

devonshire cemetery

recommended poem to read
here: "before action" by
william noel hodgson

overview

At the end of the first day of the Battle of the Somme over 160 of men of the 9th and 8th Devonshire Regiment were retrieved from where they had fallen in action in No-Mans-Land and the German positions. They were carried back to the British Front Line trench position, and were buried in a section of this trench near a small wood called Mansell Copse.

The graves were left in this position when the cemeteries were rebuilt after the war. 163 graves are now contained in the cemetery.

Lieutenant William Noel Hodgson, MC (grave ref. A3)

Two days before going into action on 1st July 1916 with the 9th Devons, Lieutenant William Noel Hodgson wrote a poem called "**Before Action**". It makes very poignant reading as Hodgson did not survive to see the end of the day. He was killed aged 23 and was one of the Devons' bodies brought in that night from where he fell in action.



Captain Duncan Lenox Martin (grave ref. A1)

As the preparations for the Battle of the Somme offensive were progressing, Captain Martin, commander of "A" company, grew increasingly concerned about the known location of a German machine gun in the French civilian cemetery on the southern outskirts of Mametz village.

This machine gun was opposite the British Front Line from where the Devons were to make their advance. Captain Martin was aware that the German machine gunners would have a clear view of his men when they began the attack across the 400 yards of No-Mans-Land toward the German Front Line. He went on leave before the battle and made a plasticine model, examining the field of fire that the machine gun would have from the cemetery.

On the morning of 1st July Captain Martin was one of the many Devons officers to be killed by the ferocious German machine gun fire as he advanced across the open valley towards the German line and Mametz village.

