

### **Found! A Lost Soldier of the Great War**

My father, Sydney Wood, was born in a small village called Malborough in South Devon, the youngest of 13 children. His eldest brother, Herbert Henry, born in 1894 was killed in action in Flanders in April 1916 aged just 22.

This is the only surviving photo of Herbert taken in around 1915 with his two sisters and his brother John (who survived the war but sadly died of the influenza epidemic in 1918).



Herbert is on the right of the photo. I also have in my possession a small circular facial photo of Herbert (cut from the same original) which, I understand, my grandmother wore in a locket all of her life.

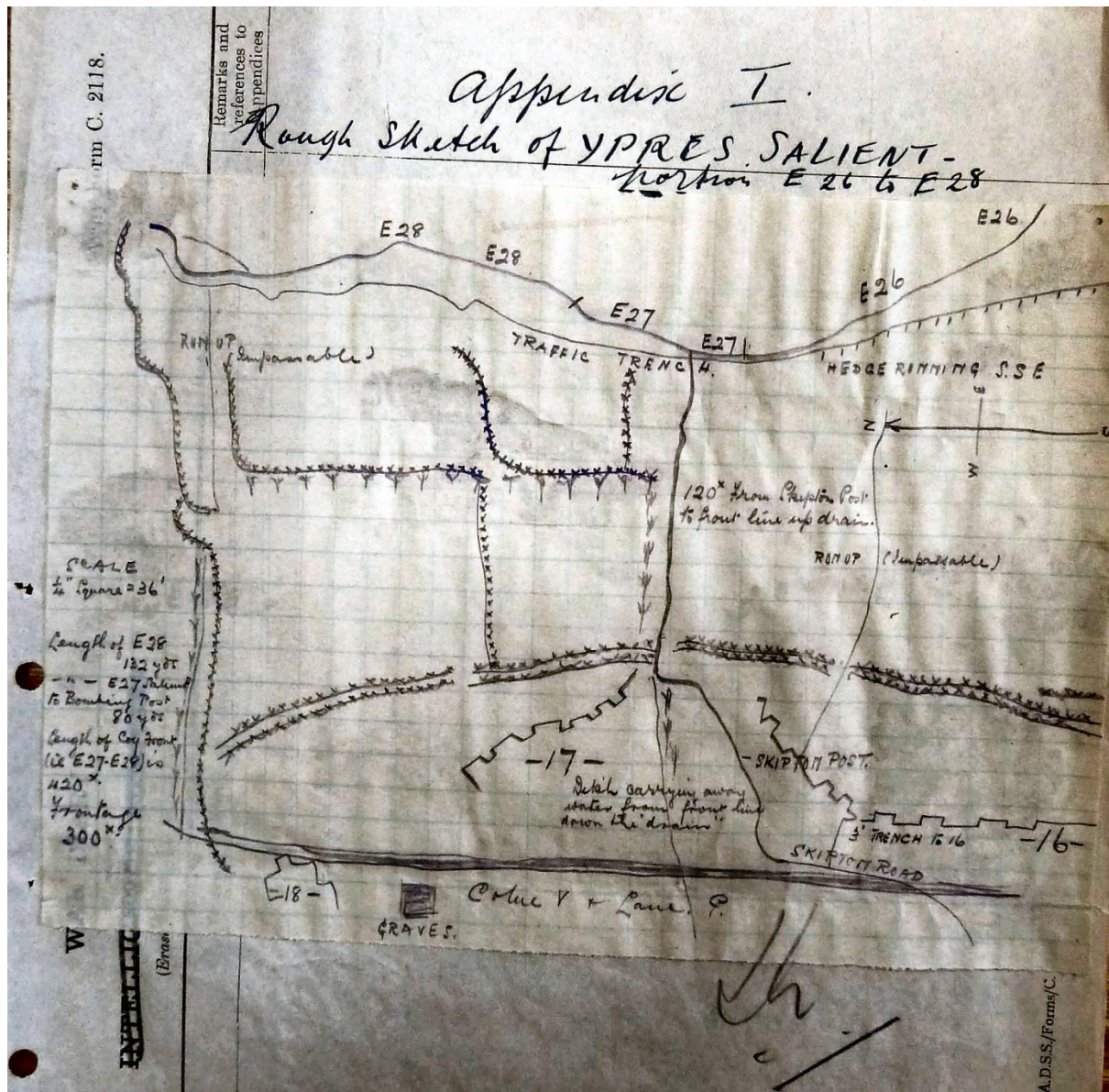
There are references to Herbert Henry Wood killed in France on the Malborough War Memorial, inside the Parish Church on a Roll of Honour and even on a gravestone erected by my grandparents.

For many years my late father tried to trace Herbert's place of burial with a view to visiting his grave. All efforts failed to trace him. After my father's death I took on the task of trying to locate him also with no success – until the release of the 1911 census which revealed his name as Herbert Henry Wood EDWARDS! He had been born a few weeks before his parents were married, a fact which they obviously went to great lengths to disguise.

I was then easily able to locate Private 16532 H.H.W. Edwards of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Unfortunately, he was one of the many thousands of soldiers with no known grave and the only recognition was on the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres. There followed a

visit to the D.C.L.I. regimental museum in Bodmin, Cornwall where I was able to find a little more about the events on the date of his death and the approximate location but this was still just a general area of Flanders.

In February 2013 on a visit to the National Archives at Kew I requested to view a copy of the D.C.L.I war diaries for April 1916. Not only did the diary contain the details of what happened on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1916 but, to my surprise, the Commanding Officer had drawn an excellent sketch map of the trench locations.



With the help of modern maps, old British Army trench maps and an extremely knowledgeable Belgian local (who I found via the Internet via the excellent "Great War Forum") I was able to find the precise location – near Boezinghe a few miles North of Ypres.

The war diaries indicated that the battalion had taken over trenches E26 to E28 on the 7<sup>th</sup> April and in the following few days nothing of any great note took place. However on April 11<sup>th</sup> the Germans decided to mount a mortar attack which resulted in over 60 soldiers in trench E28 being killed or seriously injured. My uncle was one of the unfortunate ones to be in the wrong place and was killed immediately and, I suspect, buried on the spot as the trench was totally destroyed.

In April 2013 I spent a few days in Ypres and the surrounding countryside and was able to not only witness the very moving “Last Post” ceremony at the Menin Gate but also visit the area where trench 28 had once been. Luckily this proved to be still agricultural land whereas not too far away the battlefields had been replaced by a giant industrial estate.

The visit was not only for my own curiosity and respect for my uncle but on behalf of my late father who would so much have liked to make that journey.

Tony Wood