

Age 15

Albert Richard Ashley was born in Worth, Sussex in 1899, the second of three sons born to James William and Minnie Ashley. His brothers were Robert William (born 1898 served with 1/6th Bn. East Surrey Regiment) and Harry (born 1909). In 1911 Albert was living with his mother and brothers at 59 Palmerston Road, Wimbledon and he was at school.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Great War, on the 11th November, 1914, Albert presented himself for enlistment at a recruiting office in Merton, Middlesex. He stated he was 19 years old, although he was still only 15, he was measured at 5' 10" with a fair complexion, grey eyes and brown hair and he gave his occupation as a porter, at this time he was living at 14, Dane Road, Merton.

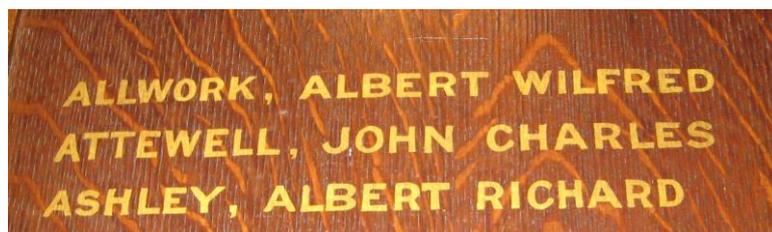


After being passed as medically fit for active service he was posted to the 3rd Bn. East Surrey Regiment and given the regimental number 11002. This was a reserve battalion which was raised at Kingston-on-Thames on 4th August, 1914 and was then sent to Dover where it remained throughout the war.

After completion of his training Private Ashley was sent overseas on the 6th March, 1915. He was probably sent to

an Infantry Base Depot before joining the 2nd Bn. East Surrey Regiment, which at that time was in positions on the Ypres Salient, possibly as a draft replacement; the 2nd Bn had been on the Western Front since January, 1915. Private Ashley's first time in the front line trenches was probably at the end of March when the battalion was in the St Eloi sector. They remained in this sector at the beginning of April before moving to Zonnebeke on the 10th. On the night of the 23rd/24th April, 1915 the battalion repulsed an enemy attack. At 1 p.m. the following day they came under a gas attack and the enemy broke through into Trench 23 "The Garrison of which had been rendered helpless by the fumes", the total casualties for the 25th were 254 killed, wounded or missing. The casualties for the month of April were 509, killed wounded or missing, one of these was Private Albert Ashley, he is listed as wounded or missing on the 27th April, 1914, he had been on the Western front for just over seven weeks. His body was not recovered and identified from the battlefield and he is commemorated on Panel 34 Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. He is also commemorated in St Mary, The Virgin, Merton Parish Church.

His medal entitlement was Memorial Plaque, 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.





Donald MacLeod Snaddon was born in Govan, Scotland in 1900 the second son of Donald and Marion Snaddon. His brothers were William (born 1898) and Roderick (born 1903) and in 1911 the family lived at 41, Wilson Street, Glasgow.

On 7th April, 1915, Donald Snaddon enlisted into the army in Glasgow, giving his age as 19 years, and after being passed as medically fit he was posted to the 3rd Bn. Royal Scots Fusiliers and given the regimental number 17780. This was a reserve battalion which had been raised in Ayr on the 4th August, 1914 and on mobilization was moved to Gourock for a role on the Clyde Defences. Private Snaddon soon found himself in trouble with the

authorities when he was sentenced to 28 days detention on 12th July, 1915 (reason unknown), he later received 4 days remission and returned to duty on the 5th August. At the end of that month he was in trouble again for “using obscene language in the Coy. Hut”, on this occasion he was sentenced to 21 days Field Punishment No.2.

Private Snaddon was sent overseas on the 17th November, 1915 and was probably sent to an Infantry Base Depot before joining the 1st Bn. Royal Scots Fusiliers. He may have been one of the 39 OR's which joined the battalion on the 24th November when it was in the trenches at St. Eloi, where they remained until the 29th when they went to billets in Reninghelst. During December the battalion was either in the trenches around St Eloi and Voormezeele or in billets at Reninghelst. Private Snadden was in trouble yet again when he was arrested on 15th December and convicted 5 days later of “When on active service – when a soldier acting as sentinel, sleeping on his post”, he was sentenced to two years hard labour which was later commuted to six months hard labour on the 13th January, 1916. The following day Private Snaddon was part of a working party in Scottish Wood, the war diary states that 2 OR's were wounded, one of these was Private Snaddon, he received gun shot wounds to the chest. He was taken to No.10 Casualty Clearing Station where he died from his wounds on the 18th January, 1916. He is buried in Plot II, Row D, Grave 37 Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium.

Donald Snaddon was not the only member of his family to lose his life during the Great War, his mother also lost three brothers, 545267 Q.M.S. Donald McLeod, Royal Army Medical Corps died 18th August, 1918, 103327 Piper John MacLeod, 67th Bn. Canadian Infantry, died 8th February, 1919 and S/6100 Lance Corporal Roderick MacLeod, 11th Bn. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, died 27th September, 1915. All four men are commemorated on the Kinloch, Laxay Memorial, Isle of Lewis.

For his services during the Great War Private Snaddon was entitled to Memorial Plaque, 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Richard Stott was born in Ashton Under Lyne in 1900, the eldest son of John and Betty Stott. His brothers were William (born 1902), John (born 1903) and Alfred (born 1907). Richard was educated at Holy Trinity School, Ashton and in 1911 the family were living at 37, Wrigley Street, Ashton. After leaving school Richard found employment as a porter but he always wanted to join the Territorials and so his father did not stand in his way when he enlisted on the 14th February, 1914, in the 1/9th Bn. Manchester Regiment, stating on his attestation papers that he was 17 years old. On the outbreak of war he volunteered for service overseas when the Ashton Territorials were called up for the first time in their history, the 1/9th Bn. were part of the East Lancashire Brigade, East Lancashire Division, and at the end of August they were sent to Bury.

The battalion left Bury on the 9th September and travelled to Southampton where they boarded the *H.M.T Aragon* and sailed for Egypt the following day.

They arrived in Alexandria on the 25th September, where they remained for two days before moving on to Cairo. On their arrival in Cairo a strenuous training regime began with route marches through the desert as well as sporting activities such as boxing and football.



The 9th Bn. left Cairo on 1st May, 1915, arriving in Port Said on the 4th where they embarked on board the *Ausonia* and on 9th May they landed on V Beach, Gallipoli under heavy fire, two days later they were in the reserve lines and on 21st May, 1915 they went into the Redoubt Line.

On 4th June there was a heavy bombardment of the enemy positions by Army and Navy guns, at this time the 9th Bn. was in Divisional Reserve. Fighting continued the following day and during this time the battalion was involved in the construction of redoubts. On the 7th June, "C" company took part in an attack on the Turkish trenches and it was possibly during this attack that Private Stott was wounded as the war diary states there were 3 other ranks killed and 25 wounded; he died on board a hospital ship on the 13th June, 1915 and was buried at sea. He is commemorated on Panels 158 – 170 Helles Memorial, Turkey.

For his services in the Great War Private Stott was entitled to the Memorial Plaque, 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.



Elias Ratcliffe was born in Birkenhead in 1900, the third child of Elias and Abrah Ratcliffe. At the age of 15 he enlisted into the 3rd Bn. Cheshire Regiment and a few months later was promoted to Lance Corporal. However, his parents thought he was too young to serve and succeeded in obtaining his discharge from the army in January, 1916. Elias was determined to join the army and three days later, on 3rd February, 1916, he re-enlisted into the 4th Bn. Cheshire Regiment but this time using the name of George Griffiths, his mother's maiden name. Elias was not the only member of the Ratcliffe family to enlist at an early age, his brother William (born 1897), joined the Cheshire Regiment when he was 16 and was transferred to the Manchester Regiment when he was posted to France.

Elias was posted to the 3/4th Bn. Cheshire Regiment on 11th February and sent to Park Hall, Oswestry for training. He soon found himself in trouble with the authorities on 12th March, 1916 when he was given 7 days detention for causing a disturbance in the barracks and being insolent to an N.C.O. On 24th July, he was in trouble again, this time for being absent from parade, for which he received 3 days confined to barracks and finally on 5th August, he received 7 days confined to barracks for playing cards for money.

Private "Griffiths" was sent overseas on 7th September, 1916, sailing from Southampton and landing in Rouen the following day. He was sent to No.4 Infantry Base Depot before joining the 11th Bn. Cheshire Regiment on 16th September. His first time in the trenches would have been at the beginning of October when the 11th Bn. was in the front line around Aveluy, at the end of the month they were moved to the north of Ploegsteert Wood. Private "Griffiths" was admitted to the 75th Field Ambulance on 3rd November, 1916 suffering from trench foot, he was then transferred to the 76th Field Ambulance where he was taken ill with influenza on 13th November, finally returning to duty on 18th November. The battalion remained in the area of Ploegsteert Wood until the beginning of January, 1917 when they moved to Nieppe for a period of training, returning to the trenches at Le Touquet and Le Bizet on the 17th January.

By this time Elias's parents had discovered where he was serving and again successfully applied for his discharge. On the 10th February, 1917, he was due to leave the trenches for the final time when he was killed by a shell explosion. He was buried in Plot II, Row D, Grave 10, Tancrez Farm Cemetery, Belgium.

In May, 1920, having received notification of his medal entitlement, his father wrote to the Infantry Record Office advising them that although he had served as Private George Griffiths, his son's name was Elias Ratcliffe and this was the name he would like to have on his medals. However, in November, 1920 he received the Memorial Plaque and Scroll in the name of George Griffiths, he wrote again and was advised that they could only be issued in the name under which he had served. His medal entitlement was Memorial Plaque, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Private Ratcliffe is commemorated on the War Memorial, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead.