

## C DIFM Soldiers' Small Notebook - Private Frederick McSweeney 1912

**Accession number:** 18/34

**Historical Background/Biographical Background:** This biographical history was kindly provided by the depositor, Mr Bob Gallacher.

Frederick McSweeney was born in Hull in 1892 to parents Martin & Annie. It is almost certain that Martin McSweeney was an old regular soldier who had served in India; Frederick had an older brother William who was born in Poona. His mother Annie was born in Athlone, Ireland and was probably herself the daughter of a British soldier stationed there. Upon returning to civilian life Fred's dad worked as a shipyard labourer in Hull.

By the time of the 1901 census Fred was living in Keighley with his mother, younger siblings Margaret and Martin and a 17 year old who is listed as William Francis Gooch and being the, possibly adoptive, son of Annie - there is another military link here as William Gooch was born in Colchester. Unfortunately by the time of that census Martin senior was in the Keighley Workhouse listed as a pauper, he died in 1906.

By the time of the 1911 census, there is no sign of Fred - he was most probably already serving as a regular in India with the 1st Manchesters by this time. He had at some point before that lived in Royton with relatives. In 1911 his younger brother Martin was living with their Aunt & Uncle - Margaret & Francis Murray on High Barn Street. Francis was a retired soldier and Margaret, born in Athlone, was almost certainly Fred's mother's sister. In 1915 during a sermon at St.Paul's in Royton, the vicar mentioned Fred as being one of the parishioners who had already fallen in service of their country.

After the outbreak of war Fred left India along with the rest of the 1st Manchesters in August 1914 and arrived in Marseille on September 26th and after re-equipping for the Western Front found themselves in the front line for the first time on October 26th. The next day they suffered their first casualties of the war - one of them was Fred McSweeney who was killed by a German shell. Fellow Royton man Bertram Lees, himself to die in March 1915, wrote home....

"I have no doubt that you will have received quite a shock when you heard I was in this melee as I call it. I suppose you got to hear of poor McSweeney who was killed by a "Jack Johnson" as people term the big shell the Germans use. He was completely buried alive, he and 3 more. They dug them up but only 1 man was alive"

The CWGC only has one other man from the 1st Battalion dying that day (it's possible the other man was from another unit, the 2nd Manchesters were also there), he was Private James Ogden, aged 21, from Higginshaw Road, Oldham. 2256

Frederick McSweeney's name is not on the Royton War Memorial. It's very likely that he is the F. McSweeney on the Oldham memorial but why he appears on that rather than Royton's will probably remain a mystery.

**Custodial history:** Deposited by Mr Bob Gallacher of Royton in December 2018

**Description:** Soldier's Small Note Book:  
FREDERICK McSWEENEY

Age: 22

Date of Death: 27/10/1914

Rank: Private

Service No: 1696

Regiment: Manchester Regiment

Unit: 1st Bn.

Memorial: Le Touret Memorial

Panel Ref: Panel 35a

Included with the notebook is a copy photograph of Private McSweeney in uniform which has been printed and added to the hard copy catalogue. The notebook gives very little information about Private McSweeney but gives instructions on saluting officers, how to make a complaint, how to clean a rifle, how to clean clothes, what to observe when on guard and in outposts, cooking, soldiers' discharge and soldiers' wills.

**Extent:** 2 items

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader

C DIFM/1	Soldiers' Small Note Book - Private Frederick McSweeney 1 item	1912
C DIFM/2	Copy photograph of Private Frederick McSweeney A copy of this photograph can be found with the hard copy catalogue in the searchroom 1 item	c. 1912