

SIDNEY DENBOLE LEA

Lance Corporal 10164



Sidney Lea was born in Plympton, the son of James and Emma Lea of 3, Dixon Terrace in Yealmpton. James Lea ran an agricultural merchants business called "Leas of Yealmpton".

Sidney enlisted at Plymouth in the 8th (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. The Battalion was part of the first wave of Kitchener's Army. It landed at Le Havre on 28 July 1915 and proceeded to The Front where it joined 20th Brigade as part of 7th Division.

The Battle of Loos was the largest British offensive of 1915, and the first time that the British used gas. During the battle, on 25 September 1915, the battalion was formed up in four lines ready to attack German positions at Cite St Ellie. Overnight there had been some shelling, but at 5.30am a British intensive bombardment began, and a deluge of shells swept down on the German trenches. They opened up with a heavy reply which caused many casualties in the packed British trenches.

At 6.30am the British attack began, and 8 Devon's pushed forward with great dash. The first objective "Breslau Trench" was taken despite Germans manning the trench parapet and inflicting heavy casualties, including the Commanding Officer and seven officers. The battalion on 8 Devon's left was redirected to another task, which left their left flank exposed. Nevertheless, with only three officers left to direct them, the soldiers pushed on. By the time they reached the crossroads south of Cite St Ellie only two officers and about 70 men remained. They had advanced some 2,000 yards, and captured four field guns. The Germans mounted a massive counter attack and succeeded in pushing the 8 Devon's back to "Gun Trench".

8 Devon's defended their position for the next four days, after which they were pulled out of the line. The casualty list was very high – 19 officers and 620 other ranks were lost. Among those who fell on 25 September 1915 was Lance Corporal Lea, aged 24. He is remembered with honour at the Loos Memorial (Panel 35-37).



7th Division attack 25 September 1915

Battle of Loos

