

Rifleman Frederick Milner[©]
Regimental number: C/12724
21st Battalion, Kings Royal Rifle Corps

born: 1894–died: 1916

Frederick Milner was born in 1894 (the birth was registered at Malton, Yorkshire North Riding¹) and baptized in North Grimston on 6 May of that year,² the son of Tom and Elizabeth Milner. Tom and Elizabeth had three other younger children: Myrtle (b. 1896);³ Violet, her twin sister, who died as an infant;^{4,5} and Percy Welburn (b. 1898).⁶

Frederick also had five older half siblings: Wilson Rayner (b. 1878);⁷ Arthur (b. 1880),⁸ who died as an infant;⁹ Florence Ann (b. 1882);¹⁰ Maggie (b. 1884);¹¹ and Mary Elizabeth (b. 1887).¹² His mother Elizabeth, née Wilson, had an earlier marriage in 1877¹³ to Samuel Rayner Bretherick, a joiner and builder,¹⁴ who for the last few years of his life was also the landlord of the Queen's Head Inn in North Grimston.¹⁵ Samuel was also a longtime member of the Malton Company Rifle Volunteers and a crack shot who won several competitions. He died of consumption in 1891 at the age of 42, leaving his wife with four children, aged 4 to 13.

Two years later, Elizabeth married Tom Milner.¹⁶ He had been a boarder in Samuel and Elizabeth's public house in the 1891 Census and was employed as a joiner.¹⁷ In 1901, Tom was listed as an innkeeper and joiner, so presumably he took over the Queen's Head Inn.¹⁸ He was living with his wife, their three children, and his stepdaughters Maggie and Mary, as well as an apprentice and a boarder. Maggie was working as a server at the inn.

Ten years later, in the 1911 Census, Frederick was still living at home with his parents in North Grimston, working as an apprentice draper.¹⁹ His siblings Myrtle and Percy were students at school, and his half-sisters Maggie and Mary Elizabeth, now in their 20s, were still living with them. Father Tom Milner was listed as a joiner, so probably he was no longer running the Queen's Head Inn.

Frederick enlisted in the 21st Battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps at Malton on 4 December 1915.²⁰ His trade was listed as farmer, so his career as a draper did not last long. He joined the 21st (Yeoman Rifles) Battalion two days later at its training camp in Helmsley, Yorkshire.

The 21st Battalion moved to Aldershot to join the 124th Brigade, 41st Division for final training.²¹ They travelled from Southampton to Le Havre, France, on the SS *Marguerite* on the night of 5 May 1916²² and were stationed between Hazebrouck and Bailleul. On 9 May Frederick was confined to barracks for four days for disobeying an order.

From 17 to 23 July 1916 the battalion was in the trenches at Ploegsteert Wood.²³ On 19 July there was nothing reported in the war diary other than some wire cutting by the battalion's artillery, but Frederick was fatally wounded that day. According to a letter written by his father he was killed by a stray shell. The war diary records that 8 were killed and 13 wounded during this week in the trenches.²⁴

Rifleman Frederick Milner died of his wounds on 19 July 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul²⁵ and was buried the same day in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Reference II. F. 6.²⁶ The inscription on his headstone reads simply "R.I.P.". The cemetery lies

in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the Nord department of the Hauts-de-France region; it contains the remains of 4344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Rifleman Milner received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) for his service.²⁷

Frederick's younger brother Percy is the only other member of the family known to have served in the First World War. He was only 16 when the war started but served as a private in the 21st Battalion of the Manchester Rifles, survived the war, and also received the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.²⁸

In 1926 he married Doris Anne Aconley,²⁹ a farmer's daughter.³⁰ He became a farmer himself, and in 1939 they were living in Whin Hill, Norton, Yorkshire.³¹ During the Second World War Percy became a member of an auxiliary unit, a secret resistance network of highly trained volunteers prepared to be Britain's last-ditch line of defence.³² Percy was a sergeant leading the Leavening Patrol.³³ He died at Leavening in 1984, aged 85.³⁴

Frederick's full sister Myrtle never married and lived to the age of 84.³⁵ At the age of 60 she traveled to South Africa with her half-sister Florence Ann for a visit.³⁶ Myrtle died in Somerset in 1980.³⁷

Frederick's half-brother Wilson had a career with the North East Railway, eventually becoming the station master for Sledmere and Fimber, Yorkshire.³⁸ He married Charlotte Lucy Goodwin in 1903³⁹ and died in Fimber in 1949, aged 71.⁴⁰

Frederick's half-sister Florence Ann was a domestic servant for most of her life. In 1901 she was a governess to two young children in a Brothertoft, Lincolnshire rectory;⁴¹ from 1925 to 1933 she was a lady's maid⁴² and later a nurse⁴³ to Lord and Lady Airedale in Cadogan Square, London. She made a number of trips to South Africa,^{44,45} including one with her half-sister Myrtle in 1956.⁴⁶ She was living in South Africa when she died in 1962, aged 79,⁴⁷ naming Myrtle as her beneficiary.

Florence's younger sister Maggie was still living at home with her mother and stepfather in 1911, aged 26, with no recorded occupation.⁴⁸ Five years later, during the War, she married Alfred Saunders Staples,⁴⁹ a shoemaker. She died in 1959, aged 74,⁵⁰ a year after her husband.⁵¹

The youngest sister, Mary Elizabeth, was also still living at home with her mother and stepfather in 1911, aged 24, with no recorded occupation.⁵² In 1920 she traveled to South Africa as a nurse, with the intention of making it her permanent residence.⁵³ She died in Capetown at age 54 in 1942, a married woman with the last name of Cubie.⁵⁴

Frederick's father Tom continued working as a joiner and wheelwright. In 1939, now retired, he was living at 31 Vine Street, Norton, near Malton, with his wife Elizabeth and daughter Myrtle, who was a nurse with the Red Cross.⁵⁵ He died at this address a year later.⁵⁶ Elizabeth lived another 13 years, dying at the age of 98.⁵⁷

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- ⁸ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 November 2023), entry for Arthur Bretherick
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- ¹⁵ “Funeral of an Old Volunteer,” *Malton Messenger*, 23 May 1891, page 3, *British Newspaper Archive* (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0004716/18910523/024/0003>: accessed 28 November 2023), search for Samuel Rayner Bretherick
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- ¹⁸ “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 29 November 2023), entry for Tom Milner, Registration district: Malton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 7, Piece: 4537, Folio: 77, Page: 4
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²³ “War Diary, 21st Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Corps,” *The National Archives*, Ref: WO 95/2643/4, page 18

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