CHICHESTER IN THE GREAT WAR

Ship's Corporal Second Class Sydney George Barnett, 30.11.1889 – 15.10.1918
Nicholas Shaw

Introduction

Sydney George Barnett's name can be seen on the Memorial Tablet at Chichester and Horsham Police Stations and I wanted to explore the life and background of this Sussex Policeman.

Sydney George Barnett was born at 15, Jackson's Terrace, Phipps Bridge, Mitcham on 30th November 1889. In the 1901 Census he was living in Vann Lane, Fernhurst where he was described as being a 'nephew'. In the 1911 Census he was a general labourer boarding at Chapel Street, Fernhurst with Job and Emily Burse, farm labourer. He joined the West Sussex Constabulary on 29th May 1911. Sydney George Barnett joined the Royal Navy as a Ship's Corporal Second Class and served on HMS 'Victory' from 13th May 1918 to 11th August 1918 and also HMS 'Achilles' 12th August to 15th October 1918.

HMS 'Achilles' was launched on 17th June 1905 and completed on 22nd April 1907. She joined the 5th Cruiser Squadron in 1907 and made a port visit to Russia in 1908. The ship was later transferred to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron in 1909. 'Achilles' accompanied by a few other ships were sent to reinforce the defences of the Shetland Islands on 2nd August 1914. 'Achilles' missed the Battle of Jutland on 31st May 1916 because she was refitting. The ship was transferred to the North America and West Indies Station in August 1917 for convoy duties. She returned to Britain for a refit between February and December 1918. Sydney joined HMS 'Achilles' on 12th August 1918 and the ship eventually became a training ship for new and existing recruits throughout the whole of 1918. The ship was eventually sold for scrap on 9th May 1921.

Sydney had four children, William H. Stratton Barnett born in March 1913 at East Preston. Sydney J Stratton Barnett born in June 1914. Marian L Stratton Barnett, born at Westbourne in March 1916 and finally Edmund H. Stratton Barnett born in Westbourne in December 1918. Emily who married Job Burse was in fact Sydney's aunt. His mother, also Emily, was the daughter of Emily Burse's sister Sarah who married Henry Barnett.

On 15th October at 12.25am, he died of pneumonia aged 29 and was one of 34 on the sick list at that time. At 5pm on 16th October he was buried at sea. He left a widow Lucy Jane of Police Cottage, Old Fishbourne, near Chichester. He had married Lucy Jane Stratton in 1912 (Midhurst district).

He is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 29, Hampshire, which is situated on Southsea Common. He can be found on the Memorial Tablet at Horsham Police Station, West Sussex.

He was entitled to the Victory Medal and British War Medal.

Notes

The 1918 flu pandemic (January 1918-December 1920) was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic. It infected 500 million people across the world, and resulted in the death of 50 to 100 million. Investigative work by a British team led by virologist John Oxford of St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Royal London Hospital identified a major troop staging and hospital camp in Etaples, France as almost certainly being the centre of the 1918 flu pandemic. The exact death toll from the virus is unknown but the figure in Britain is usually stated to be around 250,000.

Conclusion

Sidney George Barnett's life was cut short by catching pneumonia at a time when pneumonia was to become the deadliest disease to hit the world. He was buried at sea and so is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, at Southsea.

Sources

www.ancestry.co.uk (Family details)

www.cwgc.org (Cemetery details)

https//freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/-thinblueline