

## Graham Barclay Harris – World War 1 Service

born 8 September 1888 at Daisybank, Marton.  
died 11 August 1917 Killed in action in Belgium.

Graham had spent a lot of time on the farm his Uncle Percy Graham managed in the Gisborne district. This led to him becoming a farmer. At some stage he spent a year with the Fielding Rifles.

When he enlisted in the army in July 1916 his employer was a Mr. Mossman and Graham had been a Station Hand at Wairengaahuri (This should possibly be spelt Waerengaokuri which is just out of Gisborne). He was shipped overseas in November 1916 disembarking in Devonport (U.K.) and was based at camp Sling, Salisbury, England. At the time he was in the 4th Infantry Brigade and for a period of time was based at Codford. On 28 May 1917 his regimental number was 32176 and he was posted to 12th company, Canterbury Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the NZ Expeditionary Force who were sent to fight in Flanders on the French Belgian Boarder.

He would have taken part in The Battle of Messines in which the Allies had tunnelled under the German lines and laid large numbers of mines beneath the German front line in 19 different places. These were set off at 3.10am on 7th June 1917. Massive explosions took place which dazed the Germans so successfully that the ridge of Messines was taken within hours. The next battle he would have been involved in was called "The Third Battle of Ypres" This commenced on the 31st July 1917 in which the Allies were keen to push the Germans out of the Ypres Salient after their success on the Messines Ridge.

On 26/27 July the Battalion was in action near Pont Rouge to lead the enemy to believe they were going to cross the River Lys. In the process of doing this they encountered two strong enemy patrols who they drove off killing 14 Germans while not suffering any casualties themselves. On the 27th the first Brigade attacked and captured La Basse Ville but were driven off by a counter attack. Again on 31st July a completely successful attack was made against the Village. The weather was wet, trenches muddy and sickness was rife, typical of the whole Ypres Salient. The enemies uneasiness made him shell the whole area all hours day and night especially La Basse Ville with high explosive and gas shells. On the nights of 5/6 August the 3rd Canterbury Battalion relieved the 3rd Auckland Battalion just outside La Basse Ville. No offensive action was being taken at the time and the front in this area was starting to quiet down. Graham was killed in action on the 11th August probably by German shelling.

Even though the Allies eventually gained their objectives in mid-November the battle could only be described as hellish. Graham is buried in the London Rifle Brigade Cemetery, Ploegsteert, West Flanders, Belgium which is very close to where he died. This is a very quiet and peaceful place today with very little evidence other than War Cemeteries of a devastating war ever having taken place.

Ploegsteert is a village in the province of West Flanders, Belgium, very close to the French Belgian border. The cemetery is located about 600 metres south of the village on the west side of the main road from Ypres to Messines to Armentieres. It's quite possible that at the time of writing this (1996) the only other relative to visit his grave was his brother in law Robert who was part of the occupation forces at the end of the war.

Let's never forget the sacrifice men like Graham made, travelling to the far side of the world to fight and be willing to sacrifice their lives in the service of their country to secure our freedom and that of many others.

Terry Logan