Caius WW1 War Dead

In the Spring of 1915, the British returned to their salient at Ypres just as the Germans planned to seize the high ground near Pilchem and Langemark with the use of chlorine gas on the French trenches. The French retreated leaving a four mile gap which the Canadians filled. The Second Battle of Ypres was then fought between the 22\textsuperscript{nd} April and the 25\textsuperscript{th} May for control of the salient. The Germans did not break through but the salient was much reduced and very vulnerable to German artillery bombardment. The whole battle consisted of six major separate engagements at Gravenstafel, St. Julien, Frezenberg, Bellewaarde, Hooge and again at Bellewaarde.

Caius lost three more men 100 years ago this week in these engagements. Alan James Jackson was killed aged 20 on the 27\textsuperscript{th} April, Alan David Coates aged 21 on the 28\textsuperscript{th} and Geoffrey Gordon aged 33 on the 30\textsuperscript{th}.

Alan Jackson had been at the front just over a week with the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Battalion, the Middlesex Regiment when he died. In the war diary it says ‘Lieut Jackson – he was sent out on patrol to the front N of St Jean on the night of the 22\textsuperscript{nd} Ap & has not been heard of since’ but the Commonwealth War Graves gives his date of death as the 27\textsuperscript{th}. Sometimes these dates of death had to be surmised when the fighting was severe and the man had been missing.

Alan Coates was in the 4\textsuperscript{th} Battalion, the London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) who had undertaken a 35 mile forced march with no food to get into position near La Brique just outside Ypres. He was a liaison officer taking intelligence between the Brigade Headquarters and the troops and had to pass through the enemy barrage several times. Alan was killed when the men had been ordered to cross an open field with no cover and nothing but their bayonets and rifles.

Geoffrey Gordon was an Irishman who died at St Julien. He had graduated MA at Aberdeen University before coming to Caius. He then became an Assistant Commissioner in the Punjab. When war broke out he was commissioned into the 12th (Prince of Wales) Royal Lancers who famously and successfully charged the Prussian Dragoons with lances in August 1914 at Moy. Geoffrey was killed by a shell but his body was not recovered.