

ARTHUR FARMERY

Arthur Beck Farmery was born in Alne in 1894, the eldest of the five children of William Beck, a builder's labourer, and his wife Elizabeth. By 1901, however, his family had moved to York, where he spent the rest of his life apart from his time in the army.

When he joined up on 25th April 1914 he gave his occupation as a flour miller, employed by H Leetham and Sons, and was living at home in Newbiggin Street. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps. The RAMC was often the choice of men who wanted to "do their bit" but did not want to participate in fighting due to religious or moral convictions. He served in England until 14th April 1915, when he was posted to France for a year where he was attached to the 1st Northumbrian Field Ambulance. A Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit responsible for establishing and operating a number of points along a casualty evacuation chain. The chain comprised bearer relay points, an advanced dressing station, and the main dressing station, as well as a walking wounded collection station, rest areas and local sick rooms.

There is little information about how Arthur's war went and where exactly he served, except that he remained a private, but his character was deemed 'very good' and there were no charges on his conduct sheet. After his return to England he was posted to No. 2 Company of the West Yorkshire Regiment for a year until August 1917 when he was again transferred, this time to the 297 Labour Corps – the labour corps being reserved for those deemed not fit enough for frontline service. At some point between then and March 1919 he was further moved to the 19th Company of the RAMC. It was in May 1919 that his relatives were informed that he was dangerously ill in hospital, suffering from heart problems. He recovered and was demobbed on 19th July 1919, and awarded a weekly pension of 12 shillings for a year due to 30% disablement.

After the war, Arthur returned to his former trade of miller as well as to the parental home, as shown on his marriage certificate of 15th April 1922 when he married a widow called Mabel Smith (nee Kirkley). I can find no record of any children being born to the couple, and Mabel sadly died ten years later at the age of just 44. In 1935 he remarried – to Lily Fletcher – and again I can find no record of any children. Perhaps due to his heart condition, Arthur died in 1950 aged 56, but I do not know whether he was survived by his wife.