

THE DORRINGTONS' OF BURSTEAD FARM

Philip Hays¹

Thirty-three men are commemorated on the Little Hallingbury War Memorial. Sixteen of these men have a known grave. Fourteen of these graves are situated in France or Flanders, but two men are buried in Little Hallingbury, in the Burial Ground at Gaston Green: George Dorrington and Thomas Dorrington. They were the sons of Daniel and Alice Dorrington, who are also buried in Gaston Green. Daniel and Alice had four sons, all of whom served their king and country during the Great War. Three of these sons "laid down their lives" for their brethren. A fourth son was awarded the Military Medal in recognition of his bravery.

Daniel Samuel Dorrington was born in Sawbridgeworth in 1859. In 1901 he was living at Burstead Farm, giving his occupation as a "poultry man". His wife, Alice, was born Alice Jennings in Spellbrook in 1861. They married in 1883 and had four sons and two daughters, all born in Great Hallingbury, probably in Spellbrook. Their eldest son, George, was born in 1884. Their elder daughter, Emily was born in 1886. Their younger daughter, Mary Ann was born in 1888. Ernest Daniel, their second son, was born in 1890. Thomas Charles, their third son, was born in 1892. Albert George, their youngest son, was born in 1896. Daniel Samuel Dorrington died on 2nd February, 1907, aged 48.



¹ Philip Hays is currently President of the Stort Valley Probus Club, a local historian and former headteacher of Sheering Primary School for 26 years.

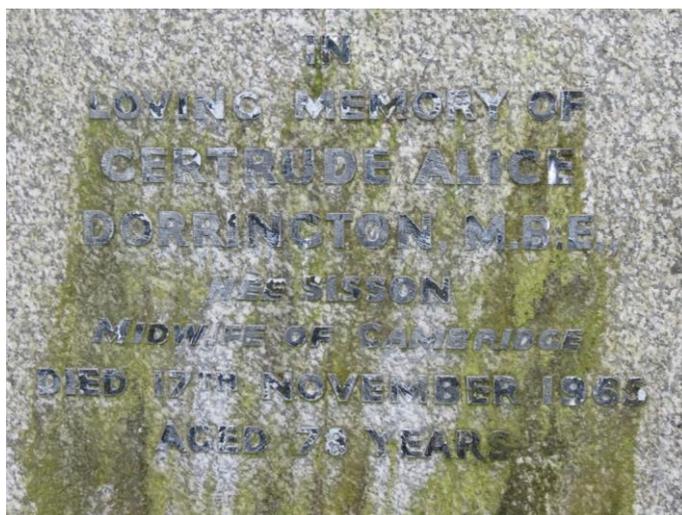
In 1911 Alice was living in Burstead Farm with three of her younger sons, Ernest, Thomas and Albert. George Dorrington in 1911 was working as a gardener at Barrington Hall. Ernest was carrying on his father's occupation as a poultry man, Thomas was a plumber. Albert was a Junior Clerk. Emily Dorrington, now aged 25, was a housemaid, working for a Wesleyan Minister, William Musson, who lived in 35 South Street, Bishop's Stortford.

All four sons of Daniel and Alice Dorrington served in the Great War. Three of them died in the conflict. The first to die was Albert, the youngest son, aged 21 at the time of his death. Albert had enlisted in Chelsea, where he was living at the time, joining the Royal Sussex Regiment. He met his death during the Battle of the Somme on 3rd September 1916. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. A stone plaque has been placed on his parents' grave in Gaston Green Burial Ground which reports Albert "as missing."

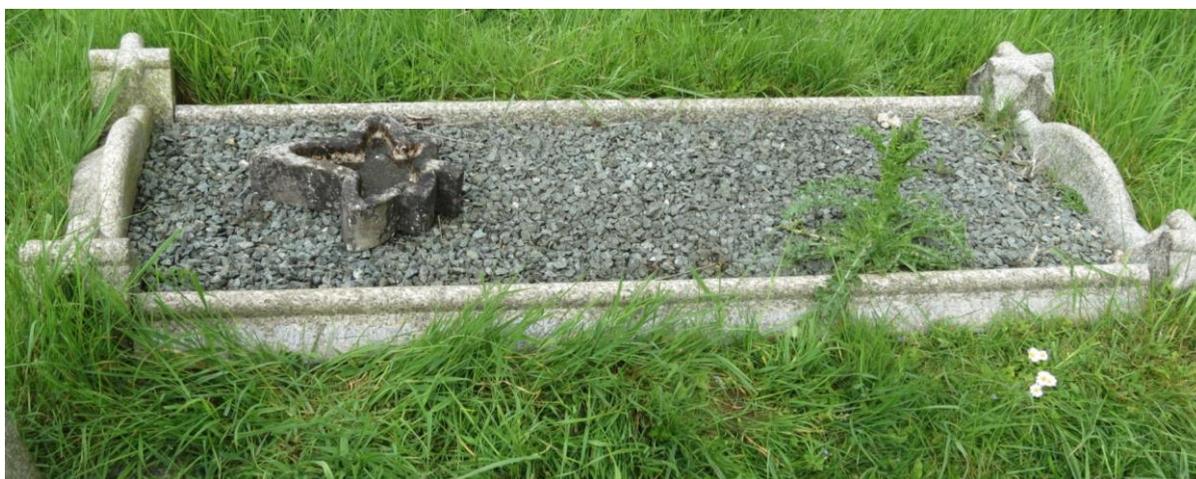


Thomas Charles died on 8th October 1917 in Lambeth, aged 26 at the time of his death. He had enlisted in Winchester and served in the Royal Hampshire Regiment. He is buried in Gaston Green Burial Ground. George Dorrington died on 22nd November 1918, eleven days after the war had ended. He was aged 34 at the time of his death. He had served as a gunner with the Royal Artillery Garrison. In 1916 he had married Gertrude Alice Sisson, described as a dress maker in the 1911 Census. His military record at the time of his death states that he was the husband of "Gertrude A Dorrington of 28 Catherine Street, Romsey, Cambridgeshire". Gertrude had been born in Cambridge in 1887. George

Dorrington is buried in Gaston Green Burial Ground. In a grave next to her husband is buried Gertrude Alice Dorrington. After her husband's death Gertrude trained in nursing and for about 40 years was a midwife practising in Cambridge. She delivered more than 4,000 babies and was awarded the MBE. The local Bobbies guarded her bicycle with their lives when they spotted it outside a Cambridge house in the small hours. She is described on her gravestone as "The Midwife of Cambridge." She died on the 17th November, 1965, aged 78 years.



The tombstone of George Dorrington





Ernest Dorrington (pictured above), the second son of Daniel and Alice Dorrington, survived the Great War. He served with the Essex Yeomanry in France for five years and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery, saving the life of one of his officers in May 1915 at Ypres.

Those of us who like cream cakes, we owe an extra debt of gratitude to Ernest Dorrington, because on the 19th August 1919 he set up business in Sawbridgeworth as a baker in a small bake house with one shop (pictured below).



He had left the army only two weeks earlier and in that fortnight he married the girl he had courted throughout the war, taken a week's honeymoon, and put down his war service gratuity as a deposit for the business of "baker and corn dealer", so corn could be purchased alongside the daily loaf; this was important, as most people at that time kept a few chickens in their back yard. In 1924 the first branch shop was opened in Old Harlow and a model T Ford Van (pictured below) was purchased to make deliveries. In 1930 another branch shop opened in Bishop's Stortford in the market square.





Deliveries of bread were still carried out during the Second World War on three days a week, although shortage of petrol meant that horse-drawn delivery vans came back into service (pictured above). Sometimes it would be 10 o'clock at night before the last deliveries were made to the last customer at the far end of Great Hallingbury. Deliveries were always made, but on one occasion a horse walked into the pond at Woodside Green, whilst the rounds man was away.

Ernest Dorrington died on 19th September 1955, and he too is buried in Gaston Green Burial Ground. Alice Dorrington died on 16th July 1936 and was buried with her husband, Daniel, in Gaston Green Burial Ground.



She must have been a remarkable lady: widowed in 1907, she had to bear on her own the grief of losing three sons in the Great War. One son survived the carnage and she must have felt honoured that he was awarded a Military Medal for bravery. The Burial Ground in Gaston Green is well worth a visit to help us understand a little about the agonies which families in Little Hallingbury, such as the Dorringtons of Burstead Farm, suffered one hundred years ago.

