

Pte. H. Still – The Duke of Cambridge’s Own (Middlesex Regiment)

Harry Still was the second son of William and Elizabeth Still of Keepers Cottage, Milton Street, Westcott – William was the gamekeeper on the Bury Hill Estate. Harry was a painter by trade and worked for Jeaters, the builders and plumbers in the village. He was a very active sportsman and was a member of the Westcott cricket, football and rifle clubs. He appears in the photograph of the Westcott football team which was taken during the season of 1910-11.



Harry enlisted in 3rd/8th Bn The Middlesex Regiment at Dorking on 6th December 1915. After training he joined the 1st/8th Battalion, a unit of the 70th Brigade, part of the 8th Division. On 9th February 1916, the battalion was transferred to 167th Brigade in the 56th (London Division) which suffered heavy casualties in the Second Battle of the Scarpe. After a period out of the line at Grosville, the battalion moved to Flanders to take part in the second Allied attack of the offensive known as the Third Battle of Ypres or Passchendaele. The attack took place in appalling conditions. Shelling had destroyed the dykes of drainage canals in the area and heavy rains in August turned the ground into a morass of mud and flooded shell craters. The attack was due to start on 13th August 1917, but General Gough, commanding the Fifth Army, postponed the offensive for a day and then for another 24 hours after a thunderstorm late on the 14th.

The attack started on 16th August. The objective for 56th (London) Division was to advance about 500 yards into Polygon Wood. The ground conditions in the 56th Division area were so bad that none of the supporting tanks got into action. As a result the infantry was more severely exposed and the Division’s advance was stopped by fire from German strong-points and pillboxes. Despite this setback, successes were achieved on other parts of the front and objectives were achieved, but at heavy cost.

The attack – known as the Battle of Langemarcke – lasted from 16th to 18th August. All we know of Harry Still is that he was hit while on stretcher-bearer duties and died of wounds on 18th August 1917. He is buried at Brandhoek Military Cemetery which is situated about 4 miles west of the centre of Ypres. He is also commemorated on the headstone of the grave of his brother, James Still, who died in 1918 during his military service, and which is near the lych-gate at the entrance to our churchyard.