Herbert Alfred Croft





Rank: - Able Seaman

Number: - KW/225

Unit: - Royal Marines \ RNVR Nelson Bn. R.N. Div

Killed in Action (Dardanelles): - 25/05/1915 Age: 20 years

Memorial: - Helles Memorial, Turkey (including Gallipoli) Panels 8 to 15

Batley News, 19 June 1915 (photo)

Family Details

Herbert Alfred Croft was born Herbert Cliff on the 11th June, 1895 to single mother Kate Cliff. His place of birth is given as the Leeds Industrial School, St James's Hospital, Leeds. It is possible Kate was sent there from the workhouse to give birth.
On the 26th December, 1895 Kate married Tom Oswald Croft who gave Herbert his surname. The family lived in Potter Newton, Leeds but by 1905 had moved to 7 Well Street, Dewsbury. The family now had six other children, Clifford (1897), Oswald (1899), Alfred (1903), Dorothy Irene (1905), Clarice (1906) and Olive (1910). Three further children were born into the family after the 1911 Census, George (1911), Percy (1914) and Annie in 1915.
Before the war Herbert worked at Messrs. G and J Stubley, Bottom's Mill in the napping department.

Service Details

He first enlisted as Private 15314 in The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry but transferred to the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve in the Nelson Battalion on the 11th November 1914. He had visited home at Christmas and shortly afterwards left the country with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. His first and last letter from the Dardanelles said, "*We are doing very well at present here, just now, and we have nothing to grumble at about food, only the biscuits are a bit hard.*"
His parents now lived at 39 Albion Street, Batley. Their young son George had died in 1912 aged one and their new baby Annie had just been born when they received a message from the Admiralty to say Herbert had been killed in the Dardanelles on the 25th May, 1915.

The eight-month campaign in Gallipoli was fought by Commonwealth and French forces in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock of the Western Front in France and Belgium, and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea.

The Allies landed on the peninsula on 25-26 April 1915. The difficult terrain and stiff Turkish resistance soon led to the stalemate of trench warfare. From the

end of August, no further serious action was fought and the lines remained unchanged. The peninsula was successfully evacuated in December and early January 1916.

Herbert Alfred is remembered with Honour at the Helles Memorial and Batley War Memorial.

Researcher Susan White.

