



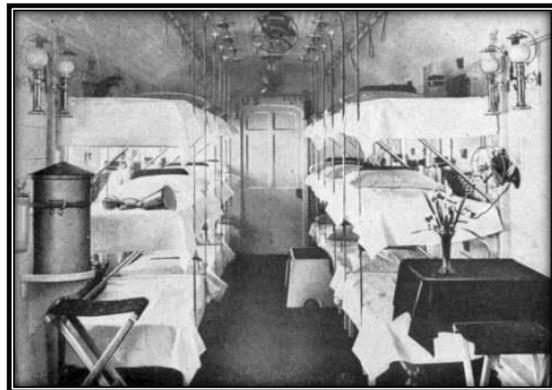
## Alfred Charles Baker

There are no service records for Alfred who was known as Alf from a young age. We don't know for sure when he enlisted but a medical record from Oct 1916 suggests that he joined the Army only seven months before this record - possibly about March 1916. He would have been 22.

The 1911 census tells us that Alf's family home was 56 Gordon Ave, St. Margarets. His mother was Emma (nee Lingwood) and father Charles, who was a house decorator. Alf's eldest brother Ernest was a Railway Clerk, his sister Mabel a Milliner, brother Frank was an Insurance Clerk and Wilfred a Second Due Clerk. Alf was 16 and the youngest of the family, also an insurance clerk and born 1894 in Richmond.

Alf Baker joined 1/16th County of London Battalion (Queen's Westminster Rifles) and faced a baptism of fire. He would have been engaged in various actions on the Western Front including battles at Gommecourt and Ginchy, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, and the Battle of Transloy Ridges.

This Battalion must have been exhausted and it is not surprising that Alf succumbed to a bout of dysentery and was 'hospitalised' on a train for three days in October 1916. It was during WW1 that trains began to be used as mobile medical facilities with on board surgical wards and essential medical supplies. These trains were able to connect with hospital ships at French channel ports in order to repatriate wounded British soldiers back to England.



In March/April of 1917 Alf's Battalion would also have been subject to the dangers of the hundreds of booby trap mines laid by the Germans as they retreated from the 'Hindenburg Line' (reducing the length of the line they had been defending to free up their army divisions to serve as reserve troops).



On the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1917, Alfred's Battalion was engaged in the First Battle of the Scarpe (this battle was part of the Arras Offensive). It was here, on 17<sup>th</sup> April, that Alf was shot in his left thigh and wrist. Alfred was not killed, but was taken by 31<sup>st</sup> Ambulance Train from Warlencourt to Camiers, a huge base depot of the British Army near the coast of France known then as Étapes camp. Although it had over a dozen hospitals, Alfred died of his wounds on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1917. His last resting place is at Étapes War Cemetery - the largest Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in France. He is also remembered at All Souls' Church, St Margarets.

Rest On Dear Son & Brother  
In Thine Hallowed Grave