

Charles Townsend Cobbold

The third name on the Rownhams WWI memorial is Charles Townsend Cobbold, son of Augustus Hills Cobbold (a stocks and shares broker) and Ellen Stanley Cobbold, of Brownhill House, Nursling, the first child of his father's third marriage. If you visit this site:

<http://www.hollowaysauctioneers.co.uk/catalogues/bp280611/page10.html> and scroll down to lot 296, you'll find a portrait of Charles, and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were looking at one of the WWI poets: he's a sensitive yet stunning looking young man, in his uniform.

Looks are deceptive. When he was at Caius College, Cambridge, he was a strapping rower who won his oar in the Lent races in 1913 and graduated in 1914. He rowed for his college at Henley in 1913, the year the Marlow and Caius boats had a dead heat. He joined the Hampshire Carabineers yeomanry as a trooper and was commissioned into the Royal Field Artillery in August 1915, joining a battery at the front (as an officer of 32nd brigade) in the November of that year. Some of his letters 'home' have survived and they speak of life at the front – the wet, the rats, his horse, his men.

He was killed in action on 3rd October 1916 near the village of Lesboeufs during the Battle of the Somme, and buried near the village in a marked grave but as the tide of battle twice more swept over the area in the following two years his grave was not found at the end of the war. His Commanding Officer had written of him: 'We all liked him so much. He had an extraordinary disregard of danger, and always set an excellent example to the men, with whom he was very popular. His last words to his men were, "Don't take any notice of the shells, they're only strays and not meant for you." ' (Sourced from The Times obituaries.)

Charles is listed among the "missing" of the battle, his name is engraved on the Thiepval Memorial and also appears in Rownhams, at Caius, and on a memorial plaque in Romsey Abbey. He left £1159 17s 9d in his will.

If you want to learn more about the Cobbold family, start here:

<http://www.cobboldfht.com/files/cobbbebb11.pdf>