

MAJOR JAMES BERTRAM FALKNER CARTLAND

1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died aged 42 on 27 May 1918

Remembered with honour on *Soissons Memorial, Aisne, France*

Commemorated in Tewkesbury Abbey Churchyard, also in Ashchurch, Worcester & Pershore



Soissons Memorial



Major Cartland in 1918



Worcestershire Regiment

JAMES BERTRAM FALKNER CARTLAND was born in Kings Heath, Birmingham, in 1876, the son of James F.H. Cartland, a manufacturer, and Flora (formerly Falkner), who lived at The Priory, Kings Heath (now a school). He married Mary Hamilton Scobell in 1900; they lived at Bowbrook House, Peopleton, Worces., and had a daughter, Barbara Cartland. In October 1903 disaster affected the family when his father committed suicide, ostensibly after a business failure. The family were forced to leave their home and rent the more modest Amerie Court in Pershore from Lord Coventry. Brought up to be a country gentleman and part-time Militia officer, James did not gain a salaried career until 1910 when he became secretary of the Primrose League, a supportive body of the Conservative Party. His wife and family came to stay periodically at Walton House, Ashchurch, the home of her father, Lt.Col. George T. Scobell. They had two sons: Ronald in 1907 and Anthony in 1913.

Before the war James was on the General Reserve of Officers list, attached to the Worcestershire Regiment with the rank of Captain. The war transformed his career: he was soon mobilised and landed in France on 2 November 1914, serving on the Staff of 8th Division. In November 1916 he was an Instructor at the GHQ School at St. Omer. In March 1917 he joined the 10th Battalion and served with them at the *Battle of Messines* (7-14 June 1917). He took command of the 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, on 30 December 1917, by which time he had been promoted to Major. James was *'Mentioned in Despatches'* three times, on 22 June 1915, 5 May 1916 and 18 December 1917, and received the *'1914-15 Star'* medal as an *'Old Contemptible'*.

In March 1918 James was posted as second in command to the 1st Bn., Worcestershire Regiment, part of 8th Division. The Division was heavily involved in *Operation Michael*, the first phase of the German Spring Offensive, known as the *Second Battle of the Somme 1918* (21 March-4 July 1918). It was then one of five British divisions, which had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Somme and in Flanders, to be transferred to a quiet area of the French front to rest and recuperate. They moved to the Aisne area early in May, under the command of the French 6th Army. Despite protests, they were deployed in positions vulnerable to attack, as the Germans were about to launch the third phase of their Spring Offensive, the *Battle of the Aisne 1918* (27 May-4 June). Major Cartland was in temporary command of the 1st Battalion, its C.O. having been taken ill. The battalion was overrun and, in the confusion of battle, James Cartland was declared *'missing'* on 27 May 1918.

A Memorial Service was organised but on 22 July 1918 a War Office telegram stated: *'The report of death ... was cancelled by GHQ'*. A battalion member reported that he had witnessed James's capture and the service was changed to a *'Thanksgiving'*. However, a Capt. Pratt in a Red Cross interview stated that: *'I was present with Major Cartland in the Support Line ... when he was killed by shell fire. Killed outright. He was not buried when I last saw him.'*

Major James B. F. Cartland's death was later confirmed but his body was never identified or recovered and his name is recorded on the *Memorial to the Missing* at Soissons, France. In Tewkesbury, his death is only commemorated on a family memorial in the Abbey grounds.