

Driver Frank Brearley

Regimental number: 229632

"C" Battery, 174th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: probably 1894/5 - died: 11 September 1918

Driver Frank Brearley was probably born in late 1894 or early 1895. He was baptised on 6 February 1895 in St Mary's Church, Oldham, Lancashire, the son of Tom and Eliza Brearley.¹ His father, Tom, was born in about 1873 in Oldham and his mother, the former Eliza Taylor, was born in about 1872 in Heywood, Lancashire.² Tom and Eliza were married in Oldham in 1894³ and had two sons: Frank and a younger son, Harold, born in about 1897.

In 1901, the family was living at 31 Kendall Street in Prestwich, north of Manchester, where Tom was a general labourer.⁴ By 1911, Eliza and the two boys had moved back to Oldham and were living at 4 Crown Street.⁵ Frank, aged 16, was a mule piecer in a cotton spinning mill.⁶ Although Eliza indicated on the census that she was married, her husband, Tom, was not living with the family. He was possibly living at the Salvation Army Working Men's Home in Liverpool, where he was identified as a former machine joiner.⁷ He was identified as being single, suggesting that he had left the family and had fallen on hard time. It is possible that Tom was convicted of begging in Dewsbury, about 30 miles from Oldham, in September 1904 and served seven days imprisonment in Wakefield, West Yorkshire.⁸

Frank enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery in Oldham.⁹ The 174th Brigade was part of the 39th Divisional Artillery. On 10 September 1918, he was wounded and admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to his neck, abdomen and right foot.¹⁰ He died the day he was admitted and was buried the following day in the Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 5, Row H, Grave 54) with the chaplain W. F. O'N. Fisher presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.¹¹ The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.¹² A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September.

Frank's mother was notified of his death.¹³ However, the monies owing to him from the army after the war were not issued.¹⁴ Frank was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁵

Eliza Brearley lost both her sons in the Great War. Frank's younger brother, Harold, was a Rifleman in the 7th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps (Regimental number R/11758)¹⁶ and joined the Front in France on 5 August 1915.¹⁷ He died less than two months later. He was killed in action on 27 September 1915 and is buried in the Bedford House Cemetery, near Ypres, Belgium.¹⁸ He was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁹

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¹ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley, FHL Film Number: 1656225, Reference ID: 19

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- ² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley, Registration district: Prestwich, Sub-registration district: Newton, ED, institution, or vessel: 43, Piece: 3763, Folio: 136, Page Number: 28, Household schedule number: 178
- ³ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Tom Brearley, District: Oldham, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8D, Page: 788
- ⁴ "1901 England Census," entry for Frank Brearley
- ⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley, Registration district: Oldham, Registration District Number: 469, Sub-registration district: Oldham South, ED, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 24500
- ⁶ Mule piecers were usually young children who were employed to lean over the spinning-machine to repair broken threads. "Piecers in the Textile Industry," Sparticus Educational (www.sparticus-educational.com; accessed 23 October 2015)
- ⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Tom Brearley, Registration district: Liverpool, Registration District Number: 453, Sub-registration district: Abercromby, ED, institution, or vessel: 36-50, Piece: 22210
- ⁸ Prison record "West Yorkshire, England, Prison Records, 1801-1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Tom Brearley
- ⁹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley
- ¹⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 649
- ¹¹ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)
- ¹² "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹³ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 649
- ¹⁴ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley
- ¹⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Frank Brearley
- ¹⁶ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Harold Brearley
- ¹⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Harold Brearley
- ¹⁸ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Brearley, Harold, Service No: R/11758
- ¹⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 October 2015), entry for Harold Brearley