

Pte W.P.Woods – The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

William Pullenger Woods was the son of William and Hannah Woods who lived at what is now Wyvern Cottage in Milton Street, Westcott. William, like his father, was a gardener on the Bury Hill Estate. In 1913 he married Isabel Smith of South Merstham.



William enlisted at Dorking and joined 5th Bn. The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment). His battalion later became 22nd Bn. London Regiment (The Queen's) which went to France in March 1915 as part of the 2nd London Division. Two months later the Division was re-formed as the 47th London Division which subsequently saw action in the battles of Aubers Ridge, Festubert, Loos in 1915 and the Somme in 1916. The Division then played a prominent part in the Battle of Messines which took place south of Ypres from 7th to 13th June 1917. William Woods died on 3rd May 1917; we do not know the circumstances of his death but it appears he may have died of wounds as the Division moved up before the battle.

William is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery which is located 12 km to the west of Ypres on the main communication line between the Allied Military Bases and the Ypres battlefields. Close to the front but out of range of German field artillery it became a natural place to establish casualty clearing stations. The cemetery is the second largest Commonwealth cemetery in Belgium; it contains 9,901 Commonwealth graves together with the graves of 883 soldiers of other nationalities.

William's wife, Isabel, gave birth to a little girl, Isabel Marguerite, who was baptised in this church on 24th June 1917. The entry in the parish register records her father as 'Pte Woods of Dene Street, Dorking, serving with 5th Bn The Queen's Regiment' – from this it appears that William's family were not aware of his death at the time of his daughter's baptism. His widow re-married in 1919.

The Woods family suffered particularly badly in the Great War. William was their only son. His father died in December 1916. One of their daughters, Lucy, married Frederick Barnes of St Margaret at Cliffe, near Dover, who died in the war while serving with the RAMC, and who is buried in St John's churchyard in Westcott. Frederick is commemorated

on the war memorial at St Margaret at Cliffe and, although he is not remembered on the Westcott memorial, a tribute to him is in this book.

In 1944 William's mother, Hannah, was living in one of the Watson Road houses damaged by the bomb which killed nine people whose names are on our memorial to those who died in the Second World War. Although very frail, Hannah survived and died three years later, aged 94.