
FEATURE ARTICLE

Rowland Rose LIMBERT MM

By Sarah Marshman

My research started when I became involved in a project to illustrate the backgrounds of the names on the Compton War Memorial. The first person I picked to research had been born in East Ilsley. Rowland Rose LIMBERT later died in France, and, despite being born in East Ilsley, he was named on the Compton War Memorial. As my research progressed, I discovered the stories of his brothers and felt they needed to be told too. If anyone has any pictures related to any of the names given in the article please do get in touch.



Rowland Rose LIMBERT was baptised on the 4th September, 1887, at St. Mary's, East Ilsley. The son of Rowland Rose LIMBERT, a groom, and Sarah Matilda LIMBERT. He had two elder brothers, Henry Rose LIMBERT, baptised 4th March, 1883, and Frederick Rose LIMBERT, baptised 25th December, 1884.

Rowland's father, also Rowland Rose (Sr.), was baptised in St Paul's in Derby on the 24th October, 1858. He was the son of Henry Rose LIMBERT and Letitia WINFIELD who were married in 1855. Rowland's mother, Sarah Matilda HUNT, known as Matilda, was born in 1860 in Hill Green, Leckhampstead, Berkshire. She was the daughter of Jeremiah HUNT and Mary HILL who were married in 1851. Rowland (Sr.) and Sarah were married at St. Mary's Church, East Ilsley, on the 10th July, 1882.

In the 1881 Census, Rowland (Sr.) was a stableman living at Churchill Cottage. The household contained the DOVER family, one domestic servant and 19 other stablemen. Meanwhile, Sarah was working as a domestic servant at Westridge Farm near Streatley working for the LAY family. They married the following year and, on the 1891 census, Rowland (Sr.) and Sarah (recorded as Matilda) lived in Fairfield Cottage on the West Ilsley Road with their three children, Henry, 8, Frederick, 6, and Rowland, 3.

Sadly, after their three sons, Rowland (Sr.) and Sarah had a daughter Lizzie who was baptised on the 4th May, 1890, and was buried on the 6th January, 1891, at the age of one. They had a further daughter Mary Letitia who was born on the 25th December, 1892, baptised on 23rd February, 1893, and then buried on the 30th March, 1893, at the age of 3 months. This was shortly followed by the



The Compton War Memorial.

death of Sarah, Rowland's mother, who was buried on the 20th May, 1893, at St. Mary's, East Ilsley at the age of 32. Rowland (Sr.) was later buried on the 13th May, 1895, leaving the three boys orphaned.

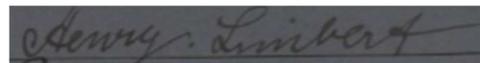


Frederick LIMBERT's signature from his army attestation papers.

Frederick Rose LIMBERT joined the army on 14th March, 1901, at the age of 18, and in the census taken on the 31st March that year he was shown as a Private at Oxford Wood Barracks in Reading. At the time of joining he gave his trade as a labourer living in Letcombe. His documents list his reason for recommendation as "a likely lad – approved". During his time in the army he served in Gibraltar for a year, Egypt for four years then India for four years. Whilst serving in India in 1908 he was transferred from the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment to the 64th Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

Frederick later appeared twice on the 1911 Census (2nd April). He was marked as absent on the census return for the 64th Battery of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary where he was recorded as a driver – he is instead found in the census on a vessel in Hampshire. He was transferred to the 70th Battalion on 21st April and appointed a Shoeing Smith on 1st July. He was then posted to the 128th Battalion on the 6th September. The following year, on the 30th April, 1912, he was discharged from service for being medically unfit. His character was described as "exemplary". Frederick gave his address on discharge as Horn Street, Compton. Frederick died aged 29 on the 8th September, 1912, from pulmonary tuberculosis and exhaustion. His death was registered by John HALL, his uncle by marriage, who was present at the death. He was buried on the 13th September, 1912, at the Church of St Mary and St Nicholas in Compton.

On the 1st May, 1900, Henry Rose LIMBERT attempted to enlist in the 4th Battalion of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry. He gave his current address as Calthorp Street, Banbury, whilst his residence for the previous 12 months was given as Letcombe Regis, and he stated his occupation as a stableman. Just two days later he was discharged having been declared medically unfit as he was weak on his right with the muscles wasted away.



Henry LIMBERT's signature from his army attestation papers from 1900.

In the 1901 Census, Henry was located on a vessel, the Bess Mitchell, at St Tudwall Roads near Pwllheli in Wales. The vessel contained five crew members including Henry as the cook.

Henry married Mary RAY on 26th March, 1904, in St. Aloysius (Catholic) Church in Oxford. They both gave their address as 11 English Row, St. Aldates, Oxford. Henry stated his profession as a marine engineer. Mary was born in 1884 in Cowley, Oxford.

In 1909 the Hampshire Chronicle reported on a 'Women's Quarrel', Mary LIMBERT of Lower Brooks Street, Winchester, was charged by warrant with using threats towards Rose AVERY. Rose stated that Mary and her husband had been lodging with her for about a month and she had asked them to leave. She continued that she had a small shop and Mary had entered the shop later that day and,

remarking "Here's a present for you, you dirty woman", threw a parcel at her. Rose also claimed Mary had used bad language and threatened her with a hat pin. Rose's husband then turned Mary out of the shop and Mary broke a pane of glass in the door. Mary, however, stated she had been turned out with no reason or warning on Monday morning. She had entered the shop later that day and claimed she had thrown a parcel along the floor. She was then pushed out of the shop which made her fall and when she got up she accidentally broke the pane of glass. Henry stated that he had broken up the last hat pin Mary had to use in his tattooing machine. Two witnesses corroborated Mary's story and the case was dismissed.

In the 1911 census, the couple are found in separate households. Mary was a visitor at 8 Gravel Lane, Bedford. She gave her occupation as a laundress. Meanwhile, Henry was a boarder at 2 Permit Office Street, Ipswich. He gave his occupation as an artist.

Henry enlisted on the 24th April, 1915, in the Army Service Corps. He was discharged on the 25th October the same year due to sickness. On the 10th October, 1916, Henry enlisted again in the 4th Battalion of the Gloucester Regiment. His trade was a sailor and he enlisted due to receiving notice to do so. Henry and Mary's address at this time was 44 Wade Street, St. Jude's, Bristol. Henry was discharged as he was "no longer physically fit for service" due to phthisis just 50 days later on the 28th November. He was eligible to become a Chelsea Pensioner.



In December 1916, Henry was awarded the Silver War Badge as he was no longer physically fit for service. This was introduced in September 1916 and given to those who had served either at home or abroad since the start of the war and were discharged due to injury or illness. The badge acted both as an honour and as a visible symbol that the wearer had carried out his duty for his country.

Mary LIMBERT died on the 24th August, 1917, from pulmonary tuberculosis and toxæmia. Just two months later, on the 25th October, 1917, Henry died, aged 35, of pulmonary tuberculosis. His last address was 44 Wade Street, Bristol and his occupation was described as ex-private in Army Service Corps. The death was registered by his brother Rowland, who gave his own address as

Victoria Barracks, Portsmouth.

The LIMBERT brothers' aunt, Lydia HALL nee HUNT, lived in Horn Street, Compton at the time of the 1911 Census. Lydia and her husband John had two daughters, Beatrice Elsie and Emily Kate, who died aged 1 year and 11 months respectively, and one son, Percy James HALL.

Percy was a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He was killed in action on the 9th May, 1915, and is also named on the Compton War Memorial.

In 1901, at the age of 14, Rowland was living on Baydon Road in Lambourn working as an agricultural labourer for Sarah HARDING. The following year, Rowland, described as a carter boy, found himself at the Petty Sessions in Lambourn on the 28th February having been summoned by Agnes Winkworth for using insulting language to her on the 17th February, whilst Rowland summoned Mrs. Winkworth for using abusive language to him on the same date. The Magistrates fined Rowland 8s. 6d. including costs, whilst Mrs. Winkworth was bound over to keep the peace and fined 15s.

PETTY SESSIONS, FRIDAY, FEB. 28.—(Present Major J. Aldridge, and E. E. Portal and T. A. Kennard, Esqrs.)—INSULTING LANGUAGE.—Rowland Limbert, a carter boy, was summoned by Agnes Winkworth, a married woman, for using insulting language to her on the 17th Feb., and Limbert summoned Mrs. Winkworth for using abusive language to him on the same date. After hearing the evidence of each party, the Magistrates fined Limbert 8s. 6d. including costs, and Winkworth (who was bound over to keep the peace) 15s.

Report from the Reading Mercury, 8th March, 1902.

By the following census in 1911, Rowland was serving in India in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. The Battalion was stationed in Meerut, India, from 1909 and Jhansi, India, from 1912. Rowland's service number, 7905, indicates Rowland joined the unit probably in late 1904 or early 1905. At some point before the outbreak of war, Rowland transferred from the 2nd Battalion to

the 1st Battalion and in August the 1st Battalion was stationed at Mandora Barracks, Aldershot, as part of the 6th Brigade of the 2nd Division. The United Kingdom declared war with Germany on the 4th August, 1914. Nine days later, the 1st Battalion was mobilised for war, landing at Rouen, France. Rowland would have fought in the following named battles as a member of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment.

MILITARY MEDALS.
It was announced on Monday that the following Berks men have been awarded the Military Medal:—

7905 Corporal R. Limbert.

Clippings of the announcement that Corporal Rowland LIMBERT had been awarded the Military Medal.

Taken from the Reading Mercury on 28th October, 1916.

The Battle of Mons was the first major action for the British Forces and included the 1st Battalion. The British Army attempted to hold the line of the Mons-Condé Canal, however, they were forced to retreat. The retreat was followed by The Battle of the Marne, which took place from 7th – 10th September, 1914. This battle forced a retreat of the German forces, but once again the retreat then led to a further battle, the Battle of the Aisne, from 12th – 15th September. This battle led to a stalemate between the two sides, where neither side was able to advance, nor did they choose to retreat. Shallow trenches were initially dug for cover, however these trenches were soon deepened to around seven feet and trench warfare, a new style of warfare, thus began.

The First Battle of Ypres from, 19th October to 22nd November, led the troops into the Winter Operations of 1914/15. The Battle of Festubert took place



The Military Medal.

between 15th and 25th May, 1915, and was part of a series of attacks by the French Tenth Army and the British First Army. From 13th September to 13th October, the Battle of Loos took place. It was the biggest attack by the British Army in 1915 and was the first time the British used poison gas. During December 1915, the 1st Battalion was transferred to the 99th Brigade of the 2nd Division.

Rowland was mentioned in dispatches on 15th June, 1916, and it was announced he has been awarded the Military Medal in the London Gazette on 21st October, 1916. The Military Medal was awarded to members of the British Army, below commissioned rank, for gallantry and devotion to duty while under fire in battle on land. The medal was established in March 1916 and states "For Bravery in the Field" on the reverse. Recipients of the Military Medal are entitled to use the initials MM after their name.



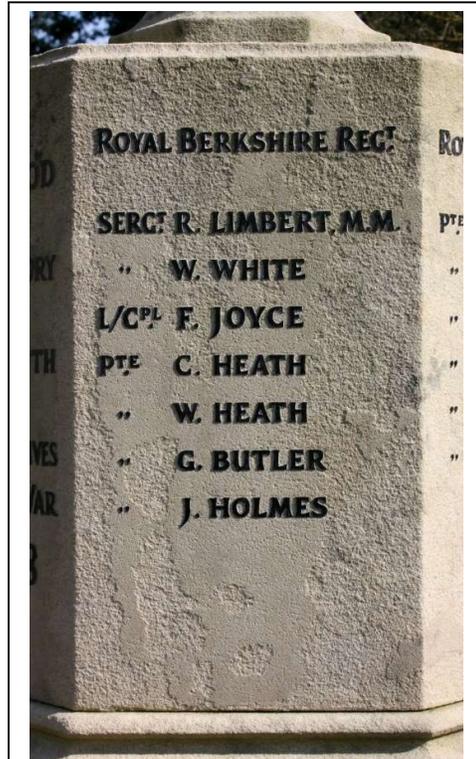
(L-R): The Military Medal, the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Rowland was mentioned in dispatches on 15th June, 1916, and it was announced he has been awarded the Military Medal in the London Gazette on 21st October, 1916. The Military Medal was awarded to members of the British Army, below commissioned rank, for gallantry and devotion to duty while under fire in battle on land. The medal was established in March 1916 and states "For Bravery in the Field" on the reverse. Recipients of the Military Medal are entitled to use the initials MM after their name.

In the second half of 1916, the Battle of the Somme took place. This was the largest battle of the First World War on the Western Front and resulted in more than 1 million casualties. The Battle of Delville Wood was part of the Battle of the Somme, whilst the Battle of the Ancre was the final large British attack of the Battle of the Somme.

Between 9th February and 20th March, 1917, the German Army orchestrated a planned withdrawal to new positions on a shorter, more easily defensible line, referred to as the Hindenburg Line. This is referred to as the German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line in Britain, despite it being a tactical withdrawal. The Battle of Arras, which consisted of a series of smaller scale operations, then followed from 8th April to 16th May. Whilst significant advances were made, the British troops were unable to achieve a breakthrough and the battle resulted in almost 160,000 British casualties. The Battle of Cambrai was an attack launched on the Hindenburg Line between 20th November and 7th December, 1917. The Battle was not a success, but it led to tactical innovations for both sides (the use of tanks for the British troops and the counter-attack methods developed by the German troops) that would have significant effect on the fighting in 1918.

Operation Michael was launched from the Hindenburg Line by the German troops on 21st March, 1918. The objective was to break through Allied lines and to march north-west to seize the Channel Ports, however, the plan was changed and instead attempts were made to push the British and French troops west and into the sea. Various battles were fought during this operation and the 1st Battalion would have



A panel from the Compton War



Mory Abbey Cemetery.

participated in the Battle of St. Quentin, the Battle of Baupaume and the First Battle of Arras, with Operation Michael ending in failure for the German troops on the 5th April, 1918.

In August, 1918, a continuing series of 'bite and hold' actions were fought. This involved launching an attack under artillery cover then digging in to defend the new position. The 1st Battalion began their attack on the 21st August, continuing until the 24th August, with the Battalion taking a section of Mory Switch and Mory Copse and linking up with the Guards Division.

On the 24th August, 1918, during this offensive and less than 3 months before the end of World War I, Sergeant Rowland LIMBERT MM was killed in action in Ervillers, France. He was 31. His body was buried on or near the battlefield, but later exhumed and reburied at Mory Abbey British Cemetery, France.

The War Diary for the 1st Battalion stated: "Through the operations August 21st - 24th the weather was very hot with little wind. Supply arrangements worked very smoothly and the men were never short of SAA, food or water. Large numbers of prisoners were captured together with MGs, Rifles and countless other stores. Owing to the pace at which the operations were carried out no attempt could be made to make even a rough list of the captured material. The total casualties for the 4 days were:- OFFICERS Killed LIEUT W L HUMBLEY, Rev C H BELL MC CF; Wounded CAPT LORD MC MM, LIEUT BALDWIN, 2/LIEUT BUSH, 2/LIEUT CUMMING, 2/LIEUT THORBY; Other Ranks killed 24; wounded 196; missing 7; To Hospital NYD Gas 35."

Mrs. Edith Markham of Jessamine Cottage, Compton, requested the simple message "To memory always dear" be put on Rowland's headstone. Edith was living in Horn Street, Compton, in the 1911 Census with her husband William. As Rowland's aunt, Lydia, had passed away in September, 1917, it is assumed that, as Edith lived in the same street as Lydia, she was a close family friend. Edith received two payments as Rowland's sole legatee of £29 8s 1d to cover Rowland's pay and £26 10s as a war gratuity.

For his service Rowland was awarded the 1914 star, the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal along with the Military Medal.



"7905 Serjeant
R. Limbert, MM,
Royal Berkshire Regiment
24th August 1918 Age 31
To memory always dear"