

Herts at War

(www.hertsatwar.co.uk)

Name: Frank Topham
Rank: Private
Service Number: 31340
Date of Death: 18th June 1917
Age: 29
Regiment/Service: 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment



Award:

Grave/Memorial Reference: II. F. 2.

Cemetery/Memorial: MENDINGHEM MILITARY CEMETERY, BELGIUM

UK Cemetery/Memorial: Hitchin War Memorial, St Mary's Church, Hitchin
St Mary's Church Memorial Book, Hitchin (*not confirmed*)

Pre War:

He was born in Langford and enlisted in Hitchin where he lived. Before joining the army he was a grocer's assistant at Messrs G. Halsey & Son of Hitchin and he was Assistant Secretary at Arlesey Wesleyan Church Sunday School.

His wife was infants' mistress at St. Mary's School in Hitchin. He was the eldest son of Frederick and Clara Topham of 1, Nightingale Terrace, Hitchin Road, Arlesey, Beds. Another address shown for him was 108 Bearton Road, Hitchin.

Wartime Service:

He was allocated Regimental Number 31340 and served in the 7th Battalion of the Regiment. He was a member of a Lewis-gun Section and died after being wounded and badly gassed in Belgium. A few weeks earlier a bullet had passed through his gas helmet. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission states that he was killed on the 18th June 1917 which is less probable as the Battalion was at Monchy-au-Bois on that date in bivouacs.

At 9.30 pm on the 17th July 1917 550 men were sent as working parties burying cables, carrying, etc. There were four killed and five wounded in 'A' Company. This was somewhere between Reninghelst and Zillebeke Lake. The wounded men could be expected to go to the Mendinghem Casualty Clearing Station near Proven. The name was coined by the English soldiery as a corruption of the Flemish language.

He was buried in Plot 2, Row F, Grave 2 in the Mendinghem Military Cemetery, West Vlaanderen in Belgium. A private inscription on the headstone reads "*In his steps*". The same stone also records 40930 Drummer Field, Royal Dublin Fusiliers who died on the 19th July 1917. They lie in a shared grave.

Additional Information:

Frank had a brother, Walter, who served and who was also killed.

Acknowledgments:

Adrian Dunne

David C Baines

www.hitchinatwar.org.uk

