

Herbert EASTON

Born: 1896 in Neatishead

Baptised: -

Parents: Father: Frederick (1860-1943)

Mother: Mary Ann Greenwood (1861-) married 1884

Siblings: Annie Matilda (1885-1980)

George Frederick (born 1887 in Aylsham)

Maude Mary (1888-1979)

twins William Blackburn (1890-1916) **killed in action**

twins Charles Edward (1890-1978) **served in WW1**

Beryl Minnie (1892-1988)

Gertrude Eliza (born 1895 in Neatishead)

Helen (born 1897 in Neatishead)

Alfred (1899-1920) **killed in action**

Schooling: -

Occupation: listed as boat builder when enlisted

Marriage: no record found

Children:

1911 census: Aged 15, living at home with parents and 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

His occupation Yacht Boat Builder Apprentice

Register of Electors: 1918 Parish of Neatishead NM
(Residence : Street)

Military & War service:

Corporal 500123, Inland Water Transport CNE

68124, WR/500123 Royal Engineers

Medals: Victory, British, 1915 Star

Death: no record found

Burial: -

Source: *The North Walsham & District Parish Magazine*:-

MARCH, 1915.

Our Roll of Honour keeps steadily increasing, and we have pleasure in adding the following names to the list: Robert and Charles Colk, Arthur Tooley (10th Norfolks), **Herbert Easton** (Canal Transport Service) and Alfred Easton has entered a training ship. Mr. Sam Colk is to be congratulated on having four sons, and two sons-in-law now serving their king and Country.

The most peaceful and tranquil method of transporting wounded men from the battle areas of the Western Front - was by hospital barge. The system was introduced by the French in the first week of the war and in the autumn of 1914, the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.) began to do the same, and "soon a regular fleet of these useful little hospitals sprang into being and passed along the quiet waterways of France from the front, right back to the base", said *The Times*.



The **Inland Water Transport Division**(I.W.T.D.) of the Royal Engineers was responsible for the movement and safe navigation of ambulance barges along the waterways of northern France. This coloured 1918 Christmas greetings postcard depicting a tug, also shows the connection between the I.W.T.D. and the medical services, by the depiction of a red cross emblem. By the end of the Great War over 70,000 casualties had been carried to safety by the I.W.T.D. barges.

About the size of a Thames lighter, the ambulance barges were roofed in and fitted out as a ward with 30 beds and an operating table. In the bow of the barge was a kitchen and store-room, and there were bunks for the staff in the stern. Each vessel was staffed by two nursing sisters, nine R.A.M.C. orderlies and three Royal Engineers (R.E.) from the Inland Water Transport unit.

The barges were towed in pairs by a small tug operated by the engineers. An onboard medical officer attended to patients in both barges.

Transportation by this method was particularly suited to those suffering from head or chest wounds and

gunshot fractures of the thigh, as the jolting usually experienced by any other means of transport only resulted in, "**more suffering for the patient**".

After stopping a 'Blighty one' and laying for many hours in a shell-hole in No-Man's-Land, a severely wounded soldier described his journey by barge, "**It was almost as if one had died and literally wakened in heaven. The peace, the silence, were unbelievable. One had glimpses of lovely country, and the scent of it drifted in. The nights moored up were so still - though sometimes one heard the distant gun-fire, but it didn't matter any more - it seemed so far away.**"

R.A.M.C. men who landed duty on the inland medical barges would "**bless their luck in being water-gypsies amid a countryside remote from the immediate horrors of war**", said one of their number. Although the official war photographers took pictures of patients and staff on the barges, non it seems, were reproduced on contemporary picture postcards. However, the Inland Water Transport section of the R.E. - who managed the vessels - issued several colourful artist-drawn Christmas postcards in 1917/18.

(Source: <http://www.worldwar1postcards.com>)