

# THE GREAT WAR MEMORIAL OF SURBITON PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH: BEHIND THE NAMES

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## ABSTRACT

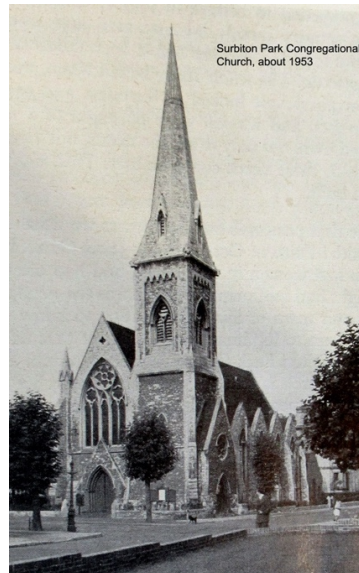
A war memorial panel was unveiled in Surbiton Park Congregational Church on 12 November 1922. It commemorated eight men, one of whom was a civilian. Of the four enlisted men, two died in England. Private Hart died of heatstroke when training in Aldershot and Private Palmer died, following measles, in a military hospital in Dover. Two men died on the Western Front in France or Flanders. Private Newby died of wounds and Private Thane was killed in action. Of the three officers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Horace Payne was killed in air combat on the Western Front and his brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Henry Payne, died in a flying accident in the Dover area. Lieutenant Stephen Read probably died of influenza in East Africa, after the Armistice. His brother, Charles Read, was a civilian medical student who died, after the Armistice, in King's College Hospital, London, following influenza. Both would have been victims of the Spanish Influenza pandemic. The church was demolished in the late 1960s, and the fate of the memorial was not discovered.

## INTRODUCTION

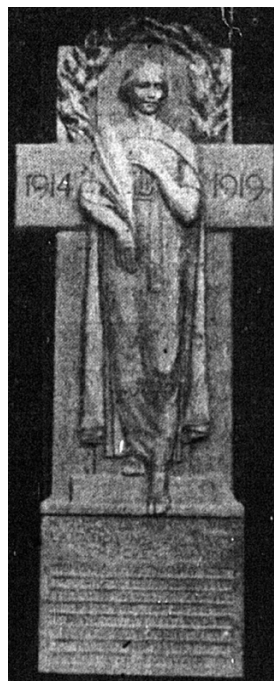
Surbiton Park Congregational Church had its origins in 1853 when a group of people met in a private house for worship. In 1854 a church was built on the corner of St Leonard's Road and Maple Road in an area, which became known as "*Surbiton Park*".<sup>1</sup> This proved to be too small for an expanding congregation and in 1865 work started on a bigger church on the corner of Grove Road and Maple Road. It was dedicated at a service on 27 June 1866.<sup>2</sup> **Figure 1** shows the building as it was in about 1953. It was demolished in the late 1960s.

A war memorial panel, installed on a wall to the right of the pulpit, was unveiled at a service in the church on Sunday, 12 November 1922. It was finely cast in bronze at the Thames Ditton Bronze Foundry and mounted on Irish green marble. The artist was Richard Reginald Goulden, the sculptor for the Kingston upon Thames war memorial. It was presented by Mr Arthur Bryan Burton, the owner of the foundry.<sup>3</sup> A picture of the panel was published in the Surrey Comet local newspaper of 18 November 1922 – **Figure 2**. It has been described as "*the figure of Victory, with a cross bearing the*

*dates 1914-1919, and a wreath of laurels as background, is depicted as descending steps which typify the death of heroes who made the supreme sacrifice". The inscription, including the list of seven names, was transcribed by Jon Moore. It was dedicated "In memory of those who laid down their lives in the Great War".<sup>4</sup> The fate of the memorial after the demolition of the church was not discovered.*



**Figure 1. Surbiton Park Congregational Church, about 1953, from the publication *Surbiton Park Congregational Church Centenary, 1853-1953*, computer enhanced.**



**Figure 2. Memorial panel installed at Surbiton Park Congregational Church, from the *Surrey Comet*, 18 November 1922, computer enhanced.**

Some sources for the research are listed in the Appendix. The object was to find a best match, i.e., someone who, on a balance of probabilities in the light of the accumulated evidence, was most likely to be a person behind a name on the memorial. Biographical notes of each of the men considered to be the best match and details of each death, burial or commemoration follow.

### **1. SAMUEL LESLIE HART**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Private Samuel Leslie Hart*, D Company. 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, no. 17339. Son of William and Margaret E. Hart of 39 Prospect Road, Surbiton. He was baptised at St Mary's Church, Long Ditton, on 8 April 1894. In the 1911 Census, he was a gardener living in the household of his father, William Hart, a barge builder, at Unity Cottage, Prospect Place, Long Ditton, Surrey.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** According to the *Surrey Advertiser* of 6 May 1916, he died, during a long route march in Aldershot, on 28 April 1916, aged 22. The cause of death was heatstroke.<sup>5</sup> His funeral was with full military honours and his coffin, covered with the Union Jack, was taken to St Mary's Church, Long Ditton on a gun carriage. The band of the Depot of the East Surrey Regiment at Kingston played, and an address was made at the graveside on behalf of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, of which he had been a member. He is commemorated on Long Ditton War Memorial and on Surbiton UDC memorial as S.L. Hart.

### **2. JOHN ARTHUR NEWBY**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Gunner John Arthur Newby*, 94<sup>th</sup> Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, no. 120135. Son of John and Charlotte Westwood Newby of East Sheen, Surrey and husband of Margaret Newby of 37 Cotterill Road, Surbiton, Surrey. In the 1911 Census he was a commercial clerk living in the household of his father, a commercial clerk, at 27 Leinster Avenue, Mortlake, Surrey. He married Margaret Newby, née Campbell, in Richmond, Surrey, in 1912.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** He died of wounds, on the Western Front, on 15 August 1917, aged 33 and is buried in Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, France [III, L. 6A.]. He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as J.A. Newby.

### **3. HAROLD STEWART PALMER**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Private Harold Stuart Palmer*, 31<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Training Reserve, no. 25814, son of Edward and Betsy Martha Palmer of 7 Brighton

Road, Surbiton. In the 1911 Census, he was a schoolboy, living in the household of his father, a gents' outfitter, at 7 Brighton Road, Surbiton. He was conscripted at Kingston in February-March 1917, he was a surveyor at the time and his address was given as 7 Brighton Road, Surbiton.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** he was buried in Kingston Cemetery [unconsecrated, 162]. His death certificate recorded that he died on 9 April 1917 at the Military Hospital, Western Heights, Dover, Kent, aged 18. The cause of death was entered as measles for six days and broncho-pneumonia. He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as H. S. Palmer.

#### **4. HORACE ABRAHAM PAYNE**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Horace Abraham Payne*, Royal Flying Corps/RAF. He was baptised on 2 November 1902, at All Saints' Church, Highgate and was the son of Abraham, a merchant, and Catherine Payne, who in the 1921 Census were boarders in the Ardmay Hotel, 4 Avenue Elmers, Surbiton. Horace Abraham Payne enlisted in the Honourable Artillery Company as a private in 1914. On 18 April 1916, The Woolwich Gazette and Plumstead News reported that he had been fined 12s for speeding at 30 mph on a motorcycle at Shooter's Hill. He was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps on 26 September 1916. Probate records gave his address as *Kohat*, Grove Road, Surbiton.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** He was killed in air combat, on the Western Front, on 18 March 1918, age 22, and is buried in La Vallee-Mulatre Communal Cemetery, Picardie, France. He left an estate of £116. He is commemorated on the grave, in Surbiton Cemetery, of his brother, Henry William Payne [below] and his mother, Catherine Julia Payne [Section IV, Class A, 47]. He is possibly commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as H. W. P.

#### **5. HENRY WILLIAM PAYNE**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Henry William Payne*, Royal Flying Corps/RAF. He was baptised on 2 November 1902, at All Saints' Church, Highgate and was the son of Abraham, a merchant, and Catherine Payne, who in the 1921 Census were boarders in the Ardmay Hotel, 4 Avenue Elmers, Surbiton. He was the brother of Horace Abraham Payne [above]. The London Gazette of 23 November 1917, reported that Henry William Payne of the School of Military Aeronautics was, on 17 November 1917, granted a commission as a temporary 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the RFC.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** His death certificate records that he died at the Military Hospital, Western Heights, Dover, Kent on 11 March 1918, aged 20. The cause of death, issued after an inquest held on 14 March 1918, was entered as *“accidentally killed whilst flying”*. He is buried in Surbiton Cemetery [Section IV, Class A, 47]. His mother, Catherine Payne, is buried there and his brother, Horace Abraham Payne [above] is commemorated there. He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC Memorial as H.W. Payne.

## **6. CHARLES NATHANIEL READ**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Charles Nathaniel Read*, was a civilian who was born in Brooklyn, New York, USA. He was the eldest son of George Francis and Emma Whitaker Read who were both born in the USA and were naturalised UK citizens. In the 1911 Census, he was a student living in the household of his father, then a widower, at 21 Beaufort Road, Kingston. He was a chief engineer and works manager employed by a printing press manufacturer. Also in the household was his younger brother, Stephen Tucker Read [below] born in the USA. Charles Nathaniel Read was a medical student, and later was a house physician, at King's College Hospital, London.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** He died on 14 November 1918 at King's College Hospital, age 25. No record of his burial was found. A memorial plaque in St Luke's Chapel in the hospital records that he died while a house physician in the hospital and *“faithful to his duty, he died at his post”*. His death certificate records that he was a medical student at King's College Hospital, of 21 Beaufort Road, Kingston and he died on 14 November 1918. The cause of death was entered as “influenzal bronco-pneumonia, acute nephritis and syncope”. He left an estate of £95. Charles Nathaniel Read is not listed in the University of London's War List of those who served in HM Forces, 1914-18. It is concluded that he was a civilian when he died. He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as C. N. Read.

## **7. STEPHEN TUCKER READ**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Lieutenant Stephen Tucker Read*, East Yorkshire Regiment, attached to the King's African Rifles, was born in Brooklyn, New York, USA. He was a son of George Francis and Emma Whitaker Read who were both born in the USA and were naturalised UK citizens. In the 1911 Census, he was a schoolboy living in the household of his father, then a widower, a chief engineer and works manager employed by a printing press manufacturer, at 21 Beaufort Road,

Kingston. Also in the household was his brother, Charles Nathaniel Read [above] also born in the USA. In 1918, his father lived at 21 Old Park Avenue, Nightingale Lane, Balham, London. Stephen Tucker Read enlisted in the Royal Fusiliers and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He obtained a commission in the East Yorkshire Regiment and as a Lieutenant was attached to the King's African Rifles. He became a naturalised British Citizen on 4 September 1916.

**Death, burial or commemoration:** He died on 11 December 1918, aged 23, and is buried in Mangochi Town Cemetery, Malawi, East Africa. This contains graves of soldiers who died in at a local depôt of the King's African Rifles. An outbreak of Spanish Influenza is known to have been a cause of many deaths among officers and men of the KAR after the Armistice and it is presumed that Stephen Tucker Read was one of them.<sup>6</sup> He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as S. T. Read.

## **8. RALPH JOHN THANE**

**Biographical notes of best match:** *Private Ralph John Thane*, B Company., 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, no. 22237, son of John Walter Herbert and Fanny Scrivener Thane of Brackley, Northamptonshire. In the 1911 Census, a glove warehouseman, he was living in the household of his father, a coal traveller, at 11 Grove Lane, Kingston upon Thames. The Northampton Mercury, on 8 August 1913, reported the wedding, at Brackley Congregational Church, of Ralph John Thane and Ann Elizabeth Gardner of Brackley, Northamptonshire. It reported that the bridegroom, lately of Brackley, lived in Kingston upon Thames and was the secretary of the Surbiton Park Congregational Church.

**Death, burial and commemoration:** He was killed in action on 21 March 1918, on the Western Front, aged 34, and is buried in Bellicourt British Cemetery, France [IV, J. 10]. He is commemorated on the Surbiton UDC memorial as R.J. Thane.

## **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS**

The memorial commemorated eight men, one of whom was a civilian. Of the four enlisted men, two died in England. Private Hart died of heatstroke when training in Aldershot and Private Palmer died, following measles, in a military hospital in Dover. Two men died on the Western Front in France or Flanders. Private Newby died of wounds and Private Thane was killed in action. Of the three officers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Horace Payne was killed in air combat on the Western Front and his brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Henry Payne, died in a flying accident in the Dover area. Lieutenant Stephen Read probably died of influenza in East Africa, after the Armistice. His

brother, Charles Read, was a civilian medical student who died, after the Armistice, in King's College Hospital, London, following influenza. Both would have been victims of the Spanish Influenza pandemic. The church was demolished in the late 1960s, and the fate of the memorial was not discovered.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I wish to thank Jon Moore for sharing his research findings and to staff of the Kingston History Centre for information on the church.

## **APPENDIX: SOME SOURCES**

### **1. Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/>

In the case of the Great War, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for commemoration of persons who died between 4 August 1914 and 31 August 1921:

- whilst serving in a Commonwealth military force or specified organisation, or
- after they were discharged from a Commonwealth military force, if their death was caused by wartime service.

### **2. Soldiers Died In The Great War**

<https://uk.forceswarrecords.com/publication/1278/uk-soldiers-died-in-the-great-war-1914-1919>

### **3. Ancestry**

<http://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

census records, births, deaths & marriages, military records, probate records, electoral registers

### **4. Find My Past**

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

census records, births, deaths & marriages, military records

### **6. Surrey In The Great War**

[https://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk/collections/getrecord/SHMEM\\_W\\_M\\_2760](https://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk/collections/getrecord/SHMEM_W_M_2760)

### **7. Digitised newspapers**

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

[Surrey Comet, 1854-1910](#)

[Surrey Advertiser, 1864-1973](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The Surbiton Park estate was once owned by Alexander Raphael, the builder of St Raphael's Church, KT1 2NA.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surbiton\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surbiton_Park) Surbiton Park Congregational Church Centenary, 1853-1952. The official centenary handbook of the Surbiton Park Congregational Church. Kingston History Centre, S2 [285.8], SUR.

<sup>3</sup> Surrey Comet, 18 November 1922. <https://victorianweb.org/sculpture/goulden/4.html>  
<https://elmsbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/forging-art/>

<sup>4</sup> I am most grateful to Jon Moore for this information.

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<sup>5</sup> His entry in the UK Army Register of Soldiers' Effects notes "heatstroke".

<sup>6</sup> <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/influenza-pandemic-africa/>