

Private Albert Nelmes

Died 7th December 1917 aged 25

Albert Nelmes was a Yorkshire man who moved to Shropshire with his work and married a local girl.

He was born in the spring of 1892 in Halifax. He originally stayed in the north, and in 1911 he was a boarder in Collyhurst Street, Manchester and was working as a commercial clerk for the railways.

It seems likely that he moved to Shropshire while still working for the railways as he married Elsie Williams in 1916 in Church Stretton. Elsie was the oldest of a family of 12 children. Her father died before 1911 leaving her mother to bring up the family, but her father had worked as a railway porter so that may be how Albert and Elsie met.

Sadly, Albert and Elsie hardly enjoyed any time together as a married couple. Albert enlisted in Church Stretton and joined the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. He was soon transferred to the 1st battalion of The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment as a Private 34305.

This battalion was attached to No 2 Auxillary Horse Transport Depot and on the War Memorial he is recorded as belonging to the Royal Army Service Corps and it seems that his military record reflects his pre-war work in the transport sector.

THE Army Service Corps (the "Royal" was added after the war) filled a variety of roles in recruitment, training and supply. The base depots were in the UK and at the ports of entry but the advanced depots were further up the lines of communication.

Each division of the army had a certain amount of transport under its own command. This was the "workhorse" of the division.

The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment consisted of 3 battalions at the outbreak of war but was soon swelled by the "Kitchener Battalions" drawn from the many patriotic northerners who flocked to enlist, including the well-known Accrington Pals. The Regiment was involved in heavy fighting first in Ypres and then on the Somme.

Albert's regiment stayed in France and Flanders. By 1917 a total of 27 British battalions were engaged on the Western Front. Mutinies in the French armies and the Russian revolution meant that they were bearing the brunt of the fighting.

Albert died on Friday 7th December 1917. This would suggest that he was a casualty of the Cambrai offensive. Cambrai was an important German supply point. The British attack on Cambrai was followed by the biggest German counter offensive against the British Expeditionary Force since 1914. Albert Nelmes was one of almost 90,000 British and German casualties.

He is buried in the Abbeville Communal Cemetery extension in northern France. Abbeville was the headquarters of the commonwealth lines of communication. It was also the home to 3 military hospitals. The cemetery extension was begun in September 1916 and contains 1754 burials. It continued to be used in the Second World War.



Albert was awarded the War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Quite poignantly, when the war had ended Albert's widow, Elsie, was sent his effects, as his widow and sole legatee. These amounted to the miserable sum of £1 4s with the extra bonus of a war gratuity of £8.