

Henry Bunce

Born 1878

Died 9th May 1915 Age 27

Royal Berks Reg 2nd Bn. Pte 10443

Ploegsteert Memorial

Henry Bunce was one of the hardest men to trace. Apart from his name on the memorial tablet, and a reference back from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that he had a link to Hanney, there was nothing else to show that he had been here. He was not related to the Bunces already in Hanney and it was difficult to find any connection with any Henry Bunce found on the census. It was only by finding, in the parish records, that an Elizabeth Bunce, 33, a widow in West Hanney, married Walter Ernest Hicks, 25, a soldier on active service, on 9th March 1918 that a connection was made. Through Elizabeth's entry in the 1911 census in Enstone we found her married to Henry and discovered where he was born.

The 1881 census lists him as the fifth child, out of six, of George and Selina Bunce living at Bradfield, Reading. George was an agricultural labourer from Stanford Dingley and Selina was from Bucklebury.

No other records can be found until 22nd September 1897, when Henry enlisted in Oxford, in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, where he states he is already serving in the local militia. By the end of the following month he has his first entry in the Defaulter Book – for using obscene language. There are 18 entries up until September 1904, including being dirty and talking in the ranks on recruits drill, making improper replies, being drunk and improperly dressed, absent without leave, losing his rifle, and breaking out of barracks. However the book does show where Henry was stationed, including the Curragh in Ireland, where troops were camped in the middle of the racecourse. Chatham, Gravesend and Borden Camp were other places he was posted to. He was discharged on 21st September 1909 in Warwick after serving his 12 years. His address given was in Enstone.

In 1910 Henry enlisted in the General Service Army Reserve in Warwick. The 1911 census shows him living in Enstone aged 33 employ as a cowman. His wife Elizabeth is 26. She and their eldest two children Edward, 6, and Phoebe, 5, were born at Hampstead Norris. Dorothy, 4, was born in Steventon and the last two Thomas, 3, and Ester, 1, in Enstone.

His army records show he was collected from Lyford Cottage, East Hanney on 13th February 1914.