



Private James Holder Grimes - 22783



18th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers

Killed in action Sunday 15th April 1917,
Age 36

Thiepval Memorial, France Pier and Face 3C and 3D

Burbage War Memorial

James Holder Grimes was born at the old manor house at Owlpen, Gloucestershire in late 1879. The son of Henry and Esther (nee Holder) Grimes. His father Henry was a gardener for the Stoughton family a branch of the ancient Mander family. James had six step siblings and a sister Lily.

The Stoughton family had abandoned the old manor house for Owlpen House a large Italianate mansion. The east wing of the old manor became home to the Grimes family where his father was caretaker/gardener. James' childhood was spent in Owlpen, where the poet Swinburne described it to William Morris as near to paradise that one would find on earth.



Owlpen Manor



Garden Owlpen Manor

On leaving school James became a gardener helping his father tend the topiary yews, giving them their annual tonsure and maintaining the walled kitchen gardens with their superior soil and fertility for Owlpen House. It is largely due to James and his father maintaining the old gardens that Gertrude Jekyll was able to restore them in 1926.

Gertrude Jekyll worked with Lutyens when the WW1 Commonwealth War Graves were originally designed. She chose plants where possible that would be commonly found in an English cottage garden. The ones that would be well known to the fallen.

At some time after 1901 James left home moved to Hillesley, Wotton under Edge, some seven miles from Owlpen.

On the 2nd April 1908 at the age of 28 James married Elizabeth Margaret Powell at Holy Trinity Church, Drybrook, Gloucestershire. By the census of 1911 he is listed as a head gardener at one of the large estates in the area. His father age 74 is also living with the couple and still employed as a gardener.

Maybe it was the horticulture of this area which brought James and his wife to Burbage. He would possibly have worked for the Burbage Nurseries for the Hurst family who had a national reputation for rose growing.

They made their home at 15 (now 31) Coventry Road, Burbage.

The Burbage Experimental Station of Charles Chamberlain Hurst also attracted skilled gardeners. The station closed in WW1 as many of the workers enlisted and this may be why by the age of 36 James had also joined the Royal Field Artillery.

Conscription for Men age 18-40, including married men, was passed in May 1916. James would be one of the older men that enlisted at Hinckley.

The first battle of Scarpe close to Arras commenced on the 9th April 1917. The Arras campaign is viewed as a turning point in favour of the British forces. By 14th April the first battle had ceased, but it is during this time that James was killed. He has no known grave.

Henry Grimes his Father died in December 1917 age 81 at Owlpen.

After his death his wife Elizabeth moved to live at 10 Occupation Road (now the Crossways). Probate to Elizabeth his wife was granted in October 1917, effects £179.18s 7d.

GRIMES James Holder of Burbage **Leicestershire** private 18th battalion Lancashire Fusiliers died 15 April 1917 in France on military service Probate **Leicester** 8 October to Elizabeth Margaret Grimes widow. Effects £179 18s. 7d.



Thiepval Memorial, France

NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Manor was abandoned shortly after 1815, and about 1848 Owlpen Park, a new mansion to the designs of S.S. Teulon, was built on the hills, at the other end of the estate, a mile away. It has a commanding site with picturesque Reptonian prospects, evergreens, clumps and shelter belts. But the gardens at the old manor were kept up, when labour was plentiful, and we find it described as a "garden house", with a caretaker/gardener, **Henry Grimes**, living in part of the east wing. He tended the topiary yews, giving them their annual tonsure, and maintained the walled kitchen gardens, with their superior soil and fertility, for the Big House.

Victorian photographs show the yews neatly trimmed, the garden carefully cultivated as a self-consciously romantic idyll, a destination for picnics and after-church excursions for house parties. Four yew pylons in front came to dominate and conceal the manor house, which "cowered", as Vita Sackville-West described it, amongst them. When they were removed in the 1950s, Christopher Hussey wrote a teasing verse to the then owner, lamenting the passing of the "introvert Owlpen of yore . . . though I like yew, I really love *you* even more".

The garden retained its old-world charm after Norman Jewson's restoration, becoming widely recognised on both sides of the Atlantic between the Wars. [REDACTED]

Owlpen Manor History