

Walter Leonard Dobson



Walter was born on 28th December 1887 in Barnes, in Surrey, and baptised on 28th February 1898 at St George's Church, Old Brentford, with some of his other siblings. His parents were Noah Joseph Dobson (1896-1925), a milkman, who was born in Bromley in Kent and Jane nee Draper (1860-1904) from Buckinghamshire/Bedfordshire. They had married on November 9th, 1884 in St Matthew's Parish Church in Croydon. Walter had four surviving siblings: Constance Maud (1890-1964) May Beatrice (1894-1968) Stanley Frederick (1895-1977), and his mother's first child: William Draper/ Dobson born in 1880. Walter was brought up in 12 Waldeck Road, Chiswick, in the Strand on the Green area. By 1911, he had moved to 31 Waldeck Road, with his wife, May, and his daughters May and Maud. He had married May Oliver, born in Salisbury, in Wiltshire, in 1907 at Brentford Registry Office, and by 1911, his occupation was a stableman. By 1920, Walter had five surviving children: May Eveline, Beatrice Maud, Emily Grace, Violet (sometimes known as Victoria) Constance and Olive Hilda and the family was living at 2 Mitchell's Cottages, near the Royal Oak Public House on Worton Road in Isleworth.

Walter enlisted in Hounslow on 29th March 1915, and joined the Army Veterinary Corps, with the regimental number of SE 5550. This Corps was responsible for the medical care of animals used by the army: predominantly horses, mules and pigeons. The Corps reorganised in 1914 to provide a Mobile Veterinary Section as part of each Division that went overseas. Walter's experience as a horse keeper, would have stood him in good stead.

His record shows he was 5' 41/2 inches in height (5'6* in 1918), with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and auburn hair. He had a tattoo on his left arm, and that he served at Home from 29th March- April 10th; and abroad in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Alexandria and Salonica, from 11th April 1915-February 2nd 1918. He was appointed Lance Sergeant in 1916 and paid as Acting Sergeant in April 1917, then admitted to hospital in July 1917, with haematuria (blood in the urine), sailing to Malta on a hospital ship, and then invalided to England. His final service was at Home from 6th Feb 1918- 23rd March 1918. He was discharged at Woolwich on 25th March 1918 as physically unfit for active service, His medical report stated that he had nephritis, due to exposure to infection, and was initially assessed at 70% disability. His record on discharge was that he was a 'very good' military character, "a valued and efficient NCO, a good worker, honest, sober and reliable". He was recommended hospital treatment from time to time. His death occurred on 12th January 1920.

Walter is also honoured on the memorial in St John's Church, close to where he lived. His family continued to live at 2 Mitchell's Cottages and were on the electoral roll there in 1934. In 1938, this row of cottages was condemned as unfit for habitation. In 1939, four of Walter's children were living at 86 St John's Road, near to the church. May and Maud were working with surgical appliances and Violet working in a soap (factory); the 4th person's name, redacted after Violet was probably Olive Hilda.

