

11 William Lawrence Sharpe d 8 December 1946, accidentally shot



NWEM 10 Dec 1946

Where is the grave?

Walk due south from the South (disused) chapel, and turn right up the third path south of the wall, before the path that leads around the perimeter. Sharpe is buried half-way up the path on the left. *This is on the CWGC webs-site as a war grave.*

North-Western Evening Mail Monday 9 December 1946:

Dalton man dies of wounds

Admitted to North Lonsdale Hospital yesterday afternoon with gunshot wounds in his abdomen, William Lawrence Sharp (*sic*) (21), of 17, Ashworth-street, Dalton, died there yesterday evening, following an emergency operation.

It appears that Sharp left home yesterday to go shooting on a farm at Newby Bridge with a friend, William Bates, of Greystones Mount, Dalton. They toured the fields with the guns in the morning, and on their return the guns were placed in their car.

They then had lunch, and afterwards went to gather holly. It is understood that when Bates moved one of the guns to make way for the holly, the gun went off, and Sharp, who was standing to his right rear, was wounded.

Sharp was taken to Dr. Gunson, at Dalton, and he ordered his immediate removal to hospital.

Sharp was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Sharp, and was home on demobilisation leave from the Navy. He was released from service about three weeks ago, having joined up about two years ago. (*He was attached to shore base HMS Pembroke*)

He had entered Messrs. Vickers-Armstrongs works as a fitter apprentice on leaving Dowdales School, and was within five months of completing his apprenticeship when he volunteered for the Navy, which he entered as ordnance officer, his last ship being H.M.S. Ocean.

North-Western Evening Mail Wednesday 11 December 1946:

Gun in car went off: Young Dalton man fatally wounded

INQUEST STORY OF SHOOTING ACCIDENT

Death from gunshot wounds accidentally received was the verdict returned by Mr. J. Poole, Coroner for Furness, at yesterday's inquiry at Barrow attending the death of William Laurence (*sic*) Sharpe, of 17, Ashworth-street, Dalton.

Sharpe, who was 21 years of age, died in the North Lonsdale Hospital on Sunday following a mishap while he was on a rabbit shooting expedition.

He was on demobilisation leave from the Royal Navy.

Returning the verdict the Coroner added: - "These guns are of the old type of hammer gun and special care is needed when using them, and when people who are using them come to rest, or put them down, the precaution should be taken of taking out the cartridges.

Mr. H. W. Sharpe, father of deceased, said he was present when his son, who had been demobilised from the Navy only three weeks previously, died in the hospital.

TRIP TO NEWBY BRIDGE

Mr. William Bates (46), master builder, of Greystone Mount, Dalton, said that he had known Sharpe for about twelve months. They set off together for Beckett's Farm, Newby Bridge, to shoot rabbits and gather some holly.

They arrived at the farm at 11 a.m., went out and shot two rabbits. After having some tea and sandwiches, both he and Sharpe went to gather holly, Sharpe taking his gun with him, but Bates leaving his gun in the back of the car.

Witness came back and _____ some holly in the car, and then returned to Sharpe, who was still cutting holly in the field.

Later they returned to the car together, and Bates, who was in front, opened the rear door.

"I saw the barrel of the gun looking straight at me. It was lying on the floor in the well of the car. I wanted to remove it, or put it to one side. I got hold of the gun and it went off, sending a shudder up my arm," Bates continued.

"I heard Sharpe say, "Hell Bill, I'm hit."

Bates added that he then put the safety catch on the other barrel, and ran to the farm for assistance.

Sharpe was put in the front seat of the car, and after a call at Dr. Gunson's at Dalton, was brought to the North Lonsdale Hospital.

Answering the Coroner, Bates said he did not know where the hospital was in Ulverston and did not want to waste time looking for it.

"I HAVE SHOT MY PAL - "

John James Beckett (32), a farm labourer, employed at Hazel Rigg Farm, Newby Bridge, gave evidence of having seen Bates when he came to the farm for a pot of tea, and later when Mr. Bates and Mr. Sharpe were crossing a field together.

"At about 2 p.m. I heard a shot. It seemed very near. Mr. Bates came into the yard and said "I have shot my pal. Will you help me get him into the car?"

Beckett said he saw Sharpe in a kneeling position, with his face to the ground. Speaking to Bates, Sharpe said "I am killed, Bill." They then drove off in the car.

Sergt. J. Nicholson, of Greenodd, described the scene of the accident. Hazel Rigg Lane, Staveley, Cartmel, and Sergt. F. Sargeant gave evidence of examining Sharpe's trousers, and described the hole in them.

Dr. J. M. McKinnon, house surgeon at the North Lonsdale Hospital, said Sharpe was admitted at 3.15 p.m. on Sunday. He was given a blood transfusion, but died at 5.45 p.m.

Wounds in his abdomen were consistent with him having received a charge from fairly close range.