

Voices of War Life Story

George Boulger
1892 - 1915





Name: George Boulger

Other names:

Date of Birth: 1892

Place of birth: Melton Mowbray

Nationality: British

Date of Death: 25.09.1915

Place of death: Hooge, Belgium

Burial or memorials: Ypres Memorial, Belgium, Egerton Park War Memorial (above)

Service No: 1000

Unit(s): 1st/5th Leicestershire Regiment

Rank: Corporal

Medals and Awards: 1914-15 Star, British and Victory medals.

Education:

Clubs and Affiliations: Midland Railway, Working Men Club, United Reform Church



Life Story

George was born in 1892 in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. His father was John Boulger (a groom) born 1866 in Kildare in Ireland. He was working in Melton Mowbray when he met George's mother Kate (nee Gray) and they married in 1890 Melton. George had a number of siblings - John Willie, born in the 4th quarter of 1890, James Edward, born 1895, Thomas Herbert, born 1898 and Dora, born 1899. In the March 1901 census the family home is recorded as 2 Granby Terrace, Rutland Street, Melton Mowbray. By 1911 George was working as iron foundry worker and was living in the family home, now 16 Cottesmore Avenue in Melton (opposite).

Military Service:

In February 1910 George enlisted with the Territorial Force, a month before his 19th birthday. His medical examination recorded that he was 5 foot 4 inches in height, and he had a chest measurement of between 33½ and 35½ inches, good vision and physical condition and as a result was pronounced fit for the Territorial Force on the 5th

February 1910. He joined the Leicestershire Regiment as a Private, service number 1000, and was posted to the 5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment for training.



His military records show:

- Attended annual training at Buxton Camp on the 31/7/10 – 14/8/10.
- Attended annual training at High Tor Camp on the 6/8/11 – 21/8/11.
- Attended annual training at Aberystwyth Camp on the 4/8/12 – 18/8/12.
- Embodied service commenced on the 5/8/14.
- Appointed Lance Corporal on the 1/1/15.
- Appointed paid Lance Corporal at Sawbridgeworth on 20/2/15.
- Embarked from Southampton with the 1/5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment to join the British Expeditionary Force in France on 26/2/15.

George Landed at Le Havre on the 27th February 1915. He was promoted to Corporal in the field on the 23rd July after rescuing some wounded comrades from a shelled trench. He was wounded slightly after the pack was shot off his back on 11th September 1915, and he also sustained a wound to the knee. George was admitted to field hospital for treatment, being released the same day. There is an incorrect regimental entry for misconduct on the 15/9/15 on his records which has been noted. On the 12th September a local comrade - Russell Hubbard - was killed after a shell hit his trench, and his brother Archibald wrote home to their parents that George had helped him with his field burial, making a wreath for the grave. There were a number of local soldiers from Melton killed or injured that day, as the below article shows and the loss must have been hard on the remaining men of the unit.

Melton Mowbray Times & Vale of Belvoir Gazette
Friday September 24th 1915



MELTON AND THE WAR.” – MORE LOCAL TERRITORIAL CASUALTIES. – TWO MELTONIANS KILLED.

We regret that the ranks of our local Territorial's arriving at the front have been further reduced, and two more Meltonians have been killed, in addition to several wounded. One is Private Russell Hubbard, 141, Thorpe-road, Melton Mowbray. Deceased who was 22 years of age last June, was employed for about five years at the shoe factory, being subsequently engaged as shop porter at Messrs. Garner and Sons', ironmongers. When war was declared he had gone to Bridlington with the 5th Leicester's (Territorial's) for their annual fortnight's training, and went out to France with them last February. He was killed last Sunday week by a shell which also wounded several other Melton Territorial's. The news of his death was conveyed to his parents by the following letter:- *“Dear Mr. Hubbard. - It is with deepest regret that I write to tell you of your son's death. He was killed by a shell on Sunday mid-day, and died as brave a death as any soldier could. He was greatly respected by all the rest of the Company, and please accept the deepest sympathy from me and from them in your great loss. Yours Sincerely, F. E. Wynne, 2nd Lieut.”*

Deceased's eldest brother Pte. Archibald Hubbard, who is serving with the same regiment, wrote home as follows:- *“September 15th. Dear Mother and Dad, and sisters. - Just a few lines to say I received your parcel all right, and to thank you. I do not know how to write these few lines, but I am very sorry to say that we have lost poor old Russ. On Sunday we had a terrible day, but I am pleased*



to say he died nobly doing his duty like an Englishman. We buried him nicely at night behind the lines. Bill Roper one of the burial party, Corpl. Boulger, and myself went last night and trimmed it up a bit. We shall make a wreath of evergreens and put on it. The chaplain came up and read the service for us. Well, dear mother, I cannot write much more this time, as I feel about done up. May God watch over and protect you, and give you strength to stand this awful blow. It is a big blow to me, and I know it will be a bigger one to you. Kiss Regg and Lott for me, and accept same yourself. That is all this time, with love from your loving son. Arch. P.S. – We come out of the trenches on Tuesday night for six days.”

Private R. Lakey, son of Mr. Robert Lakey, 14, Chapel street, Melton Mowbray was also killed the same day. He served his apprenticeship as bookbinder at Mr. J. W. Warner’s, 11 years ago, then took a situation in Lincoln. After that he had various other engagements and when the war broke out was employed by Mr. Stacey, printer and bookbinder, Leicester. Deceased enlisted in the 2/5th Leicester’s (Territorial’s), and went out with the second draft from Luton. Last Friday his father received the following letter. – *“Dear Mr. Lakey. – It is with deepest regret that I write to tell you of your son’s death. He was killed by a shell on Sunday morning early, and died as brave a death as any soldier could. He was greatly respected by the rest of the company, and please accept the deepest sympathy from me and from them in your great loss. Yours sincerely. F. E. Wynne, 2nd Lieut.”* Deceased’s sister Mrs. J. W. Coulson, received the following letter from Sergt. Dobson. *“September 16th. Dear Madam. – Just a line to let you know the*



sad death of your brother Bob. It came as a big blow to us because the little time he had been with us he had been much liked by all and I am only expressing the feelings of No.6 Platoon in this letter. He got killed by a shell exploding near him, and death must have been instantaneous. Several of the company laid him to rest at the back of the line. I am sure while we are in this place his grave will be well looked after. Poor old Bob! I knew him before the war, and I was surprised when he joined us, but I can safely say he always did his duty, and was always very cheerful. Please accept my deepest sympathy. I expect all his personal belongings will be sent home. I remain, yours sincerely. H. Dobson."

Quartermaster-Sergt. W. Wade wrote as follows to deceased's brother:- *"Dear Sir. – I am returning your letter which is addressed to your brother Bob. I think you have most probably heard the sad news about him. I knew him all his life. He had not been with us many days, but he was a favourite with everyone. He will be missed amongst us all. He was in a dug-out and got it blown in with a shell, and he was buried. All the men sympathise with you in your loss, and please accept my sympathy. Yours sincerely. W. Wade."*

In addition to the above, several local Territorial's in the same company were wounded by shells about the same time. Pte. Frank Cooke of Melton, was wounded in the calf of one of his legs, Pte. Brown of Melton, was badly wounded in the shoulder and Pte. Leach of Melton, sustained a wound in the body one of his ribs being broken. Lance-Corpl. A. Birch, of Melton, had the drums of both ears burst, causing complete deafness, and Pte. Armstrong, of Sewstern was wounded in four places – one calf, both thighs, and a scratch at the back of the head.



Unit War Diary: 25 Sep-1915

TRENCHES. At 3.50 am bombardment of HOOGE. Enemy replied and also shelled A1 and 50. At 5.56 am straw which had been put out by night was lighted in front of 50. Smoke bombs were thrown from 49 and A1. This promptly drew fire. 50 and A1 were heavily shelled and 49 trench mortared. Artillery telephone communication lost but 3rd LINCOLNSHIRE Battery and 2nd DERBYSHIRE Howitzer fired over 50 and 49 and later 4th STAFFORDSHIRE Battery. About 7.15 am bombardment ended and the rest of the day was fairly quiet.

In the early hours of the 25th September, a loud bombardment of Hooge commenced, which resulted in heavy return fire from the German sector, as the above unit war diary shows. George was killed in this attack (trench map from that period shown opposite).

His personal items of a purse, thimble, gospel, hymn book, note book, and letters were returned to his mother after his death. The Melton Times reported the circumstances of his death:

Melton Mowbray Times & Vale of Belvoir Gazette

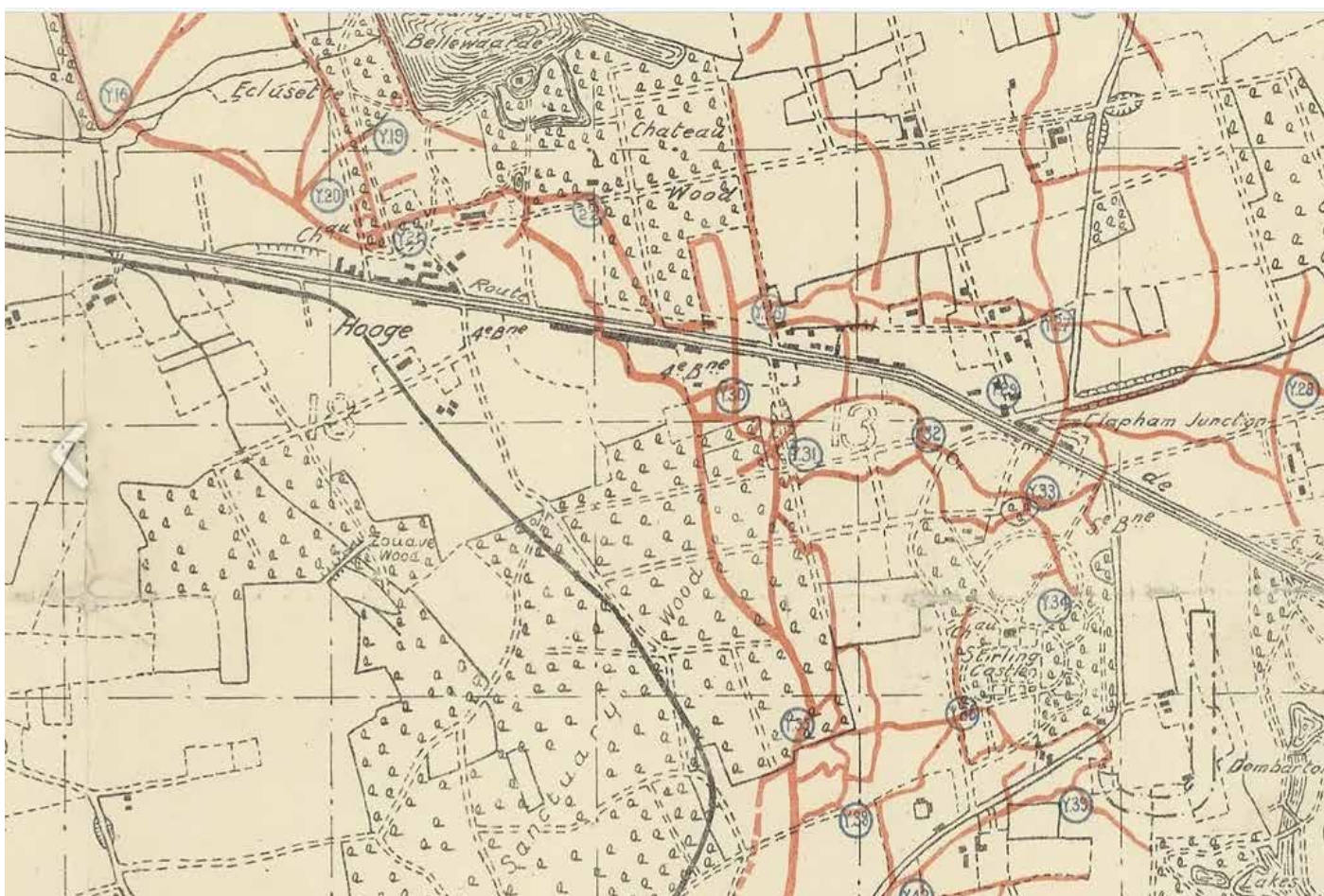
Friday October 1st 1915

“MELTON AND THE WAR.” – MORE MELTON TERRITORIAL CASUALTIES:

Mrs. Ruddle, of Fernie-avenue, Melton Mowbray, has received a letter from her husband, in which he states that last Sunday he



assisted to bury Corpl. George Boulger, of the 5th Leicestershire (T.F.) Regiment, who was killed the previous day. Corpl. Boulger was a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Boulger, 16, Cottesmore Avenue, and has been a member of the local Territorial's for several years, in fact he would have completed his time in November, although it was his intention to sign on again. As recently as a month ago he came home on six days furlough. In recognition of his gallantry on the occasion when the trench was blown up by a mine he was recently promoted to Corporal. He also took part in an engagement on the 11th September, when his kit was shot off his back, and he was slightly injured in the knee. His parents received an official intimation of this mishap only yesterday, the notice stating that



Corpl. G. Boulger was wounded in action on September 11th and returned to duty the same day. Deceased, who was 23 years of age was employed on the Midland Railway, and was much respected by all who knew him. He was well known in local football circles. Another Melton Territorial, Pte. R. Bowett, was somewhat severely wounded yesterday week in the leg and both arms with shrapnel, and is now in hospital at Harrogate, Yorks. Pte. Bowett went out with a draft from Luton three months ago. He formerly worked for Mr. Eli Abbott, shoemaker, King-street, Melton.



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