

Donald Robert Keates

Born in Yarnbrook 1892

Died in France 10 November 1918

Donald was running a business as a motor mechanic in Bradford-on-Avon when he was called up soon after conscription started in 1916. The Local Tribunal granted him an exemption, as he was the only man in the town doing such work. Doctors and local Tradesmen whose vehicles he cared for supported his appeal. The military appeal against this was granted by the County Tribunal in June 1916, to the fury of the Local Tribunal, as no account was taken of his importance to the town and immediate area. He enlisted in August 1916.

His business survived, his youngest brother Reginald, only 18 in 1916, taking over the work on vehicles and sister Bessie doing the paperwork. This meant repeatedly obtaining 2-month exemptions for Reginald from the Local Tribunal, then Bessie appearing at the County Tribunal to challenge military appeals against them. Eventually, the County Tribunal warned the military against more appeals. Keates Garage business continued in Bradford-on-Avon until 2006.

Donald's Service Record has not survived, so all we know of his military career is that he was a Private in the Army Service Corps, in one of the many Mechanical Transport Companies, which had a range of roles. He is known to have died at 83 General Hospital in Boulogne, France, it is believed from pneumonia resulting from influenza.

He is buried in the Terlinchun British Cemetery on the outskirts of Boulogne, and is commemorated on the North Bradley Memorial Plaques, Bradford on Avon War Memorial and Holy Trinity Bradford on Avon 1914-1918 Memorial.

See Donald Robert Keates' Life Story at: <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/2210949>

Father: Ebenezer Keates

Born and brought up in Westbury, the seventh child of ten.

Moved to Yarnbrook by his late teens, working as a Blacksmith. He appears to have continued in that trade all his life.

Died in early 1908, buried in West Ashton.

Married in West Ashton Church in 1875, by 1881 Ebenezer and Rosina are living in Yarnbrook with 5 children.

The 1891 Census 10 years later shows them living next door to the Long's Arms in Yarnbrook, 8 children at home, three (the youngest 12 years old) living and working not far away.

Donald was 8 years old and one of 8 children at home in 1901. Living just over the Parish boundary on Yarnbrook Hill, West Ashton, next door to Ebenezer's Blacksmith employer.

By 1911, Rosina was widowed. Donald was the eldest still at home, with two younger brothers and a married sister visiting with her young daughter at the Census. They were still living on the Parish boundary. A brother and a sister were farming Little Common and another sister living with them working as a Parlour Maid, probably in North Bradley village.

The records show Rosina had 15 children, it is unclear how many lived to adulthood, although it seems most did.

Donald had described his occupation as 'Motor and Cycle Mechanic' in the 1911 Census; he was in business with Charles Perkins in St Margaret Street, Bradford on Avon. By 1915, Kelly's Directory shows him as sole proprietor.

G/father

William Keates
b. North Bradley
Mason (Builder)

G/mother

Ann(e) Bailey
b. Dilton Marsh /Westbury
Grocer in Westbury

G/father

Stephen Griffin
b. West Ashton
Agricultural Labourer

G/mother

Mary Ann Cook
b. West Ashton
Dressmaker

Two of Donald's brothers also served in the Army and a sister in the QAIMNS. See Donald's Life Story for links to more information about them.