

Pte. Charles Beresford
2nd South Wales Borderers

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Commemorated on Newbridge War Memorial as C. Beresford SWB

Commemorated on Celynyn Collieries Roll of Honour

Family

Charles Beresford was born in Birmingham in 1875, the first child of Christopher and Elizabeth Beresford. In 1881 the family was living at 25 Barr St. West in Birmingham and the six year old Charles had a baby sister Clara.

By 1891 the family had moved to 390 Lodge Road, Birmingham. Charles and his father were both working in a brass foundry whilst his mother was a draper, Clara was still at school.

Charles was married to Minnie Ellen Pugh in 1897 and Harry Arthur, their first child, was subsequently born in 1898. In 1901 the family were living at 163 Hunters Road in Handsworth, Birmingham and Charles was still employed as a brass founder.

Whilst in Birmingham, Charles and Minnie had a further two children, Ellen Elizabeth and Elsie May

By 1911 the Beresfords had left their native Birmingham and moved to 27 Celynyn Terrace, Newbridge, Mon. where Charles took a job in the local colliery working as an underground labourer. Whilst in Newbridge they had another daughter Minnie Irene who was born in 1912.

Military

Charles Beresford enlisted in the army and served as a Private (15174) with the 2nd Bn. South Wales Borderers.

The 2nd Bn. South Wales Borderers was a regular battalion and in August 1914 it had nearly completed its two year tour of duty at Tientsin in northern China. On 12th January 1915 the battalion returned to the UK and joined the 87th Brigade of the 29th Division billeted in and around Coventry.

It was at some point after their return to the UK that Charles Beresford was posted to the battalion and he arrived in the Balkans on 10th May 1915. Two weeks previously, as part of the 29th Division, the 2nd SWB took part in the historic 'Landing at Helles' on 25th April 1915.

The 2nd Bn. served throughout the rest of the Gallipoli campaign taking part in the efforts to advance from Cape Helles in May and June. In August it moved round, with the rest of the 29th Division, to Suvla Bay to support five fresh Divisions from England who had been fought to a standstill.

In one final effort the 29th Division made a gallant, but unsuccessful, attack on Scimitar Hill (Hill 70) in which the 2nd Bn. suffered nearly 300 casualties. One of these casualties was Private Charles Beresford.

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The following extract from the 2nd Battalion War Diary for 21st August show the chaotic scenes which lead to the loss of Charles Beresford and so many of his comrades.....

21st August
1915

6.10 pm In accordance with orders received Battalion advanced to the assault of Hill 70. Failure of Inniskillings & Border Regt caused a change in the orders. C & D coys formed the front line. A & B supports.

Battalion Hqrs moved up into K.O.S.B's trenches. The mounted brigade were supposed to attack on our right but for some reason or other they also advanced straight on Hill 70 and so got muddled up with us.

C & D coys appeared to get on well and charged over the top of Hill 70. Darkness then came down & it was impossible to see what was going on. A great many Yeomanry came back and said that they had been given the order to "retire". B coy was then sent up to try and work up the left hand spur of Hill 70 from which the Turks were bringing an enfilade fire to bear out those already on the hill.

Major Going accompanied by the Adjutant then proceeded onto the hill and found everything in confusion. The only officer there was 2nd Lieut Burrell 2nd South Wales Borderers. On the hill there were about 200 Border Regt 300 S.W.B and a great many Inniskillings and Yeomanry. The only way to reorganise was to order all the S.W.B. to the left all Border Regt to the right and all Yeomanry to collect in the centre. The Inniskillings were ordered back to the support trenches.

11.30 pm Adjutant was sent back to report to the Bde Major. Colonel Lucas himself came up to the K.O.S.Bs headquarters and after consulting with the Officer Commanding on Hill 70 (Major Neilson, Major Going having injured his eye) and with the Division it was decided to abandon the Hill Brigade lost altogether about 1,100 men.

Battalion lost Officers Killed - Lieut Burrell & McShane
Missing Lieut Neville wounded - Capt Walters, Lieut Tragett, Mumford, Blake. Philpott, Knowles, Hill, Creaney, Evans and about 300 men mostly missing. All 4 C.S.Majors were wounded.

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In 1984, Charles' grandson, Malcolm P. Stevens, visited the battlefield and wrote the following:

“The last major battle of the Gallipoli campaign took place on the afternoon of August 21 an assault on strategic high ground called "Scimitar Hill." Through an unseasonable gray mist that obscured the topographical details of their objective, the British troops advanced, and as darkness settled in, they went charging over the crest of the hill. Before the night was over, however, they had been forced to withdraw with the South Wales Borderers losing a third of their men, among them Private Charles A. Beresford, my grandfather”.

Malcolm P. Stevens was the son of Charles' third daughter Minnie Irene Beresford, he wrote a novel "Evan's War" which he dedicated to Blodwyn and Evan John Evans and "to the to the memory of my maternal grandfather, Charles Beresford, late of the South Wales Borderers, killed at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, August 21, 1915"



Private Charles Beresford's body was not identified after the battle and so he does not have an individual grave marker.

He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial which serves the dual function of Commonwealth battle memorial for the whole Gallipoli campaign and place of commemoration for 20,886 of those Commonwealth servicemen who died there and have no known grave.

Sources

CWGC.org
6th Battalion South Wales Borderers War Diary
Fact Sheet 2nd South Wales Borderers (from SWB Museum)
1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 Census
Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919
British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920
saudiaramcoworld.com
Walesonline.co.uk