

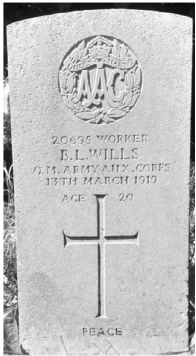
Commonwealth War Grave

You may have noticed fresh signs that have sprung up outside the church gates at Dolton and Dowland.

At Dolton this only refers to a single grave in the churchyard: that of Beatrice Lucy Wills. She was the daughter of George Hermon Wills and his wife Rosa Boundy Wills. George was a watchmaker, originally from Barnstaple but who had lived in Romansleigh before settling in Dolton. They lived in West Lane, the cottage was then called Rose Cottage, but is now known as Fountain Cottage.



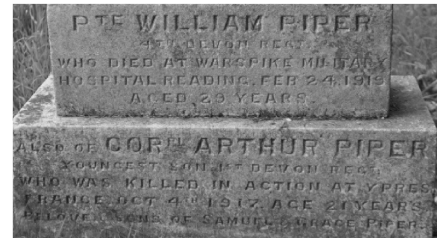
There were 7 children in the family including Beatrice Lucy. Two of her elder brothers also died in WWI and are named on the war memorial (Beatrice Lucy is not). An elder brother Lionel Wills had worked at Stafford Barton for Amiel Woollacott before the war; he signed up early in the war with the 8th Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment and was killed on the battlefield in Loos on 25th September 1915. Another brother, 2 years younger than Lionel but 6 years older than Beatrice Lucy, called Edgar Boundy Wills had worked for John Darch at Ham Farm. He signed up with the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. Both brothers had enrolled at Exeter, but I don't know if they enrolled at the same time. Edgar was killed in action 3 years after Lionel on 20th October 1918 in the battle of Selle. Their sister had worked with the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps – it says as a “worker” so presumably not in a qualified nursing position. The record shows she was attached to the 10th Reserve Battalion of the London Regiment at Chisleton, and does not say if she worked abroad, although she was likely to have been exposed to the horrors of the effect of the war even if she remained in this country. She survived the war but died 13th March 1919 shortly after the birth of her only son Edgar Paskey Wills who is buried in the same spot as his mother.



Their eldest brother Albert Reginald Wills signed up in Chulmleigh for service in the Artillery Regiment on 2nd September 1914, and as far as I know, he survived, but the family had lost three others to the war. Their mother Rosa died in 1926 and their

father lived until 1939. There were two other sisters: Evelyn married Alfred Lyne and Dorothy married Wilfred Henry Fishleigh, a brother of Charlie the butcher.

At Dowland there is also just one Commonwealth War grave; this one is that of Private William Piper. He was the son of gamekeeper Samuel Piper and his wife Grace (née Cudmore), they lived at Upcott and had a total of 14 children. He was actually the third child they had called William, the others having died young in 1881 and 1884. William himself had married Matilda Baker in 1917 and they were living at Coxes Bridge, Winkleigh. He too survived the war itself but died of pneumonia on 24th February 1919 at Warspike military hospital in Reading.



On the same gravestone is his youngest brother Arthur Piper who was killed in action at Ypres on 4th October 1917, but this does not get a mention on the list of Commonwealth War Graves for Dowland because he is not buried here, just commemorated.

If you want to look up the records for these graves or others locally you can go to the website at [cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) and search there. When you think of wartime, the old tune “There’ll Always be an England” made famous by Vera Lynn is one that springs to mind, so when you find the first question you are asked on the site is for the country you want to look in, it is ironic that “England” does not appear as an option to answer that. Perhaps Vera Lynn was wrong.

There are 3 such graves at Iddesleigh, 1 at Monkeokehampton, 4 at Winkleigh, 1 at Beaford.