

ALFRED GEORGE FROUDE

Private

6th Bn. Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Royal Berkshire) Regiment

Service No: 7758

Died: 11 August 1917. Killed in Action

Alfred George Froude's connection with Beenham is unclear but he is commemorated on the war memorial. His birth was registered in Reading in the third quarter of 1887 and at the time of the 1891 census he is living with his parents, James, 47 (b1842) and Ann, 47 together with three siblings all of whom were born in Reading. James was then an unemployed labourer who had been born in Beenham and his wife was from Ufton. Certainly there were Froude families in the village in earlier times, as far back as 1787 and a number of baptisms throughout the 1880s and 1890s, but no direct connection has been found. There is no mention of Alfred in either the 1901 or 1911 census.

Alfred attested on 3 November 1903 at Reading joining the 3rd Btn. Royal Berkshire Regiment. At the time he was living with his parents at 10 Beecham Road, Reading in the parish of St George's which is in Tilehurst, close to the Oxford Road. Alfred is described as aged 17yr 4months and employed as a general labourer for a Mr Collier. He was 5ft 31/2inches tall, weighed 121lbs with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair; he had two scars on his forehead and one on his left shin! Alfred was transferred to the Regular Army on 18 July 1904.

Alfred was in the 6th (Service) Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment which was raised at Reading in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Second New Army and joined 53rd Brigade, 18th (Eastern) Division. Earlier in his time on the front, The Reading Mercury of 23 September 1916 had reported Alfred as missing but presumably had been found in time to take part in the Ypres offensive of 1917. The winter of 1916/17 was spent variously resting in billets and in and out of trenches in the Ancre Valley. In February they were in action again in the battle of Boom Ravine and on 31 July made their move against a background of flawed intelligence reports and the 30th Division having taken a wrong direction. On Saturday 11 August they were near Zillebeke, located about one and a half miles south-east of Ypres approaching Sanctuary Wood when they came under strong German machine gun fire but obtained their objective. The Regimental diary reports "2.30AM - relief of 7th Bedfords complete. Line held. A Coy on right, B on left, C in support in Jargon Switch, D in reserve in the Tunnel. HQ in tunnel. 4.50 - Enemy counterattacked and took SP, from Norfolks. 5.30 - Counter attack by 8th Norfolks launched and supported by fire from LGs & C Coy. 5.50 retaken & line re-established. Quiet day". In the course of the battle, their Medical Officer, Captain Harold Ackroyd was shot in the head by a sniper; he was later to earn a Victoria Cross for the way he attended to the wounded. That same day Alfred George Froude was also killed along with eleven of his comrades.

Alfred was reported killed in the Reading Mercury on 22 September 1917 and is commemorated on Panel 45 of the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.