

Pte. James David Dallow
11th South Wales Borderers

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*Commemorated on Newbridge War Memorial as J. Dallow SWB
Commemorated on Celynen Collieries Roll of Honour*

Family

James David Dallow was born in 1895, the son of Charles and Margaret Dallow. The 1901 Census show six year old James to be the second of four children - Annie E Dallow (7) was born a year before him and he had younger siblings William C Dallow (4) and Mary S M Dallow (2).

Charles was originally from Hereford and Margaret from Crickhowell, all the children were born in Abercarn.

In 1911 the family were living at 42 Celynen Terrace in Newbridge. Charles and his two sons were all working as coal hewers in a local colliery whilst Mary was still at school. The family appear to have had a further son, Thomas, although the Census shows him as having died.

The family had a lodger called John Knight who also worked at the colliery but was a boiler stoker working above ground.

Military

James David Dallow enlisted in the army and was posted as Private 23247 to the 11th Battalion of the South Wales Borderers, part of the 115th Brigade of the 38th (Welsh) Division.

In December 1915 the 38th (Welsh) Division embarked for France, the 11th Battalion arriving at Le Havre on 4th December 1915.

The following is an extract from a factsheet issued by the South Wales Borderers Museum, Brecon

After spells in the Line at Givenchy in the spring of 1916 the Division moved to the River Ancre on 3rd July at the opening of the Battle of the Somme, and both battalions had their first real action in the attack on Mametz Wood. Here they had five days' hard fighting in a thick wood flanked by machine guns. It required skill and determination on the part of all ranks to turn the Germans out, and fine work was done with bomb and bayonet by the courage and initiative of junior leaders. The 10th Battalion lost 180 men and the 11th Battalion 220.

After an uneventful winter in the trenches the Welsh Division found itself attacking the Pilckem Ridge on 31st July 1917, the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres. The two leading Brigades were to capture as their three objectives the German line east of the Ypres Canal, the German second line on the Pilckem Ridge, and a further ridge east of Pilckem known as Iron Cross Ridge. The 115th Brigade was then to pass through, push forward another 700 yards to the Steenbeeke and secure crossings over that stream.

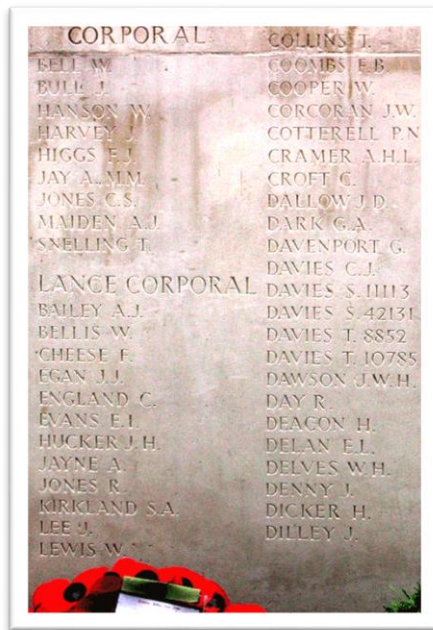
The attack started at 3.50 a.m. The first two objectives were taken up to time but there was hard fighting at Iron Cross, and when the 11th Battalion reached that area about 9 a.m. to pass through they came under machine gun fire from some still untaken pillboxes. In spite of this, the 11th completed the capture of the Iron Cross Ridge and swept down to the Steenbeeke, dealing with the pillboxes in a manner which showed their training and dash.

As an example, a machine gun nest was holding up the left. It was rushed and captured by a platoon, together with 50 prisoners. Another machine gun was causing heavy casualties at short range. Sergeant Ivor Rees led his platoon forward till he had worked round to the rear of the position and was within 20 yards of the gun. He rushed the post, shot one of the team, bayoneted another and silenced the gun. Then he bombed the adjacent pillbox, killed five of its garrison, and captured the rest, two officers and thirty men. For this gallant and dashing piece of leadership he received the Victoria Cross.

Newbridge War Memorial

As can be seen above, the 11th Battalion was engaged in furious fighting around Pilckem Ridge on 31st July 1917 and it was during this battle that James David Dallow was killed.

In common with many others, his body was never recovered, he is one of 54,408 casualties commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial



Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial

Another notable casualty of the attack on Pilckem Ridge that day was the Welsh language poet Ellis Humphrey Evans who took the bardic name 'Hedd Wyn'. His entry for the 1917 National Eisteddfod was posted from Fléchin, France on 15th July just as his unit, 15th Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, prepared for the major offensive at Passchendaele.

On 6 September 1917, the ceremony of Chairing of the Bard took place at the National Eisteddfod, held that year within Birkenhead Park, England. David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister - himself a Welsh-speaking Welshman - was present. After the adjudicators announced the entry submitted under the pseudonym Fleur de Lys was the winner, the trumpets were sounded for the author to identify themselves. After three such summons, Archdruid Dyfed solemnly announced the winner had been killed in action six weeks earlier. The empty chair was then draped in a black sheet. It was delivered to the parents of Evans in the same condition, "The festival in tears and the poet in his grave," as Archdruid Dyfed said. The festival is now referred to as "Eisteddfod y Gadair Ddu" ("The Eisteddfod of the Black Chair").

Sources

CWGC.org
Fact Sheet 11th South Wales Borderers (from SWB Museum)
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