

126: James Devaney

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: J. Devaney

Rank: Lance Corporal

Battalion / Regiment: No. 4 Siege Coy. Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers

Service Number: 388417 Date of Death: 30 October 1918 Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Croix Churchyard, Croix, Departement du Nord, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

James Devaney, and his younger brother George [see [125: George Devaney](#)], both died in WW1. James was the (probably) tenth child of John and Sarah Devaney (sometimes Devanny/Devanney) of Neston.

A considerable amount of information regarding the Devaney family was given in entry [125: George Devaney](#) and is not restated here.

By the time of the 1911 census the family was living at Ivy Cottage, Greasby; three of John's sons had followed him in the bricklaying trade and James, 23, may have been working alongside his father.

James' Service Record - in a poor state of preservation, possibly as a result of damage during WW2 - exists in part and records that he enlisted, in Birkenhead, on 26 April 1916 when he was aged 28 years 120 days. He was said to be 5ft 6½ins tall, weighed 140lb (10 stone / 63.6kg) with a 38½-inch expanded chest. A bricklayer (he was classified as being 'superior' when tested in November 1918), he was unmarried and still living with his parents at Ivy Cottage, Greasby. Although it is recorded that James enlisted, as a sapper, with the 4th Siege Company Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, no details of his service in Britain are known before he embarked for France on 27 January 1917 (disembarking 29 January) and joining his unit a few days later.

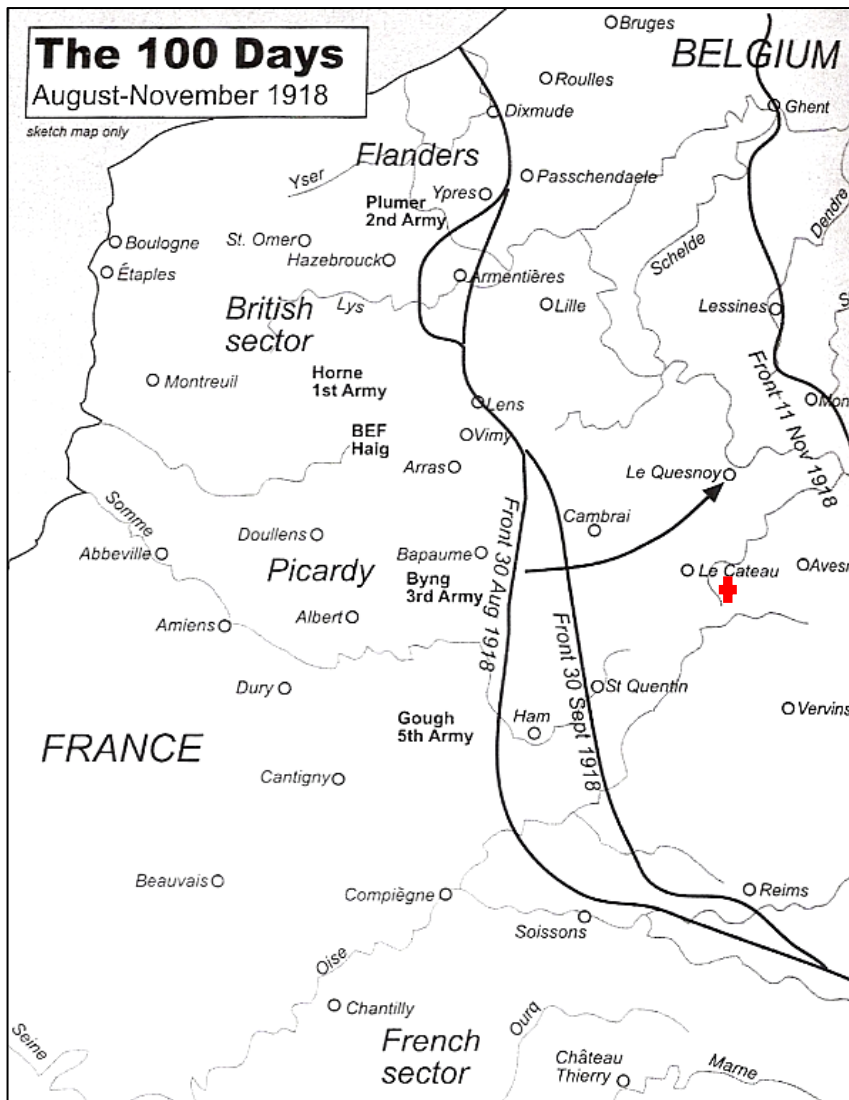
The Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers is one of the oldest and most senior regiments in the British Army Reserve (now part of the Territorial Army), having being formed in 1539 (and, in 2016, is the only remaining Militia unit in the British Army). It is the only unit to have two 'Royal' prefixes in its title, gaining the first 'Royal' in 1804 when it was known as the Monmouth and Brecon Militia and the second in 1877 when the regiment transferred from an infantry unit into a Special Reserve section of the expanding Royal Engineers.

The 4th Siege Company was a war-time unit, authorised on 26 August 1914 and formed on 14 September. The main forces had embarked at Southampton for France on 13 December 1914, although James had not enlisted at this time.

The 4th Siege Company was the first of the war-time Companies raised by the Royal Monmouth RE and was posted to V Corps as Corps troops at Ypres, working in the area

of "Hill 60." For the next two years and eight months it served continuously in the salient of Ypres and was in the vicinity of the first German gas attack in the spring of 1915, but seems to have escaped without any gas-casualties. The Company distinguished itself at The Battle of Messines in June 1917 and later in the year the Company moved briefly from the 2nd Army Area to the 1st Army Area and was then withdrawn. About September 1917, on leaving X Corps, the Company received a special commendation when the Chief Engineer of X Corps (Major General Tulloch, late RE) wrote:

On leaving the Corps, the Chief Engineer wishes to thank the 4th Siege Coy. R.M.R.E. for the good work they have done during the two years and eight months they were in the Ypres salient, which constituted a record for any unit, and the 4th Siege Company have reason to be proud of their fine performances. Their contribution towards the success of the operations has already been referred to by the Corps Commander, and I am glad to think that the traditions of the Royal Engineers have been so well upheld by this fine 'Special Reserve' unit.



James Devaney is buried at Croix Churchyard at Croix-Coluyau, 7 km north of Le Cateau and indicated on this map in red.

It may be presumed that James was killed some short distance to the west or southwest of the churchyard.

The map shows how the frontline advanced rapidly eastwards in the closing stages of the war.

[<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/295196950557822407/>]

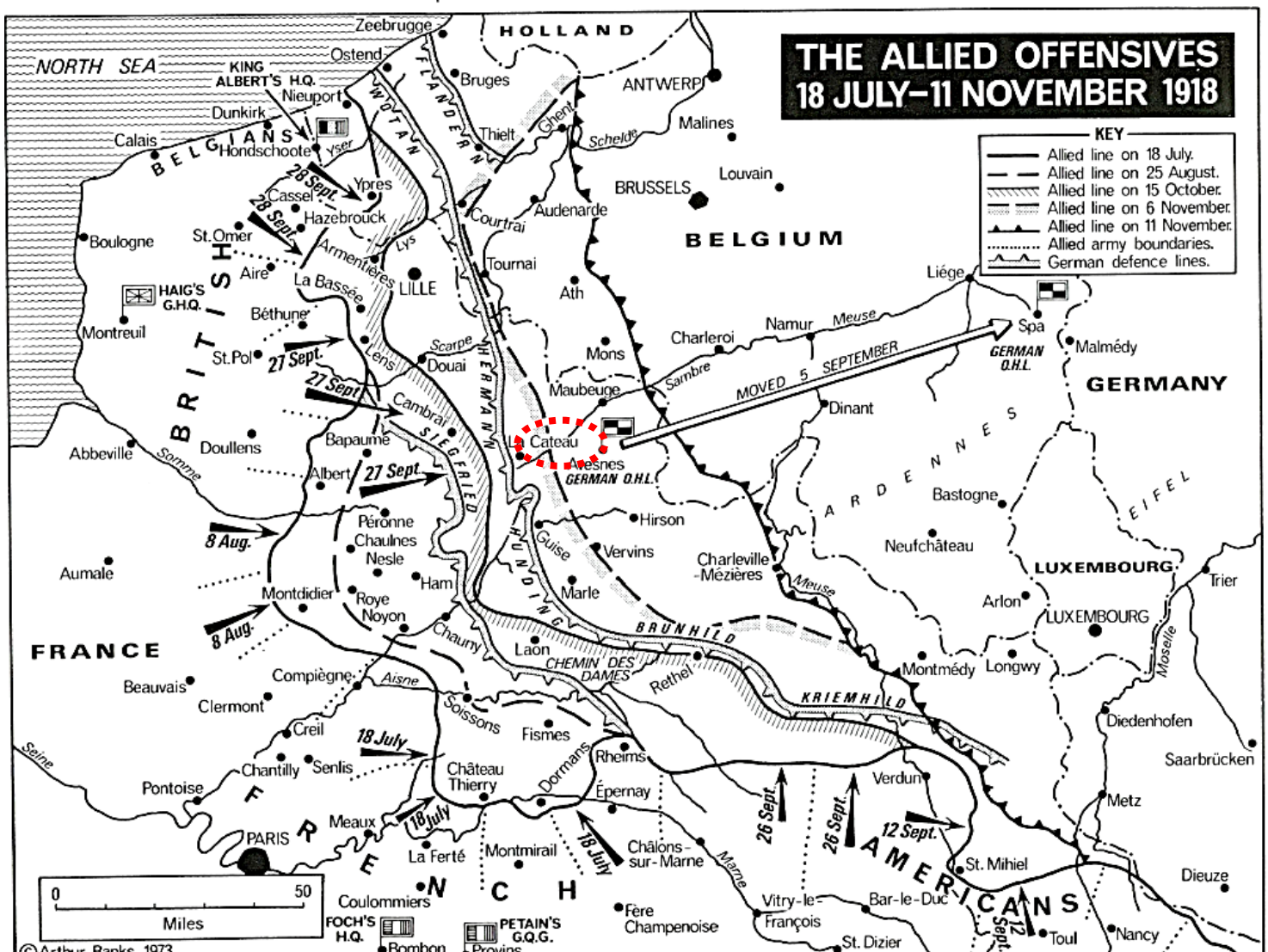
It was also in that month, on 17 September 1917, that James was appointed as Acting Lance Corporal (paid) as the assistant to Lance Corporal J T Quine (who appears to have survived the war) and he retained this rank until he became a full Lance Corporal on 5 June 1918.

In 1918 the Company moved to Nancy in the French zone and was employed on the erection of hutting for the R.A.F. whose special task was the bombing of the Ruhr - at this time the limited range of loaded bombers did not permit them to reach the Ruhr from the British zone.

In late summer of 1918 the Company was back in Northern France, where it took part in The Hundred Days Offensive, the final advances to the Armistice line which ended the war.

There was no particular offensive on 30 October 1918, but the records note that James was killed in action on this day so, although no details are available, we can be certain that he did not die of disease and it is unlikely that he died as a result of an earlier injury. This was just twelve days before the signing of the Armistice and the end of the war and it is interesting to note that the 4th Siege Company suffered more fatal casualties - 31 - than any other Royal Monmouthshire RE Company. At the time of his death James had served in the RE for a total of 2 years 188 day, 1 year and 277 days having being spent in France.

[General details of the 4th Siege Company RMRE adapted from: *The Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia) 1908-1967* Colonel Howard Everett & Lieut. Colonel Gavin Low 1969 Hughes & Son., The Griffin Press]



James Devaney probably died to the west of Le Cateau (encircled in red and shown, incorrectly, as La Cateau) on 30 October 1918

[Source: *A Military Atlas of the First World War* Arthur Banks Lee Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]

Both James and George Devaney are commemorated on the Grange Hill Memorial (the Hoylake and West Kirby War Memorial) [See previous entry, [125: George Thomas Devaney](#), for photographs].



James Devaney is buried in Croix Churchyard, Croix-Coluyau. Here, there are just 14 UK graves of British soldiers killed in WW1, 5 being buried on 30 October. Six of the 14 men served with the Royal Engineers.

804442	800369	Devaney James	PRK 4th Co. Regt Supt 388419	3105 Chatham Action France 17.14.9 2.19	13.5.19	John	17.14.9
✓							
27.2.19	Includes War Grat £14.10 -						

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. James's father, John, received a payment of outstanding wages of £3 14s 9d from the army and an usually large War Gratuity of £14 10s. This, a total value of £17 14s 9d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £2750 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.