

HARRY MILLSON

Driver

Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery

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

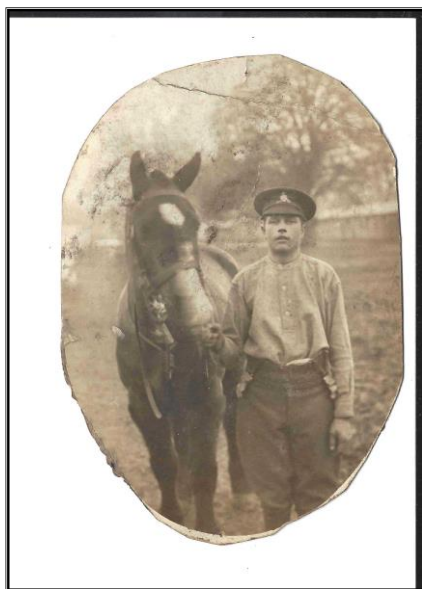
Service No: 616378

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.

Postscript.

Following the publication of Harry's biography in November 2017, I was approached by Harry's great nephew a Mr. Nathan Millsom Gregory who was able to furnish more details of the family, including the enclosed photograph of Harry and his twin brother, Albert.

Harry's father Henry C. Millson was registered Charles Henry Millson but known as Henry, his birth certificate showing he was born on 16 August 1871 in Bucklebury to George and Louisa Millson nee (Selwood). Harry's mother, Caroline was born on 27 May 1872 also in Bucklebury to Thomas and Caroline Clarke (nee Butler). Henry and Caroline were married in the parish church of Bucklebury on 7 May 1891 and lived in Beeham up to 1898 when they moved to Bucklebury then to Rotten Row and finally to Tilehurst in 1904. On 13 March 1913 Caroline died of rheumatic fever at the Union Workhouse, Reading (which went on to become Battle Hospital) and was buried in a pauper's grave. Henry Millson, now a widower, continued to raise the children and is believed to have died in 1946, registered Reading, first quarter.

Of their children, George Henry was the eldest born on 15 January 1892 and subsequently married a Rose Why. George Henry was another casualty of the war whose biography is recorded later. Charles William was born in Beenham on 13 September 1893 and is also believed to have enlisted; he married Elizabeth Wilcocks in Stepney in 1929. Harry's twin brother Albert also served in the forces having joined the Royal Naval Reserve around 1911. Albert was instrumental in helping his younger twin brothers Thomas (1907-1983) and Edward (1907-1974) find new lives in Australia. Albert married first Daisy Kate Heath with whom he had five children and second, Elizabeth Cox with whom he had one daughter. Albert died on 13 March 1990 at Battle Hospital having lived in Southend Road, Bradfield for many years. James William (registered William James) was born 3 August 1898 in Bucklebury and also served in the army, enlisting on 2 March 1916. Arthur (registered Arthur William) was born in Rotten Row on 23 December 1899. He married Bertha Florence Boyce in Reading on 23 November 1929 and had at least two children. Kathleen Millson was born 5 March 1904 in Tilehurst; she married Frank Barnes in 1924 and had two children. Finally Ellen, Millson was born 26 August 1911, again in Tilehurst. She married first William Young and later lived with Ali Kolosine with whom she had three children.

More information may be obtained from Nathan Millsom Gregory by emailing him at: nmgregoriesg@live.co.uk