

Harry Beeson

Corporal 10165, 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers

Harry Beeson was born on 8 May 1887 in High Wycombe. His father, Alfred James Beeson, married a widow, Serena Clarke, who was already the mother of six children. Her maiden name was Alflatt. Serena and Alfred had more children and Harry was their third son. Sadly, Serena died in 1889 but Alfred married Marianne Hall in 1890. Alfred was a stationary engine driver, born locally at Chenies on 26 October 1857. For many years the family lived at 49 Easton Street, High Wycombe. Between 1891 and 1901 Alfred and Marianne moved to 19 Eric Road, Willesden, Middlesex, with the younger members of their family and Alfred worked as a blacksmith at a shoeing forge. Harry, aged fourteen, was still at home and, as no employment is mentioned, he was probably still at school.

William, Harry's older brother¹ by two years, married Rose Annie Craft in the summer of 1906 and in the 1911 Census, William, a cowman, and Rose were living in High Street, Amersham, with their daughter Rose aged three. Harry was living with them and working as a coal carter.

Harry was probably already a member of the 1/1st City of London Battalion, who were part of the Territorial Force and affiliated to the other City of London Regiment, the all-regular Royal Fusiliers. In the event of war Territorials were to be used to guard the railway lines, stations and other vital supply routes. When war was declared in August 1914 the battalion was mobilised to guard the London to Newhaven railway. Later, on 4 September, there was a major change of plan and they sailed to Malta arriving at Valetta on 14 September. They remained there until February 1915 and returned to Avonmouth. Three weeks later the battalion landed at Le Havre and joined the 25th Brigade in the 8th Division. This was a regular army division and was then in a line south of Armentières. The battalion took part in the battle of Aubers Ridge on 9 May 1915, losing three officers and one hundred and twenty men.

At the end of July 1915 the Royal Fusiliers were serving on the Western Front in La Brique trenches, north of Ypres. The enemy were sniping every day and there was regular exchange of artillery fire. The battalion *War Diary* notes "their whizzbangs/little bullets contained sulphur". Sulphur ignites on contact with air causing fires and inflicting dangerous wounds. The battalion casualties for the month were nine killed or died of wounds and thirty six wounded. The *War Diary* for 1 August 1915 states "Corporal Beeson was wounded while wiring and died of wounds next day."² Evidently Harry was either repairing or extending the barbed wire entanglements around the trenches designed to slow down the enemy in no-man's-land and thus increase the chances of their advance being detected. Wiring parties went out at night to avoid detection but even so they were very vulnerable to attack from enemy snipers. It was a very effective method of warfare in the early part of WW1 but became less so with the development of tanks later on, as they were able to drive through the wire.

Harry was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18 in addition to The 1914 Star.

Harry Beeson is remembered with Honour and is buried in
grave I.E.9, Poperinghe New Military Cemetery,
West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

¹ Note that another brother named after their father, Alfred James Beeson, a Sergeant with the 2nd Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment and a regular soldier, was killed in action on 1 July 1916.

² *War Diary 1/1st Battalion London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)* The National Archives, Kew Ref. WO 95/1613/2