

**Grange U3A Family and Social History
Group Project on the Grange WW1 War Memorial**



Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres, Belgium

***A short biography in commemoration of
James Bland 1887- 1916***

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James Bland was the only son of Joseph Gill Bland and Margaret Bland nee Dickinson, of Grange Fell, Grange over Sands. Born in 1887 James, at the age of fourteen, was a cabinet makers' errand boy and in 1911 he was a house painter with a local builder.

Initially he enlisted with the 16th (The Queen's) Lancers, but was transferred to the Royal Irish Rifles.

An article appeared in the Westmorland Gazette as follows:

RIFLEMAN BLAND, OF GRANGE.

Mr J G Bland, postman, of Grange Fell, received notice on Wednesday morning that his son had been killed in action at Hooge on September 25th. Rifleman Bland, well known at Grange by the affectionate title of "Jimmie" Bland, joined the 16th Lancers in August, shortly after war was declared. He had a thorough training at the Curragh, in Ireland, as a cavalry man, along with D (Daniel) Hadwin and F. Dibble, also of Grange, and who joined at the same time. In May this year they were transferred to the Royal Irish Rifles stationed at Dublin, and they went to the front at the beginning of June.



Rifleman James Bland

Bland wrote home every week regularly after going to France, and when his father had heard nothing of him for three weeks he suspected something was wrong, but the news that he had been killed outright came as a very great shock for he was the only son, and hopes were entertained that the news might be of a more lenient nature. Rifleman Bland was a plumber by trade, being apprenticed with Mr B Ward at Grange. He was very popular among his comrades, for he was one of the cheeriest fellows imaginable, and his death has caused great grief to all who knew him. He had a great many friends in the Grange and Cartmel district, and was a well known cricketer and footballer. He was 28 years of age. A memorial service will be held at the Church Fell Room on Sunday at three p.m.

ACTION AT HOOGE, 25th SEPTEMBER 1915

Hooge is a small village on the Menin Road (the N8), around two miles east of Ypres. The front line of the Salient was here in 1914 and there was fierce fighting in the area over the next three years,

On the night of 24th September 1915 at 11.30pm, the Royal Irish Rifles relieved the 1st Honourable Artillery Company in the trenches at Hooge, to the east of Ypres, and occupied positions in front of Bellewaerde Lake. This included the regularly contested three craters. For six days previously the German line had been subjected to artillery barrage and attack as part of diversions to the forthcoming offensive at Loos which was due to open on the 25th September.



Dugouts in the huge crater at Hooge formed by British mining operations

The battalion war diary records in great detail the preparation and the action which took place on the 25th which resulted in the death of James Bland.

The diary records:

In trenches as above (i.e. the 24th position). Our Artillery bombarded the front line to be attacked from 3.50am until 4.20am- lifting their fire gradually from the front line to support line.

Commencing at 4.5am four mines were exploded on right- first pair at 4.19am, second pair at 4.19 ½ am.

The assault was delivered at 4.19 ½ am.

At 4.14am the attacking Companies crossed the parapet and deployed about 30 yards in front in a line with the blind end which runs out from C6.*

Each company had two platoons in the front line and two platoons in the second line. The second line was just in front of the parapet. Six sections of Bombers and two machineguns accompanied the attack.

*Between 29 and 91** the attack reached the German second line and occupied it with little opposition, but no bombers reached the objective and a Bomb attack by the enemy forced those who had reached it to retire to the German first line, where one officer and some dozen men held on till dark.*

Opposite 29 and between 91-93 the attack was held up by wire and machine-gun fire and the men took what cover they could in shell holes close up to the German lines. Some of them rejoined after dark. At about 4.30am "C" Coy in support went up to reinforce the attacking companies, who were seen to have penetrated the enemy's line. This company had met with heavy rifle and machinegun fire and few if any succeeded in reaching the enemy's trenches. "A" Company then moved up and occupied our front line trenches. At about 6am some of our men could still be seen in the enemy's trenches, but after that hour nothing further could be seen of them.

With the greatest determination and gallantry, and the Reserve Company, after it saw that the attack had been, in the main, unsuccessful, was still eager to be allowed to go in.

A company of the 1st Wiltshires moved up into reserve place of "A" Company. About midnight 25th/26th 1st Wilts commenced relief and our relief was completed at 2.15am 26th.

The report concludes with the casualty list of Officers and Men. These were:

Officers- 4 killed; 5 wounded; 4 wounded and missing; 1 missing;

Other ranks- 46 killed; 140 wounded; 150 missing; 26 wounded and missing;

M.G. and team lost. The battalion was destroyed.

James was one of the missing and was never found after the war. He is remembered on the Menin Gate with no known grave.

Notes

*Text references. The asterisk(*) indicates a particular part of a trench and (**) indicates particular sections of the trench system.*

Author: David Clapp- 17th June 2015