

Name, Rank & Regiment of
Soldier: **Bacon, John William**

Lance Corporal 11th Battalion
Kings Royal Rifle Corps R/3802
(part of the 59th Brigade)



*Photo of Thiepval Monument where L/ Corporal
Bacon is remembered courtesy M. Barnard*

Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
30 th June 1894	September 3 th 1916	22

Background **John 'Jack' William Bacon**

John William Bacon (Jack) was born in Newark on 30th June 1894 to George Henry Bacon (1861 – 1904), a platelayer on the railways and Mary Ann Bacon (1866 – 1939 née Coulby). Although George was born in Doncaster, his parents, Thomas and Sarah Bacon, were Collingham natives and the family returned to the village sometime after 1863. John William's mother was also Collingham born and bred. However, George's work as a platelayer for the railways took him to Wright Street, Newark where the first five of their 7 children were born, then around 1900 to Ordsall near Retford where son George was born in 1902.

George Henry died in September 1904 of yellow fever aged 45. Mary and her family moved back to North Collingham after she was widowed to be near family. The following June, she gave birth to Arthur Bacon (1905-1967).

In 1911 Mary Ann lived in a 4-roomed cottage as a tenant in part of what is now 'Cleave Cottage' 53 Low Street with her children. John William (16) was a baker's apprentice and his brother Tom (19) was a baker and confectioner.

Jack had been a choirboy at All Saints Church. Initially it seemed he trained as a baker alongside his brother Thomas (according to the 1911 census) but by 1914 he was employed on the Midland Railway as a porter before enlisting as soon as War broke out.



Left: Mary Bacon (Polly) with John William on the left of the picture and Thomas on the right, Sarah Ann b. 1899 (on the left) and Florence Jane b 1897 on the right. The baby is George (according to the Fish family tree on Ancestry.co.uk). This dates the photo to around 1904 or early 1905.

Photograph courtesy of Brenda Sills



Above: Cleave Cottage (on the left) was originally two cottages. This post card in Collingham Archives is possibly of the Bacon children c 1910. The houses were known colloquially as 'The Bog Cottages' because of their tendency to get flooded by the River Fleet behind them.

Military History: L/Corporal Bacon

Jack joined the army soon after the outbreak of war, his attestation papers give his occupation as porter and address as Newark. He enlisted on 8th Sept 1914 and joined the 11th Battalion Kings Royal Rifles. They went to France on 21st July 1915 as part of the 20th Division, Fourth Army.

Jack was made a 1st class signaller on 3rd July 1916. His battalion were on the Somme and the 20th Division were involved in the battles of Delville Wood and Guillemont between July and October 1916.

On 3rd September, the day Jack was killed, the 10th & 11th King's Royal Rifles fought at Guillemont, on the Somme (Western Front).

'After German attacks had been repelled by the 11th Battalion, the 10th Battalion took a major part in the capture of Guillemont, supported by the 11th Battalion. This fortress had resisted many attacks for a month. A break-through resulted and heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy. This success was unfortunately not followed up with reserves. Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. Blacklock, 10th Battalion, and Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. R. Hope, 11th Battalion, were wounded. Losses in the Two Battalions: Officers: killed 4, wounded 16; Other Ranks: about 400¹

From Trevor Frecknall's book, 'Collingham During the Great War':

'Tuesday 19 September 1916: Widow Mary Ann Bacon in North Collingham discovered that her son John, 22, was killed in action on 3 September². A letter from one of his mates in the King's Royal Rifles told her: "He was a good lad and did his bit without complaint. I wish there were more like him." John, a choirboy in the village church for six years, worked on the Midland Railway as a porter before enlisting as soon as War broke out. He had been in France 14 months and, in his frequent letters home to Mum, there was never one word of complaint against the hardships in he had to undergo. Rifleman 3802 Bacon is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.³

John William Bacon is commemorated on the Thiepval, Somme, Grave Pier and Face 13A/13B & North Collingham War Memorial Cross and Parishioners' Plaque.

John William Bacon's Memorial Plaque

In July 2015 Mr Chris Allen discovered John William Bacon's Memorial Plaque in his garden (53 Low Street). Chris put an appeal in *Fleet* magazine for any descendants of the Bacons to get in touch so

¹ Source: Kings Royal Rifles Corps Association website

² This means the date on the All Saints Roll of Honour Service Sheet (CDLHS Archives Ref: WCD/FF1/8) is wrong as it states 13th September.

³ From Trevor Frecknall's book 'Collingham During the Great War'

he could return the plaque. Two people contacted him: Mrs Alice Bellamy of Collingham and Mrs Brenda Sills of Saxilby, Lincs. Both were connected to the Bacon family.

On Tuesday March 8th 2016, Chris met Brenda, the closest tie to John William's branch, at her home and returned the plaque. She was delighted and provided more information about the Bacon family, including photographs.

John William Bacon's commemorative plaque discovered by Chris Allen in his garden in 2015 Photo ©Helena Pielichaty



First World War Memorial Plaques

These bronze plaques, 5ins (about 20 cm) in diameter were issued to the families of those who had a relative killed during World War One. Designed by Edward Carter Preston, their resemblance to a copper coin gave them the nickname 'The Dead Man's Penny' or 'Widows' Penny.'

The image shown is of Britannia holding an olive leaf. A lion strides in front of her. The soldier's name (no rank) is shown beneath her arm. 'He (or She – 600 were issued to women) died for freedom and honour' is inscribed round the perimeter.

1,355,000 were issued.



Left: Brenda Sills (left) with Alice Bellamy at Alice's home on Windsor Close 10th August 2016.

