



In early April 2014, some months after we published this article about Ernest, Fred was contacted on behalf of Scole Parish Council who wanted to name a street after Ernest. You can find out what happened by returning to the "Memories Passed Down" page and following the link to "Ernest Seaman VC"

Ernest Seaman V.C.

Dene Valley U3A member Fred Turner who lives in Wellesbourne writes,

"I was brought up in Norfolk, and my mother often spoke about "Uncle Ernie" . She lived as a young girl in the village of Scole in Norfolk, where Uncle Ernie had lived."

Fred did some research and found the following report about his uncle on Wikipedia

Ernest Seaman VC MM (16 August 1893 – 29 September 1918) was an English recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

Ernie was born in a small village near Norwich, then while he was still a young boy his mother remarried and his family moved to Scole. On leaving school he worked for a while as a page boy in the Grand Hotel in Felixstowe. He had a few other jobs before signing up to go and fight for his country.

Classified as unfit for active front line service he ended up as a baker in the Army Service Corps of the British Army. It was not until late in the war that he was allowed to join a front-line unit.

He was 25 years old, and a lance-corporal in the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 29 September 1918 at Terhand, Belgium, when the right flank of his company was held up by enemy machine-guns, Lance-Corporal Seaman went forward under heavy fire with his Lewis gun and engaged the position single-handed, capturing two machine-guns and 12 prisoners, and killing one officer and two men. Later in the day he again rushed another enemy machine-gun post, capturing the gun under very heavy fire. He was killed immediately afterwards, but it was due to his gallant conduct that his company was able to push forward to its objective.

A copy of his medal is held in the Officers Mess at The Royal Logistic Corps Museum (Camberley, Surrey, England). The original is kept in a bank vault.

Ernie is commemorated at Tyne Cot Cemetery (Panel No. 70), the memorial to the 36th Division at the Ulster Tower near Thiepval on the Somme, Felixstowe War Memorial (Suffolk), and the Scole War Memorial (Norfolk).ⁱ

On the website of the 36th Ulster Division which is devoted to remembering soldiers of the Great War the following entry tells us even more about this country lad from Norfolk who won both the M.C. and the V.C.ⁱⁱ

Ernest Seaman VC, MM.

L/Cpl (42364) Ernest Seaman 2nd Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

Born on Wednesday 16th August 1893 Heigham, Norwich, England.

Ernest Seaman was the youngest of seven sons to Henry and Sarah Elizabeth Seaman, who also had two daughters.

Ernest went to the local Church of England school and was still quite young when his father died. His mother later married Edward Palmer, landlord of the Kings Head Inn at Scole, on the Norfolk / Suffolk border. Edward Palmer also ran a taxi service and pony and trap service from Diss station. The family moved to Scole and Ernest attended Scole Council School, and was remembered by school friends as quiet and reserved, but kind and gentlemanly. He was a plumpish short boy who soon acquired the nickname, 'Peddler' Palmer after his father.

Ernest Seaman left school at 14 and tried a variety of jobs before moving to Trimley in Suffolk where he lived with an aunt while working as a pageboy at the Grand Hotel in Felixstowe. He worked there for three years before emigrating to Canada in 1912.

He returned to England in 1915 and tried to enlist in the Army, but was initially turned down as medically unfit, however, on 26th December 1915 he finally enlisted at Le Havre as A/367702 in the Army Service Corps (ASC) Canteens, where he was employed as a baker.

By 1917, because of heavy British casualties, more men were needed to fight, and after re-examination Ernie was transferred into the infantry. He joined the 2nd Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and on 3rd February 1918 the battalion transferred to the 109th Brigade, 36th (Ulster) Division.

Army records show that had he survived the war he would have been transferred back to the bakery!

Ernest Seaman saw considerable action with the 2nd Battalion around Ypres and Passchendaele, being promoted to Lance Corporal in early September just fourteen days before he was killed.

Ernest Seaman and his colleagues of 'A' Company were involved in fierce fighting near the tiny village of Terhand, north of the Menin Road, in the Ypres salient, it was here that he would lay down his life.

**On Sunday, 29th September 1918
At Terhand, Belgium.**

When the right flank of his company was held up by a nest of enemy machine-guns, Lance-Corporal Seaman with great courage and initiative, rushed forward under heavy fire with his Lewis gun and engaged the machine gun position single-handed, capturing two machine-guns and 12 prisoners, and killing one officer and two men. Later in the day he again rushed another enemy machine-gun post, capturing the gun under very heavy fire. He was killed immediately afterwards.

His courage and dash were beyond all praise, and it was entirely due to the very gallant conduct of Lance-Corporal Seaman that his company was able to push forward to its objective and capture many prisoners.

Ernest Seaman was killed in the above action he has no known grave.

He is commemorated on the
TYNE COT MEMORIAL

Zonnebeke, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

Panel 70 to 72

Also Commemorated by:

MEMORIAL STONE in the grounds of THE ULSTER MEMORIAL TOWER, SCOLE WAR MEMORIAL, FELIXSTOWE WAR MEMORIAL

Copy of Victoria Cross citation is displayed with the roll of honour in ST ANDREWS CHURCH Scole.

On the 29th September the 109th Brigade held the line that it had won, enabling the 108th to move through to renew the attack. Captain V.E.S. Mattocks, Officer Commanding A Company wrote:

"He was one of the best soldiers whom I had ever met, an excellent soldier in every sense of the word, and very keen to do his duties. He always volunteered to help in any extra work that had to be done, no matter how dangerous or difficult, and for his constant devotion to duty and gallantry in voluntarily attending his wounded colleagues under heavy fire, I recommended his being awarded the Military Medal".

On 13th February 1919 at Buckingham Palace, King George V presented the medal to Ernest Seaman's Mother Sarah.

The rear of the ribbon metal clasp is inscribed:
42364 L/Cpl E. Seaman. Late 2nd Bn. R.Innis. Fus.

In the early 1940's the medal was donated to the trustees of the Royal Army Service Corps, by Colonel W. Wordie OBE T.D. Honorary Colonel 52nd (Lowland) Divisional R.A.S.C., after it was purchased privately at a public auction.

A replica medal is on display in the RCT Medal collection in the Officers Mess of the Royal Logistic Corps at Deepcut in Surrey. Viewing of this medal is by special appointment only, while the original remains locked away in a bank vault and is not available for viewing.

ⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Seaman

ⁱⁱ <http://36ud.forumotions.net/t26-ernest-seaman-vc-mm>