

## Gunner Herbert Boots 1884 – 1952 95692 Royal Garrison Artillery



Bert Boots, despite being married with one child and another on the way, did not wait to be conscripted into the Army during the First World War, but enlisted at the end of 1915, signing his attestation papers on the 15<sup>th</sup> December. (*Conscription commenced the following February with the Military Service Act 1916*).

Just after the birth of his son Herbert Alfred on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1916, Bert was posted for duty as a gunner to Plymouth, on the 8<sup>th</sup> June. As far as can be ascertained all of Bert's military service was in the Plymouth area, particularly at the Granby Barracks, Devonport, until his final discharge on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1919.

Bert was assigned to the B.E.F. Mesopotamia which embarked on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1917, in the event though he was seriously ill in hospital at this time. Bert had been taken ill with pneumonia and pleurisy the previous March and had been hospitalised for most of March, April, May and June. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1917, Bert was transferred to the Woodstock Convalescence Hospital in Epsom, Surrey, where he remained until 26<sup>th</sup> June. While he was at Epsom, Bert was visited by his wife Rose with their 7 year old daughter Doris, Young Bert being left in Handsworth, Birmingham, with relatives.

From Epsom, Bert was transferred back to the Granby Billeting Centre, Granby Barracks, Devonport, where because he was not fit enough for active service, he remained until his discharge. He did have another short spell in the Devonport Military Hospital about October 1918 with an ear infection.

In civilian life, Bert was a Costing Clerk with a large engineering company, and it is assumed he was employed in some sort of clerical capacity for his remaining 2 years in the army.

Prior to his discharge on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1919, Bert was assessed for a disability pension by several Army Medical Boards. His details are listed as follows: -

Height	5 foot 9 inch (175.3 cm)
Weight	145 lbs (65.8 kg)
Expanded Chest	38 inch (96.5 cm)
Expansion	2.1/2 inch (6.35 cm)

The Medical Board concluded that his general debility and shortness of breath was caused by the pneumonia and pleurisy and that Bert was disabled, but at less than 20% disability, he was granted a pension which was to be reviewed 6 months after his discharge on 22/4/1919.

On his discharge, Bert resumed his employment at Tangye's Engineering Works, Cornwall Road, Staffordshire, and remained there until his retirement age 65 in 1949. Bert only enjoyed a short retirement, he had needed to be careful of his health all his life, no doubt caused by the illness during his army service and he died 1952 at the age of 68. This was a young age for his relatively long lived family. His father lived to 83, his mother to 85, his brother Charles to 78 and his sister Mary Ellen to 87, while his children Doris and Bert are still living at 99 and 93 respectively.

One person who was very pleased to see her father come home, was his daughter Doris, who had been told that if she was a good girl during the war, she would get a doll's pram for her much loved dolly, when her father came home. In the event she was told that they could not afford it. 90 years later, she is still peeved about this. Here is a photograph of Doris, about 1918, with the aforementioned Dolly.



Alan S. Parr. November 2009