

Sapper Harry Taylor©

Regimental number: 388825

1st (Royal Monmouth) Siege Company, Royal Engineers

born: 1885 – died: 21 Oct 1918

According to his service records, Sapper Harry Taylor's parents were Harry and Margaret Taylor.¹

Just like his namesake father, Harry Taylor also married a woman named Margaret—Margaret Turner—in Preston, Lancashire, on 21 May 1908.² In the 1911 Census, Harry (described as a plumber) and Margaret (a cotton weaver) are cited as living at 100 Castleton Road, Preston. Harry and Margaret (also born about 1885) had both been born in Preston.³ They had one child, a son named Harold (the third generation Harry), who was born in Blackburn, Lancashire, on 13 June 1914.⁴

Harry Taylor, plumber, enlisted with the Royal Engineers in December 1915.⁵ At that time the family was residing at Upland Hall Lodge in Broughton, near Preston.

Harry became a sapper, one of the most dangerous jobs in the army. According to the Forces War Records website, “Royal Engineer tunnelling companies, nicknamed “the Moles”, were specialist units of the Corps of Royal Engineers within the British Army, formed to dig attacking tunnels under enemy lines during the First World War. They designed and built the frontline fortifications, creating cover for the infantry and positions for the artillery. . . The REs maintained the railways, roads, water supply, bridges and transport - allowing supplies to the armies. They operated the railways and inland waterways, maintained wireless, telephones and other signalling equipment, making sure communications existed.”⁶

Sapper Taylor first left for France in April 1917. Nine months later, suffering from an unrecorded ailment, he was treated for more than a week in the 8th Casualty Clearing Station in Agnez-lès-Duisans, being discharged on 5 February 1918. He would later receive treatment at the Canadian clearing station in the same village. Sapper Taylor returned to the continent on 14 July 1918 after leave in the UK,⁷ which would be the last time he was home in England.

Serving as part of the 1st (Royal Monmouth) Siege Company, Royal Engineers, on 20 October 1918, Sapper Taylor suffered injuries to the chin and head due to a booby trap, a significant danger to members of an engineering company. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station and died there the following day.⁸

As the armies moved through France, correspondingly, the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station was on the move. When Harry Taylor arrived at the clearing station, it was well established in Agnez-lès-Duisans. Despite the “great difficulty in getting transport to move necessities forward,” the clearing station was relocated 45 kilometres to Auberchicourt by 29 October 1918. In addition to arranging the move, the clearing station treated many wounded soldiers. In the month of October, 48 Canadian deaths were recorded at the station; 33 Imperial soldiers and two others also died there.⁹

Harry Taylor's remains were buried in the Duisans Military Cemetery in Etrun, France. Duisans Cemetery takes its name from the nearby village of Duisans in the Department of Pas-de-Calais.¹⁰ According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, there are now 3,207 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated at the cemetery.

According to the roll of individuals, Sapper Taylor was posthumously awarded the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918).¹¹ At the end of the war, Taylor's widow resided at 6 Relation Street, Stopes Brow, Darwen.¹² When the 1939 National Register was done in Britain, their son Harold Taylor and

daughter-in-law Sarah were living at 73 Hannah Street, Darwen.¹³ By occupation, Harold Taylor the son was a “drawer-in and loomer” in the Lancashire cotton industry.

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¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harry Taylor, Registration district: Preston, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 1210

³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harry Taylor, Registration district: Preston, Registration district number: 476, Sub-registration district: North Preston, Enumeration district: 29, Household schedule number: 43, Piece: 25302

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harold Taylor, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 667

⁵ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

⁶ www.forces-war-records.co.uk

⁷ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 July 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "War diaries - 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/e/e061/e001509500.jpg> : accessed 11 July 2016), Reference: RG9, Militia and Defence, Series III-D-3, Volume/box number: 5032, File number: 838, Copied container number: T-10921

¹⁰ "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 August 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

¹¹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 August 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

¹² "UK, Commonwealth War Graves, 1914–1921 and 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 August 2016), entry for Harry Taylor

¹³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 15 August 2016), entry for Harold Taylor, Ref: RG101/4739A/011/34 Letter code: NUFM