

Alfred Henry Tross

Born: 1889, Northwood

Parents: Alfred Tross and Mary Anne (Annie) Jacobs

Last known address: Chawton Cottage, Chawton Lane, Northwood

Last known occupation: Bricklayer working on the Ward Estate

Service number: 27109 **Regiment:** 9th Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

Service history summary:

- enlisted: 12th April 1916
- rank: Private
- decorations: British War Medal and Victory Medal

Died: 4th September 1916

Age: 26

Buried: [Corbie Communal Cemetery Extension](#), Somme, France.

Family: Alfred was born on October 2nd 1889 at Sticelett Cottages, Northwood, the only son of Alfred Tross and Mary Anne Jacobs when Alfred was a shepherd. They had married at St John the Baptist Church, Northwood in 1884. The church is directly in front of Chawton Cottages where his parents were living at the time of the War. Both remained in the locality until their deaths. Alfred senior worked on various local farms, ending at Somerton Farm. He went blind with glaucoma, moved from Somerton to a cottage in Three Gates Road and then to the bungalow, 'Mimosa', in Place Road, where he died aged 77 in 1941. Mary Ann died in 1952 aged 85, living at Hillside, Solent View Road, Gurnard

Both of Alfred's sisters married locally, Gertrude to Henry Vine and Beatrice to James Cheverton. The latter had three children and there are several descendants living in Cowes. These include Les Cheverton (born 1925) who remembers Alfred Henry's father as a farm manager at Somerton Farm.

Sisters: Gertrude Mary (1894) and Beatrice Ellen (1898)

Northwood/Gurnard connection: Alfred's parents were both born on the Island, his father at Forest Gate, Northwood and his mother at Godshill. In the 1891 Census he lived at Hillis Corner, when his father, Alfred senior, was described as a 'farm servant'. The 1901 Census listed Alfred senior as a 'general labourer' living at Hillis Farm in Northwood civil parish. Then, in the 1911 Census, Alfred Henry was living at Chawton Cottage, Northwood and was stated to be a bricklayer working on Ward Estate. His father was a 'shepherd on farm'.

Alfred's great nephew, Les Cheverton, said that the family story was that Alfred Tross had a sweetheart named Eldridge who died after a short illness. He thought that he had nothing to lose so he signed up. Looking at Isle of Wight BMD records,

there was a young girl, Rose Ellen Eldridge, the daughter of George W Eldridge and Mary Jane (Hunt), who was living at Cockleton Farm in 1901 with her parents and therefore quite likely that they knew each other as Chawton and Cockleton farms were owned by the Ward Estate. Her father was described as a carter. She died in Ryde of chlorosis and gastric ulcer exhaustion on January 29th 1911 aged 17. She was described as a general servant (domestic) on her death certificate.

Alfred was also a member of the Court of Foresters for the Isle of Wight, as indeed some of the other Northwood soldiers were. Those that lost their lives are commemorated in a memorial that is installed at St Mary's Church, Cowes.

War record: records from the Cornwalls' Regimental Museum give a great deal of information. Alfred was employed as a labourer, when he enlisted into the DCLI on April 12th 1916 at the age of 26 years and 6 months, the same day as Reggie Grant *qv*. This was shortly after conscription had been introduced on January 27th 1916. At the time of his joining, Alfred Tross was 5ft 3½ ins tall, below average for that time.



Picture courtesy of Mr Les Cheverton

He reported to the Regimental Depôt at Bodmin, probably on April 13th, where he would have been documented and given a full medical examination. He was posted to the 9th (Training) Battalion DCLI at Wareham on April 15th. The recruits' training syllabus at this time was supposed to take six months but it is obvious that he was posted to an operational battalion earlier than the six months would allow as he died of wounds on September 4th, having been posted to the 1st Battalion, presumably in August 1916. It is believed that Private Alfred Tross was mortally wounded on September 3rd 1916, when the 1st Battalion took part in the final Battle of Guillemont when the remains of the village were at last captured. Alfred Tross can only have been with the 1st Battalion a very few days, as his records were never updated from the 9th (Training) Battalion.