

LEST WE FORGET

World War 1 – the impact on Wick

At the outset of the War, the Vicar of St Mary's was the Rev. James Jervis and he came to Wick with his wife, Minnie, and their 5 children, four boys and a girl. The children had all been born in London where Rev. Jarvis had taken Holy Orders. Immediately prior to coming to Wick the family had lived in King's Norton near Birmingham where the Reverend was the local Vicar for a number of years and, by the time of the transfer to Wick, the two older boys, Bernard and Cyril, had gone off to be schoolteachers, with Bernard in Lancashire and Cyril in Devon. The younger two boys, twins Cedric and Norman, lived at the Vicarage with their parents and younger sister Aileen.

When War was declared, three of the young Jervis lads joined up in the Army.

Cyril was a Lieutenant in 3rd Battalion Kings (Liverpool Regiment) but was seconded to the 2nd / 3rd Battalion Kings Africa Rifles (KRA) and for this was given temporary promotion to the rank of Captain. The KRA was a multi-battalion British Colonial regiment and was created to protect British interests in East Africa. Although the rank and file soldiers were mainly drawn from the local population, a large percentage of officers were seconded from the British Army – Cyril being one of these.

The War had spilt over from Europe and there was fighting in German East Africa (now predominantly Tanzania). This was a prolonged conflict and there were many casualties, both from the fighting itself and also from illness. The losses among the KAR officers amounted to 22.6% and this statistic included Cyril, who was killed in action on 3rd July 1918 aged 32. There are no details we can find about exactly where and how he died but his body was finally put to rest in Lumbo British Cemetery, Mozambique.

Cedric at first joined up with the 21st Battalion Royal Fusiliers but soon transferred to the Royal Flying Corp.

The following is the official report on his death:

Lt J C Jervis of No 5 Sqn RFC (formerly 21st Bn, Royal Fusiliers) was killed in action on 26 October 1916 while flying as the observer in BE2d 5781 with his pilot Lt J S Smith, who was wounded. The BE2d was on an Artillery Observation mission from Marieux aerodrome when it was engaged by two enemy aircraft over Puisieux and shot down. The wreckage was then destroyed by shellfire.

From the German reports of action at that time, we discover that "A victory was credited to Hpt Oswald Boelcke of Jasta 2"

Boelcke's report was:

About 4.45 seven of our machines of which I had charge attacked some English biplanes west of P [Puisieux]. I attacked one and wounded the observer, so he was unable to fire at me. At the second attack the machine started to smoke. Both pilot and observer seemed dead. It fell into the second line English trenches and burned up.

This turned out to be the 40th and final such "victory" for this pilot as two days later, on 28 October, Hpt Boelcke was himself killed in a flying accident.

At the age of 26, Cyril was laid to rest in a military cemetery at Courcelles au Bois, Picardie, France.

One can only imagine the sense of loss that the family felt at the deaths of Cyril and Cedric who both now lay in foreign soil. During 1916 Rev. Jervis and his family had already moved on to Snitterfield, Stratford upon Avon where the Reverend was to be the vicar of St James the Great until 1926. After the

War, the names of both Cyril and Cedric were among those listed on the large and impressive War Memorial that is at the entrance to Snitterfield village looking out across the Warwickshire countryside. In addition, Rev Jarvis erected a small alter in the church dedicated to his two sons and there it remains today along with a plaque in memory of both sons and also to the Reverend himself.

As for Norman, he survived the War, having served as a Lieutenant in the 16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment Machine Gun Corp.

There were of course still strong ties to Wick and when our War Memorial was erected both Cyril and Cedric's names were recorded there as well. In addition, within our Church there is displayed the list of names of the fifty local men who all served in WWI and amongst these are the names of the three Jervis boys.