

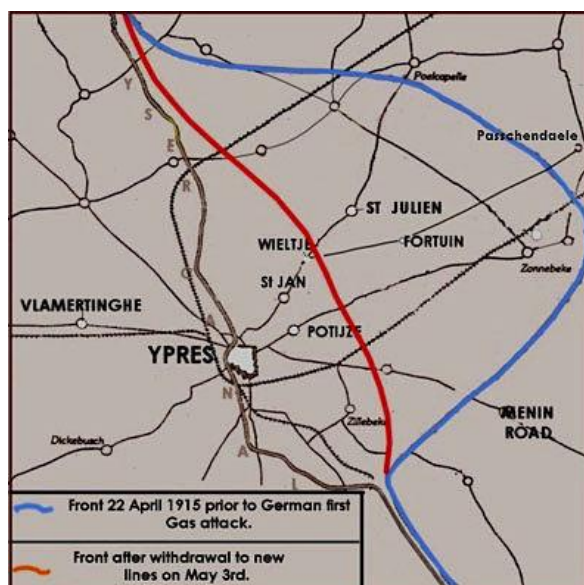
## SIDNEY BEST – Private 1785, 4<sup>th</sup> Green Howards, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1915, Age 19

Sidney Best was born in Welbury near Northallerton, Yorkshire in 1895 to Matthew and Mary Best. His father Matthew was the Station Master in Welbury and came from Melsonby and his Mother Mary was from Lancashire. Matthew had been married previously (to Jane) to whom he had a daughter, Sarah Jane in 1864 <sup>(5)</sup>.

The 1901 Census <sup>(1)</sup> shows Sidney as a 5 year old living with his parents, 4 brothers and two sisters:

Matthew Best	Head	61	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	Melsonby
Mary do	Wife	45	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	Lancashire Broad Green
Benny do	Son	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	Yorkshire Welbury
Harry do	Son	11	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Edith do	Daughter	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Arthur do	Son	7	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Albert J do	Son	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Henrietta do	Daughter	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do
Sidney do	Son	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	do	do

By 1911 <sup>(2)</sup> Sid was a 15 year old Blacksmith's apprentice in Brompton-on-Swale, working for John James Pennock (Blacksmith and Cartwright), with whom he was boarding. Sid enlisted before the war in Catterick in 1913 <sup>(4)</sup> when he was 17, and became a Private (number 1785) with 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment) – the Green Howards <sup>(3)</sup>.



On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1915 the battalion was serving near St Julien when the German's attacked. From noon until 4pm the Germans kept up a constant hail of shells. They followed this up with a release of chlorine gas. This wasn't the first time and the troops had improvised respirators "made of cotton-wool, handkerchiefs, mufflers and even towels soaked in soda or whatever moisture was available." The line held and frustrated all German attempts to take advantage of the gas <sup>(6)</sup>.

Figure 1 - Map of St Julien 1915 (source: Bill Danby)

A Sergeant Wilf Parker, also of the 4th Yorkshires, wrote to his friend in Northallerton <sup>(6)</sup> :-

"...The worst day we had was Sunday, when the Germans started to advance. At about 4.30 their artillery commenced to shell us and they didn't half send the shells flying. Then the Germans came out of their trenches and we let them have it. We kept firing away but then they sent their gas shells among us. Oh dear! the smell is fearful. The poor fellows in the thick of it are absolutely helpless. It gives one a horrible feeling and one hardly knows what he is doing. Just at this stage George Chapman got killed..."

By 8pm all was quiet again. The Battalion War Diary states that during this period 6 officers were wounded and one gassed. 34 other ranks were killed and 74 wounded. It's very likely that Sid was one of the wounded and died the following day, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1915 from wounds received. He was 19.

1914-15.		(A) Where decoration was earned.		(B) Present situation.	
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)	
(A) BEST	4 <sup>th</sup> York R	PR	1985	VICTIM	01/01/11 13
(B) Sidney				BRITISH	01/01/11 13
Action taken				15 STAR 01/12/15 36	
THEATRE OF WAR: (1) France				Dead	
QUALIFYING DATE: 18-4-15					
(S 24 46) W294-HP5990 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608				[OVER]	

Figure 3 - Sidney Best's Medal Card



Figure 2 - St Julien Church in Ruins

Sidney Best is buried in [BOULOGNE EASTERN CEMETERY](#) <sup>(4)</sup>, Grave Ref: VIII. B. 31.



Figure 4 - Boulogne Eastern Cemetery

Sources:

- (1) 1901 Census (RG13 PN4594; Folio: 14; Page: 5.)
- (2) 1911 Census (RG14 PN29476 RG78PN1711 RD542 SD2 ED2 SN27)
- (3) UK Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914 – 1919
- (4) Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
[http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty\\_details.aspx?casualty=48702](http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=48702)
- (5) 1881 Census
- (6) 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment (Bill Danby)  
<http://4thyorkshires.com/>