

Biography of 2nd Lt. Alfred Olley DCM 1887-1919



Alfred was born in 1887, the son of George and Katherine Olley. We know that his wife's name was Maud Lilian and that they were living at 149 Lathom Road, East Ham, London at the time of his death in 1919¹.

Alfred served as a Sergeant in the York and Lancaster Regiment, beginning his service in the First World War on 7th October 1916 in France². There he served with distinction and on 7th June 1917 was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). The citation read:

*(York and Lancaster Regiment cap badge)*³

"His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to the undermentioned Warrant Officers, Noncommissioned Officers and Men, for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty in the Field...

7304 Serjeant A. Olley, York & Lancaster Regiment. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He led his men with great courage and coolness during our offensive, afterwards showing great ability in organising working and carrying parties under very trying conditions. He rendered great help in the clearing of the wounded, and his example throughout has been magnificent to the whole of his battalion."⁴



*(Distinguished Conduct Medal)*⁵



Soon afterwards Alfred was promoted to Warrant Officer Class II in the 9th Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment⁶. His battalion served in the battle of the Menin Road (20-25 Sept 1917), the battle of Polygon Wood (26 Sept - 3rd Oct 1917), and the First and Second Battles of Passchendaele (12 Oct and 26 Oct - 10 Nov 1917). In November 1917 the battalion moved to Italy to strengthen their resistance effort and engaged in various actions, including The Battle of Vittorio Veneto.⁷

*(Men of the York and Lancaster Regiment)*⁸

¹ Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC): <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/649246/>

² Medal index card (MIC): <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D4454580>

³ Photo. Imperial War Museum (IWM): <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/3331317>

⁴ The London Gazette, 16 August 1917.

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30234/supplement/8407>

⁵ Photo: IWM as above.

⁶ IWM as above.

⁷ <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/328/york-and-lancaster-regiment/>

⁸ Photo: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_and_Lancaster_Regiment



On 30th April 1918 Alfred became a commissioned officer, being appointed 2nd Lieutenant in the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.⁹

(West Riding Regiment cap badge)¹⁰

Alfred died on 1st July 1919¹¹, most likely at the Pinewood Sanatorium after contracting tuberculosis, since he was buried in the churchyard of the parish church, St Sebastian's, Wokingham Without.



Rev Canon Andrew Marsden,
Vicar of St Sebastians Church, Wokingham,
19th August 2020.

⁹ The London Gazette, 21 May 1918.

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30692/supplement/5971/data.pdf>

¹⁰ Photo: IWM as above.

¹¹ CWGC as above.