

TOM DIXON STOCKS



15th April 1918

1896-1918 Aged 21



Second Lieutenant 2nd Battalion Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment.

Tom Stocks' father and grandfather were woollen cloth manufacturers at Beck's Mill, one of Silsden's nine textile factories. Tom was born on 15th April 1896, the younger of the two surviving sons of James Isaac Stocks and Emily Dixon who married in Steeton in 1893. Emily's father owned the bobbin mill in that village. The couple lived in Bingley where their two boys were born. They moved to Steeton and finally they took over the Stocks' family home Airedale Villa beside the canal bank in Silsden. Tom began his secondary education at the Keighley Trade and Grammar School. He moved to the Bradford Grammar School in September 1907 aged eleven where his elder brother James was also a pupil. Tom was at B.G.S. for five years on the Modern side. He was generally an average student and he left in 1912 when he was sixteen. Both James and Tom became apprentices to their father in the family spinning and weaving business in Silsden. In his leisure time Tom was assistant scoutmaster in the Silsden Parish Church Troop.

In December 1915 Tom and two other lads from Silsden enlisted in Penrith (in Cumberland, now Cumbria) in the Westmorland and Cumberland Yeomanry. It is presumed that they journeyed there specifically to join this Territorial Force cavalry regiment. Tom was 19 years and eight months old. He served with the yeomanry's second line unit at Rungilly Camp at Cupar in Fife, Scotland for nearly a year until he was accepted for officer training. On 4th November 1916 he reported to 8th Officer Training Battalion at Lichfield, and following a four month course on 28th February 1917 he became a Second Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. Shortly afterwards he was posted to the regiment's 2nd Battalion near Arras in France, probably after they had been in action on 9th April at the start of the British Spring Offensive. Stocks was very fortunate that on 3rd May he was attached to the Brigade H.Q. in charge of a carrying party—on that day his battalion was

reduced to two platoons after a disastrous attack on the Chemical Works at Roeux, suffering more than one hundred men killed. Later in the year on 9th October it attacked in terrible mud near Passchendaele. Its casualties were 170 men.

In the second week of April 1918, 10th Infantry Brigade of which the 2/Dukes were part was moved by lorry from Arras to block the second major German attack of the year, Operation Georgette. Tom Stocks received the wound from which he died in a hastily prepared attack late on the afternoon of 15th April just to the north of Bethune. The Germans had occupied Pacault Wood from which two British battalions were ordered to eject them. The author of the 2/Dukes War Diary confined himself to a brief description: 'The operation was not a success.' Casualties amounted to 227 Officers and men. The wounded Stocks was taken back to 10th Field Ambulance at the village of Gonnehem where he died during the night. He is one of five British soldiers buried in the village cemetery.

Tom's brother James also served with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, as a Captain. He won the Military Cross for his bravery in July 1918. He was severely wounded in the thigh in September, but he survived the war.



Acknowledgements:

The photo is an enlargement of that published in *Craven's Part in the Great War*, compiled and edited by John T. Clayton, (Skipton, 1919) (author's copy). The family was researched using Ancestry.com. Tom's years at B.G.S. are recorded in the 1908-12 Annual Reports. The photo of a group of Silsden Parish Church scouts taken on camp at Grange-over-Sands in 1913 is taken from <<http://johngliddle.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/silsdens-war-stories-to-be-told-in.html>> (accessed 9-4-2018). Stocks is

third from left. <<http://www.cpgw.org.uk/soldier-records/tom-dixon-stocks/>> (accessed 6-4-2018) includes transcripts of several articles from the *Craven Herald* and *West Yorkshire Pioneer* relating to Stocks. These gave his date of enlistment as April 1915 with the names of his friends Harold Middleton and Harry Longbottom. The date is contradicted by the Attestation Form in his Officer Personal Record TNA WO330-75487 which states he volunteered at Penrith on 8th December, and he was embodied from that date. His two chums survived the war. Harold was also a scout.



The 2/Dukes War Diary is available through Ancestry.com in two parts: Piece 1508 (1917) and Piece 1481/3 (1918). Tom's joining is not noted although the diary is otherwise meticulous in listing the comings and goings of officers. The 3rd May dead are calculated from CWGC records. All the records in Tom's file (above) state he died of wounds on 16th

April, the date given in the telegram his family received on 17th April. The War Diary states he died on 15th April. He must have died during the night.

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