

Basil Armitage Carver

Cranage Hall, Cranage

Killed in Action 21st August 1916

The Carver family home



His Story

Born in 1887 in Marple he was the son of William Oswald and Kate Carver. The family owned Hollins Mill at Marple and also had offices and warehousing in central Manchester's "cotton district". By 1901 the family had moved into Cranage Hall, Cranage, with Basil aged 4. In 1911 he was a pupil at Charterhouse School, Godalming, Surrey, aged 14. He went on to Sandhurst and had only spent a short time there when war broke out and he obtained a commission a few weeks after his 18th birthday.

His War Record

He enlisted in October 1914 with the 6th (Iniskilling) Dragoons and was subsequently posted as 2nd Lieut, to the Devon Regiment. Basil left Southampton on 11 December 1914 to join his Battalion at Marseilles on the 15th. By the middle of 1916, Royal Engineers were digging tunnels towards enemy lines around the Messines Ridge.

Eventually, these would be packed with explosive and exploded on 7 June 1917, immediately before an infantry attack. It was hard and dangerous work for the specialist tunnellers. When not in the front line trenches, other troops would be kept active by undertaking less specialist work such as carrying the spoil from the tunnels away from the digging area. On 21 August, Basil was supervising his men in one of the tunnels near the village of Neuville St Vaast, doing that sort of work.

Four of the Royal Engineers were overcome by toxic fumes and Basil and several of his troop went deeper into the tunnel to try to rescue them. They failed and he and four men were also overcome and died. It was probably a build up of carbon monoxide that caused the deaths. One of the men who tried to rescue him was Sergeant William Fletcher. For his bravery, William was awarded the Military Medal. Mr & Mrs Carver later presented him with a gold half hunter watch inscribed with their thanks for his efforts.

Basil is buried in the Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont-St Eloi, Grave III.E.9 and he is also commemorated on the Roll of Honour of Hollins Mill Co, Manchester.