

2. Lieutenant David Robert Drummond, age 30

The First battle of Ypres

David was the second son of George Drummond whose family were the last private individuals to occupy Swaylands, Penshurst. He was married in 1907 to Hilda and lived in Chichester with three daughters. In 1911 the census records him working as a banker and living in Chelsea.

David had been in the army since joining the Black Watch in 1903, and was quickly given a commission one year later in the Scots Guards. As a lieutenant, he arrived in France in October 1914, where he was involved in the First Battle of Ypres. He died in action on November 3rd 1914, and was originally buried at the scene of the first battle of Ypres, but the site of the grave has been lost.

Ypres was the last major obstacle to the German advance on Boulogne-sur-Mer and Calais, and the Ypres campaign became the culmination of the Race to the Sea by each army. Both sides attacked until a major German offensive in mid-October forced the Allies onto the strategic defensive. Each side missed opportunities to obtain a decisive victory. The Germans in particular overestimated the numbers and strength of the Allied defences at Ypres and called off their last offensive too early.

The battle was significant for two reasons. It witnessed the destruction of the highly experienced and trained British regular army. Britain had to turn first to reserves and then eventually to conscription in 1916. It also completed the move to the trench warfare that would typify the conflict for the next three years. Mobile operations would not resume until 1918.

After David's death, the wife of a brother officer wrote to his widow:

“ One night there was a wounded man in the trench a little way off. They heard him moaning and Mr Drummond managed to get to him and give him some morphia. The poor man died in the night, his last hours painless owing to Mr Drummond's act.

Another day they passed a wounded man lying on the ground in the cold, waiting to be picked up. Mr Drummond took his Burberry, covered the man with it, and left it there. Considering what coats mean to them out there, it was a splendidly kind and noble action.”

David's death was described by his captain:

“Just a hurried line on the march to tell you about poor David; he was shot through the head by a sniper and thank god suffered no pain. We buried him that night. I got a parson to say a few words over his grave, and I put up a rough cross I cut out of wood with his name and regiment on it. We can ill spare him - one of the best officers I had and the most unselfish fellow I have met. I am simply miserable about him.