

ALEXANDER JOSEPH COTTRELL
Private
2d Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment
Service No: 9278
Died of Wounds 13 July 1915, aged 31

Alexander Joseph Cottrell was born in 1884, the birth being registered at Bradfield in the 2nd quarter as Joseph Alexander. Although his name does not appear on the war memorial and the family connection to the village is unclear, the "Soldiers Who Died in the Great War" listing shows him born in Beenham; it may be that he didn't live in the parish for long or perhaps more likely, he lived in a neighbouring parish. The 1891 census shows him aged 6 years living on the Bath Road near Lamdens Farm with his father Henry Cottrell 31, gardener of Knighton, Vale of the White Horse, mother Mary Ann Cottrell 31 (nee Leavey), of Brimpton, and siblings Laura Elizabeth Cottrell 10, b Woolhampton, Alice Mary Cottrell 9, b Beenham, Frances Helen Cottrell 5, b Ufton Edith May Cottrell 3, b Ufton Harry William Cottrell 2, b Ufton.

The 1901 census for Charter Alley near Monk Sherborne, Hants shows him, aged 16 living with his uncle, Joseph W. Leavey and his family, a draper, who was originally from Brimpton. In this census, he is shown as Joseph A., a draper's assistant and born in Beenham. In 1911 he is listed as Alexander Joseph and in Dover at the South Front barracks, Western Heights having enlisted at Reading with the 1st Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, rank given as private, aged 25 years, unmarried and, once again, born in Beenham. Meanwhile his parents Henry & Mary had moved to Surrey where Henry was head gardener at Royal Holloway College, Englefield Green.

The 1st Battalion was apart of the Regular army. In August 1914 they were in Aldershot under command of 6th Brigade in 2nd Division and on 13 August 1914 they landed at Rouen. In 1914 they were in action in The Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne, the actions on the Aisne heights and First Battle of Ypres. They took part in the Winter Operations of 1914-15.

We know that Alexander's Regiment was involved in heavy fighting just East of Bethune, near Givenchy and that Alexander became a casualty with injuries received at Neuve Chapelle (10-13 March 1915). We also know that he was evacuated to England where he died of wounds at King George Hospital, London on 13 July 1915, aged 31. His effects, given to his father on 12 November 1915 amounted to £12 5s 4d and a further £5 on 12 July 1919.

Alexander Joseph Cottrell is buried at Englefield Green cemetery, Runnymede, Surrey in a grave shared with his sister Edith May (d 1910), father (d 1928) and mother (d 1938). As far as can be established, his name does not appear on any war memorial.

