

Gunner William Mosley (born 27/7/1878; killed in action 3/6/1917)

Early years

William Mosley was born on the 27th July 1877, in Farnhill, and was baptised in Kildwick Church the following October. He was the only child of David and Mary Ann Mosley (nee Hopkinson). His father was from Farnhill and his mother from Cowling.

The 1881 census shows the family living on Bucklar Hill. His father (aged 37) is listed as a Cotton Warp Dresser – like a large number of villagers, he was employed in one of the local mills. His mother (aged 38 in 1881) is listed as a House Keeper.

Mary Ann Mosley died in Leeds Infirmary in July 1890, aged 47, and was buried in Kildwick churchyard.

It is likely that young William attended Kildwick School but by the time of the 1891 census, when he was 13, he was already working in a local mill – probably T and M Bairstow, in Sutton.



Photograph by George Whiteoak. Probably taken between 1905 and 1914.
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Less than a year after the death of his first wife, David Mosley married Henrietta Stephenson of Silsden (25th June 1892, in Kildwick Church).

David Mosley died in September 1900 (aged 57), and the 1901 census shows William living with his stepmother, who was running a greengrocers shop at their Bucklar Hill home.

Married life

On 12th June 1903 William Mosley married Lottie Rich, from Millom in Cumberland, and they set up their home first at number 9 and then at 56 Starkey Lane, living in just three rooms. Children came to marriage quickly and in rapid succession – 5 before the 1911 census:

Hannah (born in Millom) – 1904

Henrietta (born in Farnhill) – 7th September 1905

Frederick (born in Farnhill) – 16th May 1909

Plus two others who died before the 1911 census; probably:

David – died April 1907 (aged 3 months)

Leo – died February 1911 (aged 1 month)

A further son, Joseph, was born in 1913; and a daughter, Vida, was born shortly after the start of WW1 (8th November 1914), by which time the family were living in 53 Starkey Lane.

War service

William Mosley was called up sometime after the introduction of conscription in April 1916. He joined the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and was given the rank of Gunner and the Regimental serial number 165037.



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There are no known records of William's military career, but when a further son was born at the end of 1916 and baptised at Kildwick Church his occupation was recorded as "Soldier". Sadly this son, William, died in January 1917; aged just 2 months.

At the beginning of June 1917, the 59th Division RFA was based near Equincourt, on the Somme. The regimental diary records that on the 2nd and 3rd they carried out some test shooting in order to obtain a response which would enable them to pin-point enemy gun positions. They received return fire from a German battery in Havrincourt Wood.

Gunner William Mosley was killed in action on the 2nd June 1917.

His death was reported in the local press.

THE CRAVEN HERALD—FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 1917.

FARNHILL.

GUNNER MOSLEY KILLED.

On Friday morning last Mrs. William Mosley, Buckler Hill, Farnhill, received the following letter from France, written by one of her husband's comrades:—

"Dear Madam,—Just a few lines to let you know of the sad death of your husband. I dare say by this time you will have received the fatal news. I tender my greatest sympathy, and that of all the boys in this battery, to you and his dear children. He died for a just and noble cause and fell at duty's call. He was buried decently and reverently, I myself being one of six gunners to dig his grave in a cemetery by the cross roads out here. We laid him to rest last Sunday evening and to-day (June 4th) I have been down to put a cross on his grave with the inscription:—R.I.P. Killed in Action. Gunr. Mosley, W. No. 165037, — Brigade, R.F.A., June 2nd, 1917. So long as we are here you may rest assured that I shall see his grave is well looked after. He was liked by all the boys, being a quiet, steady man. I am married man myself and can sympathise with you in every way.—Believe me, Yours in sympathy,
GUNNER E. MOORE."

Gunner Mosley before joining the Army worked at the sud ponds at Sutton Mill. He was one of the bellringers at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, from being a boy, and a member of the Bellringers' Association. As a token of respect the church bells were muffled and rung on Saturday afternoon, and again on Sunday morning. In the evening they were half muffled. He was 40 years of age and leaves a wife and five children.

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On 7th November 1917, Lottie received £4 5s 9d in back pay and, after the end of the war, a further £3 War Gratuity.

In due course she would also have received his WW1 service medals: the British War Medal (below left) and the Victory Medal.



And also a WW1 Memorial Plaque – known colloquially as “the dead man’s penny”.



William Mosley was buried in the La Laiterie Military Cemetery; his is one of 571 graves maintained at that site by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Photograph courtesy of Commonwealth War Graves Commission

He is commemorated on the Kildwick War Memorial.



Photograph by kind permission of Dr. John Laycock

Postscript

Henrietta Mosley, William's step-mother, died in hospital in Skipton in September 1924, aged 74.

Lottie Mosley left Farnhill shortly after the end of the war. Examination of local electoral rolls show that between 1919 and 1948 she lived at 5 Main Road, Eastburn and later moved to Harewood Avenue. In 1931 she married Squire Mitchell Blenkarn. She died in 1968, aged 87.

