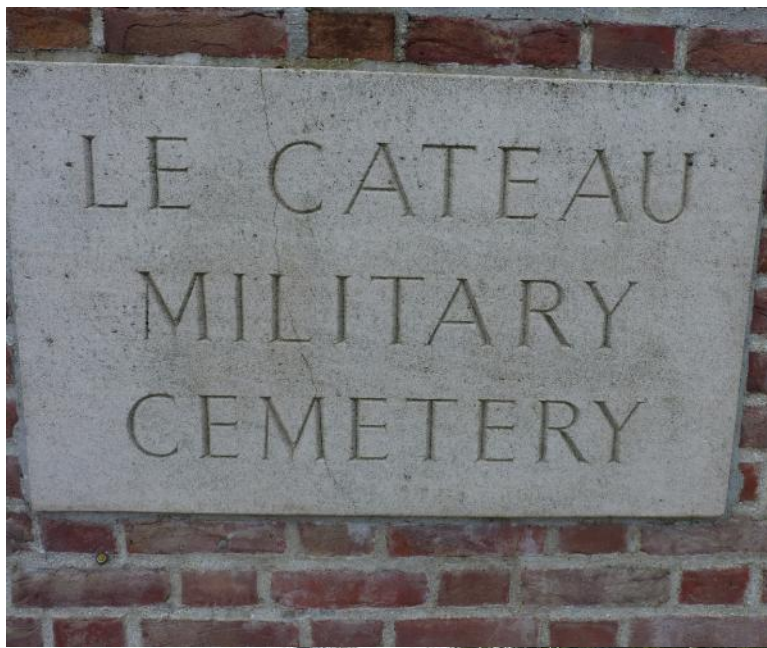


JAMES GIRLING BALLS (1907-09)

Date of Birth	19 August 1895
School Information	None
Career Information	Farmer at Spexhall, Suffolk
Date Of Death	7 December 1917
Cause of Death	Killed in the air
Location	Beauval, France
Cemetery	Le Cateau Military Cemetery - Plot V.E.16
Rank	Second Lieutenant
Branch of Service	Royal Field Artillery, A Battalion, 92 nd brigade

In October 2014 there was an OF visit to his grave







Le Cateau Military Cemetery



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Le Cateau-Cambrésis and the country to the west of it were the scene of a battle fought by the British II Corps on 26 August 1914 against a greatly superior German force. The town remained in German hands until the evening of 10 October 1918, when it was retaken by the 3rd Canadian Division. During the war, Le Cateau was the site of a German railway and a major military hospital (Krieglazarett 10). The hospital was located in the Seydoux textile factory building and was used to treat wounded German troops and Allied prisoners of war until it was destroyed by shellfire in October 1918.

The military cemetery was laid out by the Germans in February 1916 with separate plots for the Commonwealth and German dead. It contains the graves of over 5,000 German soldiers, who were either buried during the occupation or brought in from other German cemeteries in the region after the Armistice. A separate plot contains the graves of 34 Russian prisoners of war. The Commonwealth plot is now the final resting place of almost 700 servicemen of the First World War. Approximately 100 of these are known to have been killed or mortally wounded at the Battle of Le Cateau. The cemetery also contains the graves of at least 100 Commonwealth servicemen who fell in heavy fighting in this sector in October 1918. Most of the remaining burials are those of men who were captured while wounded and subsequently died in the German general hospital.



The Battle of Le Cateau

The first major battle between the British and German forces on the Western Front took place at Mons on 23 August 1914. By 25 August, the German First Army was close on the heels of II Corps of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), and there was a danger that the retreating British troops, now exhausted and in some disarray, would be overrun and defeated if the withdrawal continued. By nightfall, General Smith-Dorrien had decided that II Corps, along with a detachment of French Cavalry under Général Sordet, would stand and face the

advancing German forces the following day at Le Cateau. Shortly after dawn on 26 August, German artillery batteries located about three miles to the north-east began firing on British troops who were still taking up their positions to the west of the town. At the first shells landed, German cavalry appeared from the direction of Cambrai and began advancing toward the British lines. Almost simultaneously, German infantry units launched a surprise attack on the men of the East Surrey and Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry who had massed themselves in the eastern suburb of the town.

For the next six hours, French and British troops held down withering rifle and artillery fire against the attackers and, despite suffering heavy casualties, managed to hold a greatly superior German force at bay. By midday, more German units were entering the battlefield, enemy artillery fire was becoming more intense, and it was clear that the Allied forces, numbering about 40,000 men, would have to begin to retreat or prepare to surrender. Soon after 1pm, British artillery units, some of which had been stationed alongside the infantry in the front-line, began to slowly withdraw from the battlefield. Fighting continued for the rest of the day and toward British units were almost completely lost to enemy fire, but by sunset most Allied soldiers had successfully withdrawn.

In total, over 7,000 British and French soldiers were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner at Le Cateau, while the German forces suffered approximately 8,000 casualties. The battle had been a costly one, but the stand taken by II Corps temporarily stopped the German advance and bought the Allied forces valuable time as they retreated towards the Marne.

†† Simon Road Field Station viewed through a French village, August 1914
Le Cateau during the Battle of Le Cateau on 26 August 1914

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commission is responsible for the commemoration of almost 1,700,000 members of the Commonwealth forces who gave their lives in the two world wars. The graves and memorials of these men and women, who came from all parts of the Commonwealth and who were of many faiths and of none, are found around the globe in 153 countries. For more information about the Commission, our work and how to search our records online visit www.cwgc.org. Enquiries are also welcome at our offices: **CWGC Head Office** Tel: +44 (0) 1628 507200
E-mail: casualtyenq@cwgc.org **CWGC France Office** Tel: +33 (0) 3 21 21 77 00 E-mail: france.mex@cwgc.org

For more information about this location and name of those commemorated here, scan the QR code (right).

