



CORPORAL ALBERT CROCKER

SERVIVE NO. 6/22226

6TH BATTALION, THE QUEEN'S
(ROYAL WEST SURREY REGIMENT)

DIED 30TH JUNE 1918 AGED 26

Albert Crocker's story was first told in the Spring 2014 edition of the Journal and this reprint includes some updated information.

Albert was the youngest of five sons born to John William and Jane Crocker of Cemetery Hill, King Street, Odiham¹. He was born on 7 October 1891². His father, John, had been a carpenter/machinist/engineer at the local brewery for many years³. Albert attended London Road Board School from 1 March 1898, having previously attended the Infants School.⁴ He was employed as an assistant at W.P Kensett, Drapery Stores and Outfitters in the High Street after leaving school and was still there at the time of the 1911 census⁵. According to his obituary, he joined the local Territorial unit of The Hampshire Regiment, serving for two or three years. By August 1914, Albert was living in Godalming, Surrey and in 1915 he married Mabel Wiltshire from Overton in Hampshire⁶. At that time, Albert and Mabel were living in Ham, Surrey.

By his high service number (G/22226) it is assumed that Albert enlisted at Odiham as a conscript in 1916 following the implementation of the second Military Service Act (which added married men to the list of conscripts). He joined the 6th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment). The 6th Battalion was part of the 37th Brigade, 12th Division. It was not until April 1917 that Albert and his Battalion went to France, having spent time up to then deployed at various military centres across the home country⁷. Before leaving England a group photograph, which includes Albert and his colleagues, was taken (see above). Albert was pictured far right, middle row.

¹ Source - Information given by family member

² Source - London Road Board School Admission Register

³ Source - Hants & Berks Gazette, 20 March 1915 - father's obituary

⁴ Source - London Road Board School Admission Register

⁵ Source - Details given by family member

⁶ Source - Hants & Berks Gazette, 7 September 1918, obituary

⁷ Source - Hants & Berks Gazette, 7 September 1918, obituary



Throughout most of 1917 the 12th (Eastern Division) was deployed in the Arras Offensive and it was here that Albert would have fought and helped in the expansion of the tunnel complex below the town of Arras. In October the Division moved on to take part in operations on the Cambrai front, successfully attacking and taking German trenches on 20 November, but then losing most of these in a German counter-attack on 30 November⁸.

The move to the Somme came with the start of the German Offensive on 21 March 1918, the Division going into the line in and around Albert, parts of which were in enemy hands, on 25 March. On 1 June, reportedly a "quiet day", the Battalion was at Beauquesne undertaking "continued training in Musketry, Lewis Gun etc." This training continued until 16 June, the Division having gone into "GHQ Reserve" on 6 June. On 19 June, the Battalion moved to Mardonville Wood and at 7.15 pm on to the front line south of Aveluy Wood to relieve the 17th Royal Scots. The Battalion remained "in the line" for the rest of the month, Order No. 28 giving instructions for actions to be taken on 29 June –

"The Battalion will relieve the 7th Bn. Royal Sussex Regt on the night 29/30th June 1918, but will only occupy the frontage of the 7th Bn. Royal Sussex Regt Right Front Company."

The assembly operation was duly completed without casualties by 5.45 pm, but Albert was one of 41 members of 6th Battalion who was killed in this action on 30 June 1918⁹.

All the Crocker brothers served during the Great War. John, the eldest, had emigrated to Canada, enlisted in Montreal at the start of the war and served with the Machine Gun Section, Ontario Rifles before transferring to the Royal Engineers. He went to France in May 1915. By the end of the war he had become Farrier-Sergeant, 1st Div. Sig. Co, RE, 1st Canadian Division and had been awarded the Meritorious Cross for gallantry in the field in France and Flanders¹⁰.

Albert Crocker was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal^{11 12} and is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France.

⁸ Source - Information provided by family member as detailed in her commissioned research report

⁹ Source - 6th Bn. "The Queens" Royal West Surrey Regt. War Diary and Information provided by family member as detailed in her commissioned research report

¹⁰ Source - Hants and Berks Gazette, 15 February 1919

¹¹ Source - Source - British Army WW1 Medal Rolls and Index Cards, 1914-1920. www.ancestry.co.uk