

HERBERT LOOMES (Summary)

Herbert Loomes's grandparents, Thomas, born in Husband's Bosworth, Leicestershire, a painter and glazier by trade, and his wife Elizabeth (nee Matthews) born in Huntington, arrived in the village of Wellesbourne at sometime between their marriage in 1851 and the following year when their first child was born. This son was given the same name as his father and on the 26th June 1879, in the Parish Church of St. Peters in Wellesbourne he married Fanny O'Donnell, a girl from the village of Long Itchington but who had originated from Donegal, in Ireland. Thomas worked as a plumber and painter and Fanny as a laundress. They were to have 8 children including Herbert who was born on 6th March 1889 and baptised on the 9th June of the same year in the village church. It's not known what Herbert's occupation was immediately after leaving the village school but by the time he was 22 years of age, he worked as a Footman and lived with his parents and siblings in Stratford Road, Wellesbourne.

At the outbreak of the war in August 1914 Herbert was one of the first from Wellesbourne to enlist. He and a number of other young men from the village travelled to the recruitment office in Birmingham where on the 3rd September they joined the 8th (Service) Battalion, Rifle Brigade (Prince Consorts Own), a new Battalion formed at Winchester on 21st Aug 1914 as part of General Kitchener's First New Army and part of the 41st Brigade, (14th Light Division). Hubert was given the number S/1718. Two of the other lads joined the same battalion, Edwin Soden, number S/1713 and William Cherry Findon, number S /1716. They were all attached to 'C' Company.

After training the Battalion sailed for Boulogne arriving on the 19th of May 1915 and were immediately sent to a position East of Ypres where fighting continued until the 27th when the Second Battle of Ypres ended in virtual stalemate. On the 29th July Herbert with colleagues Edwin and William and the rest of the 8th Battalion were moved to trenches at Hooge. Early the following day the German Army counter attacked using flame throwers for the first time leaving 'C' Company decimated. On the 31st July the three Wellesbourne men were among those posted as 'missing'.

News reached home in August 1915 that Herbert had in fact been taken prisoner but that he had also been woundedⁱ. He was sent a parcel each week from the villagers of Wellesbourne to which he responded later in the year by thanking all who had contributed and stating that he was now in good healthⁱⁱ. He remained a prisoner for the next three years.

With the armistice signed, it was announced in the local press that on Tuesday the 25th January 1919 that a gathering would take place in the Town Hall to honour the men recently repatriated. Councillor Flowers, the Lord Mayor of Stratford upon Avon, would express the town's gratitude to the soldiers. Herbert Loomes was named as one of those that would be presentⁱⁱⁱ. A week later though, the local newspaper recorded that although Hubert's brother Charles, who had also been a prisoner of the Germans, had arrived home, there was no news of Hubert^{iv}. A few days later his parents

received the sad news that he had in fact died from influenza on the 29th October 1918 in the Branch Hospital, Mainz, Germany^v; a victim of the worldwide epidemic of that year. He was described as a great favourite within the village community.

Herbert is buried in the Niedierzwehren Cemetery, Kassel, Germany which is part of the original Niedierzwehren Prisoner of War Camp, (Grave reference III.F.11).

His medals, the 1915 Star, British and Victory were sent to his mother. He is commemorated on the Wellesbourne Church of England School Roll of Honour, The Wellesbourne Roll of Honour for the Dead, in St Peter's Church, Wellesbourne and on the village War Memorial. (23/6/2013)

(See also : Edwin James Soden and William Cherry Findon)

ⁱ Stratford upon Avon Herald 3/9/1915.

ⁱⁱ Stratford upon Avon Herald 3/12/1915.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stratford upon Avon Herald 17/1/1919.

^{iv} Stratford upon Avon Herald 24/1/1919.

^v Stratford upon Avon Herald 31/1/1919

Sources: (War Diaries: 8th Bn Rifle Brigade. May 1915 – July 1918 (14th Div , 41st Infantry Brigade) WO95/1895)

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