



A Funeral Service for

Private William James Meager
16th Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment
Killed on 18 August 1917

And

Two Unknown Soldiers of Unknown Regiments

CWGC Poelcapelle British Cemetery, Belgium

Wednesday 27 September 2023 at 10:30 hours

Service Conducted by
The Reverend Paul Collins CF
3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

Private William James Meager

William Meager was born in Bloomsbury, North London on 19 May 1879. He was the eldest of 8 children. In 1901 the family moved to 11 Beamish Road, Lower Edmonton. William's occupation prior to joining the army is described simply as a 'porter' employed by the local Council. On 29 July 1915 at 37 years of age and a single man, William enlisted for the duration of the war at the Area Recruiting Office in Tottenham.

Military Service – On 1 July 1915, Private Meager reported to Mill Hill Barracks, the depot of the Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) and was posted to B Company of the Regiment's 4th Battalion.

He then undertook a period of recruit training, followed by a course that qualified him as a Machine Gunner. Following that, he was posted to the Western Front on 11 May 1916. William fought in the Battle of the Somme until he was wounded on 6 July 1916 and was hospitalised in the UK. He returned to the Western Front on 20 May 1917 and, a few weeks later, was transferred to the 16th (Service) Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment (Public Schools). He was killed in action on 18 August 1917 at the Battle of Langemarck.

William Meager had served for 2 years and 51 days. His brother, Henry Albert Meager also of the 4th Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment, was killed in action on 20 September 1915 just 51 days after William had joined the army.

Honours and awards – William was awarded the British War Medal, which was delivered into the hands of his sister Mrs Ellen Burton on 9 April 1920, and the Victory Medal again delivered into the hands of his sister Mrs Ellen Burton on 12 February 1921.

16th (Service) Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment (Public Schools)

The 16th Middlesex was a Kitchener 'Pals' Battalion formed in August 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army. The recruits to the new battalion came exclusively from former public schoolboys.

However, by the time William Meager was posted to the battalion on 8 July 1917, the original make up had changed completely with most of the original members having been persuaded to take commissions in an expanding army that was desperate for officers. The 16th Middlesex retained its 'Public Schools' title but by now its ranks were filled with ordinary volunteers and later conscripts.

The battalion was practically wiped out on the first day of the Battle of the Somme and was quickly brought up to strength again, but the 16th Battalion never recovered from further continuous hard fighting with the accompanying high casualty rates. The Public Schools Battalion was disbanded before the end of the war in February 1918.

Welcome

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
And the love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you all.

We are gathered here today in this place of remembrance to honour our fallen in conflicts past.

Today we remember with thanksgiving these brave men whom, alongside so many others, answered the call of their country, served with honour, and gave their lives in the service of their nation.

We will shortly commit their bodies to be buried. In so doing let us commit ourselves anew to remember their courage. For by so doing we honour their memory, and we reflect upon that sacrifice.

Let us offer ourselves also to God's service, that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven and that His kingdom of justice and peace be established everywhere.

Bidding Prayer

Let us recall the presence of God, the Father of all mankind, maker and sustainer of all that is, whose purposes are good, whose love is never withheld and whose mercy never passes away. We call to mind His faithfulness in times of darkness and despair.

We remember before Him our brothers and sisters whose names are known only to God, and all who have served in the Armed Forces of our nation; who counted service to others greater than service of self, and who gave their lives in battle.

Merciful Father,
hear our prayers and comfort us;
renew our trust in your Son
whom you raised from the dead;
strengthen our faith
that all who have died in the love of Christ
will share in His resurrection;
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Scripture Reading

Ecclesiastes 3, 1 – 8 (King James Version)

Read by Mr Axel Lange, British Embassy, Brussels

To everything there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up:
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance:
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones
together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away:
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak:
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

Scripture Reading

John 14, 1 – 6 (King James Version)

Let not your heart be troubled:

ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Address

The Reverend Paul Collins CF

Since They Have Died

by May Wedderburn

Read by Mrs Catherine Meager, great niece of Pte Meager

Since they have died to give us gentleness,
And hearts kind with contentment and quiet mirth,
Let us who live give also happiness
And love, that's born of pity, to the earth.

For, I have thought, some day they may lie sleeping
Forgetting all the weariness and pain,
And smile to think their world is in our keeping,
And laughter come back to the earth again.

Interment

Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Our days are like the grass;
we flourish like a flower of the field
when the wind goes over it; it is gone
and its place will know it no more.
But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures
for ever and ever...

We have entrusted these three men into the hands of God. We therefore commit their bodies to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust having our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father, and in the victory of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried and rose again for us, and is alive and reigns for evermore.

Amen

Volley of Shots

The Exhortation

Read by Corporal Trevor Francis
3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

We will remember them.

The Last Post

Silence

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

Read by Corporal Trevor Francis

The 3rd Battalion, Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

When you go home tell them of us and say:

"For your tomorrow, we gave our today".

The Laying of the Wreaths

Prayers

Almighty God, protect all who serve in the Forces of The King; strengthen us in danger and temptation, give us courage and loyalty, that we may remain true to the highest traditions of our profession; and keep us steadfast when faced with the perils of action in war; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Almighty God, who has revealed your only Son as the resurrection and the life; raise us, we pray, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness that, when we depart from this life, we may rest in Him, and at the last may receive the blessing; Well done good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord. Grant this, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our mediator and redeemer.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever.
Amen

Regimental Collect of The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own)

Read by Major (Retd) Derrick Harwood MBE TD
Queen's Regimental Association, Middlesex Branch

O everliving God, by whose only grace we are able to say,
blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, grant to us thy
servants of The Middlesex Regiment that, ever remembering
the valour of those who gave us victory, we may endure
hardness and be faithful unto death, as good soldiers of Him
who laid down His life for us, our saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

Support us, O Lord,
all the day long of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening falls,
the busy world is hushed,
the fever of life is over and our work is done.
Then, Lord, in Your mercy grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at last;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
rest upon you and remain with you
and all those you love and for whom you pray,
this day and always.

Amen

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Poelcapelle British Cemetery was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and several smaller cemeteries. There are over 7,400 Commonwealth service personnel of the First World War buried in the cemetery, of whom more than 6,000 remain unidentified. The three casualties being laid to rest today, including Private William James Meager, were recovered from these former battlefields.



ARMY

The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

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