

Early family life

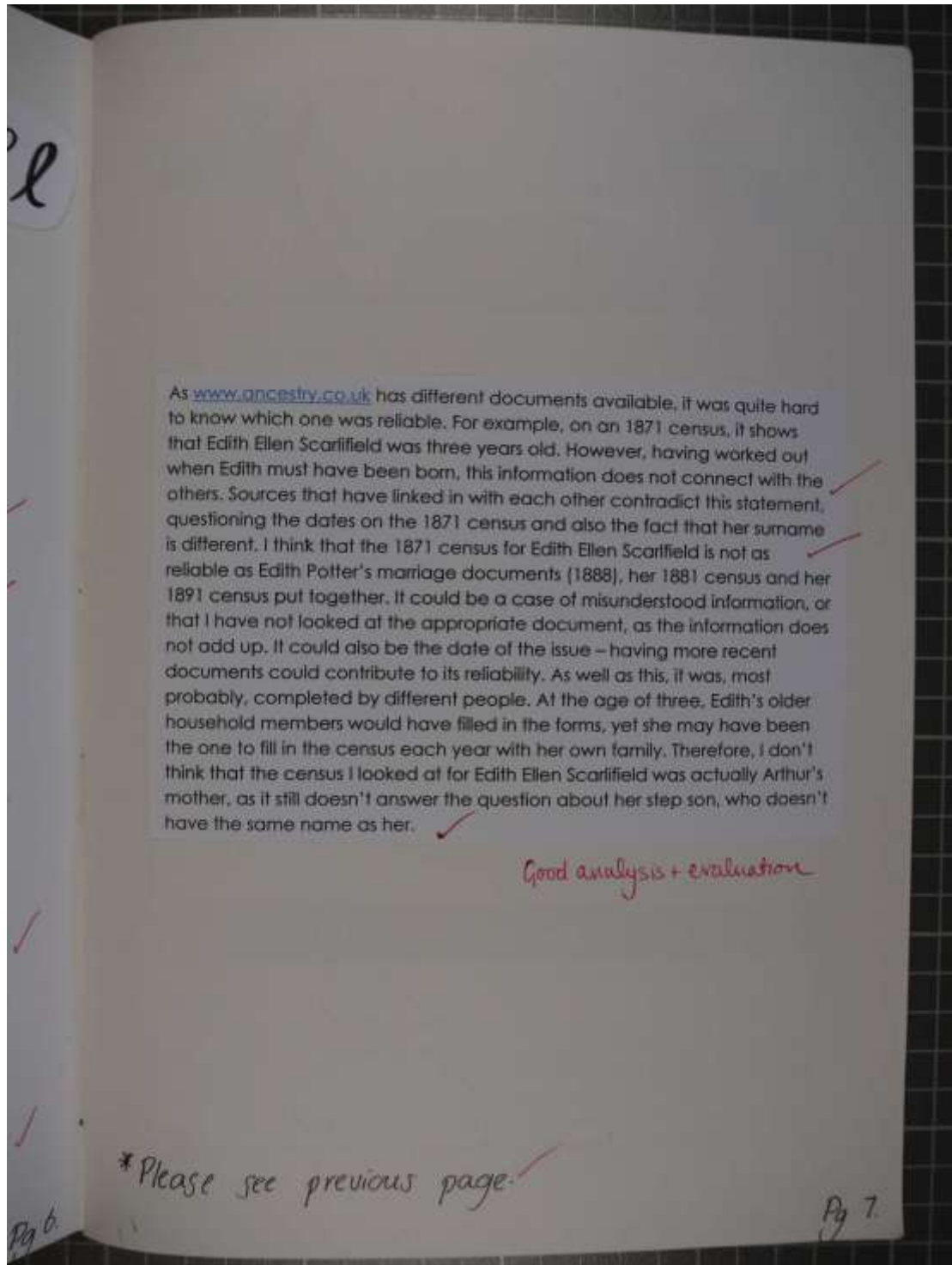
It is clear to see from the birth reports of his siblings, that Arthur's parents may not have had a stable home to raise their young children. His father, George Potter, was employed to do manual labour, so was obviously not very wealthy, or else he would have been employing others. Perhaps they just didn't have enough money for a stable home at the time, as the eldest, George E Potter, was sent to work alongside his father at the early age of twelve to bring in extra money, and his mother didn't work. Each child was either born in Sompling, Lancing or Patcham, excluding Henry E Scarterfield*. So why did they move from town to town? Unfortunately, as there is not a lot of basic information about Arthur's early life, I was unable to find out where he spent his childhood. The lack of information could be down to the fact that a census was unreadable, or just the loss of information over the years.

This table represents the 1891 English census (source from www.ancestry.co.uk).

Member of Family	Relation	Age	Birth Town	Position in society
George Potter	Father	39	Unknown	Agricultural labourer
Edith Ellen Potter	Mother	28	Oving, Chichester	Unemployed
George Edward Potter	Son	12	Sompling	Agricultural labourer
Eliza F Potter	Daughter	10	Patcham	Scholar
Arthur Potter	Son	6	Lancing	Scholar
Henry E Scarterfield*	Stepson	4	Chichester	Scholar
Frederick C Potter	Son	2	Lancing	Not of age
Edith M Potter	Daughter	4 Months	Sompling	Not of age

Pg. 6

* Pica



Boarding

In the ten year gap between the 1901 and 1911 census, Arthur and his family members split off into different houses. In 1911, his older brother, George, married Caroline Cissie Bicknell, at the age of 32. However, before this, in 1907, he had his first child, Georgina May Potter, and his second, Arthur Edward Potter, in 1908. They moved into 95 Cranworth Road, (Worthing, Sussex) along with Arthur (aged 25) and their father, George Potter (aged 55). Since the death of his mother in 1901, Arthur boarded alongside his father in his brother's house. Could his father have sold their childhood house once the others had split off? Did Arthur and his father need somewhere to stay, even if it was originally only to be temporary?

But, just a year later, 1912, George E Potter, the eldest son of Edith and George, unexpectedly died. His death was registered between October and December of that year. This left two fatherless children, a widow and a grandfather, who had recently lost both his son and his wife. As Arthur was never married, I suspect that he stayed within the household to help raise his sister-in-law's children, and help his own father get through the difficult times. This would have been hard, though, as his job as a gardener would not have paid much, and the children were too young to be sent out to work. However, just because there is no record of marriage doesn't mean that Arthur didn't have a girlfriend, who he may have been intending to marry – until the war broke out.

Another interesting question was to where Edith M Potter, the youngest sister of Arthur and an early teenager at the time, was living. With no censuses to fill this gap and no trace of any marriage or death records that we know about, the question may remain unanswered. It is important to consider the fact that these dates are only from one source – a census that was filled in over 100 years ago. The years in-between have been filled with assumptions, as there is no solid evidence that pieces together the life of Arthur and his family.

Pg 8

with his brother

95 Cranworth Road, Worthing, Sussex - Picture taken from:
<https://maps.google.co.uk/>



The 1921 census would be able to tell us about later life within this broken family, but unfortunately each census is only released one hundred years after it has been written. As we have not encountered 2021 yet, the census will remain unavailable.

Pg 8

Pg 9

The 13th Battalion

The First World War started in 1914. At this point, Arthur had been living with his father, sister-in-law and her two children for about seven years (according to the *Worthing Gazette* of 1917, when they announced his death, he had been living there since 1907). As no sign up sheet could be found for Arthur Potter, we do not know the exact date of which he enlisted, but we do know some basic information about his battalions and divisions; he joined the Royal Sussex Regiment, the 13th Battalion and was placed in the 39th Division.

The 13th Battalion was formed in Bexhill on the 20th November 1914 by Lieut-Col Lowther. In July of 1915 it travelled to Maidstone and was taken over by the War Office. By September of 1915 it was based in Aldershot and it had moved to Willey by the next October. At this point, it came under the command of the 116th Brigade in the 39th Division.

The route of the 13th Battalion



Pg 10

Point A – 95 Cranworth Road, Worthing Sussex

Point B – Bexhill, where the 13th Battalion was formed.

Point C – Maidstone.

Point D – Aldershot.

Point E – Willey, where the Battalion was adopted by the 116th Brigade, 39th Division.

As this map clearly shows, the closest point to Arthur's house was actually Willey, the last English destination of the 13th Battalion, but I suspect that it would have been difficult to have joined at this point, when they were getting ready to move onto foreign countries. Therefore, I think that most likely place for Arthur to have joined would have been Bexhill, the first destination, as it was not too far away from his home town. This would mean that he had joined almost immediately, as most men would have, in around late 1914 or early 1915. The reason I think he joined in Bexhill and not in Worthing was because there was no guarantee that he would be able to join with the specific battalion, the 13th, in Worthing, where many men were just given places. However, travelling to Bexhill meant that he was most likely to be put into the 13th Battalion, as this was where the main training and recruiting was taking place.

In March of 1916, the Battalion had landed in Le Havre, France, and continued onto a front line sector, Fleurbaix. Here, they waited for further instructions whilst their training continued.

Good use of the evidence to tell his story



Pg 10.

Pg 17.

Lowther's Lambs

Colonel Claude Lowther was the founder of the earliest battalions of local Sussex men. He was granted permission to enlist men in the September of 1914 by the War Office. He gathered locals from all over Sussex, including people from Worthing, Bexhill, Hastings, Brighton and Bognor. They came from lots of different backgrounds – rich men and poor men, people just like Arthur Potter, who was recruited in Bexhill.

regiment badge?



Claude Lowther.

This picture was taken from 'The History of the Southdown Battalions' - <http://royalsussex-southdowns.co.uk/history>

On the 30th June 1916, three months after landing in France, a diversionary attack was launched, distracting the enemy from another attack close by to them. However, the attack gained nothing. Numbers reached just under 1,100 men being killed, taken as a Prisoner Of War, or injured, and the majority of these men were from Sussex. The large scale raid made no difference to the enemy's attack the next day, which, today, is known as the 'First Day of the Somme'. It has since been referred to as 'Lowther's Lambs' because of the needless slaughter of so many men. He forced them into a fruitless attack, which had no further outcomes to the rest of the battles.

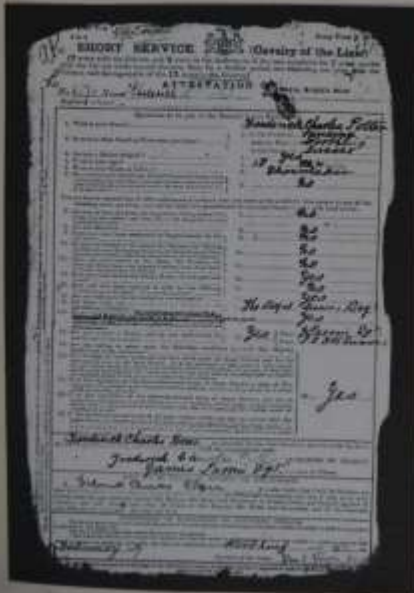
Although Arthur Potter's Battalion did take part in this needless fight, he managed to stay alive throughout it. He continued to fight until September 1917, over one year later.

Pg 12

Arthur's siblings in the war

As George E Potter had died two years before the start of WW1, he could obviously not take part in joining his brothers. However, we do know that the youngest boy, Frederick Charles Potter, signed up in 1916, when he was just 18 years and 4 months old. Before this, he was a shoe maker, who was not married at the time. According to his British Army records, his regiment number was 8670, and he belonged to the Royal Sussex Regiment. As he joined in 1916, we know that he could not have been in the same battle groups as Arthur, as he would have already been fighting in France at this point. The fact that Frederick joined at such an early age could have been that he felt pressured. Many people lied about their age so that they could get in when they were far too young, but it seems Fred waited. This could lead to him being the base of mockery, as people seemed to think it was a man's duty to fight for his country, even if he had only just become an adult.

In 1916 the conscription law came in - you had to join if you were 18



We also know that Henry Scarterfield joined the war effort, too, as although there may not have been records found of his sign up, there are records of the medals he won at the end of the war.

Frederick's enlistment sheet - source taken from www.ancestry.co.uk

Pg 13

The death of

The basic information given to me by the Sussex Role of Honour informed me that Arthur was killed in action near Railway wood, which is just 5.2 km (1 hour and 2 minutes) away from Polygon Wood, one of the main sites of The Third Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele). He died on the 27th of September, 1917, and the battle of Polygon Wood started on the 26th of September and ended on the 3rd of October, meaning that the possibility of Arthur being killed on the outskirts of this battle is high. Of course, this is just a theory, but the evidence given connects to present the idea of Arthur being killed near this large battle.



This is a satellite picture of two destinations – Point A is the area of which the battle of Polygon Wood took place, and Point B is Railway Wood, where Arthur died.

Good

Pg 14

Arthur Potter



A closer view:

Point A = Polygon Wood

Point B = Railway Wood

As well as the points being close together, you can see that there are six cemeteries on this map. This gives strong evidence that there was a large battle there, otherwise there would have only been one or two. It also supports the point of this fight taking place over a large area of land, and not just being based around a single wood.


good deduction

A recent picture of Railway Wood.




Pg 14.

Pg 15.



An up to date view of Polygon Wood.



This map shows three destinations:

- Point A = Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke, Belgium
- Point B = Menin Road, Belgium
- Point C = Railway Wood, Oude Kortrijkstraat, Belgium

The battle of Polygon Wood mainly took place around the area from Point A (Polygon Wood) and Point B (Menin Road), and later travelled northwards, towards Railway Wood (Point C).

The fact that each position of the battle site is so close together, proves the point of where and why Arthur died. Although 5.2km may sound like a long way to walk today, these men would have had no choice if they wanted to survive this war.

Py 16

Remembering Arthur

Birth: unknown
Death: Sep. 27, 1917

Note: G/16063. 13th Bn. Royal Sussex Regiment. 27th September 1917. Age 31. Panel 861088.

Burial:
[Tyne Cot Memorial](#)
Zonnebeke
West Flanders (West-Vlaanderen), Belgium

Created by: [International Wargraves...](#)
Record added: Oct 12, 2005
Find A Grave Memorial® 11956768



Cemetery Photo

After I found out the details about where and when Arthur died, I had to go on to research where he was buried. The Sussex Role of Honour claimed that he was commemorated on the Tyne Cot memorial, Belgium, and that there is no known grave for him. It also told me that the reference panel is 86 - 88.

I think Arthur doesn't have a grave because of his unfortunate death. Being killed at the beginning of a battle means that nobody can stop and pick you up - you had to keep going if you could. But once he had died, if it was on the battle field, his body would have just been trampled on. That is the harsh reality - maybe he doesn't have a grave because nobody could find his remains.

If Arthur's body was found and they could recognise it, he would have most certainly got a grave. Even members of the army who were not found were still given memorial panels all over Europe, and every soldier whose body was recognised still received an individual grave, unlike the Germans. After so many of them had been individually buried, a decision was made that changed the way the German's were remembered. They created 'collecting' cemeteries: a large area of land with a huge mass grave to pile in the dead. The largest is the Menen cemetery, where 47,864 bodies (or pieces) are crammed into a deep, hollow pit.

Pg 16

Pg 17.

The Worthing Gazette's misprint:

When the news of a death had spread back to their home town, each soldier was likely to be given a small paragraph in the newspaper, for them to be remembered by and to explain who they were. Here is the original piece that was printed by the Worthing Gazette on the 14th November 1917, to honour Arthur's death:

"BROADWATER, KILLED IN ACTION – The death has occurred in action of Private Arthur Potter, who was employed in civil life by Messrs. H. And' A. Pullen-Burry, and was engaged as a labourer at Decoy Farm at the time of his enlistment."

However, exactly a week later, the newspaper declared that they had actually got it wrong, and all the information about Arthur's death was a misprint. They published this on the 21st November 1917:

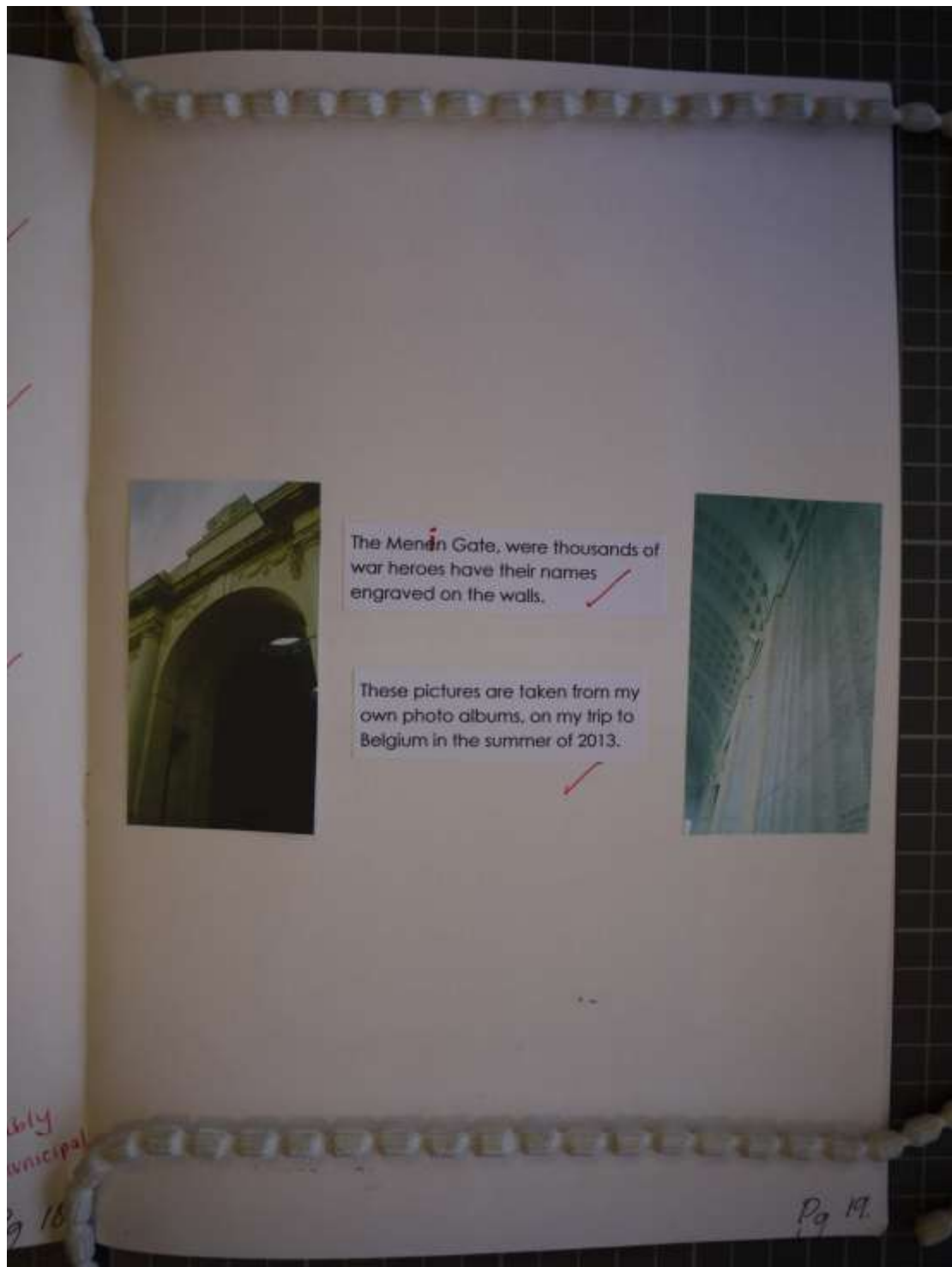
"Under our Broadwater heading last week we published a paragraph announcing the death of Private Arthur Potter, who was killed in action, but we have since been informed that his home has been Cranworth Road for the past ten years. He was employed by the Corporation in the Park for three years prior to his enlistment, and left the "Muniupal" service to serve his country. His death took place on 27th September 1917."

They had, in fact, mistaken Arthur for living in Broadwater, when he had actually been living in Worthing for most of his adult life. To begin with, in their original statement, they didn't put a lot of information about Arthur, but when they realised their mistake they included quite a bit more about his death and where he lived. I think that the information could have been wrongly told, as it took just under two months to get back to the Gazette. If the soldiers on the front line couldn't identify his body, there would have been no chance of finding his dog chain, with the basic information on, so they must have had to go on their own knowledge of the ordinary private.

This evidence was taken from the Worthing Gazette book in Worthing Library, which the librarian kindly tried printing off. However, as it was turned in towards the page, she was unable, and had to write it out instead. Unfortunately, I was unable to read some of her writing, so the word 'Muniupal' may not be her exact word. This also backs up my point of unreadable censuses, and how easy it is to misjudge someone's writing.

probably
municipal

Pg 18.



Winning a medal

Surname	Given Name	Rank	Regt
POTTER	Arthur	Pte	4/16053
Date of War Medal awarded to Date of being awarded			

The record of Arthur's medal.

Surname	Given Name	Rank	Regt
SCARTERFIELD	Henry T.	Pte	2648 475337
Date of War Medal awarded to Date of being awarded			

Henry Scarterfield's medal records.

Pg 20

As you can see, Arthur won a medal for his war efforts, just as his step brother, Henry, did. This shows us that even though we don't have Henry's signup sheets, we still know that he did join the fight. Unfortunately, I don't really know what these medals are for, as they are hard to interpret, and I have had trouble searching for their true significance. My guess is that they were awarded to him for his time in the war, known as 'Service medals'. These service medals were awarded to most soldiers who were fighting overseas, which probably included all English fighters as there were no battles in England. As he was only a Private at his time of death, it was unlikely that the medal was given for an act of 'high' bravery (although any act in the war, in my opinion, is brave), and I think that he would have been ranked higher for this sort of recognition.

known as 'Pip, Squeak + Wilfred' - 3 medals
given to men who fought on the Western Front
The Victory Medal was one of these

Pg 20.

Pg 21.

Conclusion

In the beginning, I started looking at the Sussex Role of Honour website (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/>) to find my chosen soldier. I began by looking for someone with my last name, Burton, or my mother's maiden name, Wakefield, but unfortunately there was nobody with either name. I then tried looking for someone who had lived near me, as my friend had found a soldier who had lived next door to her. This would give me a connection with my soldier, and hopefully lead me to more information about relatives who lived in the area. However, having found no one who lived down my road, I carried on searching for someone who looked insignificant. A soldier who nobody really knew about, and I hoped that I could spread the information I found around, so it could lead on to more and more people searching to find out the truth about the Sussex soldiers. This was the point where I found Arthur Potter, a soldier with just enough information to give me something to investigate.

After having chosen my soldier, I evaluated my evidence to work out where to start researching him. As I had no idea where he had lived, or anything about his family, I started at the end, and began finding out where and when he died. I chose to look at Spartacus, which gave me some of the key dates about where and when main battles took place. I found out that Third battle of Ypres had taken place between July and November, so I researched into further details about the dates. It showed me that the Battle of Polygon Wood was held between the 26th September and the 3rd October, which included the date that Arthur had died, so I carried onto Google Maps, and researched where Polygon Wood was in relation to Railway Wood. I found that they were only a few miles away from each other, which meant that there was a strong possibility that Arthur was taking part in this battle; if they hadn't been close together, I would have had to look at some more secluded battles, as I knew he had died in action. I began collecting information about the famous battle, which led me towards Arthur's battle groups, battalions and regiments.

Pg 22

To start off, I had trouble finding out about Arthur's battalions, as I wasn't sure where to go to look for them. My friend then told me where to look on 'The Long Long Trail' website (<http://www.1914-1918.net/>) and I started getting a rough idea of what his battalion did during the war.

After this, I headed to my local Library (Worthing Library) and started researching Arthur's early family life using Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk), it was a great help - it gave me lots of information about his family, and gave me primary evidence of birth dates, wedding certificates, signup sheets and death records. One of the staff helped me find valuable information about the misprint in the Worthing Gazette and Lowther's Lambs. With help from my mum and the librarians, I was piecing together Arthur's life.

The main reliability question that has repeatedly come up is: "Is it Scarfield or Scarterfield?" There are many sources that prove it is Scarterfield - The medal records and the 1891 census - but there are also records to contradict this, including the 1871 census. I think that the more reliable sources would have been the ones to prove that Henry's name was, in fact, Scarterfield, as there is more evidence suggesting so. The censuses are a useful piece of evidence because they gave me information about other people in Arthur's life, not just his experiences. However, the medal records are also useful because they were made to praise Arthur's achievements, so it is unlikely that they were careless and got it wrong.

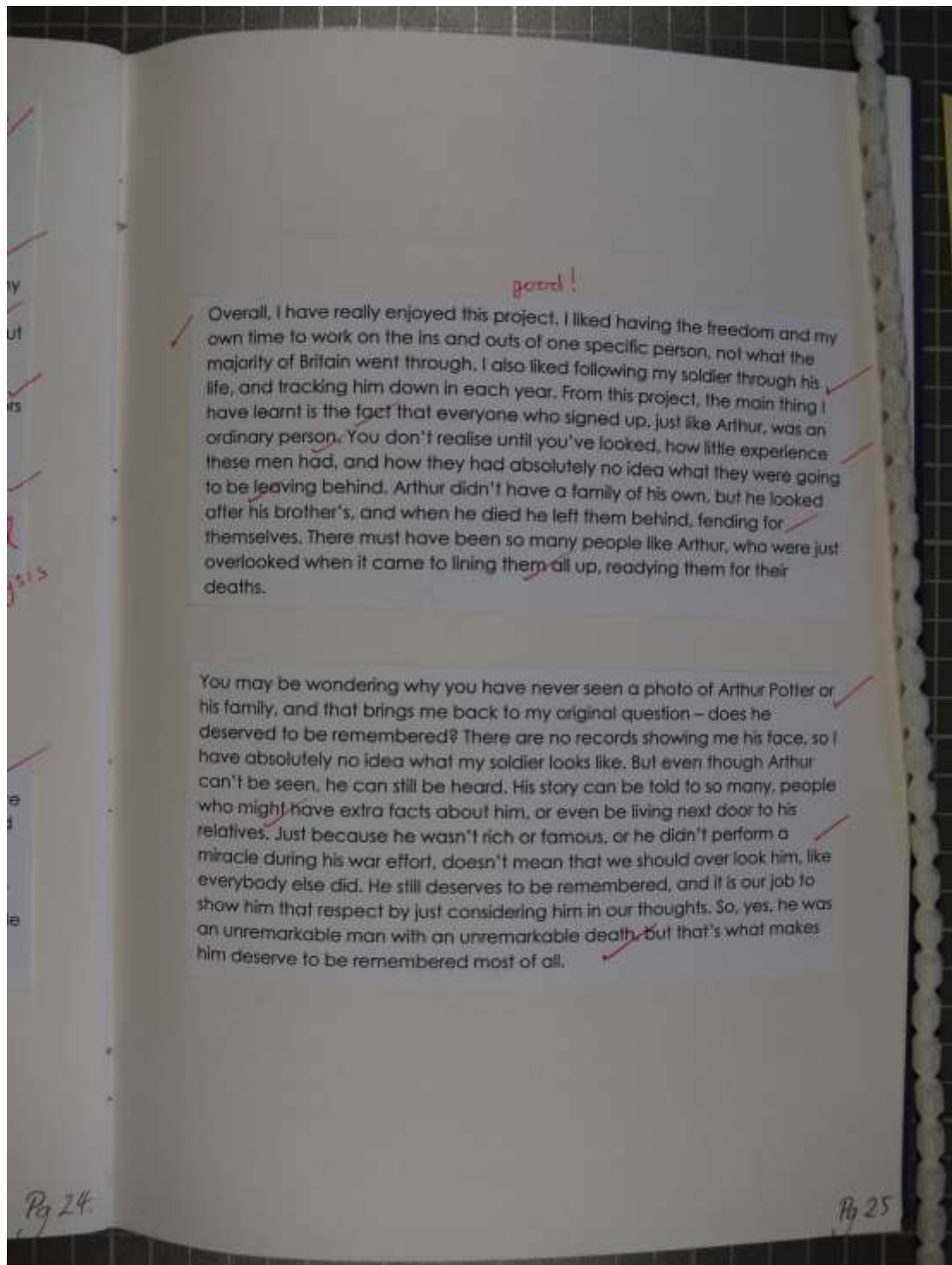
As well as there being more evidence to back up one point, the sources suggesting that his name was actually Scarterfield were written at a later date, meaning that they could be more trustworthy, as they have less years in between each other. However, I think that it was actually the fact that I had looked at the wrong source. On the side of the Ancestry website, it gives you 'documents that may be helpful to your search', but that doesn't mean that they are relevant to the person you are looking for. In future, I will check to make sure that the details add up with what I already know before including them with my current information.

Another source that has not proven to be as reliable as I would have liked is the Worthing Gazette. This is a useful source because it was printed for everyone who had known Arthur, so they could be given something back after his death. This meant that the article writers would have probably liked to have given Arthur's family the real information, but this has proven to be untrue. Even though they took the time to print out a death notice, they still got it wrong. I understand that the information about Arthur's death would have come from a long way away, and they must have had to print so many that they didn't have time to check that the details were correct. But that was the problem – they didn't check. It wasn't the fact that it was biased, but factual, which surprised me the most. There is a possibility that the reporters knew Arthur, but if they didn't, why would they want to give him a bad name? He had just risked his life in a battle, so there is no reason for the writers to want to be one-sided about him. They found out only a week later that Arthur didn't actually live in Broadwater and he wasn't a real farmer. If they hadn't ~~of~~ reprinted then most of my work would have come to a dead end, as you usually don't expect a newspaper to print misleading information. It just shows that even reporters, who would usually have truthful information, don't always get things right first time.

good
analysis

My main difficulty was finding information about Arthur's home life. Before I went to the library I had no idea about my individual soldier, just about where his whereabouts were within the battle squads. I eventually managed to find out about some of his family, and from then on I had no trouble with finding more information, because once you get started, the hard thing is to stop. You have to make sure that you aren't just picking up random bits of information because they might connect with your soldier. To make a fact file even more reliable, you must choose to evaluate your sources and information carefully, and not just end up with loose facts about his life.

Pg 24



Bibliography

- The Long, long trail: <http://www.1914-1918.net/>
 - To find battle groups and regiments relevant to my soldier.
 - To find out basic information about what a normal battalion would include (e.g Soldier quantities, battle preparation, weapons) ✓
- The Sussex Role of Honour: <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/>
 - To find Arthur Potter ✓
- Wikipedia, The free Encyclopaedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Polygon_Wood
 - To find key information about the battle of Polygon Wood and where Potter died. ✓
- Google Maps: <https://maps.google.co.uk/>
 - This let me follow the path of Arthur Potter, and helped me understand where he died and the site of the battle fields. ✓
- Ancestry: www.ancestry.co.uk
 - This helped me find valuable information about the whole of Arthur's family, and gained me access to document about weddings, deaths and birth certificates. ✓
- The History of the Southdown Battalions: <http://royalsussex-southdowns.co.uk/history>
 - This was a really useful website that allowed me to obtain more information about the tragedy of Lowther's Lambs. ✓
- The Worthing Gazette - (newspaper)
 - This gave me the vital information about the misprint of Arthur's death. ✓
- Spartacus - <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/>
 - This was a really useful website as it helped me find out when and where certain battles were taking place, and this determined when Arthur died. ✓
- German Military Burials: <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/article/german-military-burials-belgium.htm>
 - This website helped me find more information about mass German graves. ✓

Pg 26

