

Redfern Holt



Rank: Private

Killed in Action: 30th November 1917 (France)

11th Durham Light Infantry (Service) B'n.



Summary

Redfern Holt family home was Hollin Hall Farm, Upper Hopton where he was raised by his parents Allan and Mary Ann Holt and worked as a carpenter. Redfern originally joined the Royal Engineers (see his cap badge) and was later transferred to the Durham Light Infantry.

Infantry was under orders to build a new defensive line based on the old Hindenburg line. Early on the morning of 30th November the various Companies were returning from night work. Travelling along the high ground Captain Jee noticed large groups of stragglers making their way back in some disorder. He quickly formed a defensive line and sent out messengers. Lt Colonel Hayes at battalion HQ also organised the men at his disposal, and any others he could press, into a defensive arrangement around the village of Gouzeaucourt. It was probably here that Redfern was killed in action (age 36) His sacrifice has been remembered at the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, France.

Redfern Holt

Family details

Date of Birth 19th October 1881

Date of Baptism 5th February 1882

Church Baptised St Paul's, Eastthorpe

Father Allan (1850-1926)

Father's occupation Farmer

Mother Mary Ann (nee Hebblethwaite) (1854-1911)

Siblings Alfred (1880-1955)

Arthur (1883-1957)

William Hebblethwaite (1886-1892)

Joseph (1890-1972) Elizabeth (1893-1953)

Parents residence Hollin Hall Farm, Upper Hopton

Soldiers residence As above

Soldiers Occupation Carpenter

Married No.

Spouse -

Children -

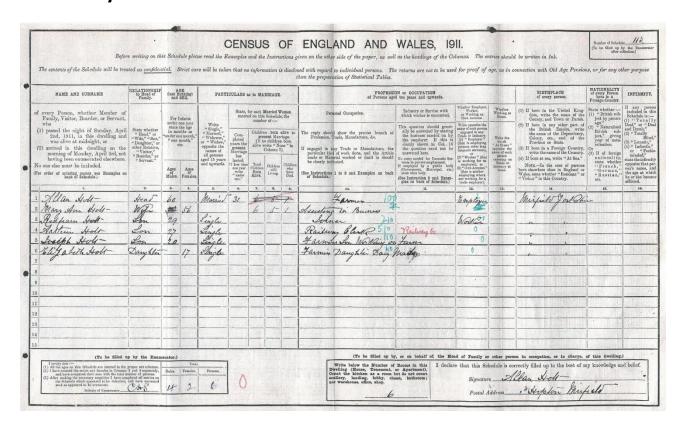
Burial / Memorial Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, France

Age at death 36



Redfern Holt

Holt family census 1911



Redfern Holt was the second of six children born to Allan & Mary Ann Holt of Upper Hopton, Mirfield.

Redfern's father, Allan Holt, was born in 1850 at Hollin Hall, where his own father Joseph was a farmer. In 1865 the family relocated to North Moor Farm on the Kirkheaton Boundary and Allan lived here with his parents until he married Mary Ann Hebblethwaite at Mirfield Parish Church in April 1879. Mary Ann was the daughter of Sidney & Ann Hebblethwaite who farmed at Sheep Ings on Granny Lane. Shortly after their marriage and the birth of their first son Alfred, Allan and Mary Ann went to live at the Co-operative on Jackroyd Lane where Allan was the Manager for the next 10 years. It was here that Redfern was born in October 1881, followed by his younger siblings Arthur in July 1883, William Hebblethwaite in November 1886 and Joseph in April 1890. In 1891 the Holts moved to the nearby Traveller's Rest Inn on Hopton Lane which Allan ran as a Publican and Farmer for 9 years.



Redfern Holt

Photograph outside the Travellers Rest

Redfern's father, Allan Holt (1850-1926) is the bearded guy standing on the left in the doorway, on his right is Redfern's mother Mary Ann (nee Hebblethwaite 1854-1911) the baby is possibly Joseph Holt b.1890. The elderly lady in flowery bonnet standing between Allan and Mary Ann, but slightly back in the doorway, is Allan's mother Sarah Holt (nee Redfearn 1820-1891). The photo was taken between July and December 1891.

When this photo was taken Allan and Mary Ann Holt had just taken over running the farm/public house.



Whilst living at the Traveller's Rest the family suffered a tragic bereavement when Redfern's younger brother William Hebblethwaite Holt died suddenly of a typhoid type illness just before his 6th birthday, the death taking place on the 19th of October 1892 which was actually Redfern's 11th birthday, something he would never forget. The family's spirits were lifted by the safe arrival of a final child; Elizabeth, who was born in April 1893. In 1900 the Holts moved back to Hollin Hall Farm.

Redfern Holt

During this period Redfern's father Allan became very interested in local politics. Allan Holt was an active member of the old Mirfield Urban District Council from 1895 to 1908 and was Vice-Chairman in 1905 and Chairman in 1906.

After leaving school Redfern decided not to join his brothers Alfred and Joseph who worked with their father on the farm, but instead embarked on a carpentry apprenticeship, a craft which he loved and had a natural inclination towards. The upper floor of one of the barns at Hollin Hall was converted into a workshop for him and he soon acquired an array of tools and technical books. For many years he worked closely with Joshua Buckley who ran the Cabinet Makers on Easthorpe Lane in Mirfield. Here Redfern undertook a variety of carpentry tasks ranging from simple blind and carpet fitting, to more complex joinery and cabinet making.

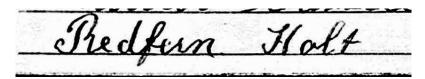
In a character reference, Joshua Buckley described Redfern as a man of "Cheerful, genial temperament" and said he was "always pleasant to work with" as well as being "strictly honest with both time and materials".

Hollin Hall Farm in the early 1900s. Redfern's workshop can be seen on the far left of the picture.



Redfern was never married or engaged, but enjoyed socialising with his siblings and Hebblethwaite cousins and regularly attended services at St John's Church. He valued his good name and personal integrity above all things. On his 32rd birthday – 19th October 1913 - he wrote a (slightly misquoted) reference from Othello in his sister Elizabeth's autograph book "He that steals my purse, steals trash. He that robbeth me of my good name, robbeth me of that which enriches him not".

In November 1904 Redfern's eldest brother Alfred Holt was married at St John's to Elizabeth Cassell. Redfern signed his name clearly as their witness.



In June 1911 Redfern's mother; Mary Ann, died aged 57 in Lancaster of cancer after a lingering and painful illness. For the last month of her life she was cared for by



Redfern Holt

friends in Lancaster as her condition was so distressing for her loved ones. The family who were caring for her – John & Ann Pickett – were old friends from Mirfield and John Pickett was himself a Cabinet Maker and perhaps the inspiration for Redfern's chosen career.



Mrs. Allan Holt, wife of Mr. Allan Holt, Hollin Hall Farm, Hopton, Mirfield, and a daughter of Mr. Sydney Hebblethwäite, died on Tuesday. She had long been an invalid, and for some time had been staying at Lancaster, where her death took place. Mr. Allan Holt was a popular member of Mirfield District Council in the year of its inception—1895—and held a seat on the Council until 1908, when he retired. During that period he was once chairman—in 1906—and vice chairman—in 1905. His father in-law, Mr. Hebblethwaite, was an honoured member of the old Mirfield Local Board, from 1873 to 1885, although he never once officiated as chairman.



In September 1914, shortly after War had begun, Redfern's brother Arthur was married at Sandal to his sweetheart Jinny Bramald. Arthur had poor general health and was not suited to a physical occupation like farming, working instead as a Railway Office Clerk. Jinny's Dad Frederick Bramald was a Joiner like Redfern and this is possibly how Arthur and Jinny first met.

In November 1915 Redfern's widowed father Allan Holt remarried to Fanny Hebblethwaite who was the spinster sister of his late wife Mary Ann and who had long been a favourite Aunt of his children. Redfern and his brothers and sister were pleased about their father's choice, but others were less so, since it had only been legal to marry a deceased wife's sister since 1907 and some people still found it shocking. The legislation allowed individual clergy to refuse to conduct marriages which would previously have been prohibited, should they choose to do so, and this may have been a reason why the marriage took place at North Road Congregational Chapel in Ravensthorpe, rather than at St John's in Hopton.

Redfern enlisted as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers at Huddersfield on 13th November 1916 but for some reason unknown, was immediately transferred onto the Army Reserve. He was mobilized on 1st March 1917 and transferred to the Durham Light Infantry as a Private on 16th September that year. Soldiers were advised to make a Will in advance of active service

and Redfern made his on the 15th September before he travelled to France. It was witnessed by William Broadley of 3 Hilda St York and Henry Burr of 32 Rugby Place, Kemp Town, Brighton. William Broadley was another man who, like Redfern, had just been transferred from the Royal Engineers into the Durham Light Infantry, so they were obviously friends.

Redfern served abroad for a little over a month before his death in the Cambrai campaign, on 30th November 1917. His family were informed on the 22nd of December by telegram. As a much loved son, brother, uncle and cousin, he was deeply mourned, especially by his sister Elizabeth who regularly wore a cherished tinted photograph of him in a locket.



Redfern Holt

Military Details

Attestation / Enlistment 13th November 1916

Deployment 1st March 1917

Rank Private

Medals British War Medal

Victory Medal

Regiment number 76882

Regiment 11th Bn, Durham Light Infantry

(previously Royal Engineers transferred 16th

Sept 1917 to DLI)

Regimental Badge



Where killed France

Cemetery or Memorial Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, France

Date of death 30th November 1917



Redfern Holt

Cambrai Memorial, Louverval





The **Cambrai** Memorial the to Missing (sometimes referred to as the **Louverval** Memorial) is a Commonwealth War Graves Commission memorial for the missing soldiers of World War I who fought in the Battle Cambrai on the Western Front. The memorial stands at one end of Louverval Military Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, which was founded by Commonwealth troops in April 1917 on the site of Louverval Chateau in northern France.

The memorial lists the 7,048 missing soldiers of the United Kingdom and South Africa who died at the Battle of Cambrai and have no known graves.



Redfern Holt

11th Durham Light Infantry (Service) Battalion (Pioneers)

Formed at Newcastle in September 1914 as part of K2 and came under orders of 60th Brigade in 20th (Light) Division. Moved to initially to Woking, then Pirbright. January 1915 : converted into а Pioneer Battalion in same Moved to Witley in February 1915 and then on to Larkhill in March 1915. 20 July 1915: landed at Boulogne. Early November 1917 in Vicinity of Gouzeaucourt building shelters, railways and roads. 17th Nov.1917 20th Div. attacked enemy trenches at Cambrai (following behind the tanks). A & B companies of 11th DLI were already moving forward behind the tanks hastily constructing roads to allow cavalry to move forward. C & D companies followed digging new a communications trench from the British to German front line. The Pioneer battalion worked on new roads to support the new front line for the next 9 days. From the 27th Nov the 11th DLI built a new defensive line base on the old Hindenburg Line. Early on 30th Nov when the various companies were returning from night work there was a surprise German counter attack and they pulled off a flanking manoeuvres. A new British defensive line had to be established.

The Regiment's Actions:

Actions - 11th Durham Light Infantry - November 1917 Part One

For the first couple of weeks of November 1917, the 11 DLI war diary continued to refer to its HQ camp site by cryptic references (W3.c.5.7) indicating the level of secrecy around what was in hand. They were actually in the vicinity of the village of Gouzeaucourt. The work was all labour and little rest, so it is doubtful if the men had much time to think about what was going on, though we can be sure there was plenty of speculation. They were building shelters, communications trenches, but mostly working on road improvements. On 7 November, Captain Palmer left the battalion to join the Tank Corps and his place in charge of 'A' Company was taken by Captain WGL Sear.

A typical working day was 5 November when "Four companies (were) working on Villers-Plouich-Gouzeaucourt Road and Villers-Plouich-Gonnelieu Road. A party of 50 under 2/Lt Atlay (were) working on railway." Meanwhile back in England it was Bonfire Night, though what sort of celebrations were made is anybody's guess. At Number 6, Bridge Terrace in Darlington, Florence Bashforth gave birth to Thomas's third child, John Raymond Bashforth, who would one day be my Dad.

Something of what was afoot became more apparent to some the lads, as on 9 November they were working on a model of the forthcoming operations. After several more days of the usual work, on 17 November, the battalion moved camp to the equally mysterious 'W.5.b'. The stage was almost set.



Redfern Holt

Actions - 11th Durham Light Infantry - November 1917 Part Two

From 17 November 1917, 11 DLI HQ was based at W.5.b – somewhere near Gouzeaucourt. At 6.20 am on 20 November, 20th Division attacked the enemy trenches at Cambrai, following behind the tanks. 'A' and 'B' companies of 11 DLI were already moving forward at 6 am behind the tanks hastily constructing roads to allow cavalry to move forward. 'C' and 'D' companies followed afterwards at 6.40 am, digging a new communications trench from the British front line towards the German front line, before starting work on a road between Villers-Plouich and La Vacquerie, with two platoons continuing the same work throughout the following night. Lt. Dan Ellwood was in charge of 8 Lewis gun teams providing anti-aircraft cover for the attack and they then moved into the forward area to join the infantry brigades mopping up the former German lines. After all that excitement, from 21 November the Pioneer battalion resumed duty for the next nine days working on roads to support the new front line, with their new HQ base at Q 36.a.8.2. That was the Battle of Cambrai from the viewpoint of a supporting battalion. Then it would all unravel and 11 DLI would be right in the thick of it.

Actions - 11th Durham Light Infantry - around the time of Redfern's death

30 November 1917

From 27 November onwards the Pioneer battalion 11 DLI was under orders to build a new defensive line based on the old Hindenburg line, including all the necessary communications trenches, roads, tracks, trenches and a dugout for each infantry brigade HQ. Early on the morning of 30 November the various Companies were returning from night work. Travelling along the high ground of Welsh Ridge, they became aware that something was going on below – Captain Jee of B Company noticed large groups of stragglers making their way back in some disorder. He quickly formed a defensive line and sent messengers to make contact with the 20th Division infantry brigades nearest to them. Each of the men in charge of the other Companies on work detail did something similar and Lt Colonel Hayes at battalion HQ also organised the men at his disposal, and any others he could press, into a defensive arrangement around the village of Gouzeaucourt.

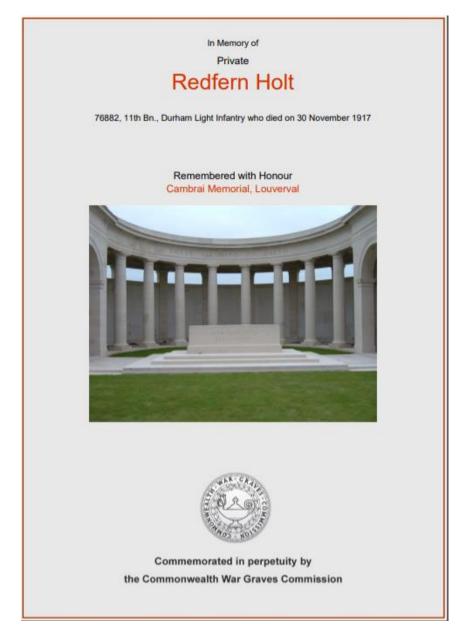
The Companies along Welsh Ridge and Borderer Ridge, in many cases linked up with infantry battalions from 20th Division, helped create a backbone that stemmed what had been a surprise German counter-attack that had already overwhelmed three British Divisions. Things were rather more frantic at Gouzeaucourt, since the Germans had pulled off one of their flanking manoeuvres. Fortunately HQ Company had been joined by C Company and Hayes commandeered a company of Royal Engineers, along with support from Field Artillery men who had been driven back from their guns, and anyone else he could gather. He



Redfern Holt

managed an orderly retreat to a defensive line created by CSM McEvoy and a platoon of 11 DLI. With the support of some dismounted cavalry he managed to hold the line and create the conditions from which a battalion of Coldstream Guards were able to launch an attack.

It was not yet the end of the story, but there is no doubt that the quick thinking of Lt Colonel Hayes and his Company Commanders, Captains Jee, Sear and Pemberton and Lieutenant Bushell had avoided a total disaster as December dawned.





Redfern Holt



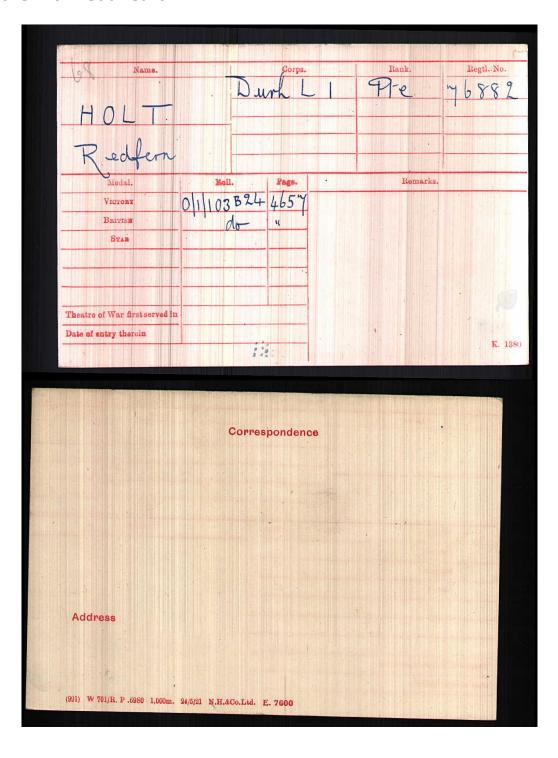
Redfern shown in a group photo with the Royal Engineers (he is far left at the back).

Redfern enlisted with the Royal Engineers on the 13^{th} November 1916 and was then transferred to the Army Reserve . He was mobilised on 1^{st} March 1917 and transferred to the Durham Light Infantry on the 16th Sept 1917.



Redfern Holt

Redfern's Medal Card





Redfern Holt

Redfern's medals

British War Medal



Victory Medal



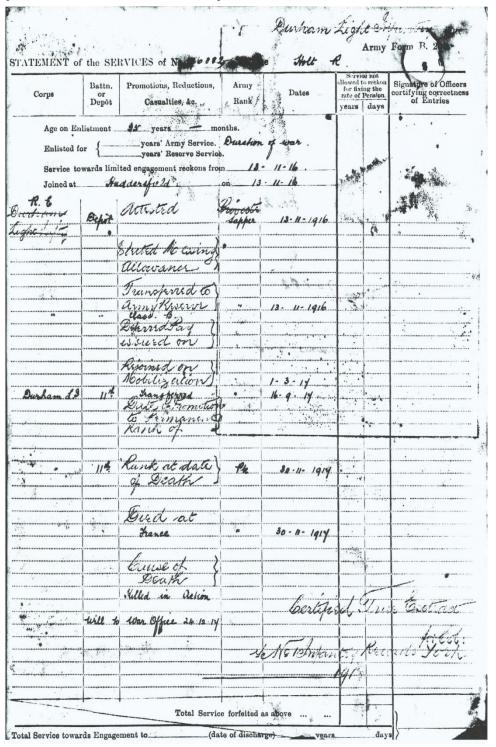
Next of kin memorial plaque





Redfern Holt

Military record - Service History





Redfern Holt

Military Record - Service details

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Redfern Holt

Military Record - Return of Redfern's personal belongings to his father.

MEMORANDUM FOR	Effects Vorr
The Officer in cha	records, To.
Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to:- The Secretary,	WAR OFFICE, IMPERIAL INSTITUTE, SOUTH KENSINGTON,
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•	Any medals granted to the deceased that are now in your ession or that may hereafter reach you should be disposed o:—
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