

Bert Line

Private 4726, 60th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Bert Line was born January or February 1896 to Harry Line (43) and his 39 year old wife Rose Eleanor (née Cook) in Amersham, Buckinghamshire and was baptised on 16 February 1896 at the Parish Church of St Mary's in Old Amersham. Father Harry was 25 when he married Rose (21) in Bethnal Green, St Jude, Tower Hamlets on 1 January 1884 and their fathers (Bert's grandfathers) were James Line, a wheelwright and Edward Cook a farm labourer. At the time of the 1901 Census the family were living at The Broadway, Amersham. Bert aged 5 had three older brothers listed; Robert (7), Leonard Cecil (11) and Edward William (13) and a sister Lillie (16) plus, at least, a further sister Ann Elburn (an independent family). Harry Line was a self-employed coach builder.

By the time of the 1911 Census the family had moved to Pineapple Road, Amersham Common and Harry had changed his occupation and was employed as a wheelwright. The children at home were; Robert (17) a motor engineer and Bert (15) a house boy. Fanny (9) was at school and there was an adopted child, Theodore Line aged four months, with the adoptive parents Harry and Rose being in their 50's. The accommodation in Pineapple Road consisted of four rooms plus a kitchen.

Bert enlisted at Watford, joining the Bedford Regiment (service number 22728) but later transferred to the Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) 60th Company as Private 4726. The official documents of the history of the Machine Gun Corps have been ill-fated with most being lost, destroyed in fires during the Blitz of the Second World War. As an aside; Bert's older brother Leonard Cecil Line also served in the First World War in the Durham Light Infantry, having enlisted, aged 26, on 5 June 1916 at Aylesbury. At the time Leonard was a grocer's assistant and living at Stanley Hill, Amersham Common having married Frances Louisa Elizabeth Burton at St Mary's Church on 1 July 1915. In May 1918 Leonard's Army Allowance was 12s. 6d (62.5p then, roughly £26.60 now) per week and payable to wife Frances as his next of kin. Leonard survived the war, transferring to Class 'Z' Army Reserve on demobilization on 2 December 1919.

A depot and training centre was established at Belton Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire and a base depot at Camiers in France. The 60th Brigade Machine Gun Company left Grantham on 23 February and 1 March 1916. It disembarked at Le Havre, France on 25 February and 3 March respectively and joined the 20th (Light) Division on 3 March 1916. It is likely to have been formed from the Machine Gun Sections of the listed [infantry](#) battalions.

The 20th (Light) Division were in action on the Somme in the battles of **Delville Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Morval** and **Le Transloy**. In 1917 they again saw action during the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, the battles being **Langemarck, Menin Road Ridge, Polygon Wood** and the **Cambrai Operations**.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Bert Line was killed in action in France on 3 March 1917. He was aged 21. A slight anomaly is that an obituary in the *Bucks Examiner* of 6 April 1917 quotes his demise as 2 March.

"Amersham Common: We are sorry to hear that Pte Line of the 60th Company Machine Gun Corps has been killed in action, and sympathise with his mother (Mrs Line of Mitford, Lexham Gardens) and the family in the loss they have sustained. Corpl Ratcliffe states that Pte Line was killed on March 2nd by a trench mortar. "He was a good soldier and carried out his duties with ready and willing spirit" was his officer's description of the deceased."

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

Bert Line is remembered with Honour
A.I.F. Burial Ground, Flers, Somme, Picardy, France
Grave Reference V.K.1



Photograph courtesy: Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The great majority of the graves in A.I.F. Burial Ground date from the autumn of 1916, and there are others from the spring of 1917 and from the spring and summer of 1918. There are twenty Machine Gun soldiers buried here. About 4000 re-interments were brought in from the battlefields of the Somme after the Armistice in 1918.