

# Church pays special tribute to bell-ringer killed in war

By BOB RAE  
rae@thestar.co.uk  
Twitter: @bobrae

Bells are to ring out at St John's Church in the Rammoor district of Sheffield today to mark the centenary of the death of one of its ringers during World War I.

A memorial peal lasting more than three hours, and a quarter peal tomorrow, will mark the passing of Arthur Ward, who was killed on the Western Front, aged 26, during an attack on German defences near the French city of Arras.

Arthur and his four older brothers - Alfred, Francis, Maurice and Fred - all rang at St John's and have their achievements recorded on 'Peal Boards' in the ringing chamber of the church's bell tower.

His death is commemorated in St John's ringing chamber by a brass plaque, which records that he was killed at Gavrelle, a village six miles north east of Arras.

Arthur Ward was the fifth son of Theresa and table blade forger Henry Ward, who himself began ringing in 1888 and rang for 22 years at St Marie's in Sheffield, nowadays the city's Roman Catholic Cath-

edral. A Peal Board at St Marie's records that Henry was among members of the Ancient Society of College Youths and Yorkshire Association of Change Ringers who rang a muffled Peal of Bob Major in three hours and 33 minutes to mark the interment of Queen Victoria in the Royal Mausoleum on February 4, 1901.

The first record of Arthur ringing at St John's dates back to April 1909, when, aged 17, he joined brothers Francis, Maurice and Fred ringing for Sunday services as an inexperienced ringer on a salary of 6s 6d a quarter - half that of the more experienced ringers, but equivalent to £36.45 today, when inflation is taken into account. By January 1910, Arthur, a silver finisher, working for a silver and electroplating company, had gained enough experience to have his salary increased to the full rate of 11s a quarter, the equivalent of £61 today.

Three years later, aged 21, he joined Francis, 28; Maurice, 25; and five others to ring a muffled peal of Kent Treble Bob Major, lasting three hours and 29 minutes, following the funeral of the Vicar of St John's Rammoor, the Rev James George Williams.

The first Rammoor ringer

*Arthur Ward*

Arthur Ward's signature on his enlistment papers

to enlist was called Edward Cockey, who joined the 12th (Sheffield City) Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment. Maurice and Arthur Ward followed him, with Arthur enlisting in the York and Lancaster Regiment in December 1915 and being mobilised in June the following year, serving in the 15th Battalion and then being sent to the 3rd Battalion in Sunderland, where he had a run-in with military justice. Army records show Private 28197 Arthur Ward being confined to barracks for seven days and docked 10 days pay for overstaying his leave by four days and nine hours in October 1916.

A month later he was sailing to France to join the Yorks and Lancaster's 14th Battalion - also known as the 2nd Barnsley Pals.

The Pals had suffered severe casualties earlier in the year in an attack on Serre on the first day of the Somme campaign at about the same time as Arthur was being mo-

bilised. After four months, Arthur was pulled out of the field for treatment of septic sores on his feet - a not uncommon ailment for soldiers struggling to survive in wet, muddy trenches - but was back with his unit towards the end of May.

A month earlier, the first of the Rammoor ringers to go to war, Edward Cockey, had returned to Sheffield after being wounded and then discharged from the Army.

Cockey continues: "By 1am on the 29th, the 14th Battalion [Ward's Battalion] was well established in 'Cairo Alley' [the name of one of the trenches] and by daybreak the entire stretch of the line was bristling with rifles and Lewis guns, ready for the expected counter-attack, which never came."

A year after suffering heavy losses on the Somme, the Pals had gained the Battle Honour of 'Oppy' while suffering 'unusually low' casualties, one of whom was Rammoor ringer Arthur Ward.

Arthur now lies with 3,000 casualties of the First World War and 20 from the Second World War, who are buried at the Orchard Dump Cemetery on the D99, between Bailleul-Sire-Berthoult and Arleux-en-Cohelle, north west of Oppy.

Arthur Ward was posthumously awarded the British War and Victory Medals, which were given to his mother, along with two discs - probably his military identity discs - a letter, photos, pocket book, religious book, metal mirror, comb and £33 8s and 5d - around £2,200 today.

Arthur's father, Henry, had died the year before, at the age of 59, but he was survived by his mother, his two sisters, Elsie and Mary, and his four brothers.

Alfred, the eldest, served as a driver with the Sheffield-based 3rd West Riding Royal Field Artillery, which also saw action in France.

Maurice, like Arthur, was a Private in the York and Lancaster Regiment, serving in the 4th West Riding Battalion. Two months before Arthur's death, he was reported as missing in action in France, but by September he was known to have survived and recorded in Rammoor ringers' archives as being a prisoner of war in Germany.

Arthur's father, Henry, had died the year before, at the age of 59, but he was survived by his mother, his two sisters, Elsie and Mary, and his four brothers.

Arthur's father, Henry, had died the year before, at the age of 59, but he was survived by his mother, his two sisters, Elsie and Mary, and his four brothers.

Alfred, the eldest, served as a driver with the Sheffield-based 3rd West Riding Royal Field Artillery, which also saw action in France.

Maurice, like Arthur, was a Private in the York and Lancaster Regiment, serving in the 4th West Riding Battalion. Two months before Arthur's death, he was reported as missing in action in France, but by September he was known to have survived and recorded in Rammoor ringers' archives as being a prisoner of war in Germany.

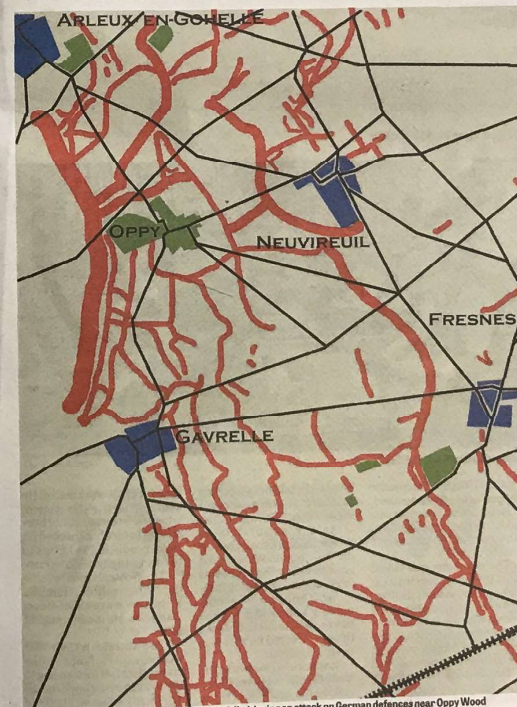
Arthur's father, Henry, had died the year before, at the age of 59, but he was survived by his mother, his two sisters, Elsie and Mary, and his four brothers.

1917 Third Quarter

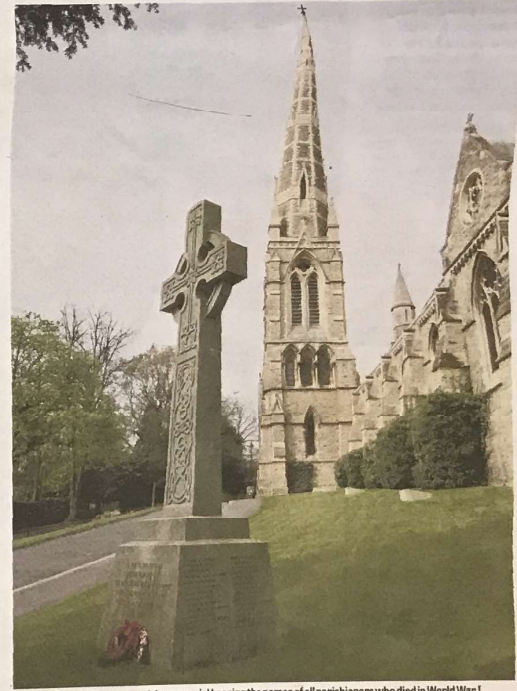
	July	August	September	Salary	Fines
W. S. Plant				22-6	
C. Haynes				22-6	
A. Ward	1/-	1/-		22-6	2-0
J. Cogathorpe	6	6		22-6	2-0
M. Ward	Missing Since May 3rd				
A. Ward	Killed in Action July 1st				
J. E. L. Cockey		6		22-6	2-0
A. E. Haynes		6	6		
		6	6		
			6		
				11 2-6	6-6

Prisoner of War in Germany

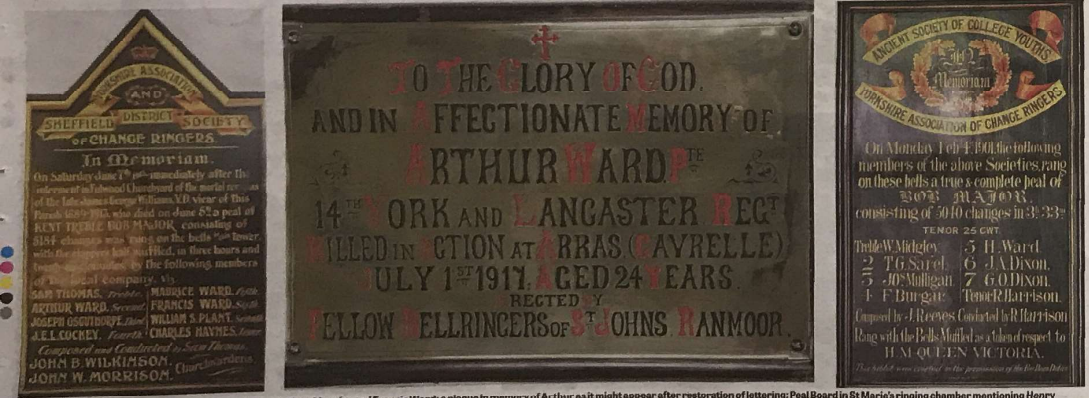
Register from St John's bell tower, recording Arthur Ward's death and his brother's imprisonment



Trench lines shown in red, where Arthur Ward died during an attack on German defences near Oppy Wood



St John's Church, Rammoor, and the memorial bearing the names of all parishioners who died in World War I



Pictured, from left, Peal Board at St John's mentioning Arthur, Maurice and Francis Ward; a plaque in memory of Arthur; a Peal Board in St Marie's ringing chamber mentioning Henry