

Albert Charles Tomlin

Born on 29th May 1888 the fifth child and second son of Thomas and Ellen Tomlin, baptised Albert Charles at All Saints, Hockley, he is listed on the Memorial as A Tomlin, but seems to have been known as Charles. At the time of his baptism the family lived in Bridge Street West, Birmingham and his father was a bellows maker.

By 1891 the family had moved to Aston, living with his parents and three older siblings in Wheeler Street, and the family had moved again by 1901 to 68 Berners Street. Later that year Charles' father died, and at just 13 years of age he would already have had to be thinking about work. In September 1903 the young Charles was employed as a lorry boy at Hockley Station but he was only there for three months before resigning. We don't know what happened to Charles over the next number of years, but his regimental number in the Worcestershire Regiment would indicate he had joined the army in early March 1909, and in 1911 Charles was based at Albany Barracks, Parkhurst, Carisbrooke on the Isle of Wight – listed as a private in the 1st Battalion. In later records Charles is in the 2nd and 3rd Battalions and it isn't possible to say when he changed Battalions. In the years before the outbreak of war the 1st Battalion spent time in India and then Egypt, and the 2nd Battalion in India, so it is very likely that Charles did service abroad. During his time abroad his mother had died.

The 2nd Battalion returned to England in 1913, the 1st in September 1914, and both battalions mobilised to France very early in the campaign. Charles was wounded in late 1914 (reported on 6 December) and this would place him almost certainly with the 1st Battalion as they were in action during late November/early December. On recovering either from wounds or frostbite (between 15 November and 13 December over 430 other ranks were debilitated from frost bite compared to around 75 wounded) he joined the 3rd Battalion, almost certainly a case of 'back-filling' for casualties.

By 1916 Charles was an acting Corporal in the 3rd Battalion. The brigade of which the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment was a part had transferred to the 25th Division in late 1915 and since then had been engaged in numerous actions in the Somme region of France.

“From 5th to 16th July 1916 the 25th Division took the leading part in the successful operations which culminated in the capture of Ovillers La Boiselle. The village was defended with the utmost courage and determination by a garrison which consisted of some of the enemy's finest troops”. (quote from the Worcestershire Regiment War Diaries).

It was during this operation (when 52 soldiers from the 3rd Battalion alone were killed and 290 injured) that, on 14th July 1916, Charles was killed in action, and he is remembered on Thiepval Memorial, France. He had served for around 7 years with the Regiment, seen something of India and Egypt, but endured almost two years of heavy fighting since his arrival in France.

At the time of his death Charles' next of kin was given as his sister Nellie Bowles – listed with him and their parents on the 1901 census. Her marriage in 1908 took place in Aston and she

was still living in Aston in 1911. Despite Charles not having lived in Aston for some time, it is assumed that Nellie asked for his name to be included on the Aston Parish Church Memorial.

Written by Janice Burns, researcher, with editing by researcher Ann Hartley.