

The Murphys at war

PRIVATE ROBERT MURPHY 14864

Robert Murphy was born in the first quarter of 1894 in a house at Grange Fell, recorded on the censuses as 3, Front Row, but given by the Murphys as 3, Mount Pleasant.



FRONT ROW TERRACE 2015

Robert was one of fifteen children, twelve of whom survived infancy to be recorded on the 1911 census. In a 1920 document his father lists only nine surviving children. Robert's mother was Mary Ann Wilson, a local girl, and his father was Christopher Murphy, from Liverpool, son of an Essex born engine driver.

On his most of his forms, his occupation was given as Farmhand except for one with the Argylls, where he is listed as a Postman, presumably in error, as in 1911 he was working at Copster Hall Farm, Salmesbury, near Blackburn. By today's norms he was a small man, just over 5'3" and about eight stone, with a full set of false teeth. He sported a tattoo with the name "Alice" but I have so far found no clues as to Alice's identity.

Robert enlisted, at Kendal, in the West Yorkshire Regiment on 20.11.1915. However, due to the influence of a friend, he then joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders on the 23.11.1915. He was posted as absent from the West Yorks and subsequently charged with fraudulent

enlistment in the Argylls, generating a good deal of paperwork and culminating in deductions from his pay. By rights he should have been returned to the West Yorks but, as the Argylls had fitted him out with a uniform, he was allowed to stay with them.

The copy of Robert's service record indicates that he was posted to Boulogne on 31.08.1916 and to No.19 Infantry Base on 01.09.1916. He was posted sick to the field hospital on 03.12.1916 and moved on, via Rouen, arriving on 14.12.1916 at the Bristol Military Hospital, where he was admitted for surgery on his bunions and was there for 111 days until 2.4.1917. He was posted back to his unit on 14.07.1917.

Robert died on 26.03.1918, of wounds received to his abdomen and thigh, at the Le Tréport Military Hospital, in the Pays de Caux, about 21 miles from Dieppe. He is buried in grave V.E.1B at Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Tréport.

It seem likely that Robert was wounded in the Battle of St Quentin, probably on the 21st March, when the Allied positions were over run by the German troops.

In November 1919, Robert's father received his outstanding effects - pay and allowances - of £24 9s 5d.

JOHN PERCY MURPHY 200812

Robert's younger brother, John Percy, was born 01.06.1895 at 3, Front Row. He grew to be a bigger man than his brother at just over 5'7" and 10 stone, working as a fishmonger, when he enlisted in the 4th Battalion of the Kings Own Royal Lancasters, at Ulverston, on 17.02.1915.

He was stationed in England, presumably for training, although he must have been 'sick' for some of this time, as he broke his collarbone in a cycling accident, whilst on home leave. He was posted to the Expeditionary Force as a machine gunner on 01.01.1916. His battalion spent most of 1916 on the Somme. On 08.08.1916 he was seriously wounded by shrapnel at Guillemont, possibly in one of the abortive, early attempts to take the German positions on Mont Guillemont.

As a result of his injuries he was operated on in the field hospital to amputate his left leg above the knee and his right arm below the elbow.

By the beginning of September he had been transferred to the 2nd Western General Hospital in Manchester, where he stayed until the end of May, his leg wound being very slow to heal.

He was presumably discharged home on furlough but his records show that he under the care of The Lord Derby Hospital Warrington from July 1917 to January 1918, presumably not as an in-patient as he was seen by a Richard C Lowther at the Eggerslack Auxiliary Military Hospital in Grange, on 16.09.1917, his leg wound still not healing.

In January 1918, he was admitted to Eggerslack, his left stump having completely broken down, where he stayed until the middle of May, when he was discharged, fully healed, to Roehampton for the fitting of an artificial leg.

John Percy was recorded in the Grange Red Book in the 1930's as living at 10, Front Terrace and in 1969 at 10 Grange Fell, a rather ambiguous address. The numbering system has changed over the years as the house in Front Row (Terrace) numbered 10 has a nameplate for 10, Fell Cottages.

John married Lizzie Mewies, born 1895, at Walton-on-Trent, Derby, in 1925. They seem to have had three children, Sheila C in 1926, Vera in 1928 and John H in 1932.

John died in the 1st quarter of 1972, aged 77, and Lizzie's death was registered in 1985 in Preston and South Ribble, presumably living with one of the children.

Christopher Murphy

The boys' father, Christopher, was born in West Derby, Liverpool, in the 3rd quarter of 1862, son of an Essex born engine driver. He worked as a carriage driver and, subsequently, as a council labourer. He died in the 2nd quarter of 1923, aged 60.

He served in the King's Own National Reserve, based in Barrow.


Mary Ann Wilson

The boys' mother, Mary Ann was born in the 3rd quarter of 1866, probably in Cartmel, as recorded on the 1871 census, but subsequently

recorded her birth as being in Grange. She was the daughter of Richard Wilson, a gardener from Kendal, and his wife Agnes from Cartmel Fell, residents of Higher Grange. By 1881 Mary Ann was working as a servant for the Shaw spinsters at Eden Mount. Her first child, Jane Murphy, was born in the 4th quarter of 1884 in Cartmel but Mary Ann did not marry Christopher Murphy until the 4th quarter of 1888, about the time of the birth of her second child, Agnes, by which date she was 21. Does this suggest that she married against her parents' wishes? I have found no record of the children's baptisms, could the problem be a clash of denominations?

Mary Ann produced children at regular intervals until her last child, Edmund, was born in 1908. She died in the last quarter of 1918, aged 52.

GRANGE MAN WOUNDED.



Pte. J. MURPHY.

Mrs. Murphy, of Grange Fell, has received notification from the Chaplain of the 165th Infantry Brigade, that her son, Private John Murphy, 4th King's Own, was wounded in the leg and right fore-arm on August 8th. Private Murphy enlisted in January, 1915, and has been in France about five months, and it will be remembered that whilst at home on leave before going to France he had the misfortune to break his collar-bone whilst out cycling, and his departure was in consequence delayed. His brother, Robert, is in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and expects to go to the front at an early date, whilst his father is doing his duty by serving in the King's Own (National Reserves) at Barrow.