



### **Augustus Harris, Welsh Guards – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916 (Age 22).**

#### **1184 – Lance Corporal Augustus (Gus) Harris – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Welsh Guards**

According to the 1911 census, Augustus was born to Thomas (b.1865) and Elizabeth 'Lillie' (née Pugh - b.14/12/1870) Harris at Ty'n-y-Coedcae [farmhouse] on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1893. He had two brothers, Gwyn (b.1899) and (Thomas) Brindley (b.1895) and two sisters, Beatrice (b.1891) and May (b.1897). The family previously lived at 9 New Row, Machen.

Augustus, or Gus as he was known, worked as a tinplate catcher at the Waterloo Tin Plate Works as did brother 'Brindley'. Their father was a tinplate roller at the same works. Gus was a well-known rugby player.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1914 Gus joined the Glamorgan Constabulary as PC 526 but left on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1915 so he could join the Welsh Guards the following day. Sixty of his Glamorgan Police colleagues who also joined up lost their lives – 23 with the Welsh Guards.

Gus served on the Western Front from August to December 1915 and again from July 1916. In August 1916 he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

His brother Brindley joined the Army Flying Corps on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1918 (then RAF on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918). He survived the war, married Clarice and lived with their three daughters in Oxford until his death in 1969. According to Brindley's record, their Mother Lillie was living at 13 Standard Street, Trethomas in 1918.

### **JH Richards, Welsh Guards – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916 (Age 19).**

#### **2208 – Guardsman James Herbert (Bert) Richards – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Welsh Guards**

As far as we can ascertain, Bert was born in Abercarn in 1896 to William (b.1869) and Clara Ann (née Thomas, b.1869). He had five younger brothers, Eldred Arthur (b.22/02/1899), Trevor Glyndwr (b.27/11/1900), William Percival (b.02/04/1902), Melvyn Ernest (b.1909) and Stanley Clifford (b.1910), as well as a younger sister Katie (b.1898).

In 1901 the family was registered at 10 Waterloo Terrace but Bert was noted at another house on Waterloo Terrace (we think either No. 2 or 3) with his maternal Grandparents James (b.1849) and Ann (b.1843) Thomas. In 1911, while the family was still at No. 10 Waterloo Terrace, Bert was registered at Dranllwyn, Machen with Grandparents James and Ann.

At 14 years of age Bert was working as a tinplate cleaner and his grandfather James was a tinplate assorter. Bert's Army record suggests, that like Gus, he also joined in 1915.

We have noted Gus and Bert together as they fought in the same Battalion and died on the same day – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916; a day that saw "...hard and confused fighting."

Arriving on the Somme from the Ypres Sector at the end of July, 1916, the Welsh Guards [Motto: Cymru am Byth] took over front line trenches for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> August. These being between the villages of Beaumont-Hamel and Serre; both scenes of horrific fighting during the 1916 Somme campaign. Having moved south, the Battalion took part in operations around Ginchy on 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> September. Here there was fierce hand-to-hand fighting as the Guardsmen and other troops fought around and through the village.

For the Welsh Guards a short rest from the fighting would be enjoyed as final details were worked out for a big attack (the Battle of Flers – Courcellette) planned to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> September.



This was to see British tanks in action for the first time. In preparation, the Guardsmen took up positions west of Trônes Wood on 14<sup>th</sup> September.

Here, and in trenches close to Ginchy, the Battalion sat it out in pouring rain, patiently waiting for their turn to assault the enemy's line at Lesbœufs, a heavily fortified village on the right of the main assault.

Just after mid-day on 16<sup>th</sup> September, the Welsh Guards went forward. But conditions were such that only short rushes could be made and the assaulting troops, finding themselves in standing crops, soon lost direction. At the end of the day the Battalion had suffered 144 casualties with both Gus and Bert among them.

With no known graves the men's names are recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme – both on Pier 7/Face D.



## **Postscript**

### Gus Harris

Some weeks after Gus was killed, his wristwatch was found on the battlefield by an officer of the Royal Field Artillery and sent to Cardiff Police Station from where his Mother reclaimed it. We think she later moved to Bedwas and was living at 8 East Avenue in 1939.

### Bert Richards

Bert's Mother Clara died before the war ended and was buried in St James Churchyard, Rudry on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1918.

After the war, Bert's brother Eldred married Dorothy Minnie Mason (b.29/10/1895) in 1922 and moved to 13 John Street, Abercarn and his brother Trevor married Dorothy's sister, Lily Maud Mason (b.1901) in 1924 (they had 2 children, Lily J (b.1926) and Bernice Audrey (b.1927)). Trevor and Lily lived next door to Eldred and Dorothy at 14 John Street. The sisters grew up in Garth Place, Rudry.

Bert's brother William married Ann L Williams (b.25/10/1895) in 1927 and they had a daughter Dorothy E in 1934. They lived at 9 The Crescent, Machen.