

# NOTES & ANECDOTES RELEVANT TO THE ASHBURY WW1 PROJECT

## 1) Notes from the War Memorials Trust that are relevant to WW1 soldiers commemorated in Ashbury.

**Hon. Lawrence Charles Walter Palk** had fought in the Boer War as well as the First World War in the service of the Hampshire Regiment, the same regiment as the Countess of Craven's son.

**Lieut. Col. Palk** was mentioned in despatches, decorated with the award of Legion of Honour and decorated with the award of Companion, Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.). He died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

**Lieutenant Corporal Tabor** died at the Battle of Passchendaele in October 1917.

**Pte. Ebbsworth** died on the first day of the Battle of Loos in September 1915;

**Pte. Manners**, a fellow member of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, is also commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

**Pte. Nobes** is buried in Greece, indicating that he was in a battalion fighting on the Salonika Front. He died at the end of May 1917, a time when the Allies were fighting offensives against the Bulgarians.

**Pte. Tombs and Dvr. Parradine** were killed in the final phase of the war that began with the German Spring offensive.

*[N.B. The source of this information is not provided]*

## 2) Notes from the Echoes of War web site concerning the Hon Lawrence Palk.

**Lawrence Palk fought** in the Boer War between 1901 and 1902. He gained the rank of Major and Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel in the service of the Hampshire Regiment. He fought in the First World War, where he was mentioned in despatches and was decorated with the award of Legion of Honour. He was decorated with the award of Companion, Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.).

He died on 1 July 1916 at age 45, killed in action serving as commanding officer of the 1st Hampshires which lost all 26 of their officers and 559 of their men on that day. According to Major Holt he exhorted his men that it was the greatest day the British army ever had, dressed himself in his finest uniform and donned white gloves before leading his battalion across No Man's Land. "Lying mortally wounded in a shell hole, he turned to another man lying near him and said "If you know of a better 'ole, go to it."

*[N.B. The source of this information is not provided]*

## 3) Anecdotes found amongst historical Ashbury papers collected by Mr Peter Knott (deceased resident of Ashbury)

In 1914 thousands of men from town and villages all over England volunteered for "Kitchener's Army. Many for no more reason than Ashbury man **George Disbury** gave me: "I were cold and wet ploughing down the bottom so I up and went". By August 1916 he was in France and experiencing all three. He saw action in the Somme at Passchendaele and at Ypres. After the Canadians took Vimy Ridge George was among those holding it. Cards were drawn to see who would go out at night to lay barbed wire in front of their lines. George went and on his return was informed he had ten days leave but he had to cross the ridge before dawn. He returned home in the lice covered clothes he fought in. After his leave he returned to France, this time

Cambrai. He later spent five days in cattle trucks crossing Europe to Italy. In the Italian campaign he aided a sergeant in clearing out a machine gun nest and capturing over 300 prisoners. For this he received the Military Medal.

Almost to the day that his brother was killed in France, George was blown up in a dugout. Badly burned and blind for nine days, for him and millions of others the "Great War" was over. 1918 not only saw the end of a world war, but the end of a world that these volunteers and conscripted men from Ashbury had known.

Another story concerned four inseparable young friends known, as the "Four Toms", who were infamous for their tricks: **Tom Daniels, Tom Disbury, Tom Simpson and Tom Halliday**. All four volunteered to enlist at Faringdon. They walked to Reading, took the King's shilling, but got fed up waiting for uniforms and orders, so they walked home to Ashbury for the weekend and then walked back to Reading yet again.

Ethel Disbury kept a little book throughout the war, each year adding the names of men who had been lost. Later the names were carved in stone on a simple cross in the centre of Ashbury village. She wrote: **Sydney Cannons** of Idstone, **William Walker** killed in France 1917, **Bill Taber** - France 1918, **Charlie Lawford, Cyril Parradine**, lived at Ashdown, **Herbert Pearce** lived at North Mill, **Edward Cross** lived at Odstone, **Ernest Ebbsworth** lived at Idstone, **Ernest Hare** lived at Idstone died 1917, **John Johnson** lived at Idstone, **John Manners** lived at Zulu (Farm) died in France 1915, **Bill Nobes** died in Salonika 1917, **John Palmer** lived at Ashdown, **Walter Pearce** lived at North Mill died in the Persian Gulf 1916, **Bill Timberell** lived at Idstone, **Joe Tombs** lived at Kingston died in France 1918, **William Webb** lived at Kingston and **Cyril White** was from the "Top Shop". **George Disbury** lost a brother.

#### **4) Recollection by Miss Doris Bunce (deceased resident of Ashbury)**

Two houses chiefly overlook Lyde (the Ashbury water cress beds). One was occupied for many years by a family named **Halliday**. The eldest son **Tom**, was in the First World War, and at one stage was desperate for water. Can't you imagine his thoughts? He says "He longed" – "Oh how he longed, for a glass of Lyde Water".