

Lest We Forget - Arthur Cyril Hudson



The fifth child to Lydia and Alfred Hudson, Arthur was born in 1879 and lived with the family in Abbey Lawn Pershore. Later there followed another three children, including Aubrey.

In his early years, Arthur was sent off to boarding school and attended Hill Side, in Bradfield, Berkshire and then went on to Clifton College. However, an academic life was not for him and, aged 21, he enlisted as a young officer in the South Staffordshire regiment. This saw Arthur him being sent off to South Africa, where he was involved in the Boer War. He was there from 1900 to 1902 and was awarded the Queens Medal with two clasps, a campaign medal that indicated that Arthur was involved in two battles or campaigns.

At the end of this conflict, Arthur was gazetted to the Royal Fusiliers and served in India with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions.

Exactly how long he was serving abroad is unclear now but we do know that he was back on British soil in November 1908 as, at All Saints church in Evesham, Arthur married Irene Clifford, the daughter of the Reverend Harry Clifford. They then took up residence in Endon Hall. However the 1911 census, taken on 2nd April, captures them as guests staying in the Palace Hotel in Hastings and Arthur's occupation was shown as an Army Lieutenant.

On 16.03.14, Irene gave birth to their son, Henry Clifford Hudson (named after his maternal grandfather it would seem) but it was only five months later that war was declared and Arthur was attached to the 11th Battalion of the Fusiliers, being promoted to the rank of major in December.

On 31st August 1915, the Evesham Journal published the following:

MAJOR A C HUDSON WOUNDED

News has been received at Wick House that Col. Hudson's second son, Major Arthur C Hudson of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers was wounded when fighting in Northern France last week. The Major had only been in France a week or two and this was his first experience of warfare. The shot struck him in the arm just as he was leaving the trenches after

successful bombing of the enemy's lines. He was removed to the base hospital and now has just arrived at a London hospital.

Arthur convalesced at home for a few months before re-joining his regiment in France the following February. It was then back to fighting in the trenches.

In late September, another major offensive was to take place and this was known as the "Thiepval Operation". The battalion had been withdrawn from the front line for a couple of weeks to practice and then on 24th September, they were moved in to the trenches. Two days later, the various companies were moved up to the forward line and were in position, waiting for Zero Hour which was 12:35 pm. Major Hudson was in charge of A company and had his orders for the 3 objectives that were for them. Basically, these objectives revolved around moving forward taking different enemy trenches along the way, marked in different colours on the maps supplied to the officers.

The contemporary war diary for that day's action, written by a Captain who ended up leading the battalion after most other officers were killed or injured, records that Arthur and his men achieved their first objective after very heavy fighting. In the advance, they were assisted by a couple of the new tanks but one had already broken down and was of no use to them. To add to the dangers, the battlefield was covered in shell holes and every other hole contained an enemy sniper.



Troops advancing on the battlefield at Thiepval

Having been in battle for over two hours, the Company was pushing on to the second objective and it was then that Arthur was hit.

He was eventually recovered from the battlefield and was brought away from the front and taken to a hospital around Boulogne.

Extract from The Evesham Journal 7th October 1916

"DEATH OF MAJOR ARTHUR HUDSON"

"An official telegram to Wick House on Saturday morning announced that Major Arthur Hudson had been seriously wounded and was in hospital at Boulogne. A second telegram

in the evening of the same day at Endon Hall reported the words "Seriously wounded" and authorised Mrs Hudson, the Major's wife, to go to France. Too late for the last train that night, Mrs Hudson commenced her journal by the earliest on Sunday morning but the Major had passed away before she reached France. He died that day and the sad announcement was officially made to Colonel Hudson early on Monday morning."

We can only imagine the heartache for Irene. She had rushed from Wick to get to France but too late. At the age of just 26 years old, she was a widow with a 2-year-old son to bring up.

For Lt.-Colonel Hudson and his wife, they had now lost their two youngest sons in battle, Arthur and Aubrey, as well as their nephew, Alban. To add to the loss, Aubrey's body was never recovered and now Arthur was buried in a military grave in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery.

A heavy toll for a family to bear, although sadly not an uncommon one for the times. Indeed, the Vicar at St Mary's at the start of the conflict, Rev. Jervis, also lost two of his sons in the war and their graves were in France and Mozambique.

In these circumstances, we can perhaps understand how important the Memorial in the Church was to the families and friends of the Fallen.