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Kent War Memorials Transcription Project

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WEST J.W

Lyminge Civic War Memorial

Private G/1431 James William WEST. 8th (Service) Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). Died 27 March 1919 aged 34 years at Royal Victoria Hospital, Folkestone, Kent. Born 1886 Margate, Kent. Enlisted 7 September 1914 (volunteer). Resided 4 Rose Cottages, Peene, Newington, Folkestone, Kent. Formerly Mill Cottage, Lyminge, Kent. Later (1918) resided "Ivydene", Station Road, Lyminge, Kent. Husband of Edith Clayson (married Margate 1911).

GRO Death Reference

1919, MAR, West James W, 34 Elham 2a 1983

Upon enlistment James was posted to the Buffs Depot at Canterbury to start his training with the 3rd Buffs. On 12 September 1914 James finished his basic training and was drafted to the 8th (Service) Battalion, of the Buffs. It is with this battalion that James saw action during the Battle of Loos. He was posted Missing in action on 26 September 1915 with a note stating he had been taken Prisoner of War (POW) by the Germans at Hulloch. During this engagement James was very severely gassed and wounded in the left leg – Gun Shot Wound (GSW) to abdomen and left leg (fractured femur). It is documented in the Buffs Regimental History (Col Moody) that during the Battle of Loos the 8th (Service) battalion, Buffs came under heavy and sustained gas attack on more than one occasion. The Germans used Gas extensively at Hulloch where James unit was fighting. It appears that soon after the "missing in action" report James was found terribly wounded on the battlefield and was recovered through the medical evacuation chain to the UK. James was taken from Dover to the Naval Hospital in nearby Gillingham where he remained for some considerable time. James was eventually discharged from the army on 23 June 1916 unfit for further war service (retired as an invalid). James was awarded a full Army Disability War Pension (assessed at 80% for both his gunshot wounds and his lung problems). He continued to suffer from the effects of gas and his family state he received treatment for various respiratory conditions in Folkestone throughout 1917 and 1918. His abdomen wounds eventually healed although he was prone to hernia and although the fracture had healed, the missile was still in situ and his left leg was 2 inches shorter than the other! He walked slowly with a limp but distance was a problem because he became out of breath very quickly. It seems that he never recovered from these serious war wounds and that the gassing weakened his lungs! After the war ended James went to live at "Ivydene", Station Road, Lyminge, Kent. James continued with his treatment but his lungs were terribly damaged. On 18 March 1919 James was admitted into hospital suffering from shortness of breath and what looked like influenza. He was dead by March 1919. His Death Certificate gives cause of death as Influenza and Pneumonia (obviously the gassing had a detrimental effect on his lung capacity which in turn contributed towards his death). It would seem that poor James NEVER really recovered from his wounds and that in his final days suffered terribly! Had James lungs been in good health he may have survived the Spanish Flu.

On the balance of Probability James died as a direct consequence of his war service – His Death Certificate gives cause of death as Flu/Pneumonia. The gassing 2 years earlier had a profound effect on his lungs and he was unable to fight off the effects of influenza which in 1918 and 1919 was a very virulent strain.

James saw action in some furious battles and engagements including –

1. Battle of Loos
2. Hulloch Operation September 1915.