

William Emmett

William Emmett was born in Devon, probably at North Tawton, the son of William (from Zeal Monachorum) and Mary Ann (from North Tawton). In 1891 the family was living in Lee, where William senior was an agricultural labourer; William junior had three brothers and three sisters. He had left home by the time of the next census, when the family are in Church Cottages.

There the trail goes cold. There are so many William Emmetts from the Devon area, born at a similar time, none of whom I can be sure are 'our' man. Is he the coal trimmer on a ship in Southampton water in 1911? Is he the William Emmett who is serving with the 80th Battery Royal Field Artillery in India? Is he the William Emmett who marries Emily Biddlecombe in Romsey in 1914? (Edith, from Redlynch, appears to have been a servant for a Miss Backhouse in Bournemouth.) And where was he in 1901?

At least we have a clearer picture of his war record. He served with the 8th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade who in August 1917 were ordered to the front line to counter a German attack at Inverness Copse; the position was secured, but Emmett lost his life. There is an excellent account of the action on the Invision Zone site, including officers' accounts.

<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=80827>

“During the afternoon reinforcements of the 8th Bn. Rifle Brigade arrived, and after a conference, it was decided to post them south of the Menin Road, strengthen the line (and) offensive flank, and push forward posts into Inverness Copse while one platoon, being overcrowded, spread up north of the Menin Road. Later the 7th Bn. 60th and 7th Bn. Rifle Brigade came up to relieve all troops in this sector. I made myself responsible for the relief of all troops north of the Menin Road while O.C., 10th Bn. D.L.I. and O.C. 8th Bn. Rifle Brigade handed over all south of the Menin Road. My relief was complete by 3.30 a.m. on the 25th when I proceeded to Zillebeke Bund.”

Sergeant William Emmett died during the 3rd Battle of Ypres on 24th August, 1917. He has no known grave but is commemorated at Tyne Cot. His widow, Edith was his sole legatee and seems to have received £20 10/- as part of his effects.

Ann Laird - Rownhams February 2015