CHOAT, Sidney Herbert



5837164, Lance Corporal
1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment.
Place of Birth: Haverhill
Date of Death: Friday, 25th August 1944
Killed on Active Service
Cemetery: Florence War Cemetery
Aged: 22 years



Born in 1922 **Sidney Herbert Choat** (known as Sid) was the son of Alice nee Hammond and John Joseph Choat. (photo right)



He was one of the seven children who survived beyond the age of five. His father John Joseph Choat was a traction engine driver who was born in Ridgewell. In 1906, he married Alice Hammond from Shudy Camps and in 1911, they were living at Baythorn End.

By the time Sid's sister Ethel was born in 1912, the family had moved to Haverhill. No doubt, John had found employment as a traction engine driver on one of the local farms.

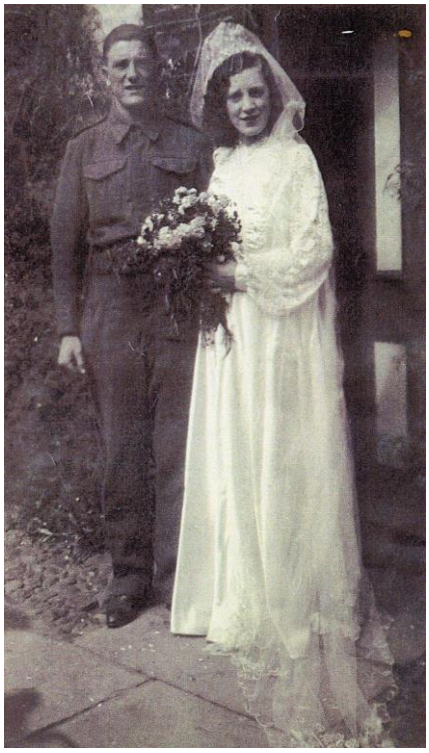
Sid attended the Council Schools and was a member of the 1st Haverhill Scouts. After leaving school he began his working life as a milkman for the Haverhill Co-operative Society.



Sid joined up in 1940. There is some confusion about which regiment he served with as the CWGC has him with the 1st Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment but the Army Roll of Honour places him with the 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment. It is possible that he started with one and was transferred to the other. However he was most certainly with the latter regiment in Europe as the former served in India.

Sid was good friends with Tommy Turner, the local bandleader whose popular local dance band entertained many locals.

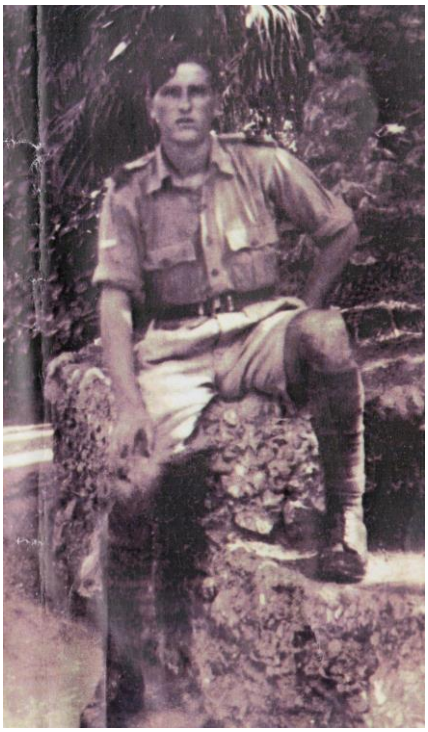
Photo left – Sid with Tommy Turner.



When Sid married Lucy Tomlinson on 20th June 1942, Tommy Turner was his best man. Their daughter, Katrina was born on 9th December 1943.

The 1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment was mobilised on the outbreak of war, as part of 162nd Infantry Brigade, attached to 54th (East Anglian) Infantry Division on coastal defence in October 1939. It remained employed on such duties until March 1943, when it was ordered to prepare for overseas service. It arrived in Gibraltar on 22 April, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel G. W. H. Peters MC. It remained there for over a year, much of the time spent training.

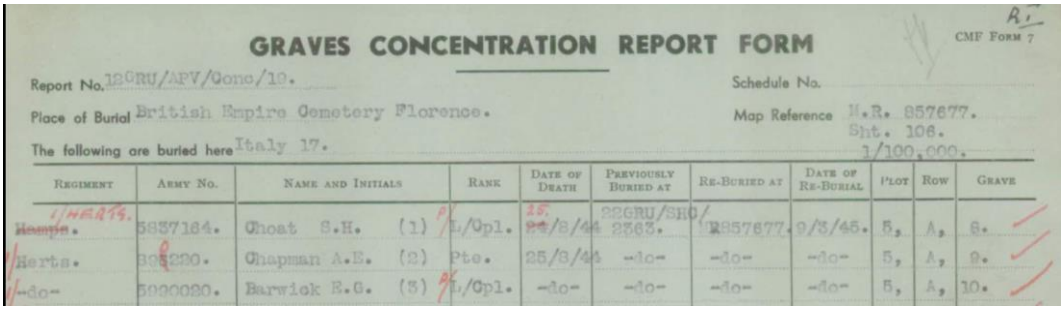
The photo right was taken when he was in Gibraltar probably in 1943 or early 1944.



In July 1944, the Battalion was deployed to Italy where it joined 66th Infantry Brigade and became part of the 1st Infantry Division. Florence was taken by the Allied forces on 13 August 1944 and became the centre of the Arno line and the point from which the attack on the German Gothic Line defences in the Apennines was launched.

The Battalion moved into the frontline on 19th August, relieving 6/13th Frontier Force Rifles to the northeast of Florence.

After being on the frontline for just six days, Sid was killed in action near Florence on 25th August 1944. From the grave concentration report it seems that he was one of three members of the 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment to lose their lives on this date. It is moving to discover that they are buried in graves that are next to each other.



GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

CMF Form 7

Report No. 12GRU/APV/Cons/10.

Schedule No.

Place of Burial British Empire Cemetery Florence.

Map Reference M.R. 857677. Sht. 106. 1/100,000.

The following are buried here Italy 17.

Regiment	Army No.	Name and Initials	Rank	Date of Death	Previously Buried at	Re-Buried at	Date of Re-Burial	Plot	Row	Grave
1/Herts.	5837164.	Choat S.H. (1)	L/Cpl.	25/8/44	22GRU/SRO/2563.	M.R. 857677.	9/3/46.	5,	A,	8.
Herts.	5[illegible]200.	Chapman A.E. (2)	Pte.	25/8/44	-do-	-do-	-do-	5,	A,	9.
-do-	5[illegible]080.	Barwick E.G. (3)	L/Cpl.	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	5,	A,	10.



Originally buried in Arrow Route Cemetery, Sid was re-buried in Florence on 9th March 1945, presumably one of the 83 graves that were moved into the cemetery, when it proved impossible to acquire the site in perpetuity.



When news of his death reached Haverhill, Sid's home address was given as Mason's Yard.