

## **Noel Morris** 1894 - 1916

**Educated at Barry County School and Jesus College Oxford**

**Died of wounds received at Vimy Ridge, aged 22, on 12 May 1916**

### **Family and Education**

Noel Dyke Morris was born between January and March 1894 in Vaynor, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan. His father Thomas Morris was a brewery manager, his mother was Mary Ellen, and he had two brothers and a sister.

In 1911 Noel was 17 and a student at Barry County School. Then he gained a Welsh Scholarship in Modern History at Jesus College. He began studying there in 1913, and joined the University Officers' Training Corps. In September 1914 he enlisted, not in a Welsh regiment as might have been expected, but in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment. It may be that he opted to join up with a friend from that region.

### **War Service: 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment)**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was newly formed when Noel joined as a Second Lieutenant: he must have been amongst its first volunteers. Its early days have been described as 'chaotic', and Noel's experience in the Officers' Training Corps would have been valuable. The unit came under the command of the 75<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division, and remained in England for a year, landing in France on 28 September 1915. They were based in the area of Nieppe, and were not involved in any major action over the next months. Noel was promoted to Lieutenant, and he became acting Captain for a time.

In early May 1916 Noel's battalion moved to occupy trenches opposite Vimy Ridge which had previously been a quiet sector under the French. It became livelier when the British arrived and attempted to deter German mining activity, which was giving troops 'the feeling of sitting on a volcano'. The Germans responded by intensifying their artillery and trench mortar fire. The front-line trenches were very badly damaged, and communication trenches also became targets. Noel was injured at this time and evacuated to Etaples Hospital near Boulogne. He died there from wounds on 12 May, aged 22. He was mentioned in despatches for his actions, and is buried in the Etaples Military Cemetery.

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This is the story of one of the men who appear on a war memorial at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, UK. These stories were compiled in 2018-19 from a variety of family history and military sources. In particular, Chris Baker's site, 'The Long, Long Trail' has provided valuable details of the men's experience of battle:

<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>