

ALFRED RIDGLEY

Born during 1888 in Saunderton, Buckinghamshire, England

Killed in action on May 7th 1915 in Ypres, France

Commemorated on the War Memorial in the graveyard of St Mary and St Nicholas church, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire. His family name is misspelled as 'Ridgeley' on the memorial

Alfred was born to William and Eliza Ridgley (née Newell) in 1895, and his parents registered his birth during September 1895 at High Wycombe. He was the fourth child and third son of their five children. His father already had one child, William Albert, born in 1879, from his previous marriage to Charlotte Barlow (who died in 1883), and had also been married to Maria Stevens from 1869 until her death in 1876 (but it is not possible to identify if William and Maria had any children). Alfred's mother, Eliza, already had three children; Frederick born in 1873, Ada born in 1878 and George born in 1880, from her previous marriage to Jesse Williams, who had died in 1881. William Ridgley and Eliza Williams married in September 1887, and Alfred was born before February 1888. William was an agricultural labourer for most of his life, working on Pigeon House Farm in Little Marlow, Chorley Farm in West Wycombe and Pond Farm in Saunderton, near the Rose and Crown public house (now much altered (*left*) and called The Chiltern on the A4010).



At the time of the April 1891 census Alfred was listed as an infant living with his parents on Chorley Farm in West Wycombe. By the time of the March 1901 census he was listed as a Farm Ploughboy living with his parents on Pond Farm in Saunderton.

On May 3rd 1905, Alfred enlisted into the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Light Infantry. On his attestation sheet, he signed his own name twice and joined up for a minimum of 6 years, giving his address as Grange Cottage, Saunderton. These cottages are still on the Wycombe Road by the drive to the Saunderton Hostel. The form listed Alfred as 17 years and 3 months old, 5 foot 3¹/₂ inches tall and just over 7 stone in weight. His complexion was described as fresh, his eyes hazel and his hair brown. He confirmed that he was a Methodist. This is why Alfred was not baptised at Saunderton Church of England parish church.

On February 6th 1906, Alfred transferred to the Kings and Shropshire Light Infantry. In the census of April 1911, he was listed as a private in the British Army serving in India, with the second Battalion of the Kings and Shropshire Light Infantry, stationed in Trimulgherry, just north of modern-day Hyderabad, in central India. There was a large military prison at Trimulgherry (*right*), but Alfred was not in the prison.



At the outbreak of war on August 4th 1914, the second Battalion of the Kings and Shropshire Light Infantry were stationed in Secunderabad in India. Secunderabad is just south of Trimulgherry. The Battalion arrived in Plymouth in November 1914, which must have been a shock after at least three years in India. On December 21st 1914, the Battalion landed at Le Havre. On April 22nd 1915, the second Battle for Ypres (*left*) began under General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, and the second Battalion were held as 80th Brigade Reserves in position north of Bellewaerde Lake in southern Belgium and saw action as the battle developed. The battle lasted until May 25th 1915, the total number of casualties was over 59,000 on the Allied side alone; 10,500 were fatalities. Alfred's death

was recorded as May 7th 1915. He is commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres in Belgium on panels 47 and 49. Posthumously he was awarded three campaign medals: the 1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Alfred's younger brother, Percy died of his wounds sustained on April 22nd 1917 at Rouen in France. Percy is also commemorated on the Memorial at St Mary and St Nicholas church in Saunderton, and both Alfred and Percy are commemorated on the Memorial at Loosely Row village cemetery.

Alfred was survived by his parents, one sister, Ellen and two of his brothers, Frank and Herbert Ridgley as well as his half siblings Frederick, Ada and George Williams. Herbert Ridgley served in the Royal Army Service Corps from his enlistment on March 2nd 1916 until his discharge on March 5th 1919 and survived the war. There are no records about Frank Ridgley's war service.

Gary Knight March 31st 2014.