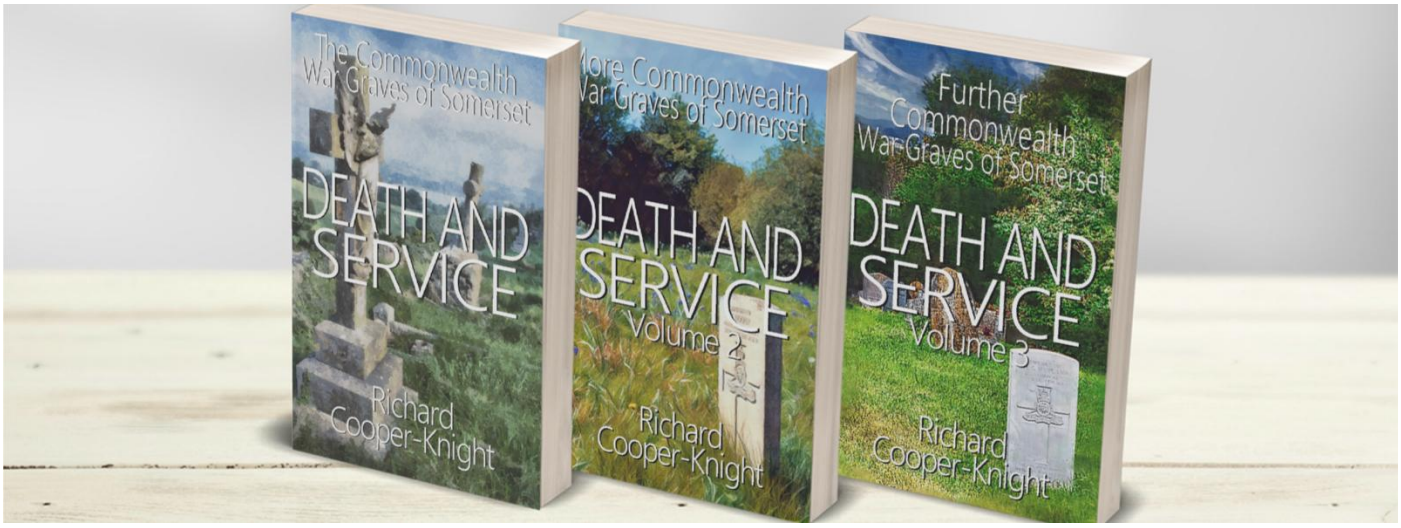


Death and Service Newsletter

Issue 34: March 2026

Well, spring seems to be trying to show its face, although, here in Somerset, we have yet to have a day this year without rain.

The last month has been one of preparation. Planning for my first talks of the year – in Taunton and Minehead – is well under way, and I am sketching an outline for my project on the Chatham Air Raid in 1917.

I have also had a couple of trips away – including a surreal meeting with the King and Queen, which I am still trying to get my head around! – and these have allowed me to photograph some graves in Northamptonshire and Berkshire, more of which you can read about later in this issue.

The focus of this month's newsletter is the de Ruvigny Roll of Honour, an attempt to record and commemorate every soldier, sailor and airman who died during the First World War. One of the men that project memorialises is Serjeant William Dutch, and you can learn more about him in this month's grave.

Please feel free to share any topics or ideas you'd like to see featured in future editions of the newsletter.

I am always happy to conduct First World War research where I can. If you have a relative from that era that you would like me to find out more about, please let me know.

Until next time.

Richard

Keep in touch:

Website:
https://deathandservice.co.uk/

Facebook: @deathandservice

Instagram: @deathandservice

YouTube: @deathandservice

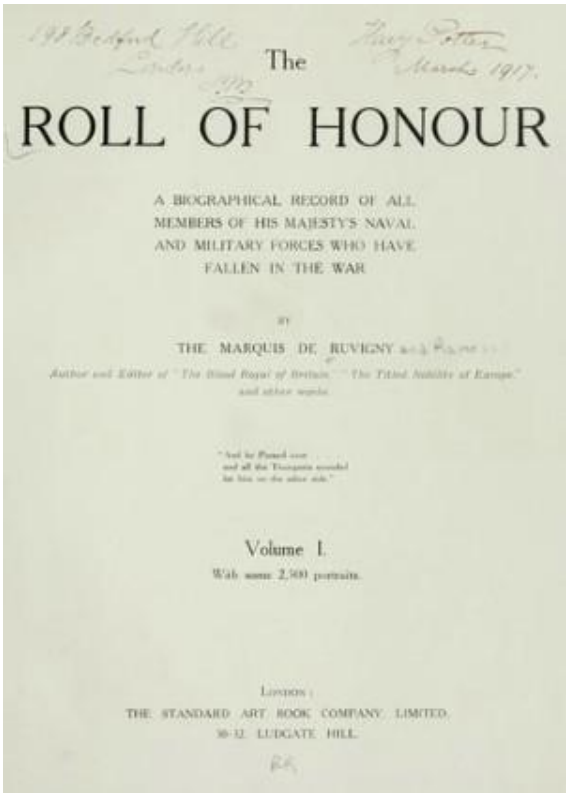
Email:
deathandservice@outlook.com

Death and Service:
Volumes 1-3 are available in paperback and eBook.

BEHIND THE RESEARCH: DE RUVIGNY ROLL OF HONOUR

As the casualties of the Great War started mounting, so too grew an understanding that those who had sacrificed their all needed to be memorialised. This came in a number of ways, but the dedication of one man in particular stands out.

The self-styled Marquis of Ruvigny and Raineval, Melville Amadeus Henry Douglas Heddle de la Caillemotte de Massue de Ruvigny, was a keen genealogist who had compiled an account of the Jacobite peerage in 1904 (its reliability was later disputed, as were his rights to the titles he celebrated). As the war dragged on, he took it upon himself to compile a *"Roll of honour… to place on permanent record the name of every officer, non-commissioned officer and man of His Majesty's Forces, on land or sea, who is killed in action, who dies of wounds, or whose death is otherwise resulting from the present war."*


The

ROLL OF HONOUR

A BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD OF ALL MEMBERS OF HIS MAJESTY'S NAVAL AND MILITARY FORCES WHO HAVE FALLEN IN THE WAR

THE MARQUIS DE RUVIGNY

Volume I.

THE STANDARD ART BOOK COMPANY, LIMITED

De Ruvigny's aim was to record the name, rank and regiment of everyone recorded on the official casualty lists. This would include, where possible, a biography of their parents, birth details, education, career and date of death. Where a photograph was available, or citations from the deceased's officer or comrades, these would also be included. The project would be spread across a number of volumes, with servicemen recorded in alphabetical order.

The Roll of Honour would cost money, of course, but would be paid for by subscription. Families of the deceased would be able to submit details of their loved ones at no cost to themselves.

The mammoth undertaking was a success in a number of ways, and, given the limited options for research at the time, is an incredible achievement. More than a century later, it still proves to be a vital resource for anyone researching the dead of the Great War. The volumes were planned to be chronological, with the first covering 1914, and the last focusing on 1918. However, many early casualties appear in later editions and the holes in the Jacobite research that de Ruvigny has previously been criticised about would also be reflected in his Roll of Honour.

The Marquis' untimely death in 1921, would mean that only five of the planned volumes were completed, but these still contain the details of more than 25,000 casualties. While many of the lower ranked soldiers include just a sentence or two of information, those in the upper echelons of service might go on for many paragraphs, and include information that, unless the death was reported in a contemporary newspaper, would not otherwise be readily available.


The Roll of Honour 51

Used in conjunction with other resources, de Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, or *The Roll of Honour: A biographical Record of all His Majesty's Naval and Military Forces who has Fallen in the War*, to give it its full title, can offer insights that are unavailable elsewhere. It is a great resource and, in some cases, can add real detail to the life of those who had given their all for the conflict.

Did you know?

The Roll of Honour includes more than 7000 photographs of those who died as a result of the war.

GRAVE OF THE MONTH

Grave Location:
Locksbrook Cemetery
Cedric Road
Bath
BA1 3PD

Name: Dutch, William

Rank: Serjeant

Regiment: Royal Field Artillery

Date of death: 11th April 1915

Age at time of death: 22

Cause of death: Pneumonia

DUTCH, WILLIAM BENJAMIN, Sergt., No. 83812, 47th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, [son] of William Dutch, of Bladud House, Bath, Accountant, by his wife, Alice, [daughter] of Alderman Alfred Taylor, of The Red House, Bath; b. Lower Weston, Bath, 21 April 1894; educ. Bathforum, and Bath City Secondary School 93 years' Scholarship), and was employed in the engineering works of Stothert and Pitt Ltd., of Bath. He joined the Army, 17th Aug. 1914; was made Bombardier, 1 November 1914; Corpl., 14 November 1914; and Sergt., 1 January 1915; and died at the Thornhill Isolation Hospital, Aldershot, 11 April 1915, of septic scarlet fever; [unmarried]. He was buried at Locksbrook Cemetery, Bath, will full military honours. His Capt. wrote: "I cannot exaggerate the loss he is to me personally and to the whole battery, had picked up a wonderful knowledge of gunnery and his work in general was out and out the best sergeant I had, and would have gone far in the service." He was a keen sportsman and a popular football player.
[De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1919]

William Benjamin Dutch was the second of five children to William and Alice. His father initially worked as a grocer and wine and spirit shopkeeper, and the 1901 census found the family living above the shop on the corner of Chelsea Road and Park Road, Bath.

By the time of the 1911 census, however, things had changed. The Dutches had moved to Walcot, nearer the centre of Bath, and William was working as a tramway clerk. Alice ran the family home - 3 Bladud Buildings - as a boarding house, and employed a housemaid and kitchen maid to help look after the lodgings.

William's dedication to his army role - and his rapid rise through the ranks - is outlined in the article above. He seems, however, to have spent his time on home soil, remaining at his Hampshire base from his enlistment to his passing. His service records give an insight into his physical nature: he stood 5ft 6.5ins (1.69m) tall, and weighed 153lbs (69.4kg). He had light brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion.

Serjeant Dutch's illness seems to have come on him quickly:

On Sunday a telegram reached [his parents] saying that their son... was seriously ill in hospital at Aldershot. Mr Dutch went thither at once, only to find that his son had passed away. He

GRAVE OF THE MONTH

Grave Location:
Locksbrook Cemetery
Cedric Road
Bath
BA1 3PD

was attacked last week with bronchial pneumonia, and tracheotomy was performed in the hope of saving his life, but in vain. The deceased was... a young soldier of rare promise and fine physique.
[Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette - Saturday 17 April 1915]

William Benjamin Dutch was just 20 years old when he passed away. His body was taken back to Somerset for burial. He was laid to rest in the family plot in Bath's sweeping Locksbrook Cemetery, within sight of William Sr's former shop on Chelsea Road.

DUTCH, WILLIAM BENJAMIN, Sergt., No. 83812, 47th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, *s.* of William Dutch, of Bladud House, Bath, Accountant, by his wife, Alice, dau. of Alderman Alfred Taylor, of The Red House, Bath; *b.* Lower Weston, Bath, 21 April, 1894; educ. Bathforum, and Bath City Secondary School (3 years' Scholarship), and was employed in the engineering works of Stothert and Pitt, Ltd., of Bath. He joined the Army, 17 Aug. 1914; was made Bombardier, 1 Nov. 1914; Corpl,. 14 Nov. 1914; and Sergt., 1 Jan. 1915; and died at the Thornhill Isolation Hospital, Aldershot, 11 April, 1915, of septic scarlet fever; *unm.* He was buried at Locksbrook Cemetery, Bath, with full military honours. His Capt. wrote: "I cannot exaggerate the loss he is to me personally and to the whole battery, had picked up a wonderful knowledge of gunnery and his work in general, was out and out the best sergeant I had, and would have gone far in the service." He was a keen sportsman and a popular football player.

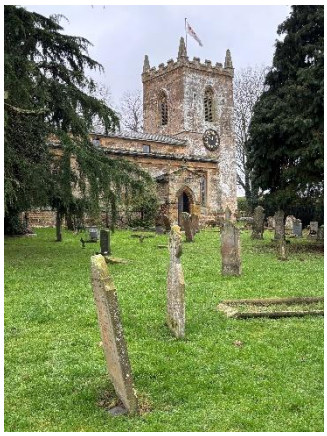
The physical volumes of de Ruvigny's Roll of Honour can sometimes be found on auction sites and second-hand book shops, while the complete publication has been digitised by both *Ancestry* and *Find My Past*.

Two of the volumes are also available for download, using the links below:

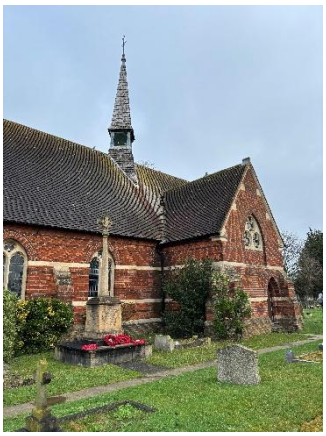
de Ruvigny Roll of Honour: Volume 1

de Ruvigny Roll of Honour: Volume 3

Great Billing,
Northampshire



Hardingstone,
Northampshire



Eton Wick,
Berkshire

Clewer,
Berkshire

GRAVE HUNTING

A couple of recent trips has meant that I was able to visit some more graveyards. Going further afield, I dipped into Berkshire and Northamptonshire, and, along with the WW1 headstones I was looking for, I came across a couple of interesting finds.

In the peaceful graveyard of St Edmund's Church, Hardingstone, Northamptonshire, is an understated wooden cross. Dedicated to the memory of an unknown man, who died on 6th November 1930, it hides the gruesome story of a murder by Alfred Rouse. Financially struggling, he had sought to fake his own death, setting fire to his car. Authorities found a body inside the remains of the Morris Minor, but his identity has never been discovered. Rouse was caught and tried for the murder, and was hanged in Bedford Gaol on 10th March 1931.

Meanwhile, in St Andrew's Churchyard, Clewer, Berkshire, is the grave of Owen George Allum. Born in Falmouth in 1895, the 1911 census recorded him as living in Windsor, where he was working as telegraph boy for the town's post office. His parents had separated and he bought a third class ticket for the Titanic, to visit his mother in the United States. He perished when the mighty ship sank, but his body was to be one of the few bodies to be rescued from the icy sea. His remains were brought back to Britain, and he was laid to rest in the churchyard not far from his grieving father's home.