

OLIVER LARGENT BELL KEER (1906-12)

Date of Birth	24 October 1895
School Information	Brother of Kenneth John Taylor Keer (1899-1907) , Raymond Wilfred Cordy Keer MBE (1901-07) and Ivan Philip Montague Keer (1916.19) . Other relations also went to the College. He was awarded Springfield Cup for Junior Steeplechase and Athletics Cap.
Career Information	None
Date Of Death	7 February 1916
Cause of Death	Killed in action.
Location	Pas de Calais, France
Cemetery	Cambrin Churchyard Extension, Pas de Calais, France. Also commemorated on Wickham Market War Memorial – see below
Rank	Private
Branch of Service	Royal Fusiliers, 18 th Battalion.

I am indebted to Derek Pheasant for the following additional information and photos.

"The 1901 census shows Oliver, age 5, living with his family at Claremont House, Bridge Street, Wickham Market which is/was down towards the bridge at the northern end of the village. I've yet to check to see if it is still there. His father John Cordy Keer was a "surgeon", I suspect more a doctor and the census records that he worked from home. The family were wealthy enough to employ a governess and two domestic servants.

I found an entry in a local newspaper, the Suffolk Chronicle and Mercury in March 1916 reporting Oliver's death – see below.

Mr. N. more, hon. secretary of the Newton Road Conservative Club.

News has been received by Dr. J. Cordy Keer and Mrs. Keer, of Claremont House, Wickham Market, that their third son, Oliver Largent Bell, aged 20 years, has been killed in action in France by shrapnel. After two attempts that failed he eventually enlisted in the 18th Battalion Royal Fusiliers. He was an old Framlinghamian, and while there distinguished himself in foot racing, winning, in 1912, the silver cup for the Juniors' Steeplechase, in record time. He was much liked by his fellow-students, who will regret his death. His captain says in a letter to his parents: "He will be greatly missed by his comrades here for his invariable cheerfulness and the unselfish way in which he would try to help others, and he was doing his duty as usual when he was hit and instantly killed." Dr. Keer has two other sons serving with His Majesty's Forces.

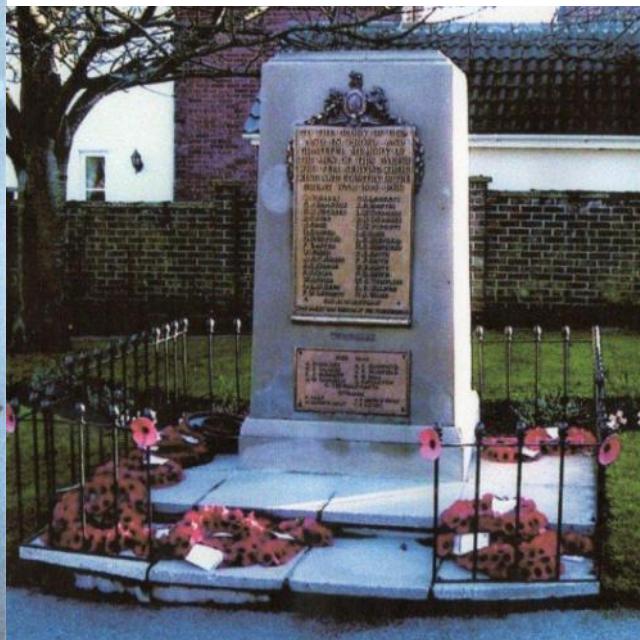
It records him winning the Springfield Cup in 1912 for the Junior Steeplechase whilst at Fram.

Oliver enlisted into the 18th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. This was a war service battalion designated the 1st Public Schools Battalion and raised in Epsom on 11th September 1914. Its ranks were filled with public school and university lads. Training continued at Clipstone in Notts before Oliver and the battalion landed in France on 14th November 1915.

The War Diary for the battalion records that it suffered several casualties, including three killed on 17th February 1916 whilst "...a fatigue party carrying up material (to the Front Line) were heavily shelled. One of the three killed was presumably Oliver Keer.

His body was recovered and buried in the church yard in the village of Cambrin which was very close to the Front Line (about 800metres) and some 8 kms to the east of the army town of Bethune. The church was used as a dressing station and its associated casualties were buried in the adjacent church yard which was extended to eventually contain 1211 war dead.

Oliver is also commemorated on the Wickham Market War Memorial.



I have visited the Western Front many times over the years but have never made it to Cambrin but I will certainly do so at some stage. I'll take a photo for you of Oliver's grave."