

Remembering William Inman

11th April, 1918. Aged 37.



Born in July 1880, the second of 4 sons of quarryman Thomas Inman and his wife Nancy (nee Smith), William worked in the cotton mills as a weaver. He had married local girl Nancy Nutter in 1904, and they moved to Skipton where Nancy's widowed father could live with them. The couple returned to Embsay by 1912 with their daughter Nellie to live at Millholme. Two more daughters, Bessie and Sarah Ellen were born in Embsay, before the First World War broke out. By then they were living at Elm Tree Cottages, and William, at 34 years of age, was working at the Skipton Rock Company.

He should not be confused with another William Inman, who was 10 years younger, who was a groom in Skipton, and joined the 3rd Battalion West Riding Regiment (regimental number 14315) in October 1914. While the younger William Inman was charged twice with desertion during the war, the elder

William Inman of Embsay (regimental number 203072), also in the West Riding Regiment (1/4th Battalion), was awarded the Military Medal. His service records no longer survive, but it is known from local newspapers that he joined up on 7th August 1916 (presumably conscripted) and he left for France in December. Two years later, shortly after being home on leave, he was a member of a raiding party which made the news back in England.

Having recently undertaken special training for the operation, on 12th March 1918 the 1/4th Battalion received orders to send out a platoon to carry out a raid on a pill-box the following morning, following an opening barrage of artillery, and under the cover of machine gun fire. The raiding party were given their rum ration 45 minutes before they went out. They were supposed to complete the raid and return to their own lines within half an hour. 2nd Lieutenant Gumby took out 33 men and they captured 37 prisoners and three machine guns, and inflicted heavy casualties, at the cost of 2 killed and 8 wounded (two fatally). A detailed account of this raid can be found on the website, Craven's Part in the Great War (<http://www.cpgw.org.uk/soldier-records/william-inman/>) and by Captain P.G. Bales, in his "History of the 1/4th Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919". Such was the success of the raid that the battalion was congratulated by General Plumer at G.H.Q. who sent a telegram:

"General PLUMER was delighted on his arrival to hear of the successful raid this morning of West Riding 49th Division and wished to convey his congratulations to all concerned."

On 5th April 1918, the Halifax Courier newspaper printed a letter which had been sent to 2nd Lt Gumby:

“West Riding Exploit. The Daring Pill Box Raid. A Shower of Decorations. Colonel Sugden’s letter to Lieutenant Gumby with regard to his handling of the raid.

“You will no doubt be surfeited with congratulations. Probably I was in a better position than nearly anyone else to realise the attack and see the whole operation. I would like you to tell your men how exceedingly proud I, and the whole battalion are of them. They went over the top like ‘top hole’ sportsmen, every man Jack and I take my hat off to them. There was not the slightest hesitation. The advance looked grand and made me feel very small and humble because I realised how every Private earned his brass better than I did. It is an achievement you and your lads can look back upon with pride all your lives. There has been no raid in this Division to come near it and it beats all I have heard of any other. Every man deserves the M.M. and more every man’s name shall be kept in the roll of the battalion record. Jolly good luck to you and to all the lads and may God bring you all out safe at the end of war.”

In total one Military Cross (2nd Lt Gumby), four D.C.Ms (to N.C.O.s), one bar to the Military Medal (to an N.C.O.), and 10 military medals (to other ranks) were awarded. One of those military medals was awarded to Private William Inman.

Just one month later William Inman was reported missing in action. His body was later found, and he is buried at Le Grand Beaumart British Cemetery, at Steenwerck. His widow, Nancy, chose the phrase “Fondly remembered” for his headstone inscription.

In 1920 she published a memorial in the local newspaper on the anniversary of his death:

‘Tis hard to part with a husband so dear,
A father fond and kind.
‘Tis hard to part with a partner dear,
And to be left behind.
With friends who twine around the heart,
Experiences best can tell
How hard – how very hard to part,
And bid the long farewell.

From his sorrowing Wife and Children, Elm Tree Cottages, Embsay.

His brother Harry also published a memorial to William in 1920:

We often sit and think of him,
But make no outward show;
The heart that mourns sincerely
Mourns silently and low.
“Peace, perfect peace.”

From his loving Brother and Sister-in-law, Harry and Sarah, Sunny Bank,
Embsay.

And again in April 1921, Harry sent in another:

Forgotten by some to the world he may be,
But true to our memory he ever will be.

From his loving Brother and Sister-in-law, Harry and Sarah, and Ann, Sunny Bank, Embsay.

And William's widow sent in the following:

Three years have passed since that sad day

When one we loved was called away;

Friends are friends, if they be true,

But we lost our best friend when we lost you.

From his loving Wife and Children, Elm Tree Cottages, Embsay.

Nancy never re-married and died in 1955 at the age of 75.

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