Herbert Hirst





Rank: - Gunner

Number: - 200619

Regiment: - Royal Garrison Artillery (formerly Life Guards) 520th Siege Battery

Died of influenza: - 12th November 1918 aged 29

Cemetery: - Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, Pas-de-Calais, France
X.E.34. France.

"TIME PASSES MEMORIES REMAIN"

Batley News, 23 Nov 1918 (photo)

Family Details

Herbert was born in Soothill in the summer of 1889 the son of Thomas Francis and Ada (nee Goldthorp) Hirst who both came from the Holmfirth area.

His siblings were Tom (1880), Sam (1881), Walter (1883), Frank (1888), Sarah Ann (1892) there were according to the 1911 census another four children who had died in infancy.

In 1891 the family was living at Commonside and continued to do so until after 1911. Thomas Francis died in 1896.

Herbert was employed at L.O. Brooke and Co. Bradford Road, Dewsbury as a foreman cutter for blouses. His height 5feet 8 1/2 inches tall and lived at 59, Mill Lane, Hanging Heaton in 1915.

Service Details

Attested on 11th December 1915 and posted on 19th October 1916. He was transferred to R.G.A. as a Gunner on 19th October 1917.

His service record has survived and shows that he attested on 11 Dec 1915 the very last day that he could enlist under the Derby Scheme (http://www.1914-1918.net/derbyscheme.html) as was the case he was posted to Reserve the same day.

His job was a reserved occupation as was made clear in one of the testimonials, dated Feb 1916 addressed by his employer to a Major NEWSOME – see below). On 2nd Oct 1916 he wrote to the Commanding officer of the First Life Guards (Household Cavalry) expressing a desire to serve under his command. He received a reply the following day from the CO with instructions and was appointed, to the Household Cavalry (1st Life Guards) on 17th October 1916 with service number 4339. His service record shows that he "rejoined" from B Reserve.

The Household Cavalry were elite regular army regiments that had a traditional role of being the mounted guards of the Monarch. Herbert's service record indicates that between his mobilisation on 17 Oct 1916 and his embarkation from Southampton to Le Havre on 31st March 1918, he served "at home" This doesn't mean at home in Hanging Heaton but at home in the UK. It is probable

that during this period he was training and served in the 1st Life Guards, Household Cavalry in the UK, perhaps including Hyde Park, London which was the Regimental base. During this period, on 17th December 1917, he was transferred to the newly established 520th (Household) Siege Battery Royal Garrison Artillery. He is likely to have received a new service number, 200619, at this time. He embarked with the RGA unit from Southampton to Le Havre, France arriving there on 1st April 1918.

The 520th Siege Battery was unbrigaded (i.e. it wasn't part of a brigade in a division) and served with the British First Army under the command of General Sir Henry Horne the headquarters of which from 29th March 1918 were located as follows; -

29 March 1918: second echelon of First Army HQ (offices of Director of Medical Services, Deputy Director of Veterinary Services, etc) moved to Matringhem; main body of Army HQ remained at Ranchicourt
9 May 1918: second echelon of First Army HQ moved to Heuchin
17 October 1918: Duisans
26 October 1918: Auberchicourt
13 November 1918: advanced First Army HQ opens at Valenciennes; rest of HQ joins it there on 19 November

During the period Herbert served with the 520th the British 1st Army saw action at

The Battles of the Lys, April 1918
The Second Battles of Arras 1918, August 1918
The Battle of the Canal du Nord, September-October 1918
The Battle of Cambrai, October 1918
The pursuit to the Selle, October 1918
The final advance in Artois, October-November 1918

Listed as part of First Army artillery on 11th Nov 1918 First Army held a 14-mile front from a point 9 miles east of Ath, Belgium, to a point south-east of Mons near Villers St Ghislain. VIII Corps was on the right, Canadian Corps in the centre and XXII Corps on the left of the advance battery.

Herbert's service record shows the regard the men had for the Regiment and that the Regiment had for its men. On Herbert's transfer his service record has

the following words; - *Not transferrable from the Royal Artillery except to the Household Cavalry.*

Sadly, Herbert was not to return to the Household Cavalry, at 9.45 pm on 12th November 1918, the day after the Armistice, he died of Influenza, Spanish Flu, while he was still serving with the 520th (Household) Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery in the First Army. The record indicates that he had been hospitalised for three weeks with Impetigo on 30 July 1918 and he was again in hospital in late September 1918, never to return to his unit.

His effects & his medals were left to Miss Laura NEWSOME, Bryn Hafren (?) Earlsheaton. – see UK Army Registers of Soldiers' effects 1901-1929 – Ancestry.co.uk

He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Ebenezer Methodist Chapel, Hanging Heaton Memorial (St. Paul's) and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by
Alan Howe and Valerie Mitchell August 2016