

23630 Private Jesse Walter Harmer

6th Battalion, Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Killed in action on 20th September, 1917

Jesse was born in Ewelme at Tidmarsh Lane and baptised on 12 November 1882. His father was William J HARMER and his mother was Mary GREEN. They married on 9 Oct 1875 at Ewelme. William was a Carter, born in **Benson** and his father, John HARMER was born in Stoke (I assume this was one of the local Stokes). Jesse was married to Elizabeth Emma (nee WINTERBOURNE) at St Helens Church, Benson on 29 September 1914. She was born in the Wallingford area, location unknown, but her address at the time was Dorchester. No evidence of any children.

Jesse was employed as a gardener at Fifield Manor and lived at Fifield Cottage. His siblings in the 1901 census were:

William John (b. 1877 – carter on farm)

* In 1904 he married Alice Fanny SHEARS at Ewelme

* Daughter May (b. 1905)

* Son William (b. 1907)

* Daughter Eileen (b. 1911)

Joseph (b. 1879 – carter on farm)

Mary (b. 1886)

Alice (b. 1889)

SERVICE

The Battle of the Menin Road Ridge, sometimes called "Battle of the Menin Road", was the third British general attack of the Third Battle of Ypres in the First World War. The battle took place 20–25 September 1917, in the Ypres Salient in Flanders on the Western Front. During the pause in Allied general attacks between late August and 20 September, the British changed some infantry tactics, by adopting the "leap-frog" method of advance, when waves of infantry stopped once they reached their objective, then consolidated the ground while other waves passed through the objective to attack the next one and the earlier waves became the tactical reserve. General adoption of the method was made possible when more artillery was brought into the salient and by increasing the

amount of air support of ground operations and specialising the tasks of air defence, contact-patrol, counter-attack patrol, artillery observation and ground-attack. Optimism increased among German commanders, that the offensive had ended. Drier weather and extensive road repairs made it much easier for the British to move vast amounts of supplies forward from the original front line. Visibility increased except for frequent ground fog around dawn, which

helped conceal British infantry during the attack, before clearing to expose German troop movements to British observation and attack. The British infantry succeeded in capturing most of their objectives and then holding them against German counter-attacks, inflicting many casualties on the local German defenders and the Eingreif Divisions sent to reinforce them, with massed artillery and small-arms fire. German defences on the Gheluvelt Plateau, which had been retained or quickly recaptured in July and August were lost and the British were able to attack again on 26 September.

On September 20th, a fresh offensive was begun along the whole front from Langemarck to the Ypres-Menin Road, a distance of 8 miles. The 6th battalion was the only battalion of the regiment engaged on that day.

From the official account by Lt Col CRC Boyle commanding the battalion, it is known that the action started at 5.40am