



Arthur Foster



Arthur Foster was born in Kettering in 1891. His father Charles Foster was from Heyford.

Family

In the 1901 Census Arthur Foster was living with his father Charles and two brothers Willie and Charles in Albion Road, Kettering. They were boarders in the house of Maria Wills.

Charles Foster Snr. was employed as a Railway Engine Driver.

By 1911 the family had relocated to Station Lane, Corby. Maria Wills had married Charles Foster Snr.

Charles Snr. was employed as a "Locomotive Engine Fitter", Arthur as an "ironstone labourer" and his brother William was a "shunter at the ironstone mines". Charles



Jnr. was not recorded at the property; however a blast furnaceman Alfred Mayes was recorded as a lodger with the Foster family.

In 1915 Arthur Foster married Alice Jane Christie at Kettering Registry Office. Alice Foster was employed at Wilson & Watson Shoemakers.

Military Service

Arthur Foster was a Corporal (15126) in the 11th (Service) Battalion, Essex Regiment.

The 11th (Service) Battalion was formed in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Army and was part of the 24th Division.

He disembarked in Boulogne on 30th August 1915.

By October 1915 the 11th (Service) Battalion was in the 18th Brigade of the 6th Division.

On 9th October 1916 the Battalion was in trenches in the Gueudecourt Sector.

"According to the battalion diary: - "*Battalion remained in trenches. Consistent shelling day & night. Assembly trenches & communication trenches were dug.*"

On 10th October 1916:- "*Battalion were relieved by W.Yorks & proceeded to Trones Wood. Total casualties in the 2¹/₂ days 47.*"

Corporal Arthur Foster was killed in action on 10th October 1916. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

His death was reported in the Northampton Mercury (20th October 1916) and in the Grantham Journal (21st October 1916) –

Death Of A Corporal

Intelligence has just been received of the death, on Oct. 9th, of Corpl. R. Foster, Essex Regiment, of Corby, Northants. The Commanding Officer, in a letter to his wife, relates how they had been troubled by a sniper concealed in a shell hole, and her husband, intent on the safety of the men under his charge, resolved at night to crawl out and bomb him. He was just getting over the parapet when a bullet hit him in the head, killing him instantly.



On 1 July 1916, supported by a French attack to the south, thirteen divisions of Commonwealth forces launched an offensive on a line from north of Gommecourt to Maricourt. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met unexpectedly fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic and with only minimal advances on the southern flank, the initial attack was a failure. In the following weeks, huge resources of manpower and equipment were deployed in an attempt to exploit the modest successes of the first day. However, the German Army resisted tenaciously and repeated attacks and counter attacks meant a major battle for every village, copse and farmhouse gained.

At the end of September, Thiepval was finally captured. The village had been an original objective of 1 July. Attacks north and east continued throughout October and into November in increasingly difficult weather conditions. The Battle of the Somme finally ended on 18 November with the onset of winter.

In the spring of 1917, the German forces fell back to their newly prepared defences, the Hindenburg Line, and there were no further significant engagements in the Somme sector until the Germans mounted their major offensive in March 1918.

The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, 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 before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916.

The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial.

The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on 1 August 1932 (originally scheduled for 16 May but due to the death of French President Doumer the ceremony was postponed until August).

The dead of other Commonwealth countries, who died on the Somme and have no known graves, are commemorated on national memorials elsewhere.



Reference

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Photograph courtesy of Mr T Poulter
Grantham Journal

Lest We Forget

Arthur Foster
of the Essex Regiment.

d.10th October 1916

October 2016 Copy

