

HARRY MILLSON

Driver

Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery

2nd/1st Bty (Berks) Royal Horse Artillery

Service No: 616378

Died: 14 November 1917. Killed in Action

Harry Millson was born in Beenham in 1896 and baptised there on 1 March; his birth being registered in the first quarter at Bradfield. His name does not appear on the war memorial. Harry was the fourth of six sons born to Henry C. Millson and his wife Caroline. The 1901 census shows Harry living with his family in Rotten Row aged 6, together with siblings George Henry 10 (b1891), Charles William 9 (bp 3 Sep 1893), Albert 6 (bp 1 Mar 1896), James William 3 and Arthur 2 suggesting that Harry and Albert might have been twins. At this time Harry's father 30 was a bricklayer, born in Standford Dingley, whilst his mother Caroline 29 was from Bucklebury. With the exception of James and Arthur, all of the children were born in Beenham. The extensive Millson family appear to be well established in the Bradfield area at the end of the 19th century.

Ten year later in 1911, the family have moved to 1 Glen Cottages, Chapel Hill Tilehurst and Harry is working as a kiln labourer with his older brother George. Henry and Caroline have had three more children, Kathleen aged 7, Thomas 4 and Edward 4. By this time had been married for 19 years and had had 11 children, 2 of whom had died.

Harry enlisted in Reading with the Berkshire Royal Horse Artillery which was a Territorial battery formed in Berkshire in 1908. The second line battery, 2/1st Berkshire RHA, served on the Western Front in 1917 and 1918 as part of an Army Field Artillery Brigade. The Royal Horse Artillery was armed with light, mobile, horse-drawn guns that in theory provided firepower in support of the cavalry and in practice supplemented the Royal Field Artillery. The horse-drawn Royal Field Artillery was the most numerous arm of the artillery was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line and was reasonably mobile. It was organised into brigades.

Berkshire RHA formed a 2nd line in 1914, initially designated as the Berkshire (Reserve) Battery RHA and later designated the 2/1st Berkshire Battery, RHA.

Some batteries of the division were quite unready for war. Three had no horses, the fourth had just 23; three batteries had over 200 men on average, but the other just 91. The Berkshire battery was only issued with sights for its 15 pounders in December 1915, but had no ammunition. On 17 January 1916 it received four slightly more modern Ordnance BLC 15-pounders, eight ammunition wagons and 210 rounds of ammunition per gun.

The 2/1st served in the UK up to 24 May 1917 when it went to France, disembarking at Boulogne and serving for the rest of the war in 158th Army Brigade RFA which had been formed at Heytesbury on 13 April 1917 and now equipped with 18 pounders.

Exactly how and where Harry was killed is not known but he is buried at Dochy Farm New British Cemetery, Belgium. Two weeks before Harry's death on 31 October the Brigade was in the Gravenstafel area, near Zonnebeke. Fighting in Ypres area was still intense and a note in the Brigade diary reports that ground conditions at Gravenstafel were simply appalling as they continued firing on the Passchendaele village area.

Harry was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.