

Lawrence Turrell

By Julie Beck

Lawrence Turrell was killed during the First World War and is commemorated on both the memorial at the top of Need's Hill and in St George's church. His father Harry Turrell was sexton and captain of the bellringers at St George's church and pretty much the whole family were resident at Butcher's Row, just over the river from the church.

Lawrence, or 'Lark' as he was known to his family for he was 'always singing like a lark', is shown on the 1911 census as a 'carter on a farm'. This would have involved a great deal of work with the farm horses and the tack and equipment associated with them.

He signed up at the start of WW1 and became a 'No. 1 Driver in the Royal Field Artillery', most definitely using his knowledge and experience with horses. Lawrence seems to have been selfless and willing to help whatever the situation, his nephew Cecil Longhurst wrote the following piece about Lawrence:

"On one occasion there was an urgent call for artillery support for the front line and many gun crews were blown up at a cross roads on which the enemy guns were ranged. Leaving his gun and team undercover he crawled with his no. 2 driver as near to the cross roads as possible under cover of what was left of the hedges. The scene was littered with smashed gun timbers, dead horses and shell holes, but they picked out what appeared to be a way through, brought up their gun and galloped through under very heavy fire without mishap.

"He was awarded the medal for distinguished conduct in the field but on being told that his no. 2 would not be given it he refused to accept it on the grounds they were equally deserving. The medal was given to the bombardier who was nowhere near the scene of action."

We have a letter from Lark sent to his sister Olive in 1916; interestingly it is sent to 89 'Burrell's' Row, not Butcher's Row — maybe just a family joke for the row of houses which were owned by the Burrells at this time.



Driver Lawrence 'Lark' Turrell



All that's left of Lark's Butcher's Row in 2012.

The letter isn't very illuminating, but it does show that his family and news from home was very much in the forefront of his mind:

"Just a few lines to let you know that I received the parcel safe a few days ago. Hav'nt written before because you said Frank was going to write. Hav'nt got any news to tell you as it's rather quiet just now. Had a letter from Daisy few days ago but hav'nt heard from Bessie for some time now. Hope this will find you all in the best of health as am glad to say I am in the pink just at present. Will close now thanking you so very much from [sic] the parcel with love to all from Lark." Cecil also talked of Lawrence in his memoirs *Bicycles, Bells, Bombers and Bees*:

"Although he'd been in most of the big battles in France, he wasn't fighting at all when he was killed. They used to be up the front for so long, then they'd go somewhere for a rest, which is where he was at the time of his death. "An officer come out from this country and he'd got to go straight up to the

front. Course he didn't know anything about the place and he wanted somebody to take him up there. My uncle said he'd take him up.

"When they weren't actually fighting he was pretty often taking rations up the front, he had a one horse van thing they called a mess cart. He picked him up and on the way up to

the front, there were always stray shells coming over from somewhere, a shell pitched under the horse and killed the horse and him and the young officer."

Lawrence Turrell was 24 years old when he died in action on 21st September 1918.



Lawrence Turrell's war grave in the Fins New British Cemetery, France.