

ANDREW MONTGOMERY REES



18th October 1916

1895-1916 Age 21

Lieutenant 9th (Service) Battalion Essex Regiment.

Andrew Rees was born near Plymouth, on the edge of Dartmoor, on 19th June 1895. His father was the Reverend Robert Montgomery Rees M.A., a Wesleyan minister and college tutor, from Devon. He was himself the son of another Wesleyan minister who was from Montgomery in mid-Wales. Andrew's mother Catharine [sic] Tait was the daughter of a prosperous tailor who lived in Chester, although he was originally a Scot. The couple married in 1861 and over a period of nearly thirty years they had seven children. Andrew was their fifth child and the youngest of their four sons.

The Reverend Robert Rees's duties meant that he and his family moved frequently around England and Wales, as indicated by the birthplaces of his children: Newport in Gwent, Weston-super-Mare, Leicester, Devonport, and Holmfirth and Oakworth in Yorkshire. In addition, they lived in Oxford and Bristol. Rees's three elder sons attended Leeds Grammar School when he was at Burley; when he moved to Oakworth, two of them with Andrew went to Bradford Grammar School. Ronald was at Bradford for five years, he captained the Hockey XI and played for the Cricket First XI, and he left with five Higher Certificates; John was there for seven years, passed in four subjects and went on to King's College, Cambridge; Andrew had been at B.G.S. for only two years (1906-08), in Second and Third Classical Upper when his father moved to Caernarvon. He did not display academic prowess during these years, although he did play one of the Children in the Greek play 'Scenes from the Archarnians of Aristophanes'.

Andrew became a boarder, first at his father's old school Kingswood, and from 1910, when he was fifteen, at The Leys School, Cambridge. These were both Wesleyan Methodist foundations. At the latter his academic ability flourished and he was a Prefect and a Sergeant in the school Officers Training Corps. In 1914 he won a Mathematical Exhibition to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and he went up a few weeks after the outbreak of war. By this time his father had finally settled at Epping in Essex. It is quite likely that Andrew joined the Cambridge University O.T.C.; however his first attempt to enlist was



frustrated by poor eyesight (as his photo hints). He was determined to serve and was accepted as a Second Lieutenant on 18th December 1914, although for some months he was used as an instructor at the depot. He was later posted to the 9th Battalion Essex Regiment, which had crossed at the end of May, joining them in the line near Bethune on 14th December 1915. For the next six months he remained in this area until his division moved to the Somme in June 1916. On 3rd July Rees survived the 9/Essex assault on Ovillers, in which they suffered 400 casualties, and they were in action again in mid-August. They were next sent north to hold the line around Arras for the whole of September, before they returned to the Somme in early October. On the 10th they were moved up to Gueudecourt, to take part in the repeated small-scale attacks in the October mud which were labelled 'The Battle of the Transloy Ridges'. Early on the 18th they formed up in darkness along white tapes in no man's land ready for zero hour at 3.40am. Three of their four companies were held up by uncut German wire and their officers were picked off as they sought to find gaps. On the left, 'C' Company entered the German line but was forced back. The 9/Essex lost seven officers and 79 other ranks. Rees was at first believed to be missing. His body was never identified and it was later accepted that he had been killed in action. His name is on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, and the war memorials of Epping, The Leys School and B.G.S. His three brothers all served and survived.



Acknowledgements:

This photo of Rees is taken from the O.B.A. Roll of Honour, with thanks. The photo below is from the Imperial War Museum <www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205387637>. The family history was assembled from a wide range of documents available on Ancestry.com. Andrew Rees's mother's name appears as both Catherine and Catharine in the records, but it is the latter spelling which was used in the CWGC Register. For the Rees boys at Leeds Grammar School, see John G. Davies, A High Ideal. Leeds Grammar School and the Great War, (Leeds, 2015), 208. For their years at B.G.S., see the Annual Reports published midsummer 1903-08, and The Bradfordians for April, May and July 1907 (Vol. XII, nos. 92-94), passim.

I have referred to online biographies produced by Sidney Sussex College <<https://www.sid.cam.ac.uk/aboutus/greatwar/members/atoz/?letter=R>>, Epping parish <<http://www.hellfirecorner.co.uk/duffell2.htm>> both accessed 10-10-2016, and The Leys School <<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Cambridgeshire/CambridgeLeysSchoolWW1.html>> accessed 15-10-2016. For the date of his gazettement as Second Lieutenant, <<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29031/supplement/249/data.pdf>>. For the 9th Essex <<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/essex-regiment/>> accessed 10-10-2016.

In addition, for war memorials, see <<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Cambridgeshire/CambridgeUniversitySidneySussexCollege.html>> and <<http://www.ww1-yorkshires.org.uk/html-files/cambridge-leys-school.htm>> accessed 16-10-2016.

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