



Above: Arthur Freeman's memorial on the Menin Gate at Ypres.

Arthur Freeman was born on 31 May 1871 and baptised on 13 August in Lavendon. His parents were Thomas Freeman, a native of Lavendon, and Elizabeth Ann Kilpin, a Lace-Maker, who was born in Stoke Goldington. Thomas was variously described over the years as being a Corn Miller's Labourer, an Agricultural Labourer, a Horse Keeper on a farm, or Farm Labourer.

Thomas and Elizabeth were married in the spring of 1869 and in due course they had a large family – the census shows that by 1911 they had had 16 children of whom only 9 were still alive. Arthur was their second child, with Thomas Charles being the eldest. Their second youngest child born in 1887 was Everet who also perished in the Great War. Arthur and Everet's nephew, Charles Freeman, the son of their sister Lucy, died fighting for his country. Another of Arthur's nephews by marriage, Frank Percy Orpin, also perished in the war.

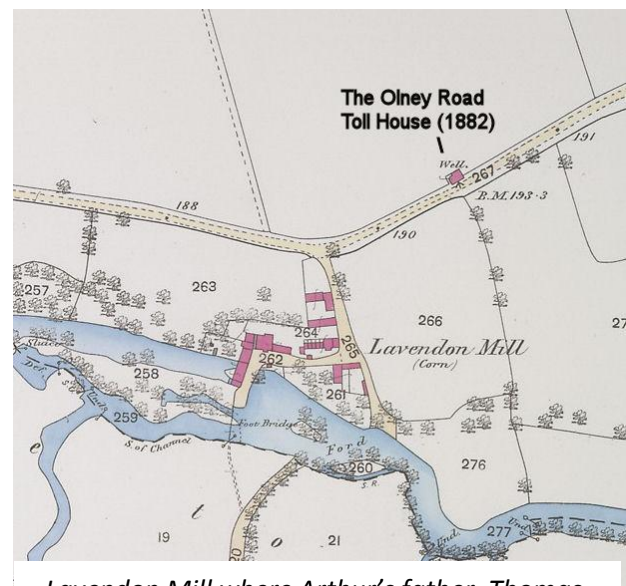
Olney Turnpike Road. The Toll House was some 50 metres towards Lavendon from the present entrance to Lavendon Mill where in 1881 his father was working as a labourer for Frederick Parsons, the then Lavendon corn miller. By 1891 both Arthur and his father were Agricultural Labourers. The family, including 9 more of Arthur's brothers and sisters, were then living adjacent to the Horse Shoe Inn, almost certainly in the so-called Dust Yard cottages which occupied the area where the Village Hall is now located.

In 1881 when Arthur was age 9, the family were living at the Old Toll House in Olney Road, long since demolished, which formerly served the Bromham to

On 7 June 1908 Arthur married Fanny Orpin who was a Lace Maker and the daughter of Daniel and Sarah Ann Orpin. By a curious coincidence, just as in the 1880s Arthur had once lived at the Olney Road tollhouse, Fanny had lived at the Toll Gate Cottages at Snelson on the former Great Staughton to Lavendon Turnpike Road. Her father, Daniel, was a Woodman and Gamekeeper for much of his working life, serving the Snelson estate until his death in 1903.

By 1911 Arthur and Fanny were living at the Crown Farm Buildings at Turvey where Arthur was working as a Stockman. Fanny's widowed mother Sarah Ann was also living with them. Arthur and Fanny had no children.

A few years later at the beginning of the Great War, Arthur enlisted in the 1st Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment. Arthur's Will dated 6th November 1914 shows that Fanny was still living at Crown Farm at that time. However, with his



Lavendon Mill where Arthur's father, Thomas, worked as a Miller's Labourer, and the nearby Old Toll House where Arthur lived as a child.

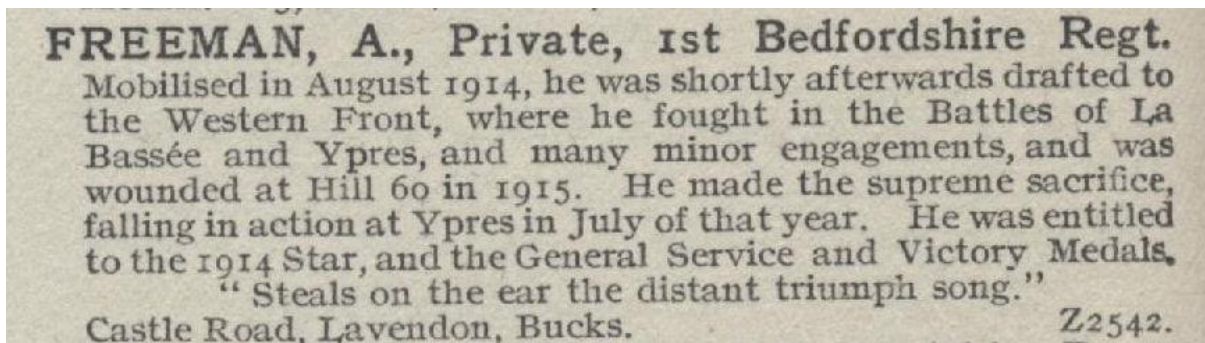
Private Arthur Freeman – 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, No.3/7803

departure from farm work, Arthur's wife Fanny evidently moved later to Castle Road in Lavendon, doubtless accompanied by her mother Sarah then aged 79.

The 1st Bedfordshire Regiment arrived in France on 16th August 1914 and fought in the early engagements of the war. The Regimental History (www.bedfordregiment.org.uk) records that

"They were engaged at the Battle of Mons in August and fought during the stand at Le Cateau, where five Victoria Crosses were won by their division. After service during the battles of the Marne and the Aisne, they were rushed north to Flanders and were also involved in the Battle of La Bassée, followed by the First Battle of Ypres. By the end of November the division had suffered 5,000 casualties and stayed in a purely defensive role that winter. Having moved to the Ypres salient early in 1915, the division were engaged at the Second Battle of Ypres, defending Hill 60, where another four Victoria Crosses were won in one day. In May Private Edward Warner of the 1st Bedfordshires won the Victoria Cross defending Hill 60 during the early use of gas as an offensive weapon, but was awarded the honour posthumously as he died of his wounds the following day."

Between May and July 1915 the Regiment continued to be involved at Hill 60 and sadly it was on the 21 July 1915 that Arthur made the ultimate sacrifice at age 44, barely one year after he had left England. Less than another year later, Arthur's younger brother Everet died in Mesopotamia. Arthur's widow Fanny lost her mother in the summer of 1916. Fanny died age 83 in 1948 at Luton but was buried at Lavendon on 7 September 1948 following a service conducted by the Rev Roy Rendell, Rector of Lavendon Church.



Right:

The Ypres (Menin Gate Memorial) where Arthur Freeman's name is recorded on Panels 31/33.



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"WILL."

I, the coent of my death
I leave the whole of my
Property & effects to my wife
Mrs Fanny Freeman
Crown Parmentary
Road
Arthur Freeman
Private ^{of} No 7803
Bedford Regt

6-11-14
Signed O.C.



Left: Private Arthur Freeman was entitled to the 1914-15 Star, the British and Victory medals. The trio of medals irreverently came to be known by the nick-name of 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred'.

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