



William Herbert HARTLEY Acting Corporal, 25804, 11th Border Regiment (Lonsdale)

William Herbert Hartley's service in many respects mirrors that of a fellow 'old boy' Arthur Armer. Both were serving with the same regiment when they were killed, and in fact would have served together for a period between July and September 1917. Hartley would undoubtedly have been close by when Armer was killed, and would have felt the loss of a friend. Sadly, Hartley was to share a similar fate two months later, falling victim to the same killer: Artillery.

In November 1917 Hartley was with the 11th Border Regiment (Lonsdale) in the Rubrouck area, near Poperinghe. The whole of the month up to the 20th was occupied with Battalion training. Then on the 24th November, the Battalion moved to the Bellevue Area (Ypres Salient) and began to undertake a relief of the trenches. The next day the Lonsdales were in the front-line when they suffered a massive enemy artillery barrage. As a result 3 Officers were wounded, 12 Other Ranks (O.R.s) were killed, 35 O.R.s were wounded and 7 O.R.s posted missing. Hartley was one of the wounded men, suffering from severe wounds in the arm and leg. He was moved out of the line and admitted to the Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem, but was overcome by his wounds the next day. The sister who had attended to him at the hospital had the unenviable task of writing to Hartley's mother to inform her of her son's death. Two QES Old boys had been killed by artillery bombardments in as many months, both serving with a local regiment.

In fact the parallels between these two former pupils run even further. Hartley started school at Queen Elizabeth Grammar just as Armer was leaving, and like his elder, Hartley enlisted into the Cadet Corps. The natural progression from here was to become a member of the 4th Border (Territorial) Regiment, which Hartley duly did. Hartley also seems to have been somewhat 'green-fingered', spending the years immediately before the war farming, gardening and assisting his father in the green grocery business, located on Market Street, Kirkby-Lonsdale. When war arrived, Hartley fulfilled his obligation as a territorial soldier, and was sent with the 4th Border Regiment to India and Burma. Other Kirkby men, including former QES pupils like Arthur Armer, also went out to India with the 4th Borders. As a result this territorial formation would have, to a large degree, held the spirit of a one of the famous 'Pals' Battalions, where men who had lived, studied and worked together would all go off to war together, to fight and even die together. Undoubtedly Hartley and Armer would have felt a sense of comradeship through their common ties to the same community and school. The 4th Borders were engaged in policing the British Empire, but for many of the soldiers it was the exotic environment, with its strange climate and colourful wildlife that proved most captivating. Hartley encapsulated these feelings when he wrote home at Christmas 1915:

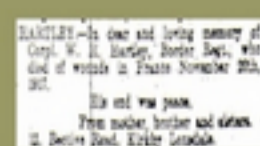
"We have not had a bad "Do" on Xmas Day. I was unlucky enough to be on guard so that I had my dinner cold. It seems very strange to have such a warm time at Xmas. It's as hot today as in the middle of Summer at home. To-day I killed a grass snake 4 ½ feet long, just as it was running up a tree. It was as green as the grass and a little thicker than an eel."

The India experience would certainly have broadened the outlook of young men like Hartley, who was 21 when he wrote this letter. Once he had completed his period of service in the Territorials, Hartley, like Armer, returned to England. The two men re-enlisted in the 1st Border Regiment together on 28th June 1916 at Kendal, their new service numbers running consecutively (Armer, 25803, Hartley, 25804). After re-enlistment the two friends separated, Armer being sent to France to join the Regiment, while Hartley remained in England acting as an instructor in various stations in the north. He must have held the rank of Acting Corporal at this time, and was clearly a very competent soldier to be asked to instruct. At the beginning of July 1917, however, Hartley re-entered 'theatre' once again joining the 11th Border Regiment, which were engaged in a heavy resistance of the line at Nieupoort. Hartley and Armer would now have been serving together once again, although Armer was now a commissioned officer. In September, however, Armer was killed, and Hartley was not to outlive his co-patriot for very long. Artillery killed them both. Hartley was buried close to the Casualty Clearing Station where he was taken, in Dozinghem Military Cemetery.

Though gone William Herbert Hartley was not forgotten. Queen Elizabeth Grammar School remembered him in their Roll of Honour, and the Roll of Honour that now hangs in St Mary's Church, Kirkby Lonsdale, also records his name. Perhaps most powerfully, however, was the tribute that his family paid him. His mother, brother and sisters remembered their hero, and after peace was declared in November 1918 they printed a notice of remembrance to William in the local paper. It simply read:

"His end was peace"

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Links

William Herbert Hartley's entry on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Website, http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=620914