George Robert Dean





Rank: - L/Cpl

Number: - 4687721

Regiment: - Coldstream Guards 2nd Bn

Died: - Killed in Action, France 21/05/1940 Age: 25 years

Cemetery: - Pecq Communal Cemetery, Hainaut, Belgium Row D, Grave 3.

George Robert was born in Batley in1915 the son of George Brook and Eliza Dean nee Longfield who had married on 20 April 1907 at St. Mary's Church, Gomersal. The couple lived at Tanhouse Lane, Hightown in 1911 before he served in the First World War.

George Robert was associated with Batley Parish Church and attended Purlwell School until he was fourteen years old and joined the Army 18 months later. He was a popular member of the Trades and Friendly Club, Wellington Street, Batley. In 1937 he married Mabel Studley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Duke Studley. The couple lived at 7, Melton Street, Batley and he worked for Messrs. Morris and Jones, wholesalers, Leeds. He had served for 10 years in the Army

and was a Reservist when war broke out. He was called up on the 3 September 1939.

The 2nd Battalion was based at Aldershot in September 1939 when the Second World War began, the 1st and 2nd battalions of The Coldstream Guards were part of the British Expeditionary Force in France. With the German invasion of the low countries, they were sent to Belgium where they were cheered and had flowers and food pressed on them. Word spread fast that the Belgium army had collapsed and it was realised if they did not pull back, they would be cut off as the Germans had broken through somewhere in the rear and were in France. Belgians were fleeing and the roads were filled with refugees.

The invasion of Belgium or Belgian campaign (10–28 May 1940), often referred to within Belgium as the 18 Days' Campaign (Dutch: *Achttiendaagse Veldtocht*), formed part of the greater Battle of France, an offensive campaign by Germany. It took place over 18 days in May 1940 and ended with the German occupation of Belgium following the surrender of the Belgian Army.

On 10 May 1940, Germany invaded Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium under the operational plan Fall Gelb (Case Yellow). The Allied armies attempted to halt the German Army in Belgium, believing it to be the main German thrust. After the French had fully committed the best of the Allied armies to Belgium between 10 and 12 May, the Germans enacted the second phase of their operation, a break-through, or sickle cut, through the Ardennes, and advanced toward the English Channel. The German Army (Heer) reached the Channel after five days, encircling the Allied armies. The Germans gradually reduced the pocket of Allied forces, forcing them back to the sea. The Belgian Army surrendered on 28 May 1940, ending the battle.

Chapter 3 - the Padres address:

We had all been called together for a quick service and address by the Padre. He was a good old stick the padre, and gave it to us straight that we would soon be going into battle and that many of us might be killed. He reminded us why we were there and after a short service in which he advised each of us to make our peace with God according to our own beliefs and to write a will and a letter home which he would shortly collect.

Chapter 4 - assault on the woods:

We were now part of the rearguard conducting a fighting retreat and trying desperately (as we would later understand) to close the gap that the Germans had punched in the French lines.

We were dug in, somewhere in France I think, and were preparing for a counter-attack against some German forces in the woods opposite. The attack would go in at first light, we knew it was serious because a rum ration was passed down the line - a double ration for each man. Then shortly after came that most awful of orders "fix bayonets" - you cannot imagine the chill generated by those words. In a few minutes we were out of the trench and going hell for leather towards the woods, we were in, men were falling all around rifle fire and grenades, but where from? then we realised the bloody Germans were all up in the trees! they rained grenades down on us and potted us with impunity. We had to withdraw, artillery was called in and plastered the woods. That finished the guys in the trees - artillery fire in woods is a terrible thing, the trees splinter and cause horrible wounds. then we went in with the bayonet and drove the rest out. I was just turned 18.



BATLEY GUARDSMAN KILLED IN ACTION.

Old Boy of Purlwell Council School.

LANCE-CORPORAL GEORGE ROBERT DEAN.

Deep sympathy will be felt with Mrs. Dean, Melton Street, Healey Place, Batley, who received a telegram on Monday night stating that her husband, Lance-Corporal George Robert Dean, Coldstream Guards, had been killed in action in France.

Lance-Corporal Dean joined the Army when only fifteen and a half years of age. He was a Reservist when war was declared. Called up on September 3rd he previously worked for Messrs. Morris and Jones, wholesalers, Leeds.

He was twenty-five years of age and thus had ten years' Army service. He married three years ago and his wife formerly worked at the Victoria Mills, Carlinghow, Batley, of Messrs. Chas. Robinson and Co.

Lance-Corporal Dean attended Purlwell School until he was fourteen, and was also associated with Batley Parish Church. He was the son of Mr. George Dean, of Batley, and his wife was before her marriage Miss Mabel Studley. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Duke Studley.

A native of Batley, he was a popular member of the Trades and Friendly Club, Wellington Street.

Batley News 22 Jun 1940 (photo)

Chapter 5 – Tanks:

It was early morning and most of the company was sleeping off a hangover in a small deserted village in which we had spent the night. Being the youngest in the battalion and only just 18 I had not really partaken of the liberated wine and along with the RSM was about the only truly sober soldier in town. A runner came in from one of the outposts, German tanks were heading straight for the village. The RSM collared me to help get everyone up and out and then the fun

began. Being big despite my youth I was the company anti tank gunner and was equipped with a Boyes anti-tank rifle, one of the most useless weapons ever to be issued to the British army. I was posted with a sergeant and my number two on the outskirts facing the advancing tanks. When they came within range I let fly - nothing happened, I fired again - again no result, they just kept on coming. At 100 yards I could see the strikes were the rounds hit but they had no effect. The sergeant was screaming at me "Hit the **** thing for god's sake" "I am" I replied, "they're bouncing off!" "The vision slits, get the vision slits" he yelled. Still no effect, now they were down to about 60-70 yards "give the bloody thing here" yelled the Sergeant and himself landed two rounds bang on the drivers slits at no more than 50 yards - they bounced off!! "fall back" cried the Sergeant and I like an idiot asked him "What about the gun?" "Leave the **** thing it's useless" he replied. and we scuttled away to rejoin the unit, now re-formed on the other side of town. When we rejoined the unit the Sergeant made his report, including his assessment of the Boyes rifle. We were however sent back to retrieve the Boyes. "We can't have Guardsmen leaving their weapons behind, can we?" was the rhetorical question "We would never live it down." I carried the Boyes all the way to Dunkirk where we destroyed it, only being allowed our rifles on board ship.

George Robert was not to reach the Channel he was killed in action in Belgium on 21 May 1940.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial.

Researched by members of
Batley History Group