

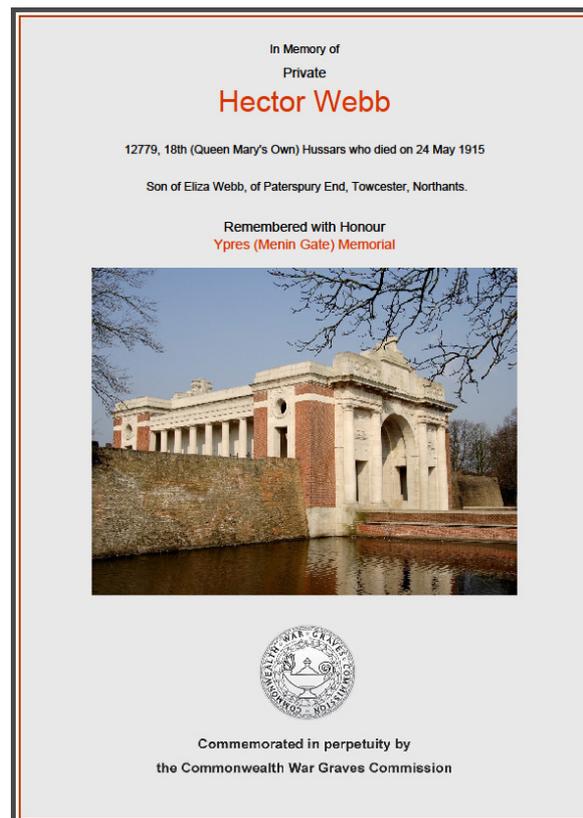
Hector Webb

Hector was born in 1892 in Paulersbury, Northamptonshire and was the son of a farmer James and his wife Eliza Webb of Towcester.

Prior to the war he had been employed as a groom. We have not been able to establish his connection with Moreton Morrell but it is assumed that as a groom he was working in the village. In 1911 according to the Census he was working as a groom in Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

However he enlisted in the 10th Hussars in Scarborough at the outbreak of the war. He was sent to France on the 18th May 1915 and joined the 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars, 2nd Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. On the 24th May 1915, at the age of 23, less than a week after his arrival he is described as having died of wounds in the Battle of Bellewaarde.ⁱ

He is commemorated at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.



There is a chilling report of that day from the "Memoires of the 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars 1906 -1922."ⁱⁱ The following paragraphs are extracts of what happened to the 18th (QMO) Hussars on 24th May 1915. It was during this day that Hector died.

“When we left Vlamertinghe for Hooge at 7.30 p.m. our ranks were filled with nearly a new edition of the 18th Hussars, many of whom had practically marched straight through without a check from Tidworth to the trenches, only alas in many cases, to meet a sad and tragic fate before many hours had elapsed.”

(Hector would have been one of these new arrivals from England.)

*“**May 24th.**-The night was very quiet, almost preter- naturally so, but at 2.45 on the morning of the 24th the reason for this unwonted stillness was apparent. The Germans had once more availed themselves of the use of chlorine gas. The fumes, slowly sweeping from the German trenches and aided by a gentle north-east wind, were on this occasion very deadly, and swept with an asphyxiating force in thick, low banks of yellow-greenish fog across our trenches; the gas protectors we were provided with proved but small protection against the deadly stuff and the inhalation of very small quantities appeared to completely prevent all breathing.”*

“The thick, heavy fumes of this asphyxiating gas had so injuriously affected practically all the men in the front line trenches in our immediate neighbourhood that, although we managed to spread out a thin line of men, yet their condition was so deplorable that it was evident that fresh troops must support them as soon as their services could be obtained, and so an urgent appeal for reinforcements was at once despatched.”

“Throughout the rest of the day very heavy shell-fire continued, and it was especially virulent during the period of our infantry counter-attacks, which were undertaken during the afternoon to re-establish, unsuccessfully, the line. During this latter period the bulk of the cavalry force was lying in support along the Roulers Railway just south-west of the Halte on the Menin Road, and the intensity of the shell-fire along this line caused many casualties.”

“so complete, however, had been the direful effects of the poisonous gas and so many other casualties had occurred among those who, though suffering from its effects, had Stubbornly refused to retire,”

“It was I in the morning before we reached our rest quarters at Vlamertinghe, where 57 men out of 273 who had gone up on the previous night answered to the call.”

“The losses had been indeed heavy, but what weighed heaviest on our spirits was the fate that so many of these gallant men who had lost their lives had had, so to speak, no run for their money. To be pitch-forked practically direct from England, without a halt on the way, into a wet trench some 30 yards from an inhuman foe, to be assailed at half-past two in the morning by a method of warfare which was unknown to one, and which had all the devilish horrors of the unknown, was a fate which we would indeed have wished to spare them. Hardly had old acquaintances been re-cemented, or fresh ones just acquired, before the connection was broken, and old friends or young acquaintances were no more”



Great War in the Villages Project

ⁱ Warwickshire Roll of Honour 1914 - 2005

ⁱⁱ <http://www.lightdragoons.org.uk/downloads.html>

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