SOLDIER PROJECT:
The experience of an individual soldier in 1917

HORACE FREDRICK MILLER

By Georgia Miller 9A
MY SOLDIER; STARTING

My soldier is Horace Frederick 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 is the information I got:


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 information 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. 159472
- 149th siege Battery
- Royal Garrison Artillery
- Died of his wounds
- Died on the 26th November 1917
- Died at the age of 31
- Son of James Alfred and Louise Miller
- Husband of Violet Kate Miller
- Lived at 49, Bolton Terrace, Lewisham, London
- Born in Worthing
- Educated in Worthing
- Buried in Burge 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 this:

- He was the son of James Alfred and Louise 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 Louise Miller.
  The interesting factor of this information is the surname, James Alfred and Louise Miller. James is the Father whilst Louise 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.

- 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 reason that this couple lived in doesn’t exist anymore and was replaced by this close in London.
114th Siege Battery:

 Siege Batteries PVA were equipped with heavy howitzers, scaling large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectories, planting fire. The usual calibres were 5 inch, 6 inch and 9.2 inch howitzers, although some had large calibre or roof-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, ships, stores, roads and railways behind enemy lines. The calibres of each battery will be given in detail later.

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

Calibre Shells: A shell is a payload-carrying projectile which, on impact, contains an explosive or other filling. 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 oval-shaped nose for good aerodynamic performance, possibly with a tapering base; but some specialised types are quite different.

Heron Miller was part of the 114th 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 6-10 pounder guns in each battery, named ‘A’ battery, ‘B’ battery, ‘C’ battery and ‘D’ battery were normally Hunttun.

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

2. The ladder is drawn by a team of six horses with a driver on one side of each pair; each of the artillerymen in the gun would have a number. No1 is command, usually a Sergeant. No2 Operates breech mechanism. No3 Limber and left hander (with No2) and fires the gun. No4 Limbers up and left hander ammunition wagon (with 5 and 6). No5 and 6: Halt in and unload ammunition team. No6 operates the fuse indicator. No7 and 8 are Reserve to the wagon line and assists with ammunition and replacing any casualties in the gun. No10: “Gunner” takes over in the event of an injury to number 7, but looks after wagon teams in the meantime. The wagon team were always susceptible to attack, the enemy targeted them because without them the horse gun might not fire efficiently was greatly affected.

3. The brigade also had about 65-70 drivers controlling horses and mule, some with ammunition wagons shore with gun and limber spare parts, it could sometimes be a hazardous job with the weather conditions keeping the drivers getting to the guns to re-connection. In conditions where mule or horses were badly done the ammunition was carried by the men each with 4 rounds in big pouches (2 either side) with straps clung over their shoulders. This was very tiring work with one walking into the mud, come getting lost in the dark or
...the way to gun positions, falling into muddled 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.

Herbert was a Gunner for the 144th 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 tiring.
UNIFORM:

Hirze'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.

- We can then cancel out The Capture of Troit 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 prove that he could not have been in that battle.

- By process of elimination and some more research we can tell that The Battle of Cambray was the one he died fighting in. It is only eight days before his death and could easily be linked to the 144th 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 Meghur Ridge- 13 & 14, 1917
- The Capture of Tibrit - 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 Meghur Ridge started in the 13th and he died in the 20th 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.

- We can cancel out the battle of Meghur 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 Tibriz 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 even 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 144th siege battery as they were sent to Belgium in 1917.
THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI;

The Battle of Cambrai fought in November 1917, proved to be a significant event in World War One. Cambrai was the first battle in which tanks were used on a large scale; the battle of Cambrai saw a mixture of tactics, 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 regrouping round the back of Cambrai and encircling the town. The attack would have 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 railhead. In front of it lay the very strong Hochberg Line - a defensive position in which the Germans put a great deal of trust. The plan included an attack on the Hochberg Line and the use of three cavalry divisions that would encircle Cambrai, thus cutting it off.

While Haig’s plan was the approval of some, others were less than impressed that it included tanks as those 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 Hochberg Line. 333 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 chances of the initial attack went well. The 3rd Cavalry Division (West) covered more than five miles in the attack from their starting point. Compared to the pace made at battles like the Somme and Verdun, such a distance was astonishing.

Not everything had gone to plan. The 3rd Cavalry Division had a problem crossing the canal at Queen’s Canal where 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: stones, barbed wire and enemy fire.
By November 30th, the Germans were ready to counter-attack and defend Cambrai. Many British 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 Berks Hill-Mansingh advance to a more retired and shorter line. The failure to build on the initial success of the attack was blamed on middle-ranking commanders - even of whom were ranked. The initial phase of the battle did show that mobility was possible in the war but that it was rarely achieved. The initial phase of the battle did show that mobility was possible in the war but that it was rarely achieved. The initial phase of the battle did show that mobility was possible in the war but that it was rarely achieved. The initial phase of the battle did show that mobility was possible in the war but that it was rarely achieved.

While losses did not equate to the Somme or Verden, the British lost over 14,000 men during the battle while the Germans lost about 45,000 men.

I am sad to say that my reasoning suggests that Horace Miller died in the attack and was buried in Belgium...
MEDALS HE WON.

He 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 was 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 Bois-Cotée Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium.

For much of the First World War, the village of Bovigny (now Bovinge) 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 1916 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 MAROZIARD 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).