

Ralph LARK

Corporal 8268, 36th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Died March 21st 1918, aged 25

Commemorated on Pozieres Memorial, Pozieres, France

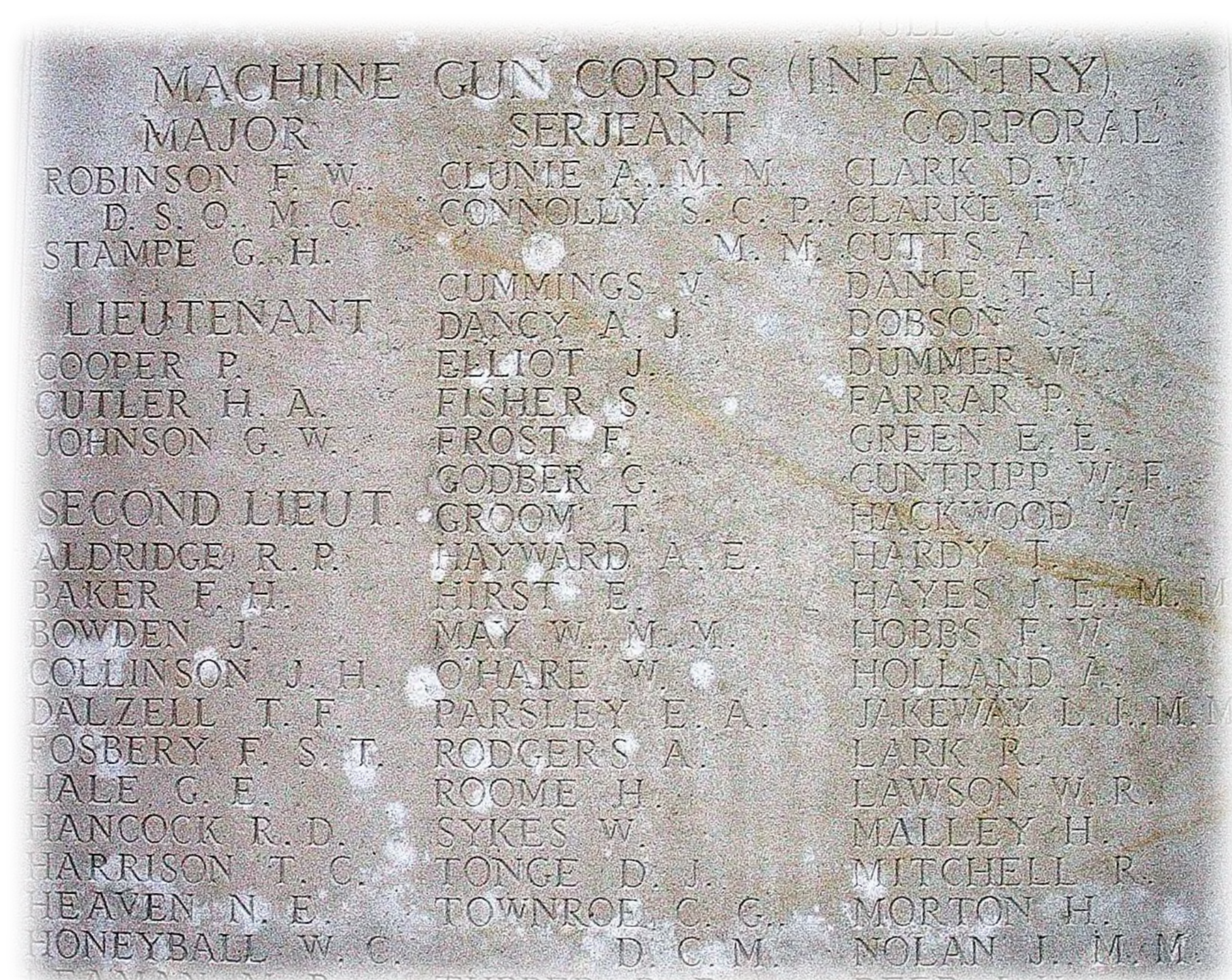
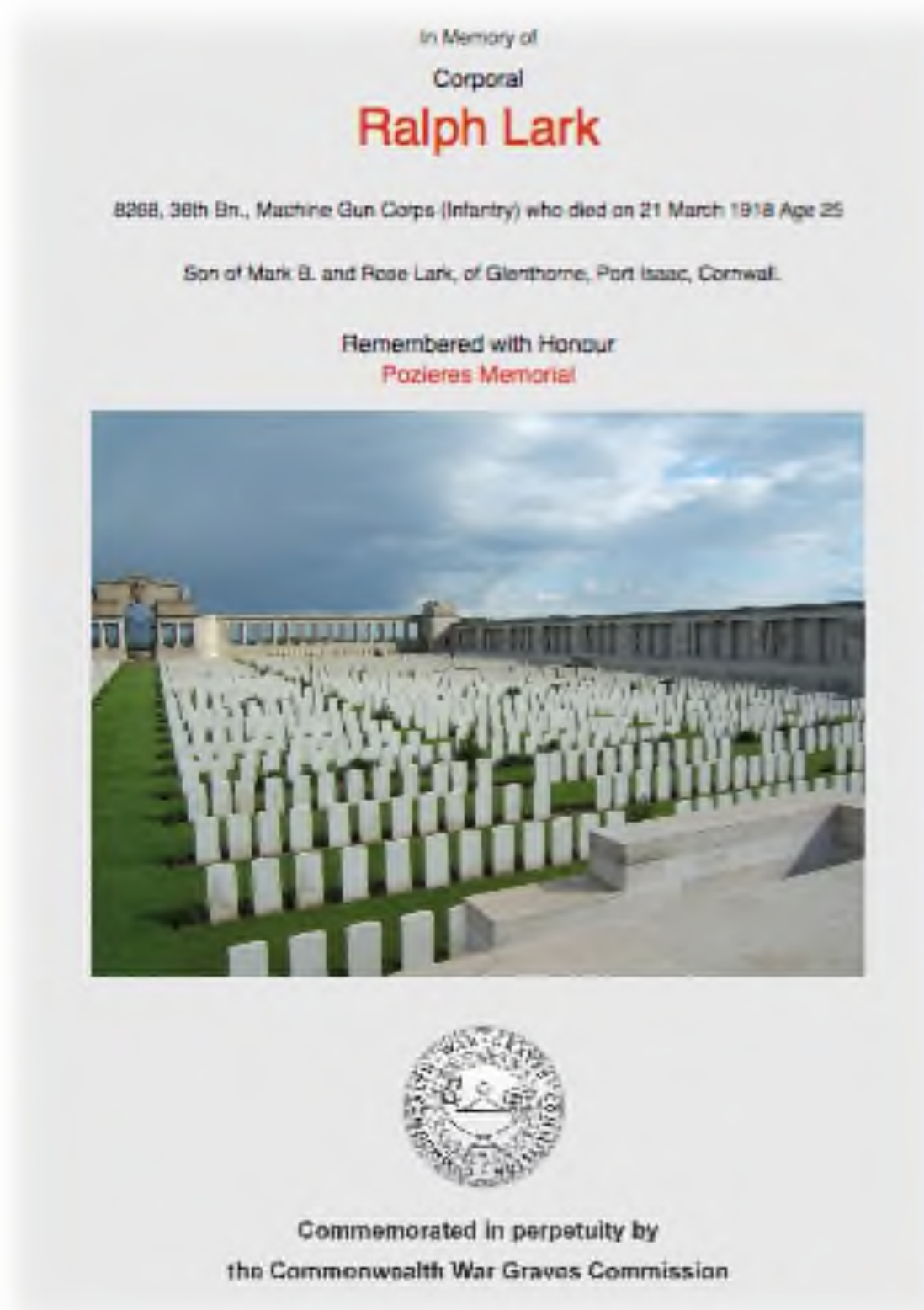
Ralph Lark was born in 1893 to Mark and Rose Lark. He was a second cousin to **Adolphus Lark**. In the 1901 census Mark (37) is recorded as a Carpenter and Innkeeper. Rose (38) was born in Monmouth, and Ralph's elder sisters Jennie (10) and Maud (9) were born in Gloucester. In 1911, 18 year old Jonathan Ralph Lark and his father Mark Burdon Lark were both lodging with Henry Richards (60), a naval pensioner, and his wife and one son, in 14 Clifton Crescent, Falmouth. Mark's occupation is given as an Electric Theatre Manager and Ralph is an electric operator, so they must have been running Falmouth's early cinema.

Ralph enlisted at Shoreditch, London, and his wartime was spent in the Machine Gun Corps, where he became a corporal. The corps was formed in October 1915 when it was realised that more effective use of machine guns came from larger units manned with specially trained men. The principal weapon was the water cooled Vickers machine gun weighing over 25 kilos with water and tripod, and capable of continuous firing for 30 seconds with each belt of 250 cartridges.

The 36th Battalion was formed in March 1918 within 36th (Ulster) Division. They were in the line near St Quentin on March 21st when the German Spring Offensive known as Operation Michael began at 04.40. Over 3,500,000 shells were fired at the British positions around St Quentin in just five hours, a staggering 200 shells a second! It was the biggest barrage of the war, hitting targets over 150 square miles. Apart from trench mortars there was mustard gas, chlorine gas, tear gas, and smoke canisters concentrated on the forward trenches. Corporal Ralph Lark was killed that day and has no known grave. He is commemorated on Pozieres Memorial for the Machine Gun Corps.



British Vickers machine gun crew wearing PH-type anti-gas helmets on the Somme in 1916



Corporal Ralph Lark's memorial at Pozieres

Sources

Machine Gun Corps: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_Gun_Corps and <http://www.1914-1918.net/mgc.htm>

Battle of St Quentin: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_St_Quentin

Operation Michael#Battle_of_St_Quentin.2C_21.E2.80.9323_March