

The Hone Brothers

Edwin Hone, originated from the hamlet of Honington, two miles to the north of Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire. He came to work as a farm labourer in Wellesbourne and on the 2nd December 1875 married Jemima Hannah Atkins, daughter of Thomas Atkins, a local shoemaker. Hannah was 14 years Edwin's junior. The couple initially lived in Garden Row before moving to Chapel Street. They had nine children, all born in Wellesbourne, all but two of which were boys. Indications are that two of their sons, John and James fought in the 1914-18 war.

John Hone.

Private, No. 721. 1st. Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

John Hone was born in Wellesbourne, Warwickshire on the 27th December 1887 and baptised in the village church of St. Peter's on the 12th February 1888. He attended the village school, initially the infants department before moving to the junior section in July 1894ⁱ.



The Census of March 1901 reveals that he had left Wellesbourne and was living at Arbury Lane Farm, Chilvers Coton, the home of farmer, John Turner and family, situated close to the mining hamlet of Griff, between the towns of Bedworth and Nuneaton, North Warwickshire. John was only 14 years of age and worked as a cow boy. Elizabeth Mary Atkins, John's cousin, two years his senior, also from Wellesbourne, worked at the farm as a domestic servant.

Situated around Griff were three coal mines. John had joined the army by the time of the 1911 Census but the document indicates that prior to his military career he had been working as a Collier.

Without his full service record it is difficult to present details of his time spent in the army. We know that he joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and that his service number 721, indicates that he would have joined up at some time between October 1905 and March 1906ⁱⁱ. He was to serve for a period of 12 years, of which 7 years would be on active service and the remainder as a reservist.

The Battalion served in the North West Frontier region of India launching punitive strikes against tribesman raiding across the border. John however, was an occupant of the Khandalla Sanatorium, Poona (Pune) District when the 1911 census was taken.

The return of the Battalion to England in December 1912 would have coincided approximately with the end of John's 7 years of service with the colours. In Wellesbourne, his mother had passed away in the February of 1906 and in

January 1912 his father had also died. Of his brothers all but James had left the village and were living in the Aston district of Birmingham. Thomas and Edwin lived at 40, Lupin Streetⁱⁱⁱ, the home of former Wellesbourne residents John and Charlotte Reynolds. In the early 1880's the Reynolds, Hone and Atkins families were close neighbours in Garden Row, Wellesbourne.

It was to Aston that John headed where he found a job as an Engine Driver with the London and North Western Railway Company at their Rupert Street Goods Station^{iv}. He met Ellen Gould who lived in Rupert Street. She worked as a packer in a Sauce Factory, most probably that of HP Sauce which, until fairly recently, was located in Aston. On the 2nd August 1914, just two days before the declaration of war, John and Ellen were married in the Aston Parish Church of St, Matthew. John was living in Cromwell St. at the time but took up residence after their marriage at 9/29 Rupert Street with his new wife. Also named Ellen, what was to be their only child, was born in the early months of 1915.

On the 4th August, the King signed the proclamation to call out the Army Reserve and John returned to his Regiment. Troops of the 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, now attached to the 10th Brigade, 4th division landed in France on the 23rd August 1914 but were only able to provide infantry support at the Battle of Le Cateau three days later.

Accompanying each Battalion would be field equipment: wagons, water carts, a field ambulance, ammunition carts also known as limbers, and pack horses to pull them. The limber requirements always appeared in the operational orders for pre-battle planning as set out in the War Diaries. This equipment was still in transit as the Battle of Cateau unfolded and explains why John, whose function within the Battalion was that of a Limber Driver, didn't arrive in France until the 27th.



Limbers and their work horses.

For the next four years the Battalion remained on the Western Front and took part in most of the major actions: the Battles of Marne, Aisne and Messines in 1914 and were involved in the Christmas truce of that year^v. The 2nd Battle of Ypres followed in 1915, the Somme in 1916 and the various Battles in 1917 that comprised the third Battle of Ypres including the first Battle of Passchendaele.

The Battalion's War Diary records that Saturday the 26th May 1917 was 'a very fine day' in Houvin –Houvigneul in the Pas-de- Calais for the 10th. Brigade's Sports Day. The 1st, Warwicks won convincingly with Private Hone finishing ahead of the field in the Limber Driving Competition.

In 1918 they were again in action on The Somme before returning to Flanders. As the year wore on, small gains made by German Forces in the Spring Offensive were not enough to achieve a breakthrough. In July John again took part in the 10th Brigade's Sports Day.

The Allied Offensive that started on the 8th August would soon see the end of the war. In October the German Army sat behind a defensive line along the River Selle. On the 21st October the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment advanced towards Saulzoir situated on the Selle river and 'moved up into battle positions at 23.00 hrs' on the night of the 23rd.

The war diary for the 24th October records: *Zero hour is at 04.00 hours. Barrage is a little short to commence with and we have a few casualties from our own side. It continues: River Ecaillon crossed without difficulty and the village of Verchain (-Maugre) entered.....*

The Hone family stories indicate that John died whilst leading his horse across the bridge at Verchain-Maugre.

On the 26th October he was due to receive a medal won in the July Brigade competition but this was subsequently forwarded by the Colonel of the Regiment to his wife.

John Hone had arrived in France only days after the 1st Battalions first battle of the war and died during its last. He was in action for 4 years and two months and died 18 days before the armistice. He is buried in the St. Souplet British Cemetery situated about 4 miles from Le Cateau, the scene of that first battle.



He is commemorated on the Birmingham Roll of Honour in the Hall of Memory, Birmingham, on the Wellesbourne Church of England school Roll of Honour, the Roll of Honour for the Dead, St. Peter's Church Wellesbourne and on the Wellesbourne War Memorial.

The medals awarded to John Hone for his service in the Great War included the British and Victory medals. In addition to the 1914 Star he also received the clasp, only awarded to those who served within range of artillery fire between the 5th August and the 22nd November 1914 and signifying his right to be called one of the 'Old Contemptibles'.

James Hone

James Hone was born in Wellesbourne on the 29th March 1891 and baptised in St. Peter's Church on Whitsunday, the 25th May of the same year. He attended the local Church of England school and left in March 1904 to take up farm work^{vi}.

By the time of the Census of 1911 James appears to be the only one of the seven brothers remaining in Wellesbourne. He lived with his elderly father Edwin and sister Mary Jane and worked as a Farm Labourer. The other brothers, apart from John, either married or single, lived in the Aston district of Birmingham.

James was to become the 'black sheep' of the family for in February of 1911 as part of a gang he was charged with stealing a bicycle lamp from outside the Peacock Inn and fined 30 shillings^{vii}. In August of the following year, suspecting that James was the gang leader regularly stealing chickens, the local constable was attacked when he tried to make an arrest. For this James was sentenced to 6 weeks in prison with hard labour and fined two pounds three shillings. An unknown male relative offered to take James and give him a good home away from Wellesbourne and so keep him from the gang with which he had become associated^{viii}.

The military records of James Hone are no longer in existence. The only mention of his involvement in the war comes from two local newspapers published in July 1916^{ix} in which it was reported that he was in hospital suffering from rheumatism and trench fever.

Family records suggest that he served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and there is a Medal Card for a Private James Hone, no 23954, RWR who was awarded the British and Victory Medals but it cannot be confirmed if this is he.

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ⁱ Wellesbourne School records CR 371/1, CD371/2, CR371/3 and CR371/4(WRO)

ⁱⁱ ArmyserVICENumbers.blogspot.com. (NA WO363/4) By 1904 the numbering system within the Royal Warwickshire Regiment had reached 9999 and the Adjutant- General authorised that numbering could start again at No1. Given the number 721, would indicate that John joined at some time between October 1905 and March 1906

ⁱⁱⁱ Census 1911

^{iv} Obituary- Birmingham Daily Post 11/11/1918

^v Meet at dawn, unarmed by Andrew Hamilton and Alan Reed gives a graphic account of the Christmas truce.

^{vi} Wellesbourne School records CR 371/1, CD371/2, CR371/3 and CR371/4(WRO).

^{vii} Leamington Spa Courier 17/2/1911

^{viii} Leamington Spa Courier 30/8/1912

^{ix} Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser 22/7/1916 and Stratford upon Avon Herald 21/7/1916)

Other sources.

Particular thanks to Mark Hone, a great nephew of John Hone for providing the photo and details from family records.

The Story of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment by C.L. Kingsford.

The Long Long Trail (www.1914-1918.net)

The War Diaries of 1st. Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (NA. WO95/1484)