

***Edgar Henry Frost.*** 

***Captain. Machine Gun Corps (and formerly the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.***

The 12<sup>th</sup> October 1895 edition of the Leamington Spa Courier announced that Mr Edward Henry Frost had been appointed to take over as headmaster of Wellesbourne School in succession to Mr. Andow, who was retiring. Mrs. Annie Frost, his wife would become assistant mistress.

And so it was that the Frost family arrived in the village, to take up residence in the School House with their son, Edgar, who was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1894 in Churt, Surrey and baptised on the 9<sup>th</sup> December in the church of St. John the Evangelist. The Frosts subsequently had two more children, Margery and Eric Norman Peter, both born in Wellesbourne.

Edgar started at the village school on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1898. His attendance record was good, as would be expected of someone whose father was the headmaster. At the end of term, August 1902, he was awarded the prize of 'a dressing case' for full attendance during that school year. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1907 he left the village school to further his education at Warwick school; the oldest boys' school in the country. In September of the following year he joined the School's Officer Training Corps with the rank of Private and remained active until leaving in April 1911 to take up the position of a Bank Clerk with Lloyd's Bank.

From the age of eight he had been a member of the St. Peter's church choir in Wellesbourne and a frequent soloist.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1915 Edgar applied for a temporary commission in the Regular Army for the duration of the war, specifically requesting an attachment to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was subsequently appointed Second Lieutenant<sup>1</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of that Regiment and ordered to report to the School of Instruction at Colchester by the 7<sup>th</sup> November.

Hereafter, the available records of Edgar's military service, both official and journalistic, are patchy and conflicting .



*MGC Cap Badge WWI*

In 1916 around the time of the commencement of the Battle of the Somme (1<sup>st</sup> July 1916), Edgar was promoted to 1st Lieutenant<sup>ii</sup> and transferred to a Machine Gun Company<sup>iii</sup>, shortly before the 12<sup>th</sup> Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regiment was absorbed, during September 1916, into the 8<sup>th</sup> Reserve Brigade.

The MGCs gained a reputation for their bravery. However, during the course of the war, a third of the 170,000 men deployed became casualties with 12,500 fatalities earning them the title of 'The Suicide Club'.

With so little of his official records still in existence it is difficult to build a detailed account of the actions etc in which he was involved. The following newspaper summery must therefore suffice.

The Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser in its report of Edgar's funeral on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1920 states: *'His Machine Gun Company was attached to the Irish Division and from the Somme to Passchendaele they were continually engaged. At the latter place he was wounded and had severe trench fever and afterwards was Acting Captain<sup>iv</sup> of a Company at the Base until the Armistice, when he went with the Army of the Rhine, with the Lowland Division<sup>v</sup>.'*

On the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1919 Edgar was released from actual military duty and granted the rank of Captain. His last unit is recorded as being the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Company and he was medically classed, at the time, as A1.

Less than twelve months later, on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1920, Edgar Henry Frost died at his home, from what the local newspapers referred to as, 'disease from four years active service in France' and which the death certificate records as



Pulmonary Tuberculosis. His funeral took place on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September. His officer's sword was placed on his coffin which was carried by four ex-service men. As a measure of his popularity and the esteem in which he was held representatives of

village organisations and most of the villagers either attended or were represented in some form.

Edgar is buried in St. Peter's Churchyard, Wellesbourne. The headstone also bears the names of his parents and younger brother Peter. He is also commemorated on the Roll of Honour for the Dead in the church, the Wellesbourne and Warwick Schools Rolls of Honour and on the Wellesbourne War Memorial.

He was awarded the Victory and British War Medals.

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<sup>i</sup> *London Gazette* 9/11/1915.

<sup>ii</sup> *Stratford upon Avon Herald* 20/7/1917

<sup>iii</sup> *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser* 26/8/1916

<sup>iv</sup> 25/1/1918 to 17/3/1919 (Service Record (WO 339/46324)

<sup>v</sup> *There is, in all of this, I believe, an anomaly within the official records. The newspaper reports relating to Edgar Frost are consistent throughout the war, particularly his involvement at the time of the Battle of the Somme (July 1916). The official Medal Card however states that Edgar did not enter the war till 14<sup>th</sup> July 1917 one year after the Somme. It would be more consistent if the medal card dates his entry as 14<sup>th</sup> July 1916.*