

FACT SHEET No 304

## **A TRAGEDY IN TWO WINDOWS** **by Sue Dymond    October 2018**

The newest window in Southwell Minster commemorates men of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire who gave their lives in the First World War. Two of the Minster's older windows give a more personal glimpse of such loss.

In 1915, the Handford brothers of Elmfield House in Southwell went out to France to join their brother-in-law, Major Becher, in the 8th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters. Like many thousands of young men they were to take part in the Battle of Loos, the 'Big Push', to rid Northern France of German forces before winter. When the offensive failed, General French returned to England and was replaced by the infamous General Haig.

One brief success at Loos had been the taking of the Hohenzollern Redoubt by a Scottish Division. Forced to relinquish the position when the rest of the line failed to advance, the Scots suffered terrible casualties. It was on this German stronghold that General Haig again set his sights and in this battle for the redoubt, the regiments of the North Midlands had the misfortune to be involved. Nearly 4,000 men died, many in the first minutes of battle. Basil and Everard Handford were killed on the 14th October 1915; Major Becher was mortally wounded.

The memorial window to the Handford brothers stands next to the new window in the south choir aisle. It is a good example of a late Kempe window. It shows St George, an earthly knight and Archangel Michael, Captain of the Heavenly Host.

Major Becher's memorial window is to be found in the Pilgrim Chapel. It was designed by a family friend, Sir William Nicholson of Newark and depicts a crucifixion. By 1918 when the window was installed, the artist's own eldest son had also died in battle. Major Becher succumbed to his wounds on New Year's Day 1916 and his grave is in France. The bodies of the Handford boys were never recovered but they are remembered on the memorial wall at Loos. Only in two windows would these young men come home to family, to Southwell and the Minster.



Ref: J Beaumont. The Stained Glass of Southwell Minster

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