

## **Frank Percy Caudery**

**Private 31218, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion,  
Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry  
Private 45649, 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment**

**Frank Percy Caudery** was born at Wendover on 8 May 1892, the sixth and youngest child of Frederick Caudery, a butcher, and his wife Mary (née Minnie). In the Census Returns of 1901 and 1911, the family was living at Chesham Villas, Amersham. In 1911, Frank was described as a helmet maker, perhaps at the Misbourne Works of William Stone, which had a contract with the War Office for this manufacture in 1915.



Chesham Villas, White Lion Road, Amersham  
(Photo – H Garas 7 Aug 2014)

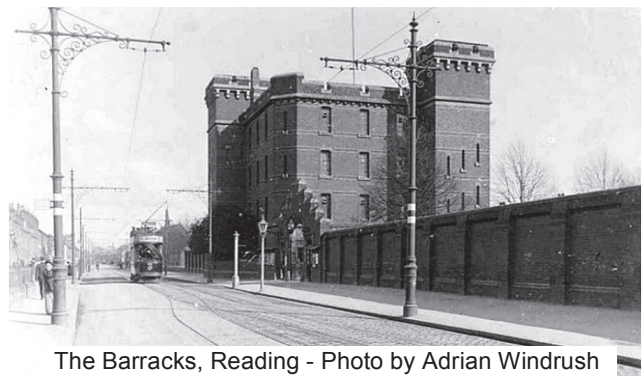
Frank married Amersham girl Ethel Stokes in 1912 when they were both aged 20. The following year, a daughter Gladys was born.

Frank enlisted at Amersham with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but was then transferred to the Royal Berkshires, 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (date unknown). The Royal Berkshire Regiment were generally known as 'The Biscuit Boys' because the regimental depot, Brock Barracks was located at Reading, not far from the well known biscuit factory, Huntley and Palmers, who were biscuit suppliers to the British Army for many years.

The 8th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment was a unit of one of Kitchener's New Armies created early in the war. It was in Kitchener's 5th New Army, known, like the others, by an abbreviation, in this case K5,

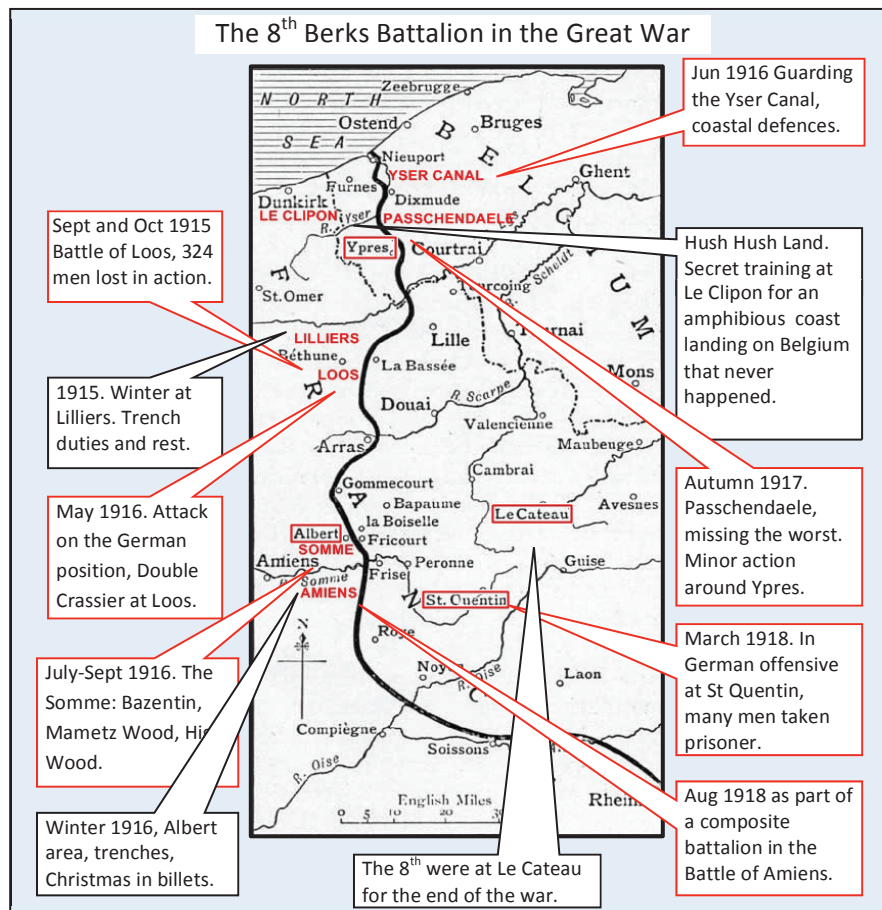
which came into being on 10 December 1914. For most of their time in England they were linked to the 7th Battalion. They moved to huts at Sutton Veney near Warminster on 7 May 1915 after having spent most of the winter billeted in Reading.

They left for France on 7 August 1915 where they became part of the 1st Division to replace one of the Guards Battalions in the 2nd Brigade. This was one of the original regular divisions of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The 8th Royal Berkshires, like all the other battalions in the New Armies, were expected to meet the standards of the regular army with no allowances made for their volunteer status. They began their service in France with 27 officers and 765 other ranks.



The Barracks, Reading - Photo by Adrian Windrush

In the two months following their arrival in France they were in training for the Battle of Loos. They were in position on 24 September and the Battle of Loos opened on the following day, 25 September. The 8th Battalion attacked Hulluch village. One platoon fought its way into the village and captured two German field guns as well as a number of machine guns. The casualties were enormous: the battalion lost a total of 493 men and was left with only two officers and 184 other ranks. On 5 and 10 October, reinforcements arrived from the 9th Battalion. They attacked again on



13 October, losing nearly 140 more men, and were then withdrawn to Lillers where they spent the winter.

On the Somme on 14 July 1916 they were engaged in the fighting at Bazentin, then at Mametz Wood on 18 August and at High Wood on 3 September. They were withdrawn from the line on 2 October and spent the winter and spring in and out of trenches in the Albert area.

On 18 June 1917 the battalion moved north to the Belgian border to guard the Yser Canal and to familiarise themselves with coastal defence work. They were withdrawn to Le Clipon camp near Dunkirk. Here they trained in amphibious warfare and it was planned that they would be part of the British force which would land on the Belgian coast as the follow-up to the Third Battle of Ypres, the final objective of which was for the British army to fight its way north to that coast.

In the re-organisation of the army in February 1918, the 8th were sent to join the 18th Division, taking the place of the 6th battalion in 53rd Brigade in the St Quentin area. There they faced the major German offensive on 21 March and lost a large number of men taken prisoner. The remainder of the battalion withdrew gradually to Nampcel where they were formed into a composite battalion with men of the Royal West Kents and the 53rd Trench Mortar Battalion. Together the three battalions had only 23 officers and 433 other ranks. They took part in the defence of Amiens on 4 April and later withdrew to St Fuscien where they received drafts of men from other units.

The final British offensive began on 8 August with the Battle of Amiens. The 8th Battalion was in action at Gressaire Wood. On 24 August they captured the great crater at La Boisselle which resulted from a huge British mining operation; and they were in action again at Trones Wood on 27 August and at St Pierre Vaast Wood on 2 September.

When the war ended the battalion was stationed at Le Cateau. Here they were engaged in clearing up operations and gradually men were discharged and returned to civilian life.

The battalion was reduced to a cadre and disbanded on 12 April 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Frank made a will<sup>2</sup> on 2 August 1918, just three months before his death on 7 November 1918 at the age of 25, and this was only four days before the Armistice. In the will he left all his property and effects to his wife, Mrs F. P. Caudery of Myrtle Cottage, Amersham Common. (His regiment was stated as the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. There are no records to show when Frank transferred from the OBLI or what battalion he served in).

There was no engagement with the enemy at the time of his death and the battalion were tasked with clearing up operations, burying the bodies of horses and clearing German booby traps. Perhaps he was killed by one of these though there is no battalion record of this, as was often the case with enlisted men. No other member of the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Berkshires died that day. His grave is in Tourgeville Military Cemetery near Deauville on the French coast. On his headstone in the photograph it can be seen that his name has been incorrectly inscribed as E.P.Caudery. There is another possible version of his death, however. The Tourgeville Military Cemetery was established in February 1918 by several General Hospitals and Convalescent Depots. It is quite possible that Frank was wounded in some action and taken to one of the General Hospitals where he later died. Documents concerning his death state 'died' rather than 'killed in action'. The Tourgeville Military Cemetery was more than a hundred miles from the Western Front.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.

Frank Percy Caudery is remembered with Honour  
Tourgeville Military Cemetery, Calvados, France (grave ref. VII.A.6)



Picture courtesy: Commonwealth  
War Graves Commission

<sup>1</sup> This information is derived from *The Royal Berkshire Regiment Great War Project*

<sup>2</sup> <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/>