



DRIVER FREDERICK CHARLES WOODFORD

SERVICE NO. 68063

117TH BTY., 26TH BDE, ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY

DIED 23RD SEPTEMBER 1914 AGED 22

Frederick was born in Down Street (now Hook Road), North Warnborough on 7th May 1892ⁱ to George Woolford, a cow keeper at the time, and Annie Woolfordⁱⁱ. He was the eighth and youngest child of the family. He attended the London Road Board School from 1st March 1899ⁱⁱⁱ. In 1911 Frederick was living at 191 Manor Road, Itchen, with his sister, Mabel Knight, and her family and was employed as a 'fireman on a steam crane'^{iv}. He was almost certainly one of 64,000 members of the Special Reserve who, having undergone some military training prior to August 1914, would have been subject to call-up on mobilisation and eligible to be sent directly to regular battalions for deployment with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). He thus joined the 26th Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery, a regular unit in the 1st Division, and entered a theatre of war in France on 16th August 1914^v.

Before the war the Regular First Infantry Division had been stationed at Aldershot. This Division, one cavalry Division and three more infantry Divisions were among the first wave of the BEF to arrive in France. They were part of Haig's First Corps. Their first engagement with the enemy came with the battle of Mons on 22nd, 23rd and 24th August and the subsequent hazardous retreat to the River Marne after the fall of Tournai. On 25th August, the First Corps marched along the eastern border of the Forêt de Mormal heading towards Landrecies. En route the 1st Division came under a heavy attack south and east of Maroilles^{vi}. The retreat south continued towards the Marne, where they were engaged in an attack on the retreating enemy whose advance towards Paris had been successfully halted by the Allies, on the Petit Morin River on 7th September. On 8th September the German withdrawal continued northwards towards the Aisne. Early on 10th September the 1st Corps continued the advance, driving the enemy northwards to the line of the Ourcq. By 12th September the 1st Division were fighting in the Battle of the Aisne against an enemy in a very strong position – 'its chief military characteristics is that from the high ground on neither side can the top of the plateau on the other side be seen except for small stretches'^{vii}. This battle was the beginning of trench warfare. By 20th September the 1st Division were involved in the subsequent actions of the Aisne Heights. It was during these actions against an enemy with the advantages of a strong position and better weaponry that Frederick was killed in action on 23rd September.

Sir John French had written in his second despatch –

'...from Sunday, August 23rd, up to the present date (September 17th), from Mons back almost to the Seine, and from the Seine to the Aisne, the Army under my command has been continually engaged without one single day's halt or rest of any kind' ^{viii}. An indication of the route taken by the 1st Hampshire in September 1914 can be seen in Fig. 3.

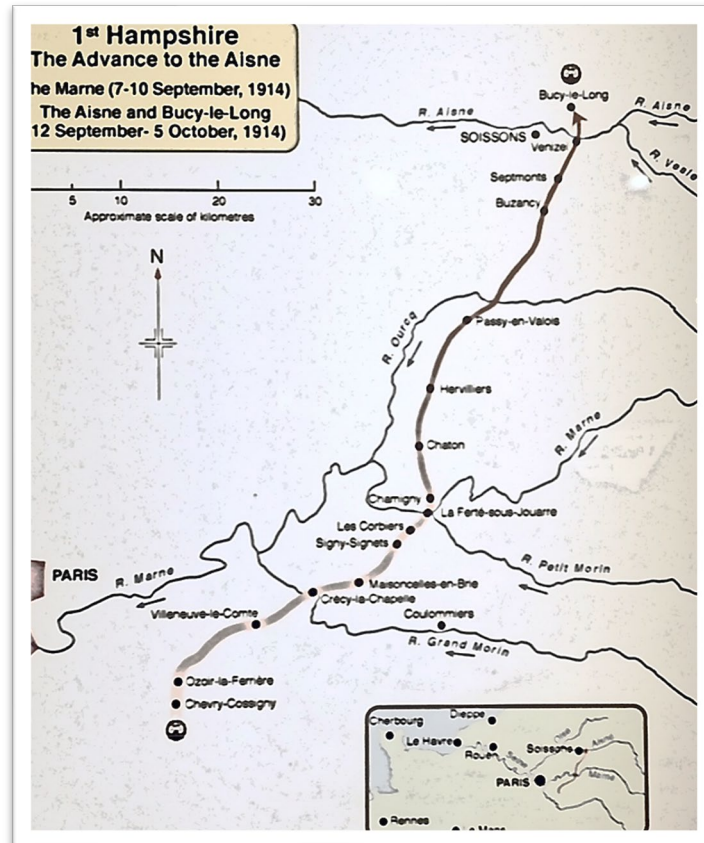


Fig.3. 1st Hampshire, The Advance to the Aisne

Source – Display photograph reprinted by kind permission of The Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum

In Sir John French's third despatch he confirmed that this engagement continued after the 17th. This would have been Frederick's experience up to his death on 23rd September 1914. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal^{ix}. He is commemorated in the Vailly British Cemetery, Aisne.



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- ⁱ London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885
- ⁱⁱ Source - 1891 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref. Class: RG12; Piece: 953; Folio: 30; Page: 21
- ⁱⁱⁱ London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885
- ^{iv} 1911 Census, Itchen, Hampshire, ref: Class: RG14, Piece: 6036, Schedule Number: 312
- ^v Source - British Army WW1 Medal Rolls and Index Cards, 1914-1920. www.ancestry.co.uk
- ^{vi} Source - Sir John French's First Despatch, The Long, Long Trail website www.1914-18.net/french_first_despatch.html
- ^{vii} Source – Sir John French's Third Despatch, The Long, Long Trail website www.1914-18.net/french_third_despatch.html
- ^{viii} Source - Sir John French's First Despatch, The Long, Long Trail website www.1914-18.net/french_second_despatch.html
- ^{ix} Source - British Army WW1 Medal Rolls and Index Cards, 1914-1920. www.ancestry.co.uk

