



Walter was born in Lavendon in 1878, one of ten children in the family. His parents, married in Lavendon in 1872; they were William Arthur Bedford, an Agricultural Labourer from Cogenhoe, and Elizabeth Spriggs, born in Lavendon, who worked as a lace-maker. In 1881 Walter lived in the family home in Castle Road, together with a brother, Thomas, who was 6 years older, a sister Annie, 2 years older, and a sister Bertha who was one year younger.

In due course Walter gained several more siblings all born in Lavendon: Martha born c1883, Arthur born c1885, Caroline born c1887, Lucy born c1889, Sarah born c1892 and John born July 1893. Arthur was a Wicker Basket Maker in 1901 but died at the early age of 18.

In 1891 Walter and his brother Thomas were, like their father, working as Agricultural Labourers; sister Annie was working in the Shoe trade as a Finisher. In 1895 Walter's mother

Elizabeth died and so by 1901 Thomas, Bertha and Sarah had moved in as boarders in Northampton Road with their grandmother Caroline Spriggs, then a widow, and Thomas Holmes, a widower. However, Walter remained in Castle Road, together with Caroline, Lucy and John. Their father William was working as a Shepherd and later as a Cowman. Meanwhile, Walter seems to have become a bit of a free spirit, for in October 1903 he was convicted of being drunk in charge of a horse and cart and fined a total of 13s 6d!

The family home remained in Castle Road – indeed Walter's father William and some of his siblings remained in Castle Road until at least 1915. Walter's youngest brother John Bedford, who died in 1974, is known to have been living at 4 Castle Road in 1966, probably the family home. By 1911 Walter and his brother Thomas were both to be found working for Maria Davies, a widow, and her son John at Grindstone Hill Farm southeast of Turvey village. They were living and working there, together with another Cowman and Domestic Housemaid, in what was a large dwelling with ten rooms. Both Walter and Thomas had remained single.

Brother Thomas was later living in Olney Road, Lavendon, but as a single man at the age of 42 years he enlisted as a packer on 28th October 1915 with the Labour Section of the Army Service Corps (No. 141697). He had joined up at the Bletchley Recruitment Office, but quickly found himself at Aldershot before being posted to France. At that time, his father William was shown as being his next of kin, still living in Castle Road, Lavendon. Thomas married in 1917 and survived the war, unlike his brother Walter. He was demobilised in February 1919 and awarded the British and Victory medals, as well as the 1914/15 Star for his war service.



Walter enlisted in Bedford with the Bedfordshire Regiment, 1st Battalion, no. 27923. For Walter, the 1st Battalion was a 'regular army' battalion which fought throughout the war. Original members of it were part of the group that became known as 'The Old Contemptibles'. They variously fought in the Battles of Ypres, Somme and Arras. In 1918 they were rushed back to the Western Front in response to the German Spring Offensives.

In 1918 the Battalion War Diary briefly records: *"23 Aug 1918 - Brown Line, Achiet-le-Petit Battalion moved up in front of Achiet Le Petit & moved forward to the attack at 11 a.m. All objectives taken, Battalion suffered rather heavily from Machine Gun fire."* As a result several officers were killed together with *"129 Other Ranks killed and wounded, etc"*.

Sadly it seems that Walter was one of that unlucky number who died on the 23rd August 1918, and so he came to be buried at Achiet le Grand communal cemetery extension some 19km south of Arras in France. His grave reference is IV. U. 3.

For his part in the war, Walter was awarded the British and Victory medals.



Above: Achiet le Grand communal cemetery extension