



Woodford Remembers

Pte. Walter Henry Murphy

2nd Quarter 1880 – 2 April 1919



Walter Murphy was the final casualty of the WW1 conflict with connections to Woodford

Family

Walter was the 8th child of James (b Belfast) and Ann Murphy (b Daventry) of Flore. His father, James was a whipmaker. Walter's elder siblings included Annie, John, William, Frank, Arthur, Lewis, and younger brother Fred. In 1891 Walter was a scholar, but in 1901 he was working in Brockhall as a domestic gardener. The 1911 census records him living in a cottage near Woodford House as an under gardener. At some point between 1911 and 1915 he changed his employment in order to serve as a butler in Woodford House, the trade he declared when enlisting in 1915.

Army Service

At the age of 34 years, Walter enlisted in Kettering on 15 January 1915 with the Royal Army Medical Corps, Regimental number 54247 and was posted on 1 March 1915. Whilst in Malta he was made Lance Corporal on 7 May 1917. In July 1917 he transferred with rank and pay to Salonika, however, he later returned to the rank of Private due to the rank being "surplus to establishment requirements".

It is also known that on January 23 January 1919 his pay was increased to 4d per day.

He volunteered to remain in service at the Hospital frequently assisting surgeons as an orderly in the operating theatre. On 23rd March he complained of a septic finger (middle finger right hand). A minor operation was performed under local anaesthetic and due to his highly increased temperature was admitted to hospital later that day. The infection spread rapidly and was ultimately diagnosed as Sepsaemia. Over the following week despite considerable endeavours, he died at 00:15hrs on 2 April 1919 (although some Army records erroneously record the date as 2 May 1919).

In a letter to Mr and Mrs Plevins of Woodford House, friends and employers for fifteen years, Rev Leighton wrote of the funeral service he had taken assisted by local clergy. An escort of 25 Serbian soldiers under the command of a Lieutenant were in attendance together with about 150 townsfolk. He was buried in the small-town cemetery beside many French soldiers. Many locals laid wreaths and wanted to contribute to the funeral costs. His remains were later relocated to Chela Kula Cemetery in Nis.

In Cranford St Andrew Parish Church there are a pair of vases with an inscription "In loving memory of Private William Henry Murphy RAMC who died in the English Hospital Zavetchar, Belgrade Serbia April 2nd 1919"

Burial / grave

Chela Kula Military Cemetery, Nis, Serbia. Grave C 03

Dependants

None

Commemoration

Woodford War Memorial

St Mary's Church Memorial



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