

Private William Sydney Manning.

He served during World War 1 (WW1) with the Royal Sussex Regiment (Territorials) 1914 - ?1916 (Regimental Number 1742) and 2 /6th Battalion (Territorials) The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, The Royal Fusiliers (Regimental Number 241845), from 1916-1919.



Author's own copy: Photograph of William Sydney Manning and Fanny Ethel Foskett on their wedding day on 11 October 1917, in South Bersted, Bognor, West Sussex.

By Maria Fryday

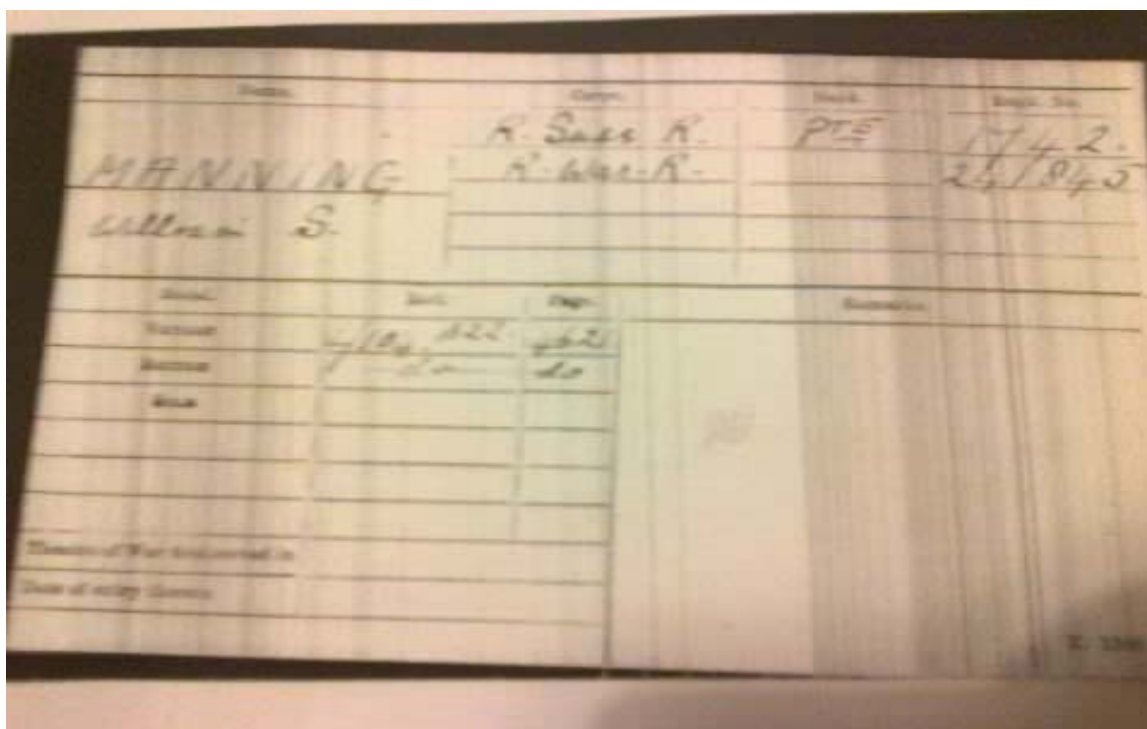
Please note that within the following text, I may refer to William Sydney Manning's name in full or just use his initials and Surname, WS Manning, to aid flow of the content.

The photograph on the title page of this study shows my late grandparents on their wedding day, which took place on 11th October 1917. Fanny Ethel Foskett (nick-named 'Essie'; goodness knows why) was 22 years old, and William Sydney Manning was 26 years old, although, to me, he looks significantly older than presented in the photograph. They may well have been acquainted for several years, because, according to the 1911 Census for England and Wales [1], William Sydney Manning lived at 18 Henry Street, South Bersted, and Fanny Ethel Foskett resided at number 9 Henry Street. The marriage appears to have taken place when William Sydney Manning was home on leave from serving in France. The Marriage Record, shown below [2], notes that he was occupied as a 'Private in HM Army serving in France'. The Absent Voters List for Chichester Division 1918 provides further information, namely, that he was serving with the 2 / 16th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment [3], and that his Regimental Number was 241845 – for that specific Regiment. His home address at this time was also recorded as number 1 Henry Street, South Bersted [3].



The above is a copy of WS Manning's and FE Foskett's Marriage Certificate [2]. The actual record clearly reads that WS Manning was 26 years old at the time of the marriage, not 21 years as may seem the case in the above image. Author's own copy.

William Sydney Manning's Medal Card [4] (shown below) confirms the details for his Number and Battalion for the latter part of the WW1 (The Royal Warwickshire Regiment) and also lists that he served originally with the Royal Sussex Regiment, and was in possession of a low, four-digit Number, 1742, for the latter Regiment. The notation of Regimental Numbers is highlighted because, at that time, apparently regiments awarded identity numbers to men for each specific regiment, rather than using one number for one person for the entire serving military. I am grateful to Mr David Baynham, Museum Assistant for the Royal Warwickshire Regimental Museum for explaining this point. This information is also supported by an online research facility [5]. Some confusion has occurred when tracing WS Manning through the available records, and discovering other people used the same Number!



WW1 Medal Card for William Sydney Manning [4].

The Medal Card (above) also confirms that WS Manning was awarded the Allied Victory and British War Medals for service in France between 1916 and early 1919 [4]. He was awarded these medals when serving with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in France, and probably Belgium.



Author's own photographs: The Victory and War Medals for WW1 (as shown above), were awarded for active service between 1916-1919. These are *not* William Sydney Manning's medals – which, sadly, have not been traced. The above medals were awarded to my other grandfather, Ernest William Hodges, who served with the Royal Lancashire Regiment, The Royal Fusiliers.

The intention of this study was to track William Sydney Manning's WW1 military service from the time he signed up until he was discharged back to civilian life. It would have been a quick and easy exercise (and probably not very - challenging) if his military records were available. It would be fabulous to be able to record a chronology, including specifics that he served with *this* regiment for *that amount of time here*, and then transferred to *n* for *x months / years*, experienced the horrors of *there*, but survived to be discharged in early 1919. However, it would appear that his Service Record and other documentation, apart from the Medal Card, were destroyed along with approximately sixty per cent of all military records in the bombing in World War 2 [5].

Some earlier attempts by this author to track WS Manning's war history resulted in some helpful advice and suggestions, including the fact that his Royal Sussex Regimental Number was a low one, implying that he was part of that regiment at an early stage in WW1, although detailed information could not be found [6]. The Assistant at the Royal Warwickshire Regimental Museum commented in a letter that the higher, newer number held by WS Manning was probably allocated when the

latter became part of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment after being posted to France in early 1916[7], perhaps as a result of a

“Requirement of drafts of men into other units which had suffered casualties in action...” [5].

The absence of the awarding of the 1914 and / or 1915 Star indicated that William Sydney Manning was not on active service outside Great Britain before 1916 [4; 7; 8; 9].

Tracing the career of William Sydney Manning through the Royal Sussex Regiment (RSR) archives has proven both frustrating in identifying him absolutely, to highly interesting in reviewing the wealth of documentation including war diaries, memorabilia, scrap books, etc., which refer to the various service battalions of said Regiment. One is reasonably certain with which battalions he did *not* serve. An occasional glimpse, as it were, does confirm that he was indeed involved with the military from an early stage in WW1, including a 1915 edition of the RSR combined list of entries of names of serving men contained within the local newspapers [10], although he does not appear to be mentioned in the West Sussex Gazette for that date [a]. The reference found which links WS Manning to the Bognor Observer [10] notes that he was part of the Territorial Force of the RSR in 1915, but does not quote his Regimental Number. Said reference correlates with the Bognor Regis Observer published on 11 August 1915 [11], in which he is listed under the heading of ‘Roll of Honour: Men on Active Service; Bognor and South Bersted Territorials’.

The first record found for William Sydney Manning in the local press is located in the 16 September 1914 edition of The Chichester and Bognor Observer and West Sussex Recorder [12]. He is noted to have the rank of Private; no mention is made to which Battalion he belonged. He is, however, listed in ensuing weekly publications of the Chichester and Bognor Observers [13 - 34] (the lists were separated into different districts per local edition from 17 March 1915 [14]) until August 1915. The Rolls were later changed to commemorate those who died for their country, from September 1916 [35]. From Mid-August 1915 appear reports of men of the RSR being killed, wounded or missing [36-39].

As noted earlier, William Sydney Manning was not serving outside England between 1914- beginning 1916. Alan Readman, (now retired) County Archivist, commented that WS Manning may well have joined the 3rd Battalion, RSR, at an early stage in the war, a training battalion – his Regimental Number being a low one, 1742 [6]. The Records of Service for the 3rd Battalion, kept at West Sussex County Records Office (WSRO) [40] note that the Battalion assembled at Chichester on 8 August 1914 [41] and proceeded to War Station – Dover – on 9 August 1914. The battalion Strength included 580 Special Reservists. The 3rd Battalion

“assumed Double Company Formation” on 14 September 1914 [42], and this date links with WS Manning’s military traces, when he was first recorded in the Roll of Honour for men on active service in the Chichester and Bognor district on 16th September 1914[12]. Page 4 of the Record of Service for the 3rd battalion notes the Army Order dated 16th August 1914 declared that all troops from that date were considered to be on Active Service [43].

The 3rd Battalion, RSR, seems to have been, overall, a home-based battalion, in which men would remain in training for six- to nine months then ‘pass out’ as drafts to the fighting units’ [44] – mainly the 2nd and 7th Battalions in France. Apparently, the 2nd Battalion, RSR, was first sent to France in August 1914 and the 7th Battalion on 1st June 1915 [45]. If William Sydney Manning was in training from September 1914, then he would presumably have remained with the 3rd Battalion until March 1915 at the earliest, or June 1915 at the latest. As noted above, he was not evidently awarded the 1915 Star and so was unlikely to have transferred to the either the 2nd or 7th Battalions for immediate service in France upon completion of training. The Record of Service does further note that the 3rd battalion proceeded from Dover to Newhaven on 16 May 1915 on ‘change of stations’ [46], and also confirms that 100 other ranks joined the Expeditionary Force on 1st June 1915 [47]. There are further notes regarding significant numbers of officers and other ranks periodically being drafted to the Expeditionary Force with the 2nd Battalion, RSR, or other regiments, throughout 1915 [48]. On 26 January 1916, 60 NCOs and men were sent to reinforce the 7th Battalion [49] and another group were dispatched to the 2nd battalion [50].

No records were found to indicate that WS Manning was definitely transferred to any of the other Service battalions of the RSR, such as the 5th, 8th, 7th, 2/5th, 3/5th, and 9th. A Readman records that the 7th, 8th and 9th (Service) battalions suffered heavy casualties when fighting in France and Belgium [51]. P. Warner notes, furthermore, that a Territorial Force made up of seventeen divisions remained in England to defend against a possible German invasion [52], and this may be reflected in the point that the 6th Battalion RSR, formed part of the coastal defence of England [53]. The 14th and 15th battalions were also home-based and used as training battalions [54]. It is vaguely possible that William Sydney Manning transferred from 3rd Battalion RSR, to the 6th Battalion, serving in England until the end of 1915, (however, see below) then was sent out to France in early 1916, perhaps to either the 2nd, 7th or 9th Battalion, then, following injury and recuperation perhaps at Bethune, was sent again to the front as part of the 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (see below). The 7th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment, did spend some time based around Bethune from 1915 [55].

Whilst reviewing some documentation for the 5th Battalion, RSR, an apparent late inscription noted that a Private A. Burton joined the 5th battalion in May 1916, and awarded the Number 1742 [56]. *WHO?* He was given the same Regimental Number as my grandfather in the *same* Regiment? While WS Manning was still alive and serving in France? The Number 1742 is blank at the beginning of this book. Private A. Burton's Medal Card records that he achieved the Territorial Force Medal with The Royal Flying Corps [57]; the rest of A. Burton's military record is as elusive as WS Manning's.

A later amendment: The answer to the question 'would another (Private) be awarded the same Regimental Number within the same Regiment', is 'yes'. According to the Order Book for the 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment [58], A Private CR Chapman was awarded the Number 1742...

The 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, The Royal Fusiliers, (RWR) embarked for Le Havre, via Ludgershall, in Hampshire, and Southampton on 21st May 1916 [59]. William Sydney Manning earned his Victory and British War Medals in France between 1916 and 1919, most likely with this Battalion. There is no clear reference found in the Record of Service (the 3rd Battalion, RSR) for other ranks being transferred to The Royal Warwickshire Regiment between January and September 1916, but one officer, a Captain AM McKee did on 29 May 1916 based at Lewis, Sussex [60].

One document entitled 'T.F. (S). No. 5828', a list of Base Depots, and presumably the Divisional Commander's Plan for location of Territorial troops [61], shows that the Royal Warwickshire Regiment was centred in NO. 7 District, Rouen, and the Royal Sussex Regiment were in No. 10 District, Etaples. The 2nd Battalion, RSR, War Diary also records that this battalion was posted for distribution to Bethune in North East France from June 1915 [62]. Intriguingly, the War Diary for the 2/6th battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, records that after landing in France, C and D Companies of that battalion 'marched to Bethune' on 10 June 1916 [63]. A and B Companies went directly to the trenches at Beuvry on 8 June 1916 [64].

So, WS Manning may have transferred from the Royal Sussex Regiment to the 2/6th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment either just before embarking for France, or from within the designated Territorial Force District around Bethune, leaving either the 2nd or 7th Battalions, RSR, perhaps following injury, treatment and re-assignment, being reassigned to a depleted battalion (of a different regiment). Bethune was located in the Pas de Calais, and the 33rd Casualty Clearing Station was based there, until December 1917 [65].

The only apparent documentation available for review with regard to the 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was the War Diaries covering 21 May 1916 to 22 September 1919 (there are two running consecutively) [66; 67]. From June 1916 onwards, the 2/6th Battalion, RWR, experienced periods of heavy fighting, interspersed with recovery days during which the men practised bayonet fighting and gas drills [68]. Examples of heavy fighting include 30 June – 19 July 1916 [69], suffering heavy casualties on 19 July 1916 in the Wick Salient [70]. On 8 October 1916, the 2/6th, RWR, were able to identify that they were fighting the 7th Bavarian Regiment [71]. On 9 January 1917, men of the 2/6th, RWR, formed working parties for carrying check boards up to the line [72]. On 23 March 1917 the whole battalion was 'employed in trench digging and on salvage work, consolidating their position west of the River Somme' [73].

From 1–16 October 1917, heavy fighting was recorded [74]. However, WS Manning spent at least some of this time in England, because he married Fanny Ethel Foskett in South Bersted on 11 October 1917, after Banns had been read [2]. The Battalion was in Divisional Reserve at Arras from 17-27 October 1917 [75], and then proceeded to Greenland Hill [76].

Bitter fighting continued. On 5 September 1918, the 2/6th, RWR, 'held the village of BAC St Maur as far as the station' [77], and reached BAS Grenier on 2 October 1918 'without opposition' [78].

By February 1919, the 2/6th, RWR, became engaged in staffing Demobilisation camps at Harfleur [79] and on 3 March 1919 were based at Dieppe [80]. Men were gradually repatriated to England, the last of the 2/6th, RWR, being returned on 22 September 1919 [81]. William Sydney Manning probably returned to England in February or early March 1919; my Mother, Essie Ethel (nee Manning) was born on 24 December 1919 [82] – her Mother's name, Fanny Ethel Foskett, has been incorrectly spelt as 'Hoskett', rather than Foskett. Essie Ethel Manning's original birth certificate does not display her parents' names.

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- 3) (West Sussex Records Office) WSRO WDC/CL73/3/1
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- 9) British Army medal index cards 1914-1920. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/medal
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- 11) Bognor Observer – BO 11/8/15 (6 col a).
- 12) Chichester and Bognor Observer and West Sussex Recorder, 16 September 1914, p6 col a.
- 13) Ibid, editions
- 14) Bognor Observer, 17March 1915, p6 col a.
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- 16) Ibid, 31 march 1915, 6 col a.
- 17) Ibid, 7 April 1915, p6 col a.
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- 19) Ibid, 21 April 1915, p6 col a.
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- 21) Ibid, 5 May 1915, p6 col a.
- 22) Ibid, 12 May 1915, p6 col a.
- 23) Ibid, 19 April 1915, p6 col a.
- 24) Ibid, 26 April 1915, p6 col a.
- 25) Ibid, 2 June 1915, p6 col a.
- 26) Ibid, 9 June 1915, p6 col a.
- 27) Ibid, 16 June 1915, p6 col a.
- 28) Ibid, 23 June 1915, p6 col a.
- 29) Ibid, 30 June 1915, p6 col a.
- 30) Ibid, 7 July 1915, p6 col a.
- 31) Ibid, 14 July 1915, p6 col a.
- 32) Ibid, 21 July 1915, p6 col a.
- 33) Ibid, 28 July 1915, p6 col a.
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- 35) Chichester and Bognor Observer and West Sussex Recorder, p6.
- 36) Ibid, 25 August 1915, p3 col b.
- 37) Ibid, 1 September 1915, p3 col c.
- 38) Ibid, 8 September 1915, p5 col e.
- 39) Ibid, 15 September 1915, p7 col e.
- 40) WSRO/RSR/MSS 3/34. Record of Service the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment 1914-1921, p2 para3.
- 41) Ibid, p2 para 4.
- 42) Ibid, p3 para2.
- 43) Ibid, p4.
- 44) WSRO/RSR (library)/2/6/Rousillon Gazette/vol 7/April 1916, issue No.2/pp 65-66.
- 45) The Royal Sussex Regiment. www.1914-1918.net/sussex
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- 47) Ibid, p 10 para 1.
- 48) Ibid, p 18 para3.
- 49) Ibid, p 20 para20.
- 50) Ibid, p 23, para11.

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- 52) Warner P. 1995 (reprint 2008), 'World War One: A Chronological Narrative', Pen and Sword, p 26.
- 53) Readman A, Ed, 1985, Ibid, p viii.
- 54) Readman A, Ed, 1985, Ibid, p 92.
- 55) WSRO/RSR/MS 7/11 – War Diary 7th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment, November 1915 p3 para2.
- 56) WSRO/RSR/MS 5/83. Promotion and Punishment Book 1915-1918, 5th Battalion, RSR.
- 57) TNA/TFWAR/RFFTFM2/
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/medal
- 58) WSRO/RSR/MS/6/7 Battalion Order Book, the 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment.
- 59) War Diary 1916-1919, the 2/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, p1 para1.
- 60) WSRO/RSR/MSS 3/34. Record of Service the 3rd Battalion, RSR 1914-1921, p 24 para5.
- 61) WSRO/RSR/MS 2/57. War Diary for 2nd battalion, RSR – contains three-page document T.F. (S). No. 5828.
- 62) WSRO/RSR/MS 2/57. War Diary 2nd Battalion, RSR, p1.
- 63) Royal Warwickshire Regiment Museum, War Diary 2/6th Battalion, 21 May 1916 – 27 March 1918, p4 para3. (Please note that the page numbers in this War Diary are idiosyncratically numbered, so I have counted chronologically from page 1.
- 64) War Diary 2/6th battalion, RWR, 21 May 1916 – 27 March 1918, p4 para 1.
- 65)
<http://ww1cemeteries.com/ww1frenchcemeteries/bethunetown.htm>
- 66) War Diary 2/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment (RWR), 21 May 1916 – 27 March 1918.
- 67) War Diary 2/6th Battalion, RWR, 3 April 1918 – 22 September 1919.
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- 70) Ibid, p 16 para1.
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- 79) Ibid, p 55 para 1.
- 80) Ibid, p 56 para 3.
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- 82) GRO vol2b Page 795. <http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&db=pubmembertrees&gsfn=Essie+E&gsln=Man>

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FURTHER READING:

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- b) WSRO/RSR/MP 4169 – 1912-1940 Index of names in the Rousillon Gazette.
- c) WSRO/RSR/MP 4170 – WW1 Index of names in newspaper cuttings (an album).
- d) WSRO/RSR/MP 4173 – Index of names of (RSR) Regimental Photograph albums.
- e) WSRO/RSR/MP 4174 – 1888-1976 Index of names in scrapbooks in the Regimental Museum.
- f) WSRO/RSR/MP 4853 – 1914-1918 Index to the Nominal Roll for the 2nd Battalion, RSR.
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- h) WSRO/RSR/Library/1/5. The Story of the 5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion
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- j) WSRO/RSR/3/37. Formal telegram sent from Hounslow, commanding the general mobilisation of troops, 3rd Battalion, RSR, 14 August 1914.
- k) WSRO/RSR/MSS 2/65 – List of Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the 2nd Battalion, RSR, killed, wounded, missing/transferred.
- l) WSRO/RSR/MSS 2/67 – Record of Awards and Decorations, 2nd Battalion, RSR.
- m) WSRO/RSR/PH 2/34 – 1908-1926 Album of Photographs of 2nd Battalion, RSR.
- n) WSRO/RSR/MSS 7/10 – War Diary 30 May 1915 – 16 June 1919, 7th Battalion, RSR.
- o) WSRO/RSR/PH 7/3 – November 1914: Photograph of 'A' Company.
- p) WSRO/RSR/MS 7/13 – War Diary 8th Battalion, RSR.
- q) WSRO/RSR/MS 7/17 – War Diary 9th Battalion, RSR.
- r) WSRO/RSR/MS/6/5 – War Diary 2/6th Battalion, RSR.

WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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