

Edward William Winkley [1917-1942]

Written by Dee and Jeff Hoole 18/4/2006



Rank: - Gunner

Number: - 1114128

Regiment: - Royal Artillery, 149 (The Lancashire Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regt.

Died: - Killed in Action at Tobruk, 8th May 1942 aged 24 years

Cemetery: - Tobruk War Cemetery, Libya, 1. A. 12.

Batley News, 28 Oct 1916 (photo)

Uncle Ted, Edward William Winkley, died in Tobruk, North Africa, 8 May 1942, aged 24. He was a handsome chap of 6ft 1 ins, with blue eyes and dark hair. He was my mum's youngest brother [Florence Mary Butterworth nee Winkley] although he was four years older than her, they were very close.

Ted died thirteen years before I was born and was not discussed as I remember, even my elder sisters, Ann and Ruth, only have a vague idea of his life or death. But what I do remember was that each year on the anniversary of his death my mother was always very sad.

The pre-war photograph was printed in the Batley News on his death clearly showing him as a boxer. That was a surprise to me when I first encountered it in Batley Library during the 1990s – by which time my parents had died and I was unable to question them about it.

The family had come to Batley from Liverpool during the late 1920s, when Ted would have been a teenager. It was a period of unemployment and trade depression, when his father Arthur Wallace Winkley, a cooper, had found a job at the vinegar works in Grange Road. The company folded within a few months of the family's move across the Pennines, yet Ted never forgot his Lancashire roots as is shown in his choice of Army Regiment when he joined up.

The records for identity cards [c.1939] show that Ted and his parents were down in Kent at the time. They had relatives there, but it seems that they may have travelled to go hop or fruit picking as seasonal workers - perhaps to supplement household income or lack of it. I do hope that it was a happy time together. His army record gives his residence as Canterbury when he enlisted at Purley, London, in January 1941. So it could be that he stayed there with relatives, but the Blitz in Kent killed his uncle and cousin, their names are listed in Canterbury Cathedral. Perhaps that was what prompted Ted to join up.



Ted with Mary Burnley [niece] c.1939

Ted was sent to North Africa in January 1942 to fight the Germans under Rommel, his time there was short lived, he was killed by a land mine at or near Tobruk, on 8 May 1942 just days before the regiment moved to a camp near Cairo. I felt very privileged to visit his grave on 18 April 2006, at Tobruk, during a Tour for relatives organised by the Royal British Legion [while Ghaddafi was still in power]. It was an eye-opener of a trip but very moving when we visited the British Cemeteries and the battlefields of the desert, where there were still unexploded munitions in places. My husband, Jeff and I are the only family members who have ever been able to visit his grave and it was a moving experience. Grave No. 1.A.12. Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Tobruk, the inscription on his grave, which was chosen by his parents, reads 'A loved voice is still, A place vacant in our home that never can be filled'. The photos of our visit were reproduced by one of our party and is a moving reminder of our pilgrimage to honour our war dead.

I have a hand-coloured photo of Ted in uniform [see above] which I believe my grandmother had. However, my favourite photo of him is one my mother had, see below, it was taken in a studio, perhaps in Egypt, as it shows a backdrop of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, the photographer or assistant is shown at the edge of the backdrop peeping round. But it shows Ted with a friend, another soldier, with Fez's on

their heads – smiling broadly for the camera, he will remain forever young in my mind but the resemblance to my eldest sister's son, Mark, at the same age is uncanny. His promising career as a boxer was cut short [see small red and white boxing glove we placed on his grave - see last page] and although we never met, he remains in our hearts.

The message I wrote in the Visitors Book kept at the British Commonwealth War Cemetery in Tobruk.

FROM THOSE WHO LOVED YOU AND COULD NOT COME – ESPECIALLY FLORENCE WHO SENT ME – REST IN PEACE TED AND KNOW THAT YOU WERE LOVED AND MISSED ... WE HONOUR YOUR MEMORY.



Dee and Jeff 18/4/2006