

# Lance Corporal Herbert Edward Evans

Died 13<sup>th</sup> November 1916, aged 23

Herbert Edward Evans was born 9<sup>th</sup> April 1893, in Ifton Heath, near Oswestry where his father was stationed as a police officer. His parents were John Evans, and Letitia Cox who married in 1875 in Ruyton XI Towns. John was born in Church Pulverbatch in 1852 and Letitia in Ruyton XI Towns in 1853. Their children were Emma May Evans dob 1877 in Cleobury Mortimer; John William Evans dob 1881 in Ruyton XI Towns; Letitia Evans dob 1884 in Little Wenlock; Lilian Evans dob 1889 in Trefonen; Arthur Valentine Evans dob 1890 in Trefonen; and Herbert Edward in 1893. As his father was a policeman, his job moved him and his family around the county. In 1896, when he was three years old, Herbert's mother Letitia died and was buried in her home town of Ruyton XI Towns.

Herbert's maternal aunt Emma Fox, dob 1847, had been single and worked as a servant for various prosperous families all her life. She joined her brother-in-law John Evans' household shortly after his wife's death, as the housekeeper. On John Evans' retirement as a police sergeant, the family moved to Church Stretton and took up residence in number 18 Church Street. They are there, as the only family occupying the house, in both the 1901 and 1911 census. In 1911 Herbert is listed as being 17 and a stationers' assistant. There were two stationers in Church Stretton in 1913, George Dunn, 42 Sandford Avenue and Thomas Lewis, 2 Burway Road and they both employed assistants; so either could have been Herbert's employer.

Herbert's father John died 29 May 1911. The following year, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1912, Herbert enlisted in the Royal Marine Light Infantry in Birmingham and stated that his previous occupation was that of a Billiard Marker.

A Billiard Marker kept scores made by players and put them up on a scoring board. In public billiard halls his duties would also include such tasks as allocating tables, cues, chalk and sometimes refreshment too. He coached beginners, played with patrons and collected fees for use of the tables.



**ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION**  
**HANDYMEN TO FIGHT ON LAND & SEA**

**1<sup>ST</sup> BRIGADE**  
BATTALIONS:  
"BENBOW"  
"COLLINGWOOD"  
"HAWKE"  
"DRAKE"

**2<sup>ND</sup> BRIGADE**  
BATTALIONS:  
"HOWE"  
"HOOD"  
"ANSON"  
"NELSON"

**RECRUITS WANTED**

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VACANCIES FOR RECRUITS BETWEEN THE AGES OF **18** AND **38**  
CHEST MEASUREMENT, 34      HEIGHT, 5 FT. 3 1/2 IN.  
PAYMENT from 1/3 per day. **FAMILY ALLOWANCES**  
Besides serving in the above Battalions and for the Transport and Engineer Sections attached.

**MEN WANTED**  
who are suitable for Training as Wireless Operators, Signalmen and other Service with the Fleet.

He was allocated the service number PO/16460 and attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Marine Bn D Company as a private. He is described on his service record as being 5 feet 6 1/2 inches tall, with a fresh complexion, brown hair and bronze eyes. He also has a large scar on his right knee and a mole on his left shoulder. He is able to swim. Immediately, he was sent to the Royal Marine Depot, Deal, Kent and stayed there until the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1913. There he underwent education and training. He got his school certificates, both 2<sup>nd</sup> class and 3<sup>rd</sup> class. He passed courses in Infantry, Field Training, Musketry and Sea Service.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1913 he was transferred to Portsmouth division company D until 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1914 when he embarked on the *HMS Birmingham*. On 9 August, 1914, *HMS Birmingham* rammed and sank the U-boat *U15* off Fair Island. This was the first U-boat loss to enemy action in the Great War.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1915 he was signed off sick, leaves this ship and was onshore with the Portsmouth Division until the 16<sup>th</sup> February when he embarked on the *HMT Olympic*, a transatlantic luxury ocean liner belonging to the White Star company, which had been converted to a troopship capable of carrying 6,000 troops. He was shipped to the port of Mudros, on the island of Lemnos, Greece, arriving just after the last of the troops who had retreated from Gallipoli also arrived on the island. After two months, in May 1916, the Royal marines were shipped to Marseille and then transported to the western front. On 7<sup>th</sup> August 1916 he was promoted to Lance Corporal.

The battle of Ancre, 13-19 November 1916, was the final phase of the first battle of the Somme. It involved an attack on the German front line as it crossed the Ancre River. The plan was to capture the village of Beaucourt and push the Germans back two miles. The attack immediately north of the river was to be carried out by Herbert's division. This was the first time they had taken part in an attack on the Western Front, and so extra care was taken to make sure everybody knew what was expected of them. The first objective involved an advance of 800 yards and would require the capture of at least three lines of trenches. This was achieved but at the cost of very heavy casualties. 85 men from his battalion, including Herbert, were killed that day; 13th November 1916. His body was buried on the battle field by Private H. Bagnall of the 6<sup>th</sup> Border Regiment in an area known on military maps of the time as Q.17.b.7.9.

His name is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial (MR21) Rnrfnbr 2874. His medals, the 1914-15 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal, were issued to his legal heir, his aunt, Miss Emma Cox, 18 Church Street, Church Stretton.



Sources:

Royal Navy Service Records. The National Archives Catalogue Reference: ADM 159/190/16460

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