

George Bennett - Gunner 3690

Age 47

(Alias White)

Royal Garrison Artillery

Transferred to (377444) 764th Company

Army Labour Corps

Seriously wounded 29th April, 1918, probably during the Lys Spring Offensive
Died Wednesday, 12th June, 1918 in a London military hospital

Buried - All Hallows Churchyard, Harthill

Not commemorated - On Langwith War Memorial, or Harthill War Memorial



George Bennett, the son of Robert and Sarah Bennett, husband of Elizabeth Bennett, was baptised at All Hallows Church on 6th August 1871. He was a career soldier and served in India prior to the war. After serving his full term of service, he returned home to Harthill, and later moved to Langwith. At the outbreak of war, he tried to sign up but was barred due to his age. He then went elsewhere, gave his name as George White, gave a younger age, and was allowed to enlist.

Towards the latter part of the war, his subterfuge was discovered and he was transferred under his real name 'George Bennett', with a new service number 377444, to the 764th Labour Company. He was seriously wounded in action on 29th April 1918 and was taken to the 7th Canadian Hospital at Arques near St. Omer in France. He was subsequently transferred to a military hospital in London where he died from his wounds on 12th June 1918.

George's father did not want him buried amongst strangers, and quickly travelled to London to bring back his body. He was buried in Harthill churchyard on 18th June 1918. Prior to his funeral, great efforts were made by the Kiveton Park Branch of the Discharged Soldiers' Association to accord the gallant soldier a military funeral. However, their application to the Sheffield authorities was unsuccessful, as both gun carriages were engaged on military funerals that day.

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Nevertheless, an application was made to a local military camp but it was refused.

The funeral was well attended, The 100th Troop Harthill Boy Scouts joined in the procession, and at the graveside, three members of the 68th Troop Wales St. John's Boy Scouts sounded "The Last Post". The chief mourners were; Misses Lily and Sarah Bennett (daughters), Mr. and Mrs. William Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bennett (Langwith), Mr. and Mrs. James Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bennett, Mrs. George. Bennett (Sheffield), Miss Ethel Bennett (Sheffield), Mr. Bertram Bennett, Miss Ivy Bennett, Mr. Willis Bennett, Miss E. Bennett, and many others.

The Labour Corps:

Formed in January 1917, The Corps consisted of some 389,900 men (more than 10% of the total size of the Army) by the Armistice. Of this total, around 175,000 were working in the United Kingdom and the rest in the theatres of war. The Corps was manned by officers and other ranks who had been medically rated below the "A1" condition needed for front line service. Labour Corps units were often deployed for work within range of the enemy guns, sometimes for lengthy periods. In the crises of March and April 1918 on the Western Front, Labour Corps units were employed as emergency infantry. The Corps always suffered from its treatment as something of a second class organisation: for example, the men who died are commemorated under their original regiment, with Labour Corps being secondary. Researching men of the Corps is made extra difficult by this, as is the fact that few records remain of the daily activities and locations of Corps units.

A report in the Worksop Guardian gave George's rank as Corporal. It is possible that on discovery of his age he was rated below "A1" and transferred to the Labour Corps as a Non-Commissioned Officer.