9 January 1887 in Millbrook near Stalybridge, not far from the city of Manchester, Lancashire. His father, Robert, was 47 years old at the time and his mother, Kitty, 45.

William, also known as "Willie," grew up in Stalybridge in a large family. His parents had 10 children, three of whom did not survive childhood. William lost his mother in 1912. His sister Ellen, who had emigrated to Canada, died in 1913.

At the age of 14, William worked in the cotton industry, like his parents. In 1908 he married Annie Thornley. They settled in Millbrook, where William worked in a cotton mill.

Together with Annie, William had a son and two daughters, Harold (1911), Mary (1913) and Irene (1917).

Before World War I, William served in the British Army, in the Cheshire Regim Territorial Force. When the war broke out, he was sent to the battlefields of France and Belgium.

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The Manchester area was famous for its cotton industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The metropolis of Manchester was aptly referred to as "Cottonopolis" at that time. The city, along with some other towns in the south and east of Lancashire, such as Stalybridge, was one of the largest and most productive centers of cotton spinning in the world.

In 1871, almost a third of the cotton produced globally was spun and woven in this region. Manchester became an important international transportation hub, with warehouses and all kinds of services for the massive industry that had developed around the city.

On the eve of the First World War, a large proportion of the British working class still lived in poor conditions. Although William started working in a factory from an early age, the living conditions of his family were relatively good. The Rhodes family could even afford a professional portrait photograph.

→ William and Annie with Harold around 1912.

Before World War I William served in the Territorial Force, a unit of part-time volunteers within the British Army. The Territorial Force was established in 1908 to strengthen the British Army without the need for conscription. Members could not be forced to serve abroad, but in the first two months of World War I, many territorials spontaneously volunteered to fight overseas.

Territorials during pre-war exercises. William is the man holding his cap. →

1914-1918: Dominion of Canada

Richard Léon Verhaeghe

Richard was born in 1878 in Zerkegem in the province of West-Flanders, Belgium. His father, Adolf, was 25 at the time and his mother, Sidonie, 21.

Throughout his early life, Richard regularly moved with his family. He had a brother and two sisters, but the two girls didn't live long. Looking for work, the family eventually settled in Ostend, on the Belgian North Sea coast.

Richard lived in Ostend until he was 20 years old. That same year, his father died.

In 1911 Richard decided to emigrate. He ended up in Saskatoon, in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada, where he worked as a tram driver. He married the German-Polish Augusta and had two children with her, Ferdinand (° 1913) and Yvonne (° 1914).

In August 1915, Richard enlisted in the Canadian Army. He left for the battlefields in France and his native country.

As a British dominion, Canada also participated in the First World War. During the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, the Canadians had to deal with the first gas attack in history. In June 1916 they were involved in the Battle of Mount Sorrel, near Zillebeke.

The Canadian Expeditionary Force built up an excellent reputation. In April 1917, it launched its first attack under Canadian command at Vimy, France. During the Battle of Passchendaele, it was the Canadians who took Passchendaele.

The Dominion of Newfoundland, which was added to Canada only in 1949, was deployed separately from the Canadians during the First World War.

From the mid-19th century onwards, Canada, like the United States, attracted many immigrants. Just before the First World War, the wave of immigration reached its peak: in 1913, more than 400,000 people poured into the country.

Belgians were among those looking for a new future across the ocean. Tens of thousands emigrated to the United States. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, more and more Belgians opted for Canada. Nevertheless, Belgian emigration to countries outside Europe was still limited overall. Population growth and industrialization caused problems in Belgium, but most people moved to Wallonia, the south part of the country, or to northern France.

Belgian ad for emigration to Canada, 1904 (KADOC - KU Leuven) ↑

The Canadian government saw English-speaking Britons as perfect immigrants during this period. In order of preference lists were drawn up with "ideal" settlers at the top: after the British and Americans came Western Europeans such as the Belgians and Dutch. Undesirables included Italians, Russians, Greeks, Syrians, Asians, Jews and Roma. However, the need for settlers to exploit the vast agricultural areas forced the authorities to put aside their prejudices.

Richard was deployed to Zillebeke (Ypres) in the Battle of Mount Sorrel in 1916. He was wounded in the eye and needed time to recover, but a few weeks later he was back with his unit. Later he fought on the Somme in France. Richard was decorated and promoted because he had stayed on the battlefield to take care of wounded soldiers, at the risk of his own life.

→ Richard, sitting on the right, with some of his comrades.

1914-1918: Union of South Africa

James Wilkinson

James was born in 1883 in Lamesley, Durham, in the United Kingdom. His father, John, was 39 years old at the time and his mother, Betsy, 36.

James grew up in a large family: he had six brothers and two sisters. His father John and his many brothers worked in the coal mines. The Wilkinson family moved several times after the birth of James.

In 1907 James married Barbara Ann Atkinson. Together with her he had two children: George (° 1909) and Ella (° 1913), although his daughter died at the age of one.

James' family moved several times in the Durham area, probably looking for work. In Wheatley Hill, where they lived the longest, he worked in the coal mines and as a firefighter.

When World War I broke out, James was in South Africa, while his Family was still living in Britain. James enlisted in the South African army in 1916.

South Africa, a dominion of the British Empire, joined the Allies in August 1914. The country was initially involved only in campaigns in German Southwest Africa (Namibia) and German East Africa (Tanzania).

Thereafter, the South African Infantry Brigade, as part of the 9th Scottish Division, participated in the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Passchendaele. By early 1918, little remained of the original brigade. In September 1918 it joined the British 66th Division and participated in the final battles in France.

South Africa became independent as a republic in 1961. Apartheid was finally abolished in 1994.

The Union of South Africa was founded after the Boer War, a conflict fought between 1899 and 1902 between the British Empire and “Boers”, descendants of mostly Dutch settlers who inhabited the independent South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State.

South Africa had strict segregation laws under British rule. Black residents were denied the right to vote while whites, a minority, owned the vast majority of land property. Before the First World War, South Africa attracted far fewer European settlers than Canada or Australia.

→ The coal mine at Wheatley Hill.

Coal is naturally abundant in Durham, in the north of England. In the nineteenth century, mining grew enormously and mining villages were created everywhere. By 1913, Durham coal production was at its peak. Though public health and better housing were being pursued by then, a significant number of British miners still lived in poor conditions on the eve of the First World War.

The reason why James was in South Africa when he registered for military service is unknown. He might have been looking for a place in South Africa to emigrate to while waiting for his family, or he may have been en route to Australia or New Zealand for the same reason. It is certain that James left Durban for Europe in 1916. He served in the South African army as a "Sanitary Sergeant", an officer in charge of medical logistics.

↓
The "Llanstephan Castle", the ship that brought James back to Europe.