

## **The Christow WW1 War Memorial**

***Over 11,000 men and women from Devon lost their lives during or as a result of serving their country during the Great War of 1914-18. The plaque in St James Church commemorates 14 of them.***

## **M2/202579 Private Albert Beer - Royal Army Service Corps**

Albert was born on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1894, the youngest of the 5 children of Arthur and Martha Beer. They lived in the Exmouth Mine Cottages. Arthur was a carpenter on the Canonteign Estate. Albert's grandfather William had also been a carpenter and his brother, William.

Albert entered Christow Primary School on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1899 and left on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1908 because he was 'of age'.

By the age of 16 Albert was working as a labourer on the estate but he left home when he married Elizabeth Easterbook in Totnes in 1915. He remained there until he enlisted on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1916 as a driver/mechanic in the Mechanical Transport Company of the Royal Army Service Corps.

He came home on leave on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1916. His twin sons, Archie Edward and Albert William, were born on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1916 at Bourton Cottage, Bridgetown, Totnes. He didn't come home again until 29<sup>th</sup> December 1917.

Albert arrived in Le Havre on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1917 assigned to Heavy Artillery Mechanical Transport and attached to a Royal Artillery Siege Battery moving heavy guns and howitzers, equipment and ammunition between the Front and the stores.

Wounded, for the first time, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1917 (9 days after arrival) Albert recovered and was transferred to another Mechanical Transport company. Wounded again on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1917 he returned to his company before being sent home on leave.

Wounded on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1918, he recovered and was transferred to another Heavy Artillery corps.

Wounded on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Albert died 3 days later - 2 months before Armistice. He is buried at Five Points Cemetery, near Bapaume, France.

Albert's personal effects were sent to his widow in Bridgetown in February 1919; followed by his final pay and a separation allowance of £1.17.9d, the Memorial Scroll and 'Dead Man's Penny' and his Victory and British medals.

## **11754 Private John Henry Counter - 1st Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment**

John Counter was born on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1883 to Edwin and Mary Counter. His father was a lead miner from Brends, Ashton. The family moved to Byteign, Christow and then to Spara Bridge Cottage (since demolished), Ashton. Edwin had then become an agricultural labourer. He died in 1904.

John entered Christow Primary School on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1888. In 1909 he married Annie Warnham.

By 1911 John and Annie had a daughter, Ivy, aged 11 months, and were living at 3 South Road, Erith, Kent with Annie's widowed mother and her brother George. In 1912 they had a daughter, Doris. Later John Henry had a job with London County Council on their Thames sludge boats and the family lived at 8M Peabody Buildings, Kingsway, London.

John enlisted on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1915 at Woolwich, as a Private in 1st Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment, and went to France.

John Henry was Gazetted on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1916, receiving the Military Medal for digging out, under heavy shell fire, several of his comrades who had been buried in a dug-out by the explosion of a shell. Typically, although these actions were regarded as heroic, they were not regarded as sufficiently heroic to merit an award of the more impressive Distinguished Conduct Medal.



By 1917 John H Counter, MM, was a Chief Engineer. He was killed in action on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1917 at the age of 33 at Polderhoek, a small hamlet north of the Menin Road close to the village of Gheluvelt and not far from Polygon Wood. It saw fighting during the 1<sup>st</sup>

Battle of Ypres in 1914 and then remained in German hands until after the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres in 1917; by that time the whole area was a lunar landscape.

Polderhoek Chateau was a medium sized chateau for this area. Little is known about its pre-war history but it appears to have been taken over as a headquarters and later a dressing station. This image dates from 1915 when the building had come under British shell fire – the amount of shrapnel damage to the building is evident by the impact marks on the walls.

John was buried at Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest British war cemetery in the world. 11,908 graves are registered there the incumbents of which are 70% unknown. On the wall at the back of the cemetery are the names of 34,927 soldiers who have no known grave and died from August 1917 to the end of the war - a continuation of the names inscribed on the Menin Gate.

John Henry's mother was living at Canonteign Lodge, Christow, and his wife Annie at their Kingsway address in London. Annie would have received John's 3 medals, Victory, British and 1915 Star, in the post.



## **291071 Private Theodore Ernest Gidley - 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment**

Theodore Gidley was born on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1877 in Christow. He entered Christow Primary School 29<sup>th</sup> August 1881.

Theodore was the grandson of Gustavus and Elizabeth Gidley. Gustavus Gidley was a master cooper in Wonson, Throwleigh, where his son, George was born in 1827. The Gidley family ran the New Inn in Wonson in 1851, with George following his father's trade of barrel-making, not yet a master, but a journeyman craftsman.

In 1861, although George is described as a lead miner when boarding at Stratton, Christow, he was probably making barrels for the mine.

By 1881 George was running the Palk Arms in Christow with this wife, Elizabeth. Their sons Arthur Charles and Theodore Ernest would both serve in WW1, but now they were just 6 and 4 years old.

By 1891, Elizabeth was a widow, and her son Arthur Charles was a barman in the inn; Theodore probably helped.

In 1901, Theodore was living with and assisting, his grandfather Gustavus, now a wool dealer and they lived at Church Hill in Honiton. Theodore must have met his future wife, Florence Turl, here. They were married in 1907 in the Exeter area and, in 1908, their son Maurice Theodore was born. Florence died in 1951 at the age of 88.

In 1911, Theodore and his family were living at 4 Taddyforde Road, St Davids, Exeter. He was a commercial traveller in corn and wool. Theodore Gidley enlisted in Exeter and was a Private in the 9<sup>th</sup> Service Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment.

He was killed on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1918, aged 41 and buried at Prospect Hill Cemetery, Gouy, France.

Florence would have received his Victory and British medals at their home at 8 Park Rd., Longbrook Street, Exeter.

*Arthur Charles Gidley*

*Maybe as a reaction to his brother's death, Arthur Charles Gidley enlisted in 1918 at Exeter at the age of 43. He was the innkeeper at the Palk Arms in Christow with his wife Emily (nee Hill) whom he married in Montrose in 1909. Described as an ex-quarryman at Scattor Rock Quarry, he had been in the 5<sup>th</sup> Devon Volunteers and became a Private in the Royal Engineers (Transportation Branch) Inland Waterways and Docks as a Private navvie. He was posted to Sandwich in Kent from Exeter on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1918 and from there to Poole. He never served abroad so was not entitled to any medals when he was demobbed on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1919.*



IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
MY BELOVED HUSBAND  
GUSTAVUS GIDLEY  
WHO FELL ASLEEP AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup>. 1929  
AGED 64  
IN THY PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF  
JOY

ALSO OF MARY JANE  
HIS BELOVED WIFE  
WHO PASSED AWAY JAN 1<sup>ST</sup>. 1944  
AGED 85

ALSO OF  
**THEODORE ERNEST GIDLEY**  
**9<sup>TH</sup>. DEVONS**  
**BROTHER OF THE ABOVE**  
**KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE**  
**OCT 5<sup>TH</sup>. 1918 AGED 41**  
**INTERRED IN PROSPECT HILL CEM., GOUY**  
**FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

## **423 Private Frank Gove - 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment**

(William) Frank Gove was born on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1893 to William Henry and Annie Gove. In 1901 the Gove family were living in Uppertown, Christow. William was a general labourer and Frank was one of 9 children. By 1911 he was 17 and living on John Pitts farm, Great Leigh, Doddiscombsleigh where he worked as a wagoner. His brother, Walter, aged 14 was there also and worked as a cowboy on the farm.

Frank enlisted on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914 in Exeter and became a drummer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment with whom he was sent to France. Drummers also used the fife and bugle for signalling and played on long marches to the front line. There they were used as runners and stretcher bearers.

Frank was at Bailleul Corps headquarters, south west of Ypres, an important railhead, a depot and hospital Casualty Clearing Station. He died of wounds on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1915 at the age of 22 and was buried at Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France among 4,402 other servicemen.

His family would have received his Victory, British and 1914 Star medals.

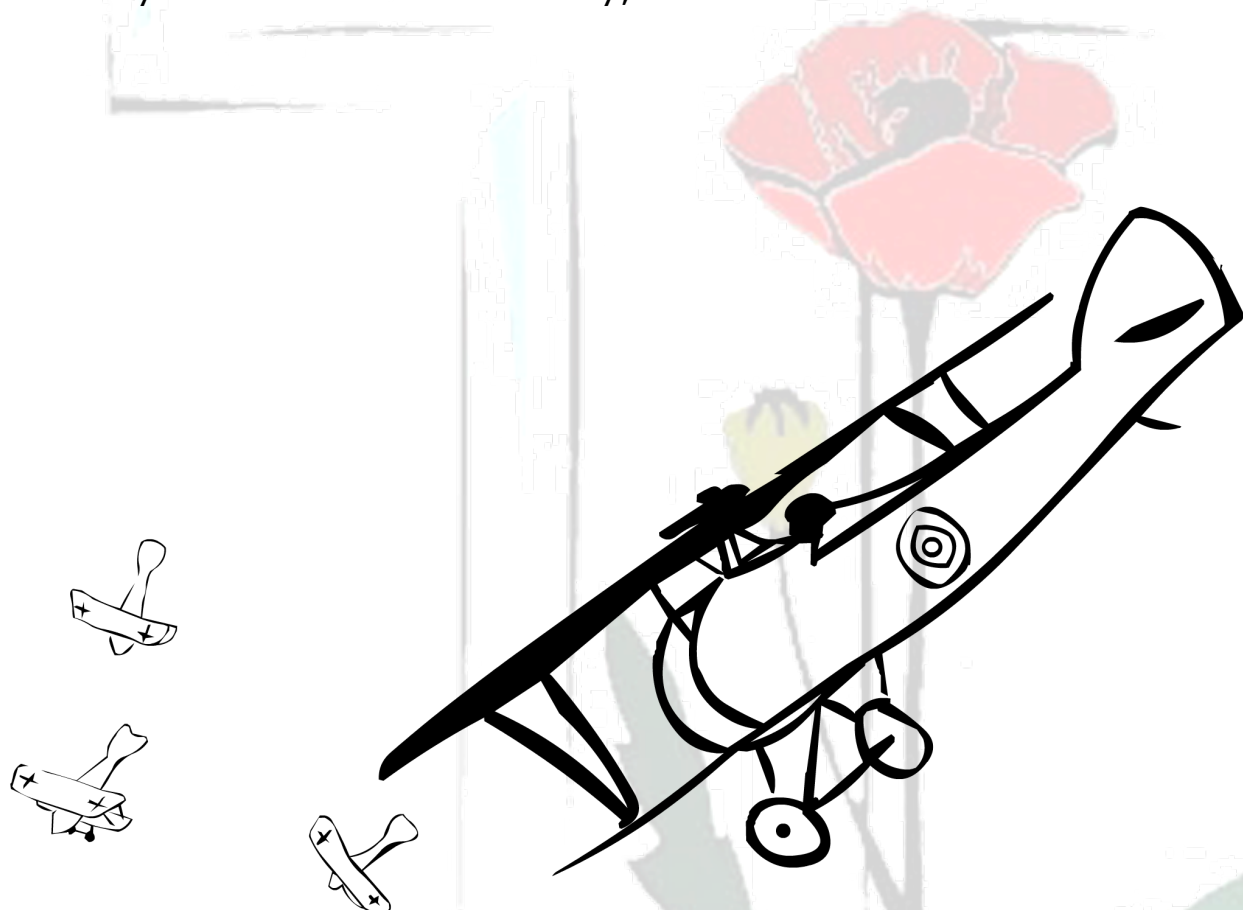


## **8916 Private Frederick George Hamlyn - 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment**

Frederick George Hamlyn was born in Christow on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1893 to George Hamlyn, a farm labourer, and his wife, Caroline. He entered Christow Primary School on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1897. In 1901 the family were living in Uppertown but by 1911 Frederick was living in the vicinity of Exeter. When he enlisted in Exeter on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1914, he gave his parents' address as Court Cottage, Christow.

Frederick enlisted as a Private with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment but his service was short lived. He died of wounds 12 weeks later on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1915 aged 21. He is buried in Merville Communal Cemetery, Nord Pas-de-Calais 15 kilometres north of Bethune which was a rail head until May 1915 and a billeting and hospital centre from 1915-1918. Frederick lies among 1,267 other Commonwealth graves and 12 French war graves.

Private Hamlyn was awarded the Victory, British and 1914 Star medals.





## 9437 Private William Thomas Hamlyn - 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment

(William) Thomas Hamlyn was the son of George and Caroline Hamlyn; brother of Frederick George Hamlyn (see above). He was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1896 and entered Christow Primary School on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1899. He left on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1909 because he was deemed as 'exempt from attendance (through) working on (a) farm.'

In 1911 Thomas was living with his parents at Sea Hill Cottage, Christow and working alongside his father as a labourer on a farm. He enlisted in Newton Abbot on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914 (before his brother, Frederick), and entered the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Devonshire Regiment.

He was killed aged 20, in action on the Somme, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 (the first day of action) and is buried in the Devonshire Cemetery, Mametz.



**The Devonshire Cemetery** is one of the smallest and most poignant of memorials scattered over the Somme. All other graveyards hold the dead of different regiments and nations, but this one is purely for a single regiment and their dead from one day of action.

Mametz was behind the German lines until 1 July 1916 when the 8th and 9th Battalions of the Devonshire Regiments attacked near Mansel Copse. Three days of fierce fighting forced the Germans back and the Devons collected their 163 dead from no man's land. They buried them in part of their old support line trench and set up a wooden plaque which read:

***'The Devonshires held this trench,***

***The Devonshires hold it still'.***

Thomas's family would have received the Victory, British and 1914 Star medals. Mrs Hamlyn applied for the 1914 Star clasp and roses for her boys and she received it in January 1920 when she was still living at Sea Hill Cottage.

Correspondence.

*Mrs B. Hamlyn makes application for 1914 Star clasp in respect of the services of her two late sons. 18-1-20.*

Address. *Sea Hill Cottage,  
Briston,  
nr. Exeter.*

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
HAMLIN William T.	1. Devon. R.	Pte	9437
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	C/2/103B/10	690	R. in A.
BRITISH	do	do	
14 STAR	C/2/1	50	
<i>clasp &amp; roses. I.N. 2/95/C a d/10.5-20. clasp 2/2016.</i>			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein	22-8-14		<i>clasp 2/2016.</i>

K. 1380.

## **2362 Private Reginald Huxtable - the Royal North Devon Hussars**

We have been unable to find any connection between a Reginald Huxtable and Christow. Of the 7 males of that name identified by the 1911 census, the one described below seems to be the most likely. Can anyone verify this or tell us any different?

Reginald Huxtable is not commemorated on the plaque in the old Methodist Chapel.

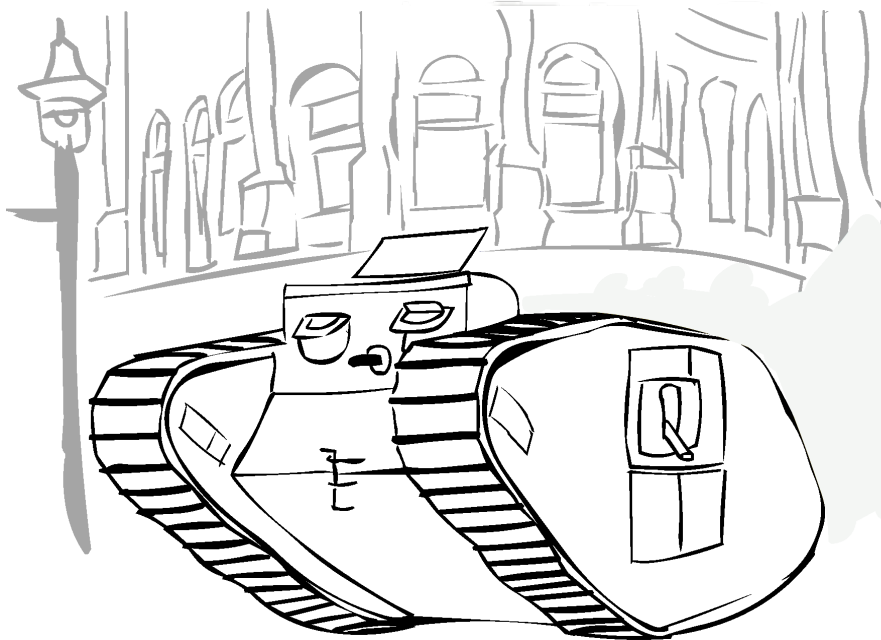
In 1901, **Reggie Huxtable**, aged 4, is living in Fremington with his grandfather John Huxtable, aged 60, who is living on Relief from the Parish. John's daughter, Mary, is also living at home. She is single and a dressmaker. Is it possible Reggie is her illegitimate son?

By 1911, **Reginald** is 14, and an errand boy for a butcher in Fremington, living with Mary and her father, John.

**Reginald** enlisted in Barnstaple on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1915 into the Royal North Devon Hussars Yeomanry of the Household Cavalry as a Private and went to Gallipoli, Turkey. He sailed on the *SS Olympic* from Liverpool as part of a group of over 7,000 men. They arrived at Mudros harbour (on the island of Lemnos), before sailing for Gallipoli. The 8 month campaign in Gallipoli started in April 1915 as an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock of the Western Front in France and Belgium and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. However, the difficult terrain and stiff Turkish resistance soon led to the stalemate of trench warfare. Those wounded in action in Gallipoli were evacuated to Egypt by improvised hospital ships.

Reginald died at sea 16 days after enlisting on his way to hospital in Egypt. He was probably buried at sea, and is commemorated on the Helles Memorial which bears more than 21,000 names

Reginald Huxtable's relatives would have received his Victory, British and 1915 Star medals.



## **10208 Private Charles George Stancombe - 8th (Service) Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment**

Charles George Stancombe was born on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1894 in Bovey Tracey.

He entered Christow Primary School on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1899 when he was living at Back Lane, Christow with his father, George, a shiny ore miner, and his wife of 17 years, Mary Ann.

By 1911, Charles is 16 and a labourer in the concrete works - his father is still a miner of shiny ore. They live at Reed Cottage, Christow

Charles enlisted at Exeter on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1915 and went to France as in the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. Charles was killed in action in France 3 months later on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915, aged 21.

His commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel C.J. Sheepshanks, wrote to his mother:

*"Please be certain of this, that he died as a soldier should, gallantly charging the German trenches in the teeth of a hellish fire; that he never hesitated for a second when the order to charge was given; and that he did his duty to the last. No soldier could do more."*

He is commemorated on Panel 35 to 37 of the Loos Memorial, Loos-en-Gohelle, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France The Loos Memorial commemorates over 20,000 officers and men who have no known grave. His parents, George and Mary Ann Stancombe now of Spring Dale, Hennock, Bovey Tracey would have received his Victory, British and 1915 Star medals.

## The Wills Boys

Arguably the most famous of the Christow war dead. Four of the sons of William Henry and Ellen Wills went to war and 3 died. In 1901 the family lived with Ellen's father, George Cox, a road labourer in Uppertown, Christow. By 1911 they were living at 1 Lears Cottages, Dry Lane.

William and Ellen were married for 24 years and had 10 children; 9 survived to 1911. William Henry was 47 years old and a stone quarryman.



A TOKEN OF EVER LOVING MEMORY  
OF DEARLY LOVED SONS OF  
WH & E WILLS  
1 LEARS COTTAGE, CHRISTOW  
CHARLES LAMBERT WILLS  
WHO DIED APRIL 14 1904 AGED 10 MONTHS

-  
**GEORGE WILLS**, 8<sup>TH</sup>. DEVON REGT.  
WHO FELL IN FRANCE  
IN THE BATTLE OF LOOS

25 SEPT 1915, AGED 25 YEARS

*THE PATH OF DUTY WAS THE WAY TO GLORY*

-  
**JOHN (JACK) WILLS**, ROYAL IRISH RIFLES

LATE OF THE ASC

WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 1918, AGED 25 YEARS

*"...AND GREAT IS HIS REWARD IN HEAVEN"*

**THOMAS (TOM) WILLS**

2/4 ROYAL; BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

WHO FELL IN ACTION AT BETHUNE, FRANCE

23 APRIL 1918, AGED 19 YEARS

*FOR HONOUR, LIBERTY AND TRUTH,*

*HE SACRIFICED HIS GLORIOUS YOUTH*

*THEIR TOILS ARE PASSED, THEIR WORK IS DONE*

*AND THEY ARE FULLY BLEST.*

*THEY HAVE FOUGHT THE FIGHT, THE VICTORY WON AND ENTERED INTO REST*



## **10203 Private George Wills - 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment**

George was the 2<sup>nd</sup> son of William and Ellen Wills. He was born on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1890 and entered Christow Primary School on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1896. He has left home by the time of the 1911 census but reappears to enlist at Exeter on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1915. He joined the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. George was killed in France 2 months later aged 24. It appears that his body was never found as his Medal Card says "*Death regarded 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915.*" He was awarded the Victory, British and 1915 Star.

He is buried in the British Cemetery at Loos-en-Gohelle. The village has given its name to the battle of the 25th September - 8th October 1915, in which it was captured from the Germans by the 15th (Scottish) and 47th (London) Divisions, and defended by French troops on the 8th October.

The cemetery was begun by the Canadian Corps in July 1917, and the graves then made are contained in Rows A and B of Plot I and Row A of Plot II. The remainder of the cemetery was formed after the Armistice by the concentration of graves from the battlefields and smaller cemeteries over a wide area North and East of the village. There are nearly 3,000 British casualties of the Battle of Loos buried here



## **47360 Rifleman John Wills - 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Royal Irish Rifles Formerly 028106 of the Royal Army Service Corps**

John was the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of William and Ellen Wills. He was born on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1892 and entered Christow Primary School on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1896. He, too, had left home by 1911 and is likely to be the John Wills aged 18 who is working as an assistant to John William Mingo, a master butcher of 28 Alphington Street, Exeter.

John enlisted on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1915 as a Private in the Army Service Corps but was then transferred to the Royal Irish Rifles. This may have happened after being wounded. On recovery his unit may have been too far away for him to reach in France so he would have been transferred to the nearest fighting unit.

John died on the Somme on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1918 aged 25. He is commemorated on the Poziers Memorial Panels 74 -76 which enclose the Pozieres British Cemetery. The Memorial commemorates over 14,300 casualties who have no known grave and died on the Somme battlefields by overwhelming German forces.





## **444522 Private Thomas Wills - 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Royal Berkshire Regiment formerly 37419 of the Wiltshire Regiment**

Thomas Wills was the 5<sup>th</sup> son of William and Ellen Wills. He was born on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1897 and entered Christow Primary School on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1902.

Thomas was only 15 when the war started. He may have enlisted when he was 17 or been conscripted, first into the Wiltshire Regiment, and then transferred into the Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Sent to France, he was killed in action near Bethune at the Battle of Lys on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1918 at the age of 21 and is buried at Saint Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery, near Bethune, Calais. For much of the First World War, the villages of St. Venant and Robecq remained practically undamaged, but in April 1918, during the Battle of the Lys, the German line was established within 2 kilometres of the road that joins them. The cemetery was begun around 12 April 1918 and used as a front line cemetery until the end of July. It contains 479 burials.



## The other Wills

### 10185 Private Charles Wills - 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment

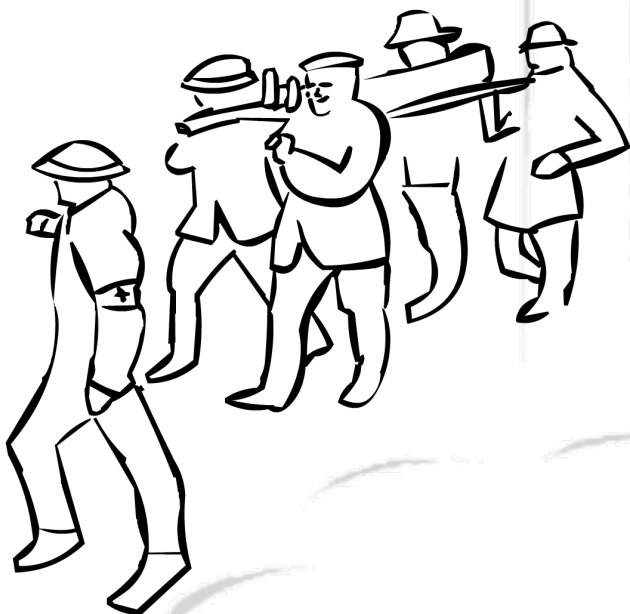
Charles Wills was born in Christow on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1894, the son of George and Mary Ann Wills, nee Horrell, George was an agricultural labourer. Charles entered Christow Primary School on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1898.

In 1901 the Wills family live at Bowden, Christow. In 1911, Charles Wills, aged 16, is a mason's labourer living with his parents in Oathill Cottage, Christow. The parents have been married 20 years and had 7 children. Charles' father is still a farm labourer, and his younger sister Bessie, aged 15, is a domestic servant. There are 4 younger siblings at home.

Charles Wills appears to have enlisted with George Wills on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1915 and both went into the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. Their service numbers are 18 digits apart - perhaps they joined different queues in Exeter. Both stated they were born in Exeter, but Christow is in the *St Thomas, Exeter* Registration District.

Charles Wills was a Private in the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment.

He was killed in action on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1917, aged 22, and buried at Hooze Crater Cemetery, although his body may have been brought in from Zillebeke or Zonnebeke cemeteries.



Hooze Chateau was the scene of very fierce fighting throughout the First World War. After Armistice, other burials were brought here including 20 UK soldiers from Menin Road Pillbox Cemetery, Zillebeke, buried in October 1917; and 26 UK soldiers from Pillbox Cemetery, Zonnebeke, buried in October 1917.



Charles' parents would have received his Victory, British and 1915 Star medals.

***"I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."***

**King George V,  
Flanders, 1922**

## **Acting Leading Seaman Sam Gordon Wills**

**Gordon Wills** is commemorated on the War Memorial inside St James's Church, Christow and Sam Gordon Wills is commemorated on the War Memorial in the old Methodist Chapel, Christow. Leading Seaman, SG Wills, SS Belgic is recorded on Dawlish War Memorial at St Gregory's Church. They are all the same person.

**Sam Gordon Wills** was born in the St Thomas area of Exeter in 1887, the son of Francis and Harriet Wills, nee Rugg.

In 1891, [Sam] Gordon is 4 years old and living at home with his parents Francis and Harriet Wills in Kenton. Francis is an agricultural worker, born in Moretonhampstead.

By 1901, Gordon Wills is 14, and a gardener, living with the Dodge family in Middlewood Cottage, Cofton, Dawlish. The rest of Gordon's family are in High Street, Kenton.

On 18 April 1906, Gordon Wills joined the Navy at Devonport, as Ordinary Seaman; described as 5'7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"", 36<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" chest, brown hair, brown eyes, fresh complexion. No scars or tattoos.

He went for training and assessment at the shore based, HMS Vivid I until 15<sup>th</sup> May 1906 when he sailed on HMS Vengeance. He made Able Seaman in 1908. He was reassigned to HMS Caesar for a year, transferred to *HMS Temeraire* in May 1909 and still on *Temeraire* when the 1911 census picks him up as Able Seaman, anchored off Portland, Dorset.

In 1911 Gordon's parents are living in Bridford. Married for 29 years, they'd had 7 children, 6 still alive. Francis snr is a quarryman working for the Devon Basalt Company with his son, Francis Wills junior - termed a boarder because he is paying rent to his parents.

After 5 years' service Gordon was transferred to the Royal Fleet Reserve in April 1911 and married Ethel Gilpin in Newton Abbot the following year.

When war is declared, Gordon is called out of Reserve on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1914 and serves on HMS Drake, Excellent, Victory I, President III - virtually unscathed, throughout the war.

On his last voyage, Royal Navy Acting Leading Seaman Gordon Wills was a serving member of the Royal Naval Voluntary Reserve on board H.M.S. President III. Gordon fell (drunk) into the hold of troop carrier SS Belgic and died. He was 32.

He is buried in The Evergreens Cemetery, Manhattan, New York

His Will left his effects of £132 3s 11d to his widow, living at 5 Church St Cottages, Dawlish and Gordon's 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal, were sent to her in 1919.



## **232299 Sergeant William George Wills - 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers**

William George Wills, was born on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1894 in Christow, the 1<sup>st</sup> son of William Henry and Elizabeth Ann Wills. He entered Christow Primary School on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1898.

By 1901 William is 6 and living with his parents at Byteign Cottages, Christow. In 1911, the Wills family are still in Byteign Cottage, but William isn't there. He has gone to live, as an apprentice in the building and decorating trade, with his uncle, George Turpin Blackler who had married William's aunt, Elizabeth Ann Blackler nee Horrell. George Turpin Blackler, is a widower and builder and decorator. They all live at 33 Pattison Road, Kent, Plumstead, Woolwich.

William enlisted in Woolwich to the 2nd (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers) of the London Regiment

Sergeant W G WILLS is killed in action in France on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1918 at the age of 24 and buried at Epehy Wood Farm Cemetery between Cambrai and Peronne. The village was captured at the beginning of April 1917, but lost on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918, then eventually retaken in the Battle of Epehy on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1918.



Sergeant William G Wills' family received his Victory and British medals

