

William Francis Hopkins



"Willie" (William Francis Hopkins)
January 1916. He died 7th Sep 1916

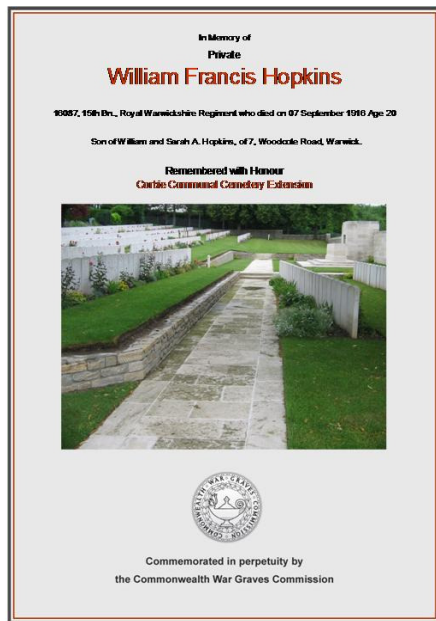


Eveline, Willie's sister (left) in 1914

We have obtained a glimpse into the impact of the Great War on one Warwickshire village family, through the kindness of Dr Sara Serpell of Wellesbourne who has let us see several documents and mementos kept by Bill Chedham who died in 2012.

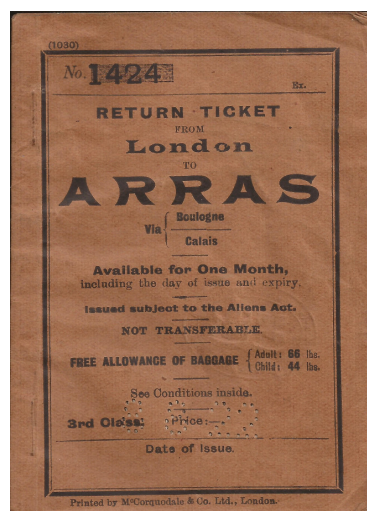
Bill's father Albert married Eveline in 1927. Eveline was the daughter of William and Sarah Hopkins. She was born in 1892 and had a younger brother William Francis who was born in 1897. Their father William was born in West Bromwich and his occupation was that of butler. In 1911 he and the family were living in the North Lodge at Moreton Paddox and he would have been butler to Robert Emmet, the rich American who had built Moreton Paddox a few years earlier.ⁱ

By the outbreak of the Great War, William Francis would have been 18 years old. We do not know when he enrolled in the army but Bill kept retained the card from the Director of Graves Registration & Enquiries sent presumably to his grandparents after the end of the war and which showed that William Francis at his death was a Private with the 15th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment and his grave was at Corbie. We have obtained a more recent photo of the cemeteryⁱⁱ from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which states he died on 7 September 1916 age 20.



Two images from the Cemetery at Corbie

At the end of the War the War Office provided for bereaved relatives to be able to visit the graves in France and Bill kept a return ticket to Arras issued in August 1922. This was his mother Eveline's ticket when she travelled with her mother Sarah to see her brother's grave.



Eveline's Ticket to her brother's grave

It is not clear whether the William Hopkins shown on the Moreton Morrell Memorial in the Church refers to William Francis but it seems likely bearing in mind his father was working at Moreton Paddox in 1911 as recorded in the Census. Sara has also a photo of the Moreton Morrell Memorial in Bill's papers.ⁱⁱⁱ

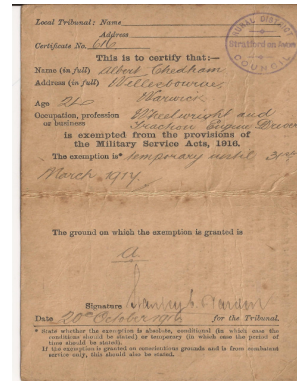
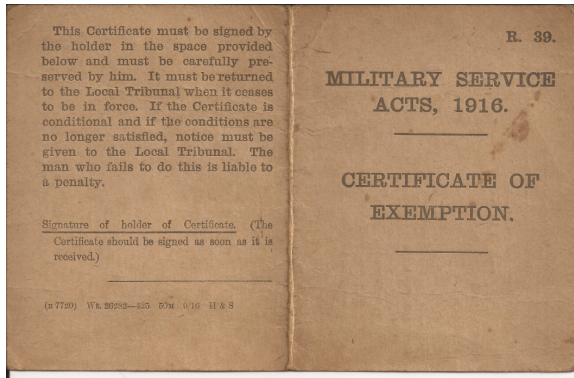
Amongst the memorabilia is an unused pack of picture postcards which show the state of Arras at the end of the War. For the two women from Warwickshire the sights they saw must have given them an horrendous insight into the ravages of the War not only for the servicemen who had fought but for the French people whose towns and villages had been devastated.

Some of the postcards showing Arras at the end of the Great War



"It was the Portuguese soldiers (during the Battle of the Lys in 1918) who took the "Christ of the Trenches" into their positions with them. The figure is now in Portugal commemorating Portugal's Unknown Soldier."^{iv}

Bill's papers also included his father Albert's certificate of exemption from Military Service issued in October 1916.



No doubt with a twinkle in his eye whenever he opened it, Bill also kept a leaflet presumably from an invalided French soldier who had opened a bar.

BRITISH SOLDIERS - Attention !

Have you yet visited "THE BLACK & WHITE" Café at N° 97, rue St-Sever ?

If not make up your mind to do so at the very first opportunity as you are missing a good thing.

Just read the following and then come and visit us :

1. - "THE BLACK & WHITE" is managed by a chap invalided from the service through wounds received at *the Front*. You may see his papers by asking for same. Medals on view in the bar.
2. - The beer stocked is the best obtainable and is sold at three pence per pint. Dark or light brands obtainable. English beer can be had at five pence per pint. We give full pints and full value as we need your custom and understand just what it is that you want.
3. - You can obtain beer during the following hours :
ON WEEK DAYS — 11 a. m. to 2 p. m. and again from 3 p. m. to 9 p. m.
ON SUNDAYS — 3 p. m. to 9 p. m.
A N° 5 or 12 tram will take you by our doors.

If you want your money's worth with civility and the good old english language just drop in and find out

GOD SAVE US ALL

Imp. A. Lazarus, 51, rue St-Eloi Rouen

ⁱ 1911 Census

ⁱⁱ The photo issued by the CWWGC shows that by the 1920s the Hopkins were living in Warwick. Sarah Serpell recalls that Bill had said that William Hopkins the father had left the job at Moreton Paddox to work at the Priory, Warwick and after the Priory was demolished he had worked at the Assizes in Birmingham. Both jobs were again in the role of butler

ⁱⁱⁱ The doubt remains because the Warwickshire County Roll of Honour suggests that the entry refers to William Hopkins the single son of Edward and Emma Hopkins who were butchers resident in Wellesbourne. This William is commemorated on the Wellesbourne memorial and no link with Moreton Morrell has been discovered.

^{iv} http://www.ww1battlefields.co.uk/others/neuve_chapelle_short.html

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