We lie here not in a foreign field

Brandwood End Cemetery contains 108 scattered burials or names on the screen wall of men who were Great War casualties. Eighteen served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, eleven were artillerymen, ten served in the Air Force and nine in the Army Service Corps. There were three Australians and one Canadian and only one medal winner. Half of the men died after the Armistice. These are a few of their stories.

1. So I am the first but I have no idea why he chose me! I’m not famous. And before you start I must warn you that we are looking at deaths and so don’t expect laughs. I am **Rifleman William Brittain - Z/1585 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade**. I don’t even have my own grave but just some bump in the ground over there. You’ll find my name on the Screen wall C. 1. "U." 517. I was a regular solider before the war started serving in Kuldana in India. I mean what a way to see the World! I loved India with all the sights, sounds and smells. Apart from the heat it was a cushy number. To think they paid me to go half round the world. When war was declared we were ordered back to England. We sailed from Bombay on 20th September and got to Liverpool a month later on 22nd October. What a journey! We saw flying fish and a whale on the way. Then off to France. It had been desperate those first few months, this is what the lads told us anyway when we there. Talk about backs to the wall! Anyway it was trenches and stalemate facing us. We took our turn in the trenches and lost a few men through shell fire and snipers. And we took part in the Christmas Truce with the Huns. That was a rum old do! We’d been told they were barbarians but they were like us really. I swopped a packet of cigarettes for a sausage with one of them. He’d worked in the meat market in Birmingham before the war. Like me he wasn’t married but a nice enough bloke. Well then winter turned to spring and there was all this talk about the Big Push and how we were going to break through and end this war. We were told that we were going to be part of it and I was really pleased and proud. It was a place called Neuve Chapelle. There were a lot of Canadians in the trenches with us. I thought that they were yanks the way they talked but they got really cross if you said that and some of them were really big and I kept me mouth shut. It was 10th March before the battle began. 7.30 in the morning. Our artillery pounded the Huns trenches. The noise fair deafened me! We were told that it would smash them to bits and that it would be easy going over the top. It weren’t true. We were back from the main trenches but even so you could hear our men going over. Hear them shout and scream as the rattle of machine gun fire tore into them. They said the wire would be smashed by the shells but it wasn’t. You try to blow barbed wire up! It goes up in the air and comes down in an even worse mess! Even so they did well. Those that came back to us said that they had captured the front line trenches and had hung on fighting off the Germans and waiting for reinforcements but none came. Flipping Generals! We could have gone and joined them rather than waiting in those trenches as the Germans shell us. It was the next day before we joined the attack. I got hit almost as soon as I left the trench. A bullet had gone through my right lung. I don’t remember much after that. I got dragged back into our trenches and then stretcher bearers took me to a casualty clearing station. God knows how I survived. Those doctors and bloomin’ miracle workers and they somehow stopped the bleeding. Then I got sent on to a hospital on the coast and then in a troop ship to Blighty. More doctors patching me up. I was quite please when I was told that I was coming to Birmingham because you’re Southern General Hospital is reckoned to be the best in the country. I went by train to Snowhill and then by train to the hospital. Mark my word they are good doctors but there wasn’t much they could do. It wasn’t their fault. I think I was a gonner as soon as the bullet hit me but I always was a stubborn one. They worked miracles on me and all but saved me and then I went and got infection and that was it. I died on 24th May 1915.
2. I’m **Second Lieutenant Frederick Clifford Alabaster - ‘C’ Company 5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment.** My father, Arthur was joint owner of the firm of Alabaster and Wilson Jewellers and Goldsmiths and I worked in the family firm. We lived in Moseley. You might know the house. It’s called Lingfield and it’s in Amesbury Road. I was the second oldest of four brothers. We all went to Kings Edwards in New Street and played for Old Edwardians. I’m slim of build and so no good as a forward but I’m also fleet of foot and so was a very useful three quarter if I do say so myself. Before the war my eldest brother and I joined the Territorials and then, when war broke out, I enlisted in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. All of my brothers served. Two of us were in the army and two were Doctors in the Royal Army Medical Corps. I was gazetted in early 1915 and as luck would have it became a 2nd Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. It was a territorial regiment and so I knew how it worked and also knew some of the men. We moved to France with the other Royal Warwicks first territorials in March 1915 landing at Le Havre on 22nd March. We were based near Cassel for some of the time, which was the General Foch’s headquarters. I speak a little French and so it wasn’t a problem for me but some of the chaps resorted to shouting which didn’t go down well with the French. We weren’t involved in any major battles although we did our fair share of being in the front line. It was June on 1916 that we moved south and ended up in the Somme. What a contrast to the Ypres Salient and Flanders! It was so much drier than the north which was a bonus. I can’t tell you how demoralising it was to be sometimes knee deep in mud. We were based between Gommecourt and Serre. The excitement was palpable. This was going to it. Yes there had been big pushes before but this time the amount of guns we had trained on the Germans meant that they would be blown out of existence. We were told that after the pounding we were going to give them our forces only had to leave the trenches and march forward. There would be no barbed wire and no machine guns. I can tell you that the chaps were looking forward to it. Our bombardment began on 24th June and that was the problem because the Germans retaliated and the occasional shell came over into our lines. You hoped and prayed that they wouldn’t have your name written on it. Most of it landed up or down from us and so the battalion was fortunate. I was not so! I survived the first day but the on the second, that would be the 25th June 1916, a shell landed just behind where I was standing. Red hot bits of shrapnel ping this way and that and I don’t remember much more. Apparently my dreadful helmet had saved me from being killed outright because the shrapnel hit it rather than my head. I was taken to a dressing station and then to a hospital on the front. At first they thought that I was going to make it but the head injury was worse than they thought. I got sent back to Blighty for specialist care which is how come I ended here. I didn’t make. I died aged 29 on 25th August 1916. My grave is A. 2 "C."257.
3. **I’m Private Albert Hambleton MM** – 8186 3rd Coldstream Guards. And I suppose that it’s only right that I am on is list because I am the only one here who won a military medal. I was born in 1889 in Sparkbrook, Birmingham to William and Mary Smith Hambleton. I wasn’t particularly brave at school though I was tall for my age and didn’t get bullied. It seemed an obvious choice to join the army because trade was bad and I was tall. I’m proud to be in the Coldstream Guards because, though the others would disagree, we are the most important regiment in the whole of the British Army. It stands to reason because it was us who brought back King Charles II in 1660. Though we were based at Aldershot we were in Chelsea at the start of the war and so entrained to France 13th of August 1914 landing at Le Havre. I was therefore, in the words of the Kaiser, ‘An Old Contemptible’. I was at Mons in September 1914. We waited for the Germans to come and laid barbed wire across the roads, with over turned carts and furniture as our barriers. We had machine guns on each corner and about 60 us lay across the street. They came at about 8 o’clock on the Tuesday and we lay there until 4 in the morning the next day pouring round into round into them as they advanced. The Germans had a big gun about 600 yards down the road, and when they fired this we could see the shell leave the gun and pass over our heads. It looked like a long red line. We were too close for their artillery fire. There was barbed wire about 75 yards in front of us. We tied tin cans on it just in case and of them sneaked up in the dark. If they came too close to this wire the officer would shout fire and we would really let them have it. Some got past the wire and came on firing. You have to admire their bravery. When it was just breaking day we could see hundreds of the dead lying around. When our roll call was made we had about 12 killed and 70 wounded. After that we had to pull back because troops to our right and left had retreated. After that we fought in the Battle of the Aisne and the First Ypres. We lost so many good men and for such a proud regiment ended scratching around in muddy trenches like the rest during that winter of 14/15. More fighting during 1915 and then in the August of that year they moved us into our own Guards division. We were proud of that. I fought on the Somme at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette and the Battle of Morval. It was this scrap were I copped it and got the medal. It was late September 1916 and the Somme had already consumed too many of our men. Us and the 1st Guards were to be involved in the frontal advance with them on the right and us on the left. The battle began at 12.35pm to suit the French who were attacking from the south. Our objectives were Morval and Lesboeufs. They used a creeping barrage in front us and so the Germans kept their heads down. This meant that we could get to their trenches with few casualties. Once there the fun started. They came out of their deeply dug holes and were waiting for us as we got there. Where we could we used bayonets but to be honest we used anything that came to hand to smash our way from them. I won’t go into details ‘cause I can see there’s ladies present but it was a bloody affair. The southern part of Lesboeufs was cleared by the 1st West Yorks of the 18th Brigade but we took the remainder of the village fighting the Germans as they came out of the ruins at us. Our officer, 2nd Lieutenant Mitchell, was shot and had a German coming towards him as he lay on the ground. I shot him. It wasn’t anything to do with being brave. He was looking at me when I shot him. I knelt next to the Lieutenant and stopped his bleeding and then used my field dressing to patch him. The Germans blasted us whilst were in the village but it was ours and we weren’t going to let it go. It was hell. Men were being killed all over the place but there was nothing we could do. I made sure that the Lieutenant was safe and he was conscious so he did his best to direct us. I stayed by making sure that he was all right. They attempted to counter attack us but we fought them off. That was when I got it. I heard my shell coming. Don’t ask me how I could tell but I could. There was a flash and then something ripped through my side. I don’t remember much else after that. We were relieved not long after which probably saved me, for a bit at least. The Lieutenant was also brought back safe and that’s how come I got the medal because if he’d died there would have been nobody. Heaven knows how I survived because I can remember looking down at what one point and there seemed to be a lot of me outside. I got taken back to Blighty and ended up in the Southern General Hospital, which was good for my Mom and Dad. Dying was so hard on them because they had such hope. I tried to hang on and the doctors were brilliant. I made it to Christmas and to the end of January but in the end there was too much damaged inside me. I died aged 28 on 21st February 1917. I’m buried in Grave C. 1 "U." 516.
4. **I’m Private Jesse Blunn** – 202685 5th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. I wish I’d got a medal but I didn’t even get to kill any Germans. I’m a King’s Heath lad. I live in Highbury Road, not far from the new park. My Dad and Mom were Alfred and Emily Blunn you might know them because they are well known in the village. When the war started us lads thought that it was so exciting and we wanted to join up but we couldn’t because we were 14. As soon as I could I joined the Territorials joining the 5th Warwicks and I was very proud. I walked down the High Street in my uniform and you should have seen the heads turning. We were territorials but proper soldiers and it wouldn’t be long before we were sent to the Front. I was 17 and the world lay before me. I think I could have made an officer or at least a Non Comm if it hadn’t been for the sea. We did a lot of marching and were trained to shoot and to stab sandbags with bayonets and then trained to march once more. We went up to Northumberland for trench training and more marching. It was hard but we have to do it if we are going to be soldiers. We got shouted a lot but on the whole the officers and Non Comms were good to us. It was a Friday when we began the route march. Full kit too! Our Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Chatterly, said it would be good for us and would make us men but it was hard. I suppose he was right because we would be doing this sort of thing and probably worse in France. There were 600 of us and we marched from our camp inland to the sea. It was a hot day and all of us were at breaking point by the time we got there. It was a relief when they told us to stand to. I’d never seen the sea before. It was amazing! Water for as far as you could see and waves they came in frothing and crashing onto the beach. When they told us we could go in it we gave a cheer and stripped off to our pants. They told us it was safe because the tide was at low ebb, whatever that meant. Never seen the sea! No never seen the sea but loved it as soon as I was in it. Of course I was frightened at first because it was cold and the waves splashed around so but once my head was in the water it was fine. The water tasted salty. I was knocked off my feet at one point and I went on my back and what was strange is that I began to float. Can you imagine? It was me, Jessie Blunn, floating on my back. Some of the others went even further out and began thrashing their arms and actual swimming. I moved out to join them and to see if I could swim because if I could float then I could swim. It was then the problems started. The water began to drag us further and further out and the sand beneath our feet kept moving so that no matter what we did we could get back. They tried to reach us with a human chain. I could see Lieutenant Brown, Sergeant Riley, and the chaplain, Captain Verschoyle, but it was no good. The water came over my head and I looked up through it to the sky above but there was no air for me. There were 8 of us drowned including the Lieutenant and the Sergeant who gave their lives trying to save us. And so I died aged 17 on 24th August 1917 with no medal and no dead Germans. I was buried with military honours in Grave - C. 1 "C." 627.
5. **I’m Private William Shakespeare – 202561 16th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment.** And before I start I want to warn anybody who laughs about me name or has already done so that I will come back and haunt you! I was born in Birmingham in 1882. My Mom and Dad both worked for Parkinson Cowan and were gas metre makers. It was a good trade because everybody wanted gas. I left Mary Street Board School when I was 12 in 1894 and went into the trade as soon as well. It helped to have a Dad working there. It gave me a stable income and after being there for nine years I planned to get married. I married the most wonderful girl in December 1903. I was 23 and she was just 18. Elizabeth Chambers. My Elizabeth. I loved her with all my heart. We lived in a back to back in Wrentham Street but ours was a palace compared to some I could mention. There was a decent water supply in the court and the walls were try and vermin free. My Liz made sure that it was clean anyway and I white-washed the walls. Unlike some we didn’t have children straight away but waited. Mine you when we started they came like trams! We had William and Nellie in 1906. Twins! Liz was so brave. There was a lady in the court who delivered babbies and I suppose she did a good job but William came out last and he had a tough time. Alice was named after me Mother and was born in 1907. Our William was never a strong lad and he died. It set us back a bit. Liz broke her heart. We moved to Lime Grove, Walter Street, Nechells not long after he died. That was a proper house and a better place to bring up kids. George was born in 1912. When war started there was no way I was going to join, I mean how could I with two children and a wife to support. Besides gas metre makers were needed. Lizzie said to me ‘let those who aren’t married go first or those without kids.’ She was right for there were lots of them shirkers in our district bringing home fat wage packets when others were dying for their country. But the news from the Front was bad and then they killed that nurse Miss Cavell and I couldn’t stay. I enlisted in June of 1915 and was accepted in the 16th Warwickshire Regiment or to you and me, the 3rd Birmingham Pals. I was proud because it was our regiment. When it started it was full of toffs but a lot our draft brought more working class lads into it. Boy we saw some action! We came through the Somme with loads of casualties. I had some leave in early 1917, which I was grateful for and not long afterwards Liz sent me a letter saying that she was expecting again. I was so proud. Maybe it would be a boy. We wrote letters to you each other. Neither of us were much good at writing but it didn’t matter because we knew what each wanted to say. We talked about names for the baby and I wanted to call it Elizabeth if it were a girl and Liz wanted to call it John, after her Dad, if it were a boy. I fought in the many of the battles in 1917 but God spared me. It was Third Ypres, or Passchendaele that did for me. What a hell-hole that was! Mud mud and more mud. We were ordered to take the Polderhoek Chateauu with the 2nd Norfolks and began the attack on 9th October 1917. We were hammered and lost so many men that we must have made a pitiful sight when we got back to our trenches. I was brought back on a stretcher having copped a shell burst as we retreated. When I got back to England they sent me to Dewsbury! Flippin’ Yorkshire! Gawd Blimey! Somebody must have said ‘e’s from Birmingham’ and someone else probably said ‘Where’s that?’ and he replied, bloody southerner, ‘It’s up north!’ Anyway my Lizzie never got to see me again. She was nearly full term with our John. He was born the week after I died aged 35 on 6th November 1917. Me Dad paid for me to buried here. I’m in grave B. 2 "C." 883.
6. **I’m Captain Frederick Maden** - **Royal Air Force 13th Training Squadron** When you look for me look to the sky for I am there amongst the clouds. My family are from Lancashire and you should see the skies there especially when you look towards the Lake District. Father was in business, wine and then oil. Father wanted me to follow him in business and who knows what I would have done had it not been for the War. Perhaps my brother Alec followed him? We lived in Showell Green Lane at the start of the war. When I could enlist I joined the Royal Flying Corps which became the RAF. I went to Denham in Oxfordshire for my training. I just love flying. I was good at it. It was rather cold in those old machines and Mother knitted me a scarf and balaclava. Yes I got some stick but they kept me warm. I became a flying officer in June 1917 and got to fly over the trenches. What a sight! How the poor devils below stood it I haven’t a clue. I moved to 7th Squadron RAF in January 1918 as a Flight Commander. We had R.E.8s which was a two-seat biplane. Our duties were mainly reconnaissance flying over enemy lines to work out their troop deployment or to give feedback for the artillery. They were good enough planes but not brilliant to manoeuvre or resilient to ground fire. We worked mainly round the Ypres Salient. I’d only been a Captain for a month when I flew over Poelcappelle. The flak was pretty hot. I pulled up but Albert Jones, my observer, copped it and the plane was badly holed. I managed to put it down behind our lines and then I noticed the blood from my leg. The bone was safe but the shell fragment had cut through the back part of my upper left leg. I was hospitalised back in England and they assigned me to desk duties with the 13th Training Squadron once I could walk again. Can you imagine how I felt? I lived to fly and I wanted to help win the war. By the end of April I was only allowed to do light duties but they did let me do a bit *of flying. I was mentioned in Dispatches for my work in May 1918 but it wasn’t quite the* same. And then it happened. I had taken a young flight cadet out over Wiltshire when the engine cut out and that was it. You don’t want to hear the rest. It’s one of those things you have to accept if you love flying and I loved flying. I died aged 21 on 9th July 1918. My body is buried here in Grave C. 1. "C." 614 No XIII
7. **I’m Lieutenant Arthur Edward Wilson – 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. I am the son of Edward and Fanny Wilson. We lived in Howard Road, Kings Heath, not far from here. My father was the managing director of The New Hudson Cycle Company and I worked there as a colonial traveler because we had a lot of trade with the Empire. Some of the chaps I knew were joining up and so I did too. We were in the 14th Warwicks but some may know it as the 1st Birmingham Pals. We left Codford on the night of 20th /21st November 1915 and left from Folkstone on the *Princess Vicotoria.* We went with the other Birmingham Pals battalions to the village of Longpre´ near to Abbeville. It was a night to forget because having marched to Longpre´ we then had to make another 12 mile march to where we were billeted. It was the early hours of a freezing cold morning. This was after three nights where we had very little sleep. Our village was called Vauchelles. On 27th November we moved on to Bouchon. The weather was cold with about 8 degrees of frost. We had to keep the men in the vilage square whiIst the powers that be had their lunch. Vauchelles was about 30 miles behind the lines. We had lectures on gas during the time we were there and then moved on to Sailly Laurette where we had trench instructions. It was now that I became an officer in the regiment which was damn good luck because others had to move when they got their commission. Then, in December 1915, we moved to the front at Frise on the River Somme. The trenches were deep and dry and so we felt ourselves pretty lucky. As we moved into 1916 the weather changed from frost into rain and our enemy was mud. On 4th December we moved to the trenches on the Bray front near the village of Etinehem. The Germans shelled us and sent over mortar bombs. We responded in kind and gingered things up with trench raids. And so we spent the Christmas of 1915/16 having our first casualties. It was during a stay in these trenches that I was wounded. A flying pig came over and took out a beautifully constructed dugout. The blast took me off my feet and threw me into the mud. I was more concerned about drowning in that cloying glook than the pain on my left side. My men pulled me out but I knew that it was pretty bad. I was taken by stretcher to a clearing station and then to a hospital to the south. I was pretty bad but they patched me up and sent me back to the 14thwho were now further north at the Arras front near Habarcq. We stayed there for over about two months and then in the middle of June moved on to Duisans. When the Battle of the Somme started we were at Magnicourt expecting to attack at Wailly. At the last moment our orders were cancelled and we sent south to the Somme. The weather was hot and the roads dusty and so we moved at night. Eventually we stopped at a point a few miles south-west of Albert. We prepared to attack the German lines at dawn of 14th July. We moved up without a barrage to warn the enemy creeping ever closer to them across No-Man’s Land. As dawn broke we attacked taking them completely by surprise and captured the Bazentin Ridge. I can tell you it was pretty exhilarating but unfortnately no fresh troops were sent up to exploit our success and so the advantage was lost. We moved back having done our bit. I was finding it hard even them because you were sure that every time a shell came over you were for it. Still I got through it. We moved to Meaulte but only spent a night there. It was pretty disconcerting to see the ambulance wagons go past us full of wounded and dying soldiers and knowing that we could be in those wagons. We moved on to what was left of Fricourt and then on 20th July we had our most prolonged piece of fighting in which many good men were killed. Wood Lane, Delville Wood. These are names etched into my brain. I I find it hard to talk about it. …………you see I wasn’t phsyically injured but me brain became gradually scrambled by the pounding of the guns. All I know is that those days were the worst of my life. We were killing or being killed constantly with man and bits of men flying around us. So many were killed, so so many. When they did our roll corps there were pity few of us left. We had a period of rest at Pommiers redoubt got a new draft of troops but these men were raw and you looked into their faces and so could see fear written all over them and all the time the Germans were shelling us. Shells bursting all around you, tearing the air with their infernal noise………noise……explosions…. noise….cries of wounded men ….. explosions….. noise. On 28th July they moved us back for another attack on Wood Lane. The attack was to begin on 30th July. I was in charge of C Company and we led the attack along with D Company. A prelimary bombardment began at 3.45 pm with the main bombardment starting an hour later. At 5.50 pm we left our trenches and advanced into No Man’s Land crouching down behind the corn that still stood there. Then at 6.05 we attacked. There was smoke and confusion everywhere and I tried to keep myself together but the German opened with machine guns from both sides of us and my men were going down like flies. It was murder. We took what shelter we could get and did our best to stay alive. We stayed there until 1 am and then crept back to our own lines. I knew then that I could take much more of it. Even when I sat quietly my hands were shaking and I was afraid less anyone would notice. In the 14 days we were there we had lost 22 officers and 422 other ranks. They drafted more men into our ranks and us old stagers were granted two days leave but we were back on the Somme at Derancourt on 24th August. We were sent to the front line trenches at Maltz Horn Ridge. The trenches had been dug by the Germans and were deep and dry. For a time life was bearable but then in September we were moved up to the front line trenches for the attack on Falfemont Farm. In the early hours of the 3rd September the attack began and forward we went once more. Again my company was in the thick of it. The company before us was cut to pieces by the German fire and we fared no better having to take cover in shell holes to avoid being annihilated. When we went back to our trenches it was found that the battalion had lost 86 killed and 216 wounded….. well there is only so much a man can take and you have to understand wat is was like! We were ordered back to the front on 9th September and suffered days of continual bombardment. BANG! CRASH! SMASH! 4 men killed and 10 wounded in two days. BANG! CRASH! SMASH! BANG! CRASH! SMASH! BANG! CRASH! SMASH! One shell landed close to where I was standing and… and….and… I remember no more …. Or I can’t tell you any more….. I can only tell you Lieutenant Alan Furse of D Company told me later. I am rather ashamed of it but please don’t judge me too harshly. Apparently after the shell exploded they found me with my hair singed, face blackened and clothes torn. I was on all fours scraping at the earth and barking like a dog. The shellshock was so bad that I got sent to hospital and eventually back to England. I cried when I saw my family. Me a grown man crying! My father said that I wasn’t going back and so an appeal was made on my behalf. I was allowed to rejoin the firm and worked on aircraft contracts. I should have had a long life after that. I bought a house with my fiance and planned to get married once the war was over. Instead I caught pneumonia during that dreadful flu epidemic dying aged 29 on 3rd December 1918. They very kindly gave me a military funeral when they buried me here in grave B. 2. "C." 1329.**
8. **I’m Captain or Doctor as I prefer, Claude Johnson Royal Army Medical Corps** – so I’m the last man in and we need 10 to win. We did win didn’t we? Or what was winning? Before the war I was a Doctor in Kings Heath. Apparently I was the youngest medical graduate in my year in 1908 with distinctions in my examinations. My father lived at Rockmount in Kings Heath and was a doctor for the area. I was also a very proud member of the Ashfield Cricket Club. I was one of the leading lights that got our lovely pavilion built in the April of 1914. Yes I am proud to be a member of Ashfield. So many of us served in France that they called us ‘The Fighting Ashfields’ and there are 30 of on our war memorial. I lost such good friends from both Ashfield and from Moor Green Football Club which we founded and I played for. I served in France from the beginning at Mons till early in 1918 and then to India where I was stationed at Jhelum. In my time I saw so many things that I would rather not see. Men with broken bodies and broken lives and I was expected to patch them up. I worked hard but many of the injuries were hopeless. The first man to die on the table under my knife made me cry, although I didn’t let the others see me. But you learn and you know that unless you do something they will die anyway and you get better. Then you would get it right and have a feeling of satisfaction only for the poor devil to die through infection. There was nothing that we could do. Once infection is deep routed it goes through the body like a train. We need something that will kill infection at the outset but such a drug doesn’t exist. Instead I have to watch countless patients die, not from their wounds but because of infection afterwards. When the war was over it was such a relief and yet it was also mixed with great sorry as one thought of the chaps who didn’t make it. Freddy Bonham Burr who played football with me died leading his men in a charge in 1915. Brave Maurice Hobson who was solid as a rock died east of the Suez Canal. Hugh Ryan Bell who played many a fine innings for us and then the men who fell on the first day of the Somme: John Balkwill, Frank Fawsett, Harry Foizey, dear Bill Furse who’s brother Alan was our secretary after the war, Bill Sanby who was such a kind man and deserved to have many children and grandchildren. My heart ached for them all. I became the Captain of Ashfield after the war and when we started playing again we did well. It was only right that we should mark the death of our friends and I moved that we had a memorial built. I got married to Elin Leibbrant in May 1915 and it was the happiest day of my life. My family were there, mother, father and my brother Stanfield as well as many people from Kings Heath who came to see their doctor get married. Sidney Halsey was there. He had been a Captain in the Cheshire Regiment and had come through the war without even a scratch. It played on his mind and he wasn’t the same man as before the war. I had chatted to him about it on a number of occasions and he kept saying ‘why me? Why wasn’t I killed like them’. You could almost touch the sadness that surrounded him. He died in a motor cycle accident in the April of 1920 and one of my last wishes was that he should also be included on the war memorial because he was a victim of the war. I never once suspected that I would join him on that memorial. Whilst in India I contracted dysentery rather badly. It left me very weak. The flu epidemic had left us but there was enough of it about for me to catch it. I had weakness in my lungs due to gas in 1915 and that, combined with the dysentery left me too weak to fight it off. Ironically it was pneumonia, the poor man’s friend, which did for me. As I lay gasping for breath in my bed with my dear Elin sitting next to me, someone was cutting the grass outside and the smell of the newly cut grass wafted in through the window. I knew that my end was near as I closed my eyes but the last thing I remember is the smell of that grass and I hope Elin saw the smile on my face I was back once more with the sun on my back, Ashfield’s pavilion to my left, hitting the winning run once more.’