

Remember Them – Bathford’s casualties at the ‘Battle of the Somme’ during World War 1...

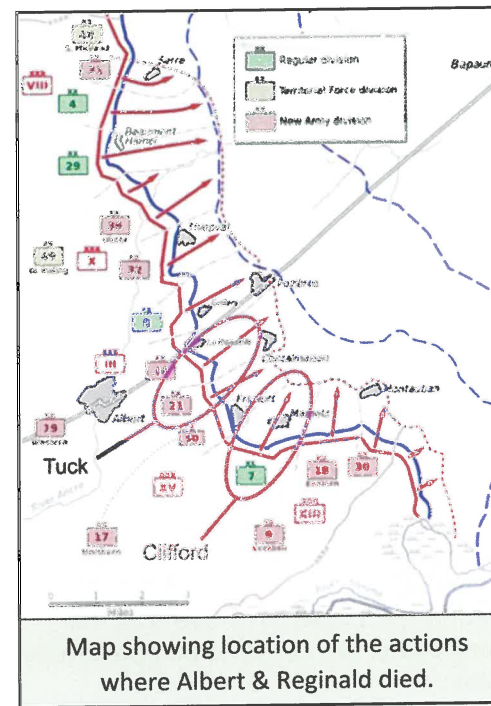
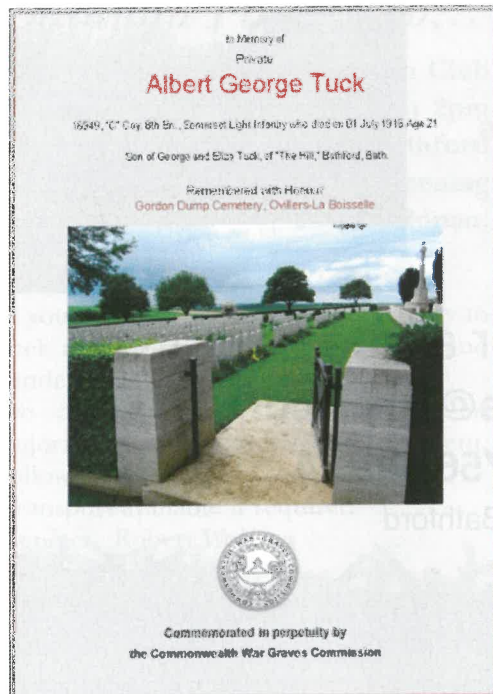
One hundred years ago this month, on the 1st July 1916, a series of battles started that lasted until 18th November 1916, now known as the Battle of the Somme. The Somme offensive saw dreadful loss of life and injuries – there were some 57,000 casualties on the first day alone. The loss of life affected most communities in Britain and the Empire as it was then. Bathford was no exception: two of the 23 men remembered on the Bathford War Memorial for WW1 in St. Swithun's church-yard died in the first few weeks of that period of stalemate on the Western Front. They were Albert Tuck and Reginald Clifford. Albert was a Private in the Somerset Light Infantry, whilst Reginald was a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery. Unlike the 'gentry' less is known about the

lives of ordinary soldiers. In 2014 I wrote about the tragic death of Henry Langton Skrine on the battlefields of Flanders which saw the end of the family line at Warleigh Manor, but for Albert Tuck and Reginald Clifford we have very little so far. Albert was living with his parents George and Eliza Tuck in Bathford when he joined the Somerset Light Infantry as Private Tuck, No. 16949, of the "C" Coy. 8th Battalion. This was part of the 21st Division of the 63rd Brigade, which was part of the XV Corps of the Fourth Army; - the

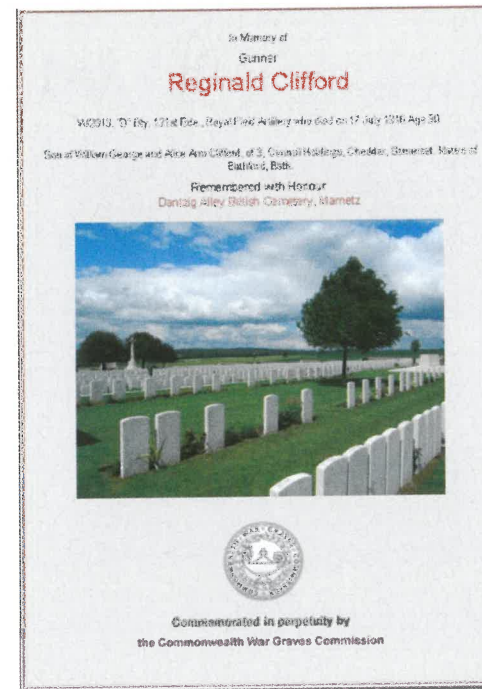


Albert Tuck

'New Army' raised by Kitchener. He was only 21 Years old when he died on the first day of the Somme offensive in the engagement called the Battle of Albert, named after the nearby town of Albert, not Albert Tuck! This was the worst day of the war in terms of casualties, and for little or no gain. Albert is buried at the 'Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovillers-de-Boisselle'. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website (CWGC) provides the certificate (left) showing his basic details. with a photograph of the cemetery. From the internet I found this photograph of Albert. In the *Bath Chronicle* archive a letter was published from a soldier who was wounded, and survived, the first day of battle. He was Sergeant Holley, also of the Somerset Light Infantry, whose home was in Herbert Road, Oldfield Park, Bath. These are extracts from his letter: - *"I shall*



Map showing location of the actions where Albert & Reginald died.



never forget the morning of the 1st, the longest day I live. It was hell upon earth. I have been through the lot, but I think that is the worst game any of us have been in. We went into the trenches about midnight the night before, and went over the top the next morning. All our watches were fixed at zero; that was for us to go over at 7:30am. Our chaps bombarded with all sorts and sizes of guns for 6 days and for the last hour every gun we had was trained on those front lines and, by gum, it must have been hell for Fritz, but he had some good dugouts".
"At 7.30, the fire was lifted, and the order was sent down the line, "Up and at 'em", and we met such a storm of machinegun and shell fire that you would think it was impossible to ever live in." - - "We got up to charge, but if you ever saw the vanishing trick put on about sixty men it was when he said "Charge". They were waiting for us and we went down like sheep. They gave me mine in my left thigh, right in the bone, and there it stopped. It was not being hit that I worried about, it was having to stay out there all day".

The other soldier, Reginald Clifford, whose parents had lived in Bathford but, when Reginald died, were living at Cheddar. He is described on the CWGC certificate (left) as 'Gunner W/2313, "D" Battery, 121st Brigade, Royal Field Artillery'. From the records his unit was assigned to the 38th (Welsh) Division, which had recently been combined with the 7th Division, and was engaged first in the capture of Marnetz Wood (1st – 13th July) and then the attack for Bazentin



Reginald Clifford

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