



## Sidney Humm

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1879, Sidney's mother, Matilda Diana Randell married Thomas Humm (a boot maker and an asylum attendant) at St John's Church in Isleworth. Inexplicably, just two years later in the 1881 census, Matilda is listed as 'daughter' (rather than wife) and is living with her mother at 3 Worton Road, and her brother Alfred and young son William who was born soon after her marriage in 1880. In 1882 twins, Charles and Frederick were born – but they did not survive for long. A few years later Ellen Mary was born and Sidney arrived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 1889.

Sadly in 1891 Matilda is now listed as a widow and 'head' of the family. Brother Alfred (a brickman labourer) still lives with her, her two sons William and Sidney, and lodger John Williams (a general labourer) whom Matilda marries in 1914. Their son, John is born in 1891. The family now live in 3, Tile Cottages, Byfield Road.

There are no service records for Sidney. In 1911, Sidney was living at Sobraon Barracks in Colchester so it appears that he joined the army years before the start of the WW1. Sidney's regiment, Prince of Wales Own (West Yorkshire) 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion were mobilised for war on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1914 and landed at Havre. Sidney had bravely fought many battles on the Western Front over the years, including The Battles of Neuve Chapelle, the Battle of Aubers, and Bois Grenier (all in 1915). In 1916 he had fought at the Battle of Albert. Earlier in 1917 he would have seen action during the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battle of Pilkem.

**Corporal Sidney Humm was an experienced soldier but his luck ran out on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917 on the first day of the three day Battle of Langemarck (3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres). He was killed in action.**

This battle was masterminded by Sir Douglas Haig. The initial assault was aimed at the German positions near Passchendaele but this was not as successful as was hoped. Heavy rain and thick glue-like mud bought a halt to proceedings for two weeks. After three days of vicious fighting around Westhoek Ridge (*...enemy aeroplanes were very active all day...flying very low and using their machine guns freely on our troops.* WW1 Diaries 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion West Yorks), the British finally achieved their aim but at a cost of 264 Ordinary Ranks and 10 Officers. The picture shows the British and French artillery forward observation officers watching the opening bombardment during the Battle of Langemarck on the day Sidney lost his life.



Observing the barrage, 16 August 1917  
Courtesy of the National Army Museum

Sidney is honoured on the Tyne Cot Memorial and also at All Saints' Church, Isleworth.

Postscript: Sidney left £40 10s 8d to a Daisy Purver (about £900 in 2016). Daisy lived at 24 Grainger Road, Isleworth. Her brother Henry, was the same age as Sidney and was possibly a school friend. As Daisy grew up maybe she became Sidney's sweetheart? Henry Purver was killed at the Somme on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1916 and is also listed on the Isleworth Memorial. Daisy married in 1919.

