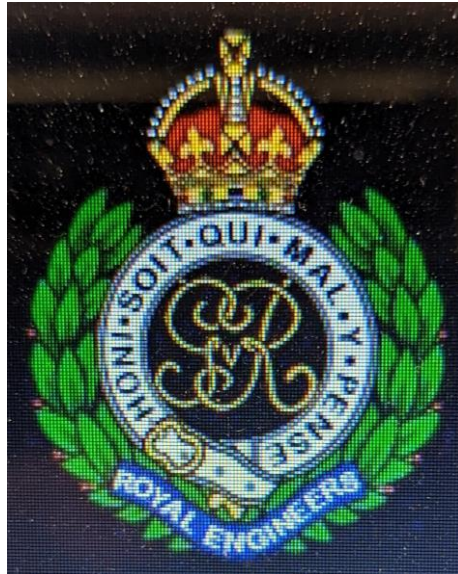


**IN MEMORY OF  
132076 SAPPER HAROLD CURTIS OF  
THE ROYAL ENGINEERS  
183rd TUNNELLING COMPANY  
KILLED IN ACTION ON 29th JUNE 1916**



**Citadel New Military Cemetery, Fricourt , Somme Region, France  
where Sapper Harold Curtis is buried and commemorated  
Grave Location - 111. F. 6**

**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - OCTOBER 2022**

# **CITADEL NEW MILITARY CEMETERY, FRICOURT**

## **History information**

Fricourt was captured by the 17th Division on 2 July 1916 but the southern part of the commune, in which this cemetery is situated, was already in Allied hands. On the road from Fricourt to Bray, before it reaches the top of the plateau, are two points 71 metres above sea level, known to the Army as 71 North and 71 South. A little further on was a feature known as the Citadel.

The cemetery is in the Northern part of a valley, running from Fricourt to the Somme, which was known in 1916 as "Happy Valley." It was begun by French troops and from August 1915, when the first Commonwealth burials were made, it was known as the Citadel Military Cemetery (Point 71). It was used until November 1916 and once in August 1918. The great majority of the burials were carried out from field ambulances before the Battles of the Somme. In the Autumn of 1916 the Citadel became a large camp for units withdrawn from the line.

The cemetery contains 380 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 17 of them unidentified.

The cemetery was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Fricourt is a village about 5 kilometres east of Albert and Citadel New Military Cemetery is approximately 2.5 kilometres south of Fricourt on the east side of the road to Bray-sur-Somme. Access to the cemetery is off a roundabout created as a result of the new airport nearby and is signposted from the roundabout.



*Citadel New Military Cemetery, Fricourt, France*

### **132076 SAPPER HAROLD CURTIS**

**(Copyright of coloured original - Michael Doyle Their Name Liveth For Evermore: The Great War Roll of Honour for Leicestershire and Rutland)**

**Note the heading stating "BELIEVED TO BE" casting some doubt on whether Harold was actually buried in this grave. This is born out in the CWGC grave registration documents which feature later.**

**COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION  
CERTIFICATE**

In Memory Of  
Sapper

**H CURTIS**

Service Number: 132076

183rd Tunnelling Coy., Royal Engineers who died on  
29 June 1916

Remembered with Honour

CITADEL NEW MILITARY CEMETERY, FRICOURT  
III. F. 6.



|||||  
COMMONWEALTH  
WAR GRAVES  
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE  
COMMONWEALTH  
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

## 132076 SAPPER HAROLD CURTIS BIOGRAPHY

**Transcribed from the Leicester Evening Mail - Saturday 03 March 1917**

A well known Pegg's Green footballer ( played for Pegg's Green Victoria), Sapper Harold Curtis, of the Royal Engineers, previously reported missing, has now been officially reported killed on June 29th last ([June 1916](#)). His brother, Lance-Corporal T. Curtis, of the Leicesters, has been awarded the Military Medal. They formerly worked at Coleorton Colliery ([would have been Coleorton No.3. Colliery known as Bug and Wink](#)).

In 1901, Harold Curtis at the age of 13, not knowing what the future held for him, was living in Griffydam with his mother, father and four siblings. All the siblings are recorded as being born in Thringstone, but this was most likely Pegg's Green:-

John Curtis, aged 51, a coal miner, born in Coalville

His wife Harriet, aged 50, born in Worthington

Kate E, daughter, aged 18, unmarried and working as a hose seamer (hosiery trade)

[Harold, son, aged 13, a coal miner-horse driver](#)

[Thomas William, son, aged 11](#)

Herbert, son, aged 8

James A, son, aged 7

**The family are not mentioned on the Griffydam 1911 census so they must have moved elsewhere.**

Lance-Corporal Thomas Curtis was two years younger than his brother Harold and was sadly killed in battle on the 14th November 1918 aged 29 following his being awarded the Military Medal for bravery. **A separate publication will be written for him.**

Sapper Harold Curtis was one of at least three men who played in the same Pegg's Green Victoria football team who lost their lives in the 1st World War. The others were Lance Corporal William Bird of the 2nd Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment and Private John William Barkby of the 1/5th Battalion, Leicestershire regiment. Another player, Driver Hy. Challoner, of the R.F.A. has been "out there" since the commencement of the war, and Private W. Holt, R.A.M.C., and Private W. Wilton, are also serving – a total of six from the football team of eleven. Further research is required to establish what happened to the latter three men.

See the following newspaper report which relates to the above paragraph and describes the captain of the club, Harold Curtis being missing at the time:-

**Transcribed from the Coalville Times - Friday September 15th 1916**

**PEGG'S GREEN SOLDIER'S DEATH**

*The death is officially reported to have taken place on August 6th, of Private John William Barkby, of the Leicestershire Regiment, as the result of wounds received in action. He was 21 years of age, and was the son of Mr James Barkby, retired miner, of Lily Cottages, Pegg's Green, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Before the war, he worked at the Coleorton Colliery, and resided with his parents. He enlisted in May, 1915, and had been about six months in France. A letter from a chaplain states that he has been buried in an English cemetery behind the firing line.*

***The deceased soldier was formerly a popular member of the Pegg's Green Victoria Football Club, being their left half-back. It is interesting to note that members of this club have done splendidly for their King and country. Of the eleven which won the Coalville League cup the two seasons prior to the war. In addition to Barkby having lost his life, the captain, Harold Curtis and W. Bird are reported missing. Another player, Driver Hy. Challoner, of the R.F.A. has been "out there" since the commencement of the war, and Private W. Holt, R.A.M.C., and Private W. Wilton, are also serving – a total of six from the football team of eleven.***

It is heartbreaking to read, even after more than 100 years has passed, how many families lost two sons in this terrible War, often leaving wives with no husbands and children with no fathers, and who, in a lot of cases, never returned to see their unborn children.

The British Army at the start of the War, were trying to recruit underground miners in order to support the tunnelling divisions which were being formed in France in preparation for the Battle of the Somme. At the age of 26, Harold Curtis, a coal miner, working at Coleorton No.3. Colliery (Bug & Wink) enlisted at Coalville and was posted to the Royal Engineers and later joined up with the 183rd Tunnelling Company in France, which had the nickname "The Moles" (further information on the 183rd Tunnelling Company and the part they played in the 1st World War is appended at the end of this publication).

**The 183rd Tunnelling Company was formed in Rouen, northern France, in October 1915.**

Allied preparations were well under way for the Battle of the Somme (1st July - 18th November 1916) and the tunnelling companies were to make two major contributions by placing 19 large and small mines beneath the German positions along the front line and by preparing a series of shallow Russian saps from the British front line into no man's land, which would be opened at zero hour and allow the infantry to attack the German positions from a comparatively short distance. Under the command of Captain Horace Hickling, 183rd Tunnelling Company placed four mines (the *Mametz East* group) in the front sector allocated to XV Corps near Mametz and three mines (the *Carnoy* group) in the front sector allocated to XIII Corps near Carnoy.

**Sapper Harold Curtis was killed one day before the start of the Battle of the Somme on 29.6.1916**

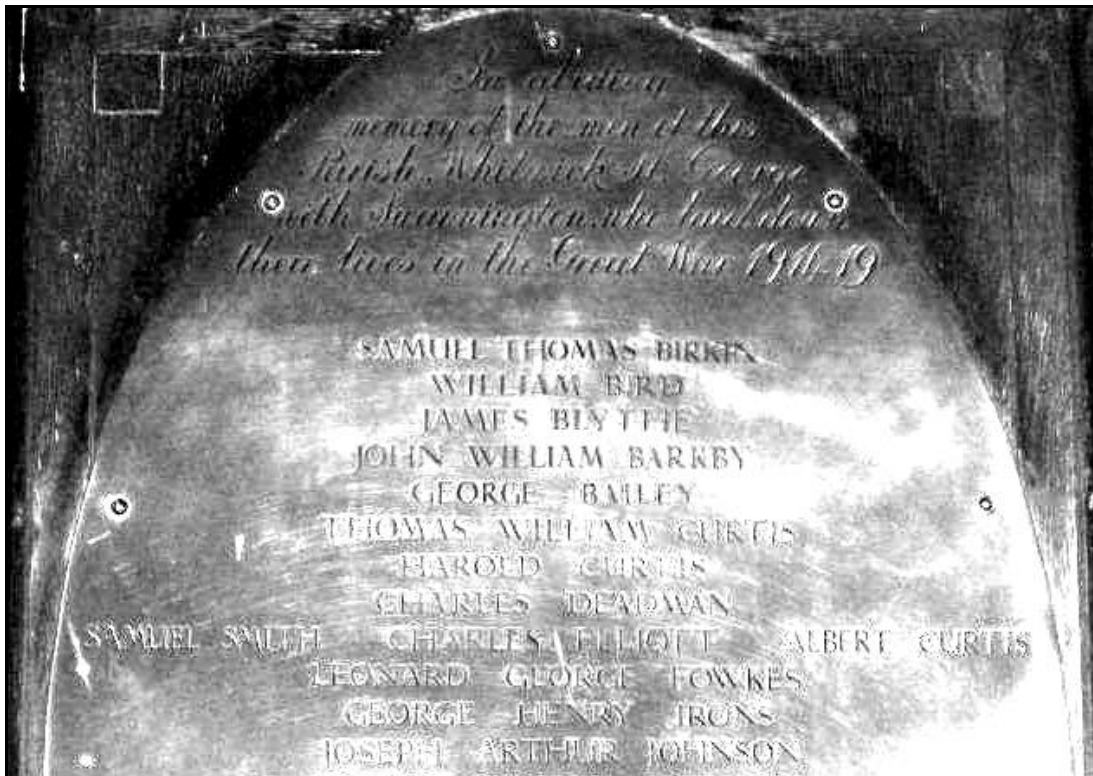
## WAR MEMORIALS

Sapper Harold Curtis is commemorated on the memorial plaque in St. George's Church, Swannington and on the Coalville war Memorial. The following is a transcription of an article in the **Coalville Times** dated **Friday 6th February 1920:-**

### SWANNINGTON WAR MEMORIAL

At Swannington Church on Sunday evening, the Rev. T. W. Walters, M.A., Vicar of Whitwick, in the absence through illness of the Vicar of Swannington, the Rev. G. Robinson, dedicated a memorial to the memory of 23 Swannington men ( ? ) who fell in the War. Presented by Mr. Thomas Atkins of Swannington, who performed the act of unveiling, the memorial consists of a brass plate mounted on an oak block erected as a mural tablet. It contains the following names of Swannington men ( ? ) who made the supreme sacrifice:-

William Bird, Samuel Thomas Birkin, James Blythe, John William Barkby, George Bailey, Thomas William Curtis, Harold Curtis, Charles Deadman, Charles Elliot, Leonard George Fowkes, George Henry Irons, Joseph Arthur Johnson, Cedric William Johnson, James Taylor Rowse, Alfred Bernard Smith, Arthur Smith, Albert Shakespeare, Walter Shaw, Herbert William Watts, Alfred Walster, Percy Walster, William Wardle and William Young.



**The Great Way Memorial Brass plaque in St. George's Church Swannington which features the name of Sapper Harold Curtis**

**IN ABIDING  
MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS  
PARISH, WHITWICK ST. GEORGE  
WITH SWANNINGTON WHO LAID DOWN  
THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 -1918**

# GRAVE REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS

15/11/20.  
P.L.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

Army Form W. 3372.

## GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM.

3rd. A. S. No. W/6432  
REPORT No. 3. SCHEDULE No. 15/C.

Commune: -FRICOURT.

PLACE OF BURIAL CITADEL NEW M.C.

Map Reference 62d.F.21.b.9.6,

The following are buried here:—

I. W. G. O. (Enquiries)  
 25 JAN 1921  
 REGENT

Regiment	No.	Name	Rank and Initials	Date of Death	Cross Erected or G. R. U'd.	Plot, Row and Grave
<u>PLOT 3. ROW "F" Cont'd.</u>						
R.F.A.		✓ BREWITT.	2/LT. W.S.	28/6/16	ALL	✓ 4.
10/Lancs Fus:	23617	OLIVER.	PTE.	27/6/16	CROSSES	✓ 5.
(183/Fld: Co: R.E. (Believed to be :-	132076	CURTIS.	SPR. H.	28-29/6/16	ERECTED	✓ 6.
10/Lancs Fus:	4092	PETERS.	PTE. M.	27/6/16		✓ 7.
-do-	13049	OWEN.	" M.	"		✓ 8.
-do-	5386	WALTON.	CPL. A.	"		✓ 9.
-do-	19188	SMITH.	L/CPL. L.	"		✓ 10.
-do-	29055	HIPKIN.	PTE.	"		✓ 11.
1/Royal W. Fus:	5105	ADAMS	L/CPL. T.	5/6/16		✓ 12.
-do-	19309	ATKINS.	PTE. F.	"		✓ 13.
-do-	18145	BISHOP.	L/CPL. A.	28/5/16		✓ 14.
-do-	10476	LOFTUS.	PTE. A.	"		✓ 15.
-do-	9808	PARRY.	" J.	"		✓ 16.
-do-	11242	O'BRIEN.	CPL. R.	26/5/16		✓ 17.
-do-	4971	RICE.	PTE. W.	14/5/16		✓ 18.

(G 31 5) W3160—P2723 100,000 9/19 HWV(P1024) Forms W3372/3

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INDEX No. Fr. 394  
CITADEL NEW  
MIL. CEM.  
FRICOURT

CRIPPIN, Capt. H. W., M.C. 56th Div. H.Q. Royal Field Artillery. 8th Sept., 1916. II. A. 2.

CROWE, Pte. Joseph Henry, 15492. 10th Bn. Essex Regt. 9th Sept., 1915. Age 21. Son of Joseph Henry and Jane Crowe. V. D. 15.

CUNINGHAME, Capt. Alfred Keith Smith. 6th Coy., 2nd Bn. Grenadier Guards. Mentioned in Despatches. Killed in action at Lesbœufs 25th Sept., 1916. Age 25. Son of Lt. Col. Cuninghame, of Caprington, Kilmarnock; Served continuously with 2nd Bn. from 14th Aug., 1914, and was last survivor of the original Bn. II. C. 3.

CURTIS, Spr. H., 132076. 183rd Tunnelling Coy. Royal Engineers. 29th June, 1916. III. F. 6.

DAKIN, Lce. Cpl. T., 11262. 2nd Bn. Border Regt. 19th April, 1916. V. D. 9.

DAVIES, Pte. E., 18118. 1st Bn. Royal Welch Fusiliers. 30th April, 1916. Age 21. Son of John and Mary Ann Davies, of 11, Coronation Terrace, Heolgerrig, Merthyr Tydfil, Glam. IV. G. 8.

DAVIES, Pte. W., 10344. 1st Bn. Cheshire Regt. 9th Nov., 1915. Age 19. Son of William and Mary Davies, of 6, Victoria Cottages, Mill Lane, Macclesfield. III. A. 7.

DEEKS, Pte. T. W. J., 4529. 2nd Bn. The Queen's. 6th April, 1916. III. E. 2.

DENT, Pte. H. E., 6412. 2nd Bn. Border Regt. Killed in action 16th June, 1916. Age 36. Son of William and Selina Dent, of Birmingham; husband of Susan Mary Dent, of 35, Fifth Avenue, Bordesley Green, Birmingham. V. B. 16.

DICKENS, Pte. J. H., 15416. 24th Bn. Manchester Regt. 30th March, 1916. II. B. 14.

DILNOTT, Cpl. William Henry, 8821. 1st Bn. Royal Welch Fusiliers. 30th June, 1916. Age 30. Son of Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Dilnott, of Coventry. II. D. 20.

DIMELOW, Pte. W., 17071. 20th Bn. Manchester Regt. 2nd June, 1916. IV. D. 6.

DODD, Pte. F., 17073. 20th Bn. Manchester Regt. 17th April, 1916. Age 21. Son of Mr. A. E. and Emma Dodd, of 21, Craigmillar Rd., Langside, Glasgow. Native of Levenshulme, Manchester. V. C. 14.

DODD, Pte. W. H., 20919. 9th Bn. Devonshire Regt. 12th April, 1916. V. B. 5.

DOIDGE, Pte. J. T., 10134. 8th Bn. Devonshire Regt. 10th May, 1916. V. E. 16.

DOLMAN, Pte. J., 24263. 1st Bn. Royal Welch Fusiliers. 29th April, 1916. IV. G. 3.

DONLON, Pte. John, 4901. 1st Bn. S. Staffordshire Regt. 27th May, 1916. Age 37. V. A. 1.

DONOVAN, Pte. Christopher, 8779. 2nd Bn. Royal Irish Regt. Died of wounds 8th June, 1916. Age 32. Son of Mrs. A. Donovan, of 5, Terrace, 4 House, Cazneau St., Liverpool. II. B. 3.

\*DOTHIE, 2nd Lt. John Howard. 2nd Bn. Border Regt. 27th June, 1916. Age 21. Son of the late Capt. James Elvery Dothie (Mercantile Marine) and Ellen Mary Dothie, of 32, Endsleigh Gardens, Ilford, Essex. Formerly Lonsdale Bn. III. F. 3.

DOW, Pte. John, S/13539. 2nd Bn. Gordon Highlanders. 12th May, 1916. Age 18. Son of Samuel and Catherine Dow, of 24, Egremont Drive, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead. V. E. 19.

DRAKE, Pte. W. J., 8110. 11th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. 8th Sept., 1915. II. C. 11.

DRANSFIELD, Pte. C., 14594. 24th Bn. Manchester Regt. 30th March, 1916. II. B. 12.

DRINKWATER, Pte. D., 13952. 10th Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers. 26th June, 1916. III. E. 14.

EDDY, Lce. Cpl. F., 121843. 183rd Tunnelling Coy. Royal Engineers. 1st Dec., 1915. V. A. 15.

EDEN, Pte. A., 10457. 2nd Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. 26th May, 1916. Age 31. Son of Mrs. Maria Eden, of New St., Castic Bromwich. IV. B. 9.

EDWARDS, Pte. Arthur, 19558. 1st Bn. S. Staffordshire Regt. 7th Feb., 1916. Age 29. Adopted son of the late Edward and Louisa Shuck, of Brettell Lane, Stoumbridge, Staffs. V. A. 2.

EDWARDS, Pte. Harold, 26028. 20th Bn. Manchester Regt. 8th May, 1916. Age 20. Son of Mrs. H. Edwards, of 4, Luke St., Cheetham, Manchester, and the late Mr. B. Edwards. V. C. 12.

EGGLETON, Spr. J., 102583. 174th Tunnelling Coy. Royal Engineers. 25th May, 1916. Age 41. Son of John and Sarah Eggleton. IV. F. 1.

ELLIS, Pte. A., S/13542. 2nd Bn. Gordon Highlanders. 12th May, 1916. V. E. 17.

\* His brother Elvay Ashton Dothie  
also fell.

NO NEXT OF KIN GIVEN

# SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON THE ROYAL ENGINEERS 183rd TUNNELLING COMPANY

The following information is taken from Wikipedia and the author cannot guarantee its total accuracy. Bibliography is included on the website:-

The 183rd Tunnelling Company was one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers created by the British Army during World War I.

## 183rd Tunnelling Company

Branch        British Army  
Type         Royal Engineer tunnelling company  
Role         Military Engineering, Tunnel Warfare  
Nickname(s) "The Moles"

The **183rd Tunnelling Company** was one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers created by the British Army during World War I. The tunnelling units were occupied in offensive and defensive mining involving the placing and maintaining of mines under enemy lines, as well as other underground work such as the construction of deep dugouts for troop accommodation, the digging of subways, saps (a narrow trench dug to approach enemy trenches), cable trenches and underground chambers for signals and medical services.

## Background

### Main article: Tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers

By January 1915 it had become evident to the BEF at the Western Front that the Germans were mining to a planned system. As the British had failed to develop suitable counter-tactics or underground listening devices before the war, field marshals French and Kitchener agreed to investigate the suitability of forming British mining units. Following consultations between the Engineer-in-Chief of the BEF, Brigadier George Fowke, and the mining specialist John Norton-Griffiths, the War Office formally approved the tunnelling company scheme on 19 February 1915.

Norton-Griffiths ensured that tunnelling companies numbers 170 to 177 were ready for deployment in mid-February 1915. In the spring of that year, there was constant underground fighting in the Ypres Salient at Hooge, Hill 60, Railway Wood, Sanctuary Wood, St Eloi and The Bluff which required the deployment of new drafts of tunnellers for several months after the formation of the first eight companies. The lack of suitably experienced men led to some tunnelling companies starting work later than others. The number of units available to the BEF was also restricted by the need to provide effective counter-measures to the German mining activities. To make the tunnels safer and quicker to deploy, the British Army **enlisted experienced coal miners**, many outside their nominal recruitment policy. The first nine companies, numbers 170 to 178, were each commanded by a regular Royal Engineers officer. These companies each comprised 5 officers and 269 sappers; they were aided by additional infantrymen who were temporarily attached to the tunnellers as required, which almost doubled their numbers. The success of the first tunnelling companies formed under Norton-Griffiths' command led to mining being made a separate branch

of the Engineer-in-Chief's office under Major-General S.R. Rice, and the appointment of an 'Inspector of Mines' at the GHQ Saint-Omer office of the Engineer-in-Chief. A second group of tunnelling companies were formed from Welsh miners from the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Monmouthshire Regiment, who were attached to the 1st Northumberland Field Company of the Royal Engineers, which was a Territorial unit. The formation of twelve new tunnelling companies, between July and October 1915, helped to bring more men into action in other parts of the Western Front.

Most tunnelling companies were formed under Norton-Griffiths' leadership during 1915, and one more was added in 1916. On 10 September 1915, the British government sent an appeal to Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand to raise tunnelling companies in the Dominions of the British Empire. On 17 September, New Zealand became the first Dominion to agree the formation of a tunnelling unit. The New Zealand Tunnelling Company arrived at Plymouth on 3 February 1916 and was deployed to the Western Front in northern France. A Canadian unit was formed from men on the battlefield, plus two other companies trained in Canada and then shipped to France. Three Australian tunnelling companies were formed by March 1916, resulting in 30 tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers being available by the summer of 1916.

## Unit history

183rd Tunnelling Company was formed in Rouen, northern France, in October 1915. From its formation until the end of the war the company served under Third Army.

### The Somme 1915/16

After its formation, the unit proceeded to Fontaine-lès-Cappy, south of the Somme. Moved to Carnoy-Maricourt to prepare mines and saps for Sir Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army and its attack on the Somme on 1 July 1916. In the Somme sector of the Western Front, local but very fierce underground fighting had taken place in the winter of 1914 and spring of 1915 at La Boisselle, Fricourt, Bois Français and Carnoy. Fowke moved the 174th and 183rd Tunnelling Companies there to relieve the French engineers, but the British did not have enough miners to take over the large number of French shafts and the French agreed to leave their engineers at work for several weeks. To provide the tunnellers needed, the British formed the 178th and 179th Tunnelling Companies in August 1915, followed by the 185th and 252nd Tunnelling Companies in October. The 181st Tunnelling Company was also present on the Somme.

As Allied preparations were under way for the Battle of the Somme (1 July – 18 November 1916), the tunnelling companies were to make two major contributions by placing 19 large and small mines beneath the German positions along the front line and by preparing a series of shallow Russian saps from the British front line into no man's land, which would be opened at zero hour and allow the infantry to attack the German positions from a comparatively short distance. **Under the command of Captain Horace Hickling, 183rd Tunnelling Company placed four mines (the Mametz East group) in the front sector allocated to XV Corps near Mametz and three mines (the Carnoy group) in the front sector allocated to XIII Corps near Carnoy.**

The *Mametz East* group consisted of four mines: Bulgar Point, a heavily wired German strong work facing the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment's attack

south-east of Mametz, was mined with 910 kilograms (2,000 lb) of explosives; a sap further west was loaded with a 91-kilogram (200 lb) charge in support of the Gordon Highlanders' attack; and two more 230-kilogram (500 lb) mines were laid beneath Austrian Trench, on the extreme right of the 7th Division's sphere of action, on the boundary with the front sector allocated to XIII Corps.



### **Livens Large Gallery Flame Projector**

In addition to placing the four mines near Mametz, 183rd Tunnelling Company from February 1916 onwards prepared dozens of Russian saps in the front sector allocated to XV Corps, which ran from the British front line to the very edge of the German positions. Small charges could be blown from the end of these tunnels and they could then be used to reinforce the captured positions. Four saps were further equipped with Livens Large Gallery Flame Projectors, ready to cover the German front line with liquid fire. In order to protect them from enemy fire, the flame throwers were hauled into the saps just hours before the battle. Two tunnels which housed such weapons – located at Kiel Trench south-west of Mametz, and between Carnoy and Kasino Point – were damaged by German shellfire before the attack. The two remaining were put to use from saps immediately left of the mine crater field at Carnoy. In view of the work required, 183rd Tunnelling Company took a calculated risk by stopping its defensive mining activities between Carnoy and Fricourt, which had so far guaranteed the underground safety of the British trenches in that area. By 1 July, the British tunnel network excavated in this sector extended 91 metres (300 ft) under no man's land.



**Miners laying charges for one of the mines on the Somme, 1–13 July 1916.**

The *Carnoy* group consisted of three mines. Two were to be fired north of Carnoy on 1 July 1916 at 07.27 hours, a 2,300-kilogram (5,000 lb) charge under a German salient at Kasino Point and a 230-kilogram (500 lb) charge on the extreme left flank, intended to collapse German dug outs and destroy machine-gun nests. The third mine also held a 230-kilogram (500 lb) charge. Underground fighting at Carnoy had taken place in the winter of 1914 and spring of 1915, and mine warfare directly in front of Carnoy, near the Carnoy–Montauban road, was conducted by both sides from May 1916. As in the *Mametz East* sector, 183rd Tunnelling Company had to stop its defensive mining activities so the work in the Carnoy sector could be finished

in time. All deep mining was halted, except at Kasino Point where an inclined gallery was built. As the chalk grew harder, the method of softening involved drilling holes with a carpenter's auger, into which the miners poured vinegar. When it was fired, the mine produced a crater with lips 30 metres (97 ft) in diameter and 9.1 metres (30 ft) deep. The miners reported after the attack on the First day on the Somme that the Kasino Point mine had buried three German dugouts and four sniper's posts, and probably a machine-gun emplacement as well. During tunnelling at Kasino Point, the British broke into a German dugout but were able to cover it up before the breach was noticed. Edmonds wrote in 1932 that this incident occurred during the digging of Russian saps rather than the Kasino Point mine. Middlebrook wrote in 1971 that the Kasino Point Salient was between Mametz, Carnoy and Montauban and the mine planted there was one of seven large mines that were due to be detonated on 1 July.

## **Messines 1916/17**

### **Main article: Battle of Messines (1917)**

As part of the preparations for the Battle of Messines in June 1917, the 183rd Tunnelling Company began work on deep dugouts in the Ypres Salient. The Battle of Messines was a prelude to the much larger Third Battle of Ypres (31 July–10 November 1917). The underground building activities of the Royal Engineer units consisted of a series of deep mines dug by the British 171st, 175th, 250th, 1st Canadian, 3rd Canadian and 1st Australian Tunnelling companies to be fired at the start of the Battle of Messines (7–14 June 1917), while the British 183rd, 2nd Canadian and 2nd Australian Tunnelling companies built underground shelters in the Second Army area. The mines at Messines were detonated on 7 June 1917, creating 19 large craters.

## **Spring Offensive 1918**


### **Main articles: German spring offensive and Battle of the Lys (1918)**

In April 1918, the 183rd and several other tunnelling companies (171st, 173rd, 184th, 255th, 258th and 3rd Australian) were forced to move from their camps at Boeschepe, when the enemy broke through the Lys positions during the German spring offensive. These units were then put on duties that included digging and wiring trenches over a long distance from Reningelst to near Saint-Omer. The operation to construct these fortifications between Reningelst and Saint-Omer was carried out jointly by the British 171st, 173rd, 183rd, 184th, 255th, 258th, 3rd Canadian and 3rd Australian Tunnelling Companies.

## 183rd Tunnelling Company



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<b>Active</b>	World War I
<b>Country</b>	 United Kingdom
<b>Branch</b>	 British Army
<b>Type</b>	Royal Engineer tunnelling company
<b>Role</b>	military engineering, tunnel warfare
<b>Nickname(s)</b>	"The Moles"
<b>Engagements</b>	World War I Battle of the Somme Battle of Messines Battle of Passchendaele Battle of the Lys

## Commanders

### Notable commanders

Captain Horace Hickling had led 172nd Tunnelling Company's activities at St Eloi in 1915. In early 1916 he was promoted and went on to command 183rd Tunnelling Company on the Somme.

