



*Henry Wykes,*

*Exc Bridge,*

*Easter.*

Harry joined the South Staffs in March 1915 at a Special Recruiting Office in Dudley, he joined the 8th Battalion. He was with the 8th Battalion when he won his Military Medal (reason unknown). He was wounded (time & place unknown), and was sent back to England. The photograph was taken when he was in hospital in Exeter, and is taken with his twin sister who was visiting him. As you can see she was a nurse and very proud to be a nurse as she still wore the uniform when just visiting her brother! She became a mid-wife and at one time half of Great Bridge was said to have been born with her assistance.

Later she became a nit-nurse I think you can easily tell they are related as their faces have the same shape. After recovering, Harry went back to France and was apparently allocated to the 1st Battalion.

This was part of 91st Brigade of 7th Division.

As Harry died of wounds at one of the CCS in Achiet, he would presumably have been wounded in the few days before his death on 13th May (Battle of Arras time). The first attack on Bullecourt took place on 3rd May but did not involve the South Staffs. Bullecourt was not taken, but the Australians had some success to the south. It was decided that the next attack on Bullecourt would also come from the south.

The History of the South Staffs Regiment by Lt Col Vale says

"On 10th May the 1st South Staffs moved up to the line under continual shelling, with the inevitable casualties. The attack by the 91st Brigade was to commence at 3.40 am on the 12th with the Battalion on the left (1st SS) and the Queen's on the right. They started from trenches thickly strewn with the dead from previous attacks, this did nothing to sustain their morale.

The Queen's escaped the worst of the enemy barrage and successfully took their objective, as did the right company of the Staffs after considerable loss. Thus most of the village was not only taken but held. On the left company front there was such a hail of machine-gun and artillery fire that little progress could be made; at about 9am Beauman (Commanding Officer) put in his reserve and this too was pinned down. At noon three companies of the 22nd Manchesters came up to assist, but the machine-gun fire was so intense that they could not deploy.

Throughout the 13th both units made strenuous efforts to get forward by bombing and were repulsed time after time; one reason being the superior range of the German egg-bomb over the Mills. That night the Battalion was due for relief by the Honourable Artillery Company, but as the change-over could not be completed before dawn the Staffs had another hard day's fighting and did not leave until the next night."

So sometime during the above action Harry was wounded, transported to CCS at Achiet and died from his wounds. The Battalion had 180 casualties.

Soldiers Died in the Great War CD shows 62 men from the 1st Bn South Staffs died between 10th & 16th May 1917. 56 Killed in Action, 4 Died of Wounds, and 2 Died.

Of the 6 men in the last two categories, 4 are buried in Achiet le Grand

Charles John Millward, died 14th, grave I.G.10

Silas George Edward Stevens, died 13th, grave I.G.8

William Knight, died 13th, grave I.G.2

Harold Lester, died 13th, grave I.G.3

The other two - one buried in Etaples so taken to a base hospital; and the other in Lille so would have been wounded and taken as a POW by the Germans and died in captivity.