

# AUGUST 1914

## WAR DECLARED

### OUR FIRST LOCAL CASUALTIES

The first shot fired by a British soldier happened in the Belgian village of Casteau at 6.30am on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914. Two days later, we suffered our first local casualties – **Lance Corporal William F Bone** (7474), aged 28 and 26 year old **Private Arthur Frost** (7879) both of Styal and both of **C Company 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Cheshire Regiment**. Both were, or had been, professional soldiers.

**William** was born in Congleton and lived for a while at 100 Oak Cottages, Styal with his Father James and Mother Ellen, three brothers and two sisters. By 1911 his residence was in Ketley, Shropshire where he lived with his wife Edith May and two children, James and Percy (named after his Father and Brother).

Bollington was **Arthur's** birthplace. In 1901 he lived at 154 Styal Cross with his father Samuel, his mother Elizabeth, one brother and three sisters. He was a cotton weaver before becoming a soldier. In 1911 he was stationed in India with the 2nd battalion.



Like many regiments the Cheshire's were divided at that time into four battalions (each of about 1,000 men at full strength). The regular 1sts were in Ireland and the 2nd in India. The 3<sup>rd</sup> were reservists, the 4<sup>th</sup> Territorials. Both casualties were time-served regulars and were called up again to fill the gaps as the emergency unfolded after 4<sup>th</sup> August.

Landing in Le Havre, they joined the rest of the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade (1<sup>st</sup> Norfolk, 1<sup>st</sup> Bedford and 1<sup>st</sup> Dorset) comprising nearly 5,000 men. On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1914 they found themselves at Audregnies near Mons as part of the British Expeditionary Force of 80,000 under Sir John French. (The other half of the BEF was overseas policing the British Empire.) Sandwiched between the Belgians and the French, we were asked to hold the line against the numerically superior German 1<sup>st</sup> Army. Improved out of recognition since the Boer War, the British professionals fought hard and their marksmanship inflicted disproportionate casualties on the enemy.

The heroic action of the Cheshires saved the BEF from disaster, but it cost them dearly. Of the 25 officers and 952 other ranks present at the start, only 7 officers and 200 other ranks reported at 'stand-to' afterwards. The majority of the missing were mercifully POWs, those killed numbered perhaps 100.



William is buried at **Cement House Cemetery** near Langemark. Arthur has no known grave, but is commemorated on **La Ferte-sous-Jouarre** memorial. Both names are on the Styal War Memorial and that inside the village Methodist church.

The BEF were forced to retreat and marched for two long weeks in good order towards Paris before attacking in concert with the French on the Marne on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1914.

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The following image is from the inside of the Methodist Church in Styal:

