



PLUCKLEY REMOUNT DEPOT

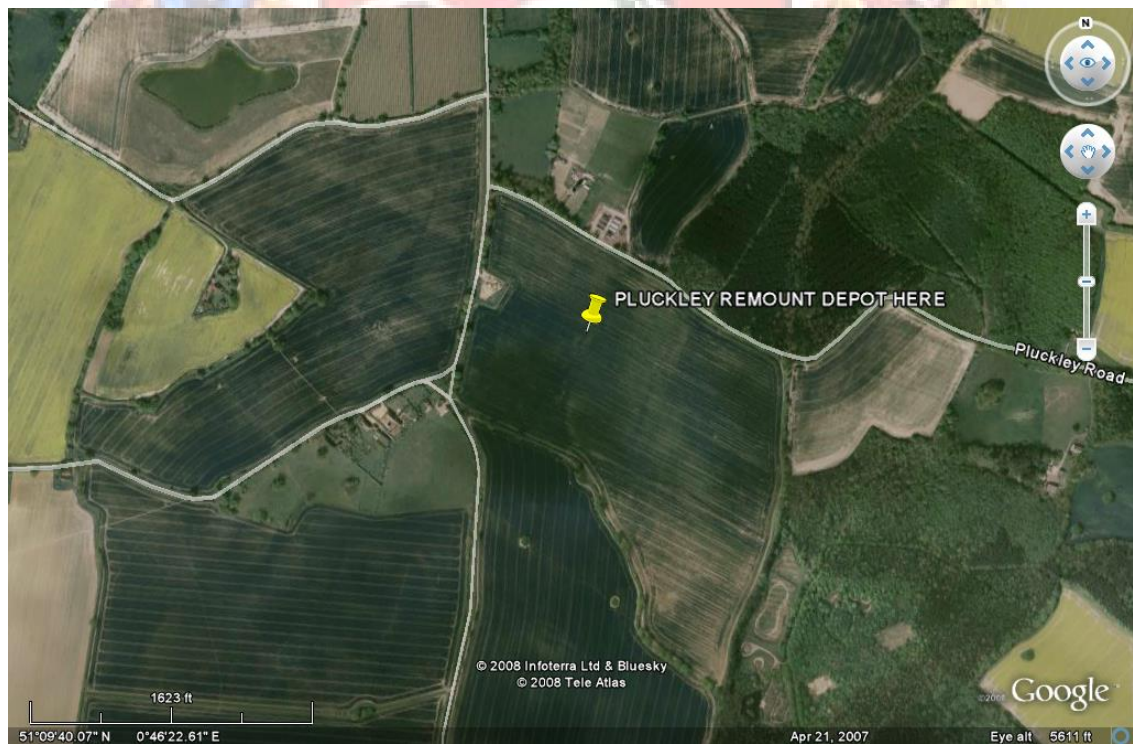
Not many people realise anything about the existence of a Remount Depot in Pluckley during the Great War (1914-1919). In fact most local people don't even know what a Remount Depot is! This is somewhat surprising given the importance of this depot during the actual war years. As time has passed all traces of the depot have almost completely disappeared which probably accounts for this ignorance. Most villages know about the Brick Works because it's buildings still exist.

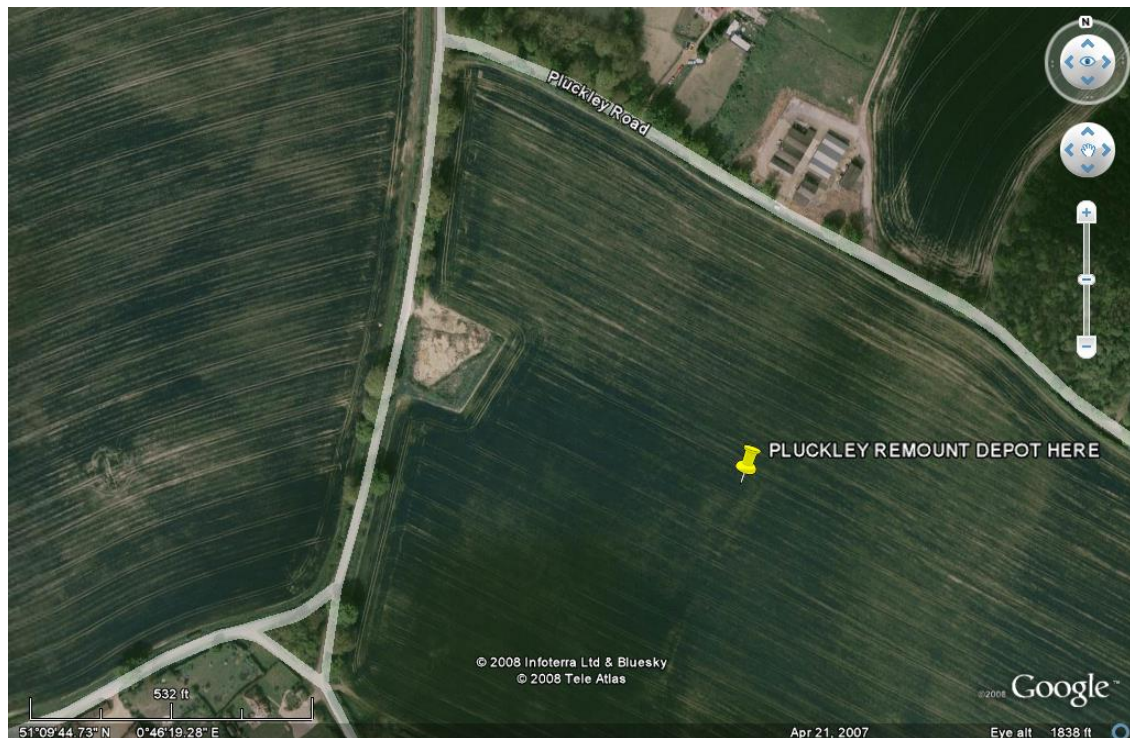
There are now no traces of the Pluckley Remount Depot left above ground. Under the soil there must be traces of the buildings foundations however many were made from Wood and remnants of these wooden buildings would now have completely disappeared. The drainage system is still intact as the farmer states the field never floods or gets waterlogged in inclement weather. The field on which it stood is now being used for agricultural purposes by it's owner local farmer Mr George Gwillam. The Gwillam family are aware of the fields former use and to this day refer to it as the "Remount Field". The family still possess a map of the area which shows where all the buildings were located. This document is probably the only proof the Remount Depot actually existed. Luckily the Gwillim family have taken great care of this plan over the years.



It's Location

The Pluckley Remount Depot was located at the end of Dowle Street. Go to Saracens and it is the field due South. Also opposite Dowle Street Farm, Pluckley.





War Office - The Army Remount Department

The problem of supplying the Army with remounts in time of war was not grasped until 1887 when the necessary reserve of horses was created by the introduction of a scheme for the registration of privately-owned animals. Under this scheme an owner could offer a number of his horses to the Army for purchase, at a fixed price, in the event of war. In return, the owner received a subsidy towards the cost of keeping the animals that had been accepted for registration. The Remount Department was a slender organisation. Purchasing was the responsibility of two Assistant-Inspectors of Remounts; a third controlled the Registration Scheme. There were two remount depots: the old **Remount Establishment at Woolwich** and a second in **Dublin**. Woolwich retained its affiliation with the artillery and engineers and the depot in Dublin provided a centre for purchasing activities in Ireland, where most cavalry remounts were obtained. The depots received newly-purchased animals and held them until they were seen to be fit for issue to a unit. Remounts were not trained at the depots. Most had been broken-in before they were purchased and the further schooling that they needed in ceremonial and tactical work was given after they had joined their regiments. The depots were commanded by Staff-Captains of the Remount Department and manned by soldiers seconded from the cavalry. In 1891, the responsibility for manning the depots was transferred to the Army Service Corps, who formed a remount company at each depot. Command of the remount depots remained a preserve of the combatant Arms. The association between the Remount Service and the Army Service Corps continued until the Second World War when the Remount Service and the Veterinary Service were amalgamated. The Peace Establishment of the Remount Service was also increased. Two additional depots were formed to expand the base organisation from which remounts would be supplied to the Army overseas in time of war. Since these two depots were intended solely for service at Home, they were staffed largely by civilians.

The Remounts Service was responsible for the provisioning of horses and mules to all other army units. It was not a large part of the ASC, amounting to only four Remount Squadrons in 1914 that ran 4 Remount Depots in the United Kingdom. A Remount Squadron consisted of approximately 200 soldiers, who obtained and trained 500 horses. A Base Remount depot (with 2,600 animals) and two Advanced Remount Depots (300 each) went to France with the original British Expeditionary Force. As the campaign continued, two further Base Remount Depots opened at the base ports. At the peak in December 1917, these facilities were training

a total of 93,847 horses and 36,613 mules. Animals were obtained by compulsory purchase in the United Kingdom and by purchasing from North and South America, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, India and China. As the army expanded, several more ASC Remount Squadrons were established. No ASC Remount personnel went to the Middle East theatres, all of the requirement being fulfilled by similar units of the Indian Army. The locations selected for the depots were **Melton Mowbray** and **Arborfield**.

1 Year or so into the Great War (1915) the authorities within the War Office recognised an urgent need for an additional Remount Depot in South East England near to the re-enforcement ports of Dover, Folkestone and Richborough (port of). Most horses were at this time passing through the Dorking Remount Depot in Surrey before embarking on their journey overseas. The railway system was used obstensively for this purpose and horses sometimes died en route from lack of water and care.

The matter was passed over to the Remount Department who in turn asked the Army Remount Service to take charge of the project.

Army Remount Service

The Army Remount Service was part of the British Army's regular structure. The officers and men of this small and specialist army unit were drawn almost exclusively from former experienced members of Cavalry Regiments. Army Remount Service personnel were complimented and assisted in general by Army Service Corps soldiers. In fact most remount depots were staffed almost exclusively by Army Service Corps soldiers who acted under the direction of Army Remount Service officers and senior NCO's. As far as is known the lowest rank within the Army Remount Service was Sergeant. Each Remount Depot was commanded by a Superintendent of Remounts normally of Major or Lieutenant Colonel rank. Each depot had an Adjutant (normally a Captain or Lieutenant) and a Veterinary Officer (Captain or Major). The Superintendent was assisted in his duties by an Assistant Superintendent NCO (normally a Company Sergeant Major or Sergeant). Most Remount Depots had a full complement of about 200 officers and men.



The Pluckley Remount Depot in detail

In April 1915 Army Remount staff took the decision to place a large Remount Depot on waste ground 5 miles west of Ashford in Kent (1.5 miles from Pluckley Railway Station). A large plot of flat well drained land was identified lying within 500 yards of the main London to Dover railway line. The Army Remount Service carried out an extensive survey and agreed on the location. Arrangements were put into operation to have a proper drainage system installed to avoid the depot from becoming water logged in wet weather. Once this had been done construction of buildings could begin –

- 1 x Guardroom
- 1 x Canteen
- 1 x Dining Hut
- 1 x Officers Quarters
- 1 x Junior Ranks Accommodation Block
- 1 x Horse Isolation Hospital (to the extreme south of the field)
- 3 x Latrines
- 1 x Horse Sadler Stores
- 1 x Blacksmiths Workshop
- 1 x Army Veterinary Corps Building
- 1 x Superintendents Office
- 1 x Orderly Room (Army Service Corps)
- 2 x Very long Horse Shelters (extending 900 yards each)
- 2 x Smaller Horse Shelters
- 1 x Forage Store
- 1 x Pining Hut
- 1 x Saddlers Shop
- 1 x Large Kraal
- 2 x Large outdoor Horse Exercise Yards
- 3 x Dung Heaps
- 5 x Segregation Boxes
- 1 x Picket Lines

As can be seen from above, this Remount Depot was a huge undertaking. The depot extended 10 acres. There was room for 1,000 horses at any one time. Horses were offloaded at Pluckley Railway Station and taken by road to the Remount Depot for sorting into the following army categories –

Royal Field Artillery (RFA)

Artillery Pieces

Ammunition wagons

Army Service Corps (ASC)

Supply Wagons

Cavalry/Yeomanry Units and other Mounted Troops

Mounts for cavalry use



Remount Depot Entrance



Looking Towards Saracens



Looking South field now used for agriculture



The only trace of the Remount Depot left is an old rusty fence





BAKER A.J

Sergeant Major 180 Alfred (Alf) John BAKER DCM. Army Remount Service (A.R.S). Assistant Superintendant, Pluckley Remount Depot. Formerly (22 years) (55) 2nd battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Died 17th February 1915 aged 51 years. Born 1863 New Romney, Kent. Husband of Mercy Elizabeth E Baker (nee BEAN). Alf married Mercy at Ashford June 1903 (West Ashford 2A 1808). Alfred and Mercy resided at 204 Godinton Road, Ashford, Kent. Killed when he was thrown from his horse at the Pluckley railway station en route to the "Remount Depot". Reported in the Kentish Express on 27th February 1915. He fell in the road fracturing the case of his skull. Alfred was actually on duty when he had the accident. Alfred's service records do not appear to now exist. Extensive searches at the National Archives have been made. The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that Alfred did not serve overseas and was therefore not entitled to any Great War medals. Because of this his name will not be on the medal index cards. There is however overwhelming evidence to support a case for belated commemoration. Alfred was a serving soldier and died when on duty. Buried Ashford Cemetery, Canterbury Road, Ashford, Kent. Grave reference – 3165.

In 2006 we were advised by the Ministry of Defence that this case had been approved! Alf will soon get a new wargrave and his name shall be added to the Commonwealth War Graves Debt of Honour Register. A satisfactory result...

Alfred's wife Mercy died 15 November 1922 and her remains were interred in Alf's grave.

Alf was a lifelong Freemason -

Mooltan Lodge, Mooltan, India

Passed for membership on 1 May 1889 and raised 31 August 1889. At this time Alf was 26 years of age and he gave his occupation as a British Soldier.

St George Lodge, Colombo, Ceylon (2170)

Joined lodge 6 November 1893. His home address was given as Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand. His occupation was given as Sergeant Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Lord Charles Beresford Lodge, Chatham, Kent (2404)

Joined 23 June 1896. Resigned 31 March 1899.

United Lodge, Colchester, Essex (697)

Joined Lodge 14 March 1900. Resigned December 1902. Occupation given Colour Sergeant, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Stour Lodge, Ashford, Kent (2305)

Joined 15 January 1914. His final entry states – Killed in Action 17 February 1915.

On 25th April 2006 the Ministry of Defence (Army) finally APPROVED commemoration. Alf is soon to get a new military pattern headstone thanks to us!

Alfred's death Certificate reference is – Western Ashford/CH15/415.

An inquest was held into Alfred's death 18th February 1915 by the Coroner of Kent C Duncan Murton. These records at Maidstone were destroyed in the 1950's.

Alfred was born in New Romney before coming to Ashford and working for Mr Finn (the grocer). Alfred served 22 years in the 2nd Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment 17 of which were spent in India. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) by Lord Roberts in South Africa. He won the DCM during the Battle of Belfast (Boer war 1900-1902). It is recorded that he won this bravery award for rescuing an injured soldier whilst under heavy fire. In 1913 Alf was Drill Instructor for the Ashford Company, Kent National Reserve. When the Great War commenced Alfred volunteered for service overseas but was turned down due to his age. Instead he was enlisted into the Army Remount Service (A.R.S). Alfred was almost immediately appointed Assistant Superintendent of the Remount Depot at Pluckley. The Superintendent and Alf's boss was Colonel Birdwood also of the Army Remount Service.

His DCM was gazetted in the London Gazette on 27th September 1901 (Army Order 15/02). The award was made for a deed during the Battle of Belfast action on the 27th August 1900. It is also recorded that Alfred was wounded in action on 24th August 1900. The 2nd Warwickshire Regiment sailed on the SS Gaul on 26th November 1899 bound for the South African Boer War. It arrived in the Cape on 16th December 1899. Upon reaching South Africa the battalion was placed in the 5th Division commanded by Sir Charles Warren. The Battle of Belfast was the last set piece battle of the war.

Alfred's death is not recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as a war casualty. His death should have been recorded as a war casualty because he was a serving soldier at the time of his death. The Army Remount Service was manned by experienced but elderly soldiers who were too old to serve overseas. It was custom for these men to use their former army ranks. The Army Remount Service had its own designated cap badge. The photo of Alfred shows him wearing a cap with this badge on it. The Remount Depots were run by the A.R.S but the vast majority of manpower was supplied by Army Service Corps (A.S.C) soldiers attached to the Army Remount Service. The Army Eastern area of command (which included Kent) had 6 Remount Depots staffed and run by the Army Remount Service in conjunction with the Army Service Corps (ASC). The personnel operating the Remount Depots were fulltime soldiers who in the main wore the badge of the Army Service Corps and to a lesser extent the Army Remount Service. Alfred Baker was a member of the Army Remount Service. These remount Depots looked after the horses that were used by the British army throughout Europe and the Middle East. Pluckley was chosen because it was in close proximity to Dover. Pluckley's depot was located close to the railway line possibly near or at the site of the old brickworks. The horses were transported by train to Dover and then put on ferries for the sea crossing. Once in France or Belgium they were taken to a forward remount depot for field deployment.

UK REMOUNT DEPOT's

Dublin
Woolwich
Melton Mowbray
Arborfield Cross near Reading
Wokingham Railway Station
Pinckards Farm, Chiddingfold, Godalming, Surrey
Pluckley, Kent (from 4th August 1914)
Brentwood, Essex
Luton, Bedfordshire
Market Harborough
Kettering, Northamptonshire
Redhill, Surrey.

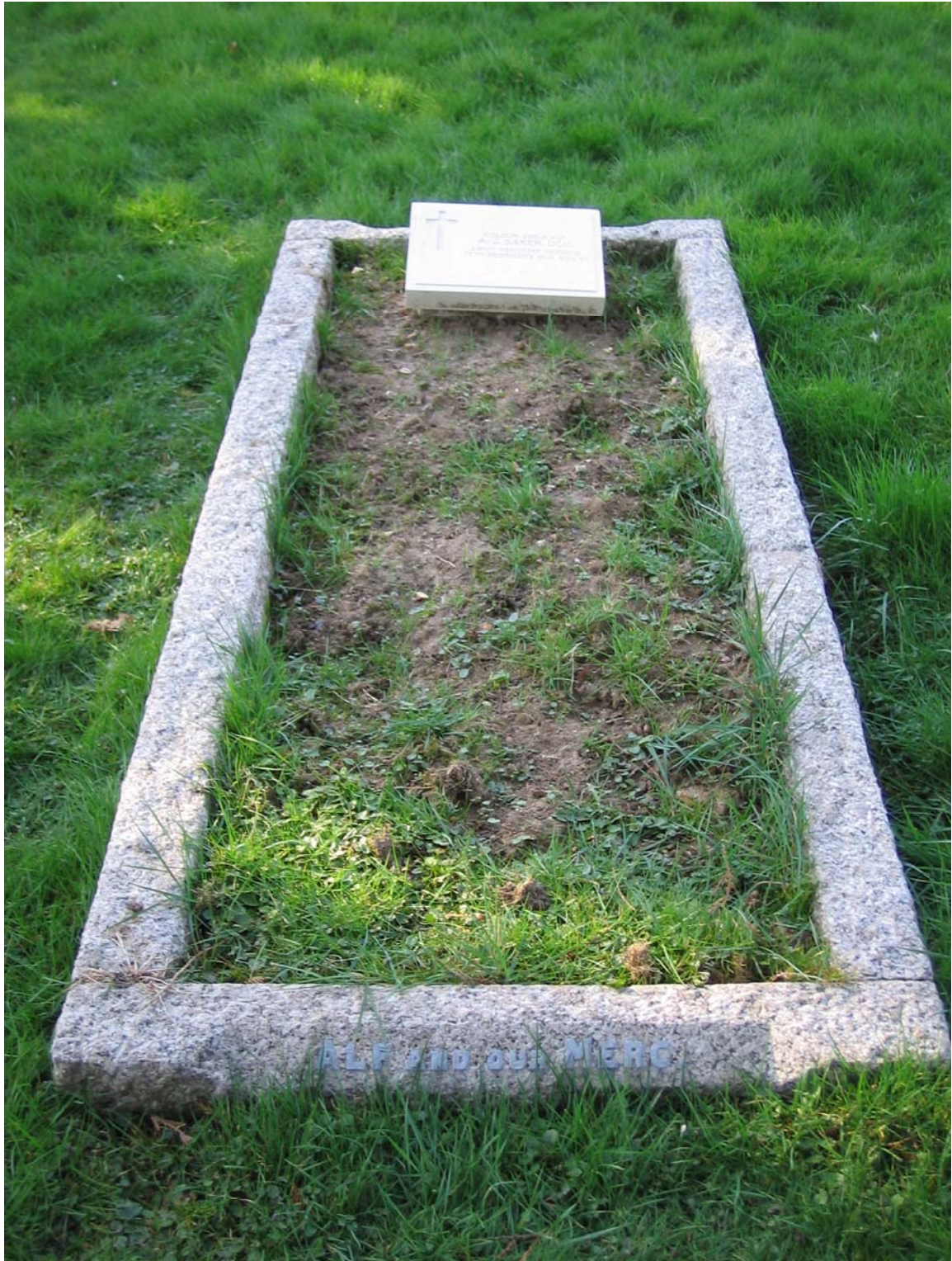
The Superintendent of the Pluckley Remount Depot was Colonel Birdwood.

Members of the Remount Depot who attended Alf's funeral

Colonel Birdwood
Major Fagfan
Captain Littledale (Veterinary Officer)
Farrier Major Pierce
Sergeant Bell
Sergeant Griffin
Sergeant Matthews
Corporal Hemsley
Corporal Kemp
Corporal Packham
Corporal Shorter
Canteen Orderly Wood
Private Homewood
Private Buss
Private Gibson
Private Russell



Alfs new Gallipoli Marker Headstone



A job well done !

HOLDSTOCK E

* **Worked and Resided Pluckley Remount Depot**

Driver/ Rough Rider/Nagsman RTS/4813 Edward HOLDSTOCK. 2nd Remount Depot, Army Remount Service (ARS) Depot Pluckley, Kent. Army Service Corps. Formerly London Yeomanry. Died Royal Herbert Military Hospital, Woolwich of Asthma and Bronchitis Monday 1st January 1917 aged 51 years. Born Hothfield, Kent. Enlisted Pluckley. Resided Pluckley. Son of William and Fanny Holdstock of 75, Christchurch Road, South Ashford, Kent. Brother of Alfred Holdstock, Dukes Head Public House, Ashford, Kent. Buried in the Greenwich Cemetery, London. Grave reference 3.C.A.204. The majority of burials here were from the Herbert Hospital and the Brook Hospital both in Greenwich.

Edward's service papers record he worked in the Pluckley Remount Depot, Kent (With C/Sgt A.J Baker DCM). His service papers clearly show that he knew Alf Baker DCM because this was the person who attested him on 13 December 1914.

Edward was a former Territorial Force soldier having served in the London Yeomanry during the South African War (Boer War) 1899-1902. After leaving the Territorial Force and coming to Ashford Edward worked as a Groom. He was obviously a skilled horseman which is the reason why he was recruited into the local Remount Depot at Pluckley 13 December 1914. Edward was awarded the 1914/15 Star because he served in France with the BEF (13 December 1914 – 10 November 1916). His service papers record he embarked on the SS Kingtonian at Southampton for Havre on 21 December 1914. Upon arriving in France Edward proceeded to his unit – 30 Remount Squadron, 5 Base Remount Depot. Edward left France on 3 October 1916. After leaving France Edward returned to the Pluckley Remount Depot near Ashford. His war service for the Great War amounted to 2 years and 20 days. It appears that Edward suffered some kind of serious Asthma attack at the Pluckley Remount Depot and was taken from Pluckley to Woolwich where he subsequently died. When Edward died his next of kin was his brother Alfred who was the Licensee of the Dukes Head in Hamstreet.

His service papers record the circumstances of his death –

"This man was admitted to hospital 28 December 1916 complaining of constant coughing and breathlessness. He stated that he had never previously been ill, but while in France the above symptoms commenced. On examination there was signs of Bronchitis over both lungs. Later he developed Characteristic manifestations of Bronchial Pneumonia and his general condition became much worse. He died on 1st January 1917. Death was due to disease which he had contracted since enlistment and was aggravated by his war service".

The 1901 census gives –
75, Christchurch Road, Ashford

Fanny	HOLDSTOCK	52	Widow	Hothfield
Edward		27	Groom	Hothfield
Henry		13	Fishmongers Asst	Ashford
Ellen Mary		19	Dressmaker	Hothfield
Harriet		18		Hothfield

The Ashford (SE&CR) Railway Works Rolls of Honour lists –

HOLDSTOCK F	Coppersmith	RE
HOLDSTOCK Henry	Apprentice	KFRE
HOLDSTOCK Harry	Apprentice	KFRE
HOLDSTOCK L.J	Apprentice	5th Buffs
HOLDSTOCK R	Striker	5th Buffs



FOX J

Pluckley Remount Depot

Private 34410 John FOX. 11th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. Formerly Royal Sussex Regiment. Killed in action 26th April 1917. Aged 33 years. Son of Robert Henry and Mercy Ellen (nee Booth) Fox, of Warbleton, Sussex. IN the 1901 Census (RG 13/889 pg 13) he was a 17 year old Labourer and his father a chicken farmer. Buried in Cabaret-Rouge British cemetery, Souchez, Pas de Calais, France. Plot XV. Row J. Grave 14.

Recorded on Warbleton civic war memorial Sussex as J FOX, Royal Sussex Regiment.

From the *The Sussex Express* 18 May 1917 page 5 (in action) "Mr. R.H. FOX, Homestead Farm, Warbleton, has received information that his second son, Private John FOX, Suffolk Regiment, was killed in action on 24th April. Private Fox, who was 33 years of age, joined up to do Blue Cross work at the outbreak of the war, and was for some time at the **Remount Depot at Pluckley**. Later he transferred to the Suffolk Regiment, and went to France last November. He had been away from home for thirteen years."