



Bombardier George W V Musselwhite



182nd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

Died 2 July 1916

Age 17

George William Valentine Musselwhite died of his wounds on 2nd July 1916 at the age of just 17. He is commemorated on a list of war dead at All Saints', Putney Common.

It is unclear how George came to be in the army at all in 1917, given he was under the minimum age of 18 required to be able to volunteer. Perhaps his war records are incorrect or he lied about his age but it is likely that George volunteered as part of Kitchener's Army only a short time before he was killed.

He was part of 182nd Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery which was formed in England and moved to France on 22 February 1916. The Royal Field Artillery was the largest arm of the artillery and was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line. George's division relocated from Ireland to Aldershot in September 1914, finally moving to France in December 1915.

George's death on 2nd July 1916 could suggest involvement in the First Battle of the Somme, which had started the previous day and lasted until 18th November of that year. However, it is also possible that he died of injuries received during 27-29th April 1916 from a cloud gas attack, near the German-held village of Hulluch, a mile north of Loos.

George lived at 7 Dyers Lane between the Upper Richmond Road and the railway in Putney with his mother, Mrs Susan Musselwhite. It is unclear what other family George had but his mother may be the same Mrs Musselwhite who in 1901 was taking in lodgers, one of whom, a gardener, about to be married, hanged himself after losing an inheritance at the Windsor races.

Bombardier Musselwhite is buried in the cemetery at Mazingarbe, a small town located in the Pas de Calais between the larger town of Lens and Béthune. The grave (number I A 13) is within the Mazingarbe Communal Cemetery Extension, which was begun by the 16th (Irish) Division in April 1916 and was used until October 1918. It contains 248 Commonwealth burials of the First World War and two German graves. The extension was designed by Sir Herbert Baker.

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