

# Personal Stories



from World War I



## Christopher Annetts 2nd Wiltshire Regiment



In October 1897 Henry Annetts married Tytherley parishioner Maria Green in All Saints Church in Winterslow. Having settled in Witt Road (formally Lower Road) going on to have five girls and five boys over the years from 1876 to 1898, the ninth child and youngest boy being Christopher who was born in 1894. At the outbreak of the war we find that Christopher had moved to London and was with his brother Frank, who was the first to leave Winterslow and his other two brothers John and Edmund.

At the outbreak of war there was a national call for volunteers to which Christopher 20 and his two brothers John 24 and Edmund 22 responded, enlisting in the army in Kingston on Thames. Because of their connection with Winterslow they were drafted together into the Wiltshire Regiment. Having completed their basic training they quickly found themselves, as part of the 2nd Wiltshire Regiment, involved in the fighting whilst occupying the trenches in Ypres, in the region of Flanders, and taking part in the first British offensive in March 1915.

The battle lasted from 10th to 13th March, but failed to make much impact, with the military records identifying 13,000 killed, wounded or missing, including from the Wiltshire Regiment 58 men and 6 officers killed, 162 men and 11 officers wounded, with 56 registered as missing. Having survived this engagement, the three brothers then settled into the routine of trench duty and periods of recuperation in the reserves.

However, his brother Edmund was to lose his life, along with one of his comrades on 15th April when back in action his unit came under mortar attack, which also injured 4 other soldiers.

In May just a month after Edmund's death the Wiltshire Regiment again came under fire from a German bombardment of high explosives and shrapnel burst which blanketed the whole of the British occupied area. For a full day the Regiment was pounded in concentration of half an hour with heavy shells falling every 8 or 9 seconds. The next day the Germans repeated the bombardment resulting in the Battalion losing nearly a quarter of its strength. The troops had to carry out significant effort to rebuild the defences using 20,000 sandbags in the process. The panorama of battle that day matched that of the typical film reel, with torrential rain soaking the troops, who were knee deep in mud, and struggling to keep weapons and ammunition fit for purpose.

Over the two days the Battalion had lost about a quarter of its strength. The military records identify 21 men and 1 officer killed, 126 men and 6 officers wounded and 11 missing. Christopher was one of the soldiers reported as missing and whose body was never located. Henry and Maria had now lost two sons, only 33 days apart, as Christopher was officially recorded as losing his life on 18th May 1915.



His name is recorded on the Memorial to the Missing located at the east end of the Le Touret Military Cemetery near Neuve Chapelle. The Memorial takes the form of a loggia surrounding an open rectangular court. The court is enclosed by three solid walls and on the eastern side by a colonnade.