

## 100: Hugh Bell DCM

### Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Hugh Bell DCM  
 Rank: Private Recorded as a Sergeant by CWGC  
 Battalion / Regiment: 10th Bn. Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders  
 Service Number: 326 Date of Death: 12 October 1917 Age at Death: ?  
 Buried / Commemorated at: Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, West Flanders, Belgium  
 Additional information given by CWGC: None

Hugh (Hughie) Bell was the eighth child, of twelve, of farm worker Samuel and Margaret Bell and he was born in South Knapdale, Argyllshire. He was an older brother of Donald and Thomas Bell who were also killed in WW1 [see entries [99: Donald Bell](#) and [101: Thomas Bell](#)].

In 1901, having recently left western Scotland, the family was involved in agriculture in western Kent, on the Medway:

Samuel Bell	Head	43	Ploughman on farm	Worker	Ireland Co. Antrim	Ballymena
Margaret B.	Wife	40	dairymaid		Scotland Renfrew	Kilmacolm
Elizabeth Bell	Daughter	16	domestic servant	Worker	Scotland Argyll	Knapdale
Robert B.	Son	14	ordinary farm labourer		B.	B.
Alice B.	Daughter	12			B.	B.
Hugh B.	Son	10			B.	B.
Thomas B.	Son	7			B.	B.
Donald B.	Son	5			B.	B.
David B.	Son	2			B.	B.

1901 census – Frog's Bridge Cottages, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent

Samuel Bell	43	ploughman on farm	born Ballymena, Co. Antrim
Margaret	40	dairymaid	born Kilmacolm, Renfrew, Scotland
Elizabeth	16	domestic servant	born Knapdale, Argyllshire
Robert	14	ordinary farm labourer	born Knapdale
Alice	12		born Knapdale
Hugh	10		born Knapdale
Thomas	7		born Knapdale
Donald	5		born Knapdale
David	2		born Knapdale

Although the family had lived in Argyllshire for many years they had, for reasons unknown, moved to Kent in about 1900 and it was here that their last child, Margaret Campbell Bell, was born in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1902.

However, by the time of the 1911 census the family had moved again and were now living in the village of Lacey Green, midway between Princes Risborough and High Wycombe:

**CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.**

*Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.*

*The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.*

Number of Schedules 132  
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.				BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of —	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.					
1 Samuel Bell	Head	33	Married	22	72	72	8	Stock man	on 71 120	Worker	Co Antrim, Ballymena	620	
2 Margaret Bell	Wife	49	Married	32	12	10	2			Worker	Renfrewshire, Knapdale	525	
3 Thomas Bell	Son	17	Single					Farm Labourer - 140		Worker	Argyllshire, Knapdale	520	
4 Donald Mc Bell	Son	15	Single					Farm Labourer - 1			Argyllshire, Knapdale		
5 David Bell	Son	12						390 school		0	Argyllshire, Knapdale		
6 Margaret Bell	Daughter	9						school			Kent, Hadlow	090	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that —  
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper columns.  
(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have entered their ages with the total number of persons.  
(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator H.S.V.

Total:  
Males 14 Females 2 Persons 6

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count outhouse, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

4 Rooms

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature Samuel Bell  
Postal Address Lacey Green Princes Risborough Bucks

1911 census (condensed) – Lac[e]y Green, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Samuel Bell	53	stockman on farm	born Ballymena, Co. Antrim
Margaret	49		born Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire
Thomas	17	farm labourer	born Argyllshire, Knapdale
Donald Mc.	15	farm labourer	born Knapdale
David	12		born Knapdale
Margaret	9		born Kent, Hadlow

Samuel and Margaret had been married for 32 years and ten of their twelve children had survived.

However, Hugh Bell was now serving in Malta with 'H' Coy. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders in Malta, stationed at the Imtarfa [now Mtarfa] Barracks:

21	Bell	Hugh	Private	age: 19	single	born Ardrishaig, Argyllshire
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1911 census (extract) – Imtarfa Barracks, Malta ['H' Coy. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders]

Bell Hugh Private age: 19 single born Ardrishaig, Argyllshire

Hugh gave his birthplace here - and in his Service Record - as Ardrishaig, a village in Knapdale.

It is not known what previous connection Hughie Bell had with Burton or Puddington although it is known that the Bell brothers came to the area for agricultural work. However, in 1911, a Thomas Bell was living in Puddington; single, aged 50, he was a farm labourer and had been born in Burton. In earlier years the name Bell was recorded several times in Puddington, Burton and Ness and it is possible that Donald Bell had ancestors who originated from this area, although no ancestral connection has been found.

However, in 1911, a Thomas Bell was living in Puddington; single, aged 50, he was a farm labourer and had been born in Burton.

In earlier years the name Bell was recorded several times in Puddington, Burton and Ness and it is possible that Hughie Bell had ancestors who originated from this area, although no ancestral connection has been found.

The Service Record for Hugh Bell provides some additional detail of his service and indicates that he attested in Tunbridge Wells on 14 June 1909 - when he would have been 17, although the age recorded was 20 years 10 months - and he was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's Regiment).

The physical description of Hugh notes that he was 5ft 8¼ins tall, weighed 146½lb (10½ stone / 66.6kg), had a 39-inch expanded chest and a fresh complexion with light-brown eyes and brown hair. Recorded as a farm labourer he had linear scars on the inner side of both index fingers and an oval scar on the inner side of his right knee as distinguishing marks. Perhaps he sustained one of the cuts on his hands shortly after enlisting as, on 28 August, he was admitted to hospital with a cut finger on the left hand although it was noted that it was a *disability of mild nature* and he *did not claim he was in the performance of military duties at the time of the accident*.

From 1909 the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was based in Malta and, certainly from March 1911, was based at the Imtarfa (now Mtarfa) Barracks, close to Rabat and Mdina in the north of the island, the barracks having been constructed in 1890. Hugh left for Malta on 15 September having spent 93 days in Britain and he appears to have remained with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Imtarfa until 28 November 1912 (a total of 3 years 75 days) when the battalion moved, en route to India.

On 2 December they were at Port Said and transited the Suez Canal, arriving in Aden on 7 December before reaching Mumbai (then Bombay) on 12/13 December. The battalion Headquarters and four companies then entrained for Dinapore, the remaining four companies moving to Dum Dum in Barrackpore, West Bengal, under Major R C Gore (it is not known where Hugh Bell was stationed).

Hugh Bell remained in India for almost two years, until 18 November 1914 when he returned to Britain until 18 December (30 days). On 19 December 1914 Hugh joined the Expeditionary Force to France, remaining in France for just 71 days before returning to the UK on 28 February 1915 where he spent the next 93 days. Perhaps the reason for returning to the UK was that, on 28 February, he appears to have transferred from the

1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion being appointed as a Lance Corporal (unpaid) in that battalion on 16 April 2015.

On 1 June 1915 Hugh returned, now in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, to France where he remained for the next 1 year 167 days. On 28 September Hugh was promoted to Corporal and on 26 December 1915 was appointed as a paid Lance Sergeant, a corporal acting in the rank of sergeant.

On 8 February 1916 Hugh was appointed as Acting Sergeant and promoted to Sergeant on 4 March. On 28 August 1916 he was appointed as Sergeant Major although, for unrecorded reasons, he reverted to the rank of Sergeant on 12 November 1916, the same day that he underwent a minor operation in a French hospital.

(432) Wt. 27169/7206 250M (8) 5.55 S.E.R. Ltd. Co. 647	No.	Corps	Name
	326	10/ATS HIGHRS	BELL
	A/CSM.		H
Operations	Vol.	Page	
DCM LG	10.1.1917	BGS-14	
File Nos. :-			

Whilst in France in 1916 Hugh was wounded twice (20 July and 22 October) although the cause and nature of his injuries are not recorded. However, it is quite possible that one of these injuries - possibly that in October - was received in the action in which he was involved and for which he received the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). Whilst this award was 'gazetted' in January 1917 the announcement, as was usual, gave no details of the date and action for which it was awarded. However, Hugh's Service Record notes that the citation was:  
*For conspicuous gallantry. He single handed established communications on the right*

The record of Hugh Bell having being awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, this being published in the *London Gazette* (LG) on 10 January 1917. At the time of the award he was Acting Company Sergeant Major (A/CSM).

*flank of his company at great personal risk. Later he rendered valuable service during the consolidating [of] the position.*

Number of days in Hospital	Remarks bearing on the cause, nature, or treatment of the case, likely to be of interest or of future use. In cases of syphilis, admissions and re-admissions to hospital will be shown. The subsequent progress, including particulars of treatment out of hospital, transfers, &c., will be given in the special syphilis case sheet.
36.	<i>a large endurated swelling back of neck right side. The abscess was opened on 12th. at Le Havre. considerable discharge from abscess. Under Cb. septic tissue excised on 11. 16. wound closed up slowly.</i>
Official record of Hugh Bell's medical problem in late 1916	

Between 15 November 1916 and 20 December (36 days) Hugh was in Tooting military hospital in Britain suffering from a 'large endurated swelling back of neck right side', the abscess having being drained on 12 November at Le Havre.

The Tooting military hospital was the informal name for the Church Lane Military Hospital, previously the Tooting Home for the Aged and Infirm. During WW1 it had 712

beds for enlisted servicemen, including 40 beds for dysentery cases, 60 for TB and 26 for eye patients.

After the war the Ministry of Pensions used it as a neurological hospital for shell-shocked and neurasthenic ex-servicemen until 1923 before, in 1931, it reopened as St Benedict's Hospital.

Hugh stayed in Britain until 19 July 1917 (247 days) when, for the third time, he was sent back to France. It appears that, until 8 August, Hugh was actually serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, when he was posted back to the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, part of the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Division before being killed in action on 12 October 1917. At the time of his death he had served for a total of 8 years 121 days and, on this third posting to France, had been in the country for just 85 days.

Although recorded on the Burton memorial as being a Private, Hugh Bell held the rank of Sergeant when he died.

ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS.—Aldridge 1918 Cpl. D. (Kirkintilloch); Allan 301683 J. (Glasgow); Bell 326 Sjt. H. (Tunbridge); Bell 8594 L.-Cpl. W. (Addiewell); Black

The death of Sjt Hugh Bell was announced in the War Office Weekly Casualty List of 4 December 1917.

As Hugh Bell was killed on 12 October 1917 it is most probable that he died during The First Battle of Passchendaele in which the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion were taking part - the Regimental War Diaries are unavailable and so no details are known.

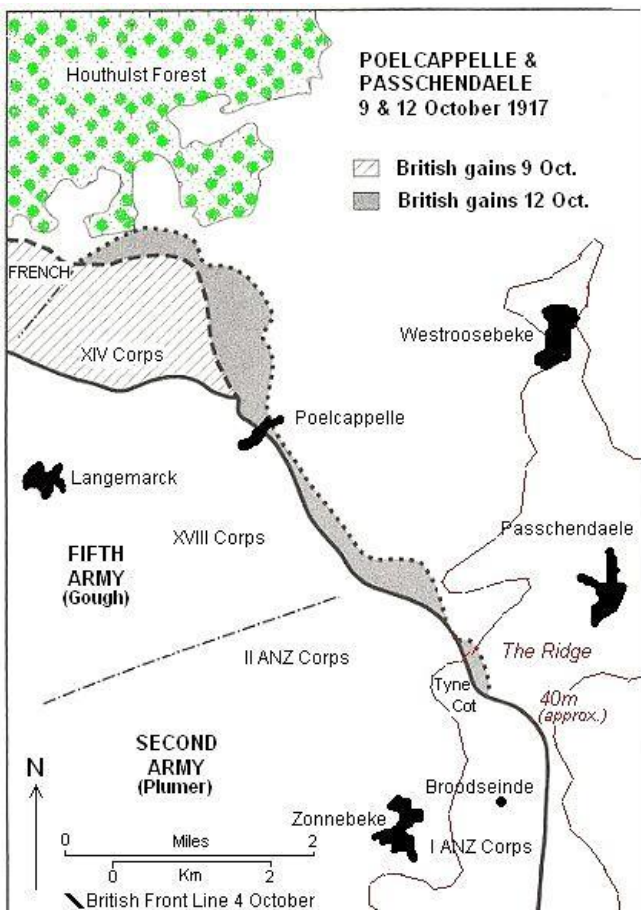
The attack was part of The Third Battle of Ypres; British troops had planned to capture the ridges south and east of the city of Ypres as part of a strategy decided by the Allies at conferences in November 1916 and May 1917. Passchendaele lay on the last ridge east of Ypres, 5 miles from a railway junction at Roulers, which was an important part of the German 4<sup>th</sup> Army supply system. After a dry spell in September, rains began on 3 October and by the Battle of Poelcappelle on 9 October, much of the British field artillery opposite Passchendaele was out of action due to the effects of rain, mud and German artillery-fire. The remaining guns were either left in old positions and fired at the limit of their range or were operated from any flat ground near wooden roadways or from platforms, many of which were unstable, when it was found impossible to move them forward to new positions before the attack began.

During the battle misleading information and delays in communication left Herbert Plumer and Douglas Haig under the impression that a substantial advance had taken place towards the Passchendaele ridge. The attackers had managed to advance towards the village but most of the captured ground had been lost to German counter-attacks during the afternoon. The attacks by the Fifth Army further north from Poelcappelle to the French First Army boundary to close in on Houthoult Forest succeeded but at the end of 9 October the front line near Passchendaele hardly

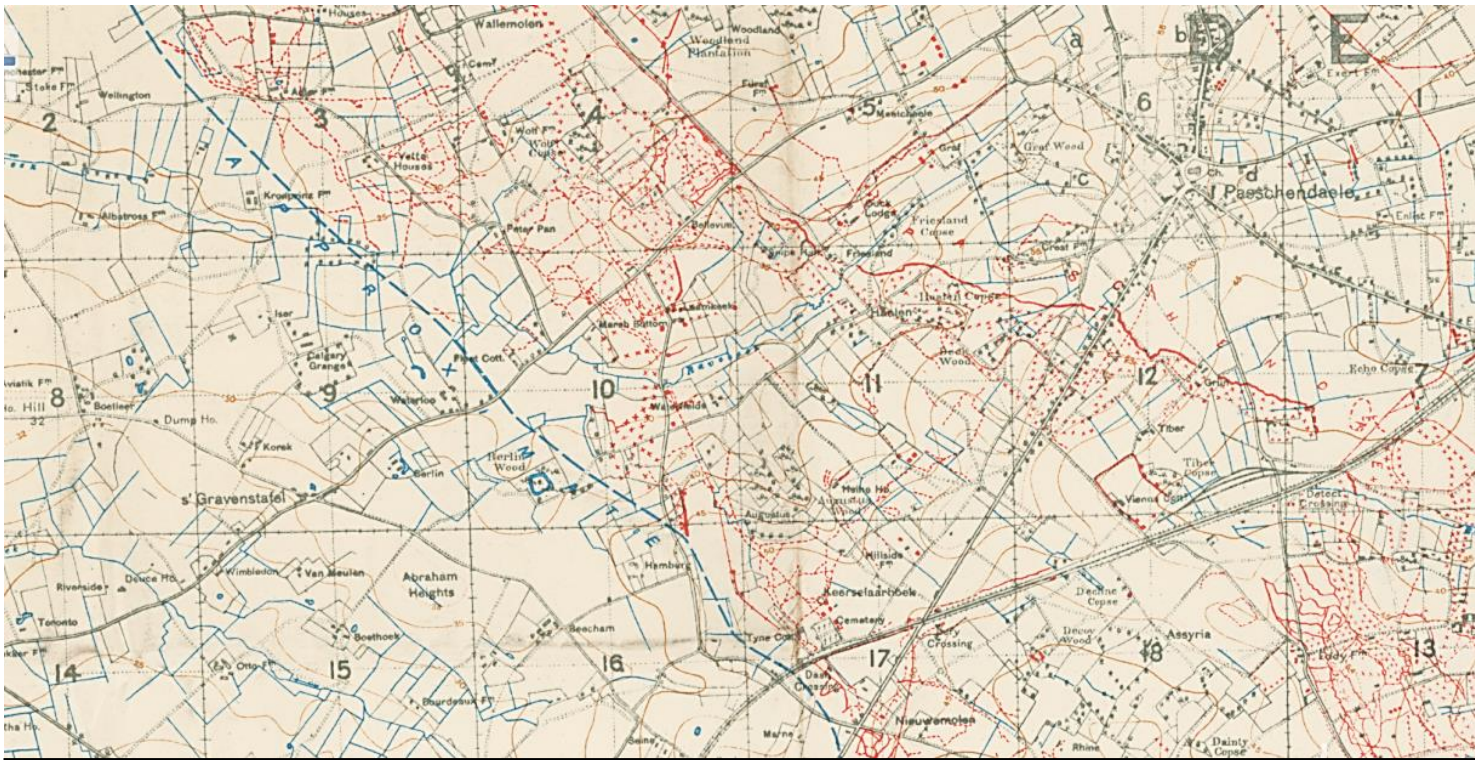
changed. Instead of an advance of 1,500 yards to complete the capture of Passchendaele, the British attack on 12 October began 2,000 - 2,500 yards from the village. The real position of the front line was discovered by air reconnaissance but the information arrived too late, to make more than minor changes to the plan.

The main attack on 12 October was conducted by the two Anzac corps in the Second Army against the 4<sup>th</sup> Army, with a supporting operation by the Fifth Army, between the northern boundary of the Second Army and the French First Army. The 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, which included the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, was to advance 2,000 yards on a 1,500-yard front into an area dotted with fortified farm buildings. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division was hampered by the effect of rain and mud on supply routes, which stranded guns and caused shortages of ammunition, particularly in smoke shells.

At midnight on 11 October torrential rain had fallen and a German gas and high explosive bombardment fell on the divisional forming-up areas. The wide front left numerous gaps in the line, as the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade advanced behind a barrage moving at 100 yards in eight minutes, assisted by a machine-gun barrage from 16 Vickers machine-guns. The creeping barrage began at 5:35 a.m. and was described as "thin and ragged". The advancing troops lost direction and communication broke down, as carrier pigeons were hindered by the high wind and messenger dog handlers became casualties. The infantry continued their advance and on the right of the captured Adler Farm and reached the green line at Source Trench.



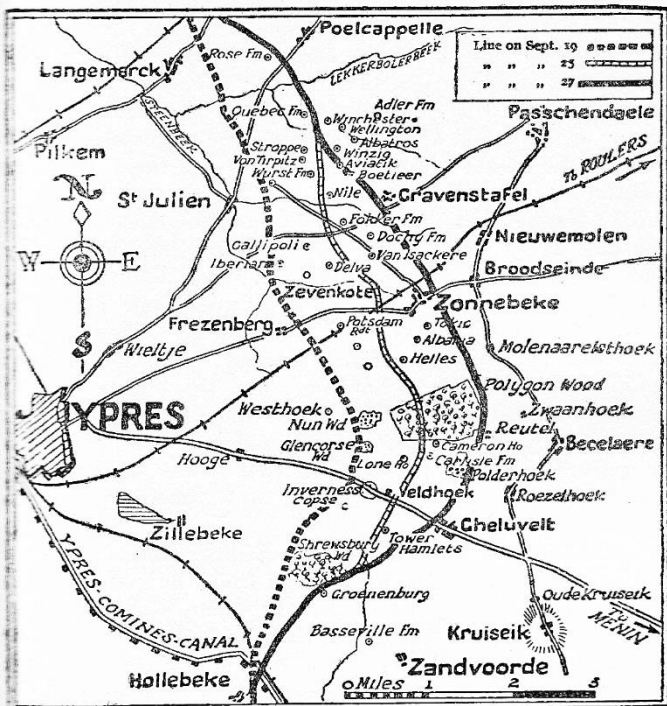
The Germans retained control of the high ground on Passchendaele Ridge opposite the I and II Anzac Corps, where the attack was repulsed or troops were forced by counter-attacks to retire from most captured ground, as had happened on 9 October. Attacks in the XVIII Corps sector from the right flank of the Fifth Army, north to Poelcappelle, were costly and gained little ground but the attack of XIV Corps from Poelcappelle to the French First Army boundary beyond the Ypres–Staden railway, reached the fringe of Houthulst Forest. The British offensive was postponed until the weather improved and communications behind the front were restored. Two German divisions intended for Italy were diverted to Flanders, to replace "extraordinarily high" losses. The battle had been a German defensive success but was costly for both sides. [Adapted from Wikipedia]



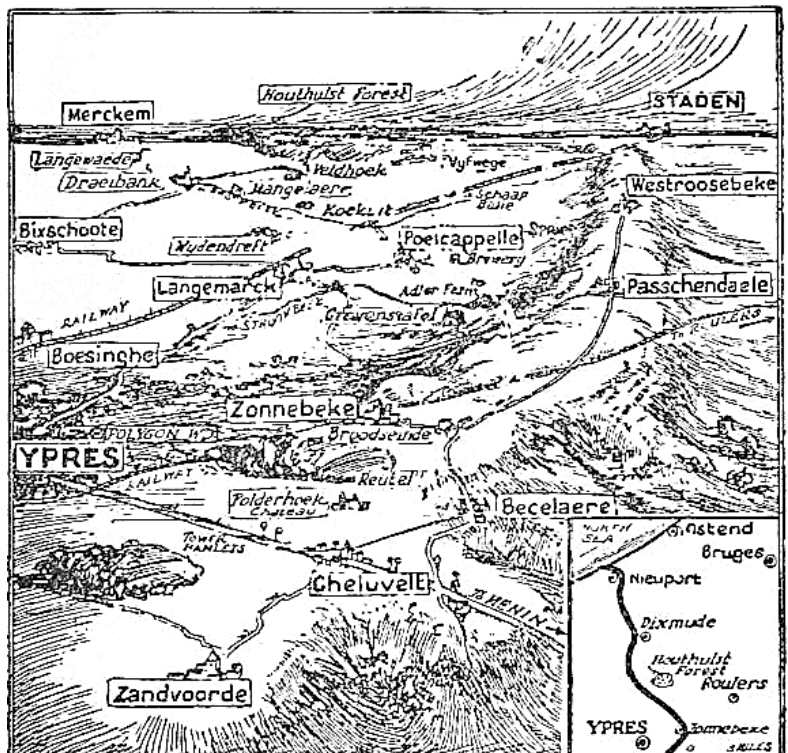
1 mile

The military position south and west of Passchendaele (north-east sector of this map extract) on 1 October 1917. The approximate position of the front line is shown by the broken blue line and, to the east, the German trenches and positions are shown in red. This map does not show the Allied trench positions; the blue lines on this map represent ditches and streams.

[Source: <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=50.8960&lon=3.0046&layers=101464912&b=1>]



Sketch map of the area between Ypres and Passchendaele showing the eastward progression of the Allied front line in September 1917 before the Third Battle of Ypres. [Source: <http://empirecall.pbworks.com/w/page/61632786/Young-W-J-Pte-456>]



Bird's-eye sketch of the Passchendaele Ridge east of Ypres. [Source: <http://freepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wakefield/history/35403-h/35403-h.htm>]



A sunburst through the clouds is shown against a landscape of destroyed land with shellholes. The morning after the First Battle of Passchendaele.



A field gun being moved two days before the battle

As Hugh Bell is commemorated on the Tye Cot Memorial, it is clear that his body was not recovered or identified after the battle. Neither Hugh nor Donald Bell are commemorated on the war memorials in Knapdale, Argyllshire, Ardrishaig, or other memorials in that vicinity.

Although no details are known, the Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929, records that Hugh was married to Elizabeth and it was she who received his army benefits after he was killed in action. It is possible that they were married in Scotland; certainly, they were not married at Burton or Neston.

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	CREDITS			CHARGES			Date of Authority	To whom Authorised	Amount Authorised			No. of List in which advertised	
					Account and Date	£	s.	d.	£	s.			d.	Account and Date	£		s.
619621	569305/1	Bell Hugh D.C.M.	10 <sup>th</sup> Argyll Squadron Sgt. 326	<del>12-10-17</del> 12-10-17 In act. Belg	Perth	32	15	1	33	9	1	m.o. 6.18.1918	Elizabeth	33	9	1	
													24/12/19 W.G.G. Elizabeth	21	10	10	

### Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. In July 1919 Hugh's widow, Elizabeth, received a payment of outstanding wages of £33 9s 1d (comprised of two payments : £32 15s 1d + 14s) from the army and, on Christmas Eve, a War Gratuity of £21 10s. This, a total value of £54 19s 1d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £8550 in 2016.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.