



Reuben Hughes

James Hughes (a coach painter) married Elvina Nelson in May 1873 in East London. After the birth of their first two daughters, Elvina (Jr) and Elizabeth, the small family moved to Bow, where seven more children were born. By 1891 the oldest daughter was working as a confectioner's packer and bringing money into the family. Her younger brothers and sisters were at school. It appears that Daisy, the last child born, died in 1894 aged 4. By 1901, the family are living at 32 Nottingham Road, Isleworth. Florence (22) is now a domestic cleaner and Lillian (17) works as a box labourer at Pears. The 1911 Census tells us that the parents and four remaining offspring - the older children living in rooms locally- now live at 66 Castle Road. Our future soldier is working as a counter man, George is an assistant powder maker and Albert at 15 is a junior clerk.

Reuben would have been about 28 when he signed up to fight for his country. He enlisted on 11th December 1915 at Eastborne where he had been working as a waiter, possibly at one of the sea-side hotels. His enlistment document records his home address now, as 48 Loring Road, Isleworth. Reuben was mobilised for war on 22nd March 1916 at Hounslow. He served with the Leicestershire Regiment (Reg.No. 6044) and then on 7th July 1916 transferred to the 10th Battalion Royal West Kent Regiment (G/18025).

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette (15-22ndSep'16) is known for the first tank battle in history. It would also be the first time Reuben would have fought with his new battalion. The attack was launched along a 12 Km front and was preceded by a massive artillery bombardment. Reuben would have faced a new tactical innovation - 'a creeping artillery barrage' which resulted in thousands of shells slowly 'raking through' the enemy lines, advancing 100 yards at a time. The infantry would closely follow the barrage in order to cross No Man's Land before the enemy could emerge from their trenches and fire at them. The relentless noise and danger of being exposed to gunfire, the German shells, the rain and the mud must have been intolerable. Reuben might well have felt shell shocked. The battle failed to break the German lines, but Reuben survived. He would not be so fortunate in the next one



17th September 1916 Flers-Courcelette
Courtesy of National Army Museum

Reuben died at The Battle of Transloy Ridges (1-18th Oct) a few weeks after Courcelette. The purpose of this battle was to press forward, pushing the enemy back in order to gain a 'front line' on higher ground. This battle was fought in freezing weather, heavy clinging Somme mud, rain, mist and a flooded battlefield. Reuben was reported as missing in the field on 9th Oct. and then recorded as Killed in Action on the same date. He is buried at Warlencourt British Cemetery. He is also remembered on the memorial in St John's Church in Isleworth. The words inscribed on his Warlencourt headstone say:-

Peace Perfect Peace