Second Lieutenant Docksey Stone

Docksey owes his unusual Christian name to his grandmother, Elizabeth Docksey. who married James Stone, at Marston-on-Dove, Derbyshire on 7th May 1844.[i] The 1851 census records that James and Elizabeth had four children, William Docksey Stone being the youngest, born in 1850 and baptised on 13th August 1850, at Etwall, Derbyshire.[ii]

Figure 1: St Mary's Church, Bleasby, Nottinghamshire

William and his brother James set up a grocery business, J & W D Stone, in Eldon Street, Tuxford, Nottinghamshire (see picture bottom left). In 1881, William, aged 30 years, was still single and lodging at the Newcastle Arms, Market Place, in Tuxford.
Five years later, on 30th October 1886, he married Ann Scott at St Mary's Church, Bleasby, Nottinghamshire.[iii]

Figure 2: J and W D Stone, grocers

By 1891 William, a family man with two daughters, Elizabeth and Anne, had moved to Eldon Street in Tuxford. The business must have been flourishing as William was able to employ two domestic servants to assist Ann in running the household.

A year later, Docksey Stone, was born on 6th March 1892.[iv] By 1901 the family had grown to seven children, five daughters and two sons..

Docksey was educated at Arnold House School, South Shore, Blackpool.[v] It was an independent school, established in 1896, during the Victorian expansion of public boarding schools in England. The school was in the United Church Schools Trust Group of Schools. Founded by Frank Trustwell Pennington the school was originally known as South Shore Collegiate School. The school later became known as Arnold House School, after Dr Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby School. In 2013 the school was merged with King Edward VII and Queen Mary School in Lytham St Annes to form Arnold KEQMS.[vi]

Figure 3 : An advertisement for The South Shore Collegiate School, Blackpool, c 1898

On leaving school, Docksey moved to 73 Eastwood Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham having become an apprentice clerk to an iron merchant. At the age of 18 years, with still two and a half years left of his apprenticeship to serve, Docksey enlisted in the Territorial Force of the 8th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Royal Warwicks) where he undertook preliminary training including an annual summer camp in 1911, between the 6th and 20th August, and 1912, between 4th and 11th August. Standing at 6' 3" tall, he was not far short of the 6' 5½" height of the tallest man in the British Army Second Lieutenant William Henry Furse of Moseley.[vii]

On 28th March 1912, Docksey's father, William, died aged 61 years. Probate was granted to William's brother James and two others to handle the estate worth £13,590 8s 7d, worth over a million pounds in todays money.[viii]

When war was declared on 4th August 1914, Docksey was called up and on 5th August became Private D Stone, No 1281 of the 3rd(Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Warwicks. Later that same year, on 24th November, he appled for a commission stating that, "*I have served and about to complete my fourth year in the ranks of the 8th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment having refused promotion to Non-Commissioed Officer twice.*" Early in the New Year, on 28th January 1915, Docksey was gazetted as Second Lieutenant in 'D' Company of the 2/8th Warwicks.[ix]

After completing his Officer Training, Docksey spent the rest of the year training at home but in reserve ready for the 'Big Push' planned for the following year.

On 22nd May 1916, the 2/8th Warwicks were called up and entrained at Denham Down ready to embark on two ships, the *S S Princess Charlotte* and *the City of Benares* from Southampton Docks at 7 pm. With each contingent went a number of horses, four and two wheeled carriages and bicycles.

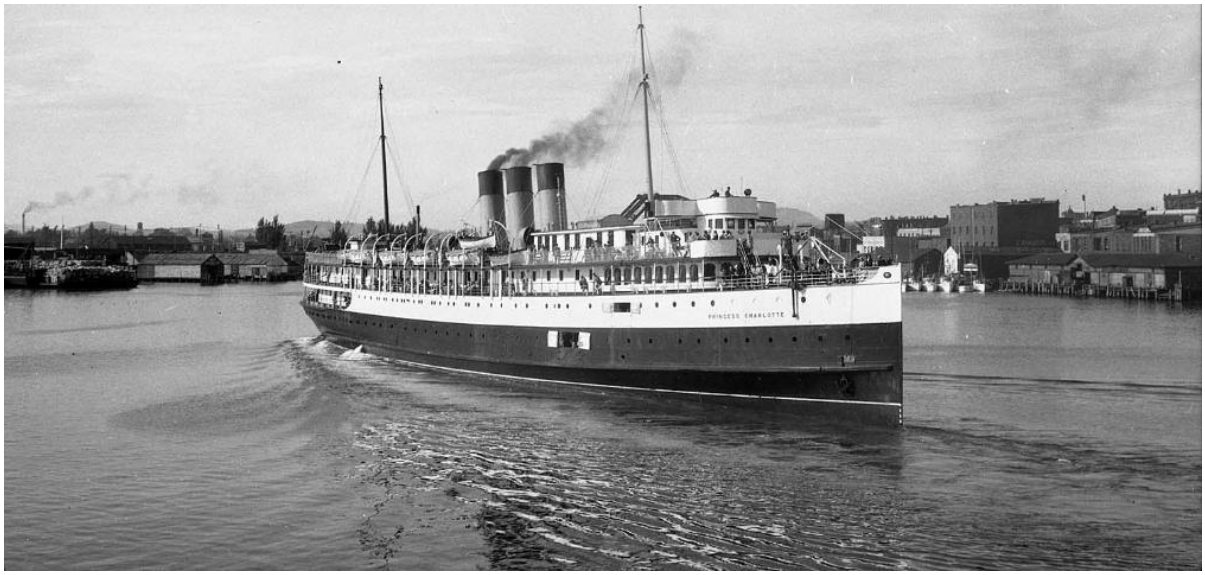

Figure 4: The *S. S. Princess Charlotte* built in Glasgow in 1908

Arriving at Le Havre at 3 am the following day, the Battalion disembarked, followed by a Muster Roll at 6.30 pm to check the presence of 33 officers and 988 other ranks.[x] The Battalion was redsignated as 182nd Brigade, 61st (2nd South Midland) Division in August 1915.[xi]

During the next few months the Battalion were prepared for the realities and trained in the skills required of them for trench warfare. This included, keeping clean with whole battalion having bathing parades (there was one which took place in the La Bassee Canal!), PT, running drill and rifle exercises, bombing practice, instruction on using gas helmets and lectures. Individual officers were sent on specialist courses, for example, trench mortar school and sniping instruction. Docksey and two other Second Lieutenants together with 12 men were directed to one such course, Bombing School with the 39th Division, on 4th June.

On 20th June, the Battalion were sent to the Neuve-Chappell sector for trench experience . At the start of the Battle of the Somme on 1st July 1916 the Battalion were in reserve. [xii]

However, on the 19th July, two divisions, the inexperienced British 61st and the Australian 5th,who had only arrived in France a few days before, were ordered to attack Fromelles on the Aubers Ridge as a major diversionary action to stop the Germans from moving troops away from this sector of the Somme. This was considered a quiet sector at the time and a good place to introduce inexperienced troops to trench warfare.[xiii]

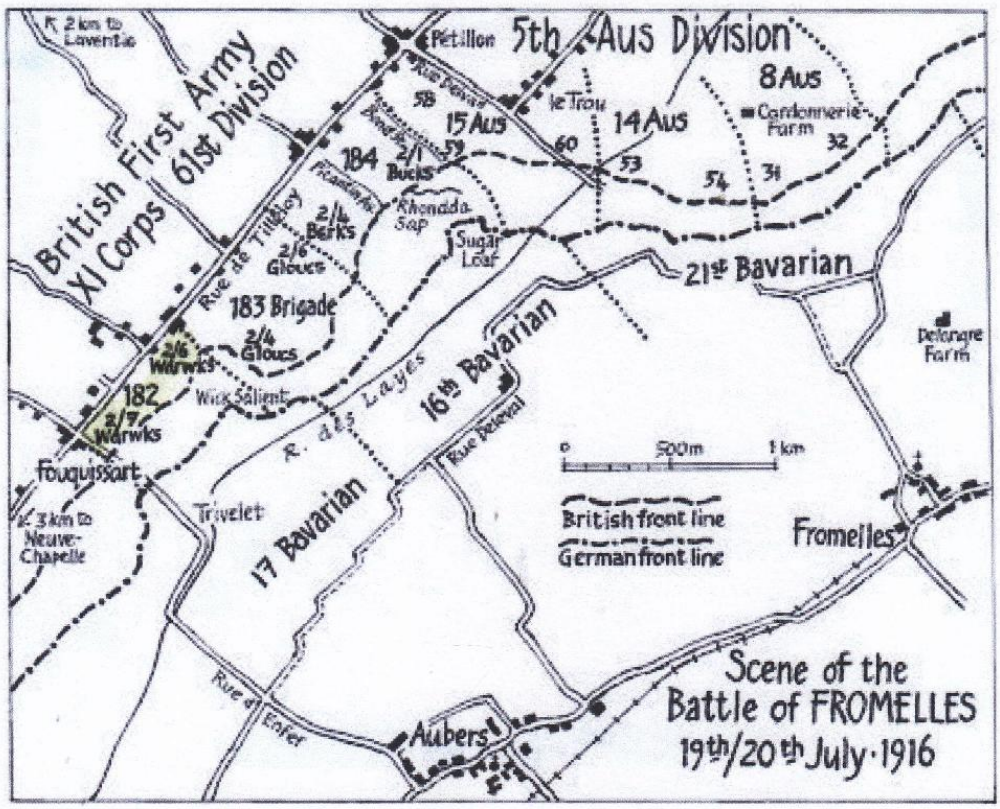

Figure 5: Map showing the positions of the 2/6th and 2/7th Warwicks on 19th July 1916, before they were relieved by the 2/8th Warwicks

On the day of the attack, the 2/6th and 2/7th Warwicks were in position in the front line trenches at Fouquissart (see map) ready to move forward at 6pm as soon as the British bombardment of over 200,000 artillery rounds, lasting over seven hours, had finished. Unfortnately, the Germans had anticipated the attack and taken up new positions over 200 yards behind their own front line. Protected by concrete bunkers they were were able to respond swiftly with their own artillery bombardment and heavy machine gun fire as soon as the British bombardment had ceased. The distance between the German and British trenches was as much as 400 yards at certain points and many of the infantrymen came under heavy machine gun fire as soon as they left their trenches.The two Warwickshire battalions were forced to retire back to their front line trenches after suffering heavy casualties, At 8.30 pm that evening, the 2/8th Warwicks were under orders to relieve the 2/6th and 2/7th Warwicks and by 11pm the handover had been completed. [xiv]

At 11 pm the following evening, '*a raiding party under Second Lieutenant D Stone went out*'. During this raid Docksey was wounded and died on the way to the dressing station in the early hours of the next morning, the 21st July. The 2/8th Warwicks spent the rest of the night searching for the killed and wounded of the 2/6th and 2/7th Warwicks. Many bodies were buried.[xv]

Docksey is buried at Plot II, E 20 Laventie Military Cemetery, La Gorge, France.[xvi] He is also commemorated at St Mary's Church, Moseley. After the death of her husband in 1912, Docksey's mother, Anne, moved to Mosley and lived at 'Courtlands', 8, Oxford Road.[xvii]

Laventie Military Cemetery

In the battle for Fromelles, the 5th Australian Division lost 5,513 men and the British 61st Division 1547 men. The Australian losses raised doubts about the judgement of higher commanders and badly damaged relations between the Australian Imperial Force and the British. A German assessment of the attack called it 'operationally and tactically senseless'.[xviii]

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Moseley Society Local History Group

Footnotes

i Derbyshire Marriages

ii Derbyshire Baptism Index

iii Nottinghamshire marriages, 1528-1929

iv National Archives, British Army Service Records, Ref WO 374/65777

v See iv

vi Arnold School
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnold_School

vii See iv
Evening Despatch, 10th July 1916.

viii Probate Calender for England & Wales 1858-1959
Money Sorter
http://www.moneysorter.co.uk/calculator_inflation2.html#calculator

ix See iv

x National Archives, War diaries of 2/th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Ref WO 95 3057, p 28

xi The Long, Long Trail
http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914- 1918/royal-warwickshire-regiment/

xii See x, pp 27-56

xiii Commonwealth War Graves Commission
http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/34300/LAVENTIE%20MILITARY%20CEMETERY,%20LA%20GORGUE

xv See x, p 56

xvi See xiii

xvii See iv

xviii Battle of Fromelles
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fromelles

Illustrations

Figure 1 St Mary's Church Bleasby
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mary%27s_Church,_Bleasby

Figure 2 J and WD Stone, grocers
http://www.oldtuxford.com/ess/ess.asp?NextPhoto=ess07

Figure 3 South Shore Collegiate School
http://www.amounderness.co.uk/arnold_school_advert_1899_south_shore_collegiate_school,_alexandra_road,_blackpool.html

Figure 4 SS Princess Caroline
http://www.evergreenfleet.com/princess_charlotte.html

Figure 5 Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (The 2/4th Battalion)
https://oxfordshireandbuckinghamshirelightinfantry.wordpress.com/tag/laventie/