

2nd Lieutenant Harold Edward Voelcker

6th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment FWR Prince of Wales Volunteers



Harold Voelcker was born in Kensington, London, son of Dr. John and Mrs. Alice Voelcker. At the time of the 1911 census he was at school, aged 16.

He was educated at Rugby School and Christ's College, Cambridge.

2nd Lieut. Harold Edward Voelcker first served in the Gallipoli campaign, entering that theatre of war on 2nd July 1915. His probate record states he was serving as a 2nd Lieut. 6th Service Bn. of the South Lancashire Regt. attached 7th Service Bn. South Lancashire Regt. when he died on 20th July 1916 during the Battle of the Somme aged 22.

The War diary for the 7th Bn. South Lancashire Regiment for 1st July shows them in trenches NW of Albert and marching across the railway at Mamont bridge then the river Ancre and arriving at the Tara – Usna line. The description at 9.15 am illustrates the scene of massed poppies, a lark ascending and the well-known statue of the Virgin Mother on the spire of the Basilica in Albert.

WAR DIARY			Army Form C. 2118
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY			
(Erase heading not required.)			
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
			Remarks and references to Appendices
TARA-USNA line.		9.15 AM.	<p>Three trees at W. 18. D. 1. 9. The distribution was in depth. Brigade Headquarters was situated in the USNA REBOUOT. The Battalion was in position by 9.15 A.M. From that hour until 2.30 in the afternoon the Battalion lay still and rested. One battery continued firing with a varying intensity, and answering shells could be seen bursting over the British front line. No accurate information of the progress of the opening assault could be obtained; no orders, no intimation of the probable task of the Battalion, were received. The Battalion lay still and waited.</p> <p>The day threw into vivid relief the antagonistic contrast between man and nature. Due west, the valley of the Ancre lay hot and perfect in the sun, its eastern slopes stained scarlet with massed poppies swaying to the breeze. Northwards, could be seen the town of AUTHVILLE WOOD jumbled to the distant view. South west, appeared the roofs of ALBERT and above them the gleaming figure of the Virgin Mother brooding over the town and twisted life below. Overhead, the lark ascended to the sky with its morning song.</p> <p>But through the quietness of the day came the constant restlessness with</p>



The golden statue of the Madonna holding aloft her child was visible from far away and provided an excellent target for enemy artillery. It was damaged in January 1915, when the statue was knocked sideways where the French secured it, leaning at an angle.

A superstition grew up that whoever occupied Albert when the statue finally fell would win the war. Albert passed from French to British control with the Germans taking it during the Spring Offensive in 1918. As the British were well aware that the tower was an excellent observation post, they deliberately targeted it and the statue finally fell.

The town, Basilica and statue were subsequently rebuilt and the golden Madonna, photographed 100 years later, now looks out from the spire as she did in 1916.

Early on 2nd July 1916 the 7th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment moved to the railway cutting SW of Albert.

The record of events and fighting between 3rd and 9th July appears to be missing.

10th to 19th July 1916 records that the 7th Battalion

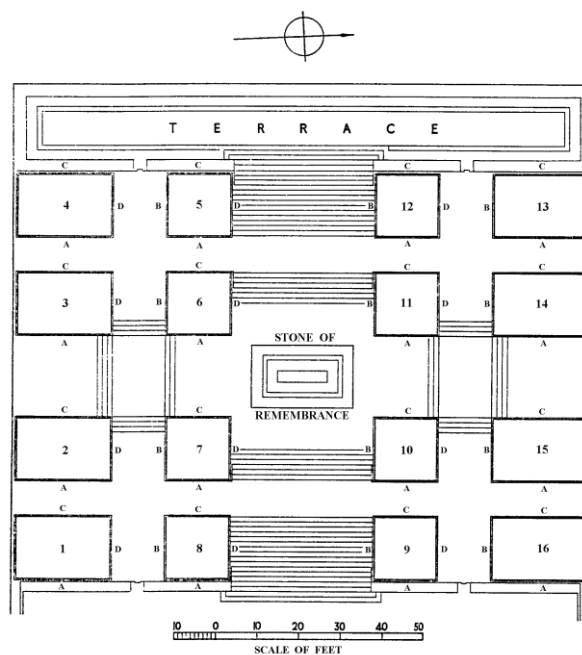
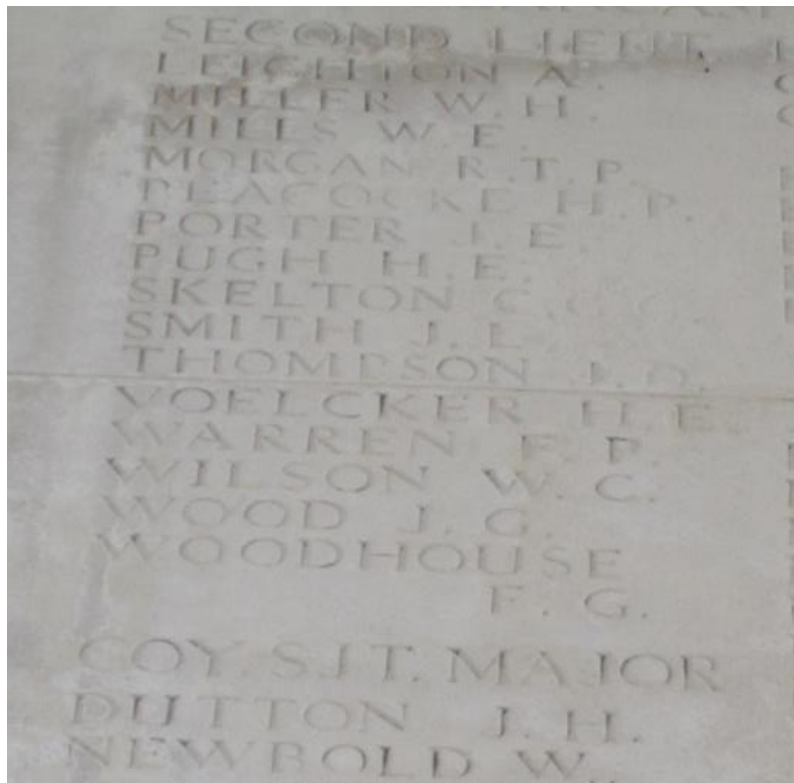
'rested in bivouac on the outskirts of Henencourt Wood. Tents were provided for the Officers and a number of tarpaulins and shelters for the men. There was very little rain during the period but the weather was dull and often cold. Everyone obtained an excellent rest. Training was carried out in physical exercises, bayonet fighting, bomb throwing and Lewis gun instruction.

The diary entries for 20th to 29th are in appendices, not with the main diary, so what happened on 20th July when Harold was killed has not been located.

His parents' address on his CWGC certificate is given as 20 Upper Phillimore Gardens, Kensington, London. His connection with Overton was through the Bevir family, as reported in the Hants and Berks Gazette on Saturday August 5 1916:

'Officers killed in action. Lieut. Raymond Bevir and Lieut. Harold Voelcker.....Son of Dr. and Mrs. Voelcker of London who shared with Lieut. Bevir the fishing box at Hillside, Overton.'

2nd Lieut. Harold Voelcker is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial reference Pier and Face 7A & 7B as a soldier of the Battle of the Somme with no known grave.



THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

THE NUMBERS OF THE PIERS
AND LETTERS OF THE FACES

Medals awarded were the British, Victory and 15 Star.

4/21 1-088

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
V. OELCKER	S. Lancs. R.	2/Lieut	
Harold Edward.			

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	S. Lancs. R. Off. 153	108	} I.V.X/200 dt 1.4.21 NW/8/7819
BRITISH	do	do	
15 STAR	S. Lancs. R. Off. 153	18	
Theatre of War first served in	Gallipoli		
Date of entry therein	2.7.15.		

NW/8/7819 K. 1380

4/21 1-088

Correspondence.

Appn. for medals 25-1-21
 E.F.G. 20-2-21.

Address. 20 Upper Phillimore Gardens.
 London. W-8.

E 1935. (1246) Wt. W 2884-R.P. 6267 1,000m. 17/12/20. E. 6989.