

Albert John Dover

Private G/10905, 26th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment

Albert John Dover's birth was registered in the last quarter of 1879 in Amersham and he was baptised on 7 December at St Mary's, Amersham. His parents were John and Emily Dover, both born in Amersham. In the 1891 Census John's occupation was a groom (domestic) and Emily was a laundress. Their home was in Union Street, Amersham, and Albert John (aged 11) was the oldest child living at home. Two other siblings: Valentine F. Dover (6) and George H. (3) were also listed. John Dover's brother William, a farm labourer, was living with them. At the time of the 1901 Census, John and Emily were still living in Union Street and John was still a groom. Albert John was single, living at home, aged 21. His occupation was stated as brewer's labourer, and he almost certainly worked for Weller's Brewery, the largest employer in Amersham. Valentine F Dover (16), a gardener, had moved next door as a boarder, but George H. Dover (13) was living at home. William Dover, John's brother, then a general labourer (49) was still in residence. In addition, a boarder, 28 year old Alfred H. Wright from Kensington, a self-employed horse-breaker, was part of the household. Union Street changed its name to Whielden Street. The family had not moved house.

By the time of the 1911 Census, the family were living at 36 Whielden Street, Amersham, and John Dover, a widower aged 55, was still employed as a groom. Emily Dover had died in 1909 aged 52. Neither Albert John (31) nor his brother George H (24) (called Harry) had married. Albert John's occupation was described as general labourer and Harry's as a gardener (domestic).



*36 Whielden Street, Amersham,
photographed in June 2013*

John Dover was a tenant in a cottage 136 Whielden Street, which was part of the Shardeloes Estate. It came up for auction, along with about half the houses in the old town, on 31 May 1928. The dwelling (lot 85) was described as a cottage with a garden at the rear. It was situated on the west side of the street and was built of brick with a tiled roof. It had a living room, scullery, two bedrooms and a ground floor room which was 'in Hand'. Water was laid on to the property and there was a shed in the garden. The tenant John Dover paid an annual rent of £4.19s.6d.

John Dover died in Amersham in 1933, aged 76.

Also in the 1928 auction was a cottage (lot 87) 128 Whielden Street, occupied by H.G.Dover (Albert's brother Harry.) He was employed on the Shardeloes estate and paid no rent for his cottage.

In Albert's Will, he named his father John Dover as beneficiary at the address 136 Whielden Street.

Army service - Albert Dover enlisted with the **Middlesex Regiment** in London (date unknown). He was assigned to the 26th Battalion (Pioneers, 3rd Public Works Service Btn), which became part of the **British Salonika Force**, under the command of Lieutenant General George Milne. The battalion had been formed in 1915 at Alexandra Palace. In July-August 1916 they embarked for Salonika, arriving on 24 August. The battalion was transferred to the 27th Division and saw action along the Bulgarian Border, along the Macedonian Front. At the beginning of October 1916, the British, in co-operation with their allies on other parts of the front, began operations along the River

Struma towards Serres. As a Pioneer Btn, the 26th would be involved in building infrastructure in this remote area with few roads. A considerable amount of work would have to be done before any movement of troops could take place. The *War Diaries*¹ for the month of February 1917 are not very informative, but give details of works carried out by the Pioneers along roads to villages like Sakavca and Dimitric, (See map in the section on Salonika). An approach road to the Gudeli Bridge across the River Struma was built, wells were dug, dumps of construction materials were made along the route and a new Battle H.Q. was constructed at Komarjan, on the River Struma, plus another at Lahana. It may be assumed that the enemy was firing on the working companies, as Albert John Dover was killed on 27 February 1917. He was killed in action, but there are no details of how he died.

Although the *War Diaries* give no indication of casualties, the records of the **Field Ambulance Stations** give very graphic accounts of the weather conditions in early 1917 and the poor health of the soldiers. From 11 January, there was heavy rain, and the River Struma overflowed its banks causing extensive flooding for half a mile either side, making the evacuation of casualties very difficult. Many dug-outs were flooded. On 24 January there was a hard frost, then several inches of snow fell, followed by heavy rain and strong winds. More snow fell in February and sledges made from the chassis of wheeled stretchers were used to move casualties. Sanitation was a severe problem, leading to sickness amongst the troops. Larvae and pupae of mosquitoes (*Anopholis*) were found in great numbers in all pools and ditches in the village. An anti-malarial methods conference was convened. It was in these conditions that Albert John Dover died, aged 38 years.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.

Albert John Dover
is remembered with Honour
Salonika (Lembet Road) Military Cemetery, Greece, (Grave ref.833)



Commonwealth War Graves Commission photograph.

The cemetery is on the northern outskirts of Salonika (now Thessalonika), on the west side of the road to Serres. Salonika was the base for the British Salonika Force, and from time to time it contained eighteen general and stationary hospitals

There are now 1,648 Empire servicemen from the First World War commemorated in this cemetery.

¹ *War Diaries of the 26th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment* – TNA ref. WO95/4885. Also contains the records of the 81st and 82nd Field Ambulance stations.