

About Worcestershire World War One Hundred

Cultural and heritage organisations from across Worcestershire have come together to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War One with an outstanding 4 year programme of events and activities under the banner Worcestershire World War One Hundred. The programme, which received the largest Heritage Lottery Fund Grant outside of London for a project commemorating the First World War, will commemorate the role Worcestershire played in World War One and tell the stories of Worcestershire people, their involvement with and personal legacy from the War.

For the full Worcestershire World War One Hundred programme visit:
ww1worcestershire.co.uk/
or follow @WW1Worcs

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about.

www.hlf.org.uk

Worcestershire Soldier Gallery

Located at The Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery, Foregate St, Worcester WR1 1DT, the Worcestershire Soldier Gallery tells the story of the men of our county regiments from 1694 to the present. Open Monday to Saturday 10.30am–4.30pm. No charge for admission. The Worcestershire Soldier is administered by the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire) Trust, a Registered Charity no 276510. For further details, contact: John Paddock or Pamela Langford on 01905 721982 or email: museummercian@btconnect.com

For more information about the regiment, visit www.worcestershiresoldier.org



Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone in recognition of the bravery of Frederick Dancox of Worcester

Laid at Dancox House,
214 (Worcestershire) Battery,
104th Regiment R.A.,
Pheasant Street, Worcester

21st October 2017

Frederick Dancox VC

1917 – 2017

WORCESTERSHIRE WORLD WAR ONE HUNDRED

ww1worcestershire.co.uk/
ww1worcestershire.co.uk/enquiry/

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, The Hive,
Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester. WR1 3PD
Tel: 01905 845714



DESIGN: BIRD CREATIVE STUDIO.COM



The Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest military decoration awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy" to members of the armed forces of various Commonwealth countries, and previous British Empire territories. It is first in the order of wear in the United Kingdom honours system, and takes precedence over all other orders, decorations, and medals, except the George Cross, with which it shares equal precedence. It may be awarded to a person of any military rank in any service and to civilians under military command. The VC is usually presented to the recipient or to their next of kin by the British monarch at an investiture held at Buckingham Palace.

The VC is awarded for "...most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy."



As part of the Centennial commemoration of the First World War, the UK Government has established a scheme for commemorative paving stones to be laid in the birthplace of Victoria Cross recipients, to be administered by the local Council. A total of 454 Victoria Crosses were awarded to UK born residents and a further 173 for servicemen who were born overseas in the Great War. Five Victoria Crosses were awarded for action on 23 August 1914, the first day British shots were fired on the Western Front.



George Wyatt VC, Worcester Guildhall

Frederick George Dancox VC

The citation in the London Gazette reads:

No. 21654 Pte. Frederick George Dancox.
Worc. R. (Worcester).

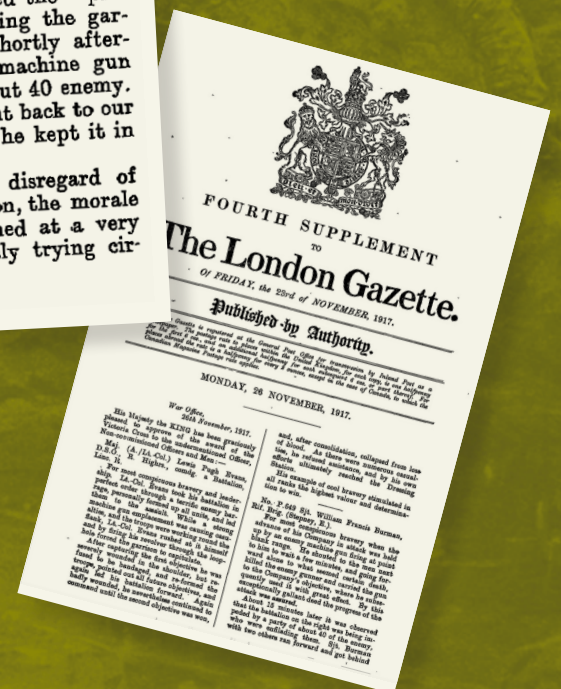
For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in attack.

After the first objective had been captured and consolidation had been started, work was considerably hampered, and numerous casualties were caused by an enemy machine gun firing from a concrete emplacement situated on the edge of our protective barrage.

Pte. Dancox was one of a party of about ten men detailed as moppers-up. Owing to the position of the machine-gun emplacement, it was extremely difficult to work round a flank. However, this man with great gallantry worked his way round through the barrage and entered the "pill box" from the rear, threatening the garrison with a Mills bomb. Shortly afterwards he reappeared with a machine gun under his arm, followed by about 40 enemy.

The machine gun was brought back to our position by Pte. Dancox, and he kept it in action throughout the day.

By his resolution, absolute disregard of danger and cheerful disposition, the morale of his comrades was maintained at a very high standard under extremely trying circumstances.



Third Ypres and the Battle of Passchendaele, 1917

by Alan Cowpe

In autumn 1917 the British army was engaged in a grim struggle around Ypres in Belgium to capture the higher ground which dominated the town and the British positions which defended it. This offensive had begun on July 31 with sweeping ambitions to drive deep into German-occupied Belgium, capture important rail communications networks and German U-boat bases on the coast, and defeat the German army in a decisive battle which would strike a war-winning blow.

After the failure of the initial ambitious attacks, the objectives were progressively scaled back and, by October, the target for the whole operation had become simply the capture of the Passchendaele ridge, which it had originally been planned to seize on the first day.

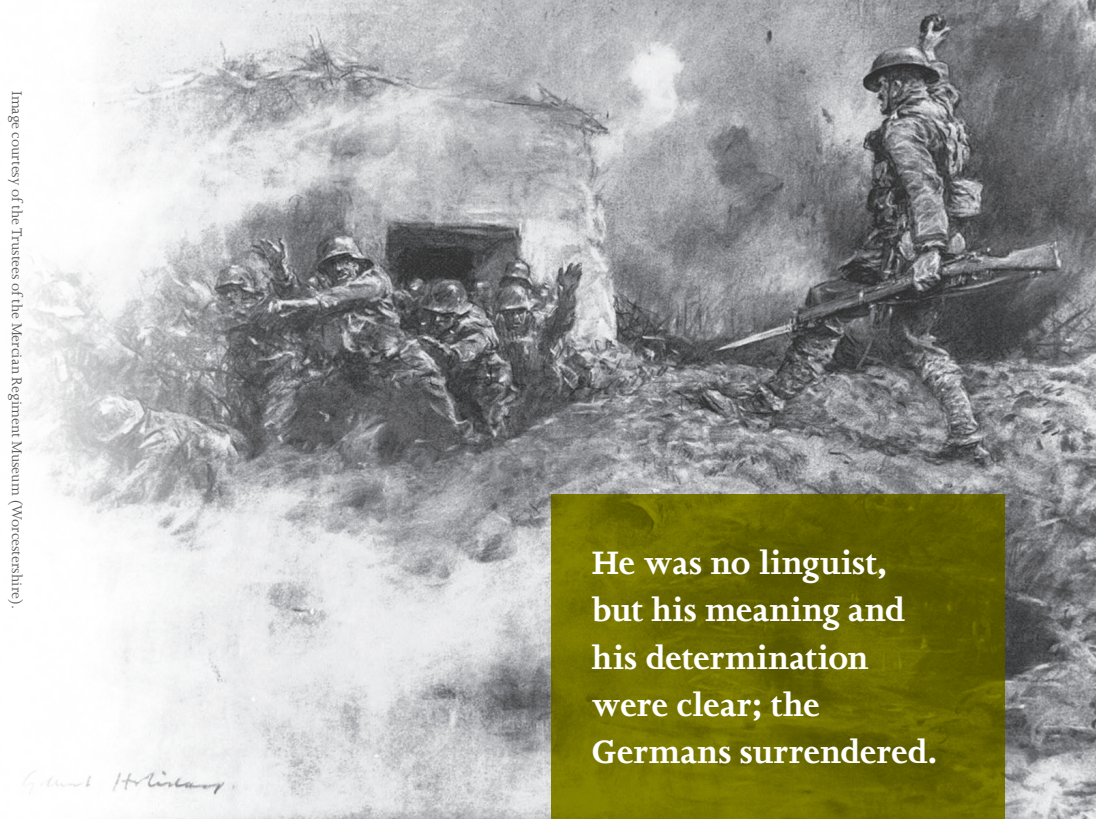
Ypres is surrounded by low-lying ground with a high water table, which depends on man-made drainage systems to maintain normal human activities, and it was recognised that effective military action would be possible only in the summer provided the weather was not wet. So the offensive began in the summer. The British army relied heavily on the extensive use of artillery to batter down the defences, but this had the effect of destroying the drainage systems with the result that normal summer rains converted the whole area

to a quagmire. Movement and supply was agonisingly slow; men and pack animals alike frequently drowned in the swamp if they slipped off the wooden tracks laid to provide roadways through the wilderness. Accurate artillery fire was virtually impossible as the guns sank into the mud when fired; and soldiers frequently waded to the attack through glutinous mud. Moreover, the offensive continued into the autumn, by which time the prospect of dry weather had long since disappeared.

In these conditions, a normal Great War defensive system of trenches was impossible; they simply flooded. Ever resourceful and adaptable, the German army had an answer. They built very large numbers of reinforced concrete pillboxes or bunkers, impervious to anything but a direct hit by very large shells which, given the technology of the time, was virtually impossible to achieve. Moreover 'pill-box' understates the formidable nature of many of these edifices, which often held up to 50 men, manning machine guns which swept the surrounding terrain with fire.

These were the obstacles that confronted the 4th battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment on 9 October 1917 near Langemark as they struggled forward, with progress measured in yards. And they were pinned down by one such fortification, with advance impossible.

Image courtesy of the Trustees of the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire).



Private Frederick George Dancox in the Battle of Poelcappelle, 9th October 1917. Drawing by Gilbert Holiday

Nobody, least of all he, would claim that Fred Dancox was anything other than an ordinary man; but as so often, it is ordinary people who do extraordinary things. He was born in Worcester and was an agricultural worker before the war. Already in his late 30s with a family, he had joined the army in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for volunteers early in the war. He had joined the 4th battalion in Gallipoli in 1915, and remained with them throughout.

Now he had originally been in a party of 10 trying to find a way forward. Separated from his companions, he continued to go forward alone. Conditions were extremely hazardous.

He was no linguist, but his meaning and his determination were clear; the Germans surrendered.

The ground was swept by machine gun fire from other bunkers and British artillery fire rained down. Somehow he survived all this and worked his way to the rear entrance of a bunker. He then chose the riskiest of options and went in brandishing hand grenades. He was no linguist, but his meaning and his determination were clear; the Germans surrendered. His colleagues were surprised when a column of some 40 Germans emerged from the bunker with their hands up, accompanied by Fred Dancox now in possession of their machine gun.

Text originally published in WR Magazine



Fred Dancox, Worcester

Frederick John Dancocks was born on 19th March 1878 at Crown Lane, Claines, Worcester but through his later life, he would use the middle name 'George'. His father William Dancocks died in 1880, and his mother, Louisa married William Whittle three years later. By 1901 Fred had two brothers, two step-brothers (from Whittle's previous marriage) and several younger half-siblings. Before joining the army in 1915 he worked as a hay-trusser. Having married Ellen Pritchard, they had 5 children – Frederick, Florence, Harry, Nellie (Ellen) and George, who died aged one. The family lived in various streets in poorer parts of Worcester Hylton Road and Dolday.

Private Dancox joined the 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment in Gallipoli before they moved to the Western Front. He had been due to receive his award from the King and the whole of Worcester prepared to celebrate the homecoming of the local hero in style: bunting was put up and alongside the Dancox family waited civic dignitaries,



The Medals of Private Frederick George Dancox VC, now in the Mercian Regiment Museum



Private Frederick George Dancox

reporters, and hundreds of local people. He did not arrive. On the 30th November, the battalion had been mobilised against the German's counter-attack and Private Dancox was killed by a shrapnel wound to the head.

Frederick was the second of the Dancocks brothers to die with no known grave: his older brother William Dancocks, had been killed in action in 1914. So, too, were the two step-brothers, William and Thomas Whittle, neither of whom has a known grave. There is a memorial to Fred at Langemark, erected by the Western Front Association.

After the war Ellen Dancox collected the VC on her husband's behalf but to assist the family, the City Council bought the medal a few years later. During the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) to Worcester in October 1932, Ellen Dancox was chosen to present the Prince with the poppy wreath that he laid at the Cathedral War Memorial.

Image courtesy of the Trustees of the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire).

Attending the ceremony

Invited guests include:

Members of the Dancox Family

Lt Col Patrick Holcroft LVO OBE, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire

Richard, Lord Faulkner of Worcester

The Right Worshipful The Mayor of Worcester
Councillor Steve MacKay

Robin Walker, MP

The Very Reverend Peter Atkinson, Dean of Worcester

Representatives of Worcester City Council

Representatives of Worcestershire County Council

Lt Col (Retd) Mark Jackson, OBE, Regimental Trustee,
The Mercian Regiment

The Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire)

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association

214 (Worcestershire) Battery Royal Artillery

Royal British Legion

West Midland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association

The Band of the Mercian Regiment

Troops of 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment, marking their 10th anniversary by exercising their right to parade through the City of Worcester in a Freedom March

