

People of Purley on Thames

Dudley Cecil Aldin

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Dudley Cecil Aldin was born in 1897 the only son of Cecil Aldin and Marguerite Dorothy Morris. Shortly after his birth his parents moved to Priory Road in Chiswick. They moved in 1904 to Southfields at Henley on Thames which is now the site of Henley Post Office.

He must have moved to Purley with his father when he became Secretary and later Master of the South Berks Hunt and lived at The Kennels (now Belleisle). He joined the army during the First World War and became a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. He was a member of the 105th Field Company and had spent six months in France when he was killed in action on Vimy Ridge 15th May 1916.

His company was attached to the 74th Brigade, 25th Division and was working with detachments of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers and 9th Loyal North Lancs Regiment. One of their key duties was tunnelling to extend the British trench system towards the enemy lines by linking up bomb craters and consolidating the lips of trenches after bombardments.

Bomb craters were often created by placing mines just in front of the line and then detonating them. These were known as Crosbie craters after Lt Col J D Crosbie who was temporarily in command of the 74th Brigade. At 8.30 pm on the night of May 15th five of these were created in the Berthonval sector. The Germans retaliated by a heavy bombardment of the British trenches and that night 14 officers and 93 other ranks were killed in the sector, among them Dudley Aldin. Two nights before he had been mentioned in reports as having 'organised and directed work under heavy fire'.

He is buried at the Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont St Eloy, France in plot 1, Row L Grave 2. His grave bears the inscription

'Second Lieutenant D C Aldin, Royal Engineers. 15th
May 1916
Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his
life for his friends'

His father erected a brass memorial plaque to his memory in Purley Church It reads :-

To the Glory of God and in memory of our dearly loved and only son Dudley Cecil Aldin
2nd Lieutenant Royal Engineers (105th Field Coy) Killed in action in France during night
operations on Vimy Ridge May 15th 1916 aged 19 years. "Greater love hath no man than
this that he lay down his life for his friends" "If thou should'st call be to resign What most I
prize it ne'er was mine I only yield thee what is Thine"

He is also commemorated on the First World War Memorial in Purley Church.

His death was a terrible shock to his father who had great difficulty in even mentioning his son. He and his father had been so close that his death left a terrible gap which could never be bridged.

John Chapman