**William George Heys**

William George Heys was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Force and served with the 8th (Ardwick) Battalion, Manchester Regiment, part of the 127th Brigade, 42nd East Lancashire Division.

The division was sent to Egypt in September 1914 to protect the Suez Canal from Turkish attack, but early in May 1915 the division was sent to Cape Helles on the Turkish Dardenelles peninsula, following the failure of the Allies to achieve the anticipated swift success at Gallipoli during April. The 125th Brigade landed in time to participate in the second Battle of Krithia on 6 May, with the entire division involved in the third Battle of Krithia on 4 June.

The advance of the 42nd Division at the third battle of Krithia was, by Gallipoli standards, very successful, quickly reaching the first objective of the Turkish trenches and moving beyond to advance a total of 1,000 yards. This attack, starting at noon, on a hot bright summer’s day, was made by the 127th (Manchester) Brigade, which broke through the Turkish 9th Division’s defences within five minutes, and captured 217 prisoners, and by 1.30pm the Division was within three quarters of a mile of Krithia village.  Early in the attack the commander of 127th Brigade, Brigadier-General Noel Lee, had been wounded in the throat, probably by shrapnel, and evacuated to a first aid post, and William, as senior officer, had taken over command.  At around 4 pm, Major General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, the Divisional Commander, ordered the troops to dig in and consolidate their positions, but by this time William had been killed outright, and this order coincided with the Turkish reserves counter-attacking against the Manchester Brigade in the centre. Within one hour, the brigade was under attack from three sides, so was eventually ordered to withdraw at 6pm.

William lost his life, aged 48 years, leading his men in the thick of the battle, but by the end, after being forced to withdraw, their new front line was a mere 200 to 250 yards in front of their start line, passing through a patch of vines that earned the area the name of ‘The Vineyard’, which was to be the site of heavy fighting again in the August. In the battle, the British troops suffered a loss of 4,500 men, the French 2,000 men, and the Turkish force lost around 10,000 men.  William now lays at rest in Grave A 29, Lancashire Landing Cemetery, Gallipoli. Sometime after William’s death, his widow, Marion, moved to 15 Crescent Road, Altrincham in Cheshire.

Source: The Provincial Grand Lodge of West Lancashire

Lieutenant Colonel Heys stayed in Bushey at ‘Rostherne’ Aldenham Road with W E Heys. This was the third house along from Beechcroft Road (in the direction of Bushey Grove Road)

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