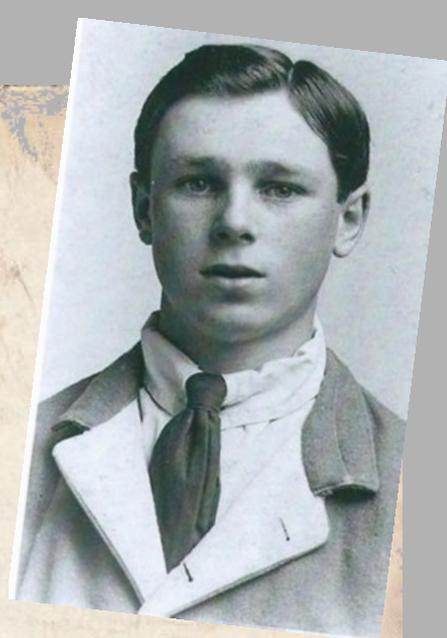


# Victor John Orpin

Victor John Orpin was born on 18th February 1899 in Grays. He lived in Richmond Road and was working as a shop assistant when war broke out.



He belonged to the church brigade at St Peter and St Pauls Parish Church in Grays, and in 1916 signed up with his friends.

Victor joined the King's Royal Rifles, where he remained until he was demobbed on 11th February 1920. He was a Corporal and acting Sergeant at one stage, and fought at the Somme and Passchendaele.

Victor was with the troops who marched into Germany. The daily marches were harsh; the weather was bitterly cold, with heavy rain turning to snow. Rations were not brought forward regularly, meaning that food was short and there was no extra clothing to combat the cold. Socks and boots were soon worn through. The men frequently had to sleep in barns or cattle sheds, when houses, churches or schools could not be found for the night. He was billeted at Solingen for most of his time in Germany.



Photo of Victor standing first on the left.

Victor was a bugler, he possibly learnt when he was in the Church brigade.

When the battalion crossed the German frontier, the bugles played the regimental march.

In 1965 an ex-comrade, who had been contacted through a local newspaper, wrote 'you were a bugler, and I should think no. 1 bugler, because you played a little better than the others.' The letter writer goes on to suggest a reunion with other ex comrades.

Victor became a carpenter. He married Gwendoline Margaret Wakeling in 1926, and they had five children.

After being demobbed Victor was very disillusioned to experience 20 weeks of unemployment and he wrote about this in his memoirs 'A Land Fit For Heroes'.



Photo of Victor and Gwendoline

Victor joined the Trade Union and Labour Movement, and was very active in both. He was involved with the Labour party's purchase of Rook Hall in Dell Road, Grays.

The opening was a grand affair with several hundred people marching with banners from Grays station. Victor later became involved in many industrial disputes and negotiations for better conditions in the building industry.

Through his role in local politics, Victor met Denis Healey several times. Victor was also an adviser to the Hospital Board and a founder member of Thurrock Lifeboat Institution.

During World War 2 Victor was an air raid warden. He died in 1977.

Story provided by Victor's son, Len Orpin.



Opladen, Germany -  
Christmas 1919.

Victor is standing  
third from the left