

No. 13529, Pte. RUPERT JOHN CAUSTON

Rupert John Causton was a son of Maurice and Sarah Causton (nee Tiffin), born in Little Cornard, in 1891. Brother to Charles Henry, Ivy E, Phyllis Martha, Emma Edith and Anna May (Florrie).

Rupert (Ru) enlisted into the army in about September 1914, with the service No. 13529. He was sent overseas to France with the 8th Suffolk Regiment, arriving on 25th July 1915.

The 8th Suffolk Regiment was formed at Exeter in September 1914 as part of K2, (Kitchener's 2nd new army), and was attached to the 53rd Brigade, 18th (Eastern) Division. The 18th Division were deemed ready and were sent to France in late May 1915, and remained on the Western Front for the rest of the war. The division as a whole served with distinction, taking in most of the significant battles and actions, such as; Battles on the Somme-July/November, 1916, the Arras Offensive-April/May, 1917, 3rd Ypres-June/November, 1917, and further actions on The Somme-March/April, 1918.

Rupert received shrapnel wounds to the head in May 1918, and was evacuated to England to be treated in a hospital in London. He was visited by his sister, Emma Edith Causton, in hospital in August 1918, and was discharged from there in November 1918. He was demobbed from the army in March 1919 and placed on 'Class Z reserve' on 10th April 1919 (class Z = 12 months minimum on the reserve list).

Rupert was entitled to the 1915 Star, British War and Victory Medals.

His father, Maurice, at this time was the proprietor of the One Bell Inn in Little Cornard, running it with his daughter Emma. Rupert was living at the pub and was working for Causton Hall Farm, Little Cornard. When, on Tuesday 24th August 1920, Rupert was taken ill, conveyed to the Red Cross Hospital in Sudbury (Belle Vue House) on Wednesday morning, and he died that evening, the 25th, under anaesthetic, for an operation to relieve what was thought to be an abscess on the brain.

The following inquest report was printed in the Suffolk Free Press, dated Wednesday, 1st September 1920.

LITTLE CORNARD

THE WAR'S AFTERMATH.

Man's Sufferings from Shrapnel Wound.

"One of the many results of the war, showing how returned wounded soldiers fight in their work against great odds, was revealed at the inquest on Thursday night at the

Town Hall, before Mr. Coroner T.M. Braithwaite, on the death of Rupert John Causton, of the Bell Inn, Little Cornard.

Causton was a single man, living at home with his father and sister. He was a labourer, and had worked at Causton Hall Farm. His age was 29.

The following were the jury; Messrs. H.W.J. Locke (foreman), P.S. Head, W.M. Foakes, F.J. Ledingham, A.W. Southgate, J. Green, and A.W. Bishop.

The first witness called was Miss. Emma Edith Causton, a sister, who, however, had not viewed the body, and the evidence of Dr. Leeming was taken while she went to the hospital. On her return, she said that on Monday the deceased came home from work at 10 minutes past nine in a dazed condition. She spoke to him, but he did not answer clearly. She noticed that his lower lip had dropped, and was inclining to the left side. She gave him a cup of tea and some bread and butter. He could not hold the cup. The next morning she sent for the doctor, and Dr Leeming came, and ordered his removal to the Red Cross Hospital. She did not see him again alive. He was in 8th Suffolk Regiment in the war, from September 1914, to May 1918; in the later month he was wounded in the head. She saw him in hospital in London on the 4th Aug., 1918, and he came home in the following November. He was demobilised in March 1919, since when he had occasionally been to the Red Cross Hospital at Sudbury to be X-rayed.

Dr. Leeming said he attended on Tuesday morning to see deceased at his home, and found him very ill, with symptoms suggesting a serious complication of an old shrapnel wound on the head. He advised his removal to the Red Cross Hospital, and he was conveyed in the motor ambulance. He was seen by a specialist from London on Wednesday, and an operation was advised. Witness administered the anaesthetic, chloroform, which was taken quite well. Just as the operation was about to commence the patient stopped breathing quite suddenly; artificial respiration was performed, and the skull was quickly opened by the surgeon in the hope that inter-cranial pressure would relieve his condition, but this had no effect; the heart stopped beating. The patient came under his care about two months ago, complaining of severe pains in the head at the site of this old shrapnel wound. He was seen by the consulting surgeon of the Eastern Command, Col. Openshaw, and X-ray photos were taken, showing the presence of a piece of shrapnel deep in the skull. The patient had been able to get about his work till the onset of this more serious development. The piece of shrapnel was in the skull at the time of the operation, as Col. Openshaw did not deem it advisable to perform an operation to have it removed.

Dr. Rix said he saw the man on Tuesday afternoon at Belle Vue Hospital. From his symptoms he came to the conclusion that the man was suffering from an abscess on the brain. He had a shrapnel wound on the right side of the head, and the piece was still in; there was a discharge from the nose. A specialist from the hospital for diseases of the nose was called in, and concluded that the nose was not causing the abscess, while not disagreeing with the diagnosis. On Wednesday morning and afternoon Dr. Rix saw the patient again, when he was getting worse, so the services of a surgeon specialist for the brain were secured (Dr. Donald Armour, of London), who came on Wednesday night by the last train, examined the man, agreed with the diagnosis (abscess on the brain), and recommended an immediate operation, for which he was removed to the operating theatre at St. Leonard's Hospital. He agreed with the evidence of Dr. Leeming as to the operation. The skull was opened as quickly as possible, and increased pressure was found inside and relieved, but the patient showed no signs of revival, in spite of continued artificial respiration. Dr. Rix went on to say that his post-mortem examination showed that the mans heart was extensively

diseased, although he had shown no signs of it in life; the form of the disease was such as to lead to sudden death. There was no abscess in the brain, but a condition due to blocking of small arteries by portions of clot coming from the diseased heart. Other organs had suffered from similar blockage previously, the left kidney and the spleen showing it most markedly. He came to the conclusion that death was due to heart failure, produced by the increased tension in the skull, accelerated by the administration of chloroform. The discharge from the nose was caused by the shrapnel wound. The diseased condition of the heart might have been caused by blood poisoning from the shrapnel wound.

The coroner said that death took place in a public institution, following an operation. It was consequently necessary to call jury together. The evidence was quite clear. Their time, however, had not been wasted, because the inquiry would satisfy them and the public generally to know that these discharged soldiers received such excellent care and treatment from the authorities. Here was a man in a humble walk of life, who not only had the best medical skill, but they did not hesitate to obtain for him the best specialist treatment. Personally he was glad, and he was sure the jury were, to know that soldiers who had fought and suffered should have the highest medical skill bestowed upon them in their affliction. Unfortunately in this case it failed. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence”.

Rupert was buried on 29th August 1920, in the Churchyard at Little Cornard.

Rupert was recorded on the Roll of Honour in the church as surviving the war – 1919, but he is recorded on the brass memorial plaque, as being a casualty. As he had died ‘at home’, and was an ‘old soldier’, he was included by the parish on the memorial, but the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were not informed.

Pte. Rupert Causton was accepted for commemoration as a casualty of the First World War, by the C.W.G.C, due to a cause attributable to wounds received during his First World war service, on 18th January 2005.

