

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ERNEST WILLIAM BLYTH

ERNEST WILLIAM BLYTH - PRIVATE No. 269543
1/7th Battalion King's (Liverpool Regiment)
Died of Wounds Wednesday 15th August 1917. Age c.34
He is buried in Davenham (St Wilfrid) Churchyard. New 632
Medal entitlement: 1914/1915 Star? - British War Medal - Victory Medal.

Ernest Blyth was not a Moultoner. He was born in Downham Market, Suffolk in 1883/4 and was the son of Frederick Blyth a carpenter and joiner. By 1901 the family were living at 59, Lynn Road, Wisbech St Peter. Ernest is shown on the Census for that year as the third of five siblings living in the house. He is 17 and a Boot and Shoe-maker. Strangely, Mrs Blyth is missing from the Census, however, as her husband Fred is listed as 'married' and not 'widowed' it looks very much as if she was away from home for some reason.

At the turn of the century, and at age 17, Margaret Ann ('Annie') Barlow was living with her parents Frederick and Ellen in Chapel Lane, Moulton. At that time Fred was 43 and Ellen 42. Their 2 year old daughter Hilda was also on the scene. Fred was a railway signalman and Annie is listed as a School-teacher! It is also believed that Fred was a School governor. Some four or five years later Annie had met and married Ernest Blyth and they had set up home in London Road, Davenham. Ernest was a manager, possibly of a shoe shop or cobblers. On 23 September 1906 Annie gave birth their daughter, Gladys Mabelle.

Sometime after their daughter Gladys was born Ernest and Annie moved to Strangeways, Manchester. This area of the City, aside from housing that notorious 'Academy for bad lads!!' was also a hive of small workshops making clothing and footwear for the retail trade. It may well be that Ernest opened his own shoe-making business there or, alternatively, managed one for someone else. In any case, it was from Strangeways that he strode forth to enlist at the Manchester recruiting office sometime after the outbreak of war.

Ernest was drafted into the 2nd/7th Battalion of the King's (Liverpool Regiment) to train as an infantryman. The 2nd/7th King's along with five other King's Battalions made up the 57th Division. Little could be found in the records of exactly when he enlisted or indeed, where he served until 1917. He may well have waited until the Conscription Bill was placed on the statute book in mid 1916, in which case he would not be entitled to the 1914/1915 Star as shown above.

July 1917 was a very mixed month for the 2/7th King's based on Armentieres. According to the Battalions War Diary they began the month in the Houplines Sector of the line and for the first fortnight nothing much happened. However, all good things come to an end, for the enemy opposite decided to subject the lads from Liverpool to a constant and terrible barrage. During this time the Germans sent over two raiding parties to try to take prisoners. They were given short shrift by the 'Scousers' who used bombs and Lewis guns to repel the foe. Losses after these attacks were four killed and 30 wounded. On 21st July a Gas shell fell on the Quartermasters Store with the result that two men died of wounds and seven were gassed. Gas shelling was severe and frequent at this time and on 22nd July 19 Officers and men succumbed to this most dreadful of weapons.

The last entry in the War Diary for the month of July is an account of casualties for the month and gives some idea of the intense shelling to which the Battalion had been subjected. A total of 12 men had been killed with 144 wounded - of these 11 more were to die. It is more probable that Pte Ernest Blyth was one of these. It is known that Ernest survived his injuries long enough to be transported to a Military Hospital at Bagthorpe, Nottingham where, on 15th August he gave up the ghost.

After his death Annie, who may have returned to her old home in Moulton whilst Ernest was fighting on the Western Front, decided to bury her husband at St Wilfrid's, Davenham. The records show that her parents, Fred and Ellen, now living at 'Brackendale' 120, Main Road, Moulton, were the grave owners. In the School records for September 1918 Annie is show as having resumed teaching but is 'absent by permission'.