

## Walter Phipps - (1877-1919)

Similar to the previous entry, Walter had died shortly after the First World War had ended, and again like the previous entry, he passed-away after a short illness, with his funeral taking place at St Aldates Church followed by an internment at the Osney (*St Mary*) Cemetery.

Born at Blackfriars Road in St Ebbes, - Walter James Phipps was born on a Monday 9 July 1877, the second youngest of at least nine children born to George Phipps, a builders labourer and bricklayer from the outlying village of Littlemore, and his wife of fourteen years, Sarah, (*Messenger*) who originally came from the small village of Denton, although she was actually raised in the neighbouring village of Garsington. Being raised in a family of three brothers, (*George, Frederick and Arthur*) and five sisters, (*Sarah, Alice, Martha, Lily and Florence*) Walter was initially raised in the area of St Ebbes known as the 'Friars', and his education would have began at the Holy Trinity Schools in Blackfriars Road, yet by the age of thirteen, Walter had recently finished what was probably a very basic education, and he was employed as a bricklayers apprentice. The Phipps family had previously been living at both 61 and 21 Blackfriars Road in St Ebbes, and by the time of the 1891 census; the majority of the family were living at 174 Marlborough Road in Grandpont; an area then still within the parish of St Aldates. This address was to remain the home of Walter Phipps for the rest of his days, and by the time of the 1901 census, he was in-fact the only child still living at home, and he had not only forsaken his training as an apprentice bricklayer, but he had trained in the equally skilful trade of a carpenter. By this time, Walter was twenty-three years of age, and he was living with his mother Sarah at the age of sixty, and his father George, who also sixty and was still working in the building trade as a bricklayer. The first major connection between Walter and St Aldate Church came just a few months later when on 6 October 1901; Walter married his wife Annie Radborn, who was a twenty-six year-old spinster from Eynsham. Annie was born in the summer of 1875, as the eldest of two daughters born to Henry Radborn; an agricultural labourer from Freeland, and his wife Mary Ann who was still living in the village of her birth.

Annie seems to have moved into Oxford independently of her family and as early as 1891; at the age of fifteen, she was living at 58a Holywell Street in Oxford where she was working as a general servant. Shortly before her marriage, Annie was again living with her parents, who by this time had moved into Oxford, and they were living at Marlborough Road in Grandpont. After their marriage, Walter and Annie Phipps lived with his parents at 174 Marlborough Road, and this was where the first of their five children was born, the first of which, born a month before the marriage, on Friday, 6 September 1901. The first of his three daughters was given the name of Alma Florence, and she was followed at regular intervals by Lillian Elsie on 27 February 1903, their first son Harold Henry on 11 October 1904, another daughter Dorothy Hilda on 1 April 1906, and finally Sidney John born 11 July 1909. Although all of the Phipps children were born in Marlborough Road, it's a little surprising to find that they hadn't been taken to either St Matthew or St Aldates Churches for their baptism, as the Phipps children were all baptised at the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (*closed 1940*), at Stewart Street in New Hinksey.

The Phipps home at Marlborough Road must have been quite a large residence, as recorded on the census of the spring of 1911; their home had six rooms, a total of which didn't include the hallway, a scullery and although unlikely in those days, a bathroom. Living at this address in the spring of 1911 was Walter and Annie with their five young children, yet also still living at 174 Marlborough Road was his parents, George and Sarah Phipps, who by this time were both around the age of seventy, although George was no longer fit for employment, probably due to his advanced age.

The census suggests that Walter, who's trade was still a carpenter, was working from home possibly as a self-employed worker or maybe he ran a small business from home, but whichever, it would appear that Walter was now the only member of the family with an income.

As the years progressed, unfortunately Walter was to lose both of his parents with the death of his mother in February 1913; followed just three years later by the death of George Phipps in January 1916 at the age of seventy-four. Previous to this, Walter had also seen the death of his younger sister Florence in 1908 at the age of twenty-three, and along with their daughter Sarah and George Phipps were interred at Osney Cemetery.

With the outbreak of war in August 1914, Walter it would seem had no desire to enlist, and it appears strange that he had not been conscripted much earlier, as it would be the summer of 1918 before Walter finally enlisted when at the age of forty-one, he joined the newly formed Royal Air Force on the 20 August 1918. Enlisting for the duration on the war, Walter Phipps was medically assessed the same day when he was assessed as being grade II, and described as being 5ft 11½ inches tall with a 33½ inch chest, a shallow complexion, and grey eyes with brown hair. Just three weeks after his enlistment, Walter Phipps was posted to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force and on arrival on the 13 September; he was immediately attached to the No1 Aeroplane Supply Depot at St Omer. With the rank of Air Mechanic 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Walter Phipps remained in France until after the armistice, only returning home to England on 2 February 1919, by which time he was possibly already suffering the effects of the Broncho-pneumonia, which sadly was the cause of his death on Sunday 9 February 1919.

One possible source of comfort for his wife was the fact that Walter had returned home shortly before he died, and as a result he was buried a few days later at St Aldates Church on the 13 February, with his body laid to rest at Osney Cemetery in Oxford. Regrettably with the passing of time and the subsequent loss of the cemetery burial registers, the exact location of Walter's grave was lost many years ago, and as a result, his name is now commemorated on a special Commonwealth War Graves Memorial at Osney Cemetery. After his untimely death, the only record of his demise to appear in a local newspaper appeared in the weekly published *Oxford Times* on 15 February 1919, when the following brief obituary appeared, - *Phipps - at 174 Marlborough Road, Oxford, Walter James Phipps, after a short illness, aged 41 years.*

### **CWGC Details.**

Phipps, Walter James,  
Royal Air Force,  
Rank, - 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Air Craft Mechanic,  
Service No, - 286711, Aged, - 41,  
Date of Death, - 9/2/1919,  
Memorial, Buried Oxford (*Osney St Mary*) Cemetery,  
Name appears of a Special Memorial.  
Son of George and Sarah Phipps; Husband of Annie Phipps of 174 Marlborough Road Grandpont, Oxford. Born at Oxford.

### **Medal Entitlement.**

Members of the Royal Air Force received the same basic medals as the army, thus he was entitled to the British War and Victory Medals, which were issued on December 1921.

Annie Phipps out-lived her late husband by more than thirty years, and she continued living at Marlborough Road for many years, before she passed-away at the age of seventy-six during the autumn of 1951.

*As a footnote to Walter's Royal Air Force service records, in the left-hand margin a list of his children's names were entered with a place and date of birth, yet strangely the name of his eldest daughter is missing from this list possibly because she was born a month before Walter and Annie had married.*

*Although he was not commemorated on the St Aldates War Memorial, the name of Walter Phipps was remembered on the St Matthew's Church War Memorial in Grandpont.*