

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch
of
The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen



Private Roland Innocent (G/96705)
1/19th London Regiment

Roland Innocent was a member of a well-known local family that lived in Sherborne House and ran the auctioneer business Innocent & Son that exists today as Moore, Allen and Innocent. He was born on 21 October 1899 and attended prep school at Southsea and then Shaftesbury Grammar School. He originally served as 100328 Royal Flying Corps, enlisting at South Farnborough in October/November 1917, before being transferred, along with other surplus men, to an infantry battalion.

A number of his letters from France survive and he mentioned that he was *"... in the Lewis gun section and we are all having a good time... I have seen a lot of captured machine guns, tanks etc, also two anti-tank rifles"*.

On 1 September 1/19th (County of London) Battalion (St Pancras), was involved in the attack by 47th (2nd London) Division when it took Bouchavesnes, losing some twenty or so other ranks many of whom were buried near the village

in Aldershot Cemetery but Private Innocent was not among them. His parents received Army Form B 104-83 reporting that that Roland was *"missing"*. A letter from Lieutenant H E Davis of B Coy informed Mr and Mrs Innocent that *"I am very much afraid that there is little likelihood of his being a prisoner"*.

Remarkably his body was found on the battlefield in 1925 so Roland was finally given a proper burial in Sailly-Saillisel British Cemetery (plot III, row J, grave 6). He is commemorated on the war memorial in St Lawrence Church, Leclade, and on a brass plaque to the right of the rail: *In memory of Roland G Innocent killed in the Great War 1918 aged 18. This altar rail was erected by his parents.*

A further memorial is an inscription on the side of the base of the cross on his parents' grave in Leclade cemetery. It reads: *Also in unforgotten memory of Roland elder son of Bentley and Fanny Innocent killed in the Great War 1918 aged 18.*