St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

Research Topics

Headstone ? - Pte. JAMES ALBERT WOOD



St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

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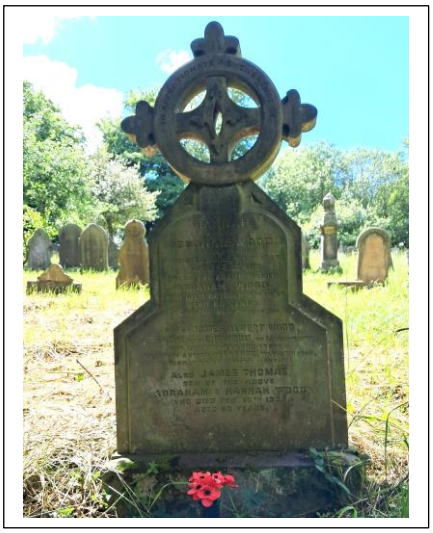

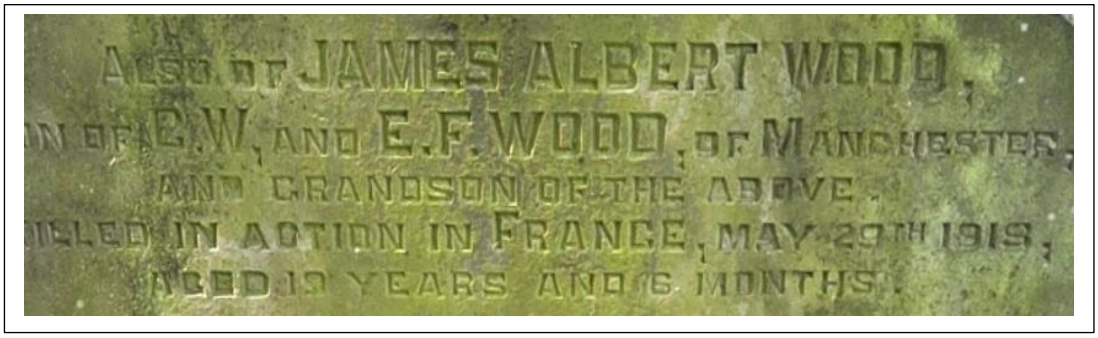



Pte. James Albert Wood

The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

Research Topics

The Family History.

Abraham Wood was born in Saddleworth in 1832. Early in his working life he had moved to Upperthong, near Holmfirth, and was employed as a weaver. On July 31st 1858 he married Hannah Gill who came from Barwick in Elmet. They moved to Birstall and set up home on Geldard Road – a few hundred yards up Leeds Road from the Coach and Six inn. Abrahm was employed as Power Loom Tuner. It was here that their two sons were born – James Thomas Wood on June 24th 1864 and then Charles William Wood on September 17th 1867.

Soon after the birth of Charles the family moved to a larger house on Colbeck Road, just off Blackburn Road, near the centre of Birstall. Abraham continued to be employed as a Power Loom Tuner and given the location of their house he probably worked in one of the textiles/shoddy mills around Birstall Smithies. Abraham and Hannah lived in Birstall for the rest of their lives and were buried together at St. Peter's Parish Church.

Charles William Wood attended school in Birstall and started work as a Cashier in a local shop. Some time in the early 1880s he moves up to Shap in Westmorland to take employment as a Book Keeper /Cashier at a large granite works. He met his future wife Euphemia Farqhar Gardiner, a local schoolteacher, and they married in her home town of Ratho, near Edinburgh, in 1897.

They set up home at 48 Hill Top in Shap and whilst they were there their first two children were born – James Albert Wood in December 1899 and George Gardiner Wood on 19 March 1900.



Father Charles, Mother Euphemia with James Albert and George Gardiner – probably around 1901



The Wood Boys

James Albert with Alexander Boyd and the George Gardiner

In 1908 Charles, Euphemia, James Albert and George Gardiner left Shap and moved to Manchester. Charles bought a Newsagents shop at 98 Princess Street on Mosside. On September 21st 1909 a third son was born - Alexander Boyd Wood. Charles and Euphemia ran the business and remained in that house for many years.

St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

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James Albert Wood – popularly known as 'Albert' continued his education in Mosside, Manchester and enjoyed a happy childhood in a respectable and middle-class suburb. His home was close to Alexandra Park and given its proximity we might assume that he was a Manchester United fan.

By the time he reached his late teens World War I had started and like most of his peer-group and generation he signed to the colours. He joined the 1st/5th Battalion of The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.



Cap badge of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

Sadly, no records have been found – so far – of his service with the Regiment. The Loyal North Lancashire was a Territorial Force infantry battalion raised in Bolton at the outbreak of World War I. They served with distinction on the Western Front as part of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division.

St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

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Pte. James Albert Wood's final resting place



Gommecourt is a village 19 kilometres south-west of Arras. Hebuterne village remained in Allied hands from March 1915 to the Armistice, although during the German advances of the summer of 1918, it was practically on the front line.

Gommecourt British Cemeteries No.1, No.2, No.3 and No.4 were made in 1917 when the battlefields were cleared.

After the Armistice, graves from the neighbouring battlefields were added.

Pte. James A. Wood lies just in front of the tree shown below indicated by the red arrow



St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

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Letter received from the Regiment …

My Dear Mr Wood,

It is my painful duty to have to inform you of the death of your son in action.

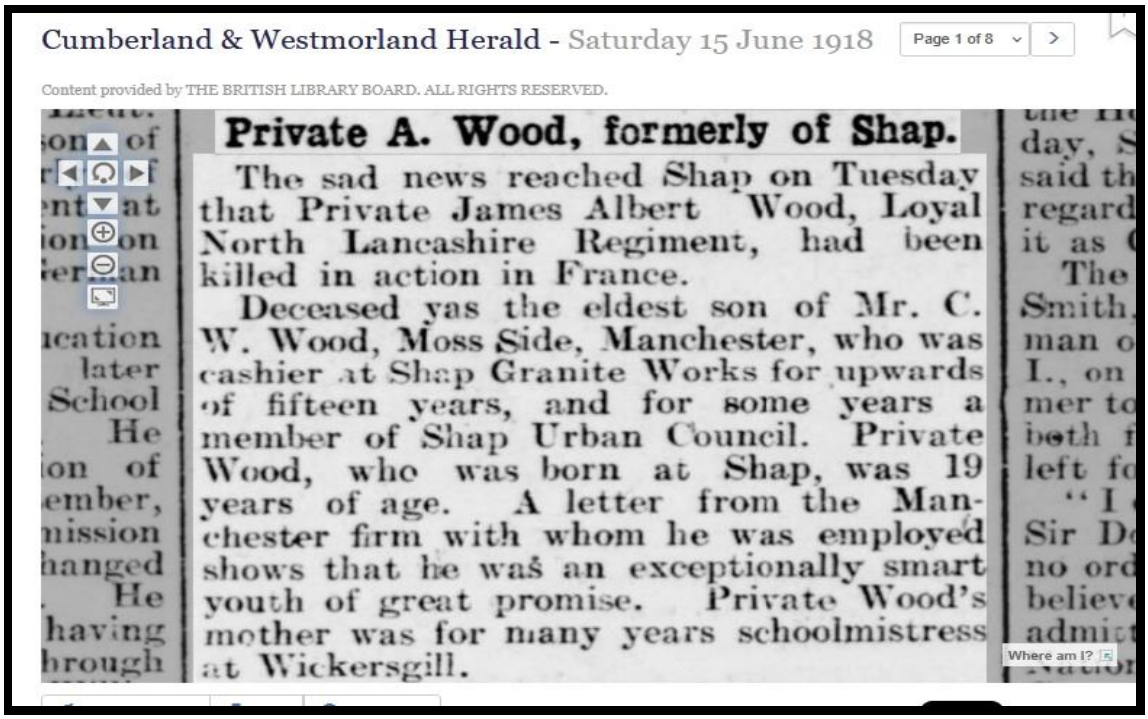
The whole company joins me in this expression of sympathy. You mourn a son, we a gallant comrade. I have visited your son's grave. It is situated in a lovely spot, he rests beside a few more of the Battalion who were killed during the same time in the line.

A cross with full particulars marks the grave the position of which will be conveyed to you by the Padre.

Again, I ask you to accept my sympathy as well as that of the whole of the Company.

Believe me to be - Yours in sympathy - Capt. G. R. Walkden

Article in local Shap, Cumberland Press



Cumberland & Westmorland Herald - Saturday 15 June 1918 Page 1 of 8

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Private A. Wood, formerly of Shap.

The sad news reached Shap on Tuesday that Private James Albert Wood, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, had been killed in action in France.

Deceased yas the eldest son of Mr. C. W. Wood, Moss Side, Manchester, who was cashier at Shap Granite Works for upwards of fifteen years, and for some years a member of Shap Urban Council. Private Wood, who was born at Shap, was 19 years of age. A letter from the Manchester firm with whom he was employed shows that he was an exceptionally smart youth of great promise. Private Wood's mother was for many years schoolmistress at Wickersgill.

In Memory Of

Private

JAMES ALBERT WOOD

Service Number: 29206

1st/5th Bn., The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment who died on 29 May 1918 Age 19

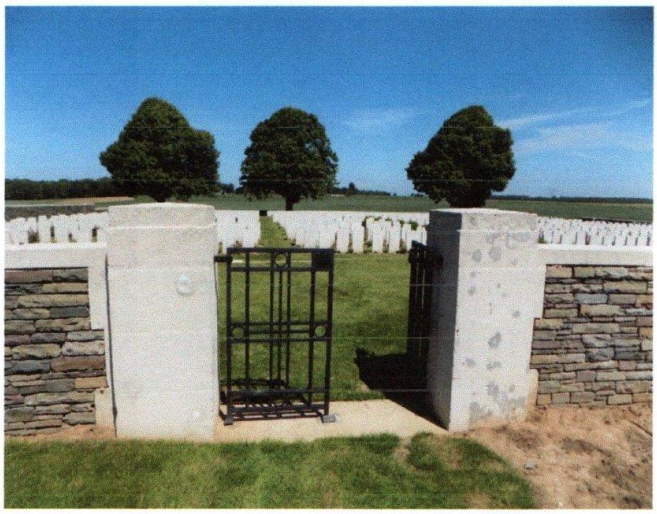
Son of Charles William and Euphemia F. Wood, of 98, Princess Rd., Moss Side, Manchester.

HE HATH FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Remembered with Honour

GOMMECOURT BRITISH CEMETERY NO.2, HEBUTERNE

V. G. 3.



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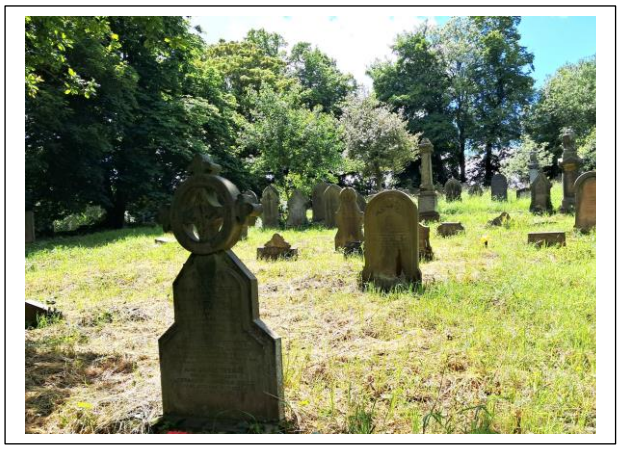
St. Peter's Parish Church, Birstall

Research Topics

Background to the research

A Birstall couple, Alison and Roger Speight, have for a number of months been clearing brambles and overgrowth around the graves in St. Peter's Parish Church extension. During this work they came across a family headstone that contained details of a soldier killed in WWI. A check on the War Graves Map showed this grave had not been previously included in local historical records.

A check on the CWGC register indicated that the soldier – Pte. James Albert Wood – came from Manchester – but was the grandson of a Birstall family. For whatever reason the soldiers name had not been included on the Birstall Memorial, nor in the local War Records nor had been picked up in Project BUGLE – the WWI Commemoration Project. As other soldiers, who had not lived locally, had been included in Memorial records, it was decided to research his life and add his story to the local WWI information.



The family grave is on the bottom path through the graveyard.

A search of Ancestry identified a family tree detailing the Birstall family and the link to the soldier. That particular tree was developed by Ann Wood. Her husband's grandfather – Alexander Boyd Wood - was the youngest brother of the soldier. Ann has enthusiastically provided the family photographs and information in this Soldier's Story. The final document has been lodged with St Peter's Church and local history concerns.

Researched and compiled by Ann Wood and Tony Dunlop.
June 2026