

William (Willie) Barker (1896 – 1918)

William Barker, although born near Halifax, lived in Farnhill from a very early age. After attending Kildwick School, where he seems to have been a diligent scholar, he worked first as bobbin pegger and then he became an apprentice wheelwright.

Volunteering for active service in 1916, he was sent to France in 1918. Willie was unfortunate to be killed during what was described as being a quiet period for his unit. He was 21 and was buried in a communal cemetery in Northern France. His name is recorded on the Kildwick War Memorial and was also included on the Kildwick School memorial.



Photograph by kind permission of www.cpgw.org

Pre-war life

Willie Barker's parents were John William Barker, born in Keighley in 1862; and Sarah Ellen (nee Mosley), born in Farnhill in 1865.

The couple were married in 1892, somewhere in the Skipton area, and the first of their two children, Edmund, was born in Holywell Green, near Halifax, on 20th January 1893, although he was baptised in Farnhill Methodist Chapel a few months later.

Their second son, William Barker (or Willie as he appears to have been known) was born on 14th December 1896, also in Holywell Green, and was similarly baptised in Farnhill early in 1897.

1897 January 5 th						
Born December 14 th 1896 No. 137	Willie	John William & Sarah Ellen	Barker	Holywell Green	Leverhulme	John R. Inman

Scan of the Farnhill Methodist Church baptismal register

The family may have been in the process of moving to Farnhill at this time as, in all subsequent documents, Willie's place of birth was given as Farnhill.

In the 1901 census, the Barker family was listed as living with Willie's maternal grandmother, Margaret Mosley, at Castle Gate House, Farnhill.

His father was recorded as a self-employed gardener.

Civil Parish of <i>Farnhill</i>		Ecclesiastical Parish of <i>Kildwick</i>		County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District of <i>Leeds</i>		Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District of <i>Shipton</i>		Rural District of <i>Shipton</i>		Parliamentary Borough or Division of <i>Shipton</i>		Township of <i>Farnhill</i>					
2		3 4 5 6 7		8		9 10		11 12		13		14 15 16					
ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE		HOUSES		Name and Surname of each Person		RELATION to Head of Family		Age last Birthday of		PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION		Employer, Worker, or Own account		If Working at Home		WHERE BORN	
In which house		Uninhabited		Number of Inhabitants		Condition as to Marriage		Males, Females									
<i>Castle Gate House</i>		1															
				<i>Margaret Barker Head</i>		<i>Wife</i>		<i>60</i>		<i>Living on own land</i>						<i>Yorkshire Farnhill</i>	
				<i>John W. Barker Son-in-law</i>		<i>Ex</i>		<i>38</i>		<i>Gardener (Not Domestic) Own account</i>		<i>At Home</i>				<i>Do. Kildwick</i>	
				<i>Samuel G. Barker Son</i>		<i>Ex</i>		<i>36</i>								<i>Do. Farnhill</i>	
				<i>Edmund G. Barker Son</i>		<i>S</i>		<i>14</i>								<i>Do. Kildwick</i>	
				<i>Willie G. Barker Son</i>		<i>S</i>		<i>4</i>								<i>Do. Farnhill</i>	
				<i>Maggie Barker Servant</i>		<i>S</i>		<i>1</i>								<i>Do. Farnhill</i>	

Extract from the 1901 census for Farnhill
Used under licence from the National Archive

Willie must have attended Kildwick National School. On 22nd December 1905 the headmaster recorded the winners of a painting competition in the school Log book, and Willie won a book for the most improved work.

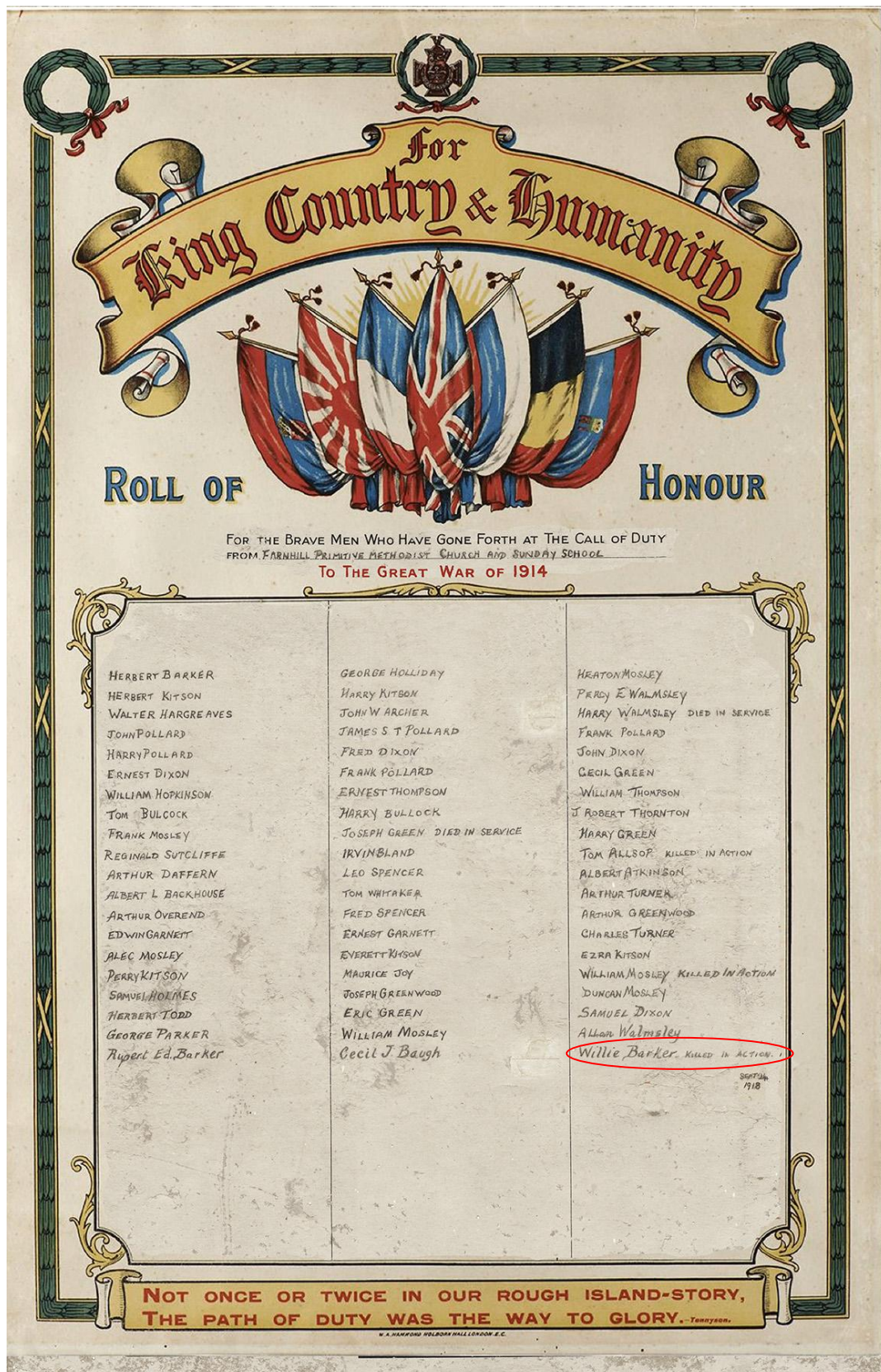
By the time the 1906 electoral roll was compiled the family were living in their own home, Arbour Cottage; and that is where Edmund died of scarlet fever, on 15th November 1910, aged just 17.

By 1911 Willie had left school and is recorded on the census of that year as working in a cotton mill as a Bobbin Pegger. By the time he enlisted however he was an apprentice wheelwright working for Sylvester Green, in Crosshills.

WW1 service

Willie Barker served with the 11th battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment.

Although he must have volunteered before the end of January 1916, Willie Barker's name was not included in newspaper reports of the unveiling of Farnhill Methodist Chapel's Roll of Honour in July 1916. His name, along with a number of others, appears to have been added later; it is the last name on the roll.



The digitally-restored Farnhill Methodist Roll of Honour (1916)

This late addition, like the others, can probably be accounted for by the late start of his active service overseas.

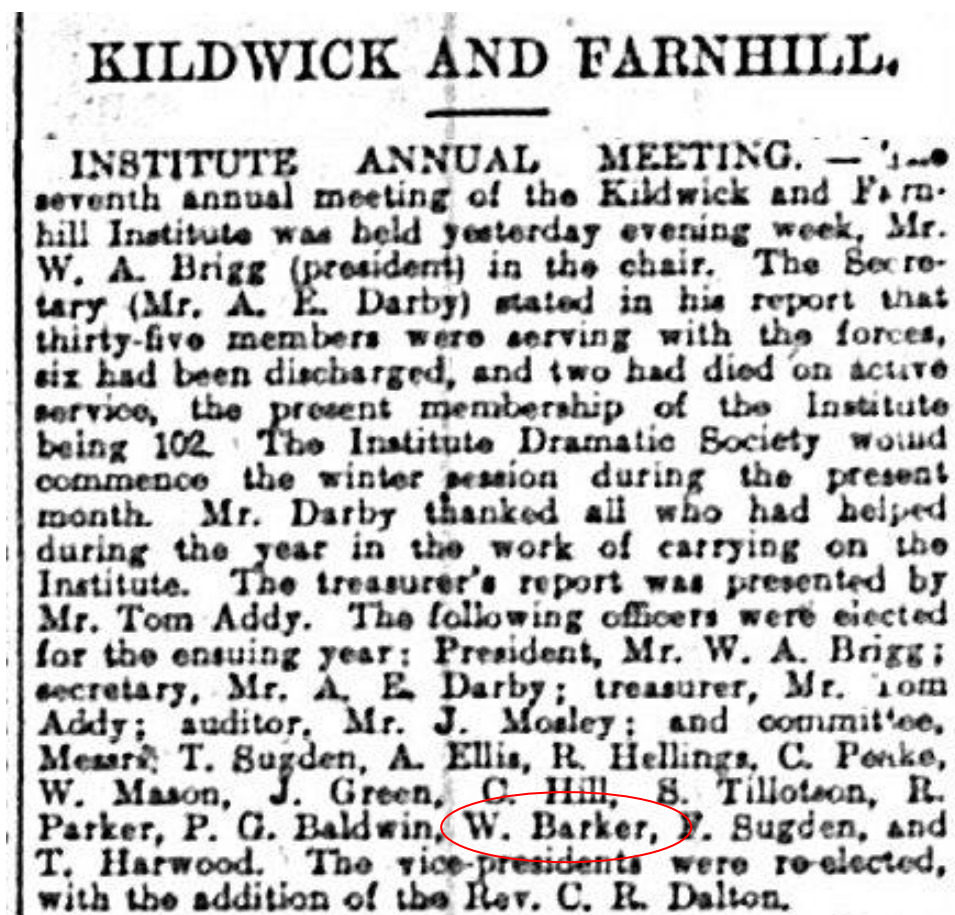
Circumstances of death

Willie Barker was sent to France on 11th September 1918. The Regimental diary for 11th battalion East Yorkshire Regiment records that he arrived as part of a contingent of 141 men. The battalion was at this time resting behind the lines, and for a fortnight Willie's life appears to have been one of lectures, training, checking kit, and playing football - matches of one sort or another appear to have taken place almost every day.

The battalion returned to the front line during the afternoon and evening of 24th September and was fully in position by 7:30am on the 25th. The Regimental diary records this as being a quiet period and orderly transfer.

Sometime on the 24th, during this quiet period, Willie Barker was killed. He was aged 21, and was the last of the seven Farnhill WW1 Volunteers to be killed on active service. His time on the front line can only have been a few hours at most.

The report of his death in the West Yorkshire Pioneer (18/10/1918), mentioned his membership of Farnhill Institute. In fact, as had been reported in the Keighley News earlier in the month (5/10/1918), he had been elected to serve on the Institute committee.



With kind permission of Keighley News

William Barker was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery, near the Belgian border and close to where he was killed (grave at Plot 3, Row G-198).



Photograph by kind permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

He is also commemorated on the Kildwick war memorial, unveiled in 1921.



Photographs provided by Keighley and District Digital Archive

Postscript

Willie's father, John William, died on 23rd October 1919 and was buried in Kildwick churchyard on the 25th.

In February 1920, the following news report appeared throughout the local press:

A beautiful memorial, provided by former scholars of Kildwick National School to commemorate the sacrifices of old scholars in the great war was unveiled in Kildwick National School on Sunday afternoon. The schoolroom was quite filled with old scholars, relatives and friends, the company including Mr. James Bairstow (Springfield), and Mr. W.A. and Mr. J.J. Brigg (Kildwick Hall). The service was in charge of the vicar of Kildwick (the Rev. C.E.V. Hodge), who said they were met to dedicate the tablet to the memory of the sons of that school who had fallen in the war.

The unveiling ceremony was fittingly performed by Mr. Thomas Appleby, who had been in charge of the National School as headmaster during the school days of most of those who had fallen. ...

The memorial is of carved oak with brass panels on which are engraven the names of the fifteen old scholars who have fallen. The centre picture is of St. George kneeling, and is a replica, in colour, of the glass panel by Mr. G.W.P. Hutchinson, exhibited at the Royal Academy. ...

*The names inscribed on the memorial are: Tom Allsopp, **Willie Barker**, A.L. Backhouse, Fred Carlton, Walter Dawson, Fred Dixon, Joseph Green, William Mosley, Fred Scarfe, Joseph Smith, J. Allan Smith, Archie Sugden, T.H. Stephens, Frank Thompson, and H. Walmsley.*



The only known photograph of the Kildwick School WW1 memorial, courtesy of Anne Hweitt.
The memorial itself remains missing, presumed destroyed.

OiC [unreadable] York requests auth(orisation) to dispose of medals. 22/3/22

Correspondence

O/c needs. York requests auth. to dispose of
Medals 22/3/22

Address

(991) W. 701/R. P. 6980 1,000m. 24/5/21 N.H.&Co.Ltd. E. 7866

Front and rear of Willie Barker's WW1 Medal Card
Used under licence from the National Archive

Sarah Ellen, Willie's mother, did however receive a pension as compensation for the loss of her son.

TRANSFERRED TO—		S.B. 36 D.		Regional No. /D/ 9	
REGION.		Particulars of Man (Men).		Particulars of Claimant(s).	
NEW REGIONAL No. 1/3848		Name 1 BARKER Willie		Name 1 BARKER Sarah Ellen	
OTHER ACTION.		Regiment 1 6. Yorks		Address 1 27 Main St. Farnhill Kildwick	
Recd DP file 358-B		Regtl. No. 1 51987		Mr. Kildwick	
30-8-23		Rank 1		Relationship 1 Mother	
OK		Marital 1		New Address 1	
7 JUN 1926		Status 2		2	
atc 51913		Date and 1 Killed in Action 24-9-18		3	
OK 6.9.30		Cause of 2		Age 1	
		Death 3		2	
		While Serving 1		3	
		Case No. 1		Age 2	
		2		3	
		After Discharge 3			

Extract from Willie Barker's WW1 pension ledger (SB 36)
Used under licence from the National Archive

Sarah Ellen left Arbour Cottage shortly after her husband died and it was subsequently occupied by Rupert and Maggie Barker (Rupert was John William's nephew, and Maggie was Sarah Ellen's niece). She moved to 27 Main Street where she lived until she died on 6th August 1945, aged 80.

Willie's parents, John William and Sarah Ellen and his brother Edmund are buried together in the graveyard of Kildwick Church. Willie's name is on their gravestone but he lies elsewhere.



Photograph by Dr. John Laycock

William (Willie) Barker – a life in summary

Born: 14/12/1896, Farnhill

Baptised: 5/1/1897, Farnhill Methodist Chapel

Died: 24/9/1918, Northern France **Aged:** 21

Parents

Father: John William Barker; b. 6/5/1862, Keighley; d. 23/10/1919, Farnhill

Mother: Sarah Ellen (nee Mosley); b. 1865, Farnhill; d. 6/8/1945, Farnhill

Married: 1892, Skipton (Registration district)

Siblings

Edmund; b. 20/1/1893, Holywell Green, Halifax; bapt. Farnhill Methodist Chapel, 9/4/1893;
d. 15/11/1910, Farnhill

WW1 service

Regt.: 11th battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment (Private, no. 51987)

Medals: British War Medal, Victory Medal (not issued)

Home address: Arbour Cottage, Farnhill

Relationship to other volunteers

Herbert and Rupert Barker (paternal cousins)

