

# FRANCIS HERBERT WOOD



25th September 1916

1882-1916 Age 33

## Private 7186, 1/14th (County of London) Battalion (London Scottish).

Francis Wood was born in Allerton, near Bradford, on the last day of 1882. He was the third of the five surviving children of Charles Wood and Mary Ann Lockwood. The Woods of Allerton were a numerous family descended from Joseph Wood who established a worsted spinning company which in 1851 was employing 250 'hands'. Frank's father Charles was his grandson, and his estate when he died in 1903 was worth £48,000, nearly £3 million in modern values. Frank's mother Mary Ann was one of nine children of another manufacturer, albeit on a much smaller scale, from Huddersfield. The family attended the local Wesleyan Methodist chapel, where Charles married Mary in 1879, and their children were baptized.

Frank was a pupil at Bradford Grammar School in the years 1891-1894, between his ninth and twelfth birthdays. The school records for that period are unavailable. At midsummer 1899 there were nine pupils at the School bearing the surname Wood—two of them had the initials of Frank's younger brothers Harold Edward and Henry Stanley, suggesting all three spent time there. The existence of a photograph showing the three younger sons as members of Allerton Cricket team (see reverse) suggests they played at School, however none of them stayed on until they were of an age to play for the Cricket XI.

In the 1901 census no occupation was given for the eldest brother James Lockwood Wood, who was twenty-one, or for Frank who was eighteen. A decade later, the three elder sons worked for the family firm. Henry trained as a solicitor's articled clerk. When war came, it was the three younger brothers who joined up, although it seems that none of them did so at the start of hostilities. Harold and Henry both became officers in the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment: Harold proceeded to France in late September 1916, and Henry the following March.



Frank enlisted in Bradford, becoming a private in the 1st-14th Battalion London Regiment, the London Scottish. It is unlikely that this was before 1916, and whether he was conscripted or he joined this unit by choice is not known. This was a kilted battalion, although no Scottish connection is apparent in the family history. They were the first Territorial Force battalion to be sent to the Western Front, before the end of 1914, and they gained a high reputation. If Frank was with them for the start of the Somme offensive on 1st July, he survived the attack on Gommecourt, in which three-quarters of the men were casualties. After receiving reinforcement drafts, the London Scottish spent much of September in fighting around Combles on the extreme right of the British line, taking part in attacks on the 10th and again on the 25th. In between these dates the weather was very wet and the men were 'very exhausted' from existing in flooded shell craters. Wood lost his life in a successful attack by London Scottish which cleared Bouleaux Wood, coming under fire from a railway embankment. He does not have a known burial and his name is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial. Both his younger brothers survived the war, while James Wood was knighted after the First World War. Frank was a wealthy man when he died, leaving effects valued at £13,000.



### Acknowledgements:

Wood's photo is from the O.B.A. Roll of Honour with thanks. His Service Record was one of those lost during World War Two, so little can be said regarding his enlistment and how long he served prior to his death. An idea of what he experienced may be gained from A. Stuart Dolden, Cannon Fodder: An Infantryman's Life on the Western Front 1914-18 (Blandford Press, 1980), based on his illegally kept diary. He served both as a bomber and a cook in 'D' Company. For the London Scottish, see <https://londonscottishregt.org/index.php?id=127> (accessed 22-9-2016). Wood's Medal Index Card gives no date for his entry into a theatre of war, which makes it likely that this did not occur until 1916.

For Wood's family, I used the records available through Ancestry.com. A useful family tree can be found at [www.steward.co.uk/home/familyhistory/Tree/indil154.html](http://www.steward.co.uk/home/familyhistory/Tree/indil154.html) (accessed 22-9-2016).



Above left: Allerton Cricket team (date unknown). Back row 3rd from left, Harold Edward Wood (born 1887); front row left, Francis Herbert Wood (born 1882); front row right, Henry Stanley Wood (born 1890).

Above right: Henry Stanley Wood (left) and Francis Herbert Wood (right) standing, Harold Edward Wood crouching.

Shared by Rachel H Olsen 9-3-2013. <http://mv.ancestry.co.uk/viewer/727d683e-18ad-4d79-9315-f0db7e52faa2/33907904/18567418751> (accessed 23-9-2016).