

HEDGES, FREDERICK MORTIMER

Private

2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regiment

Service No: 8400

Died: 25/09/1915. Killed in Action, aged 27

Frederick Mortimer Hedges was born in Beenham in about 1887 his birth being registered in the last quarter at Bradfield. His name does not appear on the war memorial.

The 1891 census shows him aged 3, living in Ufton Nervet with his father Daniel from Tadley and mother Ellen from Ufton, together with his twin brother Edward J. and four other siblings all of whom were born in Beenham: Harry Allen 15, Charles Allen 13, Arthur Allen 9 (stepbrothers?) and Fanny E. Hedges 1 month. His father, Daniel is described as an osier bed worker. By 1901 Frederick aged 13 is living at Clappers Weir, Caversham with his family whilst the 1911 census shows him to be unmarried, 23 years old and enlisted with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment as Private 8400 based in India.

In August 1914 the Battalion was in Jhansi, India but returned to England, landing on 22 October 1914. Later it moved to Winchester and placed under the command of 25th Brigade in 8th Division. On 5 November 1914 the Battalion landed at Le Havre. On the day Frederick died 25 September 1915, an account of the first day of the Battle of Loos reads "Bois Grenier, France. In these trenches the 2nd Royal Berkshire assembled, with the 2nd Rifle Brigade on their right, and the 2nd Lincolnshire on their left. The three assaulting companies of the battalion were in the order "A," "B," "C' from right to left. The attack took the normal pattern for the First World War: a heavy bombardment intended to cut the German wires and demoralise the enemy with the normal result that much of the wire in front of the German trenches remained intact and the Germans were ready in strength at the end. It was very dark at the time of the assault. In the deep and narrow trenches it was difficult to see what was happening and in the deep dugouts even more so. Some of the enemy fired from dugouts, but it does not seem they hit many men. Some were killed coming out. The men were little inclined to spare anyone and dugouts were cleared by bayonet, revolver or bombs; torches being used in some cases to discover whether they were occupied. The Battalion sustained the following casualties: Officers Killed seven. Officers Wounded six. Other Ranks: Killed 32, Missing 143, Wounded 216." Frederick Mortimer Hedges has no known grave and his name appears on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium, panel 7 and 8. He was awarded the 1914 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

Frederick's military records show that his mother Ellen received £16 8s 9d on 27 November 1916 and a further £6 on 9 October 1919, "death being presumed".