

Private. James Stephen



**4th Battalion
Gordon Highlanders**

Service no: 1682

16th February, 1916

Age: 17

REMEMBERING

SETTING THE SCENE

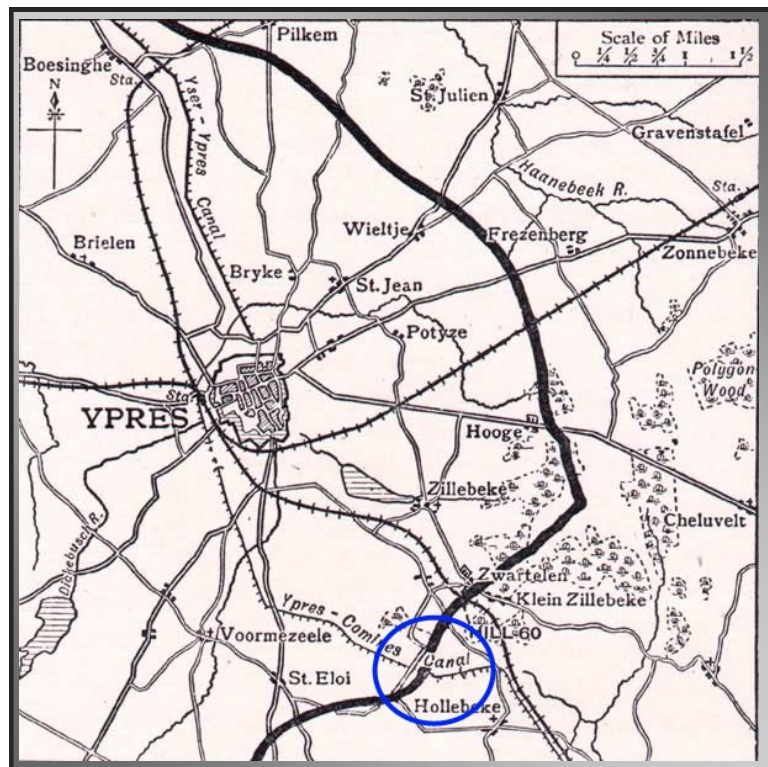


**GORDON HIGHLANDERS
REGIMENTAL BADGE**

Background

James Cruickshank Stephen was the son of George and Eliza Ann Stephen, of 18, Elmfield Avenue, Aberdeen. Pte. Stephen (service number 1682) served with the 1st/4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders, 3rd Division.

James arrived on the Western Front on 1st December 1915. The 1/4th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders was based at Reninghelst near Ypres and during January, and possibly the biggest problem that James then faced was the bitter weather. At the beginning of February the Gordons occupied the front line south of Hill 60, on the banks of the Ypres – Comines canal. They had some casualties from occasional artillery shells and persistent snipers but the Germans were planning to liven things up even more in this sector.



MAP OF YPRES SHOWING THE 'BLUFF'

Actions on the 'Bluff'

14th to 15th February 1916



THE 'BLUFF' A SPOIL HEAP ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE YPRES-COMINES CANAL

On the 12th February, the 1/4th Gordons left the front line for rest and two days later the Germans began to bombard the British positions in that area. On the 14th their infantry attacked the point where the Ypres-Comines canal cut through the trench lines. Of interest to the Germans was the vantage point occupied by the British on the northern side of the canal. 'The Bluff' as it was known to the British, was largely the spoil heap thrown up during the excavation of the canal. The Germans coveted this position as it would give them unrestricted views to Hill 60, and the rear areas of the Salient, making it even more difficult for the British to hold onto Ypres. Before the infantry attacked, the Germans detonated three small mines. The stunned and beleaguered soldiers of the 3rd British Division found it difficult to get help as all field telephone lines were cut. However, soldiers from the reserve units (including the 1/4th Gordon Highlanders) were rushed forward and in bitter cold and almost complete darkness, they attempted (and failed) to bomb (with grenades) the Germans from 'the Bluff'.

IN MEMORIUM

Less than 48 hours after the German attack on the 3rd Division positions, James Stephen died of wounds at the Base hospital at Etaples (near Boulogne).

Etaples Military Cemetery



ETAPLES MILITARY CEMETERY, NEAR BOULOGNE

During the First World War, the area around Etaples was the scene of immense concentrations of Commonwealth reinforcement camps and hospitals. It was remote from attack and accessible by railway from both the northern and southern battlefields.

The Etaples Military Cemetery contains 10,771 Commonwealth burials of the First World War including Private James Stephen.

On James's grave there is the inscription 'His Memory Endureth For Ever the Unity of God'. Families composed and paid for such inscriptions and this one would have cost his family approximately 2 days pay.



GRAVE OF PRIVATE JAMES STEPHEN

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
STEPHEN James	Gord. Highrs	Pte	1682/4
	— " —	— " —	— " —

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	G/101 B2	236	D.O.W. 16.2.16.
BRITISH	du	du	
15 STAR	G/1 B. (7)	525	
Theatre of War first served in	(1) France		Regt. No. amended Auth Lin 8 G/1 BH
Date of entry therein	1-12-15.		

K. 1380.

Correspondence.

Address.