

Sapper Albert Butterworth

Born in Milnrow, Lancashire in 1885, the 1901 census records Albert Butterworth living in Milnrow with his grandfather Joseph Butterworth, a woollen weaver, and two of his aunts. Albert was working as a Post Office clerk. On 3rd October 1906 he married Hannah White at the Registry Office in Knutsford and they had their first child, Lionel Albert, the following year. In 1914 they had a daughter, Mary Eileen. During this time, Albert was working as a sorting clerk and telegraphist for the Post Office.



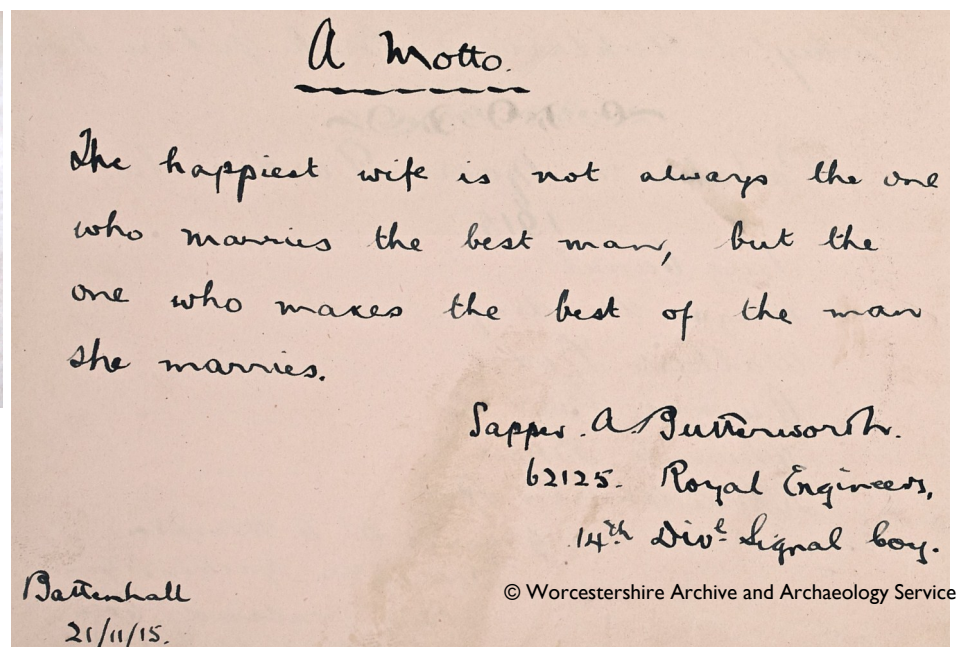
On 11th January 1915 Albert enlisted into the Royal Engineers at Altrincham. He was 29, 5 foot 5 ½ inches tall and had a mole on his left armpit. He had grey eyes and dark brown hair. Albert's civilian job as a telegraphist, at which he was recorded as being 'very good', gave him a highly useful skill for the army and he was transferred to the Fenny Stratford unit of the 14th Division Signal Corps.

Four months after enlisting, on 18th May, Albert was sent to France and joined the British Expeditionary Force. However, while he was on duty in a dug out on 1st August 1915 a high explosive shell burst in the dug out and he was partially buried for five minutes, being conscious throughout. Upon being freed, he had a slight flesh wound to the right side of his face, possibly caused by a gun shot, and had suffered a knock on the head.

He was sent to No.24 General Hospital for his injuries, and a few days later he was recorded as also suffering from neurasthenia (nervous fatigue). On 12th August he was transferred to England onboard the hospital ship Brighton and admitted to the 1st Birmingham War Hospital the next day. Medical case notes record that on admittance Albert was complaining of some loss of power in his right leg and suffered from a cramp-like pain in his calf when walking. His condition improved slightly over the next month, and on 28th September he was sent to Battenhall Mount VAD hospital, where he was treated with massages to his right leg. However when he returned to 1st Birmingham War Hospital on 23rd November his condition was no better; he had an unnatural curvature of the spine and when walking his right leg was thrown forward in a jerky manner.



The autograph book from Battenhall Mount VAD Hospital in the collection of the George Marshall Medical Museum, with Albert's entry on 21st November, 2015.



© Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

Massage treatment was continued and by March 1916 there was a distinct improvement in his condition. His treatment was extended to include exercise and on 21st March he was transferred to 2nd Western General Hospital Manchester, closer to his hometown of Altrincham. Albert was officially discharged on 8th August 1916 at Chatham, Kent where his commanding officer stated his satisfactory conduct.

After his service finished Albert and his family lived at 101 Hermitage Road, in Hale, Cheshire and in 1917 Albert and Hannah had a third child, James. However, Albert died on 12th December 1918, aged just 33. His widow Hannah was pregnant with their fourth child, Albert, who was born the following spring. In his will Albert left £71.