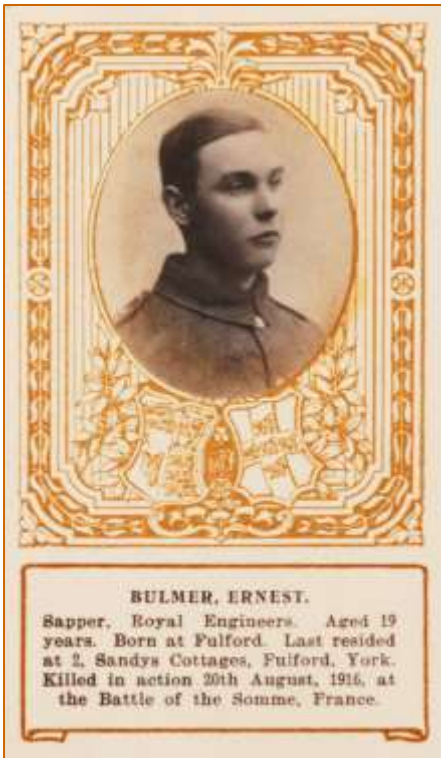


ERNEST BULMER

1896 - 1916

128513 PIONEER, ROYAL ENGINEERS
1st BATTALION SPECIAL BRIGADE



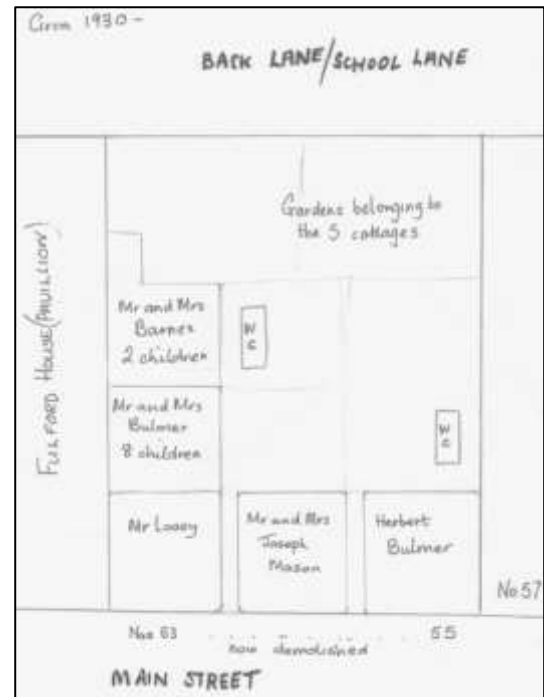
The Bulmer family lived at 2 Sandys' Cottages, Main Street, Fulford. These were situated on a plot of land now occupied by 53 and 55 Main Street, adjacent to Fulford House, the home of Colonel Sandys.

The plan below is based on information supplied by older residents of the village which suggests that the occupants of the five cottages in the 1930's. They had shared outside toilets and attached to the properties were gardens.

It can be seen from the plan of the 1930's that Bulmer families lived in two of these cottages. The Bulmer's also lived in various cottages along Main Street in Fulford; and can be traced back to the 1841 Census.



Cottages, Main Street Fulford



Plan of 53, 55 Main Street, Fulford

Ernest was born in 1886 to Albert Bulmer and his wife Mary nee Barnes. He had an older sister Emily and two younger brothers Herbert and Harold. His father, Albert had been born near Fulford and admitted to Fulford School at the age of 6 in 1882. His mother Mary was the daughter of John Barnes, an agricultural labourer and his wife Elizabeth. They came from Long Marston, near Wetherby.

Ernest was in the Royal Engineers and he is recorded as being a Pioneer. In 1915, in response to German mining of British trenches under the then static siege conditions of WW1, the Corps formed its own tunneling companies. Manned by experienced coal miners from across the country, they operated with great success. In 1917, the fixed positions broke, and they had to build deep dugouts, for example the Vampire dugout, to protect troops from heavy shelling.

Without Pioneers abroad, the British Expeditionary Force commanders were obliged to rely on French civilian labour provided by the French Government to unload the BEF's ships. But this supply of labour quickly proved to be inadequate and the first group of 300 labourers were despatched from England by the British War Office to fill the gap. More British labour followed and by December 1914 they had been formed into five Army Service Corps Labour Companies (ASCLC). Each company had a strength of six officers and around 500 men.

On the battlefield itself, much of the role of the Pioneer was undertaken as part of the 'fatigue' routine common to all British battalions. This meant that in addition to their fighting duties, squads of infantrymen were routinely set various tasks that included: trench digging; installation of barbed wire entanglements; moving of supplies and munitions and any other pioneer type duty that had to be carried out. This fatigue routine became established as an essential part of the infantryman's role and, regrettably, it often took precedence over rest periods, training for new offensives and rehearsing tactics. It was the cause of much physical decline and depression of morale amongst the troops of the infantry battalions. To some extent, or other, the practice of fatigues persisted throughout the whole period of the Great War since the chronic manpower/labour problem was never fully resolved. Active recruitment of Pioneers began in the UK and by the end of 1915 over 20,000 Pioneers were on the Western Front in Labour Companies.

WW1 witnessed the first use of chemical weapons in armed conflict. The Germans first used chlorine gas against French units in the Ypres Salient in 1915.

Ernest, as well as being a Pioneer, was also part of the 1st Battalion Special Brigade. This was a special unit of the Royal Engineers which had been established to use chemical weapons. By the end of May 1916, No 1 Special Battalion and No 2 (less a Company) were allocated to the Fourth Army.



Vermelles British Cemetery

Ernest was killed in action and died on the 20th August 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, France. He is buried at Vermelles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

ERNEST BULMER



AGED 19 YEARS