

Private



# Sydney Spencer

203672, 2nd Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment) who died on 3rd October 1918, aged 21

## Remembered with Honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials Ramicourt  
British Cemetery (A. 47)

Sydney Spencer was born in Sheffield during the Summer of 1897. He was the only son of Brackenfield born William Spencer and his Worksop born wife, Alice (nee Willey).

William and Alice had married at Ecclesall in 1896 when both were aged 24. The couple made their home at 153, Lancing Road, just off the main (A61) road to Chesterfield, from where William made a living as a gardener, and where Sydney was born.

In 1911, domestic gardener William was living at 56, Spencer Road in Sheffield with Sydney and daughter Fanny, who had been born in 1899, whilst Alice is recorded with staff at Spring Bank House in Leeds, a rescue house run by the Salvation Army.

In late October 1915, the government introduced the Derby Scheme for raising the numbers enlisting. Men aged 18 to 40 were informed that under the scheme they could continue to enlist voluntarily or attest with an obligation to come if called up later on. The War Office notified the public that voluntary enlistment would soon cease and that the last day of registration would be 15<sup>th</sup> December 1915. Sydney became 18 years of age in 1915 and it was probably as a result of this scheme that he enlisted on 18th November 1915 and was posted to Group 1 of the Reserve for mobilisation the following March.

Sydney's Attestation and Medical forms reveal that he was employed as a Clerk and living at White Lodge, at the Eckington end of Breck Lane at Barrow Hill, at the time of his enlistment. This was a tenant farm belonging to the Duke of Devonshire's estate and it could be that Sydney's father, William, had either taken on the tenancy or was working on the farm and living in one of the farm cottages. These records also show that Sydney was 5' 7 ½" tall, weighed 129lbs and that his religion was Church of England.

Sydney was mobilised on 15th March 1917 when he was 19 years of age and officially now of an age to serve abroad. He was posted to the 1/5th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys) Regiment with the service number 81498.

*Researched and written by Ann Lucas as part of the Barrow Hill: A Community Remembers project*



*White Lodge Farm*

Three months later, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1917, Sydney was posted to the 1/8th Battalion and arrived in France on 29th June. Further training, particularly in trench warfare would have taken place before Sydney was finally posted to the 2nd Battalion on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1917 with the new service number 203672, joining his unit in the field on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1917.

The 2nd Bn, Sherwood Foresters had been in France with the 6th Division, Third Army, since September 1914 and were in the 71st Brigade when Sydney joined them as one of many new re-inforcements. In 1917, they were in action at the Battle of Hill 70 and during the Cambrai Operations.

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1918, Sydney was granted four days leave to Boulogne and, shortly after his return, the battalion were again in action on the Somme at the Battle of St Quentin when the Germans launched Operation Michael, The Battles Of Bailleull and the Battles of Kemmel Ridge.

Sydney was injured on 20<sup>th</sup> July with lacerations to the fingers of his left hand but re-joined his battalion on 3<sup>rd</sup> August in time to take part in the Advance in Flanders and the Battles of the Hindenburg Line at Epehy and the St Quentin Canal.

The village of Ramicourt was immediately east of the German fortification known as the Beaufort-Fonsomme Line. It was captured by the 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/8th Sherwood Foresters on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1918, and the cemetery was made immediately after, close to a small German cemetery (since removed), by the 18th Field Ambulance and the 18th Corps Burial Officer.

Sydney Spencer was killed in action on 3rd October 1918 and is buried at the Ramicourt British Cemetery.

The 2nd Battalion war diary records *that 'For the first three days of October the battalion was in billets near Tertry.....'* which suggests that Sydney may have been attached to either

the 1/5th, 1/6th or 1/8th Sherwood Foresters at the time, or that he was a member of a working party for the front line provided by the 2nd Battalion when he was killed. Sydney died, aged 21, just a few weeks before the Armistice and two months before his battalion was selected to march into Germany as part of the occupation force. He was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



#### **Sources include**

1. *England Census 1861-1911*
2. *FreeBMD Birth/Marriage/Death Indexes 1837-1915*
3. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
4. *The Long Long Trail*
5. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
6. *British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920*
7. *British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920*
8. *2nd Bn, Sherwood Foresters War Diary*

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