

The Baxter Brothers

The Baxters were a Tansor family of several generations standing. Harry was the eldest son of John and Sarah Ann Baxter, and was born in 1880. His younger brother Herbert John was born six years later. The brothers lived in Tansor with their parents, their six sisters, and a younger brother, George. By 1881, the boys' father John worked on the railway line that ran through the village – the railway provided employment for a number of Tansor men at the time. Both boys attended Tansor village school, each of them leaving at the age of thirteen. The 1901 census shows that they were both working after they left school – Harry as a bricklayer, and Herbert as a groom, working with horses.

By 1911, like his father, Herbert was working on the railway as a platelayer. It seems likely that Harry's work took him beyond Northamptonshire as he was married in Bedfordshire in 1904. The next census shows him living in Dunstable with his wife Ada and their four-year-old son John. The Muster Roll shows that Harry signed up as a Private with the 3rd Northants, whilst his brother joined the Royal Engineers as a Sapper. Nothing more is known of Herbert's military career

The table shows the following entries for the Baxter family:

Date	ROAD, STREET, No. and No. of NAME of HOUSE	HOUSE (Uninhabited, Tenement, etc.)	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lunatic (4) Sub-normal
45	45	1	John Baxter	Head	42	Bricklayer	Worker		Tansor	
			Sarah Ann Baxter	Wife	40				Tansor	
			Harry Baxter	Son	20	Bricklayer	Worker		Tansor	
			Herbert John Baxter	Son	14	Groom (not domestic)			Tansor	
			George Baxter	Son	9				Tansor	
			Elizabeth Baxter	Daughter	7				Tansor	
			William Baxter	Son	3				Tansor	

The 1901 census, featuring the Baxter family

other than the fact that he was fortunate enough to survive and return to Tansor after the war. The 1939 Register shows that he was still living here then, alongside his widowed mother and his sister Mary. Due to the vagaries of the survival of the war records, we can piece together more about Harry. As was often the case, Harry was transferred from his initial regiment. First, he moved to the Middlesex Regiment, and was later transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. In April 1917, Harry's battalion was billeted near Foreste, in the Somme area of France. The war diary for April 1st outlines an operation

focused on Savy Wood. The men marched from Foreste to Savy, about five miles distant,

1.4.17
"Battalion met with heavy enemy artillery and machine gun fire."

facing a hostile response en route. At 3.00 p.m. the men advanced, flanked by units from the 17th Highland Light Infantry, the 97th Infantry Brigade and the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers. The diary records a successful

WAR DIARY
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
 (Eraser heading not required.)

Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and References to Appendices
1 April 1917	1. Battalion in billets at FORESTE. Received orders at 6 am to move to CHATEAU DE PIMERY. Battalion moved off at 6 am arriving at destination at 8.30 am where it remained until forming up for attack on SAVY Wood and wood in S. 26 B. Battalion received orders at 11.30 am to advance at 1.30 pm. Battalion advances to SAVY in Artillery formation, under battle/ machine gun fire. Battalion formed up and advanced at 3 pm in extended order. C, B and S Companies in front line and A Company in support. Battalion met with heavy enemy artillery and machine gun fire. Battalion entered wood in S. 26 B. at 3.30 pm when our artillery barrage after Battalion reached final objective at 3.40 pm and commenced consolidating. Strong post being established along edge of wood. A Company sent forward to reinforce front line. Casualties: 1 officer killed, 10 wounded (6 killed, 5 wounded); 107 missing.	Reference sheet 62 B. 1/20,000. 1st Edition. 17th Highland Light Infantry, 97th Infantry Brigade on night, 15th Lancashire Fusiliers on left.
	2. In conjunction with attack of 14th Infantry Brigade on HAINON PRANVILLE, STENY and the main forward of the	

War Diary, 1st April 1917, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers



Pte. Fredk. R. Allen, Regimental Siretcher, 63, Havelock-st., Luton. Killed in France.
 Sergt. E. G. Mead, 42, Albion rd., Dunstable. Killed in action.
 Pte. Roland Geo. Darby, Canadian Lutonian. Wounded. Before going to Canada. Pte. Darby's parents were well known as butchers, and resided in Chapel street, Luton.
 Pte. H. Baxter, 42, Victoria street, Dunstable. Killed in action.
 Gunr. S. Pearson, R.G.A., Boyle street, Luton. Killed in action.

operation, despite losses: 32 were killed, 117 wounded and 3 missing. Sadly, Harry Baxter was amongst those killed. His death was reported in the *Luton News & Bedfordshire Advertiser* on April 26th 1917 (left), alongside his picture (second from right). Harry was one of four Tansor men killed in April 1917, which must have been a very black month for the village as the news filtered through.

Extract, *Luton News and Bedfordshire Advertiser*, 26.4.17