

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch of The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen

The Souls Brothers

Albert, Walter, Frederick, Alfred & Arthur Souls

At Great Rissington Church there is a picture frame containing the photographs of the five brothers from the village who were killed during the Great War. The sons of William and Annie Souls - Albert, Walter, Frederick, Alfred and Arthur - all died within two years of each other; Alfred and Arthur were identical twins born an hour apart and died five days apart.

Albert and Walter were the first of the Souls Brothers to enlist and joined the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment; they sailed for France in June 1915. They were involved in the Battle of Loos and the Worcestershire Regiment was singled out for special praise for their gallantry. They transferred to the Machine Gun Corps in January 1916. On 14 March the 5th Brigade Machine Gun Corps reported one casualty and Annie Souls lost the first of her sons to the war.

Private Albert Souls (17208) 5th Brigade Machine Gun Corps



Albert was the first to be killed on 14 March 1916; he was 20 years of age. He is buried at Bully-Grenay Communal Cemetery.

Walter's unit went into the Battle of the Somme on 20 July. He was wounded in his left leg and moved to 25 Stationary Hospital, BEF, Rouen. The following day he died from an embolism in the heart.

Private Walter Davis Souls (17209) 5th Brigade Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)



Walter died of wounds on 2 August 1916; he was 24 years of age. He is buried at St Sever Cemetery, Rouen.

The older boys, Frederick, Alfred and Arthur enlisted originally in the 16th Cheshire Regiment, a Bantam Battalion raised to take recruits otherwise too small for the army.

The Souls Brothers

Private Frederick George Souls (21686) 16th Battalion Cheshire Regiment



Frederick went missing in action on 19 July 1916; he was 30 years of age. His body was never found and he is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

Alfred transferred from the 16th to the 11th Cheshires who were reduced to 100 men, one tenth of their normal numbers, in the early days of the Somme. They suffered appalling casualties at Messines Ridge and Ypres in 1917 and were in the thick of the action in the German Spring Offensive of 1918. This is where Alfred lost his life.

Private Alfred Souls (21525) 11th Battalion Cheshire Regiment



Alfred was killed in action on 20 April 1918; he was 31 years of age. He is buried in Strand Military Cemetery.

Arthur was by then a Lance Corporal and attached to the 7th Battalion of the Royal West Kent Regiment. Their diary for April 1918 records orders to hold Villers-Bretonneux plateau at all costs and lists casualties as six officers and 228 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. It gives a roll of honour including "Military Medal for 21683 L/Corporal Arthur William Souls (since a casualty)."

Lance Corporal Arthur William Souls MM (21683)

16th Battalion Cheshire Regiment (attached to 7th Battalion Queen's Own [Royal West Kent Regiment])



Arthur was killed in action on 25 April 1918; he was 31 years of age. He is buried in Hangard Communal Cemetery Extension.