

FREDERICK FRANCIS LEWINGTON

Private

2nd Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment

Service No: 20184

Died: 11 November 1916. Killed in Action, aged 24

Frederick Francis Lewington's birth was registered at Bradfield in the third quarter of 1892 having been born in Beenham and baptised here on 4 September 1892. His name does not appear on the Beenham war memorial. Just prior to Frederick's birth, the 1891 census shows, his father Walter aged 29 (born 26 April 1861) and mother, Mary Ellen Jane 27 living at Butlers Farm, Beenham together with their children William Walter 4, Alice M. 2 and Florence A. 1, along with Walter's brother, Edwin aged 24. Both Walter and Edwin are described as shepherds.

By 1901 the family had moved to South Stoke, just north of Goring and Frederick is recorded in the census living with his parents, Walter now aged 39, still a shepherd and Mary 37, together with siblings William 14, now also a shepherd, Alice 12 and Albert Edward 6. Perhaps it was the nature of the job as all of the children were born in villages scattered over the Berkshire Downs west of Newbury.

In 1911 Frederick now aged 18 was still living at South Stoke with his parents, Albert Edward 16 and Dorothy Lily 6 (b 12 June 1904); Francis is described as a waggoner and his father, still a shepherd. The census also shows that Walter and Mary had been married for 26 years and had had 9 children, of whom 4 had died.

Frederick enlisted at Reading but when is unclear. He resided at Wallingford and became part of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment, although there is a suggestion that he was formerly 24638 in the Grenadier Guards. The 2nd Bn was one of two Regular battalions formed originally in 1881, and were attacking Ovillers on the first day of the Somme offensive where they sustained 437 casualties. A few days later the 5th Battalion covered the same ground and found themselves tripping over the bodies of their comrades. The remnant of the battalion had to withdraw to reform and recuperate and the rest of the summer and early autumn was spent near Vermelles with only a few periods of trench duty. They came back to the Somme area on the 10th October and were in and out of trenches until June 1917.

On the day Francis died, the Battalion diary reads "France, in the trenches. Battalion in front line, same position as on previous day (La Briqueterie, Montauban). About 11pm the Bn. was relieved by the 1st Royal Irish Rifles and relieved the 2nd Bn. The Rifle Brigade in Brigade Support in Hogs Back trench". How he died is not known.

Frederick is commemorated on the war memorial of St Andrews church, South Stoke where his parents continued to live in Ferry Lane. His name is on the Thiepval Memorial.

Frederick's brother, William Walter had joined the Royal Engineers in 1907 but was discharged as medically unfit prior to the war in 1914. He married Edith Lina Barr in South Stoke on 6 Dec 1912 and died in 1968 at Maidenhead. In 1939, Frederick's father Walter, described as a widower and incapacitated, was living at 4 Wallingford Road, Henley with his daughter Dorothy L (married name Minchin). He died in 1941.