# IN MEMORY OF 16638 PRIVATE ALFRED CLIFFORD Born in Coleorton in 1897 1st BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT KILLED IN ACTION - 10th SEPTEMBER 1915





BY SAMUEL T STEWART - NOVEMBER 2022

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Our story begins when Clarrie Stewart (great aunt of the author), and one of the Stewart family of Lount, met her future husband, Laban Clifford (1895-1985), when he lived in one of the colliery houses opposite the George Inn, Coleorton, Leics, when he was home on sick leave from WW1 with a broken leg. Laban survived the war, and he and Clarrie were married in 1919 after which they first leased and then purchased a cottage on the Coleorton Beaumont Estate towards the top of Coleorton Moor, on the north corner of Pit Lane.



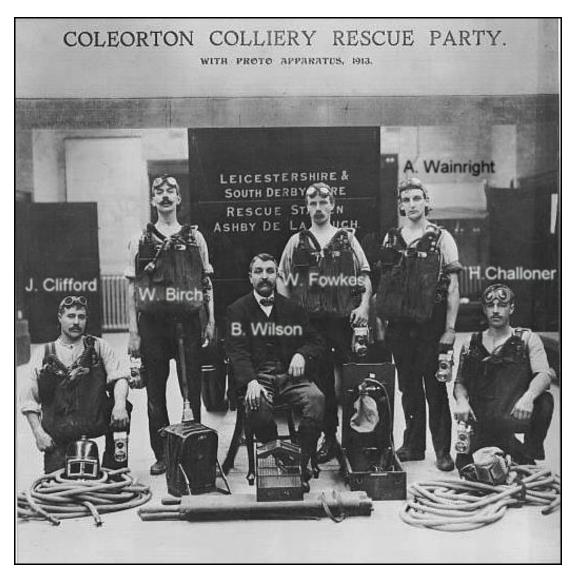
Photograph of Clarrie and Laban taken outside their cottage on the Upper Moor, Coleorton

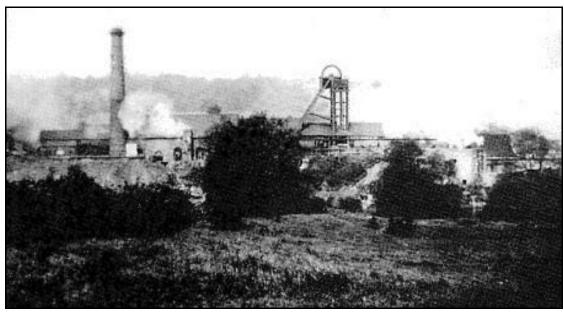
Clarrie recalled in a newspaper article celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday (lived till 103 years of age) that those were the days when the pit workers coal allowance was emptied onto the road, and ashes were collected once a week, and the lavatory down the garden was emptied weekly at the dead of night. After the war, Laban went back to work as a coal miner at Snibston Colliery where his father James was under manager and where later Laban became a deputy. Laban died on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1985.

Laban Clifford had a younger brother by 2 years named Alfred who was born in 1897 in Coleorton, to parents James and Mary (nee Willet). James Cliiford would have been employed for most of his working life as a coal miner. James and his two sons Laban and Alfred were all employed at Coleorton No.3. pit known colloquially as the "Bug & Wink". In fact, James was a member of the Coleorton Colliery rescue team in 1913 as shown in the following photograph taken when James Clifford was 44 years of age. James combined this with his full time job as an "underground hewer".

The 1911 census records that James Clifford and his two oldest sons, Laban and Alfred were employed at Coleorton No.3. Colliery and Laban and Albert were both employed as pony drivers down the pit at that time.

#### Continued over page





**COLEORTON NO.3. COLLIERY (BUG & WINK)** 

# IN MEMORY OF 16638 PRIVATE ALFRED CLIFFORD 1st BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT KILLED IN ACTION - 10th SEPTEMBER 1915







16638 PRIVATE ALFRED CLIFFORD COMMEMORATED ON MEMORIAL TABLET AT POELCAPELLE BRITISH CEMETERY, Langemark-Poelkapelle, Arrondissement leper, West Flanders (West-Vlaanderen), Belgium.

Location - St. Jean Churchyard. Mem. 13.

#### POELCAPPELLE CEMETERY HISTORY

Poelcapelle (now Poelkapelle) was taken by the Germans from the French on 20 October 1914, entered by the 11th Division on 4 October 1917, evacuated by Commonwealth forces in April 1918, and retaken by the Belgians on 28 September 1918. Poelcapelle British Cemetery was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and the following smaller cemeteries:-

HOUTHULST FOREST NEW MILITARY CEMETERY, LANGEMARCK, near the South side of the Forest, on the road from Poelcapelle to Houthulst. Here were buried a number of French soldiers, as well as 21 soldiers and two airmen from the United Kingdom, who fell in the winter of 1917-18.

KEERSELAERE FRENCH CEMETERY, LANGEMARCK, about 800 metres West of the hamlet of Keerselaere, in which 29 French soldiers, five Canadian and two from the United Kingdom were buried in 1915, apparently by the enemy.

PILCKEM ROAD GERMAN CEMETERY, LANGEMARCK, on the South-West side of the bridge over the Hannebeek, in which 13 soldiers from the United Kingdom and one from Canada were buried by the enemy in 1914-17.

POELCAPELLE COMMUNAL CEMETERY, in which one soldier from the United Kingdom was buried in 1915.

POELCAPELLE GERMAN CEMETERY No.2, nearly 1.6 Kms South-East of the village, which contained the graves of 96 soldiers from the United Kingdom and Canada who fell in 1914-15.

ST. JEAN CHURCHYARD, in which 44 soldiers from the United Kingdom were buried in 1915, but which was completely destroyed in later fighting. THIS IS THE CEMETERY GRAVEYARD IN WHICH 16638 PRIVATE ALFRED CLIFFORD IS COMMEMORATED

STADEN FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY, made by the 169th Infantry Regiment and containing the graves of 80 French soldiers and one R.A.F. Officer.

VIJFWEGEN GERMAN CEMETERY No.1, close to the railway halte, in which three soldiers from the United Kingdom were buried by the enemy.

The great majority of the graves date from the last five months of 1917, and in particular October, but certain plots (IA, VIA, VIIA, LI and LXI) contain many graves of 1914 and 1915.

There are now 7,479 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in Poelcappelle British Cemetery. 6,230 of the burials are unidentified but special memorials commemorate 8 casualties known or believed to be buried among them. Other special memorials commemorate 24 servicemen buried by the Germans in other burial grounds in the area whose graves could not be located. There is also 1 burial of the Second World War within the cemetery. Among those buried in the cemetery is Private John Condon of the Royal Irish Regiment, who at 14 is thought to be the youngest battle casualty of the First World War commemorated by the Commission. (*Information taken from CWGC website*)

#### **CWGC CERTIFICATE INFORMATION**

## In Memory Of Private

### ALFRED CLIFFORD

Service Number: 16638
1st Bn., Leicestershire Regiment who died on 10

September 1915 Age 18

Son of James and Mary Clifford, of 16, Ashby Rd., Coalville, Leicester.

Remembered with Honour POELCAPELLE BRITISH CEMETERY St. Jean Chyd. Mem. 13.



COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

#### **BIOGRAPHY & MILITARY SERVICE**

Alfred Clifford was born in 1897 to parents James and Mary (nee Willet). His siblings were, Ethel, born 1894, Laban, born 1895, Nathan, born 1899 and Annie, born 1901, all being born in Coleorton, Leics. In March 1901 the family were residing at Rotten Row, Coleorton, this being the family home of his maternal grandparents, James Willett a colliery worker, born 1838 in Worthington, Leics., and his wife Mary A., born 1841 in Swannington, Leics. It should be noted that prior to 1884, "Rotten Row" was an area of land within Coleorton which was part of Thringstone within the Ecclesiastical Parish of Whitwick. In April 1911, Alfred was residing in the family home at Coleorton, Leics., together with his parents and siblings, Ethel, Laban, Nathan, Annie, Grace, born 1904 and Mary, born 1910, the latter two siblings were both born in Thringstone, Leics.

James and his two sons Laban and Alfred were all employed at Coleorton No.3. pit known colloquially as the "Bug & Wink. The 1911 census records, James Clifford (an underground coal hewer) and his two oldest sons, Laban and Alfred were employed in Coleorton No.3. colliery. Laban and Albert were both employed as pony drivers down the pit.

Like his older brother Laban, who took part in the war, but survived his injuries, Alfred, unbeknown to his dismayed family, enlisted at Coalville on December 1914 and presumably went through a few months of basic training in the UK before being sent out to Belgium to join the British Expeditionary Force. His Regiment, the 1st Battalion Leicestershire were already in Europe and had been engaged in continual fighting in the Autumn of 1914, so presumably Alfred linked up with his regiment somewhere. He was recorded as being killed at Wieltje, Ypres, Belgium on the 10th September 1915, by shrapnel. The area was located close to the St. Jean Churchyard cemetery where Alfred is commemorated.

The War Diary records that the Battalion had relieved the East Yorkshire Regiment in the trenches at Wieltje on the 9th and 10th September, and continued:-

4.35 – 6.35am most intense bombardment of our line, also the 1st King's Shropshire. Light Infantry on our right, and the Rifle Brigade in Fotwair Cottage line on our left. Terrific bombardment by guns of all calibres chiefly H.E. and trench mortars which fired about 50lb and caused fearful damage to trenches. A great deal of shrapnel and H.E. shrapnel used also especially along our communication trenches. 3 German aeroplanes observing for enemy the whole time, flying right above our trenches, 7.25 8.45am another terrific bombardment by same artillery. Bombardment commenced by the 3 German aeroplanes which were flying over our lines suddenly all turning towards the German lines at the same time. Tremendously heavy bombardment again chiefly heavy shells and trench mortars. Points on the bombardment (1) Most intense each time especially H.E. shells 5 or 6 at a time bursting in or over our trenches. The bombardment was most incessant and is estimated at 2 batteries of heavy guns (about 8 inch), and 2 batteries of 4.5 shells and at least 3 batteries firing shrapnel and H.E. shrapnel. There were 4 German trench mortars firing and these could be spotted (by the shells) and men were able to run a few bays left or right, thereby escaping destruction. The mortars fired obliquely, they did very great damage partly of A Coys trenches, being absolutely blown in, and great craters and gaps made connection with the right of A Coy impossible except by a big detour. Their report was most intense. (2) Damage to trenches due by shell fire was also very great and communications trenches in the rear of A Coy and C Coy were

completely flattened. B and D Coys also had damage their barbed wire being torn to bits. (3) Casualties are extremely few considering the intensity and length of the bombardment. A Coy casualties 2nd Lt. W. H. Reynolds killed (some men had been buried and he dug them out and saved them, and was killed instantaneously almost immediately after) 3 men killed, 7 wounded. B Coy 3 men wounded (2 very slightly). C Coy 3 killed. D Coy 5 wounded. Many men initially buried and buried and rescued and not sent to hospital. Trenches are very good and men got good protection except for direct hits. Casualties A Coy 1 sick. Source: Michael Doyle Their Name Liveth For Evermore: The Great War Roll of Honour for Leicestershire and Rutland.

The news of Alfred's death was recorded in the Coalville Times on the 24th September 1915 as follows:-

News was received on Tuesday that Private Alfred Clifford of the Leicester Regiment, had been killed in action, being struck by a piece of shell. the information was contained in a letter from Private Chandler to his parents in Coleorton, the writer stating that he saw Clifford buried and asking them to inform his parents. He states that the deceased soldier was given a proper funeral.

His father is Mr James Clifford, who at that time was residing at Coleorton, but now lives in Ashby Road, Coalville, and works at the Desford Colliery. A sister of the deceased is Mrs J. Smith of Owen Street, Coalville. On the Imperial War Graves documents it also gives Mrs. M. Clifford, 16 Ashby Road, Coalville., as next of kin.

Alfred Clifford attended Viscount Beaumont Church of England School, at Coleorton and was the only ex-pupil, who was found to have been recorded in the school log book as follows:-

- 22nd September 1915 News received of the death of Alfred Clifford an old scholar and private in the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment in France.
- 23rd September Flag hung at half mast in memory of Alf Clifford buried in France.

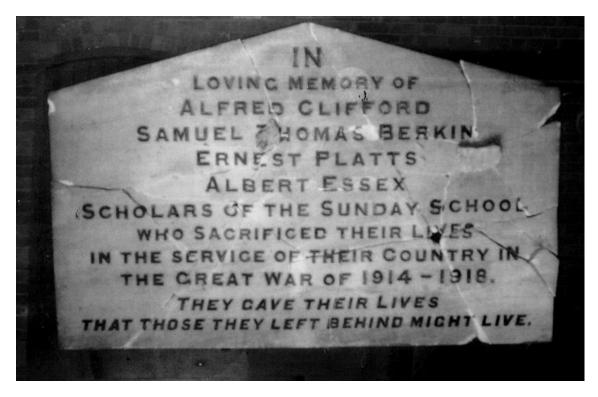
The Swannington Heritage website tell us that:-

Alfred's mother, Mary, was paid his £6 4s 7d wages and after the war received a £3 gratuity.

Ancestors cam from Newbold, Osgathorpe and Swannington.

## 16638 PRIVATE ALFRED CLIFFORD IS COMMEMORATED ON THE FOLLOWING MEMORIALS IN LEICESTERSHIRE

- CLOCK TOWER MEM., COALVILLE
- BAPTIST CHAPEL MEM., SWANNINGTON / COLEORTON
- COUNCIL OFFICE MEM., COALVILLE
- COLEORTON WAR MEMORIAL



THE ORIGINAL SWANNINGTON / COLEORTON BAPTIST CHAPEL PLAQUE. THE CHAPEL IS NOW A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

Further information about the Swannington/Coleorton Baptist Chapel can be found in the Samuel T Stewart's publication The First 100 Years History Of The Swannington/Coleorton Baptists

## GRAVE / MEMORIAL REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS

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TO THE MEMORY OF THESE 20 SOLDIERS, KILLED IN ACTION IN 1915 AND BURIED AT THE TIME IN ST. JEAN CHURCHYARD, WHOSE GRAVES WERE LATER DESTROYED IN BATTLE

### "THEIR GLORY SHALL NOT BE BLOTTED OUT" SUBSEQUENTLY BURIED IN POELCAPELLE BRITISH CEMETERY

CHAPMAN, Pte. George, 236845. Herefordshire Regt., attd. 7th Bn. King's Shropshire Light Inf. 26th Sept., 1917. Age 33. Son of Elizabeth Prosser (formerly Chapman), of 36, Burgess St., Leominster, and the late George Chapman. VIA. B. 4.

CHILTON, Pte. A. J., 235225. 4th Bn. King's Own Yorkshire Light Inf. 2nd Dec., 1917. XXII. D. 5.

CHISHOLM, Pte. Douglas Wilson, 764686. Ist Bn. Artists' Rifles. Killed in action at Passchendaele, 30th Oct., 1917. Age 26. Son of William Wilson Chisholm, J.P., and Chisholm, of 64, Crescent Rd., Sheffield. XVII.

CHITTENDEN, Lce. Cpl. A. G., 148306. 7th Coy. Canadian Machine Gun Corps. 30th Oct., 1917. XXVIII. D. 2.

CHRISTIE, Lce. Cpl. John, 27225. 1st Bn. Machine Gun Corps (Inf.). Killed in action 2nd Aug., 1917. Age 21. Son of James and Margaret Duncan Christie, of River Terrace, Guard Bridge, Fife. XLIX. B. 5.

CLARK, Pte. J. F., 1033057. P.P.C.L.I. (Eastern Ontario Regt.). 30th Oct., 1917. XXXIII. A. 19.

CLARK, Pte. R. W., 29570. 10th Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers. 23rd Sept., 1917. LVI. C. 14.

CLARKE, Pte. A. C., 15037. 4th Bn. Bedfordshire Regt. 30th Oct., 1917. XV. E. 1.

CLARKE, Pte. F., 202308. 1st/5th Bn. West Yorkshire Regt. 9th Oct., 1917. XXX. F. 2.

CLARKE, Pte. T. W., 53925. 29th Coy. Machine Gun Corps (Inf.). 22nd March, 1918. XXX. E. 13.

CLARKE, Pte. William Bertie, 41364. 10th Bn. Essex Regt. 22nd Oct., 1917. Age 30. Son of the late James and Emma Clarke, of Shropham, Norfolk. XLIII. C. 4.

CLARKE, Ptc. William Thomas, 35006. 3rd Bn. Otago Regt., N.Z.E.F. Killed in action 4th Oct., 1917. Age 24. Son of George William and Annie Elizabeth Clarke, of 42, Villa St., Masterton, Wairarapa. Born at Geraldine, New Zealand. LX. B. 20.

CLAYTON, Pte. H., 17756. 1st Bn. Leicester-INDEX No. B. 126 shire Regt. 10th Sept., 1915. Age 50. Husband POELCAPELLE of Catherine Clayton, of 36, Percy St., Derby. BRIT. CEM. St. Jean Chyd. Mem. 18.

CLAYTON, Pte. John William, 86411. 9th Bn. Sherwood Foresters. Killed in action 4th Oct., 1917. Age 25. Son of Theophilas and Hepbzibah Ann Clayton, of 34, Preston Avenue, Alfreton, Derbyshire. XLVII. C. 1.

CLEEVES, Pte. Vincent, 16872. 7th Bn. Canadian Inf. (British Columbia Regt.). 24th April, 1915. Age 36. Son of Frederick Cleeves, of Merddyn Hywel, Penmaenmawr, Wales, and the late Mary Ann Cleeves. VIIA. C. I.

CLEMENTS, Pte. C., 3976. 6th Bn. Royal West Kent Regt. 18th July, 1915. LVI. D. 6. CLEMO, Lce. Cpl. J. F., 373319. 2nd Bn. Post Office Rifles. 30th Oct., 1917. Age 33. Son of George Clemo, of Handforth Rd., Brixton; husband of Maud J. Clemo, of 47, Long Acre, London. LIV. B. 16.

CLIFFORD, Pte. Alfred, 16638. 1st Bn. Leicestershire Regt. 10th Sept., 1915. Age 18. Son of James and Mary Clifford, of 16, Ashby Rd., Coalville, Leicester. St. Jean Chyd. Mem. 13.

CLISSOLD, C.S.M. Charles Francis, 20104. 10th Bn. South Wales Borderers. 25th Aug., 1917. Age 30. Son of the late William and Sarah Clissold, of Newport; husband of Lilian Clissold, of 6, Crescent Rd., Newport, Mon. XLIX. A. 12.

COATES, Pte. Arthur C., 202803. 1st/4th Bn. East Yorkshire Regt. 31st Oct., 1917. Age 38. Son of Francis and Emma Coates, of Willesden, London; husband of Martha Craven (formerly Coates), of Hillcrest, Hewenden, Cullingworth, Bradford. V. A. 6.

COATES, Pte. Fred, 27301. 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. 2nd Dec., 1917. Age 29. Son of Abraham and Susannah Coates, of Hockley, Birmingham. XIII. E. 4.

COE, Pte. A. W., 40530. 9th Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers. 17th Aug., 1917. LV. C. 20.

COGGLES, Pte. A., 7068. 1st Bn. Norfolk Regt. 6th Dec., 1914. LXI. B. 2.

COHEN, Lt. Myer Tutzer, M.C. 42nd Bn. Canadian Inf. (Quebec Regt.). 3rd Nov., 1917. Age 22. Son of Moses M. Cohen, of 99, Machson Avenue, Toronto, Canada. XXXIV. A. 15.

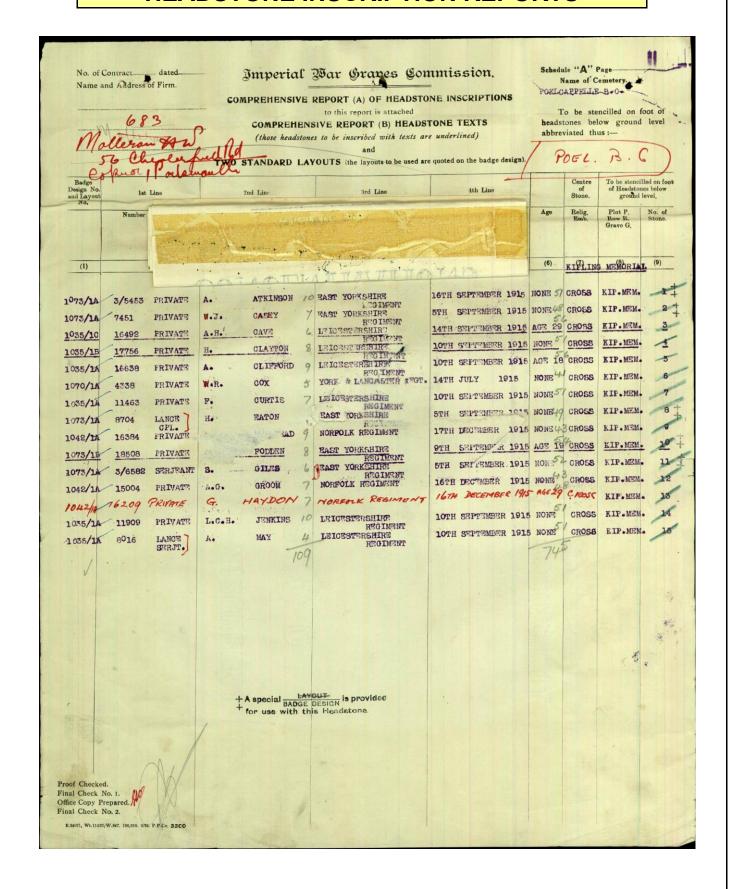
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**INDEX SHEET** 

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/Leicester Regt.	16638	GLIFFORD.	Pte. A.	10/9/15		
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GRAVE REGISTRATION COMPREHENSIVE REPORT FORM CONFIRMING BURIAL IN ST. JEAN CHURCHYARD

## IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISION HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION REPORTS



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No. of Conta	ddress of Firm.		IMPE	RIAL WAR	GRAVES CO	MMISSION.	SCHEDULE SC.  NAME OF CEM			
			COMPRE	APPENDIX 1.SC.  To be read in conjunction with  COMPREHENSIVE REPORT A & B HEADSTONE INSCRIPTIONS				ST.JEAN GEYD.  Letters and figures to be stencilled at foot of Headstones below ground level. See Comprehensive Report A under		
(B9542). Wt. 22	413A	. <b>Gp. 160.</b> O.A.			gether with OUTS 1.SC/A and 1.SC	C/B.	Columns 8 and 9.	ive Report	A unuer	
		CRIPTION. se two lines of inscription			1	ILITARY INSCRIPTIONS.				
Headstone No.	is shown on th	e full-sized layout.	Badge Design No. and	1st line.	2nd line.	3rd line.	4th line.		Religious Emblem.	
	1st line	2nd line	Layout No.	Number and Rank. Initials, Name and Honours. Regiment.		Date of Death. Age.  In any instance where the entry "NONE" appears in Col. 6, the Age will be omitted from the Headstone and the Date of Death centred laterally.				
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	
6 \$ 15	NOWN TO BE BURISD	IN TAIS 10	73/15CA/C	3/5453 PRIVATE	A. ATKINSON	SAST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT	16TH SEPTEMBER 1915	NON3 G	ioss	
7 § 2	NOWN TO BE BURIED	IN THIS 10	73/18UA/C	7451 PRIVATE	H.J. CASEY	BAST FORKSHIRE REGIMENT	5TH SEPTEMBER 1915	HOME C	<u>1058</u>	
8 F M	NOWN TO BE BURIED		35/1SCA/C	16492 PRIVATE	A.H. CAVE	LEICESTERSHIRE RECINENT	14TH SEPTEMBER 1915	AGE 29 C	ROSS	
D. & E	NOWN TO BE BURLED	IN THIS 10	35/1SCA/B	17756 PRIVATE	H. CLAYTON	LEICESPERSHIRE RECIESIT	10TH SEPTEMBER 1915	NO N3 C	ROSS .	
10 § K	MOWN TO BE BURIZD	A STATE OF THE RESIDENCE OF THE PARTY OF THE	35/1SCA/C	16638 PRIVATE	A: CLIFFORD	LEICESTERSKIRE REGIMENT	10TH SEPTEMBER 1915	AGE 18 C	RC5S	
77 è R	NOWN TO BE BURIED	The state of the s	70/15CA/C	4338 PRIVATE	W.R. COX	YORK & LANCASTER REGT	. 14TH JULY 1915	NO NZ C	ecss.	
12 § &	NOWN TO BE		35/1SCA/C	11463 PRIVATE	F. CURTIS	LEIGESPERSHERE REGIMENT	10TH SEPTEMBER 1915	NO NE C	ROSS	
13 § K	NOVE TO BE BURISD		73/150A/C	8704 LANCE CPL.	H. EATON	EAST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT	5TH SEPTEMBER 1915	NON3 C	ROSS	
14 § K	NOWN TO BE BURIED	A STATE OF THE STA	42/1SCA/C	16384 PRIVATE	C. FELSTEAD	NORFOLK REGIMENT	17TH DECEMBER 1915	NO NE CE	1058	
15 § K	NOW N TO BE BURISD		73/1SCA/B	18508 PRIVATE	G.H. FODDEN	EAST YORKSHIRE REGINERE	9TH SEPTEMBER 1915	AGE 19 C	ROSS	
16 5 K	MOWE TO BE BURISD	A STATE OF THE STA	73/150A/C	3/6582 SERJEANT	S. GILES	EAST YORKSHIRE REGINENT	5TH SEPTEMBER 1915	NO NE CE	10 15	
R-4	9				§ Headstone for this is not included Contract.					