



PRIVATE ALBERT CARTER
SERVICE NO. 26808
8TH BATTALION, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT
DIED 5TH FEBRUARY 1917 AGED 19

Albert Carter, born on 7 March 1897¹, was the third child of John, a labourer, and Clara Carter of Up Street, North Warnborough. He had two older brothers, William Leonard and Alfred, two younger brothers, Frank and Ernest, and five younger sisters, Frances Annie, Ellen Rebecca, Dora Jane, Esther Caroline and Kathleen². Buryfields School Admissions Register records his start date as 19 March 1900³. On 1 March 1904 Albert moved on to the London Road Board School⁴. Having completed his education by 1911 Albert, then aged 13, was working as a newspaper boy.⁵

It is not known exactly when Albert enlisted at Hartley Wintney, but we do know that when he joined he was posted to the 8th (Service) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, which had been based in Aldershot prior to moving on to France to join the 20th Brigade, 7th Division at Carvin on 4 August 1915. The Regimental War Diaries do indicate that, during the following 18 months, there were frequent drafts of officers and other ranks to bring numbers back up to strength, to replace those who had either been killed in action or admitted to hospital because of injury or sickness⁶. We also know from these Diaries that in January 1917, just before Albert died, the Battalion was on the Western Front in trenches at Beaumont Hamel. After being relieved they rested at Bus and then marched on to Beauval for training before moving to billets at Pernois on 31 January 1917. During the month of January there had been only six casualties (other ranks) but, having been subjected to such terrible weather and the associated unhealthy living conditions not only in the trenches but in day to day life in general, the sickness figures were much higher⁷.

¹ London Road Board School Admissions Register

² 1911 Census, Odiham, ref: RG14PN6246 RG78PN296 RD109 SD1 ED12 SN53

³ National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870-1914 Transcription; ref: 130M87/AS findmypast.co.uk

⁴ London Road Board School Admissions & Withdrawals Register, 1885

⁵ ibid

⁶ The War Diaries of 8th Bn The Devonshire Regt, January and February 1917, Ancestry.co.uk

⁷ ibid



'The winter of 1916/1917 was one of the worst on record'⁸ and does account for these high sickness rates and the number of all ranks taken to hospitals. The hospitals decided on treatment, some being shipped home, with the more serious cases being treated at base and other hospitals in France and frequently dying there. Many of the sick were taken to the St John Base Hospital at Etaples. Records from this hospital have given us an idea of the effects experienced by many during that winter, when it was overwhelmed with the numbers of patients arriving at the same time as many of the hospital staff were also suffering from sickness. In addition, fuel for the stoves, which should heat the building, was in extremely short supply. It is likely that Albert was taken to this hospital, where he died of pneumonia on 5th February 1917, for he is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery,

Albert qualified for the Victory Medal and the British War Medal by virtue of his service and these would have been sent to his next-of-kin after the cessation of hostilities⁹.

⁸ 'Sisters of Sorrow' by Penny Starns, p160

⁹ British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920 – Ancestry.co.uk

