

BERNARD H DRIVER

Bernard Henry Driver was born in 1886 in Paddington, London, a member of the land agents Drivers of Pall Mall. He was educated at St Edwards School, Oxford where his name is recorded on the memorial in the school chapel.

In 1891 he was living in Littlehampton. By 1901 the family had moved to 153 Sutherland Avenue, Paddington, London where they employed 5 servants.

Ten years later, in 1911, he was living in Elford Lowe, Tamworth, Staffordshire. Elford Lowe, on the summit of a hill about one mile east of the village of Elford, is distinguished by a large oak tree and opposite it, at the distance of a mile, is a smaller lowe. These lowes have been known as 'Robin Hood's Shooting Butts', from a belief that he sometimes practised here, and was able to shoot an arrow between them. Bernard was a farmer at this time.

He married Jessie Winifred Potter in 1911 at Ashby de la Zouche and their son Bernard Wilfrid Kingdon Driver was baptised in St Nicholas Church, Partney on 20th May 1915. Bernard senior was described as 'Gentleman' on the christening record.

By that time he had already offered himself for service in the Great War but had been rejected. He was elected as a church sidesman in 1915, which is an assistant to the churchwarden responsible for collecting offerings of money in the church. Bernard then joined the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps, based in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. Up until September 1916, the Inns of Court provided basic and officer training; the subjects covered were drill, musketry (although limited by a shortage of suitable ranges), entrenching (but little in the way of trench warfare, apart from bombing), map reading, field exercises in open warfare (designed to instill leadership and initiative), and lectures, which covered a whole range of subjects from sanitation, through tactics, to the history of the war.

Bernard was 'transferred as a second lieutenant in the Queen's Regiment on 17th August 1915 and rapidly made his way through the ranks. Two of his promotions were recorded in the London Gazette, 4th November 1916 and 2nd January 1917.

He first went to the front on November 18th 1915 and remained in constant action until his death. He was awarded the Military Cross on March 14th 1917 whilst a Lieutenant with the West Surrey Regiment for 'able leadership and conspicuous gallantry'. He was also wounded and mentioned in despatches on that day.

He eventually became a Major in September 1917 but was killed in action on 4th October 1917 during operations near Reutel. The entry in the War Diary shows they were under secret orders:

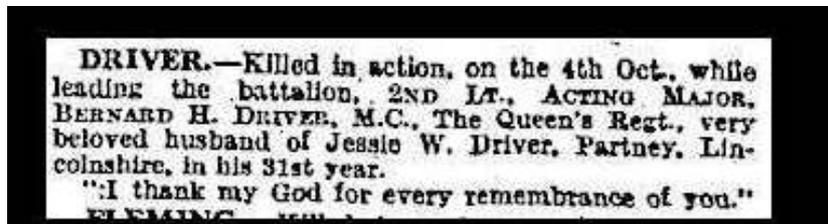
SECRET. *B* 2nd Bn. The Queen's.

OPERATION ORDER No. 62
2nd October 1917.

- 1, GENERAL. The 91st Brigade will be responsible for the Right Sector of the 7th Division frontage in the forthcoming operations of the 7th Division. The 21st Division will be on the Right of the Brigade and the 1st Anzac Division on the Left of the Division.

2. TASK OF BRIGADE. (a) The role of the 91st Brigade is to capture and consolidate the ridge running from J.12.a.30.95 to j.12.a.25.45.; the 21st Division occupy REUTEL, and high ground in J.12.a. to cover the Right flank of the 7th Division.
(b) Objectives and boundaries are as shewn on map already issued.

His death was announced in the London Times of 13th October 1917:



He left his widow, a daughter and a son. A senior officer wrote, "I cannot tell you what a high opinion I had of him. If he had been spared he would have gone a long way as a soldier. He died a glorious death fighting for his country in one of her greatest battles."

Bernard Driver was awarded the Victory Medal, the British War Medal, 1915 Star and the Military Cross. He is also recorded on the Woodham, Surrey Roll of Honour.

The minutes of the Easter vestry meeting in St Nicholas Church on 6th April 1918 record the following:

"The Chairman (Rev. Norris) referred to the great loss the parish had sustained by the death of Major Driver one of the sidesmen who fell in battle while leading his men against greatly superior numbers of the enemy".

The 1918 Electoral Register for Partney shows that his widow, Jessie Winifred Driver was living in the village, near the Church.

Bernard Henry Driver is also remembered on the Perth Cemetery (China Wall) in Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.



The cemetery was begun by French troops in November 1914 (the French graves were removed after the Armistice) and adopted by the 2nd Scottish Rifles in June 1917. It was called Perth (as the predecessors of the 2nd Scottish Rifles were raised in Perth), China Wall (from the communication trench known as the Great Wall of China), or Halfway House Cemetery. The cemetery was used for front line burials until October 1917 when it occupied about half of the present Plot I and contained 130 graves. It was not used again until after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the battlefields around Ypres.