



Second Lieutenant

Lewis Charles Burford Sheppard

3rd (Reserve) Battalion Somerset Light Infantry
2nd Battalion Duke of Wellingtons West Riding
Regiment
The Royal Flying Corps

1896 – 1917



Life in the Community

Lewis's family lived at Brook House, Penhow. His grandfather was Rev Francis Burford Leonard, Rector of Kemys Inferior and Perpetual Curate of St Peter's Church, Llandevaud. His mother, Gertrude Elizabeth Leonard, married Herbert Charles Sheppard, a colliery engineer, in 1895. Lewis had two sisters and one brother. Faith Elizabeth Sheppard, Joyce Sheppard, and his brother Leonard Charles Sutton Sheppard who served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander by 1949.

Lewis was educated at St Peter's School, Weston-Super-Mare and St Peter's College, Radley, Abingdon, Berkshire. He arrived at Radley in September 1910 as a member of B Social Stone's (Boarding House). The 1911 Census shows he was a boarder there aged 14 years. He left the college in September 1914 when he turned 18 years old.

Military Service

Lewis joined the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion Somerset light infantry in September 1914. This training unit had been formed in Taunton Somerset at the outbreak of the First World War and it remained in the UK throughout the war. The unit moved to Devonport staying there until November 1917 then going to Londonderry, finally moving to Belfast in April 1918.

Lewis was Gazetted on 8th January 1915 as a Second Lieutenant and was then attached to the 2nd Battalion Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment effective from 12th May 1915.

The 2nd Battalion had landed at Le Havre as part of the 13th Brigade in the 5th Division on 16th August 1914. It first saw action at the Battle of Mons and in 1915 were involved in the Second Battle of Ypres. This battle, for control of the strategic Flemish town of Ypres in western Belgium, had begun on 22nd April 1915 and was

fought until 25th May 1915. The battle had commenced with a surprise German attack using poison gas against French North African forces holding defences near Ypres. It was the first mass use by Germany of poison gas on the Western Front. Both sides rushed reserves in and the battle developed into the second epic in that area. Reports state that the number of men that were either killed, wounded or missing were 87,223 from the British Army and Commonwealth Forces and 35,000 from the German Forces.

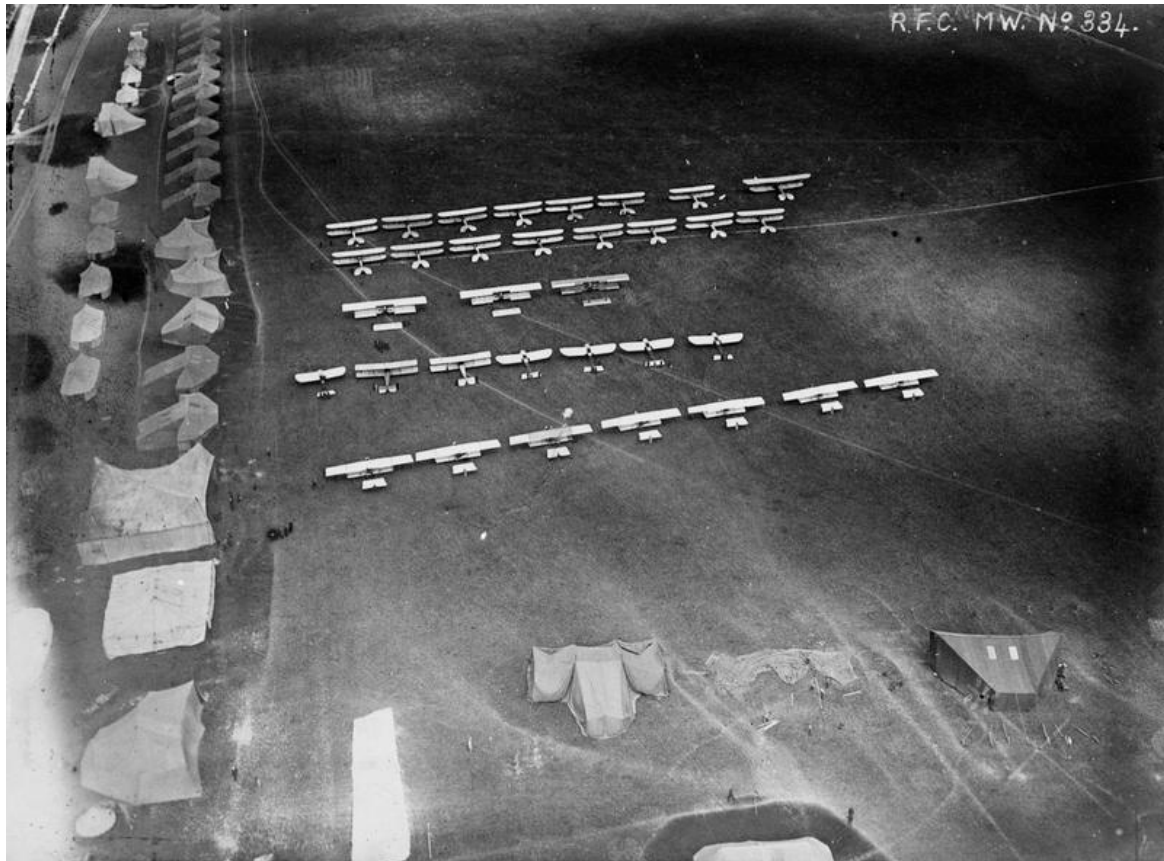
Although roundly condemned by the Allies as barbaric and reprehensible, sentiments echoed by many neutral nations, the Allies quickly developed their own form of gas warfare, with the British releasing gas canisters at Loos at the end of September 1915. All the allied countries had made extensive use of poison gas by the close of the war.

The Second Battle of Ypres is also notable for being the engagement during which Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD composed the famed poem "In Flanders Fields".

Reorganising during the summer as additional troops became available, the British soon took over the front as far south as the Somme. As troops were shifted, General Joseph Joffre, the overall French commander, sought to renew the offensive in Artois along with an assault in Champagne. Recognising the obvious signs of impending attack, the Germans spent the summer strengthening their trench system, ultimately constructing a line of supporting fortifications three miles deep.

In August 1915 Lewis was injured and subsequently invalided home.

Once fit in early 1916 Lewis re-joined the Somerset Light infantry then transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in August 1916. Following training, he gained his pilot's licence in March 1917 and joined No. 32 Squadron RFC. The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was the air arm of the British Army before and during the First World War, until it merged with the Royal Naval Air Service on 1 April 1918 to form the Royal Air Force. During the early part of the war, the RFC supported the British Army by artillery co-operation and photographic reconnaissance. This work gradually led RFC pilots into aerial battles with German pilots and later in the war included the strafing of enemy infantry and emplacements, the bombing of German military airfields and later the strategic bombing of German industrial and transportation facilities.



No. 32 Squadron was formed as part of the Royal Flying Corps on 12 January 1916 at Netheravon and moved to France as a fighter squadron equipped with Airco DH.2s in May 1916. The squadron continued to fly patrols over the Western Front, including over the Somme and Arras battlefields, for a year before beginning to re-equip with the Airco DH 5, specialising in ground attack missions.

At the start of the First World War the RFC consisted of five squadrons – one observation balloon squadron (RFC No 1 Squadron) and four aeroplane squadrons. These were first used for aerial spotting on 13 September 1914, but only became efficient when they perfected the use of wireless communication at Aubers Ridge on 9 May 1915. Aerial photography was attempted during 1914, but again only became effective the next year. Parachutes were not available to pilots of the RFC's heavier than air craft.

Parachuting from balloons and aircraft, with very few accidents, had been popular for several years before the war. Although parachutes were issued to the crews of observation balloons, the higher authorities in the RFC and the Air Board were opposed to the issuing of parachutes to pilots of heavier-than-air craft. It was felt at the time that a parachute might tempt a pilot to abandon his aircraft in an emergency rather than continuing the fight. The parachutes of the time were also heavy and cumbersome, and the added weight was frowned upon by some experienced pilots as it adversely affected aircraft with already marginal performance.

The Airco DH.2 was a single-seat biplane "pusher" aircraft which operated as a fighter during the First World War. The DH.2 was the first effectively armed British single-seat fighter and enabled Royal Flying Corps pilots to counter the "Fokker Scourge" that had given the Germans the advantage in the air in late 1915. Until the British developed a synchronisation gear to match the German system, pushers such as the DH.2 and the F.E.2b carried the burden of fighting and escort duties.



The DH.2 had sensitive controls and at a time when service training for pilots in the RFC was very poor it initially had a high accident rate, gaining the nickname "The Spinning Incinerator", but as familiarity with the type increased, it was recognised as very manoeuvrable and relatively easy to fly. The rear-mounted rotary engine made the DH.2 easy to stall, but also made it highly manoeuvrable.

As 1917 dawned the Allied Air Forces felt the effect of the German Air Force's increasing superiority in both organisation and equipment (if not numbers). The recently formed Jastas, which were hunting groups comprised of approximately 12 fighter aircraft. It was their job to hunt down and attack British and French aircraft crossing over the front-line trenches into German territory. They also provided protection for German two-seaters sent across the lines on reconnaissance and bombing missions inflicting very heavy losses on the RFC's obsolescent aircraft, culminating in Bloody April, and the lowest point of the RFC's fortunes in First World War.

To support the Battle of Arras which began on 9 April 1917, the RFC deployed 25 squadrons, totalling 365 aircraft, a third of which were fighters (scouts). The British lost 245 aircraft with 211 aircrew killed or missing & 108 as prisoners of war. The German Air Services lost just 66 aircraft from all causes.

On 21st April 1917 whilst flying in support of the Battle of Arras Lewis was killed in action.

Name		Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
SHEPPARD		Som L. I.	2/ds.	
L. C. B.		att. Yorks L. I.		
<i>Lewis Charles Burford</i>		att. R. F. C.		
Medal.	Det.	Days	Remarks.	
Victoria	Som L.I. off. HQ	109	KIA A 21.4.17	
Barrow	-do-	-do-		
15 Bars	Som L.I. Off HQ	17	I.V.X/1345 dt 12.4.21 EF/8/4186	
Theatre of War first served in		France		
Date of entry therein		May 1915		
<i>EF/8/4186</i>				

Medal Entitlement



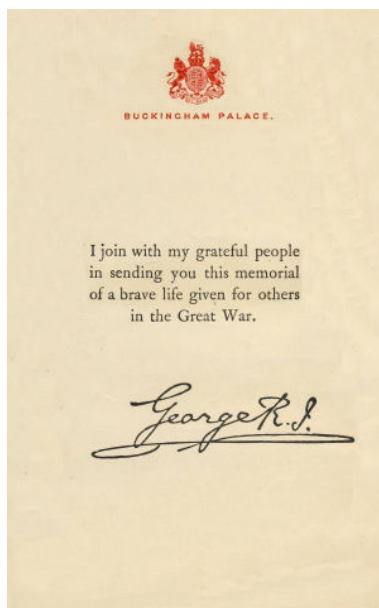
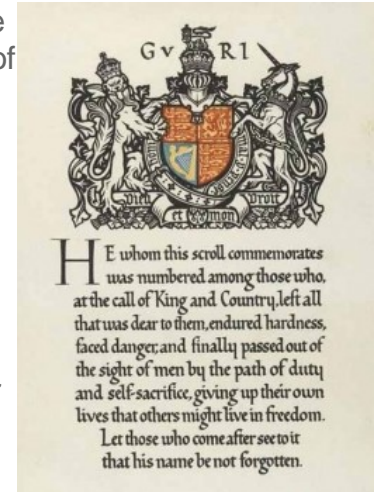
Second Lieutenant Lewis Charles Burford Sheppard's medal entitlement was the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

In the 1920's when the First World War medals were issued they were commonly referred to as "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred". It coincided with a popular comic strip published by the Daily Mirror newspaper which first appeared on 12TH May 1919. Pip was the dog, Squeak the penguin and Wilfred the young rabbit. For some reason the

three names of the characters became associated with the three campaign medals being issued at that time to many thousands of returning servicemen, and they stuck.

The medals were issued to the fallen serviceman or woman's legatees if a Will existed. If no Will existed, they were issued to the next-of-kin in the order of precedence laid down in Army Order 256 of 1917.

This Scroll accompanied the medals of servicemen and women who fell in the War and carried the full Name, Rank and Number beneath the last line of the script.



The Bronze Memorial Plaque was issued to the next of kin of servicemen or women who had fallen in the Great War. It just had the recipient's name cast in the box above the lion's head no rank was given as it was intended to show equality in their sacrifice. 1,355,000 plaques were issued, which used a total of 450 tonnes of bronze, 600 of these plaques were issued to women. Distribution started in November 1919 and they continued to be issued into the 1930s to commemorate people who died as a consequence of the war. The circular shape and coin-like appearance soon contributed to the nickname of this memorial plaque becoming widely known as the "Dead Man's Penny", the "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny".



Lewis Charles Burford Sheppard is buried at Varennes in France. This Commonwealth War Grave Commission cemetery is dedicated to 1,219 burials from the First World War.



Understandably, as the family had lived in the neighbouring village of Penhow and undoubtedly worshipped at St Peters Church Llandeud, where his grandfather was the vicar, Lewis is commemorated together with his sister in the churchyard of St Peters Church.

Lewis is also commemorated at St Peters College, Radley which has a [war memorial](#) consisting of several parts:

- A War Memorial Arch, engraved with the name and regiment of every casualty known by 1919. It was designed by Sir Thomas Jackson, the foundation stone laid in 1921, and opened by Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson on May 31st 1922;
- Eight War Memorial Albums, containing a photograph and notes about each boy;
- A War Memorial Fund, established in 1917 to provide scholarships to the sons of Old Radleians killed in the War. By the end of the First World War, Radley had lost 219 boys, teachers and servants.

The Newport Cenotaph was unveiled by Lord Tredegar in June 1923 to commemorate the local people who died in active service in the First World War. It now also commemorates people who died in subsequent wars. There are no names on the memorial but Lewis's name appears on the listing.