

# Mancetter and Ridge Lane Remembers The Great War





A promise by the nation.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day to day lives.

Proudly supporting those who serve.

**Mancetter Parish Council has received a grant towards the production of this booklet from the Armed Forces Covenant via North Warwickshire Borough Council. Available to download at [www.mancetter.org.uk](http://www.mancetter.org.uk)**



Manduessedum - Mancetter Village  
( Place of War Chariots )  
**Mancetter Parish Council**  
Serving the People of Mancetter and Ridge Lane

The idea for this booklet started to take shape after Mancetter Parish Council was asked to name the new housing development in Church Walk Mancetter on the site of the former shops.

Research began to find details of Mancetter Parish soldiers who lost their lives in World War One. This proved successful and the development took the name of Joseph Jacob Cadman, a local man with family still in the area.

With 2018 being the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the end of World War One, our research continued to find out how many men from the whole of the Parish lost their lives either whilst fighting or as a result of the war.

Councillors and staff of Mancetter Parish Council have worked with The HAT Committee, Mancetter Memorial Hall, St Peter's Church, 3<sup>rd</sup> Atherstone Brownies and Guides, Little Stars Nursery, R C Smith, Atherstone Landscapes and The Printing Shed to mark this anniversary.

Together we have organised the production of this booklet, floral tributes on The Green in Mancetter and in Ridge Lane, a mock trench at Mancetter Memorial Hall, a Remembrance Service at St Peter's Church on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 followed by a procession to Mancetter Memorial Hall and evening entertainment.

*"We will remember them"*



**Mancetter – Memorial in St Peter's Church**



Ridge Lane – Memorial in Ridge Lane Methodist Chapel



**A. Albrighton**



**Reginald Smith**



**W. Holt**



**J H Taylor**



**A.E. Johnson**



**JOSEPH JACOB CADMAN**



**A.G. Llewellyn**

**Photo Gallery.**

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Arthur Albrighton

Service Number: Private/2398/S

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Marine Light Infantry

Died of wounds on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1918 aged 32 years.  
Buried in St Pierre Cemetery, Amiens, France.

Arthur was born in Atherstone in 1885, the son of Josiah and Harriet. He lived in Atherstone and was employed as a hatter. He joined up in Portsmouth on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1917.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Frank Bird

Service Number: Private 1944

Regiment: 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Died on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1918  
aged 33 years in Flanders, and is commemorated on the  
Thiepval Memorial.

Frank was born in 1885 and was a coalminer.  
He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British  
War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Joseph Jacob Cadman

Service Number: Sapper 132729

Regiment: 177<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Co Royal Engineers

Died on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1917, aged 23 years in Flanders, and is buried in Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery Belgium.

Joseph was born in 1893, the son of Joseph and Annie of Arbour Cottages Mancetter. He was employed at Baddesley Colliery after working at Mancetter Quarry. He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Thomas Clark

Service Number: Private 103240

Regiment: 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Corps

Died on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1918, aged 30 years in Flanders. Buried in Tournai Communal Cemetery Belgium.

Thomas was born in 1888, Son of George and Sarah Ann and lived in Witherley Road, Atherstone and was a Colliery Clerk.

He was awarded the British War and Victory Medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Ernest Cotton

Service Number: Private 20875

Regiment: Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

Killed on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1915, aged 29 years in France and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial Belgium.

Ernest was born in Mancetter in 1886. He was the son of William & Eliza of Long Street, Atherstone. Ernest was a coalminer.

He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Joseph Dean

Service Number: Driver 805620

Regiment: D Battery 31<sup>st</sup> Brigade  
Royal Field Artillery

Killed in action in France on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1917 aged 23 years and is commemorated at Couin Cemetery France. Joseph was the son of Henry & Ann of Long Street, Atherstone. He was a colliery trammer.

He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER & RIDGE LANE**

Name: George Deeming

Service Number: Private 9542

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Killed in action in France on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1916 aged 29 years and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial Belgium.

George was born in Bentley in 1886. He was the son of Richard & Caroline. He was employed as a colliery banksman and coalminer.

He was awarded the 1914 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER & RIDGE LANE**

Name: John Thomas Fallows

Service Number: Lance Corporal 19160

Regiment: 206<sup>th</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Corps

Died of wounds on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1917 aged 27 years in Flanders. Buried in Croisilles British Cemetery, France.

John was born in 1890 and was the son of John & Rebecca Mary. John was a coalminer.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Alfred George Fox

Service Number: Private 3318

Regiment: 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Killed in action in Gallipoli on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1915 aged 20 years and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial Turkey.

Alfred was born in Mancetter in 1895. He was the son of Henry & Sarah Ann of The Blue Bell Inn, Atherstone. He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: William Freeman

Service Number: Private 15784

Regiment: 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Died of wounds inflicted in Flanders on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916 aged 20 years.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Edward Charles Harrad

Service Number: Gunner 195947

Regiment: 109<sup>th</sup> Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison  
Artillery

Killed in action in France on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918 aged 29 years and is commemorated at Tincourt Cemetery France.

Edward was born in Mancetter in 1889. He was the son of Edward & Emma and husband to Gertrude. He was employed as a Silk spinner.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Thomas Noel Healey

Service Number: Driver T4/035640

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Royal Army Service Corps.

Died on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1918 aged 25 years in Flanders. He is buried in Maubeuge Cemetery France.

Thomas was born in Mancetter in 1893 and was the son of Thomas & Emily. Thomas was a Quarryman.

He was awarded the 1915 star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER & RIDGE LANE**

Name: James Higginson (Higginson)

Service Number: Private 11055

Regiment: 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Killed in action in the Battle of The Somme on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916 aged 31 years.

James was born in 1885. He was the husband of Edith (nee Davis) of Ridge Lane.

James is buried in Heilly Station Cemetery France.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Walter James Holt

Service Number: Private 10291

Regiment: 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Killed in action in The Battle of The Somme on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1916 aged 33 years and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial France.

Walter was born in 1883 and was the son of Charles & Lydia of Stafford Street Atherstone and the husband of Ada. Walter was a Hatter.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Albert Edward James Johnson

Service Number: Private 9545

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment

Killed in action in France on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1915. He was the son of Annie Johnson.

Albert is buried in Le Touret Military Cemetery France.

He was awarded the 1914 star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: George Judd

Service Number: Rifleman B/200827

Regiment: 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Rifle Brigade

Killed in action in Flanders on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1917 aged 39 years and is buried in Hooze Crater Cemetery Belgium.

George was born in Witherley in 1878 and was the son of James & Mary of Grove Road, Atherstone.

George was a Stableman.

He was awarded the 1915 star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Harry Lea

Service Number: Gunner 65077

Regiment: A Battery 119<sup>th</sup> Brigade Royal Field  
Artillery

Died in Flanders on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1918 aged 19 years  
and is buried in Cement House Cemetery in Belgium.

Harry was born in 1899 in Witherley. He was the son of  
Robert & Hepzibah.

He was awarded the 1915 Star along with the British  
War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Henry Lea

Service Number:

Regiment:

After extensive research, no information can be found  
about this soldier. If anyone can help us find out any  
details it would be greatly appreciated.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Albert Edward Llewellyn

Service Number: Lance Corporal 9433

Regiment: Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Died from cancer at home in Mancetter on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1919 aged 30 years and is buried in Mancetter Cemetery.

He was born in 1889 the son of Edward & Annie.  
Albert was a prisoner of war from 1914 - 1918  
He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Arthur George Llewellyn

Service Number: Lance Corporal 10755

Regiment: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Coldstream Guards

Killed in action in Flanders on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1914 aged 17 years and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial Belgium.

Born in 1897 Arthur was the son of Edward & Annie,

He was awarded the 1914 star and clasp along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER & RIDGE LANE**

Name: Sidney Piper

Service Number: Sergeant 203991

Regiment: 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion North Staffordshire  
Regiment

Died in Flanders on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918 aged 30 years and is commemorated on the Soissons Memorial in France.

Sidney was born in 1898 in Mancetter. He was the son of Thomas & Ann of Ridge Lane and was employed as a carter.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Levi Randle

Service Number: Private 6164

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment

Killed in action in Flanders on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1915 aged 34 years and is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial France.

Levi was born in 1881 and was the son of William & Rosa and worked as a coalminer.

He was awarded the 1914 star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: J Archer Salt

Service Number:

Regiment:

After extensive research, no information can be found about this soldier. If anyone can help us find out any details it would be greatly appreciated.

## **MANCETTER & RIDGE LANE**

Name: Reginald Smith

Service Number: Private 54759

Regiment: 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Killed in action on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1918 in Italy aged 19 years and is buried in Magnaboschi War Cemetery, Italy. Reginald was born in 1899 and was the son of John & Elizabeth of Ridge Lane.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: John Ross Taylor

Service Number: Private 16681

Regiment: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

Killed in action in Flanders on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1916 aged 25 years and is buried in Essex Farm Cemetery, West Vlandeeran, Belgium.

John was born in 1891 and was the son of Charles Henry & Sarah and was employed as a carter.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **MANCETTER**

Name: Arthur Alan Ward

Service Number: Corporal Z/658

Regiment: 9th Battalion Rifle Brigade

Killed in action in Flanders on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 aged 24 years and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial Belgium.

Arthur was born in 1891 and was the son of Thomas & Alice Jane.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

## **RIDGE LANE**

Name: Thomas William Hextall

Service Number: Private 10656

Regiment: 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment

Died in Glenfield Hospital of wounds inflicted on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1918 aged 31 years. He is buried at St Laurence Church Ansley.

Thomas was born in 1886 the son of Annie Cragg. He was awarded the 1914/15 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **RIDGE LANE**

Name: Alfred Hutt

Service Number: Private 10821

Regiment: 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment

Killed in action in Flanders on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917 aged 23 years and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, France.

Alfred was born in 1894 and lived with his grandparents in Fillongley, where he was employed as a farm labourer.

He was awarded the 1914/15 Star along with the British War and Victory medals.

## **RIDGE LANE**

Name: W Oliver

Service Number:

Regiment:

After extensive research, no information can be found about this soldier. If anyone can help us find out any details it would be greatly appreciated.

## **RIDGE LANE**

Name: Edward Taylor

Service Number: Lance Corporal 9676

Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Died of wounds inflicted in Flanders on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1916 aged 28 years. He is buried in Heilly Station Cemetery France.

Edward was born in 1888 and was the son of George & Mary.

He was awarded the British War and Victory medals.

# Battles Timeline

This timeline lists the main battles involving British, Empire and Commonwealth forces.

Most were on the Western Front in France and Belgium. Fighting also took place in the Middle East and at sea.

## 1914

28 July	War declared
23 August	Battle of Mons
6 – 12 Sept	First Battle of the Marne
19 Oct - 22 Nov	First Battle of Ypres

## 1915

10 - 13 March	Neuve Chappelle
23 April – 25 May	Second Battle of Ypres
25 April - 9 Jan	Gallipoli Campaign
25 Sept – 14 Oct	Battle of Loos

## 1916

31 May – 1 June	Battle of Jutland
1 July - 18 Nov	Battle of the Somme

## 1917

7 Dec – 29 April	Siege of Kut-al-Amara
9 Apr – 16 May	Battle of Arras
7 – 14 June	Battle of Messines
31 July – 6 Nov	Third Battle of Ypres
	Passchendaele
20 Nov – 6 Dec	Battle of Cambrai

## 1918

21 Mar – 18 July	German Spring Offensive
15 July – 6 Aug	Second Battle of The Marne
8 – 11 August	Battle of Amiens
11 November	ARMISTICE

## **World War One Casualties**

World War One was one of the bloodiest wars in human history. The number of casualties varies depending on the source you consult, but the following figures are generally regarded as an accurate representation.

### **Both Military and Civilian**

Deaths: 16.5 Million      Wounded: 20 Million

### **Military Casualties by Country**

	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Wounded</b>
Russia	1,700,000	4,900,000
Germany	1,700,000	4,200,000
France	1,300,000	4,200,000
Austria	1,200,000	3,600,000
GB & Empire	908,000	2,000,000
Italy	650,000	947,000
Romania	335,000	120,000
Turkey	325,000	400,000
USA	126,000	234,000
Bulgaria	87,000	152,000
Serbia	45,000	133,000
Belgium	13,800	4,500
Portugal	7,222	13,700
Greece	500	2,100
Japan	300	900

These statistics were taken from: [ww1facts.net](http://ww1facts.net)

## **YPRES I (1914), YPRES II (1915) & YPRES III (1917)**

Four men of the Parish of Mancetter and Ridge Lane gave of their lives fighting in the area around the Belgian town of Ypres. Three major battles were fought in this area between 1914 and 1917.

The first soldier from the Parish to fall at Ypres was **Arthur George Llewellyn**. The war had yet to see its fourth month of fighting when Arthur lost his life, serving as a Lance Corporal in the 1st Battalion of the prestigious Coldstream Guards. He remains one of many soldiers who have no known grave, but his name is engraved forever on the walls of the Menin Gate Memorial. Under the Schlieffen Plan the German Army swept into Belgium with the intention of out-flanking, dividing and defeating the British and French forces that stood in the way of the German move to take Paris. The Kaiser's armies sought to outflank the British in an effort to take the Channel ports and on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 1914 the First Battle of Ypres began. The German army advanced on Ypres, taking the villages of Poelcappelle, Langemarck and the area around Polygon Wood. By the end of October, the villages of Gheluvelt, Messines, Hollebeke and Wytschaete had fallen. Ypres itself was held thanks in part to a brave counterattack by the 2nd Worcesters, inspired by Brigadier General FitzClarence VC of the First Guards Brigade. Ypres now stood at the centre of a salient and the British forces that held it did so with their German opponents holding higher ground on three sides around the town. Defence of the salient was maintained into 1915, but at a heavy cost in the lives of Britain's professional army and the town itself, where heavy shelling had reduced most buildings to little more than rubble.

April 1915 saw renewed efforts on the part of the Germans to drive the Allied forces from the salient and it was in what is now called the Second Battle of Ypres that gas was first used as a weapon of war. Its use was indiscriminate, uncontrollable and devastating. There was no protection offered to the victims of this new weapon.

The defenders of the Ypres Salient were simply advised to urinate on a piece of cloth, with which they were told to cover their nose and mouth.

Pressure on the Salient continued throughout 1915 and beyond, and on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 1915, **Private Ernest Cotton**, serving with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and another son of Mancetter was killed at Ypres. Another soldier whose grave is not known.

British and Commonwealth troops continued to reinforce the Salient, arriving at the railhead at Poperinghe before marching, often at night hoping for the cover of darkness towards the front. Often such a hope was in vain as the night sky was usually filled with the flickering lights of flares, whilst the seemingly constant sound of artillery fire and machine guns served to remind the troops if indeed they needed to be reminded, that they had come to one of the deadliest places on the Western Front. The trenches that were designed to offer soldiers like **Sapper Joseph Cadman** from Mancetter and **Rifleman George Judd**, late resident of Grove Road Atherstone some protection. However, the drainage in the area was poor especially in the winter months, and with the shelling the water table had been destroyed. Conditions underfoot for soldiers on both sides were atrocious.

The second week of June 1917 was marked by the Battle for Messines Ridge. The battle was a success for the British and their allies and had opened with a heavy artillery barrage that saw the firing of three and half million shells onto German positions. This was followed on the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> June by the detonation of nineteen mines. The explosions and the aftershock that followed were akin to an earthquake and their impact was felt as far away as London. Another heavy barrage of artillery followed and soldiers reported that it seemed the whole sky was on fire. When the British soldiers took the German trenches, they found an enemy "in a state of physical shock and collapse". British casualties were far less than expected, but amongst them on the approach to the start of the battle, was **Joseph Cadman**, who as a Sapper with the 177<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, had played a part in digging the tunnels beneath the German lines, and from where the nineteen mines were exploded.

When the assault to drive the Germans from the ridge came on 31st July 1917 at the beginning of the Third Battle of Ypres, the allies enjoyed initial success. **Rifleman George Judd** and the rest of the soldiers on both sides found themselves fighting through shell holes and living in trenches that were waist-high deep in water.

*'August 16<sup>th</sup> [1917] ... We were [positioned] a few hundred yards north of Ypres. The air was poisoned by a terrible stench that turned me sick. In the dim light the water appeared to be a dark-green swamp wherein lay corpses of men and bodies of horses; shafts of wagons and gun wheels protruded from the putrifying mass and after a shuddering glance I hurried along the towing path to cleaner air ... .. I walked along the path to where Sergeant Major Chalk was standing ... After a few minutes of silence he said, what's the time, Sir?' "Four forty-five", I said, and with my words the whole earth burst into flames with one tremendous roar as hundreds of guns hurled the first round of the barrage.'* [E C Vaughan, MC. Ypres, 1917]

It is possible that **George Judd** witnessed scenes similar to that described by Edwin Campion Vaughan, before he too, was killed in action on the same field of battle on 28<sup>th</sup> September near to where his remains lie today at Hoge Crater Cemetery Ypres.

Third Ypres ground on into the autumn. The second phase of the battle involved a series of closely staged attacks across a broadening front. German resistance had not broken, which meant that for every yard of ground gained casualty numbers continued to climb on both sides. Since 31st July the allies had advanced six thousand yards. It fell to troops from Australia, New Zealand and Canada to make the main thrust on Passchendaele village. More heavy rains added to the burden of all troops on the ground and further artillery bombardments peppered the ground with even more shell holes. These simply filled with water and for a soldier horse or mule that could not keep to narrow pathways, the result could be death by drowning as the deep mud simply swallowed them alive. By early November Third Ypres was brought to a close, due to the huge numbers of artillery pieces simply wearing out!

By the beginning of 1916, the British and French looked to co-operate closely, much as a 'united army'. The focus of action centred upon German efforts to drive back the French around the area of Verdun. The battle that takes its name from this French town soon became one of attrition and by October of that year the French had lost some 377,231 soldiers killed or wounded. The Germans, who had taken the offensive, lost almost as many casualties.

The area around the Somme had been a quiet sector during the period leading up to July 1916. The relative lack of activity had allowed the Germans time to strengthen their defences at leisure. The firm chalk upon which the Somme region stood was ideally suited to the construction of deep dugouts that unlike the trenches of the allies had a sense of permanency about them. Many dugouts were sunk to a depth of around thirty feet and as such were impervious to direct hits from all but artillery of the heaviest calibre. British planners looked to employ a strategy of 'bite and hold', using troops supported by heavy artillery to take the forward lines along a 20,000 yard front. Once taken, the initial attack would be followed through by two further assaults to take the German second line. In the days leading up to the attack a relentless bombardment of German positions, from massed artillery was to take place. The artillery bombardment, together with the employment of subterranean mines was expected to cut the German wire, destroy or neutralise the forward positions and cripple the German artillery's ability to respond in kind. The infantry was then expected to advance across the battlefield at a walking pace in extended lines carrying full kit, with the belief that the German front line and those soldiers defending it would already lie in ruins.

For the German defenders the initial bombardment was certainly dreadful. On the morning of Saturday 1st July, the mines exploded beneath the German lines. The battle had begun. In the British trenches stood lines of British and Commonwealth troops waiting for the blowing of whistles as the sign to 'go over the top' and to advance at a walking pace. The whistles sounded at 07.30am a full fifteen minutes after the exploding mines had ripped huge craters in the earth.

From this point onwards it became clear to many of the advancing soldiers that the task before them was not quite as the planners had intended. The results of the earlier bombardment were mixed – in some places the German defences had, indeed, been completely destroyed, whilst in other places both the wire and the dugouts remained very much intact. In many places the German wire had been shifted, but remained uncut. In places, particularly in the southern sector, the British made some progress, taking the villages of Mametz and by day two, Fricourt. However, further north results were more disappointing. Gains made proved difficult to hold because they could not be reinforced quickly enough. By nightfall on the first day, British and Commonwealth losses numbered 54,470 officers and men, 19,240 of which had been killed and 2,152 were reported as missing. About sixty per cent of casualties fell to German machine guns. The fifteen minutes between the setting-off of the mines and the blowing of whistles as the sign to advance had given the Germans time enough to rise from their bunkers, set up their machine guns and simply wait for the British to advance at their walking pace. The machine guns cut through the lines of soldiers as they advanced.

In the days that followed, attacks on Ovillers and Thiepval failed, whilst a promising attack on Contalmaison could not be exploited. Having reached the edge of Mametz Wood British troops found themselves lying between two German positions. In the following weeks, the British took the German first line, but at a cost of a further 25,000 men. Well directed artillery fire gave additional support and proved to be highly effective and the British took ground from Bazentin le Petit to Longueval. It was around this stage of the battle in August, that the people of Mancetter and Ridge Lane received news of the deaths of no less than three of their sons: **Private Walter Holt, Private Thomas Hextall and Lance Corporal Edward Taylor**. Two months later villagers learned of the death of **Private William Freeman**. All but **Thomas Hextall** are buried in cemeteries on the Somme, or in the case of **Walter Holt**, commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial as having no known grave. Today, the remains of **Thomas** lie a little closer to home, in the churchyard at Ansley.

## German Spring Offensive 1918

At precisely 04.40am, on the foggy morning of March 21<sup>st</sup> 1918, 6,608 guns and 3,534 heavy mortars of the Imperial German Army laid down a fearsome artillery barrage of high explosive and phosgene gas shells along a fifteen mile front between the Serre and the Oise. On that first day German guns had fired no less than three million shells onto positions held by the British 5<sup>th</sup> Army.

Amongst the units on the receiving end of this onslaught stood the 109<sup>th</sup> Heavy Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery.

On the same field of battle the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion of The Manchester Regiment held what the British had called Manchester Hill. Everyone knew the attack was coming, but all marched to their position as their band played them out of camp.

By nightfall, the German attacks had inflicted over 38,000 casualties on the British and Commonwealth forces, and amongst this figure were some 21, 000 soldiers taken prisoner.

By 26<sup>th</sup> March, unknown to the allied commanders, the German offensive was beginning to run out of steam. As the German attacks moved forward at pace its soldiers became increasingly exhausted. The German High Command began to receive reports of soldiers falling to the distractions of large supplies of food and drink, which had been abandoned by the allies, and discipline in the ranks began to break down. The British counter-attacked with ground troops and tanks of its own, and the first tank versus tank battle ensued. The German assault fell short of taking Amiens and soon after, British and Australian troops regained Villers- Bretonneux. The German offensive to this point, had taken 90,000 prisoners and 1000 guns. More territory had been taken than in all the allied advances over the previous three years – but it had not won the war.

The German Spring Offensive had cost the lives of **Gunner Edward Harrad, Private Arthur Albrighton and Sergeant Sidney Piper**. Later, in August and September, during the period known as the One Hundred Days Offensive, when the British drove back the Germans until the Armistice of November 11<sup>th</sup>, the lives of one of two brothers from Mancetter, **Gunner Harry Lea**, of the Royal Field Artillery and of **Private Frank Bird** of 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Royal Warwickshire Regiment, would be taken. The German machine guns took a heavy toll of the attackers, who lost 5000 men over twenty two days of fighting, but the wood was taken. On the grander scale, allied commanders once again reorganised their forces and gradually were able to move back to the offensive. In July, General Rawlinson planned and executed a series of allied assaults which made full use of “all possible mechanical devices” in an attempt to relieve pressure on the British army’s diminishing manpower. With almost 2000 aeroplanes, new and improved Mk V tanks, heavy artillery and machine guns added, the allies now had the punch necessary to drive back the Germans some eight miles and inflict 27,000 casualties on their forces. For the Germans this marked the beginning of the end. August saw the allies engage in what has since been called The One Hundred Days Offensive which, by 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1918, was to lead to Armistice and the end of the war.

For Mancetter and Ridge Lane, the price of war had begun with the loss of **Arthur George Llewellyn** during the First Battle of Ypres, but for the **Llewellyn** family the tragedy of personal loss did not end with **Arthur’s** death. Arthur’s brother, **Albert** had been made a prisoner of war whilst serving with the Royal Welsh. Having lived to see the Armistice that marked the end of the war **Albert** fell victim to cancer. He lies buried in the churchyard at Mancetter, where his headstone pays tribute not only to himself, but also to his brother **Arthur**.



**Photographs by Mike Evans.  
Booklet Artwork by David Meads.  
Soldier Silhouettes by Martin Saunders.  
World War One Narrative by Peter Mann.  
Additional Information from the Nuneaton and North  
Warwickshire Family History Society.**



1914-1918



*“lest we forget”*



*“They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We shall remember them”*