

**Herbert Peter Ledbitter**  
**1889-1917: age at death 28**  
**Student at the Society of the Sacred Mission and Priest**

**Family History**

Herbert Peter was born on 14th October 1889 in Rusper, Sussex and was the son of Lambert Ledbitter a gamekeeper and Annie Ledbitter née Rovey. Both his parents were born in Ifield, Sussex. They were married in 1883 in Brighton and had six children:

- Louisa, born in 1879, in Ifield
- Leonard, born in 1884, in Ifield
- Herbert, born in 1889, in Rusper
- Percy, born in 1889, in Rusper
- Laura May, born in 1894 in Leigh, near Sevenoaks
- Annie, born in 1895 in Leigh, near Sevenoaks

The 1891 census shows the family living at Nelderswood, Leigh, where the two younger children were born. By 1901, they had moved to Little Forge Cottage, Hadlow Down, Mayfield, near Uckfield, West Sussex. All the children were living with their parents except Herbert, who may have been staying in Tunbridge Wells, about 12 miles away, as a boarder (possibly attending school). There seem to be family connections with Kent.

Herbert enrolled as a divinity student at The Society of the Sacred Mission in September 1907. His entry record shows that he had only received a Primary school education, but the Society of the Sacred Mission regarded him as a 'man with mental power, which should have been developed further by philosophical training in one of the two universities'.

In 1909 it was reported in the *Nottingham Evening Post* that he had been the first person to find the body of Kate Ratcliffe of Fiskerton, who had committed suicide by drowning in the Trent.

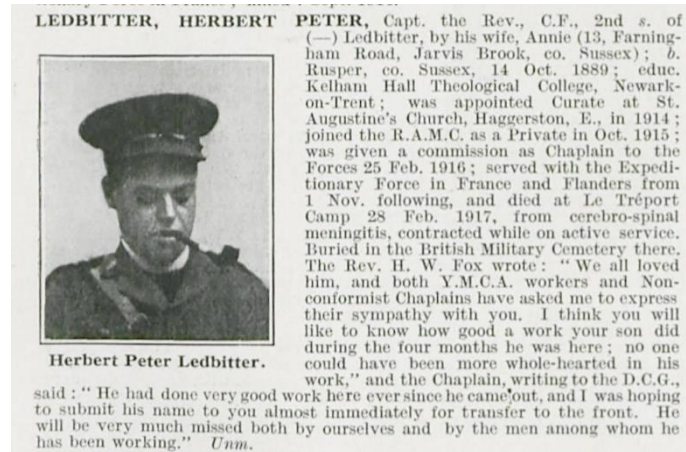
On completing his studies at Kelham, he was appointed curate at St Augustine's Church, Haggerston, Hackney, London. Built in 1865-57 to serve the poor of London's East end, St Augustine's was an important centre of advanced or high churchmanship. In 1889 there were daily celebrations of communion, altar lights, vestments and the use of incense. It is now an art gallery and bar. At the outbreak of war, the Society tried to get him to join Cambridge University, but he was eager to serve and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Herbert enlisted in 1914 joining the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. In October 1915 he was given a commission as a Temporary Chaplain to the forces 4<sup>th</sup> class. From 25th February 1916 he served with the British Expeditionary Force in France and in Flanders from 1st November.

He died in France on 28 February 1917, age 27, as a result of cerebral spinal meningitis while serving on the Western Front.

His death was announced in both the *Kent and Sussex Courier* and the *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, both published on 31 May 1918. By this time his mother was living in Jarvis Brook, Crowborough.

His service is noted in the De Ruvigny Roll of Honour



Transcription: Captain The Reverend, second son of Lambert Ledbitter by his wife Annie of 13 Framingham Road, Jarvis Brook, Sussex. Born Ruspur Sussex 14th October 1889, he was educated at the Kelham Hall theological college Newark on Trent, he was appointed curate at St Augustine Church Haggerston. He enlisted in 1914, joining the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. In October 1915 he was given a commission as a chaplain to the forces. From 25th February 1916 he served with the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders from 1st November. He died at Le Treport Camp on 28th February 1917 from cerebral spinal meningitis contracted whilst on active service, he is buried in the British Military Cemetery at Le Treport.

The Reverend H W Fox wrote of him " We all loved him and both the YMCA workers and non conformists chaplin's have asked me to express their sympathy with you. I think you will like to know how good a work your son did during the 4 months he was here and no one could have been more whole hearted in his work.

His probate, proven in London on 30th August 1917, shows him as The Reverend Herbert Peter Ledbitter of St Augustine's Rectory, Hackney, Middlesex, a clerk died 28th February 1917 on active service in France, his effects of £214, 6 shillings and 5 pence were left to Lambert Ledbitter, gentleman.

He is buried at Le Treport Military Cemetery, Seine-Maritime, France in Plot 2, Row O, Grave 3.



Herbert's older brother Leonard served as a Private in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, Royal West Sussex Regiment. He was honourably discharged in 1918 probably due to wounds received, and was awarded a Silver War Badge in 1919 (issued in the United Kingdom and the British Empire to service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds or sickness from military service in World War I). His younger brother, Percy, may have been a Sapper with the Royal Engineers.

**Sources:**

FindMyPast <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Nottinghamshire Great War Roll of Honour:  
<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour/>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission: <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/117033/>

British Listed Buildings: <https://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101235559-291-gallery-former-st-augustines-church-haggerston-ward#.WucfHojwaUk>

GoogleMaps: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Bircotes,+Doncaster/@53.41496,-1.083737,16z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x4879084340adc5c9:0x20ad5b5d3bfb9e5!8m2!3d53.415462!4d-1.053387?hl=en>