

Private James Taylor

Regimental number: 6109

8th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

born: unknown - died: 30 April 1916

Private James Taylor was born in Wellington Key, Northumberland and enlisted in The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) in Liverpool.¹ He joined the British Expeditionary Force in France on 27 October 1915.² He died just six months later near Bailleul, France.

In April 1916, the 8th Battalion of The Queen's Regiment was stationed near Dranoutre, Belgium.³ The Battalion's tour in the trenches between 27 - 29 April was generally quiet, with the exception of machine gun and rifle fire at night. However, the Battalion was on gas alert the whole time as the wind was generally from the east. Enemy deserters and prisoners of war reported the presence of gas in the German trenches. At 12.40 a.m. on 30 April there were rapid bursts of enemy machine gun fire and then at 12.45 a.m. "Gas was released in dense clouds and swept all over the Brigade front lasting until 2 a.m. Our machine guns swept the enemy parapet with the intention of piercing any gas cylinders."⁴ Enemy parties attempted, and at one point succeeded, in entering the trenches. They were repulsed with bomb attacks. The gas had passed over by 2 a.m. but the Battalion suffered 110 casualties, mainly because of the gas. "Very little warning was given of the arrival of gas as the enemy's machine gun fire successfully deafened the noise of egress from the pipes."⁵

James was likely injured in this gas attack because he died of gas poisoning on the 30 April at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.⁶ The effects of the gas attacks were also felt at the 1st CCCS, stationed near Bailleul,⁷ which was just about five miles from Dranoutre. James lost four comrades from his battalion in the few days at the end of April and beginning of May: Private Elvin Harry Davis, Private Harry Ernest Homer, Private Richard Westfield and Corporal William Osborn Bush. Most of his comrades had been poisoned by chlorine gas.

James was a Roman Catholic⁸ and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II. Row D, Grave 113).⁹ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.¹⁰

His next-of-kin was identified as Mrs A. Doswell, who was living at 86a Tanner St, Bermondsey S.E., London. Mrs Doswell was born Mary Anne Porter in about 1857 in Lambeth, London.¹¹ She was the daughter of Henry Porter and the former Elizabeth Taylor.¹² Mary Anne married James Henry Brigland in 1873¹³ and, following his death in 1887,¹⁴ married Albert Doswell in 1888.¹⁵ Although Mary Ann's mother was a Taylor, no connection to James Taylor has been found. However, there must have been a close connection for her to be identified as his next-of-kin. She was his sole legatee and received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.¹⁶

James was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁷

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- ¹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2015), entry for James Taylor
- ² "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2015), entry for James Taylor
- ³ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 August 2015), Regiment or Unit: Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment, Sub Unit: 8th Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary Dates: 1915 Aug 1 - 1916 Aug 31, Piece Description: Piece 2214/1-5: 72 Infantry Brigade: 8 Battalion Queen's (Royal West Surrey) (1915 Aug - 1918 Jan), Piece Number: 2214
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 76
- ⁷ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ⁸ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 76
- ⁹ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 28 August 2015), entry for Taylor, J., Service No: 6109
- ¹⁰ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- ¹¹ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2015), entry for Mary Ann Porter
- ¹² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2015), entry for Henry Porter, Registration district: Chelsea, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 229
- ¹³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2015), entry for James Henry Brigland, Registration district: Lambeth, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 535
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 September 2015), entry for James Henry Brigland, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 212
- ¹⁵ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2015), entry for Mary Ann Brigland, Parish: St John, Horselydown, Borough: Southwark, Register Type: Parish Register
- ¹⁶ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2015), entry for James Taylor
- ¹⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2015), entry for James Taylor