

### **Private Walter Harrison, Machine Gun Corps.**

**9<sup>th</sup> October was the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the death of one of our local soldiers, Walter Harrison, at the age of 27.**

**Walter was brought up in a small cottage on the Yeld with his parents, Martha and Mathew and his three brothers. He was born in 1891, and baptised at St Peters on 20Sep1891. His father, Mathew was a wagoner, employed at a local farm, and later the four brothers remained at home, joining their father in agriculture, Walter becoming a cowman.**

**With war clouds looming in 1914, the peaceful country life was about to change dramatically for local families, including the Harrisons.**

**Walter, and two of his brothers joined up. Walter enlisting in December 1915 with the Cheshire Regiment, eventually changing to the Machine Gun Corps, 199 Company, which was posted to Italy and later recalled to France.**

**Presumably, when he was on leave, Walter was given permission to marry his sweetheart, Mary Clays of Utkinton, who was in service at a farm in Ashton. They were married at St Peters on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1916, and you can imagine his parents and family proudly looking on, watching Walter, smart in his uniform, walking down the aisle with Mary. They started their married life at Quarry Bank, Utkinton, however, nearly a year later, Walter had been killed, and in fact their time spent together must have been very short.**

**The military records of Walter's service life are sparse. Most of the records are illegible due to fire and water damage when the Archives were bombed during WW2. Legible documents show his original enlistment, another page, where he is recorded as wounded in June 1917, and another document where someone has scrawled "Dead" over some faint writing.**

**We can assume Walter was in the Battle of Poelcappelle on 9thOctober, part of the Battle of Passchendaele, when I believe Walter died.**

**There had been much rain during the preceding months, and our soldiers were trying to advance towards a ridge, with fierce opposition from the German Armies. Walter and his comrades would have been advancing under**

constant fire, over a sea of liquid mud, waterlogged shell holes. Disease and colds were rife, and many soldiers stranded and cut off. Such conditions are unimaginable, some soldiers drowning in the liquid mud and filth.

Walter was just one of 35000 to lose his life in the period of Passchendaele, and one of 13000 never to be found. He is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

We do not know when the news of Walters's death reached here. No doubt Walter's wife Mary and his mother Martha were supported the Rev Payne at St Peters. Twelve days later, news arrived of another of Delamere's soldiers, William Atherton, also losing his life in Passchendaele.

Sadly, five months later, further devastating news reached the Harrisons. Their eldest son, George, was also killed. Again, George was never found, and is commemorated on Pozieres Memorial, France.

Martha's surviving son, Thomas, survived the war and was demobbed in 1918.