

Ashville Cenotaph: **TRAFFORD A E**

Ashville Memorial Hall: Arthur Ernest Trafford, Royal Air Force

Arthur Ernest Trafford was killed whilst serving in the Royal Air Force during the Great War. But the whole story is much more fascinating than this simple statement implies.

Arthur Ernest Trafford was born on 23rd September 1896 in Leeds, Yorkshire.

His parents were Arthur Ernest Trafford senior and Hannah Newton Osterfield Peck. Arthur senior was born in Horncastle, Lincolnshire and Hannah was born in Lincoln.

It is relevant to investigate the origins of his mother's name. Hannah's mother was born Betsy Newton and she firstly married a William Ingleby Osterfield and had three children. Secondly she married a Joseph Peck and had two more children one of whom was christened Hannah Newton Osterfield.

According to the 1881 Census 12 year old Hannah was living in the "Druids Arms" in Lincoln along with her parents, sister, one of her half brothers and one of her half sisters. Joseph Peck's occupation was "Licensed Victualler" i.e. he ran the Druids Arms. The 1871 Census shows that both Arthur's grandfathers were for a time publicans although they then both ultimately became "gardeners".

By the 1891 Census Joseph & Betsy are living elsewhere in Lincoln and Joseph's occupation is given as "Labourer". Only Hannah's sister Ursula is still at home and Hannah is untraceable on the census.

Hannah and Arthur senior got married in the fourth quarter of 1892 in Lincoln.

The 1901 Census shows Arthur and his parents living in Lincoln. His father's occupation was "Hotel Porter"

Between 1901 and 1910 the family must have moved to Hull as Arthur's mother was admitted to Hull Lunatic Asylum on 21st February 1910. Five weeks later on 28th April she was discharged because she had "recovered".

The 1911 Census shows Arthur's parents living at 5 Vane Street, Hull. Arthur's maternal grandfather, Joseph Peck, was also living with them. Arthur's father is still a Hotel Porter and Joseph's occupation was given as "retired gardener". 14 year old Arthur was at Elmfield College and appeared on their Census return.

On the 30th July 1914, a few days before the Great War started and two months shy of his 18th birthday, Arthur enlisted in the Kings Royal Rifles in London. He was assigned to the 6th Battalion, a reserve battalion based at Winchester. His enlistment medical recorded the following statistics for him: height 5ft 10½in, weight 132lbs, chest 35in – a tall (at the time the average height of British men was considered to be 5ft 6in) youth who more than adequately fulfilled the physical requirements to be a serving soldier. His religion was also given as "Church of England".

On the 29th November 1914 Arthur was transferred to the 2nd Battalion who were already at the Western Front where Arthur joins with them. When Arthur arrived at the Western Front he was only 18 years and 2 months old – at the time regulations stated you had to be 19 years old to serve overseas. Two months later he was transferred to the 5th Battalion, also a reserve battalion and returned to the UK where he stayed for just over 5 months. Was it realised when he caught up with his Battalion that a mistake had been made, hence his return home?

On the 6th July 1915 he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion and returned to the Western Front where he remained for nearly 6 months. He was still under age for overseas service when he returned!

On 11th December 1915 he was transferred back again to the 6th Battalion and returned to the UK for 8 months, whilst there he qualified as a "1st Class Bomber". By July 1916 Arthur had spent only 10 months of his 26 month Army career in a war zone. No recorded reasons were given for any of these transfers.

On 12th July 1916 he was transferred back again to the 2nd Battalion and returns to the Somme on the Western Front. On the 17th August he was badly wounded and invalided back to the UK a few days later. There is no record of the medical treatment and convalescence he must have received.

On the 11th May 1917 he is discharged from the Army. The discharge paperwork is of interest. The Medical Board Report of 20th April 1917 states:-

“Cause of Discharge: clinically unfit, GSW right shoulder [*GSW = gunshot wound*]

GSW received in action on the Somme on 17.8.16. General condition – There is a large tender wound on the right shoulder measuring 5in X 2½in at its widest part. There is very considerable loss of muscular tissue. Marked loss of upward movement of the right arm. Distinct loss of power in arm and hand.

Permanent.”

On a second sheet a second Medical Board report of 10th December 1917 states:-

“Capacity not lessened. He states he leaves for the USA in 7 weeks and does not need a pension.”

Disability permanent, likely to remain stationary. No action”

On the first sheet his address is given as – Exeter House, Cottingham, Yorks. This was then crossed out. His occupation was given as “Clerk”. On the second sheet it says “Latest address c/o Mrs Newton, 172 Trent Boulevard, West Bridgford, Nottingham”

There is no evidence that Arthur went to the United States although one of his great-uncles had already emigrated there.

On 27th April 1918 Arthur joined the Royal Air Force! The paperwork available gives the following information:-

“Prior Engagement in H.M. Forces: Kings Royal Rifles.

Civilian Occupation: Student Prospector

Religion: Church of England

Next of kin: S R Slack BA, Elmfield College, York. Relationship: Guardian

Height: 5ft 11½in Chest: 38in”

Between July 1914 (aged 17) and April 1918 (aged 21) Arthur grew by over an inch he also filled out considerably.

On 31st October 1918 (12 days before the Armistice), Flight Cadet Arthur Ernest Trafford was flying a Sopwith Camel at Hornchurch, Essex when he “attempted to loop, lost control on back and fell into spin”. He died at the scene of the crash. Hornchurch Aerodrome was a major RAF base in both world wars. At the time of the Great War it was known as Suttons Farm Aerodrome.

The CWGC & Forces War Records websites both state he was the “Son of Mr. A. E. and Mrs. H. N. O. Trafford, of 44, Exeter St., Cottingham, Yorks.” Cottingham was/is a large village about 4 miles from the centre of Hull.

Arthur was buried in the churchyard of St Andrews, Hornchurch. He has a military headstone.

Arthur’s mother passed away on 25th February 1945, aged 76, at High Street, Leadenham, Lincolnshire and left an estate worth £949 (worth about £40k today) to her husband.

His father passed away on 26th February 1954, aged 84, at The Westwood Hospital, Beverley, Yorkshire. His home address was given as 30 Devon Street, Cottingham, Yorkshire. He left an estate only worth £119 (worth about £3,160 today).

