

Arthur Lavis Age 16

Arthur Leonard Lavis was born in Knole in 1900, the son of James and Martha Lavis. James and Martha lost two sons in WW1, Arthur in 1916 and Charles in 1918. James and Martha Lavis were married in 1885 and after the birth of their first child, Mabel, they migrated to America. Their second child, Charles, was born in Iowa, U.S.A., but they returned to England in April 1891, sailing from New York to Glasgow on the *Circassia*.

The 1901 census shows James was working as a agricultural labourer. The family were living in Knole and there were seven children; Mabel age 13, Charles age 11, George age 9, Ada age 6, Flora age 4 Gertrude age 2 and Arthur at 10 months.

In April 1912, James and Martha emigrated again, leaving from Southampton on the *Ascania* , bound for Portland, Maine. They had nine children with them, ranging from Mabel age 24 down to Stewart age 1 and including Arthur who was 11. Charles and George did not accompany them. Their final destination is recorded to be Ripley, possibly in Ontario. By 1914, they were living in St Helen's, Canada.

Arthur is recorded as joining the 14th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry, the Quebec Regiment. The Veterans Affairs of Canada gives Arthur's date of birth as 20th May 1897, which suggests that Arthur added three years to his age when he enlisted.

The 14th Battalion was part of the the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, which sailed from Canada in early October 1914. Arthur would have been exceptionally young if he went at that time, having turned his 14th birthday in May 1914. The Second Division sailed a year later, completed its training in England, and crossed to France in September 1915. Even if Arthur sailed with the second division, he was probably on active service for at least a year before his death.

In late August of 1916, Canadian troops moved from Flanders to the Somme, where they took over a section of the front line west of the village of Courcellette. They ran into heavy fighting and suffered some 2,600 casualties even before the full-scale offensive got underway on 16th September. Arthur was reported killed on 7th September 1916 along with 52 other men from the Quebec Regiment that day. He was 16 years and four months old.

The news of his death did not reach Long Sutton until mid-October. The flag at the school was flown at half mast in memory of an ex-pupil.

Arthur has no known grave and is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial, set at the highest point of Vimy Ridge, about eight kilometres northeast of Arras. The memorial lists all Canadians who served their country in battle during the First World War, and particularly the 60,000 who gave their lives in France. Eleven thousand have no known grave.