

**IN MEMORY OF
241073 PRIVATE CHARLES BATSON -
1/5th BATTALION, THE LEICESTERSHIRE
REGIMENT.
KILLED IN ACTION IN WORLD WAR 1**



**Bethune War Cemetery - Pas de Calais, France
where Charles Batson is buried in grave reference Vi C 11**

**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - OCTOBER 2022 -
UPDATED JANUARY 2023 / UPDATED JULY 2024**

BETHUNE WAR CEMETERY HISTORY

For much of the First World War, Bethune was comparatively free from bombardment and remained an important railway and hospital centre, as well as a corps and divisional headquarters. The 33rd Casualty Clearing Station was in the town until December 1917. Early in 1918, Bethune began to suffer from constant shell fire and in April 1918, German forces reached Locon, five kilometres to the north. The bombardment of 21 May did great damage to the town and it was not till October that pressure from the Germans was relaxed.

Bethune Town Cemetery contains 3,004 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 11 being unidentified. This includes 26 men of the 1/8th Manchester Regiment who were killed by a bomb on 22 December 1917 while marching to rest billets. Second World War burials number 19, 2 being unidentified. There are also 122 French and 87 German war graves, 38 of the German burials are unidentified.

The Commonwealth section of the cemetery was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.



Charles Batson's burial place location is Vi C 11, in Bethune Town Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Besides his regimental details, the inscription on his War Grave reads "*Thy Will Be Done*".

Photograph kindly supplied by David Bradshaw

THE 5th BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

OVERVIEW

The 5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment was a County Battalion and a unit of the Territorial Force founded in 1908. They were organised in eight companies, with headquarters respectively at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Oakham, Melton Mowbray, Hinckley, Market Harborough, Mountsorrel, Shepshed, and one at the Regimental Headquarters at Loughborough. The companies thus were much scattered, and it was only at the annual training camps that soldiers met as a battalion. After training in England, they arrived in France on the 28th February 1915 and spent the first few months of the War in Armentieres sector before moving south to Loos. During the attack on the Hohenzollen Redoubt, which decimated the 4th Battalion, the 5th Battalion was in reserve. In December 1915, the Division was ordered to Egypt and the 1/5th Battalion embarked at Marseille on the 21st January 1916 in the Cunarder Andania, a ship described as a floating palace, but the next morning they were ordered to disembark and the divisions went back to the trenches of the Western Front.

THE BATSON FAMILY

John Batson (1) (baptised 1822) was first married to Jane Symonds / Simonds on 10th November 1845 in Hardwick, Bucks and they had the following children - James, **William**, Ann, Elizabeth, Eliza, Margaret and Ellen. John Batson's mother was named Ann Clark, and his father was also named John Batson. His wife's father was named Benjamin Symonds / Simonds and her mother was Elizabeth French. John Batson's second marriage was to Mary Miller (1830 -) on the 20th Feb 1865 at St. Mary's, Aylesbury. **According to John Batson in a newspaper report featured on page 17, he had a total of 13 children with his two wives.**

William Batson, the son of John Batson (1) was baptized 13th May 1849 and married Susannah Luff on May 8th 1870 at St. Mary's, Aylesbury, Bucks. They had the following children - Ada Jane, Annie L, Mary A, William, John, Eliza, Jemima, Charles and Eli. Susannah was recorded as being christened at Gedney Church in 1850 in Gedney, Lincs. Susannah's parents were William Luff (b. c.1824) and Jemima Olliffe (b.1830) and they were married c. June 1847. Susannah died in Griffydham in 1908 aged 57.

Melton Mowbray Mercury & Uppingham News - Thursday 30th April, 1908 - William's wife Susannah (also given as Susan Anna) died suddenly at the age of 57 in April 1908 after they had left the Traveller's Rest. She had been in indifferent health for a considerable time, suffering from Asthma and pains in the region of the heart. Some months previous she was medically attended for chronic rheumatism

William and Susannah's first born was named Ada Jane, born 12 June 1872 in Weedon, Bucks and was baptised 29 July 1872 at St. Mary's Aylesbury. At the age of 17 she was a servant to a baker on Charnwood Road, Shepshed. They then had a daughter Annie Louisa, born in Evington, Leicester c.1874., who at 16 was a servant to E. Serres, the headmaster at Osgathorpe Grammar School. A further three children were born whilst they were living on the Lower Brand. – Mary Ann, born 1877, William John born 1882, and Eliza born 1884. Eliza died in the last quarter of 1900 aged 17. Whilst William was living on the Brand, he was a lime kiln burner labourer, almost certainly at Cloud Hill Lime Quarry.

William and Susannah left their home on the Brand and moved to the Rising Sun, Griffydham where they had four children – Jemima born 1886, Charles born 1888, and Eli born 1889 who died the last quarter of 1895 aged 6.

In the following photograph taken at the front of the Traveller's Rest Beer House, the name of William Batson is on the License board above the entrance doors, but it is not possible to read the wording underneath his name. In the official Ashby licensing records there was no licensees name given for the Traveller's Rest Beer house between 1897 and 1905. In the 1901 census, William Batson is recorded as a Beer Retailer and Coal miner (hewer) and this can be identified via the enumerator's walk, as being at the Traveller's Rest Beer House, and it is taken that he was the licensee during that period 1897 to 1905 when John Emmerson took over the license. This is further supported by Kelly's Trade Directories for 1895 and 1899 where he is recorded as a Beer Retailer. William's wife Susannah would have looked after the Beer House whilst he was hewing coal at the pit face, thereby providing them with two incomes.

In 1901, William and Susannah's son Charles Batson, aged 13, was employed as a coal miner (hewer u/ground) and residing at the family home, **The Traveller's Rest**,

with his parents and sibling Jemima.

By 1911 at the age of 23, Charles was living in Talbot Street, Whitwick with his brother William and Belgian born wife Elizabeth. Both Charles and William were employed as stall-men in a local colliery.

Along came the First World War and Charles enlisted to fight for King and Country at Ashby-de-la-Zouch with the 1/5th Battalion – Leicestershire Regiment Section.

During the fighting in France on the 14th of August 1917, in the morning a Battalion raiding party left Noyelles and marched up to the line. On the march up through Vermelles 11 men of B Coy were killed and 14 wounded by one shell. Charles died from his wounds on the 17th of August 1917. His burial place is Vi C 11, Bethune Town Cemetery and his burial commemoration is Bethume Town Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. His name is on the War Memorial Plaque in Holy Trinity Church, Ashby de la Zouch.



The Travellers Rest, Griffydham

The above photograph shows the name of William Batson on the License board, but it is not possible to read the wording underneath his name. In the official Ashby licensing records there was no licensee's name given between 1897 and 1905 but we have William Batson shown as the licensee in the 1901 census, and it is thought he was the licensee during that period until 1905 when John Emmerson took over.

It is assumed that this photograph was taken c.1900. The Brewery is shown as being "Wells Brewery" of Kegworth, who apparently used a fleet of steam waggons to deliver their beer at one time.

William Batson is thought to be sitting at the table and his wife Susannah in the background with the jug of ale. At least some of their children are likely to be those in the picture. The girl on the far right could well be their daughter Jemima with Charles seated to her right.

1/5th BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT WAR DIARY

The following was recorded by Captain Hills covering the period when Charles Batson lost his life on the 17th August 1917:-

On the 14th August, after a very happy fortnight at Fouquières, we moved to the huts at Noyelles, where the special stores for the coming raid were issued. At the same time all pay books, badges, identity discs and personal kits were handed in, and to each man was issued a small round cardboard disc with a number on it. The following morning we paraded at 10 a.m., and marched through Vermelles to Lone Trench and Tenth Avenue, where we were to wait until it was time to assemble. On the way, "B" Company had a serious disaster. A shell, intended for one of our batteries West of Vermelles, fell on the Company as they were passing the Mansion House Dump. They were marching in fours and had practically a whole platoon wiped out, for eleven were killed and fourteen wounded. Amongst the killed was Freddie Chambers, self-appointed Company humorist, and one of the best known and most cheerful soldiers in the Battalion.

Our Patrol party was waiting for us in Lone Trench, but their report was far from satisfactory. 2nd Lieut. Brooke declared that there were by no means enough gaps, in fact none at all on the left, and Colonel Trimble asked for the raid to be postponed. Meanwhile, 2nd Lieut. Brooke went off to the front line, where he finally was able to convince the Divisional Intelligence Officer that there were not sufficient gaps, and at the last moment, as the Companies were preparing to move to their assembly positions, the raid was postponed for 24 hours. Accordingly we spent the night in our somewhat cramped surroundings in Lone Trench, and the following day the Artillery continued to cut the wire, this time with better success.

One of the original objects of the raid had been to detract attention from a Canadian attack on "Hill 70" to be made at the same time. This attack we watched from the back of Lone trench, and later in the day were able to give material assistance. The German counter attack came from behind Hulluch, near Wingles, and the troops for it assembled and started their attack in view of our posts. Captain Ellwood and his machine gunners at once got to work and did terrific execution, being chiefly responsible for the failure of the enemy's efforts, and enabling the Canadians to hold the Hill.

So successful was the wire cutting on the 16th, that our patrol reported all ready for the raid, and accordingly we moved at dusk to our assembly positions. One alteration in the plan of attack had to be made at the last minute. It had originally been intended that the attacking platoons, after passing in file through our wire, should spread out in No Man's Land into lines. As the German wire was only cut into gaps and not obliterated, it was now decided that platoons should keep in file until through that belt also, and spread out on entering the front line. Bridges were placed over our front line, all faces were blackened, and by 10-30 p.m. all were ready for Zero, which was to be 10-58 p.m.

The barrage started promptly, and the advance began. The enemy's wire was a little thick on both flanks, but all passed through fairly easily and entered the front line, where, as arranged, each man shouted to show he had arrived. Two enemy were found and killed, but much of the trench was full of wire. The attackers passed on rapidly to the second and third lines, finding the wire thicker in front of each line, but finally reaching their objective and building bombing blocks. It was a dark night, and to avoid losing touch, Captains Petch and Shields had arranged to call each other's names as they went forward. Suddenly Captain Shield's voice stopped with one last cry, and Captain Petch hurrying to the spot found he had been hit by a shell and terribly wounded in both legs. However, his Company reached the third line, and the party under 2nd Lieut. Plumer set out to destroy the Goose.

Meanwhile, the mopping up and demolition continued behind the attack. Several Germans were found and killed in the second line, but on the whole very few enemy were seen, somehow they had managed to escape. Probably there were many tunnels, and in the dark it

was quite impossible to tell what was a tunnel entrance and what merely a dug-out. Many of the latter were destroyed by "C" Company, though they lost 2nd Lieut. Lowe, who was slightly wounded, through being too keen to watch the effect of one of his own Mills bombs. Corporal Tunks and Pte. Baker did particularly good work with these demolition parties.

Back at Battalion Headquarters was a listening set, and this managed to overhear the German Company Commander's telephone report to his headquarters. "We are being attacked, ... front line penetrated, ... second line wrecked ... third line entered ... send up two sections." The two sections came in two parts. A strong bombing attack was made up Hicks Alley which was held by our bombing party at the newly built block; at the same time our left was attacked over the open. "A" Company were ready for them, and Lilley, the Lewis Gunner, soon accounted for many and broke up the attack. "D" Company also had some fighting, in which both 2nd Lieut. Cole and Serjeant Growdridge distinguished themselves.

The time finally came for the withdrawal, and the special flare lights were fired. Unfortunately they failed to light, and messages had to be sent at once to the raid area. The enemy were held off while the withdrawal was carried out, and by 2-0 a.m. the 17th the majority of the raiding party had returned. Captain Shields was carried in by C.S.M. Passmore, who very gallantly stayed out some time after the others were all back, but nothing could be found of Capt. Marriott or 2nd Lieut. Plumer and the "Goose" party. Capt. Marriott had been last seen in the second German line, but he had been missed in the withdrawal, and was never seen again. We brought no prisoners and no identifications, though one man brought back a rifle and another some papers from a dug-out. Several of the enemy had undoubtedly been killed, but no one had thought to cut off shoulder straps or search for pay books. At 3-0 a.m. we returned to Noyelles, where we spent the day cleaning and repairing our clothing.

The raid had not been a success. We lost Captain Marriott, 2nd Lieut. Plumer, and seven men missing, whom we never heard of again. Three more men were known to be killed, and three others were afterwards reported prisoners, while no less than fifty-one were wounded. Capt. Shields, the most cheerful, strenuous, and popular of Company Commanders, would never fight again. He reached Chocques hospital with one leg almost blown off and the other badly shattered, and the Doctors decided to amputate the one at once. It is still recorded as a unique feat, that throughout the operation neither the patient's pulse nor temperature altered, thanks to his wonderful constitution. The other leg soon healed, and within a few months he was hopping over fences in England in the best of spirits. "B" Company had lost their second Company Commander in two months. Like his friend Capt. Wynne, Captain Marriott had soon won his way to the hearts of his Company, with whom he rose from Platoon Commander, while in the Mess he was one of the merriest of companions and the friend of all.

There is no doubt that the enemy had been prepared for us. The rapidity with which his barrage started, the partly wired trenches, empty dug-outs and absence of garrison all pointed to this. He probably waited for us at his tunnel entrances, and hurried away as soon as we arrived; the few we found were those who had been too slow in getting away. As far as we ourselves were concerned, we only made one mistake—failing to bring back any identification. Apart from this all ranks had worked well, and we were congratulated by General Thwaites on our efforts.

Continued over page



The First and Second World War Memorial Plaque
in Trinity Church, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

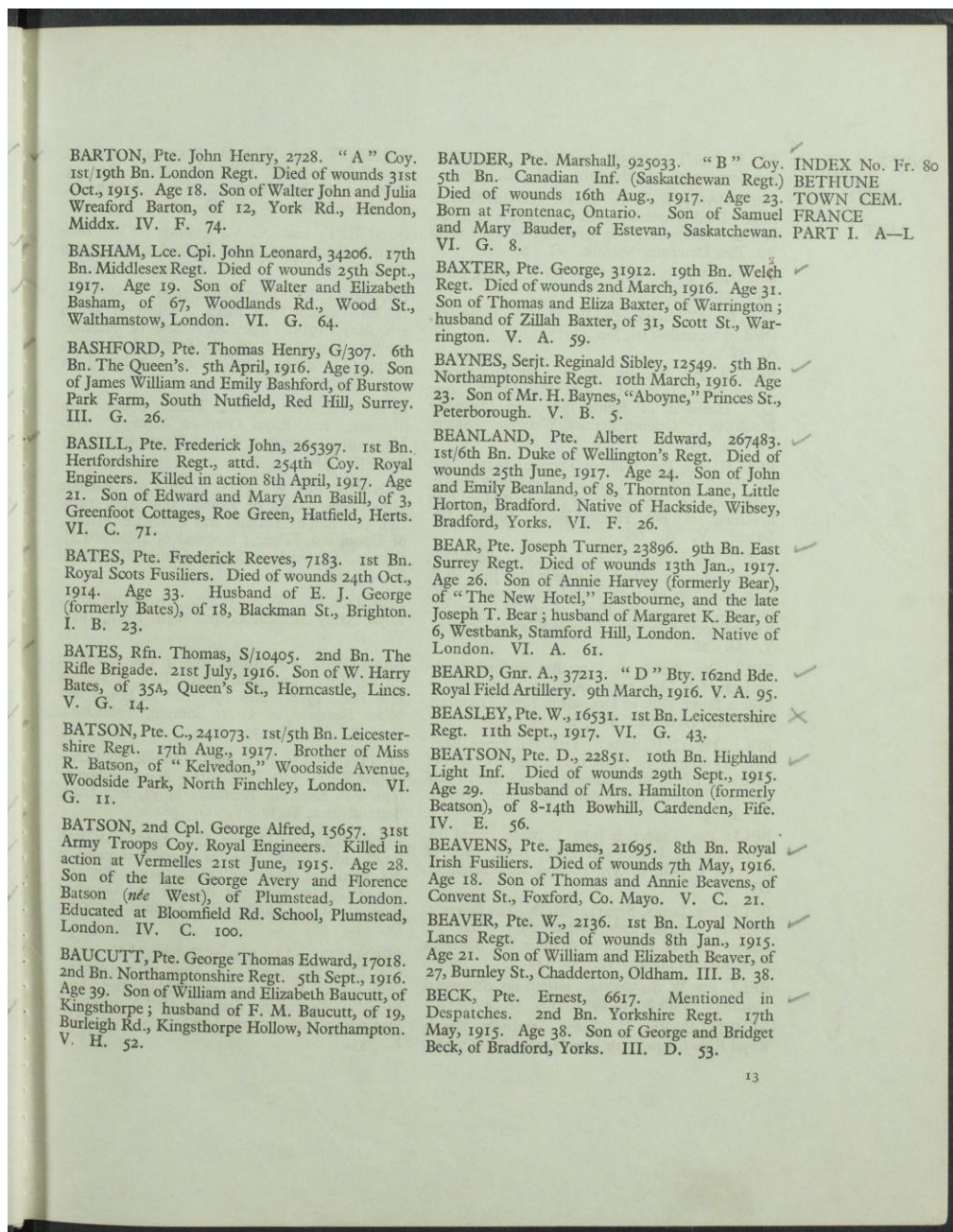
Charles Batson's name is the third down under the LH column

CHARLES BATSON'S WAR GRAVE RECORDS

Badge Design No and Layout	Headstone No.	TEXT.				No. of Letters in text.
(1)	(2)	Line 1 (3)	Line 2 (4)	Line 3 (5)	Line 4 (6)	(7)
<p>No. of Contract.....dated..... IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION. SCHEDULE B PAGE 19.....</p> <p>Name and address of Firm. COMPREHENSIVE REPORT B HEADSTONE PERSONAL INSCRIPTIONS NAME OF CEMETERY.</p> <p>..... to be read in conjunction with BETHUNE TOWN CEM. "F".</p> <p>..... COMPREHENSIVE REPORT A HEADSTONE MILITARY INSCRIPTIONS together with</p> <p>..... TWO STANDARD LAYOUTS (the layouts to be used are quoted on the badge design.)</p>						
1035/1B	2861	(K.V. West, Esq., 326, Cameron Street, Moncton, N.B. Canada.)				
	2862	THY WILL BE DONE			3-9	13
	2863	(Miss R. Batson, Kelvedon, Woodside Avenue, Woodside Park, London, N.12.)				
	2864	(Mrs. James Kimmerly, Glem Leslie P. 2., Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada.)				
1202/1D	2865	SON OF RICHARD MEW	NEW FAIRLEE	ISLE OF WIGHT	10-6	36
		(Miss Ethel L. Mew, 14, St. Anns Villas, Royal Crescent, W.11.)				
1058/1C	2866	R.I.P.	IN THE NAME OF THE LORD		6-1	21
		(Mrs. Emily Hodgson, 25, High Bullen, Wednesbury.)				
1037/2B	2867	HE IS NOT DEAD BUT	(SLEEPING		6-5	22
		(Mrs. Jane E. Ramskill, 158, Stanley Street, Grimsby.)				
	2868					
	2869	(Mrs. W. R. Macatie, c/o W. Houghton, Esq., 3, Holly Buildings, Jackson's Lane, Wellingborough.)				
1186/2C	2870	TILL THE DAY DAWN	AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY		10-2	35
		(Mr. Robert Gott, Esq., Hutton Grange, Askham Richard, York.)				
	2871	(Mrs. A. S. Smith, 12 Four Road, Loughborough.)				
1048/1B	2872	THY WILL BE DONE			3-9	13
		(Mr. Richard Hart, Broomhall, Sunningdale, Berks.)				
1202/1C	2873	SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS	SAFE ON HIS GENTLE BREAST		11-11	41
		(Mr. Heslop, Crystal Hill, Saskatchewan, Canada.)				
	2874	(David Guidgeon, Esq., 61, Birmingham Street, Willenhall, Staffordshire.)				
	2875					
1029/1C	2876	HE DIED FOR HIS HOME	AND GAVE HIS SOUL TO GOD		10-2	35
		(Mrs. Ellen Nash, 72, Mansfield Road, Hampstead, N.W.3.)				
	2877					
	2878					
	2879					
1045/1D	2880	BORN AT STRATHTAY	PERTHSHIRE, SCOTLAND	25TH JANUARY 1890	14-0	48
		(Mrs. Catherine Robertson, Little Cloichfoldich, Strathitay, Perthshire, Scotland.)				

Names and addresses of Next of Kin are shown in brackets and will not appear on the Headstones. 3-16-9 264
 Inc 9

**Headstone Personal Record 2862 - Charles Batson is second down
(Note the reference to Miss. R. Batson - it is thought that this must be a
mistake as Charles did not have a female sibling with the initial R)**



From Grave Record Index

Charles Batson third from bottom in LH column

(Note the reference to Miss. R. Batson - it is thought that this must be a mistake as Charles did not have a female sibling with the initial R)