

A/Sergeant Timothy Ashley[©]
Regimental Number: 147142
"K" Special Company, Royal Engineers

born: 23 November 1888 - died: 23 May 1918

Timothy Ashley was born on 23 November 1888 in Northamptonshire¹ and baptised in Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire on 7 April 1889.² He was the son of Thomas Arch Ashley, an agricultural labourer on a local estate, and his wife, Hannah, of Park Road, Yardley Hastings.³ His early years were spend with his family, which included three older sisters, Emily Ellen (born 1875),⁴ Eliza Kate (born 1879),⁵ Ida (born 1886)⁶ and three older brothers, John William (born 1876),⁷ Frederick Cecil (born 1881),⁸ and Arthur (born 1884).⁹ A fourth sister, Edith Ellen, was born in 1873¹⁰ and died in 1874.¹¹

However, in 1893, when Timothy was just four, his mother died.¹² So the family split up. By 1901, two of his sisters (Emily¹³ and Kate¹⁴) were married and the third (Ida) was working as a servant in Flyford Flavell, Worcestershire.¹⁵ His eldest brother, John William, was living in the Barracks of the Depot of the Northamptonshire Regiment.¹⁶ His other two brothers, Frederick and Arthur, then aged 20 and 17, were boarding with their sister, Kate, and her husband, John William Underwood. Timothy, age 12, was an errand boy and living with his other married sister, Emily, and her husband, Harry King.¹⁷ Their father, Thomas, was living on his own and working as a farm labourer.¹⁸ It is possible that his father remarried in 1898,¹⁹ but by 1911, he is again on his own, boarding with a widow at Bill Yard, Lavendon, near Olney, Buckinghamshire.²⁰

By 1911, Timothy was a wagonner on a farm and boarding with Frank Martin and his family at 77 High Street, Naseby.²¹ He was still living in Naseby when he enlisted as a Private in the Northumberland Regiment.²² He joined the theatre of war in France on 10 June 1915.²³ At some point he was promoted to Acting Sergeant and transferred to the Royal Engineers, where he served in the "K" Special Company, 1 Corps Troops.²⁴ The Special Companies were created during World War I to develop Britain's response to German gas attacks.²⁵



T. Ashley in Pernes British Military Cemetery
(Source: Author, July 2015)

He was first wounded on 6 November 1917 when he was shot behind the left knee by a machine gun bullet that passed through his leg.²⁶ Then, on 20 May 1918, he was gassed and admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.²⁷ He survived until 23 May. He was buried the following day at the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 14), near Béthune, France, with Chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding. He was a member of the Church of England. No address was available for his next of kin, so notification of his death was sent to his Adjutant. However, the payments made by the army upon his death were sent to his father, Thomas, and his sister, Eliza Underwood.²⁸ (Eliza had married John William Underwood in 1899 in Hardingstone, Northamptonshire.²⁹)

There were fifteen casualties from his unit on 19 May 1918 from an enemy gas projector attack, followed by heavy artillery bombardment whilst the unit was digging in its own gas projector batteries.³⁰ Five men are recorded as having died as a result, including presumably Timothy.

On 20 May, 370 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station – by far the highest number of admissions in any one day that month.³¹ This brought the total number of patients to 522. In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.³²

Timothy was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).³³

Two of Timothy's brothers – John William and Frederic Cecil – probably both served in the Boer War.³⁴ John William was in the Northamptonshire Regiment in 1901 and Frederic served with the 3rd Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment. He left for South Africa in April 1902, arriving at Cape Town in May and returned to England in September 1902. He received the South Africa Medal with Cape Colony and South Africa 1902 clasps.

Sadly, two of Timothy's brothers also died in World War I. John William was too old to fight in World War I, but two other brothers did.³⁵ Frederick served in the Northamptonshire Regiment and then transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment.³⁶ He died on 12 October 1916 near Thiepval, Picardie, France in the closing stages of the Battle of the Somme and is commemorated on the memorial to the missing in Thiepval.³⁷ Arthur served first in the Bedfordshire Regiment and then transferred to the 1st Battalion, Cambridgeshire Regiment.³⁸ He served at Passchendaele and died on 26 September 1917 in Zonnebeke, Belgium.³⁹ His death is commemorated on the memorial to the missing in Tyne Cot, Belgium.

All three Ashley sons are commemorated on the Northamptonshire Yardley Hastings war memorial in St Andrew's Church.⁴⁰ Timothy is also commemorated on the Naseby war memorial.⁴¹

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¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley, Registration district: Hardingstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 31. Family source, January 2015.

² "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley, FHL Film Number: 6129508, Reference ID: 121

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley, Registration district: Hardingstone, Sub-registration district: Brafield, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 1191, Folio: 24, Page Number: 19. Family source, January 2015.

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for Eliza Kate Ashley, Registration district: Hardingstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 37

⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for Emily Ashley, Registration district: Hardingstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 33

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- ⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for Ida Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 33
- ⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for John William Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 38
- ⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for Frederick Cecil Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 35
- ⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2015), entry for Arthur Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 32
- ¹⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 January 2015), entry for Edith Ellen Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 37.
- ¹¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 January 2015), entry for Edith Ellen Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 23
- ¹² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Hannah Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 15
- ¹³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Emily E. King, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Sub-registration district: Brafield, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 1415, Folio: 23, Page Number: 15, Household schedule number: 116
- ¹⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Arthur Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Sub-registration district: Brafield, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 1415, Folio: 24, Page Number: 17, Household schedule number: 127
- ¹⁵ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Ida Ashley, Registration district: Pershore, Sub-registration district: Pershore, ED, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 2782, Folio: 9, Page Number: 9, Household schedule number: 30
- ¹⁶ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for William Ashley, Registration district: Hampton, Sub-registration district: St Giles, ED, institution, or vessel: The Barracks of the Depot Northamptonshire Regiment, Piece: 1425, Folio: 155, Page Number: 10, Household schedule number: 1
- ¹⁷ "1901 England Census," entry for Emily E. King
- ¹⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Thomas Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Sub-registration district: Brafield, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 1415, Folio: 25, Page Number: 19, Household schedule number: 146
- ¹⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 December 2014), entry for Thomas Ashley, Registration district: Hardingsstone, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 104
- ²⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Thomas Ashley, Registration district: Newport Pagnell, Registration District Number: 148, Sub-registration district: Olney, ED, institution, or vessel: 15, Household schedule number: 116, Piece: 8010
- ²¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley, Registration district: Brixworth, Registration District Number: 165, Sub-registration district: West Brixworth, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Household schedule number: 71, Piece: 8484
- ²² "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley
- ²³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley
- ²⁴ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," entry for Timothy Ashley. The 1st CCCS chaplains' journal and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission entry suggests that he was at some point appointed a

Corporal. ("Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Frederick Ashley)

²⁵ "The Special Companies RE," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.1914-1918.net/specialcoyre.htm>; accessed 26 November 2014) <http://www.1914-1918.net/specialcoyre.htm>

²⁶ Family source, January 2015. Based on information about K Company from The National Archives, London.

²⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2014), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 517

²⁸ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2015), entry for Timothy Ashley

²⁹ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Eliza Kate Ashley, District: Hardington, County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3B, Page: 99. Another sister, Emily, married Harry King in 1896. ("England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Emily Ellen Ashley, District: Hardington, County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3B, Page: 120)

³⁰ Family source, January 2015. Based on information about K Company from The National Archives, London.

³¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)

³² "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)

³³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," entry for Timothy Ashley

³⁴ Family source, January 2015

³⁵ Family source, January 2015

³⁶ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Frederick Ashley

³⁷ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," entry for Frederick Ashley. Family source, January 2015

³⁸ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Arthur Ashley

³⁹ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," entry for Arthur Ashley. Family source, January 2015

⁴⁰ Northamptonshire Yardley Hastings War Memorial (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Northamptonshire/YardleyHastings.html> : accessed 9 January 2015

⁴¹ "War Memorial - Naseby" (<http://www.waymarking.com/gallery/image.aspx?f=1&guid=e20fcf85-1048-4c34-aa4f-4ca846dceba0>; accessed 14 January 2015)