

Private

WILLIAM HECTOR

26820, 1ST Battalion Somerset Light Infantry

Killed in Action 12 April 1917

Aged 23

Buried at Athies Communal Cemetery Extension

Grave E. 24

The Hector family came originally not from Buckland St Mary but from the Curry Mallet/North Curry area, though William's grandfather Robert, a farm labourer, was born in West Hatch. William's parents, William senior and Emma (nee Priddle) were living at Meare Green, between North Curry and Stoke St Gregory, when they were first married in 1890. William junior, born on the 21st June 1893, and the next two in the family, were all born at Curry Mallet. William and his older sister Emma began school at Buckland on 20 February 1899, having previously been at Donyatt School. William senior was a Blacksmith, and, probably also in 1899, the family had moved up onto the Blackdowns, and were living at Agar Cottage, Newtown, Buckland St Mary, which became their long-term home. Young William left school on 24 June 1907, his 14th birthday.

By 1911, William, aged 17, had left home and was working as a Farm Carter for Saul and Rosey Hurford at Chaffhay Farm, Yarcombe. By the time he enlisted he was working for Edmund Aplin at Fyfett Farm, Otterford. *The Taunton Courier*, in reporting his death, tells us 'He was well known in the parish, and had been a bell ringer for some time.'



William's Service Records no longer exist, so much of what follows is based on a reading of his Battalion's War Diaries. However, there still exists a 1st Battalion Casualty List, which gives at the least details of postings, injuries or deaths. William enlisted at Taunton in 1916, and was posted to the 1st Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry. He embarked from England on 16th December 1916, arriving on the 18th, and reached the Battalion on New Year's Day 1917, just in time to become part of the force being prepared for the Arras Campaign that Spring.

The 1st Battalion was with the 11th Brigade of the 4th Division, part of the 17th Corps. When William arrived they were at Camp 12 in the Somme area, south of Albert, training hard. On the 15th the move up towards the front line began, a long and trying march with heavy snowfall. Alternate stints of front line and reserve duty followed in appalling conditions of mud and filth. On 28 February the 4th Division were ordered to move to the Third Army area; by 21 March the Battalion reached Dieval, north-west of Arras, where training for the

Arras offensive, due to start on 9 April, continued in earnest. The final move forward to the trenches came on Jellalabad Day, 7 April: a good omen for the Battalion it was felt. They attended a concert that night at Hermaville, and the CO, Lieut-Col V.H.B.Majendie, made his customary Jellalabad Day speech. Next day they moved to Maroeuil, awaiting orders to move forward to the assembly positions.

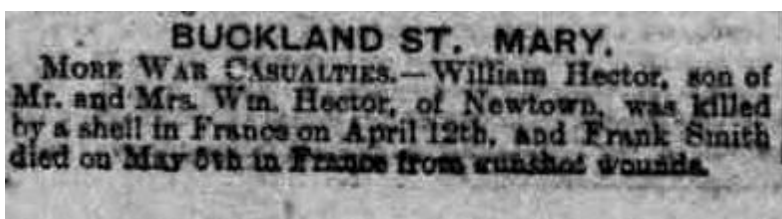
The Arras campaign was viewed as another 'Big Push', like the Somme offensive of 1916. It's acknowledged that lessons had been learnt from that offensive, but whether it seemed any different to the men on the ground is a moot point. The Germans had retreated behind the newly consolidated Hindenburg Line that Spring, and the front line British battalions had been trained over trench systems modelled on that. The initial part of the Arras Campaign was the first Battle of the Scarpe, from 9th-14th April. The 17th Corps objective was to take the 3rd German trench system from the Scarpe, east of Athies. This captured, they were to attack part of Vimy Ridge, the German trenches west of Fampoux, and Fampoux itself.

The 1st Battalion was part of the second wave of the attack. Their War Diary notes at 5am 'Tremendous bombardment now on.' Heavy rainfall - breakfast in the assembly area - the Battalion formed up in the railway cutting, and then marched to their final assembly positions. Over the top at 3.10pm, through machine gun and rifle fire and then through the German wire (regrettably not cut up by the Artillery), shooting down resisting Germans and sending prisoners to the rear. Their new line was consolidated, and they were heavily shelled. That night it snowed heavily and was bitterly cold.

On the 10th they concentrated in the Hyderabad Redoubt. Patrols were to advance at 6.30pm to secure the line, with Artillery support, but to desist if opposition were strong. In the event there was no artillery support, and the leading platoons were all but obliterated. The attack was halted.

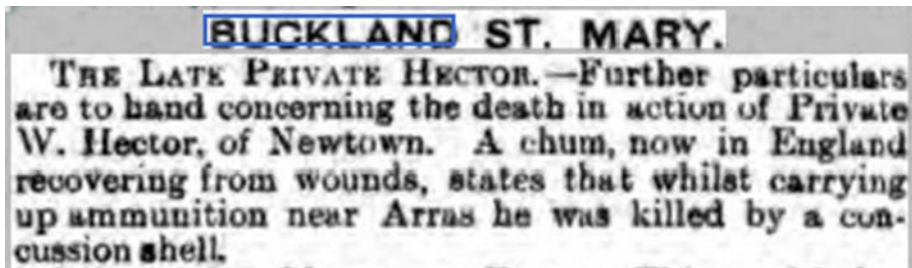
On the 11th the 4th Division had new attacking orders: to advance and secure the Plouvain -Greenland Hill line. The 1st Battalion was on the extreme left, their task to secure a section of road from Inn to cross-roads and form a defensive flank. Their jumping off position was the Hyderabad Redoubt – there was no other – but it was inadequate, and the situation was compounded by two battalions from the 10th Infantry Brigade losing their way and pouring into the Redoubt. Consequently the leading platoons did not get away till Zero + 5 minutes, by which time they were heading into a murderous machine gun and rifle fire. They tried advancing along a communication trench, but this was blown in by shell fire and swept by machine guns; nonetheless they held out there for the rest of the day. The War Diary tells us that 'During the night a line of posts was established East and North of the Redoubt...Touch was established on right and left....The men dug splendidly and by daylight a fairly strong line of posts was established.'

'The attack of the 4th Division, as a whole, practically gained no ground and must be written down as a failure.....On 12th April the 9th Division failed in a similar attack and throughout the day the Redoubt was subjected to heavy artillery fire, inflicting on the Somersets a number of casualties.' (*The Somerset Light Infantry 1914-1919*, Everard Wyrall).



Taunton Courier, May 16 1917

One of those casualties was William Hector, though there's conflicting evidence on what precisely happened. John White, a researcher working in 2002 for Don and Mervyn Hector, William's nephews, believes he was the victim of a sniper's bullet, but the two excerpts from the *Taunton Courier* printed here



Taunton Courier, July 25 1917

suggest he was killed by shellfire; a concussion shell was designed to explode on impact, scattering shrapnel. At this point in time, given the vagaries of people's memories, and the difficulty of accurate press reporting, one cannot be sure of the truth. Suffice to say that by the end of 11 April, William, aged 23, was dead.

On the 14th, the War Diary records that: 'The weather which had been vile for all the above operations improved a little. The Redoubt was again shelled fairly heavily. The Battn was relieved by the 1st Hampshire Regt and went back in Brigade Reserve... arriving soon after midnight, everyone wet through.' 7 Officers and 23 other ranks were killed, while 5 and 104 respectively were wounded. The Diary continues: 'All ranks behaved splendidly through a very trying operation; everyone suffered very much from the bad weather and loss of sleep, hot food, etc.... at one period some of the Officers collapsed through sheer exhaustion, only 3 being fit to carry on... Battn captures include about 300 prisoners, 5 machine guns, 1 cooker and innumerable other stores.'



As well as being on the Buckland St Mary Memorial, William is also on the one in Combe St Nicholas, both the Memorial inside the Church, and, more remarkably, among the photos (2nd row, 3rd from left) of those who died which hangs just inside the Church door: the families, at the end of the War, must have been asked for photographs to be framed and kept as a lasting memorial.

Administrative County Sturtevant The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the Parliamentary Borough or Division of Sturtevant or of Sturtevant or of Sturtevant

Page 18

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
House No.	ROAD STREET No. and No. of NAME of HOUSE	Uninhabited	Partially inhabited	Number of Persons	Male	Female	NAME and SURNAMES of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	Working at Least	WHERE BORN	(1) Dead and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lame (4) Insane, feeble-minded			
102	West Way			1			James Hopper Head M 43	Head	43	General Labourer	Worker		Sturtevant				
							James Hopper Wife F 41	Wife	41				do				
							James Hopper Son M 11	Son	11				do				
							Charlotte Hopper Daughter F 10	Daughter	10				do				
							Charles Hopper Son M 8	Son	8				do				
103	New Street			1			James Dicks Head M 47	Head	47	General Labourer	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Harriet Dicks Wife F 53	Wife	53				do				
							Edmund Dicks Son M 18	Son	18				do				
							Wynne Dicks Daughter F 15	Daughter	15				do				
104				1			Ruth G. Gosham Head M 37	Head	37	Employer	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Anna Gosham Wife F 36	Wife	36				do				
							Victor Gosham Son M 11	Son	11				do				
							Clara A. Stone Daughter F 40	Daughter	40				do				
105				1			William Stone Head M 52	Head	52	Builder	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Elizabeth Stone Wife F 49	Wife	49				do				
106				1			William Hutchings Head M 34	Head	34	Employer	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Elizabeth Hutchings Wife F 33	Wife	33				do				
							Henry Hutchings Son M 23	Son	23				do				
							George Hutchings Son M 16	Son	16				do				
							Walter Hutchings Daughter F 9	Daughter	9				do				
107				1			Walter W. Moberly Head M 28	Head	28	Blacksmith	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Walter W. Moberly Son M 4	Son	4				do				
108				1			Walter W. Moberly Head M 29	Head	29	Blacksmith	Worker		Sturtevant				
							Emma Hector Wife F 24	Wife	24				do				
							William Hector Son M 9	Son	9				do				
							Walter Hector Son M 5	Son	5				do				
							George Hector Son M 2	Son	2				do				
7	Total of Schedule of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms	7	1	2	Total of Males and of Females												

NOTE—Draw your pen through such words of the headings as are inapplicable.

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1901 CENSUS HECTOR FAMILY

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

Number of Schedule: 109 (To be filled up by the Enumerator)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (Date Birth) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	PERSONAL OCCUPATION	INDUSTRY or SERVICE with which worker is connected	Whether Employer, Worker, or Own Account	Whether Working at Home	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State	Write the name of the Country, Town or Parish, or of the Province or State
William Hector	Head	42	Married	Blacksmith	Employer	Worker	At Home	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant
Emma Hector	Wife	43	Married					Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant
Emily Hector	Daughter	13						Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant
Frank Hector	Son	8						Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant
Elizabeth Hector	Daughter	7						Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant
Sam Hector	Son	6						Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant	Sturtevant

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling)

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: William Hector
 Postal Address: Buchland St. Mary, Chard

1911 CENSUS HECTOR FAMILY

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

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Number of Schedule 64
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after Census)

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE that BIRTHDAY and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE		PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards	BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Personal Occupation				
1 <i>Leah Heford</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>4 1 1 1</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Widow</i>
2 <i>George Heford</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Married</i>		<i>Domestic</i>	<i>100</i>		<i>Widow</i>
3 <i>William Heford</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>Domestic</i>	<i>120</i>		<i>Widow</i>
4 <i>Andrew Jones</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>Domestic</i>	<i>120</i>		<i>Widow</i>
5 <i>Tom Jones</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>Domestic</i>	<i>013-10</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Widow</i>

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I certify that—
 (1) All persons on this Schedule are entered in the proper age columns.
 (2) I have entered the names and surnames in Column 1 and, if necessary, and have corrected their ages with the total number of persons in each column.
 (3) After making the necessary corrections, I have compared all entries on this Schedule with those on the Schedule, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Total: Males Females Persons
3 2 5

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Garden, Pantry, or Apartment). Count the habitable as a room but do not count cellars, landing, lobby, cloak, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.

4

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature *Leah Heford*
 Postal Address *Widow Jones, Farnham, Chard*

1911 CENSUS WILLIAM HECTOR

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

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Number of Schedule 81
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after Census)

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE that BIRTHDAY and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE		PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards	BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Personal Occupation				
1 <i>Edmund Upkin</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>5 2 1</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>190</i>		<i>Employed</i>
2 <i>Lucey Hannah Upkin</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>3 2 1</i>				<i>Employed</i>
3 <i>Jessie Upkin</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Single</i>					<i>Employed</i>
4 <i>Beatrice Victoria Upkin</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>School</i>	<i>390</i>		<i>Employed</i>
5 <i>Fredrick Peter</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>Farm Labourer</i>	<i>140</i>		<i>Employed</i>

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

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Total: Males Females Persons
2 3 5

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5

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature *Edmund Upkin*
 Postal Address *Atterford, Chard*

1911 CENSUS FOR WILLIAM'S FUTURE EMPLOYER

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
HECTOR		Som L I.	Pte	26820
William				

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	B/2/102-9	1035	
BRITISH	— ch —	—	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1380

MEDAL ROLL INDEX CARD

1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry Casualty List
(DD/SLI/9/4 in Somerset Heritage Centre's catalogue)

William Hector embarked for France on December 16 1916.

Arrived 3 IBD (Infantry Base Depot) December 18 1916

Joined 1st Battalion January 1 1917

Killed in Action April 12 1917





Athies Cemetery Communal Extension – Pas de Calais

