

NOVEMBER 1914

END OF THE OPENING PHASE OF THE WAR

This month 100 years ago was, as ever, crucial. The first battle of Ypres continued with great ferocity until 22nd November. In the Pacific, HMS Monmouth and Good Hope were lost to Von Spee's squadron in one of the worst defeats in British naval history. We declared war formally on Turkey following their entry on the side of the Central Powers in late October – many Cheshire men were later to die at Gallipoli in 1915 as a consequence of this decision. Even though the British and French managed to claim a victory by stopping the Germans reaching the Channel via Ypres and Northern France, we had largely lost the highly experienced, well trained Old Contemptibles of the British Expeditionary Force. They were soon to be replaced by Territorials and Kitchener's new army. The static Western Front was there to stay for almost 4 years.



Two local men were lost this month a century ago – **Joseph Bailey** and **George Allman**. The first of our November casualties, **Joseph Arnold Bailey**, was born in Wem, Shropshire. His parents, Joseph and Rose later moved to Chancel Lane, Wilmslow, close to St Bartholomew's Church, with their 6 children. After war broke out Joseph returned to his home county to enlist at Shrewsbury. When he died of wounds on **14th November**, he was Acting Corporal 1st Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry and only 20 years old. He is buried at **Erquinghem-Lys Churchyard Extension** 1.5 miles from Armentieres and is commemorated on Wilmslow War Memorial.

The second November casualty, **George Allman**, was born in Handforth in 1888, the son of John, a police constable who relocated many times. The large family of 8 were split up when George's mother, Ann, died in 1896. His father rapidly remarried and only George remained with his father and step-mother, Clara. George became an agricultural labourer living in Styal, but suddenly in the summer of 1907 decided to join the **Cheshires**. Apparently a neighbour and liaison of his - Nancy Bower of Oak Cottages - gave birth to an illegitimate child – Maggie –soon after. George was forced by Wilmslow magistrates to contribute part of his pay to Maggie's upkeep.



Posted to Belfast with the 1st battalion, his record was not unblemished – he was promoted, demoted, promoted and finally ended up an Acting Corporal. 1911 was a turning point. He married Catherine Edwards and things went well professionally and domestically.

With the outbreak of war he was recalled and saw action at the **Battle of the Marne**. George and his fellow soldiers withstood appalling weather conditions in the shallow trenches before Ypres; casualties were heavy; equipment and provisions were in short supply. He was killed in action on **16th November** aged 25. George has no known grave, but his name is recorded at St Bartholomew's Wilmslow, St Chad's Handforth, Styal village, Styal Methodist, the Menin Gate, Shankhill Road Belfast and St Matthew's Parish Church in Belfast. His widow lived in Belfast to her dying day.

On 26th November the **1st Battalion the Cheshires**, now only just over 200 strong, mounted a Guard of Honour for the Prince of Wales at Locre, 11 km south west of Ypres. On 27th November it was inspected and congratulated by Sir John French and later General Sir H Smith Dorrien. The battalion had certainly earned all the praise they received but sadly few who had earned it were present to receive it.

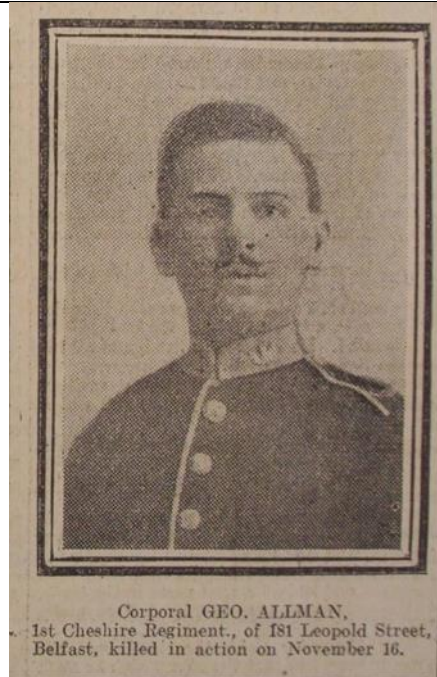


Now is the time for us all to remember Joseph, George and the other 271 young men of the Greater Wilmslow area as well those of our own families who died in the Great War.

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.”



The stone marking the grave of J.A. Bayley



**Jon Armstrong and Alan Cooper
Wilmslow Historical Society**

