

William John Salmon.

Private, No.79100, 12th Battalion Manchester Regiment (Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry(formerly No.12972, South Staffordshire Regiment.)

For at least 200 years, generations of the Salmon family had lived in the rural communities of South Warwickshire close to, or within the village of Wellesbourne. **William John Salmon's** father, Frederick, was born here and worked as a Farm Labourer. After marrying Ann Ariss (known as Annie) from nearby Moreton Morrell, during the winter of early 1892, they set up home together in Cherry Orchard and Frederick changed his occupation to that of a traction engine driver, most probably on a farm.

William arrived on the scene on 16th January 1895, the second of nine children and the eldest of five boys. Joining the junior section of the local school in June 1901, directly from the infants, he completed his education on the 7th January 1908ⁱ. The school record indicates that he was to enter service and became employed as a House Boyⁱⁱ.

William's war time service is extremely vague. He enlisted in Lichfield during the early stages of the warⁱⁱⁱ, for the South Staffordshire Regiment and was allocated service no. 12972^{iv}. The battalion to which he was attached is not clear but a number of battalions were employed as training units and never in fact saw overseas service. By the time he eventually entered France the war was drawing to its close and William had transferred to the 12th Battalion, Manchester Regiment (Duke of Lancasters Own Yeomanry) attached to the 17th Division (52nd Brigade). He was allocated a new Service number, 79100.

The approximate time of William's arrival at the Front, towards the early days of October 1918 would have coincided with the Battalions involvement in the victory of the Battle of Selle (17th to 28th October). With the German Army in retreat and now attempting a last ditch stand at the Sambre-Oise canal the allied forces planned a major offensive, to begin on November 4th. The 12th Battalion left Ovilliers on the 2nd and moved into their start positions.

The Battalion War Diary for the 3rd reported 'a quiet day in the front line but a good deal of intermittent shelling'. As William slept, a shell hit his dugout and on the 4th November^v, aged 23, he died of his wounds - just 7 days before the armistice.

William John Salmon is buried in the Caudry British Cemetery, Near Cambrai (Grave No. I.V.H16) and is commemorated in Wellesbourne on the School Roll of Honour, The Roll of Honour for the Dead, St. Peter's Church and on the War Memorial. He received the British War and Victory Medals.



British Cemetery Caudry, Nr. Cambrai, France.



Great War in the Villages Project

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

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

ⁱⁱ Census 1911

ⁱⁱⁱ Stratford upon Avon Herald- 15/11/1918

^{iv} UK Soldiers. Died in the Great War 1914-1919 Ancestry.co.

^v On 4th November the War Poet, Wilfred Owen of the 5th Battalion (attached to the 2nd Battalion) , Manchester Regiment was shot and killed whilst attempting to cross the Sambre canal in the same action- The Battle of Sambre, the last British Battle of the war.

Sources:

War Diaries- Manchester Regiment (12th Bn) (NA- WO95/2012/2

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

The County of Warwickshire Roll of Honour 1914-2005 by Kenneth Fowler

Sambre - www.cwgc.org/victory1918