



Woodford Remembers



Pte. Herbert Spencer MM

25 December 1885 – 21 August 1918

Family

Herbert was the ninth of ten children born to Benjamin and Eliza (nee White), who had married at St Mary's Church Woodford on 2 March 1868, both having been born in Woodford. Benjamin was a "lift man" at the Islip mines. Herbert was born on 25th December 1885. Herbert's elder siblings were William, Harriett, Emma, Lizzie, George, Mary, Benjamin and Joseph and his younger sister was Minnie. Herbert was admitted to the village infant school on 1 June 1891, leaving on 17 May 1895 to move to the Junior school. The family moved frequently, in 1871 they lived in the High Street, 1881 Mill Terrace, in Eady's Row in 1891 and 10 years later had moved to Mill Terrace. Herbert worked as a labourer at the Islip Ironstone Quarries.

On his 21st birthday, he married Minnie Rose Perrett and the family moved to Thomas Street, Wellingborough. His eldest son Kenneth was born in 1908 and Howard was born in 1909. Herbert worked as a tailor's presser at the Ideal Clothiers.

Army Service

Herbert enlisted in Wellingborough, initially joined the Royal Fusiliers (Regimental Number 57396) on 15th June 1917 before transferring to 1st Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment (Regimental number 26350) in October 1917. He was initially posted to Italy before moving to France in April 1918. Herbert Spencer's M.M. award is listed in the London Gazette, 4 October 1918 (issue 30940, page 11837) for actions on 7th June 1918; no citation is included, only a listing, as is customary for the gazetting of M.M. awards. The entry in the Regimental diary of 7th June reveals that the "Military Medal was awarded for gallantry and devotion to duty in action on May 20/21st"; amongst those listed is Private H Spencer. The overall action had involved the cutting of wires / fencing and hedges and the subsequent retaking of trenches, a house and orchard near Merville and the River La Bourre. The Kettering Leader reveals Private Spencer acted as a runner/messenger and received award for taking messages under heavy shell fire.

In early August the Regiment relocated through a series of overnight manoeuvres. Herbert was one of an estimated 75 from the battalion killed in action on 21st August 1918 when his battalion was in action at Coigneax in the Keane trench.

Burial / grave

Queen's Cemetery Bucquoy Grave IV.E.02

Dependants

Wife, Minnie Rose (deceased 4th quarter 1918), orphaning sons Kenneth and Howard.

Commemoration

Woodford Village Memorial

Woodford St Mary's Church Memorial



(c) P T Bird 2018