

# CROCKENHILL – TWO MEN'S WAR - FRANK ROBERTS and HERBERT ERNEST RANDALL

## PRIVATE FRANK ROBERTS



3 Mannings Bank cottages, birthplace of Frank Roberts.  
Seen here in 1930s from the field below the bank.

**Born:** Crockenhill  
c.1897/98

**Died:** 27 August 1915,  
aged 19, in France

**Home:** 3 Mannings Bank,  
Green Court Road

**Family:** Parents - Charles  
(farm labourer) & Harriet,  
aged late 40s

Sisters, Florence aged 21,  
Lily aged 17, Rose aged  
14, Brother, Sydney, aged  
11

**Work:** Farm labourer for  
Mr Haines and Mr  
Alexander Clements



## PRIVATE FRANK ROBERTS

**Enlisted:** In 1915 at Bromley aged 17 (said he was 18)

**Served:** Private G/3812, 1st Battalion Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment

After 3 months he was sent to France, where he became a popular and promising soldier.

On 27 August 1915 he was relieved from trench duty on an extended Western Front. It was very hot, so went to bathe in a canal nearby, even though he could not swim. He and a friend dived in and got stuck in the mud at the bottom, and both were drowned.

Frank's parents got an official notice of death by accidental drowning, but another local man in the same regiment told them the details when he was on leave in Crockenhill. He was Herbert Randall.



## PRIVATE FRANK ROBERTS



He was buried with full military honours in Bethane Cemetery. In the early 1920s, with the aid of St. Barnabas Pilgrimage Fund, his parents visited the grave. The photo of Charles and Harriet Roberts, below, was taken just before they set out.





## **SERGEANT HERBERT ERNEST RANDALL D.C.M.**

**Born:** Crockenhill, 1899

**Died:** 21 September 1918, aged 20, in France

**Home:** Newlands Cottages, Stones Cross Road

### **Family:**

Jonathan (farm labourer) & Anna in their 40s,  
brothers

Arthur aged 20 in 1914, Jack aged 19, Fredrick  
aged 9

**Work:** A farm labourer

**Enlisted:** 11 November 1914 as 18, when 15¾  
years old

**Served:** No. 4376 Royal West Kent Regiment,  
but transferred as G/3742 to Queen's Royal West  
Surrey Regiment



## SERGEANT HERBERT ERNEST RANDALL D.C.M. – PROMOTION, AWARD OF D.C.M. (Distinguished Conduct Medal), DEATH



Badge - Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment

- In 1st Battalion Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, fought in Battles of Loos and Somme, before Frank Roberts joined the Regiment and was drowned.
- 29 September 1916, aged 17¾, made Lance Corporal.
- November 1916 had Trench Foot, probably when he had leave in Crockenhill and visited the Roberts' family.
- 23 December 1916, made Corporal.
- In Battle of Arras.
- 24 April 1917, promoted Sergeant in the field – only 1 of 43 survivors of 1st Battalion.
- Awarded D.C.M. in Battle of Passchendaele, September 1917. Found 3 men buried in debris - under heavy fire for over an hour, with 2 volunteers released & saved them.
- 21 September 1918 fighting near Villiers at the Battle of Cambrai, aged 20, he was one of 323 casualties.

Buried in Meath Cemetery, in the middle of the former battlefield.