

FRED APPLETON – 1891-1966

A Brief Biography of his Army Service

Fred Appleton was born on 25th May 1891 at 5 East Parade, Skelton-in-Cleveland, the second son of Robert and Sarah Jane Appleton. He became an active member of the Church Lads Brigade and, on the 22nd February 1913, at the age of 21 years and 8 months, he attested into the Territorial Force as Private 1605 Fred Appleton of the 4th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment. He entered under the specialist qualification of Bandsman and his unit, “G” Company, was based at the drill hall in Skelton-in-Cleveland.

In July 1914 the Battalion was in summer camp at Deganwy in North Wales. By the time war was declared, the Battalion had returned to Northallerton and on 5th August 1914 Fred writes home on a postcard that he is “...sleeping in the New Grammar School...” In September 1914 the Battalion is at Darlington, as evidenced by postcards that Fred sent home. The evening of 15th April 1915 finds the Battalion billeted in Elswick Road Schools, Newcastle-upon-Tyne where Fred writes in a letter home that “...we are already packed up for the off...tomorrow night I think.”

On 3rd April 1917 Fred’s Pay Book records that he was confirmed in the rank of Lance Corporal. He was now officially 200207 Lance Corporal Fred Appleton of the 4th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment (the new numbers having been issued to the Territorial Forces from March 1917 onwards).

Fred continued to serve on the Western Front with the 4th Yorks until the unit was reduced to cadre on 16th July 1918. Thereafter he appears to have been assigned to a band at an Officers Training Depot as he sends letters home from there dated 21st September 1918 and 4th October 1918. In this latter he states that he is no longer with the Battalion and goes on to describe the band’s daily routine. This Training Depot may well have been in the Calais area and Fred may well have seen out the rest of his overseas service there since there are further letters home including ones written on Armistice Day and Christmas Day 1918.

Fred was still on overseas service in 1919. In a letter home on 19th January 1919 he describes himself as being at Calais waiting for demobilisation. And in one written on the 4th April 1919 he describes the band playing at a hospital and includes a copy of his recitative “The 4th Yorks Band In Action”.

Fred was eventually demobilised at Calais on 12th April 1919 and disembodied at York on the 15th May 1919.

He subsequently rejoined the then Territorial Army, attesting into the 4th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment on 21st June 1920 as 4381434 Private Fred Appleton. He was appointed Stretcher Bearer on 1st February 1921. With his unit he attended summer camps at Scarborough in 1920, Redcar in 1921, Hipswell in 1922, Ripon in 1923, Cemaes Bay on Anglesey in 1924, Pwllheli in 1925 and Catterick in 1926. On the 11th January 1927 Fred was discharged at his own request under paragraph 193 (3) of Territorial Army Regulations.