

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON
WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Douglas Aplin



Douglas and his cousin Evelyn Vera Aplin, who were briefly engaged after his last leave home in October/November 1917

Name: Douglas Aplin

Rank: Lance Corporal

Service Number: 11537

Regiment: 15th (Kings's) Hussars

Battalion/Unit number:

Date/year of Birth: 13th December 1895

Place of Birth: Durston, Somerset

Place of Residence: Stall Barton, Kingston, Nr. Taunton

Date of Death: 24th November 1917

Place of Death: Bournal Wood, near Cambrai

Burial/Memorial: Cambrai Louverval Memorial, Doignies Nord

Douglas Aplin was born on 13th December 1895, the son of George Aplin and Jane Bartlett who had been married in 1890 at Hardington Mandeville. Douglas was their eldest son, he had two older sisters Hilda (Hyld) and Annie and three brothers John, Edwin and Arthur.

Douglas's father, George, was a hotel Groom, and the family can be found in different places during the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses. George's final occupation is given as motor car driver. He died in 1947 in London. His wife Jane predeceased him in 1925.

In 1911 Douglas was 15 and employed as a Gardener's lad, boarding with the Lye family at Stall Barton, Kingston near Taunton. His sister Hyld was a kitchen maid with the Peto family in Dorset.

The following is an account by Neal Aplin, who has researched his relative and who has given permission for the above photograph to be used. Neal has also written an account of Douglas's war service including extracts from his diary, which he has made available to this project.

Douglas Aplin, service number 11537, joined the British Army late 1914, or early 1915. The exact details are not known. Douglas's Army records are not to be found, so were probably one of those destroyed by a German bombing raid during World War Two. Perhaps he was one of those young men who was caught up with the spirit of the time, joining the Army, believing it was going to be an adventure and all be over by Christmas!

[Taunton Deane enlistment records indicate that he served for 3 years 4 months in total indicating he could have enlisted in August 1914.]

He served with the 15th (The King's) Hussars in France as a Cavalry Soldier, and arrived in France during June 1915.

Douglas was promoted to Lance Corporal in 1917, and was put in charge of a machine gun team. He was involved with various battles during his service, notably, the Battle of Loos, the Battle of the Somme, and the Battle of Cambrai. Despite being a cavalry soldier, he spent time in the frontline trenches.

Douglas and his cousin Evelyn Vera Aplin (daughter of Edwin Aplin and Ellen Jane nee Samways) became very close and were briefly engaged after his last leave home in October/November 1917. (The above photograph was taken on that last

leave home.) However, Douglas was killed in action during the Battle of Bourslon Wood which was part of the Battle of Cambrai, on the 24th November 1917.

Unfortunately, like many soldiers of the First World War, Douglas has no known grave and is remembered with honour on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, France, which commemorates over 7,000 servicemen who died during the Battle of Cambrai.

Douglas wrote a diary of his time on active service, which has survived and together with letters that he wrote to his cousin, Evelyn, we can glimpse a vivid picture of his service life. The diaries are amazingly matter of fact, and they mirror the official war diaries of his unit.

It appears from combining the official accounts, his friend Harold Baker's letter to Evelyn and the citation relating to his friend Joseph Carter MM that he died on at about 4.30 pm on 24th November 1917 in the Battle of Bourslon Wood, manning the Hodgkiss machine gun of which he was in charge. It is likely that he died in action at the gun and his friend Joseph took over operating it. Joseph was killed the following day.

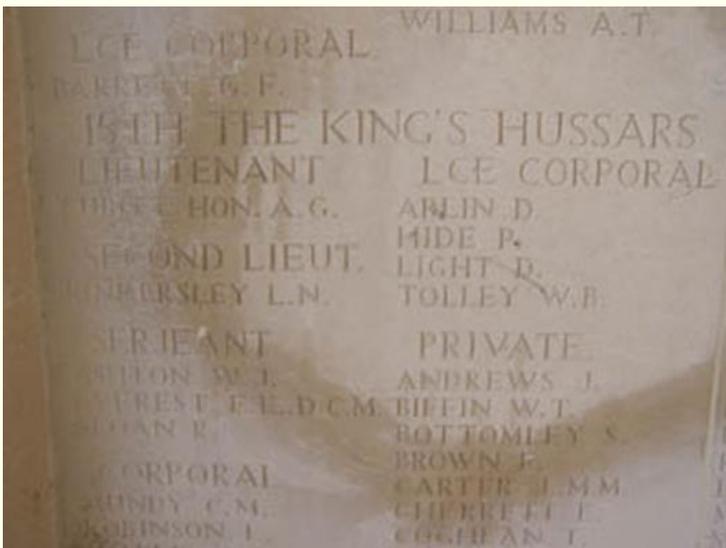
The picture here is Douglas Aplin's troop commanded by Lieutenant Alcock. Douglas is in the second row far left. Few of these men survived as the 15th Hussars suffered appalling losses during the Battle of Cambrai and afterwards.



A further piece of information has come to light which indicates that Douglas may have worked in Derbyshire before he enlisted. His name is commemorated on the Memorial Window of St. George's Church, Ticknall. He is the only one of the 19 men who died to have served in the 15th Hussars and the only person who had no connection with the parish.



The window is shown on the left, and a detailed picture showing Douglas Aplin's name at the bottom of the window on the right.



Douglas Aplin's memorial inscription near Cambrai, France