

Pte. Charles FENTON (1891 – 1914)  
(Household Cavalry)



Charles Fenton was born in Yarraville, Melbourne, Australia in 1891. His father Charles Dyson Fenton had married Emma Simpson at Batley Parish in 1882. His father was christened Charles Dyson Spedding, but had later taken the name Fenton when his mother married.

Charles Dyson Fenton was a card cleaner in a woollen mill and in the 1880s Australia was expanding rapidly and experienced woollen workers were much in demand. The family emigrated to Australia after their first child Clara was born in Batley in 1883. Agnes (1888), William George (1890) and Charles (1891) were all born in Yarraville.

The family returned in the 1890s and had all 4 children christened at Christ Church, Staincliffe on the 23rd February, 1898. They were living at St Andrew's Terrace, Purlwell Lane, Batley and Charles Dyson Fenton was still working as a card cleaner. In 1901 Clara married Fairfax Lee.

The 1911 Census shows that Agnes and William George were still living at home. William George Fenton was a well-known local footballer in Batley in the early part of the 20th Century. Charles junior was with the Queen's Regiment - Infantry 21st Battalion and had been stationed abroad. His battalion had spent time in Malta, Cyprus and Gibraltar.

Charles Fenton moved to France on the 6th September 1914. He was involved in the Battle of Messines 12 October - 2 November 1914 which was part of the 'Race to the Sea', the series of battles that decided the line of the western front. The battle officially began on the 12th October when the Cavalry Corps was pushed forward to make room for the advance of III Corps. The Corps ran into German troops on the high ground at Mont des Cats and Flêtre, and they captured Mont des Cats. The advance continued on 13 October. The British advance forced the Germans to evacuate their most forward positions in Armentières.

On the 14th October the German Sixth Army, in front of the advancing Cavalry Corps, was ordered to stand on the defensive while the Fourth Army carried out an offensive against the entire allied line from Menin to the coast. On the same day the Cavalry Corps advancing from the west met up with the 3rd Cavalry Division south of Ypres, closing the last gap in the allied lines.

The Cavalry Corps advanced over the next few days, until the night of 17/18 October when it had reached the line it would hold until the crisis of 30-31 October during the Battle of Gheluvelt, where Charles was killed in action.

Charles Fenton 6984 "B" Squadron, 20th Hussars, is 'Remembered with Honour' at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. His name appears on the St Andrew's, Purlwell Roll of Honour.

Researcher

Susan White, Batley History Group, June 2014