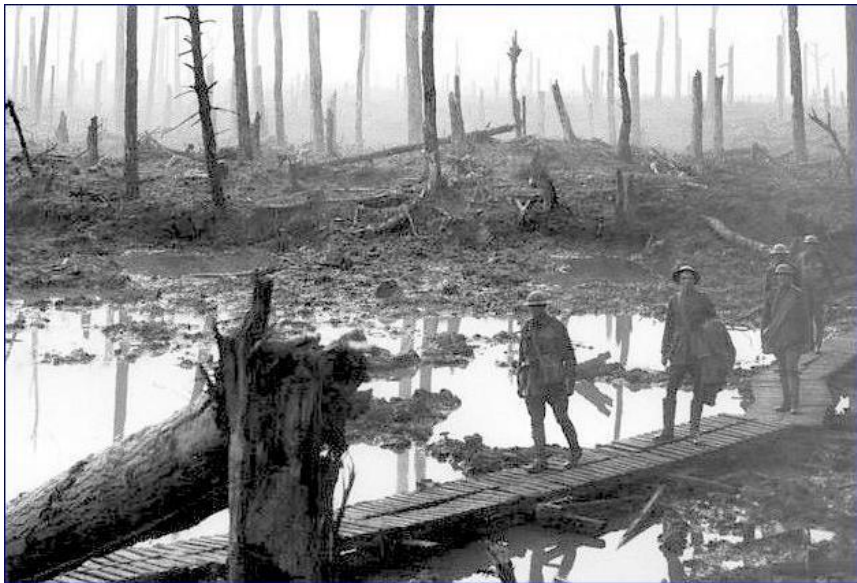


SEPTEMBER 1917

MENIN ROAD AND POLYGON WOOD

Whilst the Commander-in-Chief was often engaged in a political struggle in London to keep his position, Plumer ordered a 3-week lull to give his men a respite from their ordeal. Nevertheless, behind the lines there was constant activity, mock-ups and thorough rehearsals. The attacking infantry were now to attack, under cover of a creeping barrage, not in broad waves but in small groups with limited objectives. Local initiative was encouraged. Once a battalion had secured a position another fresh battalion was to come forward to relieve it for the next assault. This "leap frog" approach was always the hallmark of Plumer's tactics.

There were 2 main assaults this month. Joined by the ANZACS and troops from South Africa we achieved our objectives on the Menin Road Ridge over 5 days of bitter fighting (20-25 September). The same tactics brought similar limited success at Polygon Wood (26 September - 3 October). But casualties were high in both actions (21,000 and then 15,000). Our community lost 7 men in what Lloyd George called "blood and mud, blood and mud ...".



Sapper Thomas Morrell died aged 32 on the 6th fighting with the **75th company the Royal Engineers (97779)**. A bricklayer, he was the son of William and Sarah of Davenport Green and is interred at Bleuet Farm Cemetery, Ypres and remembered on the town memorial and at St John's Lindow.

The same memorial and the nearby parish church mark the passing, aged 25, of **Private George Chesters, 1st/8th Battalion Manchester's (303088)** killed in action on the 12th. His family lived in River Street, but in 1911 he was a boarder at 14 School Lane, Didsbury working as a domestic gardener. He is buried in Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

Private Robert Garner (1st/6th Cheshire's) aged 29 has no known grave, but is remembered at Tyne Cot, Wilmslow Methodist, St Bart's and the town memorial. Living in Stockport and working in a bleach works, his parent and siblings lived in Bourne Street. He was killed in action on the 20th.

The struggle for the Menin Road Ridge also took the life of another local man on the same day - **Private George Leigh Massey (7th Cheshire's 49322)**, aged 22. Born in Chelford he lived in Hawthorn Walk with his stepfather and stepmother. He had been an errand boy in 1911. Tyne Cot and our memorial bear his name.

The 20th was a dreadful day as Wilmslow lost its third young man on that day - **Private George Hazeldine (62314)** aged 26, of the **1st/6th Cheshire's**. Before the war he lived at 85 Brook Lane and worked as a paper stainer in a silk works in Macclesfield. He is commemorated at St John's Lindow and Tyne Cot.



Menin Road Ridge was to claim 2 more local fatalities. On the 24th, **Captain Thomas Somerville Beaumont** of the **2nd/8th Manchester's** was killed in action. He was the son of James and Emily of 10, The Firs and then "Baronald", but actually lived in France with his wife Blanche in Neuilly sur Seine working as an architect. A family grave in St Bart's bears his name, as do the adjacent church and civic memorial. He is buried at Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery.

The last to die this month was **Private Andrew Hobson** serving with the **1st/6th Cheshire's (50471)**. He died of his wounds aged 34 and was the husband of Constance of "Stapleton" Mount Pleasant in the town. They had 4 children. Born in Sheffield, his father Andrew and mother Kezia Ellen had 4 boys serving in the armed forces (brother George fought with the Canadians). Andrew was the manager of a wines and spirits company. He is buried at Godewaersvelde British Cemetery, the civic memorial and St Bart's also remember him.

It has never been recorded that Haig ever saw the appalling condition of the terrain in the Salient battles in which his men fought.

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