

## Rifleman Herbert Spencer Trafford

Herbert (Bert) Trafford, the son of James Bailey and Hannah Knight, was born about September 1897 in Leek, Staffordshire.

His father, William (1859-1933) married Betsy Eliza Mears (1859-1933) in 1880 and they had 8 children: William (born 1881), Sarah Annie (born 1883), Percy Mears (born 1884), Jessie (born 1886), Rowland James (born 1888), Hilda Betsy (born 1890), Raymond (born 1894) and Herbert (born 1897)



(1)

Census records for 1901, do not find Bert or his parents, although all his surviving siblings can be found. It is not known why this is the case.

In 1911, the family is recorded at Spencer House, Newcastle Road, Leek. His father is a master tailor as is his older brother Percy. Bert is still at school at this time.

**CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.**

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Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
			Wife	Single	Widow	Divorced	Personal Occupation	Industry or Service with which worker is connected	Whether Employed, Unemployed, or Retired	Whether Working as a Householder			
1 William Trafford	Head	52	Married	X	X	X	Master Tailor	270		Employed	Leek	Staffs	
2 Percy Trafford	Wife	52	Married	31	8	7	Master Tailor	270		Employed	Leek	Staffs	
3 Percy Trafford	Son	25	Single				School Teacher	370	Teacher	Unemployed	Leek	Staffs	
4 Jessie Trafford	Daughter	24	Single				School	370		Unemployed	Leek	Staffs	
5 Roland Trafford	Son	23	Single				School	370		Unemployed	Leek	Staffs	
6 Raymond Trafford	Son	14	Single				School	370		Unemployed	Leek	Staffs	
7 Bertha Trafford	Daughter	13	Single				School	370		Unemployed	Leek	Staffs	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

Male	Female	Total
5	2	7

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Garden, W.C., or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count outhouses, outhouses, outhouses, outhouses, or warehouses, office, shop.

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up by the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *William Trafford*

Printed Address: *Newcastle Rd Leek*

The War broke out in 1914 and on 10 November 1915, Bert, who was by then a farmer at Paddock House, Alstonefield, enlisted. He enlisted in Helmsley, Yorkshire into the Yeoman Rifles (King's Royal Rifle Corps). The 21st (Service) Battalion (Yeoman Rifles) were formed in August 1915 from volunteers from the farming communities of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham by the Northern Command. They moved to Duncombe Park at Helmsley.

Bert's enlistment papers show that he was 5' 8.5" and weighed 126lbs. He was of fresh complexion, with light brown hair and blue eyes. His next of kin is recorded William Trafford, his father, of 15 Brook Street, Leek.

In October 1915, the Battalion moved to Aldershot. Whilst there, Bert was punished for being absent without a pass from midnight to 07.45 on 21 February 1916. His punishment for this offence was 4 days confined to barracks.

4 May 1916 the Battalion landed in France, subsequently moving to the Ypres sector and billets near the village of Ballieul for three weeks of training to familiarise them with the arts of trench warfare before they moved into the line for the first time as a fighting unit at Ploegsteert.

Bert was killed in action, in the field, on 24 June 1916, little more than 7 weeks after arriving in France.

Shortly before daylight on the morning of 24 June, Bert was looking over the parapet of his trench towards the enemy lines for any sign of activity. This was the dawn 'stand-to' when a sudden attack by the Germans was a possibility. A sniper, his rifle trained for such an opportunity, took aim and fired. Bert Trafford was shot through the head and died instantly.

He is buried in the Berks Cemetery Extension, Belgium.



(3)

In addition he is remembered on the Nicholson War Memorial in Leek.

News of Bert's death was recorded in the Leek Times dated July 1 1916.

The article included a copy of the letter sent to his parents from his platoon officer, T R Hervey 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. In it he details how Bert died and also expresses what a good man he was and how well liked he was by everyone.

## ROLL OF HONOUR.

### RIFLEMAN BERT TRAFFORD KILLED

The sympathy of the town will be extended to Mr. and Mrs. W. Trafford, Newcastle road, Leek, in the loss of their youngest son, Rifleman Herbert Spencer Trafford, of the 21st King's Royal Rifles, who was killed on Saturday last at the Front.

Rifleman Trafford was a fine young fellow and joined the Army 12 months before he need have done. He was a very keen soldier and nothing could persuade him from going although he was not 19 years of age until last week. He joined in October last and went to France seven weeks ago. Previous to joining he was learning farming with Mr. John Gould, The Paddock Farm, Alstonfield, and had about seven months to serve to complete his indentures.

The following letter shows how he was killed:—

21st. K.R.R.

B.E.F. June 24, 1916.

DEAR MR TRAFFORD.—I hope that before you receive my letter you will have heard from other sources the main fact concerning Rifleman Trafford, of my Platoon, who I understand is your son. Rifleman Trafford to our great regret was killed in action in the early hours of this morning it may be some satisfaction to you to know that he was unconscious from the moment he was hit, and that I fully believe that he was spared all suffering during the short time that he lived after receiving the wound. At the time that he was hit he was looking over the parapet shortly before it began to get light, and he was hit through the head by a chance bullet and died before we could have him carried away from the front line trenches.

Rifleman Trafford was one of the very best men I had in the Platoon, and was much liked by everybody I may say this, I had marked him down for the next lance stripe when a vacancy occurred. I don't think that there is anything else I can tell you. I expect you will also here from one or two of his friends and I can only offer my very sincere sympathy with you in your loss.—Yours truly,

T. R. HERVEY, 2nd Lieut.

During his service he was awarded the Victory medal and the British War Medal

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
TRAFFORD	K.R. Rif. C	Pte	C/12262
Herbert			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	M/101 B8	933	
BRITISH	- do -	- do -	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K 1280.

(5)

Source of information

1. Photograph – [www.nicholsonmemorial.org.uk](http://www.nicholsonmemorial.org.uk)
2. Census 1911 © Ancestry.co.uk
3. Photograph ©- [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)
4. Article © The Leek Times 1 July 1916
5. Medal Card © Ancestry.co.uk