

Herbert James BRENT

5952312, Private, The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment
died Saturday 17th April 1943, aged 24.

Memorial Book text:

Home address was 2 Newton Street, Olney.

1939 – 7 Squad, E Coy. ITC., 38 Margetts Road, Kempston, Beds.

1940 – 15 Platoon, C Coy., 2 Beds. & Herts., Totton, Southampton, Hants.

1941 – Same unit, Barton Stacey, Winchester, Hants.

1942 – Same unit, The Barony, Dumfries, Scotland.

1943 – Reported “missing” believed killed. Register index MR2.



Medjez-el-Bab Cemetery, Tunisia.

The Tunisian hills in the background. Photograph supplied by a friend of Mr P E Cowley. April 1993.



CWWG information:

Son of Archibald James Brent and Lily Brent, of Olney, Buckinghamshire. Named on Face 17 of the Medjez-el-Bab Memorial, Tunisia.

Additional information:

Following their withdrawal to safety at Dunkirk in June 1940 the role of the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment changed to one of the defense of Britain. Summer and autumn 1940 was spent improving fortification lines along the south coastline but gradually the Battalion was re-equipped and along with it came retraining for a counter attack role. In early March 1942 the Battalion moved to Inverary in Scotland to learn and practice assault landings and by 23 March they had landed at Algiers in North Africa [6].

By this time the war in North Africa was nearing its end as the Allies grouped for the final offensive along the front line near Medjez-el-Bab in north-eastern Tunisia. The campaign had begun on 8th November 1942 with a series of landings in Algeria and Morocco (code named 'Operation Torch' – see Jack Barrick's details). Following their defeat at El Alamein the Axis forces had been pursued by the Allied Eighth Army along the Libyan coast and into Tunisia where, by December 1942, they were hemmed in. [7]

The 2nd Battalion were about to go back into battle. On 29th March they were taken by train from their staging post to within fifty miles of the front and the next day were transported by road over mountainous roads to take over a section of line held by the 1st Hampshires. By 3rd April they were in position in Hunts Gap at the mouth of the Sidi Nsir valley in front of Beja and from this time on came under increasing attack from enemy snipers, mortars, shelling and aircraft.

On the 10th they were ordered to move forward and in the next two days did so, with difficulty, over the extremely rugged terrain. Several attacks and counter-attacks took place over the next few days, with 'C' Company in the thick of the action and many casualties suffered. The night of 12/13th April was a particularly tough encounter with several sections, including parts of 15 Platoon being over-run by the Germans and forced to surrender. After this the Battalion was forced to halt their advance and dig in. They had covered just six miles. Here they remained, under consistent shelling, until 19th April when they were relieved by an American unit and moved to Medjez el Bab.

It was sometime during this violent and confused period then that Herbert Brent went missing. His date of death is officially given as 17th April [1] but how this was established and whether it is accurate is not known.