

Mawdesley
Private George William Mawdesley
7188, 1st Bn., Scots Guards
Died 7th October 1914 Age 24



Died of wounds 7th October 1914

On the 24th October 1914 the Sentinel reported the death of Private George William Mawdesley as *"the second officer the County Borough Police Force has lost in the war"* and the *"first Biddulph man to be mortally wounded in action."* Shock waves must have echoed around the parish of Biddulph with the news of his death. The Chronicle stated: *"though the grim realities of war have been deeply impressed on the minds of Biddulph people by the fact of so many Biddulph men having left the town to serve their King and country, the direful results of the nation's call to arms have been brought closer to home to many in Biddulph by the sad news of the death in hospital of George William Mawdesley, a private in the Scots Guards."*

Although George was not a Biddulph man (born in Southport in 1890) he had married Biddulph girl Harriett Finney on Christmas Day 1911 at St. Lawrence. Harriett was the daughter of the late Samuel Finney of Station Road. Their marriage entry in the Parish Register described George as a labourer of Well Street, however, prior to his marriage George had served in the Army. On leaving his regiment he had obtained employment at Chatterley Whitfield Colliery where he lost a finger in a pit accident. He applied for the post of steward at the Biddulph Unionist Club and newspaper reports state that *"his credentials from his regiment bore eloquent testimony to the esteem in which he was held by his officers and comrades."* He was a popular young man and was eagerly accepted by the local community: *"very popular amongst a host of friends by a quiet and unassuming demeanour that endeared him to all with whom he came in contact."*

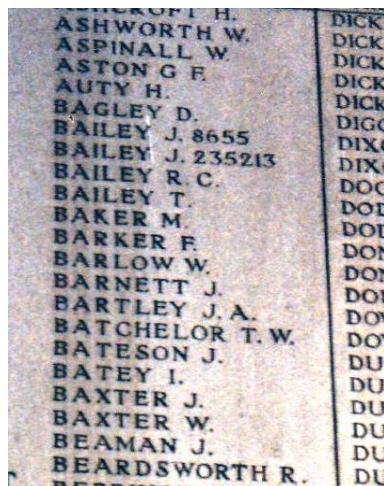
In October 1913 he joined the Stoke-on-Trent police force where he was employed as a *"plain clothes officer and assistant shops inspector."* Although only employed with the force for a short time *"Mawdesley's conduct was such as to gain alike the confidence of his superiors and the respect of his comrades."*

Buried at Vendresse Churchyard, Picardie, France and commemorated on both the St. Lawrence churchyard cross and memorial board and also on the Biddulph cenotaph. However, his surname was inscribed as 'Maudesley' on the local memorials.

Harriett Mawdesley was informed of her husband's death by a letter from an officer of the Scots Guards which was delivered to her by Mr. R.J.Carter, Chief Constable of Stoke-on-Trent. The letter *"did not intimate where Mawdesley met with his wounds or their nature, but it stated that the officers and men of the battalion were extremely sorry at losing him. He was of a type they could ill afford to lose. Mrs. Mawdesley, the letter stated, would have the satisfaction of knowing that her husband was a brave soldier. Mawdesley was a fine, stalwart young man, just turned 24 years of age, and although it is some comfort to the bereaved ones to know that he died the death of a soldier, it is sad to think of the promising life suddenly cut off so young."*

Elaine Heathcote

Bailey
Private John Bailey
8655, 1st Bn., The King's (Liverpool Regiment)
Killed in Action 28th October 1914 Age 34



Although born in Biddulph, John had also lived for many years at various homes in Hanley with his mother Mary and father Henry, a police constable in the city. John was to marry Mary Ellen about 1909 and they were to have a daughter, Florence. By 1911, John described himself as a cabinet maker on the census returns. At that time the family lived at 32, Austin Street, Hanley.

By the outbreak of the Great War on 4th August 1914 we believe that John was already in the army. Although his service records have not survived he seems to have enlisted at Warrington prior to August 1914, joining the Kings Liverpool Regiment. This regiment with its long history was stationed at Talavera barracks Aldershot. John, along with his pals in 1st Battalion Kings including James Barlow, another local soldier, sailed on the

13th August from Southampton aboard the SS Irrawaddy, this being only ten days after hostilities commenced. They formed part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and were attached to the 2nd Division.

After disembarking at Le Havre the division moved into Belgium in preparation for the Battle of Mons on 23rd August, and then bravely fighting the retreat before moving to the battles of The Marne and Aisne in September. From mid-October the battalion were in the Westhooke-Zandvoorde-Zillebeke area of Belgium preparing for the 1st Battle of Ypres.

During this battle the 1st Kings lost about fifty men - including their CO Lt Col Bannatyne. As the battle raged into late October our brave soldier, Private John Bailey, at the age of thirty four was also to die on the battlefield. It was on the 28th October. John has no known grave and is remembered on the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Michael Turnock

Barlow
Private James Barlow
7604, 1st Bn., King's (Liverpool Regiment)
Killed in Action 16th November 1914 Age 32



James was born circa 1883 with his place of birth variously given as Biddle (*sic*) and Tunstall. His mother, Mary, resided at Heath's New Row, Black Bull and it would appear that it was at Robert Heath's works that James worked at various times as a puddler. He married Louisa Barlow in 1907 and together they had four children; Elsie May (26.6.1907), Florrie (3.10.1909), Stanley (26.1.1912) and a son born two days after his posting to France and named James (2.9.1914). By this time the family were living at Newcastle (5, Old Roebuck Lane), where they had been living at the time of the 1911 census and it was to this address that communication was sent from the War Office.

Already a trained soldier, having enlisted initially at Tunstall in 1901 at the age of 18, James served in the 2nd Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment, both at home and Ireland. He was on the Army Reserve in 1909, and then returned to the colours, re-engaging at Warrington in March 1913 into the 1st Battalion King's, 2nd Division. Fortunately his army record has survived. When war broke out on the 4th August 1914 the battalion crossed the channel landing on 30th August, and moving forward in readiness to fight in the Battles of the Marne and Aisne in early September.

The following months saw the men move north into Belgium where during October and November the 1st Battle of Ypres was fought. In late October another Biddulph soldier, pal John Bailey, who served in the same battalion was to fall in battle.

Between 1st and 16th November the battalion fought in the Westhooke-Polygon Wood area where heavy losses were inflicted on the men by the elite 11th Prussian Guard. It was during this period that our brave soldier, James Barlow, received serious wounds from which he sadly died on the 16th November aged 32 years.

His death was reported in the Sentinel. However, this leads to something of a puzzle. His service records give the month of his death as November - however, the Weekly Sentinel reported his death as occurring in December:

Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel – January 2nd 1915

At a meeting of the Newcastle Relief Committee, Mr. Forster – *“also reported on the death of Private James Barlow, of the 1st King's Liverpool Regiment, who was killed in action (place unknown) on December 16th.”*

Louisa was left with four young children – the youngest only a baby. She applied for a pension and received 22/6d per week for herself and the children from 21st June 1915. Louisa must have wondered as to what had become of her husband's belongings and a poignant letter written to the Infantry Record Office still survives, although there is no documentation surviving to provide an answer:

March 16th 1915

Dear Sir,

Having wrote to the War Office about the belongings of my husband Pte James Barlow, 1st Battalion Liverpool Rgt. who has died of wounds received in action I have had a reply to enquire at Preston as all property is sent on to there. Sir I should like to know if you have received a watch belonging to my husband- it is a Silver Hunter number unknown.?... chain bearing a Jubilee sixpence on the end. If so I should like it sent on to me and oblige.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Barlow, 5 Old Roe Buck Lane, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffs.

Above: Transcribed copy of letter from Louisa Barlow

Private Barlow was buried near to where he fell and now rests in the beautifully kept Railway chateau Cemetery Ypres. He is remembered on both Biddulph memorials and the Brindley Ford memorial.

Michael Turnock & Elaine Heathcote

