

LEST WE FORGET

This series of articles setting out the stories behind those twelve men who died in this conflict and are listed on the War Memorial in our Church grounds, concludes with details of the three members of the Hudson family. It is through the accounts of their lives and loss that we might get an insight into how the WW1 impacted their families, friends and indeed our village. Of course, we also reflect on the experiences they went through when serving their Country.

Aubrey Hudson



Aubrey was born in Pershore in 1883, the youngest of eight children to parents Alfred and Lydia Hudson. They were brought up in Abbey Lawns in Pershore, it being years later in the early 1900's that the family took up residence in Wick House, following the death of their grandparents.

At the time of the 1901 census, Aubrey was 17 years old and training for life at sea as he was a cadet on HMS Worcester, the Thames Nautical Training School. This school was started by London ship owners, marine insurance underwriters and businessmen with the aim of training new naval officers.

Although the dates are not clear, it seems that Aubrey had his first taste of real military life sometime between 1901 and 1909 as there is mention that he served in the Cape Mounted Rifles in South Africa. His father may well have influenced Aubrey to become a soldier because he was by then a retired Lieutenant Colonel, having previously served with the Worcester Regiment. It might also have been his older brother, Arthur, another career soldier – more on him later.

When Aubrey came back to this country, he was transferred to the 5th Worcesters (Special Reserve). What we also know is that, although being in the Army reserves, Aubrey was considering a new career on the land as in 1911 he was registered as being a farm pupil residing in lodgings just outside of Salisbury.

As tension in Europe grew, in the early summer of 1914 the Special Reserve, numbering about 600 officers and men, were called up and encamped at Croome Park and that, on the day war was declared by Great Britain against Germany, Lord Coventry presented to the Battalion its new colours. Lieut. Hudson was told by his Commanding Officer to receive the colours from his Lordship.

With the outbreak of war, Aubrey was appointed to the 2nd Battalion of the Worcester's for active service and, after a short period in Aldershot, he and the rest of the troops were setting sail for France. On 14th August, ten days after war was declared, they disembarked in Boulogne and from then on, their orders saw the battalion moving around northern France as the British forces attempted to halt the German Army which marching south, with Paris as their target.

There were continual engagements with the enemy and the battalion were frequently the subject of heavy shelling as they attempted to chase after the retreating Germans.

On 20 September 1914, Lt. Hudson was in charge of his company of troops and entered dense woods in the area of Moussy, a small village just south of the city of Reims. (The fighting in this area was known as the battle of Aisne.) Their task was to engage and push back the German troops who were entrenched there. In hot pursuit of one section of the enemy, it was then that Aubrey's Company were taken by surprise and came under fire from another group of the Germans situated on their flank. Aubrey fell, along with six of his men. Other companies suffered similar fate and men were scattered throughout the woods, involved in heavy fighting throughout the day and into the night.

After the news of Aubrey's loss (aged 31) had been notified to him, Lt.-Col. Hudson subsequently received a letter from Aubrey's commanding officer, Colonel Westmacott, to give more detail about the circumstances surrounding Aubrey's death and a copy of the letter was later sent to the local papers for publication. It reads:

"My dear Hudson, – I am very sorry to have to tell you, but I think you know it already, that your son, Aubrey, was killed, and please accept my sincerest sympathy. He was getting on so well and fell at the head of his men in a wood fight, in which his Company got somewhat scattered. Many men were missing for some time. I heard afterwards from an N.C.O., who saw him fall, that his end was merciful and painless. His body was afterwards found by some men of another Regiment and buried in the wood. We know the spot, and it can be

approximately identified after the war. I am, of course, not allowed at present to give the whereabouts. I am so very sorry. We have not as yet received very much for the men in the shape of comforts by reason of the very inconvenient postal arrangements, but these are getting better every day, and we may expect them now at any time. We do not require any clothing as Government give the men as much as they can carry. Cigarettes, papers, tobacco, chocolate, matches, etc. are what are most needed.

*We are all very fit and well and getting on famously. Many thanks for all your good wishes.
Yours very sincerely,
C.B.L. WESTMACOT”*

Although Col. Westmacot thought the body of Aubrey would be recovered when the war ended, this never happened. One can only imagine the state of the countryside following so many years of conflict in that region.

However, Aubrey’s loss is recorded on La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial to the Missing. The Memorial commemorates 3,740 officers and men of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who fell at the battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and the Aisne between the end of August and early October 1914 and have no known graves.



Having no grave to visit, the War Memorial at Wick no doubt took on even more importance for the relatives of Aubrey as they remembered his life.

For the village and also the town of Pershore, Aubrey’s loss was the first death of a local man in the War – but sadly far from the last.