

This is the Fiftieth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

THE DEATH OF PRIVATE HORACE RUMP

I suppose that I really ought to mark the fact that this is my fiftieth article, but my main emotion is astonishment that I am still finding something to write about. Anyway, I thought that I would give you a rest from the Evans-Lombe family. Instead, I thought that it would be an appropriate time to tell you something about one of the names from the First World War on our War Memorial.

Introduction

Private Horace Albert Rump was the first man from the village to die in WWI. He was a member of the 8th Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment. This battalion formed part of the **53rd Brigade**, which was one of the three infantry brigades in the **18th (Eastern) Division** (the other two were the 54th and 55th Brigades). Now, a very full description of the activities of the 18th Division was published by a Captain Nichols in 1922 and I have used this to find out about the circumstances of his death.

We are primarily concerned with the actions of the **53rd Brigade** which was composed of:

8th Bn. Norfolk Regiment
8th Bn. Suffolk Regiment
10th Bn. Essex Regiment
6th Bn. Royal Berkshire Regiment

A little background

The first thing to note is that the 53rd Brigade had already been in action on the notorious First Day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916. This was the day when the British Army suffered the greatest number of casualties (killed, wounded and missing) on a single day in its history. They suffered about 57,000 casualties, of whom over 19,000 were killed.

The 18th Division also took part in several of the other battles in the Somme campaign. In particular it was involved in the bitter fighting for the possession of the strategically vital Trones Wood. This had already changed hands several times, and on 12th July the 18th Division was ordered to recapture it at all costs; this task fell to the 54th and 55th Brigades, but the wood had been reduced to an almost impenetrable tangle of fallen trees and undergrowth and it was only taken with great difficulty. Five days after this, the 53rd Brigade were given a very similar task, namely to recapture the southern part of Delville Wood.

Delville Wood

This was to prove to be the grave of the 53rd Brigade as it had been constituted when it landed in France. There would have been about 4,000 men in the brigade and the casualties amounted to 12 officers killed and 39 wounded, and 181 other ranks killed and 773 wounded. And it was here that Horace Rump lost his life.

The northern part of the battered village of Longueval and all of Delville Wood except the south-west corner had previously been lost (see map). The 53rd Brigade was ordered to recapture the wood.

The general scheme for the recapture of the wood was as follows: The 8th Bn. Norfolk Regiment was to attack on the morning of 19 July to clear the wood south of Princes Street – a drive that ran east to west through the wood – and as soon as this was done the other three battalions of the 53rd Brigade were to attack northwards – the 10th Essex on the right and the 6th Royal Berks in the centre. The 8th Suffolks were to clear Longueval village on the left.

It had been arranged that the C.O. of the Norfolks would inform Brigade Headquarters of the hour at which the artillery barrage should commence. However, first of all this time had had to be changed and then a message to Brigade H.Q. was delayed; the upshot was that the attack, which was finally launched at 7.15 a.m. on 19 July, had to proceed without artillery support.

There was only one entrance into the wood on the south side, and the way from Longueval to this entrance was under direct machine gun fire, which became so intense that the Norfolks, who were in front, could not at first get into the wood. This held up the 10th Essex who were behind them and their C.O. decided to push on through the Norfolks with his Battalion H.Q. and he entered the wood. The other battalions followed the Norfolks and the Essex into the wood, but the men had to run in singly, under withering machine gun fire and shelling. Bit by bit the Norfolks managed to clear the ground south of Princes Street and to work as far eastwards as Buchanan Street. By 1.30 p.m. the Norfolks had cleared the whole of the wood south of Princes Street, and the Essex, Berkshire and Suffolks started to attack northwards. However, little progress was made with this advance owing to exceedingly heavy machine-gun fire, and at 5 p.m. all four battalions were ordered to halt where they were and to dig in.

Now the CWGC (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) record that Horace Rump died, aged 34, on 19 July 1916, so it must have been some time during this fearful day that he was killed.

For two nights they held onto what they had gained. It was two days and two nights of the grimmest kind of warfare, and it was a shattered 53rd Brigade that was relieved on the night of 21st July by other battalions. However, the whole of Delville Wood was not yet in British hands; in fact, almost a month passed before it was completely cleared of Germans.

August was spent in a quiet part of the line in front of Armentières and there was intensive training. Then early in September the Division returned to the Somme, to carry out a very big undertaking indeed, the assault and capture of Thiépval and the Schwaben Redoubt, but that is another story.

The Thiépval Memorial

There is a large and impressive memorial at Thiépval which bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector and have no known grave. I visited the memorial in April this year and found the name not only of Horace Rump, but also of Herbert Walter Beevis who was in the 9th Norfolks and died on 18 October 1916. Chronologically, his name is the second to appear on our War Memorial. Now, the 9th Norfolks were in a totally different division (the 6th) so they do not appear in Nichols' book. But we do know that this Division also fought on the Somme, although so far as I can tell it was not in action there until the Battle of Flers-Courcelette (15 – 22 Sept 1916).

A Footnote

The CWGC shows Horace A. Rump as being the son of Mrs Sarah Rump of Ratby, Leicestershire, but this seems unlikely. The only suitable candidate that I can find was born in Roughton, Norfolk, the son of Samuel A. Rump and Sarah Rump. In the 1891 census he is shown as being aged 8 and living with his parents in Tasburgh, but in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses he is shown as being a footman in the household of the Barclay Family. However, when he enlisted on 23 November 1915 he stated that he was a miller's packer. His parents were still living in Tasburgh in 1901, but in the 1911 census Sarah Rump is shown as being widowed and head of the household, living in Greengate, Swanton Morley, together with quite a large family. Among them there is a son Albert Samuel Rump aged 19 who was born in Tasburgh. Some of you may recognise him as Bertie Rump, who was sexton at All Saints' Church. He died in 1977 and was buried in the churchyard just to the south of the church. He had apparently asked to be buried close to the pulpit so that he could listen to the sermons! I also found a note to say that in 1906 he helped Joseph Canham to demolish the body of the old windmill.

Map of Delville Wood

