

# **SOLDIER PROJECT:**

*The experience of an individual soldier in ww1*



**HORACE FREDRICK MILLER**

*By Georgia Miller 9A*

## MY SOLDIER; STARTING

My soldier is Horace Fredrick Miller. The information I got first was from the Sussex roll of honour website. It wasn't very detailed but I took the basic information and went from there.

This was the information I got:

*Gunner 154172, 144<sup>th</sup> siege battery, the royal Garrison Artillery. He died of his wounds 28<sup>th</sup> November 1917. Aged 37. Son of James Alfred and Louis Miller of Worthing. Husband of Violet Kate Miller of 49, Bolton Terrace Lewisham, London. Born and Educated in Worthing. Buried in Bard cottage Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium.*

As you can see the information here is sketchy but we can pick out different pieces of information and arrange it into a bullet point list. This makes it easier to visually pick out informative and also gives you a list of information that you can then start to pick at and research to find deeper information buried inside. Like this;

- He was a Gunner
- Service no. 154172
- 144<sup>th</sup> siege Battery
- Royal Garrison Artillery
- Died of his wounds
- Died on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1917
- Died at the age of 37
- Son of James Alfred and Louis Miller
- Husband of Violet Kate Miller
- Lived at 49, Bolton Terrace, Lewisham, London
- Born in Worthing
- Educated in Worthing
- Buried in Bard cottage cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

## BACKGROUND AND FAMILY;

The information I have on his family is little, but from the text on the previous page we can establish that;

- He was the son of James Alfred and Louis Miller.
- His parents lived in Worthing
- He married Violet Kate Miller
- He moved out of Worthing and lived with Violet at 49, Bolton Terrace, Lewisham, London.

If we start with the basic facts of the information we can pick at the bullet points and gain extra information. If we look closely we can start to notice little details like;

- He was the son of James Alfred and Louis Miller.

The interesting factor of this information is the surnames, James Alfred and Louis Miller. James is the Father whilst Louis is the Mother but traditionally the woman takes the man's surname whereas in this situation it seems that the husband has taken on the wife's surname. *interesting*

- He married Violet Kate Miller
- He moved out of Worthing and lived with Violet at 49 Bolton Terrace, Lewisham, London. Going back to the previous point we can notice that this couple have stuck to tradition and Violet has taken on Horace's Surname. The house that this couple lived in doesn't exist anymore and was replaced by this close in London,

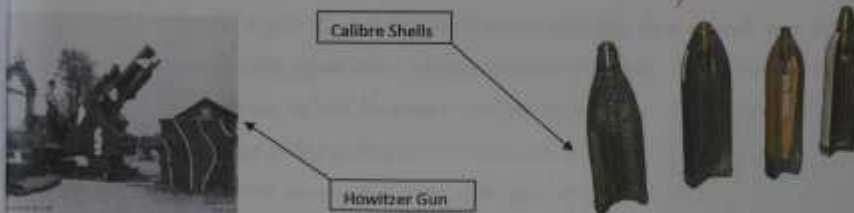


## 114<sup>TH</sup> SIEGE BATTERY;

*Siege Batteries RGA were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory, plunging fire. The usual armaments were 6 inch, 8 inch and 9.2 inch howitzers, although some had huge railway- or road-mounted 12 inch howitzers. As British artillery tactics developed, the Siege Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, stores, roads and railways behind enemy lines. The armaments of each battery will be given as details are added.*

**HOWITZER;** *A howitzer is a type of artillery piece characterized by a relatively short barrel and the use of comparatively small propellant charges to propel projectiles at relatively high trajectories, with a steep angle of descent. Until fairly recently, about the end of the Second World War, such weapons were characterized by a barrel length 15 to 25 times the calibre of the gun.*

**CALIBRE SHELLS;** *A shell is a payload-carrying projectile which, as opposed to shot, contains an explosive or other fillings. Originally it was called a "bombshell", but "shell" has come to be unambiguous in a military context. Shells are usually large-calibre projectiles fired by artillery and combat vehicles (including tanks), and warships. Shells usually have the shape of a cylinder topped by an olive-shaped nose for good aerodynamic performance, possibly with a tapering base; but some specialized types are quite different.*



*Horace Miller was part of the 114<sup>th</sup> siege Battery who were stationed in France in 1916 until 1917 when they were moved to Belgium, Ypres and took part in the Battle of Cambrai.*

## GUNNER;

Royal Field Artillery batteries consisted of 6-18 pounder guns to each battery, named "A" battery, "B" battery "C" battery and "D" battery were normally Howitzers.

1. An 18-pounder field gun had a crew of ten, six of whom operated it in action.



2. The limber is drawn by a team of six horses with a driver on one side of each pair; each of the artillerymen on the gun would have a number. No1 in command, (usually a Sergeant) No2 Operates breech mechanism. No3 Limbers and unlimbers (with No2) and fires the gun No4 Limbers up and unlimbers ammunition wagon (with 5 and 6) No5 and 6 Hook in and unhook ammunition team. No6 operates the fuse indicator. No7 and 8 are Reserves at the wagon line and assists with ammunition and replacing any casualties on the gun. No10 "Coverer" takes over in the event of an injury to number 1, but looks after wagon teams in the meantime. The wagon team were always susceptible to attack, the enemy targeted them because without ammo and horses your gun pits efficiency was greatly affected.



3. The brigade also had about 65-70 drivers controlling horse and mule, some with ammunition wagons others with gun and limber spare parts, it could sometimes be a hazardous job with the weather conditions hampering the drivers getting to the guns to re-ammunition. In conditions where mule or horse were bogged down the ammunition was carried by the men each with 4 rounds in leg pouches (2 either side) with straps slung over their shoulders. This was very tiring work with men sinking into the mud, some getting lost in the dark or



*the way to gun positions, falling into muddied shell holes, sticking fast, other not getting out at all!*

- *Gunners and drivers although with the same brigade lived in separate locations sometimes miles apart.*

*Horace was a Gunner for the 144<sup>th</sup> siege Battery and could have worked with the Drivers or the field gunners. I am unsure as to which one he would have operated but they were both equally as dangerous and taxing.*





### UNIFORM;

Horace's uniform would have looked something along the lines of these drawings. The artillery Uniform was simple when it needed to be but had a formal twist to it.



These drawings are what I think the uniforms might have looked like from the research I have done and pictures I have studied on google images.

excuse me

German soldiers had a stripe

- We can then cancel out *The Capture of Tigris* as it was fought in Turkey. It was a battle between the Turkish forces and the English. The time span of this battle is longer than the first so that almost proves that he could not have been in that battle.
- By process of elimination and some more research we can tell that *The Battle of Cambrai* was the one he died fighting in. It is only eight days before his death and could easily be linked to the 144<sup>th</sup> siege battery as they were sent to Belgium in 1917.

## WHAT BATTLE DID HE DIE IN?

After a search of battles, I found three around the time of his death. That means that there are three possible battles that Horace Miller could have died in,

- The Battle of Maghar Ridge-13.11.1917
- The Capture of Tikhrit-5.11.1917
- The Battle of Cambrai-20.11.1917

We have to take into account that he is buried in Belgium so it would have to be a battle either in or near Belgium or he wouldn't be buried there. We also have to take into mind the time span of the war to his death, i.e. The battle of Maghar Ridge started on the 13<sup>th</sup> and he died on the 28<sup>th</sup> which means that he would have been injured for 15 days but if the injuries were fatal then he couldn't have survived for that long. *Good inference*

- We can cancel out the battle of Maghar almost immediately because of the time difference and because the battle occurred over an extensive area north of the Gaza to Beersheba line and west of the road from Beersheba to Jerusalem via Hebron.
- We can then cancel out The Capture of Tikhrit as it was fought in Turkey. It was a battle between the Turkish forces and the English. The time span of this battle is longer than the first so that almost proves that he could not have been in that battle.
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## **THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI;**

*The Battle of Cambrai, fought in November/December 1917, proved to be a significant event in World War One. Cambrai was the first battle in which tanks were used en masse. In fact, the battle of Cambrai used a mixture of tanks, heavy artillery and air power. Mobility, lacking for the previous three years in World War One, suddenly found a place on the battlefield - though it was not to last for the duration of the battle.*

*While the battle of Passchendaele was being fought, Douglas Haig approved a plan to take on the Germans by sweeping round the back of Cambrai and encircling the town. The attack would use a combination of old and new - cavalry, air power, artillery and tanks that would be supported by infantry. Cambrai was an important town as it contained a strategic railroad. In front of it lay the very strong Hindenburg Line - a defensive position in which the Germans put a great deal of trust. The plan included an attack on the Hindenburg Line and the use of three cavalry divisions that would encircle Cambrai, thus cutting it off. While Haig's plan won the approval of some, others were less than inspired that it included tanks as these new weapons had yet to prove their worth in battle in the eyes of some.*

*The attack started at 06.20 on November 20th 1917. The Germans were surprised by an intense artillery attack directly on the Hindenburg Line. 350 British tanks advanced across the ground followed by infantry - they were assisted by an artillery rolling barrage that gave them cover from a German counter-attack. The chorus of the initial attack went well. The 62nd Division (West) covered more than five miles in this attack from their starting point. Compared to the gains made at battles like the Somme and Verdun, such a distance was astonishing.*

*Not everything had gone to plan. The 2nd Cavalry Division had a problem crossing the vital St. Quentin Canal when a tank went over its main bridge and broke its back - the same bridge that the cavalry were supposed to use to advance to Cambrai! Elsewhere, British units also got bogged down in their attack because of obstacles put in their way such as: ditches, barbed wire and enemy fire.*



By November 30th, the Germans were ready to counter-attack and defeat Cambrai. Many British army units had got themselves isolated and their command structure broke down in places. The German counter-attack was so effective that on December 3rd, Haig gave the order for the British units still near to Cambrai to withdraw "with the least possible delay from the Bourlon Hill-Massing salient to a more retired and shorter line." The failure to build on the initial success of the attack was blamed on middle-ranking commanders - some of whom were executed. The initial phase of the battle did show that mobility was possible in the war but that to sustain it, a decent command structure was needed so that impact gained in one area of the attack was aided by gains elsewhere in the advance.

While losses did not equate to the Somme or Verdun, the British lost over 44,000 men during the battle while the Germans lost about 45,000 men.

I am led to say that my reasoning suggests that Horace Miller died in the attack and was buried in Belgium...



## MEDALS HE WON.

*Horace won 3 medals;*

- *The Royal Garrison Artillery Medal*
- *He would have been awarded with a gallantry medal, (an award for distinguished or meritorious service or was mentioned in Despatches for showing special courage or devotion to duty in a particular action or circumstance) but his courage was not recognised in the form of a medal.*
- *He won a Campaign or a War Medal which awarded to an individual if he or she took part in a military campaign outside of the United Kingdom in a Theatre of War or in a time of war.*



*Because of his Death in the battle of Cambrai, his wife Violet Miller received the medals in his honour.*

## CEMETERY;

*Horace Miller is buried in The Barge Cottage Cemetery, Ypres, Belgian.*

*For much of the First World War, the village of Boesinghe (now Boezinge) directly faced the German line across the Yser canal. Bard Cottage was a house a little set back from the line, close to a bridge called Bard's Causeway, and the cemetery was made nearby in a sheltered position under a high bank.*

*Burials were made between June 1915 and October 1918 and they reflect the presence of the 49th (West Riding), the 38th (Welsh) and other infantry divisions in the northern sectors of the Ypres Salient, as well as the advance of artillery to the area in the autumn of 1917. After the Armistice, 46 graves were brought in to Plot VI, Row C, from the immediate area, including 32 from MARENGO FARM CEMETERY (this was located a few hundred metres to the south of Bard Cottage, on the same side of the road. It was used from June 1915 to August 1916).*



*Horace's grave*

