

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR JOHN STANLEY DALE

13794, 8th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 32 on 4 May 1918

Buried with honour at *Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery, Kemmel, Belgium*; IV D 11

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery



1914-15 Star Medal



Gloucestershire Regiment

JOHN STANLEY DALE was born in Stepney, East London, in 1886, the eldest son of Thomas Dale, a Stevedore from Evesham, and Harriett (formerly Stocks), from London; in 1891 they were living at 54 Gill Street, Limehouse. By 1901 John was living in Snowhill with his aunt Sarah Dyer (formerly Dale). He was still living there in 1911 as a 'workman on estate'. The *Tewkesbury Register* obituary added: *'at one time he was employed at the Dunlop Works, Birmingham. Owing to ill-health, he came to Tewkesbury, working for Mr. Rayer, Hardwick, from whence he joined up in September 1914. He has been in France three years next month, being home on leave as recently as February last, and having served in the Army previous to the present war.'* In 1912 John married Caroline Harriet Winifred Burston, born in 1882 at Kempsey, Worcs., in Tewkesbury (registered as just Winifred). They had two children, both born in Tewkesbury: Ernest S.F. in 1913 and Margery W. in 1916.

In September 1914 John enlisted as a volunteer in the 8th (Service) Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, recently formed at Bristol as part of Kitchener's 'New Army'; it came under the command of the 57th Infantry Brigade in the 19th (Western) Division. John landed in France with the battalion on 18 July 1915, qualifying for the '1914-15 Star' medal. By May 1918 he had progressed to Company Sergeant Major. At the beginning of that month, the battalion was holding the line in the Dickebush sector near Ypres, having been involved the previous month in defending Mont Kemmel during the *Battles of the Lys 1918*. This battle was part of *Operation Georgette*, the second of four phases of the campaign known as the German Spring Offen-

sive. According to the Battalion War Diary, much of the first half of May was spent in training. However, on 4 May 1918, the day CSM Dale was apparently killed by a stray shell, the battalion was in the front line. The diary simply states *'in the line at Dickebush'*; no reference is made to any casualties. This is unusual because an officer, Capt. Ernest Cowper Slade (presumably his Company Commander), was killed by fragments of the same shell and officer casualties usually warrant an entry in the diary. They were victims of trench warfare, as the situation at that time was otherwise generally quiet.

Considering the chaotic nature of warfare in the German onslaught of early 1918 it was fortunate that an officer could write to his widow and fulfil *'a most unpleasant and painful task. ... As a Coy-Q.M Sgt., nobody in this Division could compare with your husband, madam. I suppose you know he has been mentioned several times for his good work and devotion to duty. He was absolutely indispensable as a CQM Sgt, and was very popular indeed. During the recent hard fighting he worked magnificently all the time. I think I can truthfully say that your husband can never be replaced in this Battalion. CQMS Dale was killed with his Captain, while doing his rounds in the line. Both were killed instantly by some portions of a shell, so he did not suffer in the slightest degree'*.

CQMS John Stanley Dale and Capt. Ernest Slade are appropriately buried next to each other in *Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery*, Kemmel. John's younger brother, **Cpl. Ernest S. Dale** of the 1st/7th Battalion the Worcestershire Regiment, was killed in action in Italy on 15 June 1918 but is not commemorated in Tewkesbury.