

GEORGE HUMPHREY EXCELL

1895 – 1916

6th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)



Surname/Christian name: Excell, George Humphrey.

Rank/Service No: Pte G/9132.

Regiment/Unit: 6th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment).



Date of Death: * 03/08/1916 (See footnote 2)

Age: 21.

Type of Casualty: Killed in action.

Theatre of War: Ovillers – Battle of the Somme.

Born/Year/Location: 2nd quarter of 1895 – registered Collier Street, Kent.

Enlisted/Attestation: Gore Court, Goudhurst, Kent.

Son of/Address: Son of Henry & Mary Jane Excell (nee Cashford), Cacketts Farm, Horsmonden, Kent.

Buried/Commemorated/Memorial: Thiepval Memorial.

Relevant Military Record/Diary of Events:

George (and his older brother Sidney) enlisted and took the oath on the same day, 27th November 1915 at the recruitment centre in Gore Court, Goudhurst, where they also had their medical examination, the paperwork being forwarded to Ashford. They were then placed in the Buffs Reserves.

They joined their unit at Canterbury, George had joined his unit on 22nd January 2016, Sidney on the 9th February, both appointed to the 6th Battalion, The Buffs, East Kent Regiment and both were posted to France on 19th May 1916 and joined their Battalion at Erny-saint-Julien.

Movements between 19th May and 27th July

On the 27th May they went to Burbure from Erny-saint-Julien until 16th June. This was a period of intense training.

From Burbure to Lillers station where they entrained to Amiens. From Amiens they marched to Naours, arriving on the 18th June. From Naours to Frehencourt 28th June and Millencourt 1st July, entering the trenches on the 3rd July, the Battalion suffering many casualties.

Then to Warloy 10th July, Louvencourt 11th July, Bertrancourt 22nd July, back to Louvencourt 25th July, Bouzincourt 26th July and on the 27th July, they were in the trenches.

The Excell brothers died in the trenches north-east of Ovillers, towards Mouquet Farm, a strategic German stronghold during the fighting in the Poziere, Albert, Thiepval areas during the Battle of the Somme. It was here they faced some of the heaviest shelling of the Somme campaign.

Following the battle around 11.15pm in which brother Sidney was killed by German machine gun fire, George made it to the German trench and engaged in hand-to-hand combat before being fatally wounded by a German hand grenade and died in the early hours of the 4th Aug.

Sidney was killed when they went over the parapet to attack a section of German-held RATION TRENCH, was killed instantly by machine gun fire.

The 6th Battalions movements are shown in the War Diary entries from 1st to 6th August following the transcription below:

1ST AUGUST 1916:

TRENCHES - "Orders received that the Battalion would attack a German strong point on the following Thursday. (3rd Aug. 1916). Captain A. S. SMELTZER took over command of 'D' Company again. Two jump-out trenches were dug, one by the 5th Northamptonshire's, and the other by 'C' Company.

A patrol under 2nd Lt. MOON went out during the night to reconnoitre an old German trench. This was found to be wired up. Some Germans were encountered and an exchange of bombs (*hand grenades*) took place."

2ND AUGUST 1916:

"Company Commander went up to the hill on the far side of MASH VALLEY where a good view of the strong point to be attacked could be got. The 9.2's (*field guns*) were supposed to fire on this redoubt during the afternoon, but owing to faulty observation no shells fell in the right spot."

3RD - 4TH AUGUST 1916:

TRENCHES - "Orders from Brigade re attack received. The day was quiet on the whole.

In the afternoon the Battalion was moved into position for the attack. 'B' Company on the left, 'D' Company on the right, 'A' and 'C' Companies in reserve.

About 9pm the enemy shelled our trenches heavily, but the French 75's were turned on to the German batteries with gas shells, which completely stopped the shelling. The guns then opened an intensive bombardment of the enemy's trenches.

At 11pm, 2ND LT. HANMER and a party of bombers, crept up under the barrage to be ready to bomb an enemy MG (*machine gun*) should it open on our men or on the 8th Fusiliers on the right.
 At 11.15pm, 'B' Company went over the parapet, followed by 'D' Company, the barrage lifting at the same time.

'D' Company then went through 'B' to take the trench on the left of the strong point. 'D' Company went rather to the right.

'A' Company were brought up from the reserve and then 'C' Company, who consolidated the strong point taken, together with a Company of Royal Engineers.

The Companies then pushed on, and when dawn broke it was found that 'B' Company was in RATION TRENCH where two blocks had been made; 2ND LT. ROUTLEY and a SUSSEX officer made a reconnaissance as far as MOUQUET FARM.

The Germans attempted a counter-attack from MOUQUET FARM, upon whom our Lewis guns were turned with good effect. All the dug-outs, trenches were cleared of Germans, the total bag of prisoners amounting to 2 officers (one of whom wore an Iron Cross) and 87 O.R (*other ranks*) chiefly PRUSSIAN Infantry.

4TH AUGUST 1916:

About 4am the enemy started to shell the captured trenches. About 11am the Battalion was relieved by the 6TH Royal West Kent Regt. going back to huts in MARTINSART WOOD.
 The total casualties were 4 officers wounded, 114 Other Ranks killed, wounded, missing."

5TH AUGUST 1916:

MARTINSART WOOD

"Quiet day in MARTINSART WOOD.

MOUQUET FARM was heavily shelled by our heavies."

6TH AUGUST 1916:

"Church parade in the morning. 2 working parties found for OVILLERS POST"

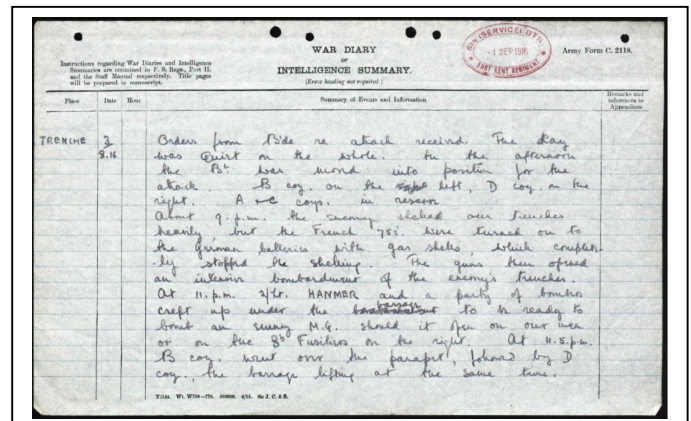
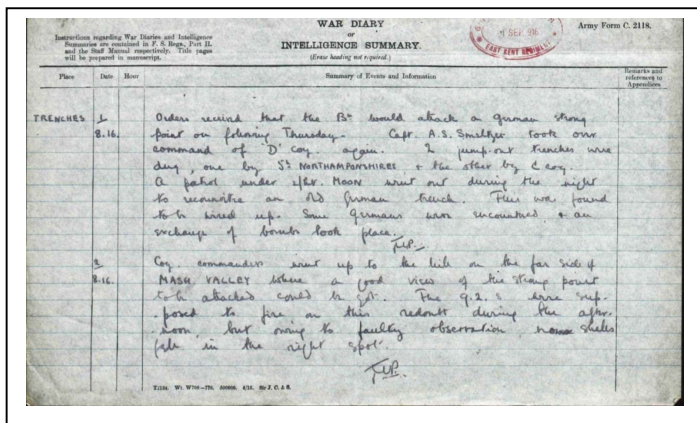
7th to 11th AUGUST 1916:

The 6th Bn. went back in the trenches on the and after being relieved, they withdrew to Bouzincourt, west of Albert, to billets and to rest up for a few days.

WAR DIARY/INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

1st * 2nd August 1916

3rd August 1916



3rd August 1916

5th & 6th August 1916

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY. Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. R. Regt. Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. This page will be prepared in accordance.

Place: Date: Hour: Summary of Events and Information: Remarks and References to Appendices:

D Coy. then went through B to take the trench on the left of the strong A point. D Coy went rather to the right. A Coy. were brought up from reverse. Then C Coy. came and the strong point taken, together with a Coy. of R.E.s. The Coys. then pushed on when dawn broke it was found that B Coy. was in RATION TRENCH, where 2 Works had been made. 2nd Lt. ROUTLEY + a Sussex officer made a reconnaissance as far as MOUVEET FARM. The Germans attempted a counter-attack from MOUVEET FARM upon whom our Lewis guns were turned with good effect. All the dug-outs in the captured trenches were cleared of Germans, the total bag of prisoners amounting to 2 officers (one of whom was an Iron Cross) + 87 O.R. chiefly Prussian inf.

1916. No. 1770-18. FORM C. 2118. G. I. C. & S.

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Nothing. About 4 a.m. the enemy started to shell the captured trenches. About 4 a.m. the B Coy. was relieved by the 6th Bn. of King's Regt. group took the trench in MARTINSART WOOD. The total casualties were - 4 Officers wounded. 114 O.R. Killed, wounded missing.

Nothing. Quiet day in MARTINSART WOOD. ^{1st} Lt. MOUVEET FARM was heavily shelled by our heavies.

Nothing. Church parade in the morning. A working party found for OFFICERS' POS.

1916. No. 1770-18. FORM C. 2118. G. I. C. & S.

FIELD STATE - Entry dated 4th August 1916

FIELD STATE. Army Form D 201.

To be filled in accordance with Field Service Regulations, Part II.

Place: Date: Hour: Summary of Events and Information: Remarks and References to Appendices:

1916. No. 1770-18. FORM D 201. G. I. C. & S.

The above document shows details about the status and strength of the 6th Btn including Officers and other ranks including riders. Also, number of horses and mules and rations held for both soldiers and animals.

Guns and ammunition supplies are shown and also transport equipment such as medical carts. Other than horses there were no other means of (mechanical) transport.

Other Relevant Documents:

Medals/Awards Received: British War and Victory Medals. Memorial Scroll and Plaque.

War medal and Scrolls documentation

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
EXCELL G. H.	E. Kent R.	Pte	G. 9132
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	E/2/102 ⁸⁵	735	
BRITISH			
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1200.

No. E.K. 1916
No. 2. Infantry Record Office.
Steines Road, Hounslow.

To: Mr. G. Excell
The Memorial Scroll in respect of the late G. H. Excell
The Buffs (East Kent) Regiment,
is forwarded herewith.

The Memorial Plaque is being despatched to you by the Plaque Factory.

Kindly acknowledge receipt hereon.

Lt-Col: 1/c No. 2. Infantry Record Office.
RECEIVED.

1920.

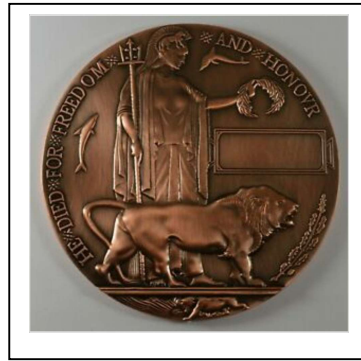
Signature: G. Excell

The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)

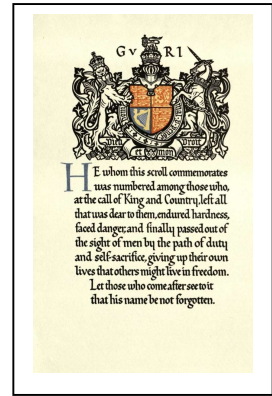
Generic British War and Victory Medals Memorial Plaque and Scroll



British War Medal - Victory Medal



Memorial Plaque (Death Penny)



Memorial Scroll

SOLDIERS EFFECTS

Documents/Images that relate to pension and personal effects

MEMORANDUM Form 1118

The Officer in charge of Infantry Battalion

Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to:

REGIMENTAL SERJEANT MAJOR, INFANTRY REGIMENT OFFICERS, 2, APT 197, LONDON, S.W., 11

RE: Private George Humphrey

and the following names given:

Mr Henry Excell
Coventry
Warwick
Warwick

Will you please note that any articles of personal property now in your possession or subsequently received by you belonging to the late Private George Humphrey should be deposited to:

Mr Henry Excell
Coventry
Warwick
Warwick

Any metals granted to the deceased that were in your possession or that may hereafter reach you should be shipped to:

the same person

C. Harris
Assistant Financial Secretary

Sample of Military and Service documents (others available)

ASHFORD, KENT

SHORT SERVICE.

(For the Duration of the War, with the Colours and in the Army Reserve)

ATTESTATION OF Mr. P. J. J.

No. 1037 Name George Humphrey Coventry

Questions to be put to the Recruit before attestation:

1. What is your Name? George Humphrey
2. What is your Trade or Calling? None
3. Are you Married? No
4. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? Yes
5. Are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? Yes
6. Do you receive a Pension, and if so, under what Act? None
7. Are you willing to serve in the following countries (marking the country should be being required your services)? Yes

DATE TO BE TAKEN BY SERJEANT ON ATTESTATION: 10th Dec 1916

Signature of Recruit: George Humphrey

Signature of Witness: Mr. P. J. J.

Signature of Approving Officer: Mr. P. J. J.

Enlistment Document

STATEMENT OF THE SERVICES OF No. 9152 Name Excell George Humphrey

Grade	Particulars, Promotions, Extensions, etc.	Army	Days	Days	Days
Age on Enlistment	<u>21</u> years	<u>210</u>			
Enlistment for	<u>12 months</u> years General Service				
Service towards limited engagement reduction from	<u>22-1-16</u>				
Actual date of discharge	<u>22-1-16</u>				
General Service	<u>General Service</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>21 Nov 1916</u>		
	<u>to Army Reserve</u>		<u>22-1-16</u>		
	<u>to Reserve</u>		<u>22-1-16</u>		
	<u>to Reserve</u>		<u>19-8-16</u>		
	<u>to Reserve</u>		<u>1-8-16</u>		
	<u>to Reserve</u>		<u>3-8-16</u>		

Total Service towards Engagement for: 2 E 16 (State of discharge) years 267 days

Total Service towards Engagement for: 2 E 16 (State of discharge) years 267 days

Army Form 5080 Relatives

Additional personal and family information:

Family History: Both brothers George and Sidney, joined 6th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) Sons of Henry & Mary Jane Excell (nee Cashford), Cacketts Farm, Horsmonden, they were both Farm Labourers, their father was a Farm Carter/Waggoner.

Their parents, Henry and Mary Jane married on 7th June 1880 in Headcorn, Kent and lived at Medway Cottages, Pattenden Lane, Marden in 1881 moving to Porters Cottage, Collier Street, Yalding in 1891.

The family came to Horsmonden in about 1896 when they moved to August Pitts, Churn Lane and from there to Cacketts Farm off Maidstone Road.

Siblings Birth year/Name: 1880 Henry, 1881 Elizabeth Jane, 1883 Ernest, 1885 John, 1886 Kate, 1888 Gilbert, 1890 Frank, 1891 Sidney, 1897 Esther Mary, 1900 Nellie.

Brother Frank served in the Middlesex Regiment lived on until he was 91.

Other Articles of Interest:

This image with horses was taken at August Pitts circa 1905.



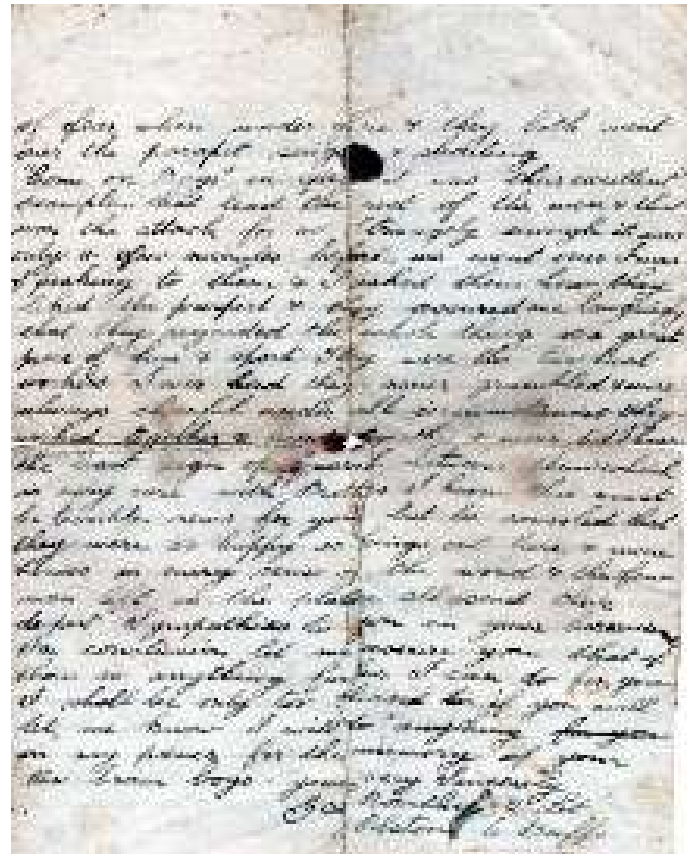
Rear left to right - Frank(b:1891), **Sidney (b:1891)**, Henry(b:1860)
front left to right - **George (b:1895)**, Esther(b:1897), Mary Jane (b:1861) Nellie (b:1900)
Baby on Mary's lap is possibly Maud Cashford (married Edgar Wood)

A later family group in front of oast house.



Back row left to right - Sidney, Gilbert, John, Ernest, Emma, Frank, George
Seated left to right - Henry Snr, Kate, Mary Jane, Alice, Henry Jrn,
Front left to right - Nellie, Possibly Beatrice and Margaret, Esther.

Letter sent to Mrs Excell informing her of both her sons' deaths.



Transcription of the letter sent to Mrs Excell

6th Buffs

15th August 1916

My Dear Mrs Excell

It is my sad duty to write and inform you of the death of your two sons in action on Aug 3rd last.

We were attacking the German trenches and your boys were with me at the head of the charge. S.E. Excell (Sidney) was killed immediately by machine gun fire but G.H. Excell (George) with others escaped this and arrived in the German trenches and was doing terrible executions with bayonet and bomb when he was hit by a German bomb.

I had him taken away to a shell hole where he was safe and his wounds were dressed. I gave him something to drink and left him for a time he seemed quite cheerful and was in no pain in fact when I told him I would see about getting him down to a dressing station he replied "It's alright don't worry about me. I'm alright here you go back to the boys in the trench."

When we had captured and consolidated our position, I immediately got the stretcher bearers to him and he was carried down and to my great regret I heard that he had died of wounds.

I can't speak too highly of their conduct in the attack neither of them showed any fear when under fire and they both went over the parapet singing and shouting "Come on boys", in fact it was their excellent example that led the rest of the men and that won the attack for us.

Strangely enough it was only a few minutes before we went over, I was speaking to them and asked them how they liked the prospect and they assured me laughingly that they regarded the whole thing as a great piece of fun and sport.

They were the two best workers I ever had they never grumbled and were always cheerful under all circumstances. They worked together and lived together and never did I hear the least sign of quarrel between them which is very rare with brothers.

I know this must be terrible news for you but be consoled that they were as happy as kings out here and were heroes in every sense of the word and the few men left in the platoon all send their deepest sympathies to you in your bereavement.

In conclusion let me assure you that if there is anything further that I can do for you I shall be only too pleased if you will let me know.

I will do anything in my power for the memory of your two brave boys.

Yours very sincerely

G Routley 2nd Lt.

2nd Lt. 16 Platoon, 6 Buffs

United Kingdom War Memorials

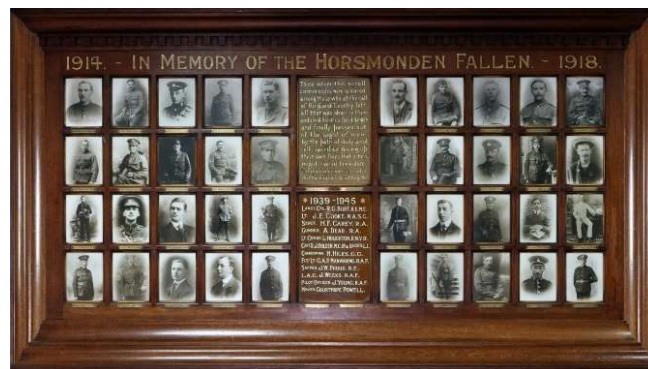
Horsmonden Memorial Building



1922



Present Day



Oak War Memorial Plaque in Memorial Building

(Pt George Excell shown right block, row 4 no. 1)



St Margaret's Church Memorial Scroll

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Entry

CWGC CERTIFICATE

In Memory Of
Private

GEORGE HUMPHREY EXCELL

Service Number: G9132

6th Bn., The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) who died on 03 August 1916

Remembered with Honour

THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

Pier and Face 5 D.



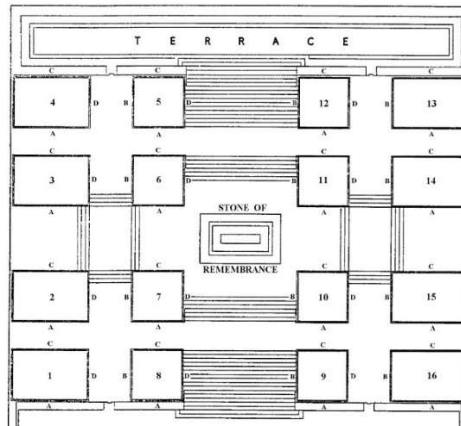
|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

THIEPVAL MEMORIAL MILITARY CEMETERY



CEMETRY PLAN



THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

Pte George Excell's name is shown on Pier and Face 5D

Pte. George Humphrey Excell.



Our thanks to Mrs Julie Jones for sharing family documents and photograph with transcription of the letter sent from the Commanding Officer to Mrs Excell.

Footnote 1: There are a number of relatives of the Excell brothers; Mrs Julie Jones, Mrs Vera (Turk) Fallon and Mrs Audrey (Turk) Guntrip, great nieces, who are living in Horsmonden today. Vera and Audrey's uncle, Private Arthur Turk was also killed during WW1.

Footnote 2: * Whilst the CWGC date of death for Pte George Excell states 3rd August, the War Diary entry for 3rd August suggests whilst the attack that led to many deaths including Pte George Excell was shortly after 11.00pm on the 3rd; it was some time after that George was wounded and died after receiving dressings which would have been in the very early hours of the 4th August. The War Diary and letter from the commanding Officer concurred with this detail.

Footnote 3: Further research confirms the Officer who wrote the letter to Mrs Excell was 2nd Lt. ROUTLEY (Ernest George). Routley was awarded the Military Cross for the action on 3rd August 1916 (He lived in Croydon and Trinity School, Croydon, carried out a history project on him). He was killed in action 7th October 1916 at the age of 24 and is also commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial.