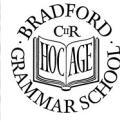


HERBERT LEE



3rd September 1916

1894-1916 Age 21

Corporal 1039, DCM, 'A' Battery, 246th Brigade Royal Field Artillery.

Herbert Lee was born near Barkerend Road to the east of Bradford's centre at the end of 1894. He was the fourth of six surviving children born to James Lee and Fanny nee Hinchliffe. The family were of modest means. James Lee's father John had been a brick-maker, a quarryman ('delver') and latterly a labourer. James himself had a variety of trades: as a clerk, in textiles, and as an 'electrical engineer', however in 1912 he was again a clerk. His mother Fanny was the daughter of a 'book-keeper' and she had been a 'machinist' prior to marriage. In 1911, the family of eight lived in a five-roomed house off Otley Road. They were members of Bradford's Wesleyan Methodist community.

Herbert went to Bradford Grammar in 1907, shortly before his thirteenth birthday. Where he had been before is not known. It is likely he went to B.G.S. as a result of Head Master Keeling's determination to provide opportunities for talented boys. For three years he was in the Classical forms, although Art was consistently his best subject. He left in July 1910, aged fifteen, and in the following year he was working as a clerk at the Y.M.C.A. A year later he was still a clerk, working at John Pickles & Co., woolcombers, in nearby Thornbury. In 1912, when he was seventeen and a half, he joined the Territorial Force, not as might be expected the Old Boys company of the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, but instead the 4th West Riding Battery, Royal Field Artillery, based at Valley Parade (it would later be renamed 246th Brigade). At this time his height was 5 feet 6 inches with a 33 inch chest. He was described as 'fit' and his physical development as 'good'.

At the start of August 1914, the West Riding Territorials had just set off for their summer camp. They were recalled and deployed for coastal defence, before they were sent to France in April 1915. Lee had already earned a single stripe and was a Bombardier (the artillery equivalent of a Lance-Corporal). In August, he was promoted to Corporal. Herbert was a signaller, and his job involved keeping open telephone communication to the Forward Observation Officers in the front line. In January 1916, The London Gazette carried the notice that he had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct



Medal. His citation explained that it was "*For conspicuous gallantry and good work in charge of Signallers. On two occasions the Infantry in the front trench have been able to use the battery telephone lines when their own had all been cut.*" He was also awarded a special gratuity of £20, although this would only be paid to his estate after his death. The actions for which he earned his award took place in the Ypres Salient, where the 49th Division spent nearly six arduous months in 1915.

During the Somme Offensive, 49th Division was in action near Thiepval from 1st July until late September 1916. Lee's artillery battery was at Mesnil when on 31st August he was wounded. He was evacuated to 11th General Hospital at Camiers on the coast, from where a telegram sent to York on 3rd September stated that he had suffered a broken femur from a gunshot wound to his left leg and was dangerously ill. He died on the same day and was buried in Etaples Military Cemetery.

For his mother there was worse to follow. Her husband James died early in 1917, and then in September her only other son George died of wounds.



Acknowledgements:

The obvious school for Lee to have attended prior to B.G.S. would have been Hanson, but he is not on their war memorial (<http://www.iwm.org.uk> www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/names/listing/28494?items_per_page=10). At B.G.S. he was in Third Classical Lower, Third Classical Upper and Fourth Classical (Year Books 1908-9, 1909-10, 1910-11).

There is a useful biography at <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/blogs/entry/1592-remembered-today-corporal-herbert-lee-dcm-246th-brigade-royal-field-artillery-who-died-on-3rd-september-1916/>, which is based on his Service Record (available through Ancestry.com) and his medal citation. The London Gazette 14th January 1916 (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29438/supplement/604/data.pdf>) announced Lee's receipt of the D.C.M.; the citation is from <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29503/supplement/2691/data.pdf>.

Lee was buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, France, grave X.B.6. The photo is the author's. The inscription paid for by his mother reads:

"He left so sweet a memory that still he seems to live from home."



This biography was researched and written by Nick Hooper, September 2016 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com), with the acknowledgement noted above.