

James Edmond Pringle RAE



Born: 21st June 1892, Cape of Good Hope, S. Africa
Occupation: Classics student, Worcester College, Oxford
Enlisted: Commission Aug 1914 (Volunteer)
Unit: 7th Duke of Cornwall's LI
Rank/number: Major
Death: Killed in action, 30th November 1917
Detail: James was shot dead by a sniper as he tried to rally his company during a massive German counter attack at the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917. The British had made huge advances on the 20th when they launched a surprise attack against the Hindenburg Line using tanks, but the enemy struck back ten days later and James was killed.

Age at death: 25

Military info:

When war broke out James was in his third year reading classics at Worcester College, Oxford, and planning a career in the Indian Civil Service. Life was mapped out for him - but the war changed everything. Fired by patriotism, James dropped his studies and applied for a commission. On 12th September 1914 he became a 2nd-Lt in the 7th DCLI, part of 61st Brigade, 20th (Light) Division. They landed in France on 25th July 1915. The Battalion played a minor part in the Battle of Loos in September and spent the winter around Ypres, where James wrote a war poem that was later published. They arrived on the Somme on 25th July 1916. James was now a captain. The Battalion saw action on 22nd August at Guillemont and on the 29th they took over trenches surrounded by decaying bodies at Trones Wood. On 16th September they attacked Lesboeufs, taking the German first line at great cost. In October James became commander of A Company. The 7th DCLI took no part in the Battle of Arras, but were involved in a follow-up action on the Hindenburg Line in May and June. James was now a major. In August the Dukes fought in the Third Battle of Ypres, at Langemarck, Menin Road Ridge and Polygon Wood. On 20th November they fought at Cambrai when troops with 475 tanks breached the Hindenburg Line. The British failed to exploit the gains and on the 30th an enemy counter-attack overran the 7th DCLI and James was killed.

Grave/memorial:

James Rae's body was never found. He is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial.

Family info:

Father: James Edmond Rae, born Birkenhead, Cheshire in 1862. Banker.

Mother: Constance Eileen (maiden name unknown), born Cape Colony, South Africa in 1868. The couple married in Cape Colony in 1881 and had 5 children, one whom died. The family returned to UK and lived at Padstow.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com

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