James Edwards





Private 14186 9th (Service) Battalion the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

Killed in action 22 July 1918

Cemetery: Le Kreule Military Cemetery, Hazebrouck, Nord, France.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE AMEN

James was born on in Batley on 3 October 1894 and baptised at St. Mary's on 21 October 1894. His mother was recently widowed Catherine Edwards (nee Dolan) who worked as a rag sorter. James had two elder sisters, Mary Ann (1887) and Kate (1888). The family lived in Ambler Street, Batley.

He attended St Mary's R.C. church and school. In 1911 having left school he was employed as a coal miner (hewer). However, in December 1912 he enlisted with the 3rd Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, giving his employment as a general labourer. His papers describe him as 5'5 ½" tall, weighing 126 lbs with a fresh complexion, hazel eyes and dark brown hair. He had three small scars on his left knee cap and two scars on the left side of his neck.

Despite signing for 12 years, he lasted only 94 days. He was discharged Free under Article 1058 of the King's Regulations. The Army was satisfied his mother was in a destitute condition and in need of his support. He returned home and was employed at Howley Park Colliery.

James enlisted again in the early days of the war and went to France in July 1915. He was a Private with the 10th Battalion, The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). Later he was with the 2nd Scottish Rifles and the 10th Scottish Rifles. After an initial period in Scotland he was based at Bordon Camp, Hampshire. After Bordon, the battalion moved to billets in Winchester in February 1915, and in April 1915 to Park House and Chisledon Camp on Salisbury Plain. In early July orders came for them to go to France, with James disembarking at Boulogne on 11 July.

The first major battle was the Battle of Loos, where the British first used poisoned gas on the Western Front. On 25 and 26 September the 10th Scottish Rifles participated in the assault on Hill 70. In total the Battalion's other rank losses were 63 men killed, 318 wounded and 239 missing.

He appears in a War Diary official daily casualty list dated 23 September 1916 as wounded, suffering from shell shock. He appeared on another War Office casualty list on 27 November 1916, again wounded, suffering from shell shock. He came home on leave in the summer of 1917 and again in 1918 returning to France for the last time in April 1918.

In mid-July 1918 James was serving with the 9th Scottish Rifles. The Battalion was operating in the Meteren area of northern France, near the border with Belgium. Om 19th July the 9th (Scottish) Division, of which the 9th SRs formed part were involved in the re-taking of Meteren from the Germans.

Their War Diary for the period around the time of James' death shows that whereas on 19 and 20 July they did receive casualties, the following two days were relatively quiet. On 21st July the various companies of the Battalion were repairing trenches and providing salvage parties. Reports from them said it was very quiet during the day.

The following day, the diary says that enemy artillery was very active, and that about 100 shells fell between the hours of 10 30pm and 4am. Reports from all

companies stated heavy shelling during the night. The only deaths mentioned in the diary are those of 2nd Lt. Spiers and two men who were killed by a direct hit on a trench at 1.45am. This number of casualties, and dates, seems at odds with the CWGC records, with nine men in the Battalion as dying on 22 July 1918.

James was killed in action on 22 July 1918 aged 23.

In terms of financial provisions for his mother after his death, his Soldiers' Effects entry shows the War Office paid her £6.16s.10d., which was probably James' wage. She was also awarded a War Gratuity of £18.19s. Alongside this, until her death in February 1932, she received a modest weekly pension for the loss of her son. The cost for the lettering on his headstone would have cost her 5s.10d.

James was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at St. Mary's Church, Batley, Batley War Memorial and the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle.



Thanks to Jane Roberts and for further information see pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk .