



History: KS2

Histories in the Headstones Soldiers buried at Lye and Wollescote Cemetery

Private James Robert Holden
5th Bttn. Worcestershire Regiment
Died 4th November 1918 aged 28

James Holden was born in 1890 and lived at School House in Stourbridge Road Lye. He married May Maria Shepherd in 1912 and they lived in Birmingham Street.

He volunteered for the Worcesters in 1914 but was later transferred to the Labour Corps. In October 1915 a rumour began to circulate that Pte Holden was missing but this was put to bed when his mother received a letter saying he *“could not write before as up the trenches doing a bit..”* He finished his letter by telling his mother *“I have just had a wash – the first for eight days”*.

In November 1915 he wrote to his mother again describing the action in the trenches:

“The other day we went up to the trenches to relieve another battalion.... Suddenly something went off with a bang.... The Germans had blown up a mine under D Company's trench, filled up the trench and buried half the Company, so we had to dig them out at night. It was terrible the rain was puring down in buckets full”.

James almost survived the war but died of pneumonia on 4th November 1918, possibly a victim of the influenza epidemic.

Research Questions:

1. How useful are letters as source material? Why?

2. How could you find out more information about the life of Private Holden using primary sources?

Information taken from *“The Lost Twenty-Nine”* by Jean Weston and Marlene Price