

Pte H.W.Jeater – The Queen’s (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

Henry William Jeater was the son of Louisa Jeater and the late Henry Jeater of Institute Road. In 1912 he married Alice Amy Etheridge, daughter of Mary Etheridge and the late James Etheridge. Harry and Alice lived with Mary in Empire Cottages, Furlong Road and it was there that their son, also Henry William, was born. Later they moved to Tudor Cottage, also in Furlong Road.



Harry Jeater was a painter by trade, working with the family firm whose premises were on the Guildford Road, at what is now Penny Cottage. He played a very active part in village life. He sang in the church choir and the Westcott Choral Society. He played in the village football team and was a member of the side that won the Dorking & District League in 1914. He was also a member of the Westcott Voluntary Fire Brigade.

Harry enlisted in Dorking and joined his county regiment; the picture shows him, seated, with Alice’s brothers, George and Albert Etheridge. After basic training Harry was posted to the 1st Bn. Queen’s which served on the Western Front throughout the war. In December 1916 he wrote home, cheerfully describing the appalling conditions in the trenches ...*’alright for mudlarks, you can’t imagine what it is like, but it hasn’t made any difference to me. I feel quite well and that is a lot out here as the mud is awful & it has been very cold at times too, we are back having a rest now for 2 or 3 weeks & a clean up & catching our livestock; it is a game I can tell you, we are all alive and you can’t keep them off....’* Lice and vermin were a perpetual problem for troops serving in the front line.

As part of the 33rd Division, the Battalion took part in the campaign known as ‘Third Ypres’ which lasted from July to November 1917. Harry Jeater was killed in action on 25th September during the final day of what came to be known as the Battle of the Menin Road. The entries in the regimental diary show the desperate situation the Battalion faced that day: *‘07.30 hours - message received enemy had penetrated the front line... Lt Hughes reported front line practically wiped out by heavy minnies but B Coy holding out...C Coy ordered to be ready to counter-attack...practically impossible to get a Company through the barrage... no communication with Brigade HQ... reinforcements asked for by pigeon.’* Later the situation

improved. The Battalion became known as 'The Gallants' after this action and 'Menin Road' is one of the Regiment's accredited battle honours.

Harry Jeater is one of 35,000 men who have no known grave and who are commemorated on the memorial at Tyne Cot which is just one of four such memorials around the town of Ypres. The Tyne Cot cemetery holds the graves of 12,000 Commonwealth servicemen, of whom 8,369 are unidentified; it is the largest war cemetery in the world.

Harry is also remembered on the headstone of his grandparents, Henry and Emily Jeater, whose grave is in Westcott churchyard. The headstone also bears an inscription commemorating another grandson, William Henry Grinstead, who did not live in Westcott, but was killed in action in Palestine just two months later, in November 1917.

Alice's brother, Pte Albert Etheridge, shown on the right in the photograph, served in the Royal Sussex Regiment and died of wounds near Ypres, just three months before Harry was killed. He is also remembered on our memorial.