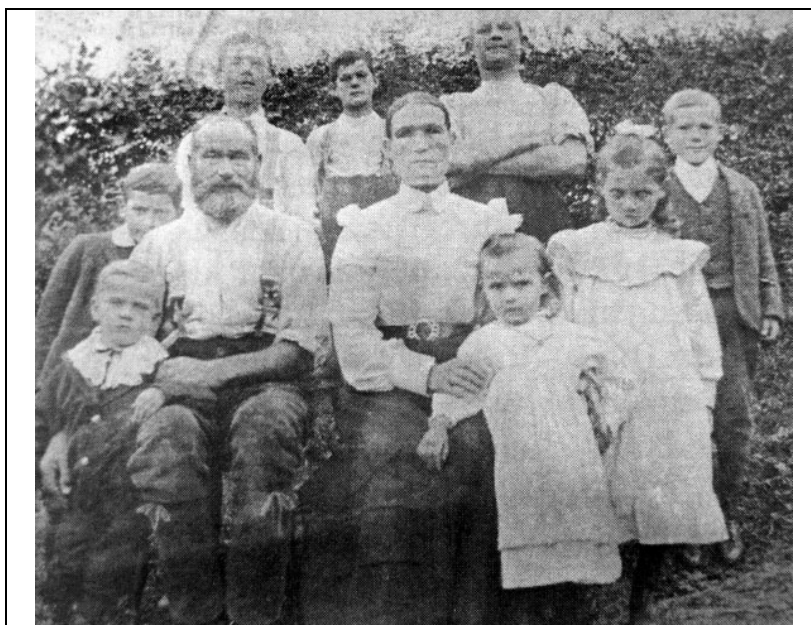


The Cox Family of Pitchers Hill

At the time of the 1911 census William and Alice Jane Cox lived at what is now number 93 Pitchers Hill. They had been married for 28 years and Alice (*nee* Bacon) had given birth to eleven children, all of whom were still alive. William had been born in Ebrington, Gloucestershire; he married Worcester-born Alice there in 1883 and the couple had most of their family in the village. He worked at different times as an agricultural labourer, with a telegraph company and then on the railways but left that job to come to the Vale to grow fruit and vegetables. Their ninth child was born in Badsey and the last two in Wickhamford where William worked as a market gardener.

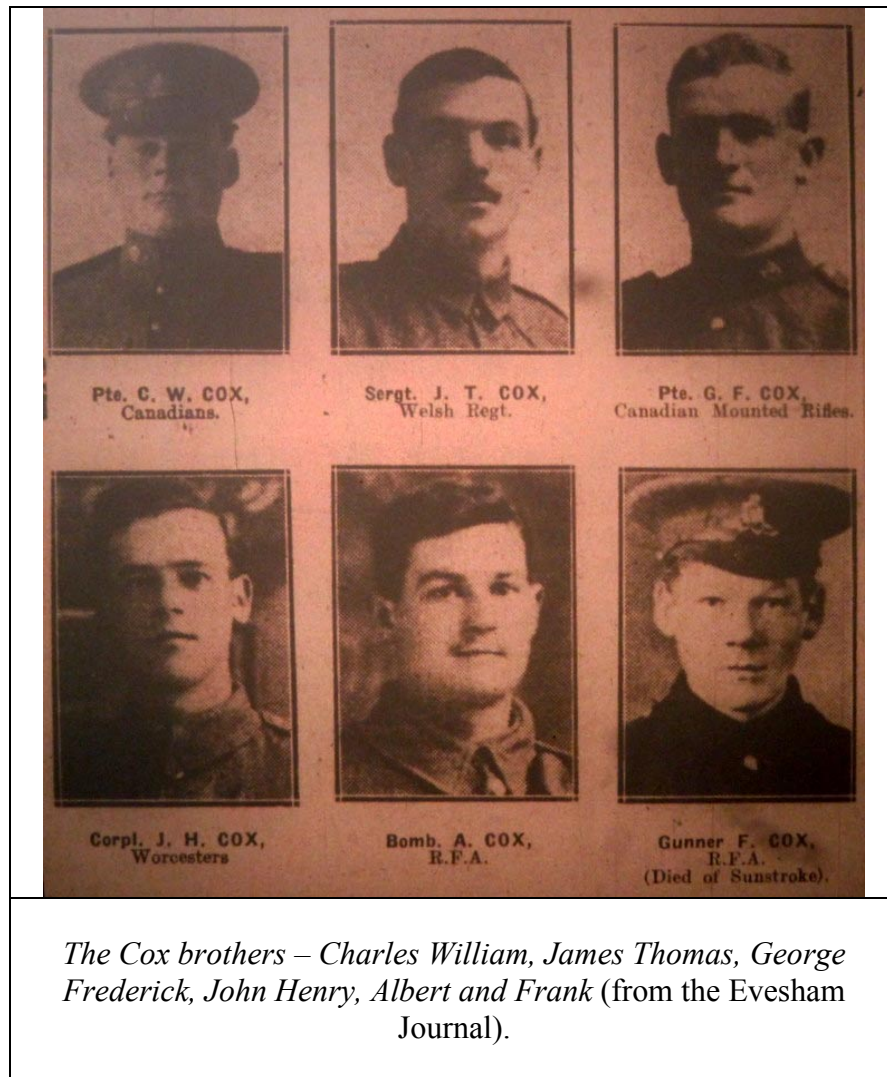
By 1911 they still had seven children living at home in the five-roomed house, with two of the boys, John Henry and Albert working as market garden labourers. Two of the elder sons had emigrated to Canada to seek their fortunes; Charles William was already married with a child when he left England in 1906, but George Frederick was still single when he left in March 1910. James Thomas had joined the Welsh Regiment in Cardiff in 1905 and was serving in Egypt in 1911.



The Cox family moved to Pitchers Hill in the mid 1900s. The picture shows William and Alice Cox with 8 of their 11 children -clockwise around parents - Ernest (b. 1904), Wilfred (b. 1900), John Henry (b. 1893), Albert (b. 1896), George (b. 1890), Frank (b. 1898), Alice (b. 1902) and Ruth (b.1906). They also had three older sons - Charles, Joseph and James (courtesy of Ruth Thomas nee Cox).

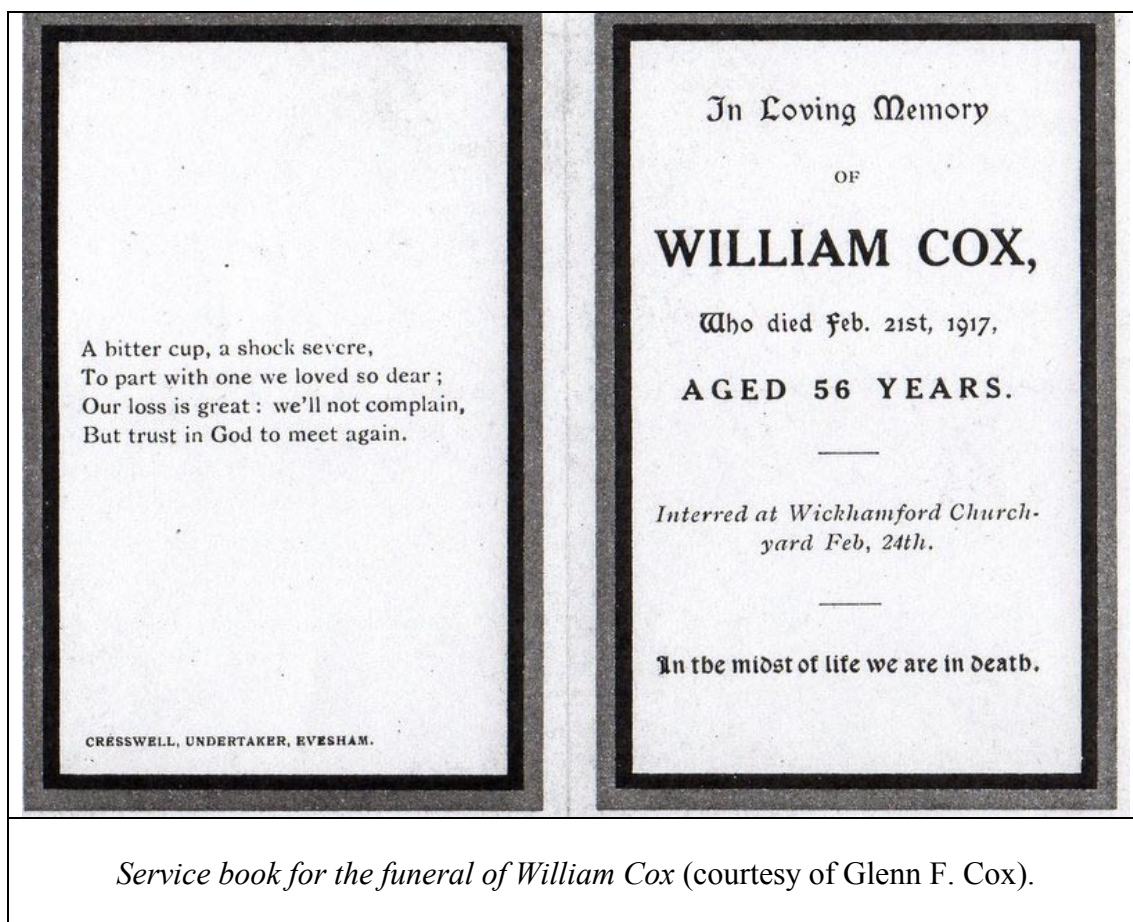
The outbreak of War in 1914 seriously affected the family, as six of the sons became soldiers. In Canada, George joined up in 1915 and Charles in 1916 and both saw

service in France. In England, James Thomas rejoined the Welsh Regiment, John Henry was already in the Worcesters and Albert enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery (R.F.A.). Although under age, Frank also joined the R.F.A. and was sent to Greece to help fight the Bulgarian Army. It was there that he succumbed to sunstroke, on 13th July 1916, after only a brief time in the country. He was just short of his 18th birthday and was buried in Salonika Military Cemetery.



Seven months later, back in Wickhamford, one of William and Alice's younger sons, Wilfred, died from septicaemia said to be as a result of a rusty nail puncturing his big toe. William worked as normal the next day and then walked to Badsey to register the death. On his way home he stopped at the Sandys Arms for a drink and later left the pub with Mr Halford. They parted company some 100 yards from William's home and he was later found dead as a result a motor accident, in which two vehicles were thought to have struck him on a dark and misty night. The second was driven by Broadway photographer, John Jacques junior, who ran over the already deceased

William lying in the middle of the road. Both William and Wilfred were buried in the Churchyard of St John the Baptist on 24th February 1917.



Charles and George Cox were released from service in the Canadian Army following their father's death. This was Canadian Government policy, as the family had no breadwinner. By way of contrast John Henry was reputedly told by the Sergeant Major that the officer had to tell him of his father's death and 'do not make this difficult for him'! George married in England before returning to Canada, but later ran the village shop on Pitchers Hill. Charles, in his later life, was a visitor to Wickhamford on several occasions, as is remembered for wearing a Stetson and smoking a large cigar around the village!

John Henry Cox had already enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment in 1912, signing on for 7 years. He was wounded at St Eloi in France on 28th March 1915, whilst rescuing a wounded companion. He spent about four months in hospital at Dalmeny, but recovered from his wound. He was then transferred to the Royal Berkshire Regt as a replacement. For his gallantry he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and served until 1919.



Sgt John Henry Coxs' Great War Medals – the 1914 Star, Meritorious Service Medal, British War Medal and Victory Medal (courtesy of Christopher J. Cox).

Albert Cox served in France and Salonika but his service record has not survived. James Thomas Cox had originally enlisted in the Army on 4th March 1905 in the Welsh Regiment and had seen service in South Africa (1907-09) and Egypt (1909-11). He left the Army and was put on the Reserve list on 8th December 1911. He was recalled and signed on again on 5th August 1914, the day after War was declared. He went to France on 13th August 1914 with the British Expeditionary Force and was wounded in the left knee, at the Battle of Aïnse, on 16th September 1914. He was probably the first man with Wickhamford connections to have seen action. After the War, he stayed in the Army, transferring to the Royal Sussex Regt on 27th October 1919. He finally left the Army, at his own request, on 10th April 1923 having completed 18 years and 40 days on active service or in the Reserves.

More details of the lives and service records of the six Cox brothers who fought in the Great War can be found in the 'Wickhamford Goes to War' article on this web-site.

Alice Cox lived on until 1950, dying at the age of 86, leaving 40 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren. Alice Lilian Annie, born in Badsey in 1902, never married and was a resident of Pitchers Hill until her death in 1986. She was described in her obituary as a pillar of the church. Ruth, the youngest child of Alice and William, died in 1990.



Alice Lilian Annie Cox, known as 'Sis' who lived on Pitchers Hill until her death in 1986 (courtesy of Christopher J. Cox).

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to the members of the Cox family who have contributed photographs and comments to help in the preparation of this article

Tom Locke – 1st August 2012.