

THE BLEASDALE FALLEN OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

PRIVATE
ROGER YATES

1892 - 1917

SECOND BATTALION, SCOTS GUARDS

ARMY NUMBER: 15295



KILLED IN ACTION 9TH MARCH 1917.



REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

PRIVATE ROGER YATES 1892 - 1917
Second Battalion, Scots Guards
Army Number: 15295



Roger Yates was the second son of John and Elizabeth Yates of Holme House Farm, Bleasdale. He was one of 6 sons and 3 daughters. In 1911 he was working on his father's farm. In late 1915/early 1916, he and his friend Andrew Smith of Whitechapel joined the Army and were posted to the 2nd battalion, the Scots Guards. On 9th March 1917, both young men were killed by the same shell in the Somme area. Roger was 24 years old.

FAMILY AND UPBRINGING

Roger Yates was born in Bleasdale in 1892. His parents were John and Elizabeth Yates who farmed at Holme House, Bleasdale (not to be confused with Roger Yates born about 1902 whose father, Roger, farmed at Higher Fairsnape.)

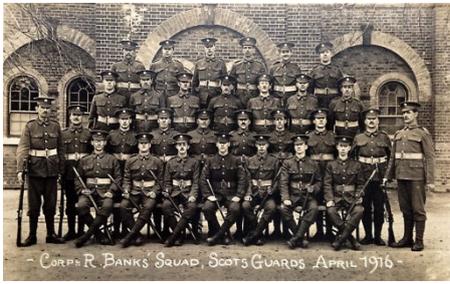
He had five brothers. The 1911 Census shows us their ages in that year. Roger was 18. Edward (20) and George(16) are presumably the 'E' and 'G' Yates referred to on the 'Those Who Have Served' Board at Bleasdale Parish Hall, showing they both joined up and returned from the War. William the youngest (9) was not old enough to fight. The oldest boy, John, was 22. He may have taken over the farm by 1917 from his father, and as a farmer, he may have escaped conscription. There is no reference to Thomas, the last but one son, who was 14 in 1911. William, the youngest, would not have been 18 until 1918.

Roger attended Bleasdale School. The School Logbook provides an insight to the sort of boy he may have been. He won second prize in the annual pressed and mounted wild flower competition in December, 1902. First prize was awarded to John Bourn who was also killed in the War.

In April, 1911, Roger was helping his father on the farm. According to information from the Preston Guardian in 1917, the farm consisted of 30 acres with 50 cattle and over 400 sheep. It is possible he may have found employment later on another farm.

ENLISTMENT and ARMY SERVICE

Roger and his friend Andrew Smith, the son of a Whitechapel farmer, went together to the Recruiting Office at Lancaster, at some time in late 1915 or early 1916, in order to enlist. They were given consecutive Army numbers when they were both posted to the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. This regiment may not have been from choice but because the Scots Guards needed men at that time. They may have been sent to the Reserve for a few months.



Cpl. Banks' Squad, Scots Guards, April 1916. Andrew is among them, and probably Roger.

Roger and Andrew would have known each other before they joined up. Roger's parents were tenants of Mrs. Elizabeth Daniel (nee Smith) who was their landlord of some of the land at Holme House Farm, Bleasdale. Andrew was one of Elizabeth Daniel's cousins and the two both came from farms in Goosnargh Parish.

The two young men would have spent some months training, before being posted to France in the autumn of 1916. Andrew Smith's family have a photograph of Andrew's Squad taken in April, 1916, which presumably includes Roger (our thanks to them for producing it).

By March 1917 they were still together, fighting in the Somme area.

Karen Macaulay writes:

'The Second Battalion Scots Guards was a regular battalion and had been on the Western Front since 7th October 1914, taking part in the early actions of the War. They fought on the Somme during September 1916 and were still holding the line on the Somme in early 1917.'

'On 24th February they were at Ville sur Ancre and the War Diary reported that the Battalion took part in a football match against the Grenadier Guards, the 2nd Scots winning 4 – 0. The next day the diary reported that the day was devoted to 'bombing and bathing'. Presumably the bombing refers to training and in fact the diary records that the CSM was killed at the Brigade bombing ground – the second fatal accident within 10 days. The Brigade boxing competition was held on 26th.

'On 27th February the battalion moved to Priez Farm where the men were on 'fatigues' (working parties). They continued until 4th March when they moved to X Camp at Maurepas. On 6th March they moved to Fregicourt where men were again on fatigues – this time as carrying parties up to the front lines where one man was killed and two wounded. The 7th March was a very cold day and the diary noted "very glad to be in dugouts". Another two men were wounded.

'The next day it snowed all morning and the battalion relieved the Welsh Guards in front of Sailly at about 8 p.m. During the evening there was a lot of shelling and the enemy sent over trench mortars and rifle grenades throughout the night, one man being killed and two wounded.

'On 9th March more snow fell. The diary reported that guns and heavy trench mortars shelled Palz trench, all day and all night. Five men were killed and seven wounded in this shelling. Private Yates was one of the men killed in action here on 9th March 1917. He was 24.'

From the report in the Preston Guardian on 31st March it appears that Roger and his friend Andrew Smith were killed by the same shell. Roger was 24 years of age.

AFTERMATH

News of Roger's death reached Holme House Farm before the end of March. The family found out more information from a sergeant who was home on leave, who told them of how Roger and Andrew had died together. This must have added to the shock, and created more worry as Roger's brothers, Edward and George were also serving in the forces.

In the same edition of the Preston Guardian which gave details of Roger's death, there was a report that John, his older brother had appeared before the Military Tribunal in Garstang as the Army was challenging his exemption from service due to his vital work as a farmer.

'The military challenged the case of a Bleasdale farmer holding 30 acres with 50 cattle and over 400 sheep, managed by the man himself and a brother. Two brothers were serving and a third had recently been killed.'

The only family that this description fits is the Yates' of Holme House. This presupposes that John Yates senior, now 62, had retired and his son, John junior, had taken over the farm. It appears that neither John nor his brother was conscripted.

Roger Yates was buried at Saily-Saillisel Cemetery, Somme, Grave II.J.5. He is commemorated on a gravestone in St. Eadmer's Churchyard and on the War Memorial inside the Church. His friend, Andrew Smith, is commemorated on the Whitechapel War Memorial.

His father received a total of £9 1s from the War Office, money owing to him at his death.

Roger received the Victory and the British medals.



The Victory and British medals.

References:

The Preston Guardian 31st March 1917 (2 articles) (microfilm, Community History Library, Harris Library, Preston).

For other references etc., see the Acknowledgement Page.