

Heber Climer.

Private, No.16989, the 14th (Service)1st Birmingham Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

The Climer family had been living in Wellesbourne since at least the turn of the 18th century. Heber's father Edward Richard was born in 1854 and worked as a wheelwright in the village. In 1874 he married Phoebe Pitcher, a local girl, and they produced at least 5 children. In 1886 however, Phoebe died and a year later Edward married her sister, Patience Elizabeth Pitcher, and together they raised three more children, Ada, Heber and Edward. The family lived in Cherry Orchard, Wellesbourne Hastings.

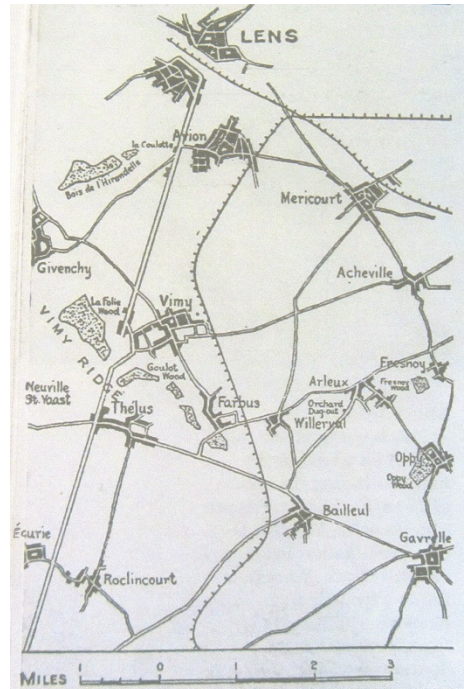
Heber was born on the 17th June 1893 and baptised in St. Peter's church on the 1st October. He attended both the infant and junior sections of the village schoolⁱ. At the end of the school year, August 1902, he was one of nine pupils presented with a school prize, that of a bible, for full attendance in the yearⁱⁱ. He finally left on the 13th July 1906 to become a plough boy; a term frequently used at the time, for a child with no other prospects than to work on a farm. By the time of the 1911 census however he was working as a Domestic Gardener and as the dark days of war approached became an agent for the Pearl Insurance Companyⁱⁱⁱ.

Military conscription was looming and on the 15th January 1916 Heber married a Stratford girl, Edith Ellen Edgington, at the Payton St. Baptist church^{iv} in her home town and went to live in Birmingham Rd. With less than two months of married life behind them, he enlisted in Stratford upon Avon and was called, in early March, to report to Budbroke Barracks^v, Warwick to join the 14th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, part of the 13th Brigade, 5th Division.

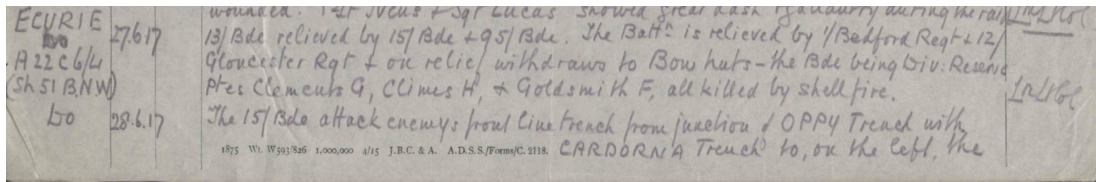
The 14th was formed in September 1914 from men volunteering in Birmingham and was originally called the 1st Birmingham Battalion before officially becoming the 14th (Service) Battalion RWR. Together with the 15th and 16th Battalions they became known as the Birmingham Pals.

By July Heber had arrived in France. On July 1st the Somme offensive was set in motion. During the next 3 months the 14th Battalion was involved in many of the main battles of that campaign and a total of 403 of their number were killed. In late September they left the Somme and spent a relatively quiet winter in trenches around Givenchy, about 2 miles north of Vimy, a section known as the La Basse Front. In April 1917 they were involved as a munitions support to consolidating troops in the capture of Vimy Ridge.

Following a raid by elements of the 14th, on the 26th June, on German positions in Oppy Wood, the battalion was relieved and retired to Ecurie, 6 miles to the west.

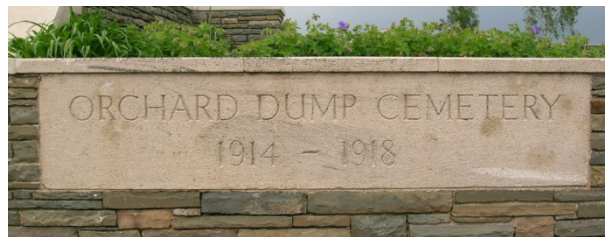


The entry in the battalion War Diary for the 27th June 1917 records that Private H. Climer and 3 comrades were killed that day, by shell fire. The entry in the diary of the name of the death of an 'other rank' was an unusual occurrence as only the deaths of officers were normally recorded.



14th Battalion RWR War Diary entry for 27th June 1917

The Orchard Dump Cemetery, Arlaux- en- Gohelle, Flanders where Heber is buried (Grave IX.A.26) was begun in April 1916 to receive the bodies of those soldiers who died in the Battles of Arras.



Heber Climer was awarded the Victory and British Medals. He is commemorated on the Roll of Honour for the Dead in St. Peter's Church, Wellesbourne and on the Wellesbourne War Memorial as well as the Stratford upon Avon War Memorial the Cemetery War Memorial and the towns Rother St. Congregational Church Memorial Tablet and Reredos, Holy Trinity Church.

Footnote: Heber's brother Private Edward Climer served in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was wounded in the head and hand but survived the war.

Researched by Grev Hudson (May 2014). (grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk)

ⁱ Wellesbourne School Records (WRO. CR371/2, CR371/2. CR371/3 AMD CR371/4)

ⁱⁱ Leamington Spa Courier 8/8/1902

ⁱⁱⁱ Stratford upon Avon Herald 13/7/1917

^{iv} Stratford upon Avon Herald 21/1/1916

^v Stratford upon Avon Herald 3/3/1916

Sources:

Birmingham Pals by Terry Carter.

Orchard Dump photos- Courtesy of Michael Caldwell

War Diaries for 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (NA. WO95/1556/1)

