

**Grange U3A Family and Social History
Group Project on the Grange WW1 War Memorial**



**A short biography in commemoration of
Hubert Podmore DSO 1887- 1917**

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This biography has been written in support of a project on the names on Grange War Memorial by the Grange U3A Family & Social History Group. The full version can be obtained from the author.

Hubert Podmore was born 21st November 1887 at Eden Mount or Charney Hall School where his father was the headmaster and owner.

Hubert was known at school as “Podders” and as “Bertie” by his mother Matilda “Mattie” Heale who had married his father George on 10th August 1882 at St James’, Piccadilly, Westminster.

Hubert was educated at Charney Hall School, Grange over Sands and left in 1901 for Rugby School with a senior Scholarship. Hubert became Head of Collins House. Being good at sport he was in the Running VIII and Cricket XXII. He also was the first holder of the Lees Knowles Leaving Exhibition.

Hubert entered Trinity College¹, Oxford, taking a BA First Class in Classical Moderations and a Third Class in the Final Classical School². His social life at Trinity was full, playing football for Trinity as well as taking a prominent part in College life, including the Mission at Stratford. He was a contemporary of many famous people from Rugby and Trinity, including Rupert Brooke with whom he was a close friend.

In the autumn of 1910 Hubert returned to Rugby as a master where he quickly established his reputation as a fair and honest man. He acted as the Tutor of Dickinson’s House and soon won the boy’s respect. So much so that they presented a portrait³ to be hung in Temple Speech Room at Rugby after his death.

As a man of his times his sense of duty and commitment induced him to take a Commission in the School Officer Training Corps (O.T.C.). He joined the Rugby School Contingent, Junior Division, OTC on the 31st March 1911 as a 2nd Lieutenant and was promoted to Lieutenant on the 13th July 1913⁴.

On the 14th August 1914 Hubert applied for a Commission in his preferred regiment, the Royal Warwickshires. This request was backed by his old

headmaster A A Davies who stated that he had known Hubert for four years⁵ and was of good moral character. Hubert was then living at 9 Horton Crescent, Rugby but all his correspondence was to be addressed to Bean Hill, Twyford, Berkshire.



**Conrad, Freda and Hubert (back) George and Mathilda Podmore
Charney Hall, Grange over Sands c1916*.**

On the 22nd September 1914 Hubert was Gazetted⁶ as a Temporary Second Lieutenant in the 6th Northamptonshire Regiment under Lt. Colonel George Eustace Ripley, an old Rugbeian (OR) like Hubert.

Hubert was promoted in quick succession to Temporary Lieutenant (9th November) and then Temporary Captain on the 22nd November 1914. I think it was at this point that Hubert obtained command of his own Company, probably "D" Company.

After nearly ten months training in the UK, Hubert was sent to France as a Captain with the 6th Battalion Northants Regiment. The regiment occupied a relatively "quiet" sector of the Western Front at Fricourt/Carnoy near Albert on the Somme from August 1915 to May 1916.

From this point onwards Hubert is fully engaged in the War and is soon being Mentioned in Dispatches (M.I.D.) between December 1915 and May 1915. He was also awarded the DSO on the 31st May 1915 *“For conspicuous gallantry and ability during a night attack by the enemy, It was largely due to Captain Podmore that his company held its own in spite of very heavy bombardment, and repelled every attack”*

According to the Northants War Diary⁷, the battalion was in a close support role in the assault on Pommiers Redoubt on the 1st July 1916 with Hubert commanding “D” Company.

The Northants then assumed the main assault battalion role on Trones Wood on the 14th July 1916. Hubert was wounded in the back by shrapnel and refused to be evacuated until ordered to do so by his CO Lieutenant Colonel Ripley on the 15th July. Hubert was Gazetted again in October 1916 as Temporary Major effective from 15th July 1916. The three month delay may indicate that Hubert was promoted to fill the post left by Major G M Clark who was killed on the 14th July.



Thiepval Memorial- The area where Hubert was serving in 1916

On the 26th September 1916 the Battalion was in a support role at the assault on Thiepval, although Hubert was not in this action he was again Mentioned in

Dispatches for operational service between the 19th May 1915 and the 18th November 1916.

After medical leave in England Hubert returned to France and rejoined the Battalion on the 7th October 1916 as second-in-Command to Lieutenant Colonel S H Charrington who had taken over from Lt. Col. Ripley after he died of injuries received at Trones Wood.

Hubert was apparently not involved in the action at Boom Ravine on the 17th February 1917 since CO's and 2nd in Commands were rarely allowed on the field of battle together. His CO Lt Col. Meyricke from the 11th Fusiliers was killed during the attack.

Hubert was also engaged in the following actions:

1. Engagement at Croissilles probing the Hindenburg Line on the 20th March 1917.
2. The attack on Hindenburg Line at Cherisy as support role in the morning and primary role in second attack in the afternoon of 3rd May 1917.
3. The battle at Glencorse Wood, 3rd Ypres 10th August 1917.

Hubert was also Mentioned in Dispatches as Temporary Major of the Northampton Regiment (operations between 18/11/1916 and 31/05/1917), Gazetted 25th May 1917. He had temporary command of the 6th Battalion whilst CO Lt Col. Reginald Turner on was on leave or absent during April- May and the 3rd -17th July 1917.

Wounded in August 1917, Hubert refused a six month posting in England because he could not bear to leave his men. Even so Hubert was sent home on medical leave to recover both physically and mentally from the horrors he had faced at the Front

During this period Hubert took temporary duty in a Cadet Company in his own College at Oxford. He was recalled in December to take command of the 12th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. He had only been in command for eight days when he was accidentally killed by explosion of mortar ammunition, whilst watching a trench mortar practice at Ploven, Flanders. Six other soldiers were also killed in the same explosion⁸.

Hubert was buried at Haringhe (Bandagehm) Military Cemetery, Belgium.

WAR DIARY		Army Form C. 2113.	
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.			
(Erase heading not required.)			
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
Vimy Camp HARINGHE.	30th		Major G.L. Harrison reported from the Senior Officer's school Algherhot.
	31st	11am	Major H. Podmore D.S.O. was killed by an explosion of Trench mortar ammunition whilst the Trench mortar Battery of the Brigade was practising fire against low flying aeroplanes. Major G.L. Harrison was wounded at the same time. Six other ranks of the Battalion attached to the Trench Mortar Battery were also killed at the same time.
	3.30		Court of enquiry opened re explosion at Trench Mortar Battery. Members from this Battalion Captain V.D. Corbett. Captain G.C. Moran as senior officer took over command of the Battalion.

J.W. News
.....Lt. & 6/Adjt.
for C.O. 12th Bn. Middlesex Regiment.

The extract from the War Diary of the 12th Manchester Regiment. which describes the accident in which Hubert was killed.



King George V inspecting a mortar exercise. This picture clearly shows the close proximity of soldiers to the mortars. In the accident with Hubert, the number of casualties indicates they were all close by as the ammunition exploded probably prematurely.



Haringhe (Bandahem) Military Cemetery, Belgium

The details below come from the Grange over Sands Parish Magazine⁹ of February 1918 which recorded a memorial service at St Paul's Church, Grange, on Thursday 10th January 1918 as follows:

IN MEMORIAM

On January 10th, a large and sympathetic congregation was present at a Memorial Service for Lt.- Col. Hubert Podmore, who was killed on December 31st by the explosion of ammunition; and laid to rest two days later at Haringhe in Belgium. The prayers were taken by the Rev. Godfrey-Smith, Rural Dean of Cartmel. The first lesson out of Wisdom III was read by the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth.

Dr. David, Headmaster of Rugby, had hoped to be present, but was unable to get away; he sent, however, a very beautiful appreciation of his late colleague's work and worth. This was read by the Vicar, who also bore personal testimony to the high ideals which Col. Podmore had, and to great value of the fine example he had left of an upright, keen and zealous soldier, who served his God as earnestly and faithfully as he served King and Country.

The Rev. Carrick Deakin (an "Old Boy") read the Charney Hall Roll of Honour, containing the names of 21 Old Boys who have fallen in this war.

The choir sang three favourite hymns- "For all the Saints who from their labours rest," "Jesu, lover of my soul," and "How bright those glorious spirits shine." Also the 46th Psalm. Mr George Rathbone rendered the Funeral March most impressively.

The greatest sympathy is felt, not only in Grange, but throughout a very wide district, for both Mr and Mrs Podmore and their family. With them we mourn

*... "The soldier whose fight is done,
"Who strove with his face to the morning sun
"Up and up to his God."*



Battlefield Cross for Hubert Podmore DSO 1917.

The battlefield cross for Hubert now resides in St. Paul's Church, Grange over Sands. These crosses were constructed by the regimental carpenters and

planted on the day of the field burial. Hubert's cross is one of only two hundred and fifty existing in Britain, of which nine are in Cumbria¹⁰

This biography is an abridged version of the full story of Hubert Podmore. I have found the whole experience of researching Hubert very moving. He was a man of modest manner, fine intellect and an amazing leader of men in a world of conflict and uncertain futures for its inhabitants. Had he survived, I am sure he would have been an inspiration to many. His ability to communicate with humour, perception and sensitivity under the most arduous of conditions, shows to me what an exceptional man he was.

David Clapp
10th March 2015

Acknowledgements.

I would like to express my deep thanks to Jill Pritchard*, the daughter of Conrad Podmore for allowing me to use family pictures to illustrate this biography. I would also thank Frances Limbrey for her help with material from St Paul's Church magazine archives.

Sources

1. University Intelligence, 19-12-1905. Oxford, 18-12. Elections to Trinity College, Open Classical Exhibition, H. Podmore of Rugby
2. University Intelligence, 28-10-1910. BA to H. Podmore, Trinity College.
3. Rugby School portrait commissioned by old boys. This is the picture on the cover of this biography.
4. London Gazette 29th June 1913.
5. War service record document H Podmore.
6. London Gazette 22nd September 1914.
7. 6th Northants Regiment (WO 95-2044-1-3)
8. This report is not absolutely clear as to what had caused the explosion. A clue may lie in the fact that they were practicing against low flying aircraft. Whether these aircraft were English or German is not stated. It would seem that if using live ammunition then the practice was against German aircraft. Family memories say that someone dropped a grenade- most probably a short fuse mortar shell.
German pilots had developed techniques of bombing the trenches and installations at low level which was causing a high casualty rate. The only defences against this low level attack were rifles or machine guns. This response was largely ineffectual, so the idea of using trench mortars to lob mortars into the air in front of the aircraft was looked at by both British and Commonwealth units. Unfortunately there were several pitfalls in employing this tactic in the trench area. The first was the unreliability of the fuses to ensure they exploded at the right height and what went up also came down! It was not unknown for the shells to fall back into the trenches with catastrophic results!

9 and 10. Material courtesy of Frances Limbrey.

Author: David Clapp

