

Dear John,

I do not know how I managed to be quite so inefficient but I made an almighty error in my initial report concerning the significance of your Grandfather's medal entitlement. This I have put right in the enclosed, revised report. The report is without my usual speculation: just the bare facts as I have deduced them from the available documentation.

I need to do a bit more work on your Grandfather's friend Herbert Harverson. I will sort that out later.

The session with Eddie and friends was hard work but very worthwhile. I will go again in a couple of weeks. Thanks for putting me on to that.

I hope that you are making a steady recovery from your recent hospital procedure,

Best wishes,

DAVID

PS There are three copies of the ^{new} report. Please re-use the maps I sent with my first version. Now that I have more or less got the report into a sensible shape, please feel free to pass ^{on} the two spare copies to your family. J

235056 Private Alan TILBURY: 8th (Service) Battalion, Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry); formerly 634028 Private, 1st/20th (County of London) Battalion, (Blackheath and Woolwich), The London Regiment; formerly 8096 Private of that battalion.

Private TILBURY was killed in action on Thursday, 4th October 1917 during the Battle of Broodseinde (fourth of the six Battles of Ypres fought from Tuesday, 31st July to Friday, 12th October 1917) at age 36. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Tyne Cot Cemetery (9km North-East of Ypres), Belgium on panels 41 to 42 and 163A.

Medal entitlement for WW1: Victory Medal and British War Medal.

Theatre of War first served in: 1(a); i.e., France and Flanders.

Date of entry therein (i.e., date of disembarkation): not known. His first battalion, 1st/20th London Regiment, disembarked at Le Havre on Wednesday, 10th March 1915. However, as according to his Medal Roll Private TILBURY was not entitled to the 1914-15 Star, he would not have been with the battalion on that day and would not have served abroad with the unit before 1916, at the very earliest.

Initially with a 4-figure regimental number, Private TILBURY later received a 6-figure number. The British Army was re-numbered with 6-figure numbers on Thursday, 1st March 1917. Therefore he would still have been with 1st/20th London Regiment on that date.

Date of transfer to 8th Somerset Light Infantry: not known but would have been between Friday, 2nd March 1917 and Thursday, 4th October 1917 (the day of his death).

The soldier's service papers did not survive the Sunday, 8th September bombing of the warehouse in Arnside Street, Walworth, London where they were stored.

According to 'Soldiers Died In The Great War, 1914-1918' he was born at Chilbolton, Hants., enlisted at Purley, Surrey and was a resident of Croydon, Surrey.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission he was the son of the late William Tilbury, of Chilbolton, Hants., and the husband of Grace A. Tilbury of 50, Willow Vale, Shepherd's Bush, London.

The date of his enlistment is not known.

At the time of Private TILBURY's death, his battalion was part of the 63rd Infantry Brigade, 37th Division. The War Diaries of 8th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, of 63rd Infantry Brigade Headquarters and of 37th Division General Staff each contain a detailed narrative of the events of Thursday, 4th October 1917, the day on which the Battle of Broodseinde was fought.

37th Division's account includes a number of maps, two of which show the

disposition of the battalion on that day. The maps indicate that Private TILBURY's death would have occurred at a point approximately 1,640 yards West-South-West of the Belgian settlement of GHELUVELT, and 1,250 yards South-South-West of the YPRES-MENIN road.

He was one of 41 Officers and Other Ranks of 8th Somerset Light Infantry who were killed during the battle. 33 of them have no known grave and are commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

The battalion, which on 4th October 1917 numbered 274 Officers and Other Ranks, suffered a total of 43% casualties (119 Officers and Other Ranks) of dead, wounded or missing as a result of the day's engagement.

It is not possible to determine the precise circumstances of Private TILBURY's death from the War Diary accounts of the fighting of 4th October 1917.

'Military Operations, France And Flanders 1917, Volume II', comments on the Southern flank of the action (where 8th Somerset Light Infantry was situated) as follows:

'The right brigade of this (37th) division... renewed the attempt to capture the defended locality on Tower Hamlets spur; but the 8/Somerset L.I. and 8/Lincolnshire, which entered it, were swept by machine-gun fire from front and flanks, as in previous attempts, and had to fall back to their starting-line. Heavy losses were incurred, and intense German shelling, together with the muddy conditions of the Bassevillebeek valley, prevented the arrival of sufficient reinforcements in time to resume the attack.'

Overall (in military terms) the Battle of Broodseinde was a considerable success, the Germans losing a great deal of ground. The battle was the prelude to the fighting for the village of Passchendaele.

SOURCES

The National Archives

WO 372: Medal Index Cards, WW1: British Army and Royal Flying Corps:
Fiche 21032; TIKA S. 18029 - TILBURY J. 88884.

WO 329/896: Medal Roll: Victory Medal and British War Medal; Somerset
Light Infantry, Other Ranks. Page 2234.

WO 363/T798: Soldiers' Service Records, WW1: TILLBROOK, Arthur G. -
TILBURY, Francis J. No trace for Private Alan TILBURY.

WO 363 MIS-SORTS/134: Soldiers' Service Records, WW1: THORNBURN, Donald -
TITE, Henry. No trace for Private Alan TILBURY.

WO 95/2529: War Diary: 8th Somerset Light Infantry; 1916 August - 1919
April.

WO 95/2528: War Diary: 63rd Infantry Brigade Headquarters; 1916 July -
1919 March.

WO 95/2514: War Diary: 37th Division General Staff; 1917 August - 1918
May.

WO 95/2738: War Diary: 1/20 Bn., London Regiment; 1915 March - 1919 May.

Publications

Soldiers Died In The Great War, 1914-1918, CD-Rom, Naval & Military Press
Ltd., 1998-1999. Originally published in 80 volumes by His Majesty's
Stationary Office, 1920.

British Regiments 1914-1918, by Brigadier E.A.James, Naval & Military Press
Ltd., 5th Edition, April 1998. Entry for 1st/20th London Regiment on
page 114; entry for 8th Somerset Light Infantry on page 57.

Order Of Battle Of Divisions: Part 3B: New Army Divisions (30-41) & 63rd
(R.N.) Division, compiled by Major A.F.Becke, His Majesty's Stationary
Office, 1945. Pages 71-79 for information on the 37th Division.

Military Operations, France And Flanders 1917, Volume II: Messines And
Third Ypres (Passchendaele), compiled and edited by Brigadier-General
Sir James E.Edmonds, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1948. Sketch 26:
Battle of Broodseinde (map). No page number. See also page 315.

More Sources Of World War 1 Army Ancestry, by Norman Holding, 3rd Edition,
Federation of Family History Societies (Publications) Ltd., 1998. Chapter
3: Regimental Numbers.

Internet

www.cwgc.org Commonwealth War Graves Commission website.