

240941 Private Albert Ernest Parker
5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment

Albert Ernest Parker was born 17 Sep 1881 in Grantham, Lincolnshire, his parents were William Henry and Martha (nee Johnson) Parker. He was their only son but he had eight sisters, he became known as “Jiggy” and he did not marry. In the 1901 Census he is recorded as being a Labourer in a Sewage Works and 1911 as a Woodsawer’s Labourer.



He enlisted, aged 34, around April 1915 at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, he was initially based at Belton Park Camp near Grantham Lincolnshire. The camp was located in the grounds of Belton House.

Jiggy (left-hand one of the two seated) shown above, at Belton Park Camp in early 1915, the camp became the largest WWI Army training base.

In Jul 1915 he moved to a training base at Luton, Bedfordshire in preparation for the battalion’s move to France.



He wrote an undated postcard probably around Jul 1915 –

*14 Platoon
D Company
5 Batt Lincs Regt
Luton Beds*

Dear Flo and Joe and all.

*I am going this weekend so I shall see Gertie and Kitty before they go back. So goodbye all.
xxxxxx for Bernard.*

He wrote another postcard probably from the same address dated 23 Jul 1915 (see photograph below) –

Dear Edie.

*I am sorry I have not wrote but we are under canvas now we are shifting to St Albans.
Goodnight,*



This photograph was on the reverse of the postcard sent to Edie whilst he was at Luton, Jiggy is third from the left on the front row.

Sometime, probably in Aug 1915, he arrived at Rouen, France and he wrote a "YMCA on Active Service" postcard dated 23 Aug 1915 –

*5th Batt Lincs Regt
138 Brigade Infantry
46 Division
Rouen
France*

Dear Flo and Nell.

I am alright up to now. Remember me to Joe and Harold and Mr and Mrs Wilson. You can send me a few fags if you like. So goodbye from Jiggy.

He wrote a "YMCA on Active Service with the British Expeditionary Force" letter dated 10^h Sep 1915 –

*2/5 Lincs Regt
No 6 General Base
Rouen
France*

Dear Flo and Joe and Nell and Harold and all.

I write these few lines to you hoping to find you quite well as it leaves me alright. I received your letter and fags and thank you very much, I should like to see Bernard and Phylis and Kitty and all of you. I seen Joe's name in the Gainsborough News in the fishing match and he was lucky he ought to get first prize he tries well. Remember me to Jackie Whitehead and Mr and Mrs Wilson. I think you would like some postcards I will send some, I shall have to go down town first then I can get some of Rouen. I remain your loving brother. Best love from Jiggy, goodbye all.

Give Bernard this picture it will please him a bit. Remember me to Ethel and it is a long time since I tried to put her in the tub. Goodbye all.

He wrote another "YMCA on Active Service" postcard dated 20 Sep 1915 –

*2/5 Lincs Regt
No 6 General Base
Rouen
France*

Dear Flo and Nell.

I received the parcel on Sunday morning and was very pleased with it. I shall have the salmon for tea today. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Wilson and I hope you are going on alright as I am. I will write a letter when I have a bit more time and I hope you are getting on well. My love to Joe and all I remain your loving brother.

So goodbye all.

His use of the "YMCA on Active Service" postcard shows that at this time he was not in the front line trenches. However he wrote a "Field Service Postcard" dated 3 Oct 1915, this is the standard Army postcard from the front line and just has the message "I am quite well". Unfortunately, it seems that very soon after sending this card he was wounded in the head which was treated at the Rouen Hospital and he was then returned to England for recuperation, he had been in France for just two months.

From the 5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment War Diaries 12th Oct 1915 –

Battalion left Hesdigneul marched to Vermelles with six hours rest on the way. In the evening we took over the trenches in front of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

From the 5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment War Diaries 13th Oct 1915 –

At 2 pm the Battalion attacked the enemy trenches. They passed over the Redoubt and owing to heavy fire took up a position in the Little Willie and North Face. About 6 pm had to retire back to the Redoubt owing to the un-tenability of the former position. This position we held. The Battalion showed the greatest bravery in the attack but suffered very severely, 10 Officers being killed and 12 wounded. Only 160 men returned safely.

We cannot be sure that this was the battle during which Jiggy received his head wound however looking at the War Diaries around the dates of his postcards show this to be very probably when he was injured. The Redoubt mentioned was the Hohenzollern Redoubt near Auchy-les-Mines and "Little Willie" and "North Face" were trenches.

The official history of the war suggested that "The fighting on the 13th–14th October had not improved the general situation in any way and had brought nothing but useless slaughter of infantry. General Sir Douglas Haig thought it might be possible to launch another attack on 7 November but heavy rain and accurate German shelling during the second half of October finally persuaded him to abandon the attempt. The 46th Division lost a total of 3763 men.

From the Grantham Journal 23rd Oct 1915 –

Pte A Parker of the 5th Lincolns (Territorials) son of Mr and Mrs Parker 9 North Parade has been admitted to No 12 Stationary Hospital suffering from a gunshot wound in the head. Two years ago Pte Parker worked in the saw mills of Messrs R Hornsby and Sons. He then proceeded to Gainsborough where seven months ago he enlisted. He has been in France two months. He was only in the trenches about three weeks. There are no further details to hand.

From the Grantham Journal 30th Oct 1915 –

“Last week we recorded that Pte A Parker (5th Lincolns TF) 59 North Parade, has received a gunshot wound to the head. We now learn that an operation was successfully performed at a hospital in Rouen. Last Saturday he reached Bristol Royal Infirmary, and in a letter home he says he is going on a well as can be expected.

Whilst in hospital he wrote an undated letter to Flo and Joe –

*No 25 Bed C Ward
2nd Southern Hospital
Bristol Royal Infirmary
Bristol*

Dear Flo & Joe.

I write these few lines to you hoping to find you quite well as I am going on well it is just right here. I had the stitches took out on Wednesday and am getting on fine how is Mr and Mrs Wilson going on now I hope well.

We went to the theatre on Wednesday to see the Cinema star a play and it was good. On Saturday we had a party from the Hippodrome and they gave us a good turn. I went to church yesterday morning and then we had some visitors in the afternoon. I had some Grantham people to see me and they brought me the Grantham Journal and my photo was in. Did you know Mr Innocent from Grantham he came to see me and brought me some eggs and some cake and some stamps. Last week I had Mr Letteren they used to help that drapers shop end of Guildhall St on High St.

I must conclude short letter this as the Doctor is just coming round so goodbye all and kiss Bernard and Kitty and hit Ethel on back of the neck for me and goodbye all.

At some point probably in mid-1916 he returned to active duty in France. He wrote more Field Service Postcards dated 21 Jul 1916, 28 Aug 1916, 19 May 1917 and 17 Jun 1917, all with just the message “I am quite well”. But just nine days after the last card Jiggy was killed in action by an explosion of a mine, on 26 Jun 1917, he was 36 years old.

Extracts From the 5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment War Diaries 26 Jun 1917 Cite Desgarennnes –

*Warm day. Report of Canadians attacking the enemy on our right.
An Officer wounded, a CSM killed and a CSM wounded in dugout explosion, a suspected booby trap. Very little shelling at the time, dugout was captured the night before.
Total casualties 6 killed, 32 wounded.*

Extracts From the 5th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment War Diaries 26 Jun 1917 –

During the day 6 more dugouts blew up, no casualties as they had been vacated. Dugouts were examined by the Australian Tunnelling Company and it was established that mines had been placed in the roofs, the system of firing being by means of a wire passing through an acid bath.

From the Grantham Journal 21 Jul 1917 –

“Pte AE Parker of Grantham.

Mr and Mrs Parker of 59 North Parade, have this week received the sad news of the death of their only son Pte AE Parker of the Lincolnshire Regt. The intimation was conveyed in a letter from the Commanding Officer expressing the regard the Company held for Pte Parker, their regret at his loss, and deep sympathy for the bereaved parents. Instantaneous death was caused by the explosion of a mine. Prior to the war, Pte Parker was in Messrs R. Hornsby and Sons Saw Mills and for a time was at Gainsborough. He enlisted in the Lincolnshire Regiment in Apr 1915 and was wounded in Oct of that year, particulars being published in the “Journal” together with a portrait of the deceased.”

All the letters and postcards were sent to Mrs Shelbourne, (his sister Flo) at 40 Willoughby St, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.

Jiggy survived a bullet in the head in 1915 but was killed by a booby trap in 1917, he is buried in the Loos British Cemetery in the Pas de Calais, France and is commemorated on the “Roll of Honour” war memorial inside St Wulfram’s Church in Grantham, Lincolnshire. It is very probable that Jiggy was initially buried in one of the smaller temporary cemeteries around the village of Loos-en-Gohelle and after the Armistice was re-interred in the much larger Loos British Cemetery.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to locate Jiggy’s Army Service Record; it is assumed that this was lost in 1940 in a fire during an air raid that destroyed some 60% of service records from WW1. Records of War Medals do survive and these show that he was awarded the usual three, the 1914-15 Star, the 1914-18 British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal. These three were affectionately known as “Pip, Squeak and Wilfred”; the whereabouts of Jiggy’s medals is unknown.

The individuals mentioned in his letters and postcards are -

Joe and Flo are his eldest sister and brother-in-law, Joseph Samuel Shelbourne and Florence Johnson Shelbourne (nee Parker).

Gertie, Kitty and Edie are his sisters, Gertrude, Catherine Ann, and Edith Louise Parker.

Nell and Harold are his sister and brother-in-law, Ellen Elizabeth and Harold Thompson.

Bernard is his nephew Bernard Joseph Shelbourne, Ethel is his niece Ethel Florence Shelbourne, children of Flo and Joe and Phylis is also a niece, the daughter of his sister Ellen Elizabeth and Harold Thompson.