

JAMES HAMILTON

2nd Lieutenant, 1/5th (Cumberland) Battalion, the Border Regiment



James Hamilton was born in Middlesbrough in 1879. In 1892, he went to the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Darlington, where he won a scholarship to Durham.

Hamilton matriculated at Durham in the Michaelmas Term of 1896, studying for a degree in Classical and General Literature. Besides his admission scholarship, he also went on to become an Exhibitioner. He graduated with 2nd Class honours in Classics in the Easter Term of 1899. He then went on to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge where he became a scholar in 1900. He did a further B.A., again taking 2nd Class Honours in Classics in 1901.

The following September, Hamilton joined The King's Hospital School, Dublin as an assistant master. King's was a distinguished Anglo-Irish foundation and, one of the oldest schools in Ireland, was very much a part of the establishment. After four years in Ireland, Hamilton returned to become an assistant master teaching at the Grammar School in Blackburn. This was followed by a brief spell over the summer term of 1910 at the Grammar School, Hampton-on-Thames (now Hampton School). Evidently finding the north more to his taste, in September 1910 Hamilton became Second Master at Heversham Grammar School, Westmoreland where he remained for the next five years. Something of an all-rounder, he taught Latin, Greek, History, English and French.

Following the outbreak of war, Hamilton left Heversham in July 1915 apparently enlisting with the local 4th (Cumberland and Westmorland) Battalion of the Border Regiment. He appears to have transferred to, or been listed with, the 1/5th (Cumberland) Battalion Territorial Force of the Border Regiment. After his last August on leave, Hamilton went up to London where he joined the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps in September 1915. He received his commission as Second Lieutenant on 27 January 1916. By the time he arrived

St. Cuthbert's Alumni Association

The alumni association of St. Cuthbert's Society, Durham University

in France, his battalion had already engaged in various actions on the Western Front including, in 1915, the Battles of St Julien, of Frezenburg Ridge, and of Bellewaarde Ridge.

Over 1916, the 1/5th saw further action at the various attacks that comprised the Battle of the Somme and in a protracted series of actions subsequently known as the Battle of the Transloy Ridges. These final weeks of this campaign on the Somme were grim and unrewarding with scant gains, massive casualties and plummeting morale.

This last stage of the battle comprised a slow advance with immense casualties. Gradually pushing downhill, troops eventually found themselves facing a huge ancient burial site which commanded the road to Bapaume. This was the Butte (or 'mound') of Warlencourt, which became the scene of very fierce fighting. Over the autumn, attack after attack proved unsuccessful, yet the Butte had a totemic impact on those faced with attempting to capture it or, on failing, carrying on beneath it. Repeated (unsuccessful) assaults sustained total losses of around 1,000.

James Hamilton became one of the many victims of this mania to capture the Butte. After a service career of some fifteen months, he was killed in action on 5 November 1916 with the 5th Battalion of the Borderers, alongside the Durhams and Northumberland Fusiliers, in the attack on the Butte of that date. He was 37.

He was officially reported killed on 18 November and eventually buried in Warlencourt British Cemetery.