

Frederick Pitkin



Royal Warwickshire Regiment 13th Battalion attached to the Somerset Light Infantry

1883 – 1916

Fred Pitkin was born on 18th September, 1883, the son of Alfred Pitkin, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Susanna (nee Alderman), who lived in Smithfield End. He was the youngest of 11 children (two of whom died young): Ann (1865), Alice (1866), Charles (1867, died in infancy), Mary (1872), Ellen (1873), Amy (1875), William (1876), Louisa (1878), Emily (1880) and Edward (1881, died at 10 months).

In 1891, aged 7, he was at school, and living in Smithfield End, but by 1901, he was living in Duck End and in employment as an under-gardener (not domestic) suggesting that he worked at Swanbourne House for the 2nd Lord Cottesloe. In 1911, aged 28, he was recorded in the census as living in Boot Road (probably in Barrack Row) and 'working in gentlemen's garden'.

On 17th February 1907, Frederick, who would have been aged 24 at the time, was baptised at St Swithuns. He was the only one of the nine children who lived into adulthood who is recorded as having been baptised there, though the two children who died in infancy were both baptised there before they died. Frederick's father was a stalwart of the Methodist chapel and several of the other children were baptised as children at the chapel, so it is interesting that he should have been baptised as an adult in the Anglican Church.

It is not known where or when he enlisted, but he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment's 13th Battalion, which formed in Golden Hill, Isle of Wight in October 1914 as a Service Battalion for the Fourth New Army (K4) and joined the 97th Brigade of the 32nd Division, then moved to Totland Bay. On 10th April 1915 it became a 2nd Reserve Battalion and in May moved to Swanage and joined the 8th Reserve Brigade and then moved to Blandford. On 1st September 1916, it became the 33rd Training Reserve Battalions and moved to Wool, Dorset.

It would seem that the Battalion was attached to the Somerset Light Infantry. But Frederick may never have served abroad, as he died on 11th April 1916 at the Royal Naval Camp, Tarrant Monkton, Blandford, Dorset, aged 32 years. His death certificate states the cause of death as '1. Asthma, and 2. Pneumonia and Syncope'. The informant was W. Pitkin, brother, of Swanbourne, in attendance. Frederick was buried in Swanbourne Cemetery on 17th April, where there is a Commonwealth War Graves headstone. In his will he left his effects of £165.2s.7d to his brother.

