

Frederick Henry William Baker

Private, 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry. Was a Reserve man. Came over from Canada to join up when the war began. Served with B.E.F. in France. Killed in action at La Bassée, the first week in May, 1915. Awarded 1914-15 Star and British War Medal.



FREDERICK BAKER WAS born in Corsham in 1887 to Frederick and Prudence (née Masters). His father Frederick was himself from Corsham and in 1891 he was a stone quarryman living on Corsham High Street near The Royal Oak with his wife, son Frederick and two daughters, Beatrice and Kate. They had another daughter Mabel (born in 1896) and son Harold (1898) before Prudence died in 1899 (possibly in childbirth). By 1901 the family had been split up, as father Frederick was in prison in Devizes while Frederick, Kate, Mabel and Harold were living with their maternal grandmother in Batcombe near Shepton Mallet. Grandmother Ann is recorded as foster mother to the children. Their father died in 1903.

Frederick married Ellen Hobbs in Tavistock, Devon, in 1907 when he was just 19. They had two children, Victor in 1908 and Prudence in 1910, and in April 1911 they were living in Gunnislake in Cornwall, where Frederick worked as a waggoner on a farm.

They had already made plans, however, to emigrate to Canada, and on 2nd May 1911 Frederick embarked alone on the Cunard ship *Albania*, destined for Quebec. Eighteen

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months later, in September 1912, his wife Ellen and children Victor and Prudence sailed from Plymouth and joined him in Canada.

The outbreak of war brought an end to their family life in Canada. Frederick returned to England on the ship *Zeeland*, arriving in Liverpool in December 1914. It appears that he enlisted immediately and by 11th January 1915 he was in France with the Somerset Light Infantry. His medal record shows that he was killed in action on 2nd May 1915 at La Bassée. He is commemorated on the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Frederick's younger brother Harold served in the West Surrey Regiment and was killed in the war in April 1918.