

John, James and Harry Gilding

In memory of three cousins from Hasland who gave their lives in France & Belgium in 1917



Louis Gilding for CADFS WW1 Project – prepared 12 August 2014

The tragedy of WW1 was how many of a family's young men would enlist with their friends full of enthusiasm and be wiped out within such a relatively short period of time. The family background to the cousins John Thomas Gilding, James Gilding and Harry Gilding born in Hasland is described prior to describing their WW1 stories.

THEIR FAMILY BACKGROUND

Our common ancestor who introduced the Gilding family to Hasland was Henry Gilding. He had been born on 7th June 1822 in the rural parish of Bottesford, Leicestershire. His mother Mary Gildon, then aged 36, was shown in the parish register as a pauper. No father was named.

We do not know how long Henry Gilding had been in Chesterfield prior to meeting Amy Hall, daughter of John Hall of Churchside Farm, Hasland. The Hall family had farmed there for several generations. Amy was aged 17 and Henry was aged 23 when they married at Chesterfield Parish Church on the 24th November 1845.

Henry and Amy Gilding lived their lives in Hasland and raised at least ten children of whom seven survived childhood. His son's followed him into the pit, although they also helped out their mother's family at Churchside Farm. His eldest son William (born 1846) would take over the farm when his uncle William Hall died in 1899, until his own death in 1917. He was the father of my grandmother Amy Gilding. Her half-brother Jim Gilding would fight in WW1 and survive.

A daughter Mary Ann followed who was born in 1849. She married Thomas Burnham in 1867 and moved to Somercoates. Henry's second son John born in 1853 would sail to Australia in 1884 after the death of his young Irish wife and their baby son.

Henry and Amy's son George born in 1856 was a coal miner and a reservist in the local militia. He purchased his discharge from the Sherwood Foresters, aged 35 to marry Rebecca Wilson at Chesterfield Registry Office in 1890. They had a child **John Thomas Gilding** baptised at St Paul's Church, Hasland on 14th January 1892. His wife Rebecca also had two children Kate and James by a previous

relationship. John would work with his father at Silverwood Colliery, Dalton, near Rotherham.

After three consecutive infant deaths another son Alfred Gilding was born in 1863. In 1882 he would marry a thatcher's daughter Sarah Paul from Dorset who was in service at a farm near Belper. The family lived at Grassmoor with periods of upheaval in the search for work near Ilkeston and Sheffield. They had a family of nine of which the first five had a "catch-up" christening at St Paul's Church, Hasland on 18th June 1891 – the ages ranging from eight to one. One of these Frank Gilding was my dad's father. In 1903 at St Paul's Church, Frank would marry his Uncle William's daughter, Amy Gilding from Churchside Farm. Sarah's remaining children were born in Hasland - three girls and a son **James Gilding** born in 1897. It was a difficult time for Sarah and her family.

Alfred deserted Sarah and her young family for another woman. In January 1900 Sarah supported by the NSPCC summoned her husband Alfred Gilding for being persistently cruel to her at Grassmoor and was granted 14 shillings a week. Two years later in June 1902 the Derbyshire Times by-line was "Callous Chesterfield Parent – Neglect of Six Children". The NSPCC brought a summons against Alfred Gilding, that he neglected his six children, all under 16 years of age, in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering. He pleaded guilty. Alfred was living with a woman near Lordsmill Street. He had up to then avoided the maintenance order, and took away food from Sarah's home in Chester Street, Brampton. Sarah had to live on the charity of neighbours or what she could not provide by her own industry. She was described as a "clean, sober and industrious woman". Alfred worked at Bond's Main Colliery and could earn £2 a week. Alfred was fined 40 shillings costs, or hard labour. In October 1902 a maintenance order of 10 shillings a week was granted to Sarah. Whether Alfred paid his dues we do not know, but the family dispersed as they found work and lodged elsewhere. Son Frank and his wife Amy would take in brother's Fred and James from time to time. By 1911 Sarah was destitute and an inmate of Chesterfield Workhouse. Alfred was living with his youngest daughter Annie and a "housekeeper" in Brimington. Their youngest son **James Gilding** was working on her sister's farm in Hampshire. Alfred returned to Sarah before his death in 1919 aged 55. No reconciliation appears to

have taken place with his son Frank. Sarah's son Harry and daughter May lived with her in Brunswick Street, Stonegravels where she had a fulfilling life involved with the Salvation Army. Sarah died a well-respected and much loved mother aged seventy one in 1930.

Returning to the family of Henry and Amy Gilding their daughter Eliza was born in 1870 at Hasland. Amy aged 45 gave birth to William in 1874 but he died an infant. Amy aged 53 died on 3rd April 1882 was buried by the porch of St Paul's Church in the Hall family plot. Following the death of her mother Eliza kept house for her father Henry Gilding at Revill Street, Grassmoor. In the 1891 Census they had taken in a lodger, William Bradley a 30 year old coal miner from Alferton. Aged 21 Eliza is shown with a daughter aged two called Mary Ann Gilding and a son Harry Gilding only two months old. Eliza married William Bradley (a widower) at Chesterfield Register Office in December 1892. By the 1911 Census all members of their family are living in Henry Street, Grassmoor and have the surname Bradley, not Gilding. Harry was aged twenty and was employed as a pony driver down the pit. When enlisting for the army he is shown as **Harry Gilding**.

Henry Gilding, a lifelong coal miner, a member of the charitable "Order of Odd fellows" enjoyed his pipe and a drink. He died aged 76 at 14 Revill Street, on 11th August 1898.

John Thomas, James and Harry Gilding were cousins born in Hasland and their place in the Gilding family identified.

Of the three, James was the only one spoken about in my immediate family as he was my grandfather's youngest brother.

Sadly I never met my Gilding grandparents as Frank died aged forty-three in 1927 following a roof fall at Grassmoor colliery. His wife Amy (his cousin) died aged fifty eight in 1941.

WORLD WAR 1 BEGINNINGS

On Sunday 28th June Archduke Franz Ferdinand who was heir to the Austro/Hapsburg throne was assassinated with his wife Sophia in Sarajevo. The culprit was a Bosnian Serb student. Relations with Serbia had been heated before but remained under control. In England the weekend was a scorcher and apart from an obituary the assassination attracted little attention. The government view was that “the tragedy ... will not, I trust lead to further complications”. The main focus of the press and government was the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, increased disruption caused by the Suffragette movement and growing industrial unrest. Although the increase in the German navy had been a worry, the British were trying to make economies in their naval budget (nothing changes). By the end of July Austria gave a 48 hour ultimatum to the Serbs to deliver excessive concessions. The British Prime Minister recognised the danger of Russia supporting Serbia and Germany and France being involved. However he saw no reason why Britain would be dragged in. Also the German General Staff expected Britain would remain neutral and France would be defeated in 40 days. On 28th July Austria declared war on Serbia. On 1st August Russia declared war on Austria and Germany mobilised in support of Austria. France mobilised its army. Needless to say there were anti-war rallies in Trafalgar Square.

Germany invaded our ally Belgium who Britain was pledged to support. The hot Bank Holiday weekend saw **Britain declare war on 4th August 1914.**

Our professional army, the British Expeditionary Force was sent to France but by 23rd August was in retreat and Germany invaded France. So began one of the bloodiest conflicts depleting a generation of young men. Young pals lined up to fight for “King and Country” in Kitchener’s New Army. Volunteers were called for on a “short service” basis, which meant for three years, or the duration of the war. By early 1916 compulsory conscription had been introduced. Like many families the tragedy of the First World War hit the Gilding family.

JOHN THOMAS GILDING

John Thomas Gilding had served in the reserves like his father George. He enlisted aged twenty six on 31st August 1914 shortly after war was declared. He enlisted at Rotherham for the York and Lancaster Regiment (12th Battalion – “Sheffield Pals”) as a private, number 13388. His service records describe him as nearly five foot seven inches tall, weight 146 pounds, fair complexion, grey eyes and brown hair.

John was posted to the 8th York and Lancaster Battalion when the 12th Battalion embarked to Egypt. The 8th battalion went to Frensham and Aldershot camps for training . On two occasions he went absent without leave and was docked several days pay. He embarked with the British Expeditionary Force from Folkestone for France on 27th August 1915 . The Battalion formed part of the the 70th Brigade. They were in action in Flanders, notably in the failed Artois – Loos Offensive in Autumn 1915 . By 1916 John appears to have rejoined the 12th Battalion which was part of 94th Brigade. The battalion took huge casualties when they went over the top on 1st July 1916, the first day of the bloody battle of the Somme. The machine guns had opened up behind largely unbroken wire and cut down the attackers in swathes. The casualties of over 57,000 were the worst ever suffered by the British Army in a single day. John was wounded in the legs and hospitalised from 2nd July until September 1916 and returned to UK. John was in England for the funeral of his mother Rebecca who died aged 60 from pneumonia on 27th December 1916. He was re-posted to France with the 12th Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment and arrived at Boulogne on 8th February 1917. For two spells in May 1917 at Arras, the battalion defended the vital Windmill spur in the Gavrelle sector, suffering 143 casualties. On 26/27th June the battalion moved to the front line in preparation for an attack between Oppy and Gavrelle on the enemy Cordunna trench. . It seems the Germans were alerted to the imminence of an attack and there was a heavy barrage. John was killed in action on 27th June 1917. John’s effects were sent to his father on 9th November 1917. They comprised his identity disc, letters, photos, pipe, pocket book, religious book, wallet and purse. His conduct as a soldier was recorded as very good. He received the 1914-15 Star; the Victory and the British Empire medals.

John Thomas Gilding is remembered in bay eight on the Arras Memorial, as a soldier with no known grave .

In 1923 a beacon tower with a light shining from the top was built by Dalton Main Collieries Ltd. in honour of their employees who had died. Silverwood Colliery had lost 250 men, and Roundwood lost 62. John's name was included with his fellow miners on brass plaques. Many years' later vandals stole the brass plaques and the memorial was reconstructed outside Thrybergh Parish Hall.

John's half-brother James Wilson had enlisted in the York's and Lancaster Regiment in 1915 and survived the war serving in India and Afghanistan. John's father George Gilding died at Dalton Parva in 1925.

Arras Memorial



Dalton Beacon Memorial, at Thrybergh, Yorkshire



JAMES GILDING

James was working in Grassmoor Colliery and lodged with his brother Frank's family at 17 Meakin Street, Hasland. It would have been a crowded house with three adults and five children living in a small miner's terraced house.

James enlisted aged seventeen with other Hasland men in September 1914. He joined the Cycle Corp attached to the Lincolnshire Regiment. The bicycle mounted infantry were widely used by all sides as a rapid response unit. Unlike John the service records for James (and many others including Harry) had been destroyed by bombing in WW2. However we can fill in some gaps. We know he had two service numbers: 25839 which relates to his time with the Scottish Rifles and 11191 which appears to tie in with 7th Lincolnshire Battalion which recruited in the North from September 1914. This new "Kitchener" Territorial battalion trained in Dorset, then Winchester before leaving Folkestone for Boulogne in July 1915. After a period of familiarisation with trench warfare the battalion occupied the south of the trench network known as the "Ypres Salient". There had been heavy fighting to prevent the Germans from driving through Belgium to the sea. The battles saw the first use of gas and the almost total destruction and evacuation of Ypres. By July 1915 the major confrontations had halted but each day was beset by sniper fire and shelling. A flavor of what James would experience in his first months in the field is described in excerpts from a **History of the Lincolnshire Regiment** edited by Colonel Major General Simpson.

"On the 19th July the 7th battalion reached billets in Eecke, and two days later a party of five officers visited the trenches near Ypres for instruction. The Brigade to which the 7th Lincolnshire belonged ...very soon began its apprenticeship in trench warfare. On the 27th they went into the trenches The next day three men were killed and four wounded – their first casualties. From the 28th to the 31st July four men were killed and sixteen wounded. "

"The Regimental Diary would read - Conditions on our front "normal ", or "All quiet", but each day there was a tell-tale causality list of killed and wounded. "

"September 1915 opened with wretched weather: rain reduced the trenches to mud alleys: parapets began to fall in and work was In consequence very heavy, not only when in support and reserve, but in

the front line also. The damage done by the enemy's shell-fire was frequently extensive. On the right, for instance, it is reported that our "heavies" "bombarded the enemy's line, the enemy retaliated: "Whizz-Bangs" "everywhere."

From September to the end of December 1915 the 7th Battalion remained holding the front lines in the southern area of the Ypres Salient. *"German trench mortars and snipers caused constant annoyance and loss."* In spring 1916 the battalion was involved in a number of engagements around the Ypres salient resulting in heavy casualties as ground was gained and then lost involving close quarter fighting.

The 7th battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment would take part in various engagements in the Battle of the Somme [1st July – 18th November 1916]. In the order of battle it was part of the 51st Brigade which was an element of the 17th (Northern) Division – a New Army Division formed in September 1914.

The 7th Battalion was part of the action called the "Battle Albert" from 1st July to 13th July. The total casualties were 7 officers and 49 other ranks killed, and 7 officers and 246 other ranks wounded; plus 28 other ranks missing. This was followed by the "Battle of Delville Wood" from 15th July to 3rd September. The objective was to recapture the wood from the Germans to secure their trenches. The wood was exposed to almost continuous artillery and machine gun fire; and movement could only take place at night. Ground gained one day would be lost the next day.

Battalions would move between the front line and reserve trenches to gain some rest; but were still be subject to shelling. By the beginning of October 1916 heavy and persistent rain had turned the Somme battlefield into a quagmire of flooded shell craters and trenches thigh deep with an evil smelling mixture of rain water, rotting bodies, and mud. The 7th would be deployed at various places on the front line, including supporting the Border Regiments in clearing and holding a heavily defended salient in the German line comprising the Eclipse and Zenith trenches. Many casualties would be taken by the Lincolnshire Regiment. After this the 7th battalion continued to consolidate ground gained.

The 1st Battalion the Cameronians [Scottish Rifles] was from Glasgow and was a long established regiment of the regular army which had fought in France since the outbreak of war. In the order of battle for the

Battle of the Somme it was part of the 19th Brigade of the 33rd Division. It had moved to the Somme and had been engaged in heavy fighting on Bazentin Ridge, at High Woods and Delville Woods. At some stage a large number of the Lincolnshire's volunteered to cover losses and fought with the 1st Battalion, the Scottish Rifles (the Cameronians) during the final stage of the battle of the Somme and its aftermath.

We know that James was wounded twice but have no information where or when this happened. In the end it was the fighting environment rather than enemy action which caused his untimely death.

James contracted trench foot and fever in the firing line during the hostilities on the Somme. Trench foot was an infection of the feet caused by cold, wet and insanitary conditions. This gave rise to lockjaw (tetanus). The symptoms were repeated muscular contractions of the head and neck preventing the intake of liquids or food. Unfortunately anti-biotics did not exist. He was moved to hospital at Boulogne.

In response to a communication from the War Office James's mother Sarah left for Boulogne at midnight on Thursday 10th January and arrived at the hospital the following morning to find that her son had passed away earlier on Friday 11th January 1917. She was present at the interment, which took place five hours later. I do not know how common it was for the War Office to transport a miner's wife from Chesterfield to France to see a dying son, a private. Also the journey time of less than twelve hours was good by any standard.

The Derbyshire Courier reported the death on 3rd February 1917. It suggested that James had lived with his mother and father at 42 Brunswick Street, Stonegravels. Brother Frank Gilding (recorded as James's next of kin) obviously felt strongly about setting the record straight in the Derbyshire Courier the following week. His father's earlier abandonment of his children and leaving his wife in the workhouse had caused a deep rift in the family. A transcript of The Derbyshire Courier dated 10th February 1917 read as follows:

"Mr Frank Gilding, 17 Meakin Street, Hasland, wishes to state that his brother, Private James Gilding, who died from lockjaw in France, and whose photograph appeared in our last week's issue, had never resided at Brunswick Street, Stonegravels. He was always recognised as a Hasland soldier, having lived there at the above address for three years

previous to his enlistment with the host of village lads who joined the Lincolnshire regiment early in September 1914. He was transferred later to the Scottish rifles, being amongst the large number of his regiment who volunteered to make up the depleted ranks.”

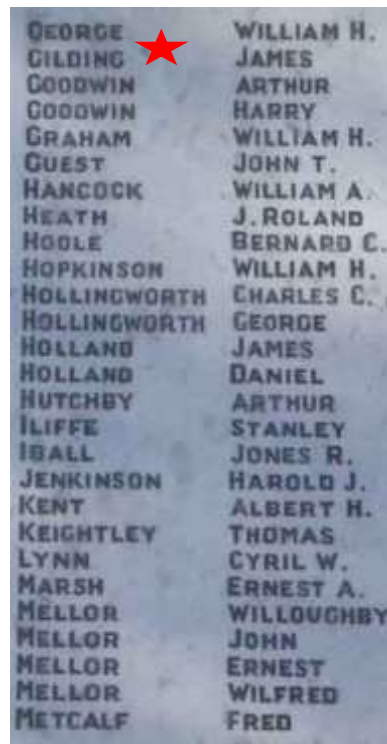
The area around Etaples was the scene of immense concentrations of reinforcement camps and hospitals. In 1917, One hundred thousand troops were camped among the sand dunes and the hospitals could deal with 22,000 wounded or sick. Etaples is south of Boulogne in North West France. This is now where the cemetery is located. It also includes many who died in the WW2 conflict.

The photographs were taken courtesy of my cousin’s son Simon Gilding who visited Etaples Military Cemetery in August 2013.



James Gilding’s headstone reads **“GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN”**. *It bears the emblem of the Cameronians; He rests with his young comrades.*

James Gilding's name is remembered on the on the Hasland War Memorial in Eastwood Park.



James received the 1914-15 Star, the Victory and the British Empire medals. These three medals were sometimes irreverently referred to as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred.

My uncle Harry Gilding (James's nephew) seldom missed a Remembrance Day with the British Legion. He would proudly wear James medals on his right with his own WW2 medals on his left.

James Gilding 1914



We are fortunate to have a photo of James Gilding in 1914 aged 17.

"Gone but never forgotten"

Harry Gilding in 1997



HARRY GILDING

Harry Gilding lived at home at Henry Street , Grassmoor, with his parents Eliza and William (Bill) Bradley and his siblings. He had been working at the Holmwood Colliery.

Harry enlisted aged 23, in 1914 as a private (no16674) with the 12th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) .

The 12th Battalion was raised at Derby on the 1st of October 1914 as part of Kitchener's Third New Army - the 24th Division. They trained at Shoreham though the division suffered from a lack of equipment and a lack of trained officers and NCOs to command the volunteers. In April 1915 the 12th Sherwood Foresters converted to be a Pioneer Battalion for the 24th Division. Pioneer battalions were intended to provide the Royal Engineers, with skilled labour and to relieve the infantry from some of its non-combatant duties. In late June 1915 they moved to Aldershot for final training. Harry embarked for France on the 29th of August 1915.

The Division concentrated in the area between Etaples and St Pol on the 4th September. The Division's first experience was truly appalling. Having been in France for only a few days, lengthy forced marches brought it into the reserve for the British assault at Loos with no experience of trench warfare. The British Army on the Western Front was not ready for a major offensive in terms of manpower or munitions and was being committed by the French to a battle not of its choosing, in an area utterly unsuited to an attack. This "Big Push" had been heralded in advance including to the enemy. The battlefield was uniformly flat, dominated by slagheaps connected with the coalmining in the district around the town of Loos. The surrounding mining villages, collieries and other industrial buildings presented a difficult challenge for any would-be attacker. The 24th Division was sent into action on 26 September. By the end of the day the shattered units of the 24th division which had taken heavy losses were relieved by the 3rd Cavalry and Guards divisions.

After this baptism of fire, the Division served on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, taking part in many of the significant actions

around the Ypres Salient prior to the Battle of the Somme. Although the 12th Sherwood Forester's primary role was that of a Divisional Pioneer Battalion it was drawn into the fight in times of crisis and gained recognition for gallant action on several occasions, especially at Loos.

In the early morning of the 30th April 1916, there was a strong attack by the Germans at Wulverghem, which was the village to the west of Messines. The Wulverghem attack was preceded by an emission of gas of such intensity that it produced much sickness as far off as at least six miles to the west. Horses in the distant lines fell senseless under the noxious vapour. It came on with such rapidity that about a hundred men of the 24th Division were overcome before they could get on their helmets. The rest were armed against it, and repelled the subsequent German attacks carried out by numerous small bodies of exploring infantry, without any difficulty.

The 12th Sherwood Foresters saw action in the Battle of the Somme. Like his cousin James Gilding, Harry was involved in the Battle of Delville Wood (15th July-3rd September 1916). The fighting that took place was fierce in the extreme. By the time the fighting finished not one tree in the wood was left untouched and the immediate landscape was littered with just the stumps of what had been trees. To the north of Delville Wood were the defenses and fortified villages around Guillemont and the battle to capture these was hard fought and lasted from 3rd-6th September 1916.

The 12 Sherwood Foresters would provide support in The Battle for Vimy Ridge, from 9th to 12th April 1917. In May the Division were moved north from Arras to become reserve divisions in preparation for the attack on Messines Ridge. The Canadian and Anzac forces would spearhead many of the attacks and suffer large casualties alongside their allies. The Battle of Messines (7th-14th June) was considered a strategic and operational success in preparation for the Third Battle of Ypres in July 1917.

Harry was killed in action on 25th June 1917 aged 26 in the vicinity of the Ypres Salient. He was struck by a fragment of artillery shell. Three days before he had rescued an officer under heavy fire. The Derbyshire

Times dated 7th July 1917 reported his death and included a “grainy” photo of Harry. A transcript is shown below.

“The parents of Private Harry Gilding, who reside at Henry Street, Grassmoor, have received this information that their son was killed in action on June 25th. In paying tribute to the memory of the deceased soldier, his Commanding officer states that he was sent out as one of a working party , when a piece of bursting shell struck him in the stomach and killed him instantly. Three



days before his death, states the officer, the deceased carried out a brave and daring act going out under heavy shell fire and fetching in a wounded officer. He was a good soldier and would be missed by all the members of his platoon, with whom he joined in the expression of their sincere regret. A chum of his Private Pitchford, who in civil life resided in Stanton Hill, wrote to the deceased’s parents stating that he was sorry to inform them that theirs son Private Harry Gilding had been killed in action by a bursting shell. They had agreed, said the writer,

that if either of them was to fall the other should inform the parents, and he was now carrying out his part of a very painful duty, and expressed his greatest sympathy with them in their sad bereavement. Prior to joining the Colours Private Gilding worked in the Tupton Seam at the Holmwood Colliery. The deceased was single and 26 years old.”

Harry Gilding is remembered at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres, Belgium. The name is shown on the Sherwood Forester’s panel’s no. 39 & 41. The memorial is dedicated to soldiers who were killed in the Ypres Salient and who have no known marked individual grave. The Last Post is played at the Menin Gate at 8pm every night in

memory of those who gave their lives. He also remembered on the Grassmoor War Memorial at the entrance to Barnes Park.



Menin Gate Memorial



Grassmoor Memorial

His younger brother Frank Bradley also a collier enlisted in the 7th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment (no. 14255) on 2nd September 1914, aged 20. His service record shows that he was nearly 5 feet 8 inches tall, had a fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. He was declared fit on 3rd September at Chesterfield, but subsequently at Aldershot Barracks on 16th October 1914 was medically discharged because an old hand injury prevented him from “grasping a rifle”. It must have been a depressing day for Frank, but could have saved his life.

***“Your souls shall be where the heroes are
And your memory shine like the morning-star.”
Joyce Kilmer***

Sources

The main sources of information apart from family members and general WW1 background information were:

Websites:

- Commonwealth Graves Commission
- Ancestry – Census material & WW military Records
- The Long, Long Trail
- Forces War Records

Derbyshire Records Office - Derbyshire Times & Courier extracts

The History of the Lincolnshire Regiment 1914-18: Edited by Major-General G.R. Simpson