

## *Charles Edward Bacon-Forster.*

***Private, No. 45053, 7/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (Princess Victoria's Royal Irish Fusiliers) (and formerly No 5263, 8<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions East Kent Regiment.)***

Charles's grandparents, George and Catherine, were classed as paupers and were occupants of the workhouse when Charles's father George was baptised on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1857 in the Church of St. John the Evangelist, in the district of Hale, Farnham, Surrey.

George became a Coach Trimmer and married Charles's mother Fanny (nee Humphrey), five years his senior, in St. Andrew's Church, Farnham, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1878. Their first child Naomi was born in Tonbridge, Kent the following year. At the time of the Census in 1881 the family lived at 44, East Street, Farnham. The couple were to have further children, George, Charles, Annie<sup>i</sup>, Kathleen and John, who died at the age of four.



*Charles, Lucy, Kathleen and Naomi.*

Charles was born during the early months of 1885 and baptised in Farnham on the 24<sup>th</sup> May.

The family moved again, to 7 Abbott's Place in Canterbury, Kent<sup>ii</sup> before arriving, during the 1890s in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire where Charles's mother died in 1898. The family shared part of a house, No. 25, Clemens Street. George continued to work as a Coach Trimmer, his son George as a General Porter and Charles now aged 15 as an Errand Boy<sup>iii</sup>. Daughter Naomi found work as a Domestic Servant at the Kings Head Hotel in Wellesbourne.

The remainder of the family followed Naomi to live in Wellesbourne where their father George died in early 1903 and brother George in a tragic drowning accident in 1915.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> December 1906, at St. Peter's Church, Wellesbourne Charles married Lucy Blackford, from Stratford upon Avon. He was a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters as was Harry Anderton who is believed to have been his best man. The Bacon-Forster's children were both born in Wellesbourne, Naomi on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1908 and Kathleen Mary on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1912 and were named after two of Charles's sisters. The family lived in the hamlet of Walton where Charles worked as a Gardener for Lady Mordaunt on the Walton Hall estate<sup>iv</sup>.

It was three days after Christmas in 1914 when Charles left his home, now in Church Walk, Wellesbourne, to attest at the Warwick Recruiting Office. He was to join the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), with Service No. 5265, and travelled to meet up with his colleagues at Canterbury two days later. After training, Charles arrived in

France on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 1915 and was posted to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Buffs which had taken heavy losses at the Battle of Loos in late September. During October the Battalion came under the command of the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 24<sup>th</sup> Division.

In April 1916 the Battalion suffered in the German gas attack at Wulverghem, near Ypres and by July were in action on the Somme. On the ninth day of the battle Charles received slight gunshot wounds to his lower chest, one of four of his Battalion wounded that day. With the volume of casualties incurred, it was not until the 6<sup>th</sup> August that he was able to board the M.S Brighton in Calais for ultimate admission the following day, to the 3rd Northern General Hospital in Sheffield where he remained for the next 33 days.

Fit again, Charles was posted, during the middle of September, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Buffs which was to remain in England for the remainder of the war. The following month, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Battalions of the Royal Irish Fusiliers merged and on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1916 Charles was reassigned to the newly formed 7/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Princess Victoria's (Royal Irish Fusiliers) (49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade) which at the time was located around the village of Kemmel, 6 miles south west of Ypres.

Raids planned for late December with the objective of destroying the enemy's frontline system were postponed and it was only on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1917 that the 7/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion were ordered to attack trenches close to the Kemmel to Wytschaete Road, now referred to on the Brigade Maps as 'Suicide Road'.

At the end of the day's fighting casualties were relatively light, but two of the Royal Irish Fusiliers were reported dead with five missing. The list of the missing included the name of Charles Bacon-Forster. It wasn't until May that British Authorities received notification via the German Red Cross that an identification disc had been found north of the Kemmel to Wytschaete Road. Charles's wife was subsequently informed 'that for official purposes' his death was now to be recorded as the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1917.



*Card sent by Charles to daughter Naomi from the Front on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1916.*

With no known grave Charles Bacon-Forster's name appears on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres. He is also commemorated on the Ireland List of Casualties of the Great War, on The Roll of Honour for the Dead, St. Peter's Church, Wellesbourne and on the village War Memorial. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star and the Victory and British Medals.

Two years after Charles's death his wife, Lucy married his friend, Harry Anderton and they had three children together.

During the war years Charles's sister Kathleen became engaged to William Hopkins of Wellesbourne who served in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment and was

killed in action on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1918. His name also appears on the Wellesbourne War Memorial.

*Researched by Grev.Hudson (Sept 2014)([grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk))*

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<sup>i</sup> Annie Victoria Winterton Bacon Forster was born in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 1887 and baptised on 7/10/1887 in Farnham . but the GRO entry of her birth refers to her as Fanny.

<sup>ii</sup> Census 1891

<sup>iii</sup> Census 1901

<sup>iv</sup> Census 1911.

*Other Sources*

*War Diaries 8<sup>th</sup> Bn. East Kent Regiment (NA .WO95/2207)*

*War Diaries 7/8<sup>th</sup> Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers(NA. WO95/1978/)*

*Charles Bacon- Forster's Service Record (via Ancestry.com)*

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