

Alfred Wood, M.M.

(25th August 1881 - 7th December 1948)



The last name on this now laid flat headstone is that of Alfred Wood. He was a Lightcliffe lad who saw more of the world than many of his contemporaries but then returned to live at Hove Edge. The M.M. on his memorial inscription indicates that he was awarded the Military Medal in WW1. His detailed obituary would seem to be a good way to start his story.

AN INTERESTING CAREER

THE LATE MR. ALFRED

WOOD, M.M.

The funeral took place at Lightcliffe Old Church on Saturday of Mr. Alfred Wood, M.M. for many years a well-known figure in the Lightcliffe and Hove Edge districts. Mr. Wood, who was 67 years of age, died at the residence of his son at Caversham Heights, Reading, on Tuesday week, but he was a native of Lightcliffe being the fourth son of the late Mr. William Wood.

A regular soldier by profession, Mr. Wood entered the Army in the Royal Field Artillery during the South African War, in 1899, and served 21 years until his retirement in 1920 with the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major. His service included six years in India, where his battery provided escort to the late King George V at the Delhi Durban; four years in South Africa, and four years' service in France in the

1914-18 war. After several 'mentions' he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

During a spell in England in 1908-11, he assisted in the training of the old Militia into the then new Territorial Army, under the Scottish Command, and later, during service in South Africa, he trained the Staats Artillery from garrison artillery to field artillery, and these troops later cleared the Germans from south west and East Africa. He returned to England and was made R.S.M. of a field brigade of the 37th Division then being formed for Kitchener's Army at Salisbury Plains, and served in France and Belgium with his unit throughout the war.

Mr. Wood had many friends of all ranks in Army circles, and his colonel in the early stages of the war, frequently visited him and corresponded with him in later years from Bermuda, where, as General Sir Thomas Astley Cubitt, K.C.M.G., he became Governor of that colony.

An interesting aside is known of Mr. Wood, who was a big man in stature that the Brigade Major in South Africa, a Major Ironside, also well over six feet tall, left his horse for Mr. Wood on his return to England where he later became Field Marshall Sir Edmund Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the commencement of the recent World War II.

Mr. Wood finished his long service with the Army at Liverpool, on the staff of the Territorial Division there in 1920, after a short period as R.S.M. at the well-known Yorkshire demobilisation camp at Ripon. At an early stage in his army career, Mr. Wood became a Freemason, and was admitted to the brotherhood at St. Thomas Mount in India. On retirement from the Army Mr. Wood entered business on his own account and retired therefrom in 1935.

PUBLIC WORK AND INTERESTS

In 1925 he was elected to the Hipperholme Urban District for the east ward, and served as a councillor until 1931. He held a number of appointments, such as chairman of the Health and Water Committee, representative on the War Memorial, Stray and Parks Committee, on the sub-committees for plans, and also the Joint Authorities Water Committee, and the Treatment of Trade Effluent Sub-Committee. He was a governor of the Brighouse Girls' Secondary School Board of Management and a representative to the Oxford University Extension Lectures Committee.

Later, on his retirement, he took up residence at Holly Bank, Hove Edge, and was foundation member of the Debating Society there, and throughout the recent war was served as an air raid warden at Hove Edge. He was a member of the Methodist Church, and for many years was a trustee of the Ebenezer Chapel, Bailiffe Bridge.

Mr. Wood was an active worker in the cause of world peace, and for many years he was organising secretary of the Brighouse Branch of the League of Nations Union.

Deeply interested in politics and economics, he was by persuasion a Liberal and did much work

in that interest in the Elland Division, supporting the Liberal candidate, Sir Robert Newbald Kay, as the chairman at many of the latter's meetings, and taking an active interest in lectures and other similar local efforts of that party.

Despite such varied calls upon his time, he had many friendships of a long and personal nature, and his life-long friend with whom he spent many holidays was Capt. L. Lockwood, M.C., of Felixstowe, Suffolk with whom he saw much service, and who is one of the few remaining soldiers distinguished as the Defenders of Ladysmith.

Mr. Wood's wife predeceased him in 1943, and in later years he had gone blind, and he spent his declining years at the home of his only son, Mr. H. W. Wood A.S.A.A., F.R.Econ.S., incorporated accountant at Caversham, near Reading.

Prior to the interment there were services at the house of Mrs. S.E. Boswell. Lightcliffe, a sister, and at Lightcliffe Old Church. Canon H.L. Taylor officiating. The mourners included Mr. and Mrs. H.W.Wood, Mr Michael Wood, Mrs. S.E. Boswell, Mr. J. Wood, Mrs Alice Davidson, Mr W. Davidson. Mr W. Wood, Mr and Mrs K Collins, Mr and Mrs D. West, Mr T. Wood, Miss C. Wood, Mr Jim Wood, Mr H. Sugden, Miss Brenda Sugden, Mr and Mrs Pamment. Among friends who attended were Mr. J. Moor, Mr. C. Taylor, Mr. L. Taylor, Mr. H. Tranter, Mr. G. Hirst and Mr. F. Hoyle.

Representing the Hove Edge Air Raid Wardens was Mr. Sterling. Mr. H. Prest, Hove Edge, was the undertaker.

As the obituary reports Alfred Wood was the fourth son of William and Rhoda Wood. Altogether they had ten children, Alfred being the eighth. Their story will be told later in the article

William Wood and family

Although some of Alfred's siblings were baptised at St. Matthew's church Alfred does not appear to be one of them. In fact, no baptism record has been found although it is known that he was born in Lighcliffe on 25th August 1881. He appears on his one and only census with his parents and eight of his nine siblings on 5th April 1891.

1891 census

William Wood	Head	50	Worsted printing Overlooker
Rhoda Wood	Wife	47	
Lydia Wood	Dau	22	Filler for worsted printing
Sarah Ellen Wood	Dau	20	Setting warps for carpets
Herman Wood	Son	18	Unemployed
Mary Wood	Dau	17	Stick dryer for printing
Spencer Wood	Son	15	Apprenice for designer
Annie Elizabeth Wood	Dau	13	Worsted winder
Harry Wood	Son	11	Box boy for printers
Alfred Wood	Son	9	Scholar
John Wood	Son	5	ditto

Address 6 Ripley St., Lightcliffe

On 7th November 1899 Alfred Wood enlisted with the Royal Artillery Corps. He signed up at Scarborough initially for a period of 5 years. By the time of the 1901 census he was a 19 year old soldier at the Shorncliffe Camp, near Folkestone, Kent, As his obituary notes he was then posted to India where he served for 5 years and 60 days according to the military precision of his military records. During this time he extended his service to 8 years. Then Sergeant Alfred Wood was "Re-engaged at Glasgow to complete 21 years' service" on 21st December 1908.

A few weeks later, on 16th January 1909, he married Lily Amelia Boswall the daughter of another soldier, William Boswall, as the parish record shows. At the time Alfred was still stationed in Glasgow hence his father's address was recorded as his place of residence.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935 for Lily Amelia Boswall
Lightcliffe, St Matthew > 1909

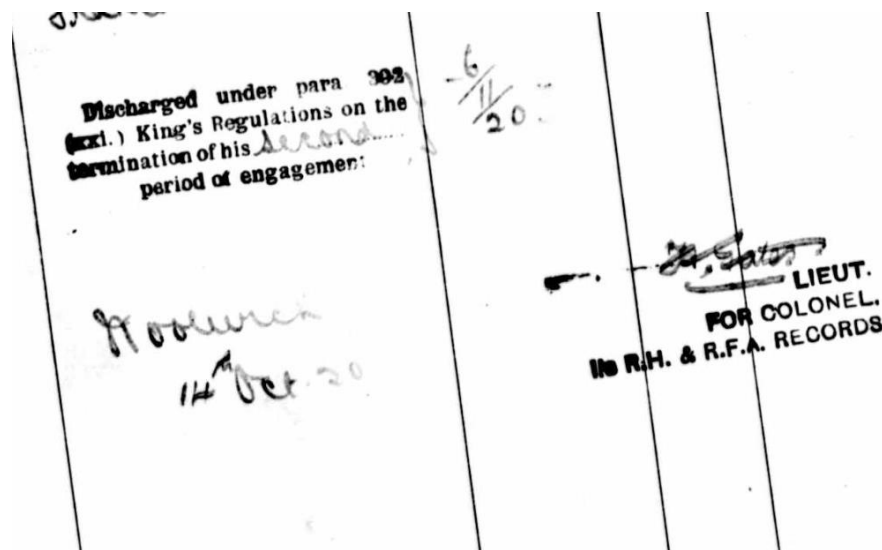
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession.
347	January 16 th 1909	Alfred Wood Lily Amelia Boswall	27 26	Bachelor Spinster	Soldier —	3 Hesketh Place Lightcliffe 3 Hesketh Place Lightcliffe	William Wood William Boswall.	Soldier Soldier
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Established Church</u> after banns by me, <u>R. Pease, Minister</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <u>Alfred Wood</u> <u>Lily Amelia Boswall</u>				in the Presence of us, <u>William Boswall</u> <u>Annie Elizabeth Wood John Wood</u>				

Just why Lily Amelia Wood was also recorded as being resident at 3 Hesketh Place and exactly who her father William Boswall was will be explored later. They are two of the other three names on the Lightcliffe headstone on plot Q38.

Their only child Herman William Wood was born at the Maryhills Barracks, Glasgow on 6th December 1910. He was baptised on New Year's Day in Glasgow. But then this Army family were moved to the Hillsborough Barracks, Eccleshall, Sheffield. On census night 2nd April 1911 Sergeant Alfred Wood was there with the 106th Battery of the Royal Field Artillery. His wife and baby son were also at these Yorkshire barracks but were listed separately as all the wives and children were, presumably in married quarters.

Then on 5th September 1912 the career soldier Alfred was off overseas again, this time to South Africa. His obituary explains his role there before he returned to join Kitchener's Army, serving in France and Belgium from 1915 onwards now as a Regimental Sergeant Major. It was during the Great War that he was awarded the Military Medal for "bravery in the Field".

His military records have casualty forms giving Woolwich as a 'Place of Casualty' in May and then June 1919 and evidence of a posting to "R.F.A Leeds". Another form records that he was admitted to Ripon Hospital with bronchitis in March 1920. He was discharged after 9 days with a "Slight hack" but was expected to make a "Good Recovery". And then finally on 6th November 1920 having served exactly 21 years Alfred Wood left the army. He had survived numerous conflicts when many others had not.



Where his wife and son resided whilst Alfred was in South Africa and then fighting in the Great War is not obvious. Perhaps they remained in the army barracks in Yorkshire. All three members of the family came back to this area after his discharge as his obituary explains. Their son Herman William Wood married Daphne Phyllis Bramwell in 1935 in Lewisham and so was not with his parents in Yorkshire when the 1939 register was taken.

1939 register

Alfred	Wood	25 Aug 1881	Male	Army Pensioner (Retired)	Married	52	1
Lily A	Wood	04 Apr 1882	Female	Unpaid Domestic Duties	Married	52	2

Address 7,9 Spout House Lane, Brighouse, Brighouse M.B., Yorkshire (West Riding), England

Lily Amelia Wood nee Boswall died on 13th February 1943. She was buried with her father William Boswall in plot Q38 in St. Matthew's churchyard on 16th February 1943

WOOD Lily Amelia of Holly Bank Hove Edge Lightcliffe **Halifax** (wife of Alfred Wood) died 12 February 1943 at Royal Halifax Infirmary Halifax Administration **Wakefield** 12 April to the said Alfred Wood retired fancy goods dealer. Effects £428 2s. 5d.

How these two London born individuals ended up in Lightcliffe will be explained in

William Boswall and family

At some point after the death of his wife and the cessation of WW2, in which he acted as air raid warden for Hove Edge, Alfred Wood moved to live with his son near Reading. It was at this Caversham home that the by then blind Alfred Wood passed away on 7th December 1948. He was brought back to Lightcliffe and buried in plot Q38 with his wife and father-in-law who was also his brother-in-law. The mourners on the day of the funeral, 11th December 1948, naturally included his only son and family as well as a sister and brother and various nieces and nephews. The cortege appears to have left from the house of his widowed sister Sarah Ellen Boswall nee Wood, No. 3 Hesketh Place.

WOOD Alfred of 20 Morecambe-avenue Caversham Reading died 7 December 1948 Probate **Oxford** 10 February to Herman William Wood civil servant and Alice Davidson (wife of William Davidson). Effects £6462 5s. 9d.

Many of Alfred's relatives including Davidsons, Greenwoods, Harrisons, Hoyles, Marsdens, Pickles and Sugdens as well as more Woods were also buried in Lightcliffe. To find out more read

William Wood and family

John Wood and family

Thomas Wood and family

D.M.Barker

February 2021