

Article in 'The Buxton Advertiser' – 8 November 2012



Neighbours go to war

WHEN the First World War began in August 1914, 20-year-old George Edward Sheldon was living at home in Oddfellows Cottages, Market Street with his parents, Edward and Hannah, and his younger brothers and sisters, Harriett, Harry and Annie.

He was working for the London and North-western Railway Company, at Buxton, and was also a member of the Primitive Methodist Choir.

Just around the corner, at 21 New Market Street, lived his friend, 18-year-old Walter Skidmore, with his mum and dad, Joseph and Mary, older brother, Sidney, and younger sisters, May, Mabel and Louisa. Walter worked as an 'Errand Boy'.

Very soon, like so many other

Buxton lads, they answered the call of King and Country and enlisted together into the 3rd Reserve Cavalry Regiment. Not content to be 'Reservists', on May 14 1917 the friends transferred to The Royal Fusiliers, London Regiment, and were posted to the 2/2 Battalion, having adjacent Service Numbers – George, Private 71074, and Walter 71075.

After training they finally left for the Western Front, arriving in France in the first week of October 1917. Just four days before embarking George had married Elsie and they were to live at 58 Bennett Street, Buxton. After landing in France they immediately moved into the trenches in front of a village we have all heard of – Passchendaele.

That infamous battle began just three weeks after George and Walter landed in France, on October 26 1917, and just as they had done all their lives, the friends fell together on that first day. It is tempting to believe that they stood and fell side by side as they left the trenches and advanced through the mud and devastation.

In these days of instant news it took a whole year for their deaths in action to be finally recognised. The Buxton Advertiser of October 26 1918 reported that



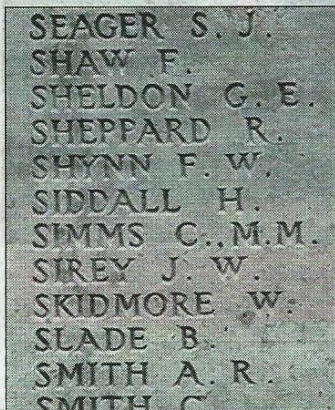
NO KNOWN GRAVE: Walter Skidmore.

they were "... presumed killed ... there is hope that, like similar cases, he may yet be heard of as a prisoner." The History of the Royal Fusiliers graphically records: "The Londons all suffered very terribly from the state of the ground. Many men were drowned in the shell-holes."

Like so many of that terrible Battle neither George nor Walter have a known grave, instead their names are inscribed on the Tyne Cot Memorial, together still for time and all eternity.

Their names are also inscribed proudly on our Memorial on The Slopes. If you are up there on Sunday for the Act of Remembrance, look them up and 'Speak Their Name With Proud'.

Graham E Conway
(Formerly Head of Normanton School, Buxton)



MORE THAN JUST A NAME ON A PLAQUE: A life celebrated.