

So Fine A Soldier

George Butterworth was born in London in 1885 but grew up in York, where his father was General Manager of the North Eastern Railway. His father wanted him to study law but he abandoned his studies to write music and collect English folk songs. By 1914 he had established himself as one of England's leading young composers.

When the War began in August 1914, George Butterworth immediately volunteered for the Army. In September, he was offered a commission and joined the 13th Battalion DLI as a Second Lieutenant. He noted in a letter home that 90% of his Platoon were miners from County Durham *"our men are wonderfully good, physically strong, mentally alert and tremendously keen."*

In August 1915, after months of training, 13 DLI was sent to France, with George Butterworth now a Lieutenant in "A" Company. In July 1916, the battalion moved to the Somme.

On 12th July, his 31st birthday, George Butterworth wrote to his father *"We have been up to the front line for a few days....the ordinary placid routine of trench warfare exists no longer....shells fly about day and night. Add to that wet weather and mud that requires all one's energy to wade through"*.

During this early Somme fighting, Lieutenant Butterworth won the Military Cross for taking command of "A" Company when his Captain was wounded.

At the end of July, "A" Company moved to Munster Alley, a ruined trench running east from the British front line to the German held trenches, and began to dig a new trench. This new work was quickly named 'Butterworth Trench'.

Back in the ruined town of Albert, he wrote to his father - *"In the trenches again No trouble at present except intermittent shrapnel. This morning a small fragment hit me in the back and made a slight scratch, which I had dressed."*

On 4th August 1916, 13 DLI moved up to the front line for an attack on Munster Alley, with "A" Company once again in Butterworth Trench. The attack began in the evening and went on throughout the night, and, despite bombs, machine guns and British artillery shells falling short, some progress was made. However, casualties were heavy with the battalion losing over 120 men killed or wounded. One of the dead was George Butterworth, killed early in the morning by a sniper's bullet.



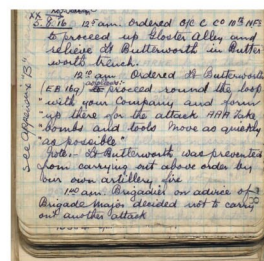
Officers of the 13th Battalion DLI, March 1915
Three of these officers were to die in the attack on Munster Alley on the night of 4th-5th August 1916 - George Butterworth (back row, 2nd from right); Noel Target (middle row, 4th from right); and Arthur Austin (front row, 3rd from right).

Edward Borrow, 13 DLI's Adjutant, is also on the front row (4th from right).
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/75/26]



George Butterworth, 13th Battalion DLI, March 1915
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/75/26]

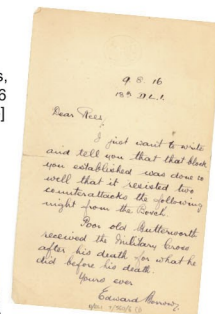
Extract from 13th DLI's War Diary, 5th August 1916
The War Diary was kept by various Adjutants who served with 13 DLI during the War. In August 1916, the Adjutant was Edward Borrow.
[Ref No: D/DLI 2/13/2]



Frederick Rees, 13th Battalion DLI, 1915
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/560/12A]

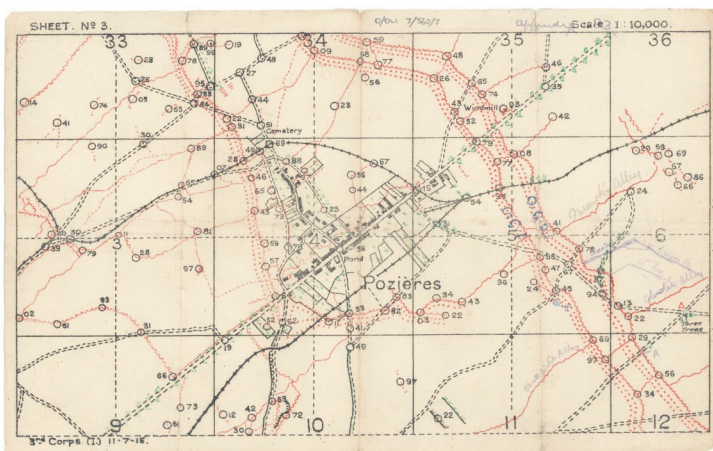
Later, the Brigadier General wrote to George Butterworth's father - *"I could ill afford to lose so fine a soldier"*.

Letter from Edward Borrow to Frederick Rees, 9th August 1916
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/560/6(1)]

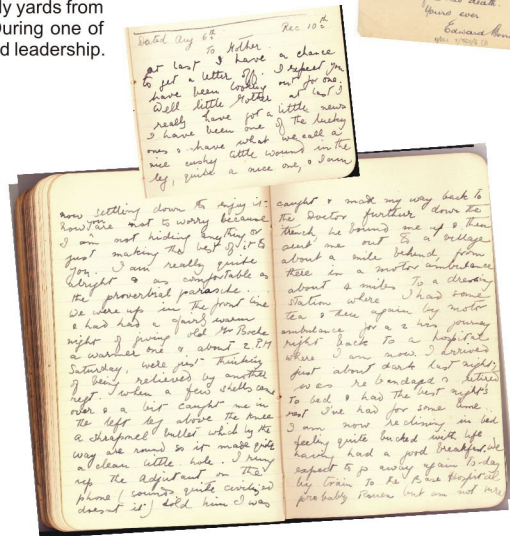


Frederick Rees was born in 1891 and went to Durham University before the Great War. In 1914, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 13th Battalion DLI. On the night of 4th-5th August 1916, Frederick Rees led a bombing party up Munster Alley. They captured sixty yards of trench and five prisoners before they were stopped at a strong German barricade, defended by two machine-guns. Frederick Rees then set up his own barricade only yards from the Germans and held on all night despite repeated attacks. During one of these he was badly wounded. He was later awarded the Military Cross for his bravery and leadership.

After the War, Frederick Rees was ordained in the Church of England. He died in 1983.



Trench Map, Pozieres.
This map was printed on 11th July 1916. As the fighting progressed, other trenches have then been added in pencil, including Munster Alley, which started at Pont 41 east of the ruined village of Pozieres. This is where George Butterworth was killed and Frederick Rees was wounded on the night of 4th-5th August 1916.
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/560/7]



Copy of a letter from Frederick Rees to his Mother, 6th August 1916
Mrs Rees received this letter on 10th August 1916. Whenever he wrote home, Frederick Rees deliberately underplayed what was happening to him. Here he dismisses his wound as *"a nice cushy little wound"*.
[Ref No: D/DLI 7/560/4(4)]