

Edward Wallace Hancock

The second name on the Rownhams WWI memorial is Edward Wallace Hancock, who was in the RHA (Royal Horse Artillery) where he served with F battery. Hancock is another soldier who died tragically young, aged 23, on 5th September 1916. He is buried at Quarry cemetery, Montauban and is on both the Rownhams and Nursling memorial plaques (rank given as corporal, although he was actually a sergeant).

Wallace was the son of Charles and Kate Hancock, of Upton Lodge Cottage, Nursling, and was born in Catisfield where his father had been a coachman in domestic service. By 1911, Charles was employed in this capacity by the Peel family at Upton Lodge. Wallace was already in the army, at the Royal Artillery barracks in Ipswich. (The Ancestry.com record lists him as female – yet another example of things being lost in transcription.)

He met his death on the Somme, a region which has seen a number of significant battles: both Crecy and Agincourt are in the area. We might, at a hundred years remove, think of the battle of the Somme as being typical of every day of the war, but it wasn't. A diary entry from the same day, in a different area, says, "The morning was taken quietly as the men were all tired, not having had much rest during the night. They took some moving in the afternoon too as Sergeant Higgins, acting Sergeant Major, has turned very slack and did not get the men under way at two o'clock - the rest of the day was uneventful."*

Hancock found 5th September far from uneventful. As was described in *Twin Spires* in 1999, "This day was marked by fierce fighting and artillery duels near the village of Guillemont, a fortified German position to the south of Delville Wood. The battle which began on 1st July, 1916 was to continue until the November. Sergt. Hancock is buried in Montauban, a village which was captured on the first day of the battle."

Hancock would have been entitled to the British War Medal for service in World War One. This British Empire campaign medal was issued for services between 5th August 1914 and 11th November 1918 and was automatically awarded in the event of death on active service before the completion of this period.

*source:

<http://ewmanifold.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/diary-entry-5th-september-1916.html>

Ann Laird - Rownhams June 2013