

### JOHN G. HODGSON – Private 34907, 9<sup>th</sup> K.O.Y.L.I, 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 1916, Age 35

John George Hodgson was the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of William Hodgson and Maria Hutchinson and was born in 1882 in Melbecks (in Swaledale, near Gunnerside). He had two older brothers (Joseph William, born 1877) and (David, born 1880). He also had a younger sister, Margaret Ann (Born 1888). The family were farmers and lead miners who moved to Minto Grange in Brompton-on-Swale in the late 1880s. In 1911, John was 29 and working in a Brewery (probably the Crown brewery) in Brompton-on-Swale. He was unmarried <sup>(1)</sup>.

John enlisted in Richmond and enrolled as Private 5395 in the Green Howards. From his military records it looks likely that on his arrival in France (around 16<sup>th</sup> July 1916), he was transferred to the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (as Private 34907). Two months later, to the day, he would be dead.



Figure 1 - Mark I Tank on the Somme

At this point the records seem unclear as to whether John was serving with the 9<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> battalions of the KOYLI. “Soldiers died in the Great War” states 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion whereas Commonwealth War Graves Commission states 12<sup>th</sup> battalion. The evidence strongly suggests it was while serving with the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette (the third and last offensive forming the Battle of the Somme) that John was killed on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1916. This battle was notable as it featured the debut of the tank.

One reason for believing John was with the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion is that he is buried some way from where the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion were in September 1916. The National Archives at Kew hold a copy of the War Diary of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Ref: WO 94/2353) and this shows that the 12th Battalion were in the Bethune sector from July to October 1916 which is a lot further away, relatively speaking, from where John was buried). Also there were 97 deaths on the 16<sup>th</sup> Sept 1916 in the 9th KOYLI, and only 1 in the 12th (John – which seems very odd).

The 9<sup>th</sup>/ KOYLI were in action near Flers and Gueudecourt and it seems this is where John was a casualty, dying from wounds. The following extracts have been taken from “The KOYLI in the Great War”.

*The 21<sup>st</sup> Div. had been moved north to the neighbourhood of Arras for a less strenuous duty. Early in September, the 64<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. was addressed by Maj.-Gen Campbell, G.O.C. 21<sup>st</sup> Div. when at Manin, who said that the division would shortly be moving down to the battle area of the Somme again. The move commenced on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Lt.-Col C.E.Heathcote arrived to command the 9/K.O.Y.L.I.; Lt.-Col. B.C.Bridge had been in command of the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. since the 11<sup>th</sup> July. The brigade arrived in Pomieres redoubt through Fricourt on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and at 2 a.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> it started in the rain to move up to Flers trench in front of Gueudecourt. The 9/K.O.Y.L.I. took up its position in the centre of the brigade, while the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. moved into Switch trench in close support of the 15/D.L.I. Flers trench was exactly five miles from*

*Pomieres, and it was reached by 5-45 a.m., as it was getting light; another 2,000 yards of country separated Flers trench from the first objective of the proposed offensive.*

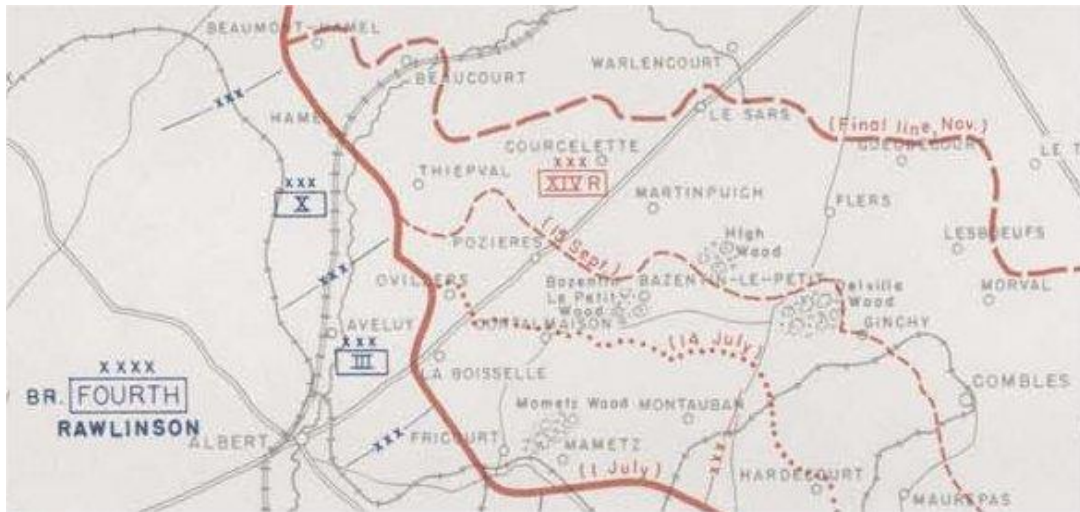


Figure 2 - The Somme - Map 1916

*The attack on Gueudecourt by the 64<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. was timed to commence at 9.20 a.m. In front of Gueudecourt were two main enemy trenches, Gird trench and Gird support; these were the objects of the attack. Brig.-Gen. Headlam had a difficult problem before him. The battalion commanders had had no opportunity for making any kind of preliminary reconnaissance. In order to take advantage of our artillery barrage when it opened, it was necessary to get the troops forward to a position near enough to the barrage line for them to get cover from it. As it was not possible to get the barrage line altered the assaulting battalions had to advance twenty and twenty-five minutes before the "Zero" time in order to get across the intervening open country and up behind the barrage when it started. This was done under fire, and the 9/K.O.Y.L.I. advanced well and in fair formation to approximately fifty yards of the objective, where it occupied shell craters which were everywhere existing. The losses had been very heavy and the attack which followed was not made in sufficient strength to prevail. The position in the craters was held throughout the day, but under cover of darkness the troops were withdrawn to the road running from Flers village towards Les Boeufs. The casualties during the day had amounted to:*

*Officers: killed 4; wounded 6; missing 3.*

*Other Ranks: killed 43; wounded 180; missing 153.*

It can be seen from these passages that the 9<sup>th</sup>/KOYLI were particularly exposed, having to advance across ground they were unfamiliar with, without cover of a barrage and under fire. It seems they were decimated and took cover in shell holes just 50 yards from the enemy where they endured until being withdrawn as night fell.



John George Hodgson was 35 when he died on 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 1916 and is buried in the [VILLE-SUR-ANCRE COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION](#) in France, Grave C 16.<sup>(2)</sup>

Figure 3 - Ville-Sur-Ancre Cemetery



Figure 4 - John George Hodgson - Gravestone

Sources:

- (1) 1911 Census
- (2) Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
[http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty\\_details.aspx?casualty=570968](http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=570968)