

Tribute to Percival Allen Grove

Percival Allan Grove was born in Sutton Coldfield on the 29th September 1888 and was the eldest son of Allen and Elizabeth Whilock Grove of 'Copsewood', Tudor Hill, Sutton Coldfield.

Prior to the war the family lived at The Cedars, Doe Bank, Lichfield Road, Four Oaks, his father was a partner in Messrs.' Crockford, Grove and Sons of Bull Street Birmingham. His grandfather, on his mother's side was Mr. R W Simkin the penultimate Warden of Sutton Coldfield in 1879-81.

Percival was affectingly known as Percy and was educated at Bishop Vesey Grammar School between 1899 and 1905. He was awarded the Victor Ludorum at school in 1905,

On leaving school Percy qualified as a chartered accountant with Harrison, West & Ledsam at Waterloo Street, Birmingham.

Percy was married to the sister of a Captain Russell Turner (Old Veseyan), who was killed in the 3rd Battle of Ypres on the 4th October 1917. His brother, Oswald Harry Grove also served in the army and survived.



Percival Allen Grove

Many of the hockey team photographs in the club house of that era were donated to the Club by the family after Oswald passed away in around the mid 1980's, which I had mounted and framed.

Percy joined both the Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club and the Cricket club in 1906 and it was reported that he was a useful bowler who took 7 wickets for 14 runs at Rectory Park against Yardley and was a very skillful full back on the hockey pitch.

Percy enlisted with the 1st City Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment – 14th Battalion, '12' Section, '111' Platoon, 'A' Company in August 1914 - Private 14/1209. (Which also included Old Veseyans, Philip Evans and Russell Turner and Jack Caswell were in the same Platoon but in '10' Section). Percy was commissioned Second Lieutenant on the 9th September 1915 into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1/5th Battalion.

The 1/5th and 1/7th Warwicks (143rd Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division) manned the line southeast of Hébuterne (between Gommecourt and Serre). There was to be no attack on this front on the 1st July, but the Battalions were expected to draw attention to themselves prior to that day as a diversion to the main attacks. The Battalions were expected to carry out frequent raids that cost lives, but did succeed in drawing the only German reserves (2nd Guards Division) in the area, prior to the 1st July, to the front opposite Hébuterne.

The preliminary British bombardment all along the front, which started on the 24th June 1916, drew heavy retaliatory German shelling. On the 1st July the 1/5th Warwicks released smoke along their front and watched the London Scottish advance through it for their diversionary attack on Gommecourt, on the Somme.

2nd Lt. P A Grove was badly wounded in several places by a 'bomb' on the 1st July. He entered the 2nd British Red Cross Hospital in Rouen at 11am on the 5th July and died of wounds at 4pm.

The Battalion was relieved on the 4th July and after suffering 13 days of shelling and raiding, they had only 75 casualties, but one was Percy who was aged 27

Percy was buried at St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, France. Plot A; Row 3; Grave 8, and a letter from the Matron at the hospital in Rouen to his parents reported that: "Percival's funeral took place at 2pm on the 6th July. The hymns 277 and 438 were sung, together with the Nunc Dimittis.

A large cross from his father and all his loved ones and two wreaths, from Matron and nursing staff and Sergeant Major and orderlies were placed upon the coffin. He had a full and impressive military funeral and all was done beautifully and reverently, as at home".

Percy was awarded the Victory and British Medals RWR/OFF/150 page 224 and is commemorated on the Holy Trinity Church Memorial Plaque and his name is recorded on the Sutton Coldfield Memorial, in King Edwards Square

Peter R.G. Bell