

**HOLLAND, WILLIAM (Billy) – 10<sup>th</sup> February 1916 aged 27**

**12027: Corporal, 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment**



Photograph is taken from the Gainsborough News

Billy, a bachelor, was the son of Charles (a farm labourer from Scotter) and Sarah (nee Foster of Walkerith) Holland. He was born on 23rd December 1888 in Scotterthorpe.

His step sister was Sarah Elizabeth Foster; brother James and sister Gertrude died in infancy before he was born. Three older sisters were Olive, Annie and Theresa and Charlie was his younger brother.

Their father moved his family to live on High Street and later Sands Lane.

In 1911 Billy was employed in the village as a farm labourer, but when war broke out he was living at 40, Ravensworth Road, Attercliffe, working as a driller in Sheffield. There he enlisted on 3rd September 1914 and was described as 5 foot 5 inches tall, of pale complexion with blue eyes and brown hair. His religion was Church of England and his parents by then were living at Sand Road, Scotter.

The 8th was a Service Battalion formed at Pontefract in September 1914 and the next month became attached to 70th Brigade, 23rd Division. They were sent to Frensham Camp in Surrey but it was not until October that some old uniforms became available for the soldiers along with 100 obsolete rifles per battalion suitable for drill purposes only.

The next month each battalion received just 8 modern rifles, such was the lack of equipment caused by the overwhelming response to Kitchener's call to arms. The brigade moved to Aldershot in December where they finally got their uniforms. It was June 1915 before modern rifles were issued and proper training began.

On 28th August the Brigade embarked for France and landed at Boulogne on their way to rest camp at Ostrohove.

In September the 23rd Division was attached to III Corps of the new 1st New Army and moved up to the front where his brigade took over trenches just south of Armentieres. On 24th and 25th September the Division took part in the Battle of Loos and there the 8th Battalion to part in their first battle. They later rested at the rear of the line and moved back to the front in January 1916.

The Gainsborough News reported:-

*'On 10th of February, about 4.20, he was out on patrol with an officer and two men, when he was shot in the stomach and died some two hours afterwards.'*

His family was later sent his Soldiers Small Book which has a bullet hole going through it.

A card commemorating him by his parents says:-

*'A devoted son, a faithful friend,  
One of the best that God could lend;  
He bravely answered duty's call,  
His life he gave for one and all.  
But the unknown grave is the bitterest blow  
None but an aching heart can know.'*

On the anniversary of his death a memoriam was placed in the Gainsborough News:-

*'In affectionate remembrance*

*We loved him, ah! no tongue can tell,  
How much we loved him and how well,  
God loved him too, and thought it best,  
To take him to His heavenly rest.*

*'From his ever loving Father, Mother, Sisters and Brother'*

A year later the following was printed in the same newspaper:-

*'In loving memory  
Death divides, but memory clings.*

*From his ever loving Father, Mother, Sisters and Brother (in France)'*

His nephew Albert 'Bill' Birkett was killed in the Second World War and is also commemorated on the village memorial. Billy's brother, Charlie, served in the Great War and is listed on the West face of the memorial.

Corporal William Holland is buried at the Sailly-sur-la-Lys Canadian Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. PLOT – II. F. 140.



**Photograph courtesy of Peter Bradshaw.**