

George Henry Gray

George Henry Gray was born in Michelmersh, to William and Charlotte Gray of Michelmersh Lane. William was an agricultural labourer: George was 10 days old at the time of the 1891 census, while his parents were listed as 50 and 46 respectively. In 1901, the family were living on Redbridge Lane, William being a carter on a farm and – mysteriously – listed as being aged 55, although 10 years have elapsed since the last census! Charlotte may well have died by then, as she doesn't show up on the census and William is listed as a widower in 1911. At this point, George and William are living with George's brother Charles and his wife Lucy. George is a domestic gardener and the other two men are farm labourers. William's age is given as 60. (Vanity? Poor memory? Age wrongly transcribed? I'd love to know.) By the time George died, he was living in Jerrett's Lane.

George joined the 14th Hampshires in 1914, serving in France from March 1916. He was killed in action on 3rd September 1916, near Hamel (I think this is Beaumont Hamel), during the battle of the Somme. (Some places seem doomed to see repeated conflict; the Somme area is one of these. Agincourt and Crecy are both close to the river.) George is listed on the Thiepval memorial, having no known grave.

On the same day, in another part of the battle, at Guillemont, Second Lieutenant Horace Wyndham Thomas – who played rugby for both Cambridge and Wales – was also lost. Shortly before he died, he wrote to friends, "I am not afraid of death at all, I feel a clean conscience. My life has been a truly happy one, thanks to you all from the bottom of my heart."

Source: Into Touch by Nigel McCreery.

Ann Laird - Rownhams May 2014