

Private James Mould

Private James (Jim) Mould Service Number 20781, who was born in Ridge to Frank and Eliza Mould. Eliza was a Ridge girl and Frank was from Chilmark. Eliza had a child out of wedlock, which must have been very difficult in those days for her but Frank, a farm carter, adopted her firstborn son and they lived in Ridge, until about 1890. James was her eighth child and shortly after he was born they moved to Figheldean, north of Amesbury in about 1891 and on to Winterslow by 1893.



Figure 1- Figheldean

By 1901 they were living in Idmiston and in 1910 James' father Frank died and at this stage they were living in Teffont in a cottage north of Manor Farm.



Figure 2- Meadow View Teffont

Their last and tenth child was born in 1895 in Winterslow by the name of Alburn to whom I will refer later on.

Private Jim Mould who enlisted in Warminster and although he died with the 1st / 6th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, there is a record to show that he first served with their 2nd / 8th Battalion, although I think that this is unlikely. The 2nd / 8th Battalion were preparing to depart for France in May and were perhaps short of soldiers. All of the Wiltshire's appear to have passed through the Wiltshire Regimental Depot at Devizes before reporting for duty at Warwick. James Mould's second number appears to have been allocated to him on or about 22 July 1916 shortly after the start of the Somme battle. It seems likely to me that when the reinforcements started arriving in France, they were allocated to the battalions with the greatest need and in James Mould's case, the 1st/6th Bn of the Warwicks.

The First World War involved so many battles with so many casualties in so many legendary places that it is worth taking a quick look at some maps to try and orientate you. This first map (Figure 3) gives a good general overview and it is in this area around Albert that James Mould's Battalion was deployed throughout his operational service.



Figure 3- Map around Albert

(Figure 4) shows the reinforcements for the Royal Warwickshire Regiment departed by ship from Southampton to the docks at Rouen on the Seine River (Figure 5) to the 29th Infantry Base Depot.



Figure 4- Reinforcements Southampton Dock



Figure 5 - Seine River

In normal times they would continue their training at the IBD until posted. However, the circumstances of the Somme battle required large numbers of reinforcements, and it is interesting to note that 35 soldiers with similar numbers to James Mould were killed in action during August 1916. I believe that it is almost certain that James Mould would have joined his Battalion by early August 1916. He would therefore have been involved immediately in his first major battle that of Pozieres (Figure 6).



Figure 6 - Pozieres

The Battalion had already lost on the first day of the Somme 120 killed or missing in action, 316 wounded, including the commanding officer and a further 22 officers out of a total of 31. When the Battalion reassembled on 2 July 1916 they could only muster 176 all ranks out of the thousand or so who had deployed to France. Pozieres was slightly less brutal as the 1st/6th were in reserve, but still resulted in nine officers and 123 other ranks being killed or wounded. Several of those would have been James Mould's friends who would have trained with him and embarked with him from Southampton, given their Army numbers. At Pozieres the Battalion took 250 German prisoners as well as all the objectives that had been assigned to them.

Of the 188 days or so that James Mould probably served in France, his Battalion was in the trenches for no more than 42 days with the remainder being spent training, marching between locations, providing work parties, resting or bivouacking.

The map (Figure 7) shows the various locations that the Battalion occupied throughout the period August 1916 to the end of January 1917. (Arras Amiens 40 miles, 5 mile radius)

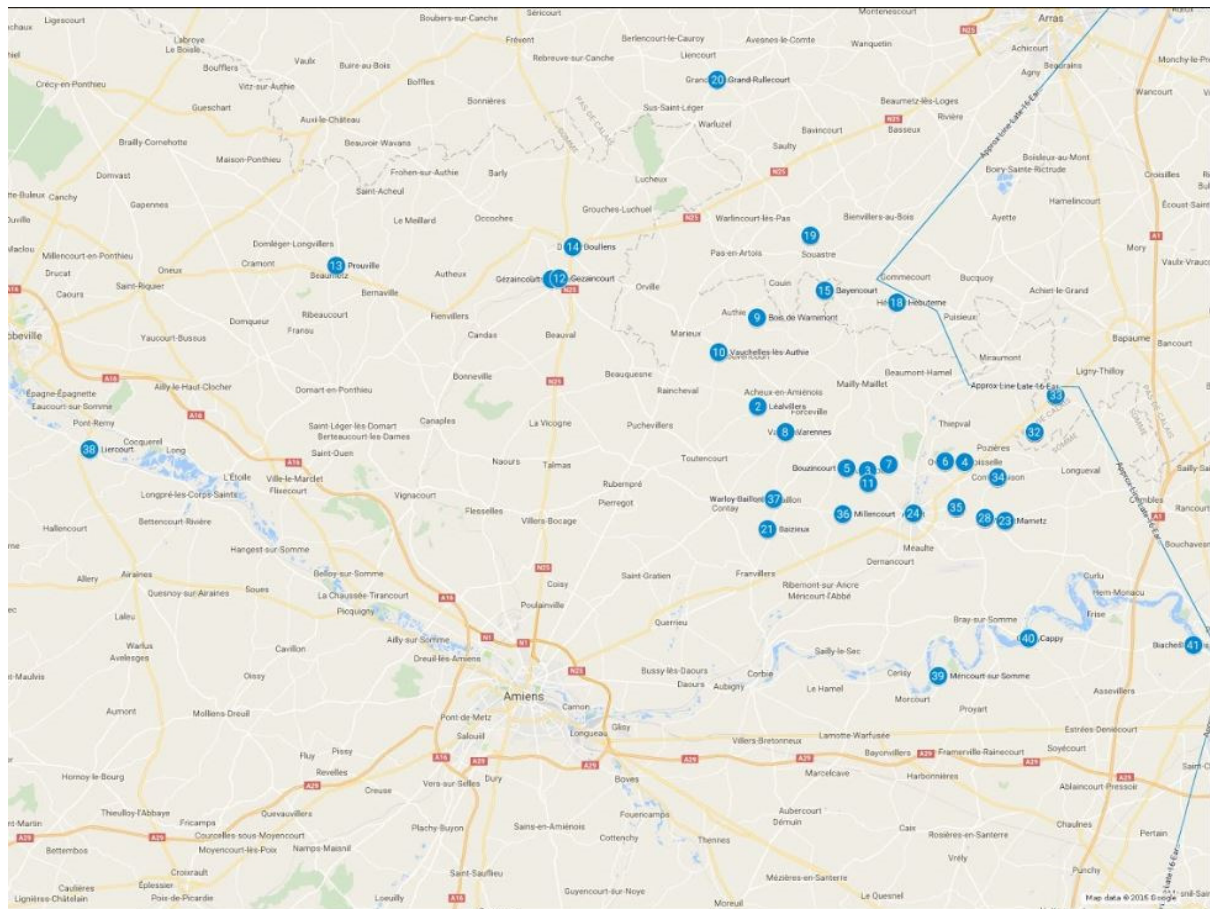


Figure 7- Locations the Battalion occupied Aug 1916 - 1917

At the end of January 1917, the Battalion was deployed to take over part of the French line to the south of the River Somme. At this time, although there were indications that the Germans were preparing a new line of defences (Figure 8) to which to withdraw and straighten their line, the British general staff were deceived and the 1st/6th Battalion certainly believed that instead a German offensive was in the offing, so clearly the deception worked and part of the deception plan involved a series of substantial attacks on the Allied line.

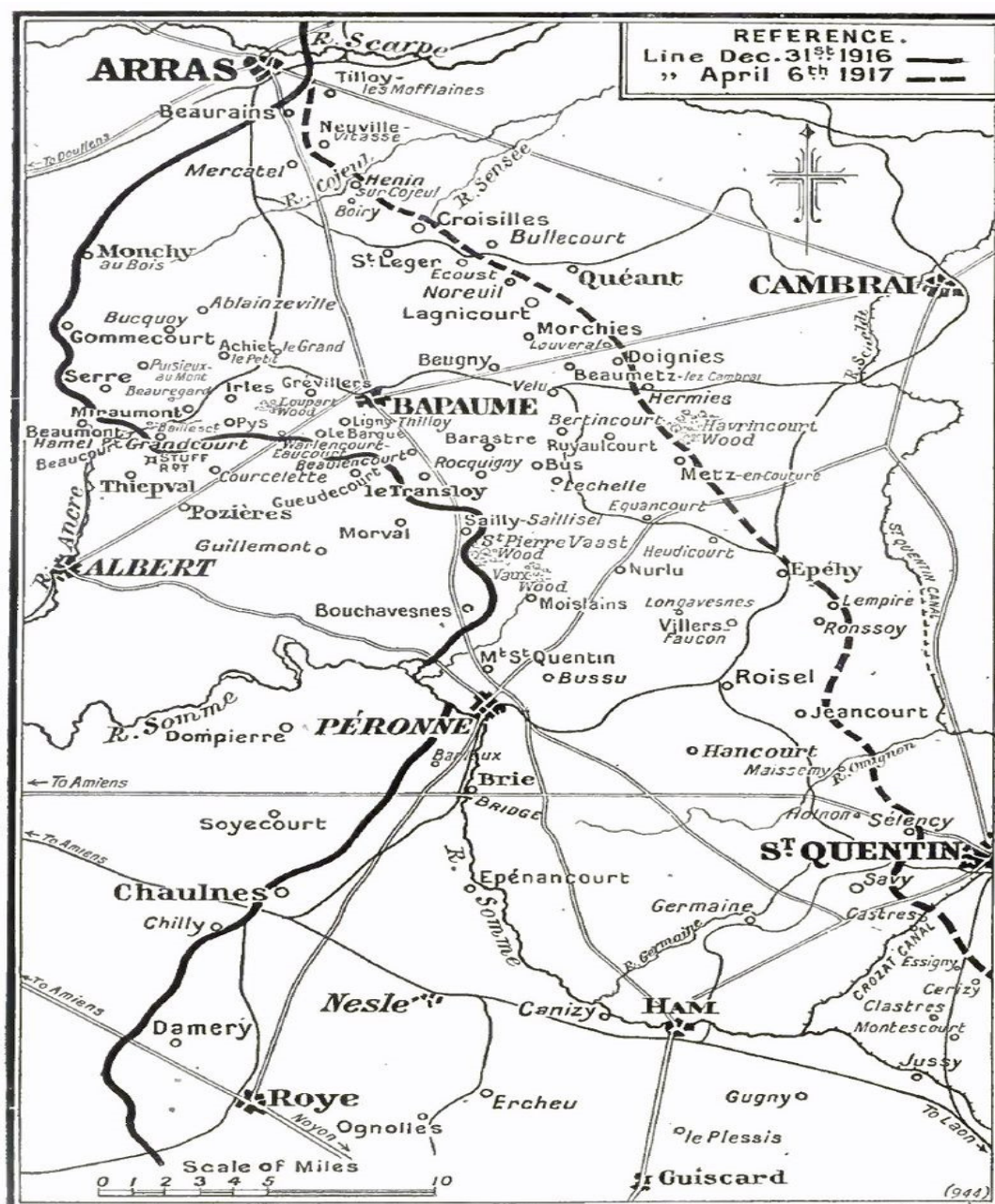


Figure 8 - German Withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line

It is at this point that we take up the story from the Warwickshire Regimental history:

The intense frost gave all the trenches a specious air of tidiness and solidity; so that the Battalion had few misgivings when they marched along the bleak road from Herbecourt on the night of February 1st and relieved the 2nd Battalion of the 125th French Infantry Regiment to the south of Biaches. Brilliant sunshine, a thin layer of snow on the ground, comfortable little dugouts, apparently very snug and secure, the enemy only 100 yards away. At noon on Sunday the 4th, shells of all calibres up

to 9 inches began arriving too fast to be counted. The frozen ground broke up into jagged fragments as dangerous as the shell splinters themselves, and the trenches where not blown in by direct hits became littered deep with debris. Dugouts were broken in bodily and men inside buried beyond hope of rescue. The roar of explosions was so continuous and deafening that orders shouted into men's ears were barely understood. Casualties were all too numerous and it was impossible to move the seriously wounded, owing to the blocks in every trench. Three times the storm lulled for a few precious minutes and then came on again with redoubled fury. At 5:40 PM the incredible climax occurred; the bombardment increased with unmistakable emphasis. There could be no more doubt. It was no mere outburst of spleen at discovering us but a preparation and protection for an actual assault. At 6:15 PM the Germans came. Every Lewis gun and rifle in the front-line still in action fired at them, but in places there were woefully few. The enemy, the 1st Prussian Guard, entered our lines on the left of B Company's sector and moved along the trench in both directions. Lieutenant Belcher and two sergeants of B Company met them on the right and bombed them to a standstill. The other party did not reach C Company's sector before it withdrew. Lt Harrison, of C Company, led a party of bombers to meet them, but all except Lt Harrison fell victims to the incessant shellfire. By 6:25 PM our line was clear except of the dead and the dying, and so it was found when supports of B Company worked their way along until they joined hands with C Company. All night over obliterated trenches, reeking with the bitter, sickening stench of blood, stumbled stretcher-bearers, taking the wounded out to the ambulances. When a reckoning was taken of the losses in the three companies, it was found that there were 37 killed, 70 wounded. (Many very seriously), and 14 missing, besides Lt Belcher, who was found lying dead where he made his stand against the raiders. So it ended. And the following night, the Battalion relieved, went back to Eclusier to recover from its wounds and bruises. No comment is needed, except the 11 decorations awarded the Battalion for that single action.

One of those 37 dead was Private James Mould of Teffont who may well have been a member of one of the bombing parties that held the trench line as they died almost to a man. Private Jim Mould died 4th February 1917 aged 28. He is buried in the cemetery at Assevillers (Figure 9)

some 3 miles from where he died, shown here on this slide and his actual (Figure 10) grave can be made out in this slide.



Figure 9 - Assevillers War Graves



Figure 10 - Assevillers showing James Mould's Grave

Commonwealth War Grave Commission grave notification

PRIVATE JIM MOULD Service Number: 20781		
Regiment & Unit/Ship Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1st/6th Bn.		
Date of Death Died 04 February 1917 Age 28 years old		
Buried or commemorated at <u>ASSEVILLERS NEW BRITISH CEMETERY</u> V. B. 7. France		
Country of Service	United Kingdom	
Additional Info	Son of Frank and Eliza Mould. Born at Teffont Magna, Salisbury.	

Figure 11- Private Jim Mould War graves France

Private James Mould's youngest brother Alburn died in Romford, Essex in 1960 and interestingly his James medals (Figure 11) were auctioned in Epping in 2014.

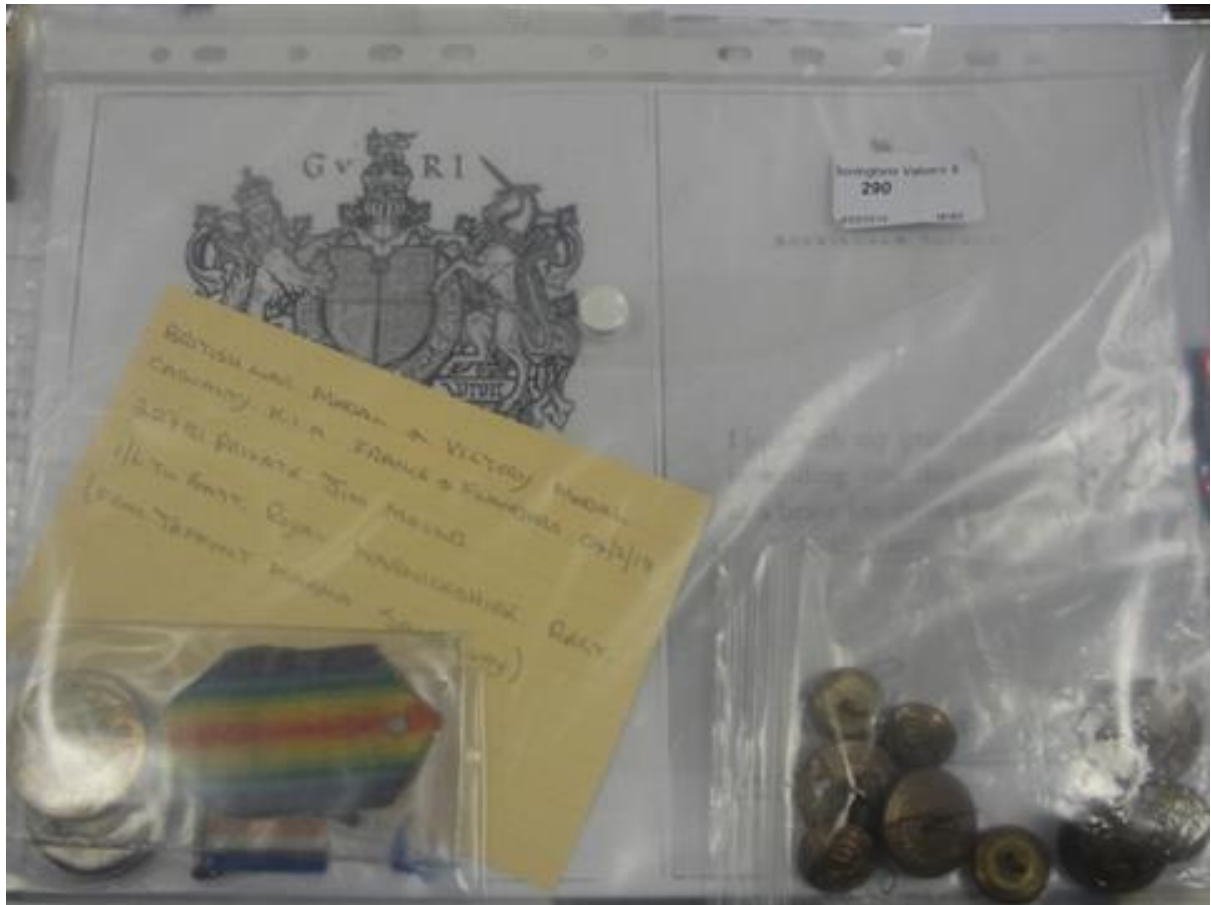


Figure 12- Private Mould's Medals

We remember James and honour his sacrifice.