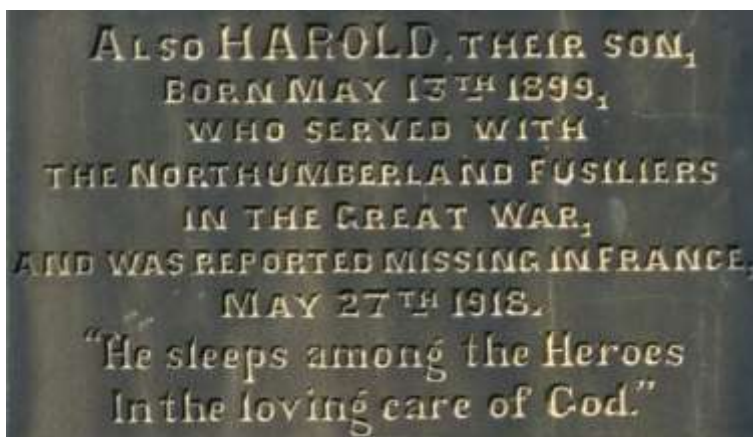


Remembering Herbert Thompson, Harold Sugden, Oliver Riley & Jacob Osborne

It may surprise some people to learn that Embsay-with-Eastby lost more men on the battlefield in 1918 than in any of the previous years during the First World War. As the “final push” by both sides at last overcame the immobility of trench warfare, fierce fighting over open ground, and through the ruined villages and farmsteads of France and Flanders, led to a sudden rise in casualty figures.

Amongst them were Herbert Thompson and Jacob Osborne whose names are on the village war memorial, as well as the brass plaque in the church. Although Oliver Riley’s name is not here, he can be found commemorated on Embsay Cricket Club’s memorial plaque. Harold Sugden was not strictly speaking an “Embsay man”, but he was born here and lived in Embsay through his childhood.

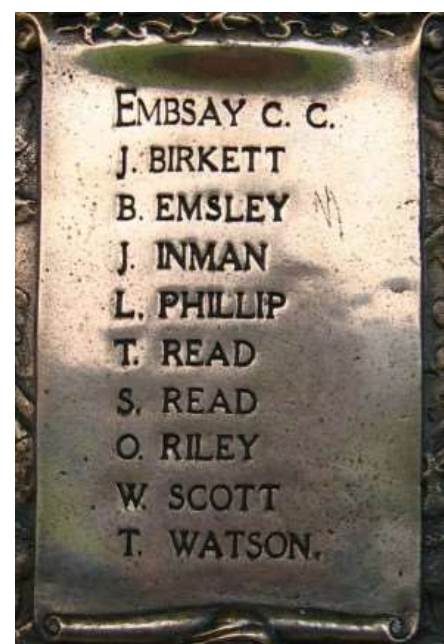
Harold, the son of Edward and Sarah Alice (nee Greenwood) Sugden, was born in 1899. His father was an overseer for the Skipton Poor Law Union, and the family lived on Crag View Terrace, Embsay, with Sarah’s widowed father, a retired farmer. By the time Harold was 10 years old they had moved to Brougham Road in Skipton. Harold attended Ermysted’s School, but joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, and was reported missing, presumed dead, on May 27th 1918 – he was 19 years old.



Although there is no entry for him in the commemorative book “Craven’s Part in the Great War”, he was named on the Skipton Cenotaph, and on the memorial plaques in Holy Trinity Church, Christ Church, and Brougham Street School. His family also ensured a dedication was placed on his parents’ gravestone at St James’s Church, Silsden – It reads: “He sleeps among the heroes in the

loving care of God.”

Similarly, **Oliver Riley’s** connection with Embsay was brief. Nevertheless, he was an interesting figure, and was resident at Embsay Kirk when the war broke out. Born in 1882, the son of a wealthy chemicals manufacturer, county councillor and J.P., Joseph Edward Riley (Joseph’s father was a member of the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church in Lancashire), Oliver grew up in a privileged social position at Arden Hall, Accrington, and attended Owen College, Manchester University. A keen huntsman, at the age of 16 or 17 he won 2nd prize at the Cliviger Agricultural Show for his 2 year old “filly for road or field”. However, Oliver was expected to earn his living and on his 21st birthday, in 1903, was brought into the family business at Hapton Works. He married Jenny Fleming Laing in 1907, the niece and ward of another wealthy family of manufacturers, the Candlish family of Shotton Hall, near Easington. According to the Burnley Express there were over 300 guests at the reception in Shotton Hall, “the presents, handsome and numerous, filled the billiard





room,” and Oliver’s father held a large dinner party in Accrington for his employees who also got a day’s holiday and a day’s wages to celebrate.

Oliver dabbled in local politics, sitting on the Rural District Council and Board of Guardians of Burnley, and later moved to live in Huncoat. In 1912 he and his wife came to live at Embsay Kirk, and Oliver became a member of the local cricket club, and gave a very generous 5 guineas to Embsay’s War Distress Fund in October 1914.

But by this time his chemicals factory in Hapton was failing – it went into receivership the following year. In 1916 Oliver was in the army. His social status would have given him automatic entry as an officer – but he never completed the officers’

training course, and in 1917, aged 34, enlisted as a private in the Royal Lancashire Regiment – the reason for this is not known. He was later transferred to the Lincolnshire Regiment, and was killed on 27th May 1918. His wife and 2 children had by this time moved to St Anne’s-on-Sea, and were bequeathed over £16,000 in his will. He is commemorated on the Soissons memorial in France.

Born in Burley-in-Wharfedale in 1886, probably illegitimate, **Herbert Thompson** [not to be confused with another man of the same name, from Skipton, who was killed in August 1918] was the adopted son of cotton warp dresser, Samuel and Alice Town, of Skipton, taken into their family of 10 children. At the age of 14 he too was working in a cotton mill. After working for a while in Barnoldswick he married at the tender age of 18 to Minnie Burrows, a cotton worker from Carleton, and the young couple set up home there, before returning to Barnoldswick with their little son, Maurice. By 1914 they had settled in Embsay where Herbert worked as weaver. He enlisted into the 1/6th (later transferred to 2/7th) Battalion of the Duke of Wellington’s West Riding Regiment, and acted as a stretcher bearer. In December 1917 he got a “Blighty one” – a bullet through the lung had him sent home, and once out of hospital, he was able to get 10 days’ leave to visit home, only the second time he’d been back since joining the army. He was returned to the front, and by the end of the war his wife Minnie had moved back to Carleton, no doubt to be close to her family, and it was there she would receive the news that her husband had been killed on the 25th May 1918, at the age of 33. He is commemorated on both the Embsay and Carleton war memorials, and has a gravestone at the Bienvillers Military Cemetery in France.



We know very little about **Jacob Osborne**, a farm labourer’s son, as he came to Embsay as a teenager all the way from Norfolk to work on the railway as a porter and ganger. At the age of just 20 he was swept up in the war fever of 1914, and was of the 27 Embsay-with-Eastby men and lads highly praised by the Craven Herald as an example to the rest of Craven for joining up so readily at the outbreak of war. Somehow he survived 4 years on the Western front, fighting with the 2/4th

Battalion of the West Riding Regiment, only to die of wounds on the 24th of May 1918, at the age of 24. He is commemorated with a gravestone at Bienvillers, Emsay war memorial and the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church. He is also one of 2,833 names listed on the Midland Railway Company's national memorial in Derby to their railway employees who died in the Great War.

Jane Lunnon (Emsay-with-Eastby Research Group).

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