



The Loos battlefield as it looks today - the 1st Division (in which William Glead was serving) attacked from bottom left to right across this image.

bogged down in attritional warfare for minor gains.

In all, 7,766 British troops died during the Battle of Loos, 459 of them serving in the 10th Battalion with William. He has no known grave but is commemorated on the Loos Memorial. He left his worldly goods to his sister, Emily, who had married Charles Davis, a carpenter from Gloucester, in 1901 and who had two young daughters.

However, the name of Glead continued to feature in village life, as William's older brother, Walter, a farmer, was also the local pig killer, "a tall upright man" who "would have a pint of cider or a cup of cocoa" when the job was done, before collecting his payment and cycling home. As well as playing cricket and bell-ringing, he held the position of sexton in the church and served on what was then Westbury-on-Severn Urban District Council.

His great grandson, who has recently been reading through what remains of Walter's papers, writes that although he was uneducated, he was a deep thinker who discovered books and had "a huge depth of knowledge, of the ancient classics, modern science, religion and so much more." He died in 1953, but by this time his son (and William's nephew) Edmund, was also active in village life, serving on both the Parish Council and the Management Committee of the newly completed Parish Hall, becoming Chairman in 1957. A true Hall volunteer, he and his wife, Margaret agreed to become Joint Treasurers when no one else could be prevailed upon in 1964.

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Westbury Remembers - Part 6

Battle of Loos—William Glead

Written by Di Landon
and sponsored by

Westbury-on-Severn Parish Council



William Glead was born in January 1876, and baptised at Westbury Church on 13th February. He was the fifth child of Samuel and Elizabeth Glead, who lived near the church. Samuel, who had also been born in the village was described by some census enumerators as a cordwainer (a maker of fine soft leather shoes) and by others, less flatteringly, as a bootmaker.



Westbury-on-Severn in 1904

William and his older brothers, Walter and James and younger brother, Harry all attended Westbury School. 'Willey Glead' is mentioned in a Parish Magazine of 1889, when he was 13 years old, as one of Westbury's young cricketers, playing alongside his brother, Walter, in the 'Singles v Marrieds' match.

When William was old enough, he

started work as a 'letter carrier' and 'lived in' at the Post Office with the postmistress, Emma Wilce, who was a 58 year old widow. He must have been kept busy as it appears that at that time incoming letters arrived by 'footpost' through Newnham twice every morning and those going out were dispatched at 9.15am and 6.15pm each evening, with just one post on Sundays. Mrs Wilce died in 1901 and William

then moved back home with his parents and older sister, Emily, who was a dressmaker and had been appointed as an 'industrial trainer' at Westbury's workhouse in 1889. In 1906, still a postman, he was given the round from Westbury-on-Severn to Bollow. In his spare time, together with his older brother, Walter, he was a bellringer at the church and in 1901

they were two of the six men who rang a muffled peal of bells on the death of Queen Victoria. He is commemorated, with the other bellringers who died in the war, on a plaque in the church tower.

William was 38 years old, and at the top of the army's permitted age range, when war broke out, and understandably he did not enlist straight away, perhaps thinking, like many others, that it would be 'over by Christmas'. But in November 1914 his father died, and having spent what would be his last Christmas at home, on 28th December 1914, William enlisted as a private in the 10th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. His father had left his effects valued at £144 to William's brother, Walter, who was now a farmer at Six Bells and was married with three children.

When William joined up, his battalion was billeted in Cheltenham but in April 1915 they moved to Salisbury Plain for training. Sadly, by June, William's mother had also died, and in August, he and his battalion left for France.

The German Army had remained on the defensive on the Western Front since late 1914, but troops had also been



First World War soldiers training on Salisbury Plain

moved away for offensive operations against Russia in the East. The German intention was to hold large areas of northern France and Belgium until they had won on the Eastern Front. During the spring of 1915, the Allies carried out various offensives against the German positions, which by this time were well-consolidated and increasingly difficult to breach. As additional troops became available during the summer, the British took over the front as far south as the Somme from the French, while the Germans spent the summer strengthening their trench system.

As the summer drew to a close, both the British and French armies were stronger in number than they had been in the spring, even though precious troops and munitions were now being consumed in Gallipoli and elsewhere. A large-scale, two-pronged offensive was planned, although there was some disagreement between the French and English generals as to where and when this should take place.

The Battle of Loos, as it is now called, started on 25th September 1915 and took place on ground not of the

Allies' choosing, and before sufficient stocks of ammunition and heavy artillery had arrived. At 3am, with the wind slowing and shifting to the South, Haig gave the order for the release of poison gas at 5.50am – the first time this had been used by the British Army. The attack was timed for forty minutes later and William's battalion was in the 1st Division, which was to lead the attack. However this was delayed when the gas drifted back into the British trenches, causing casualties. William's brigade was not as severely affected as some others



Field Marshal Douglas Haig

and his battalion apparently advanced through all their objectives despite heavy casualties. Sadly, William was one of those casualties - killed in action on Saturday 25th September, at the age of 39 years.

The first day of the battle had been successful and saw a breakthrough into the enemy positions near Loos and Hulluch. After this initial success things started to go wrong, mainly because the reserves were held too far from the battle front to be able to exploit this success. The battle continued for over three weeks but succeeding days saw the troops



British infantry advancing through gas at the Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915