

PRIATE EDWARD JAMES PITHER

SERVICE NO. 25753

2ND BN., HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

DIED 23RD DECEMBER 1916 AGED 35

Born in North Warnborough on 27 April 1881¹, Edward was the eldest son of Stephen, an agricultural labourer, and Sophia Pither. In 1891 he had two younger brothers, Walter and Arthur, who was also later to become a war casualty, and a younger sister, Alice.² He attended London Road Board School from 26 March 1888 until 30 March 1893 when he left to go to work³. In 1901 Edward was living and working as a baker/bread maker in a grocer's shop in Yateley⁴. However, from his later obituary in the local newspaper we learn that "ill-health caused him to seek some outdoor occupation⁵" and by 1911 he was back in North Warnborough living with his parents and brother and working as a general labourer.ⁱ In 1906 he played for the North Warnborough football team, who were successful in winning the Basingstoke Junior League Shield (see photo below). Edward is in the back row, second from left.



*Photo from the Editor's family photo collection –
William Crumplin in front row holding shield*

¹ Source: London Road Board School Admission Register

² 1891 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, Ref. RG 12; Piece: 953; Folio: 26; Page: 13

³ Source: London Road Board School Admission Register

⁴ 1901 Census, Yateley, Hampshire, ref: RG13; Piece: 1104; Folio: 83; Page: 2

⁵ Obituary in Hants & Berks Gazette, 6 January 1917



In 1912 Edward married Essex born Matilda Herrington in Odihamⁱⁱ. Two years later when the war started it appears that Edward was not fit enough to enlist and at that time conscription had not been introduced. However, in 1916 it seems likely that he registered his name under the Derby Scheme and subsequently transferred to the Army reserve with his allocated group. When this group was called up and trained, he would have been transferred overseas, in this instance to France, where he initially joined the 1st Bn. The Hampshire Regiment on 1st November. Shortly afterwards he transferred to the 2nd Bn. and three weeks later he was in the trenches on the front line. The Battalion War diary gives an idea of the terrible conditions, including bad weather and awful camps that had to be endured by these front line troops during Edward's short time there. For example on 21st November "Battalion moved up to the firing line NE of LES BOEUFs in relief of Newfoundland Regt.....The system of relief now is to be 3 days in front line trenches, and 3 in Support. BERNAFAY WOOD and the BRIQUETERIE, MONTAUBAN, and 3 in Reserve at MANSEL CAMP".

<u>Casualties</u>	<u>Other ranks</u>	21 st – 1 Wounded, 22 sick to hospital
		22 nd – 1 killed, 7 wounded, 6 sick to hospital
		23 rd – 8 sick to hospital

On the 22nd there was a DRAFT of 17 joined the Battn."⁶

During the rest of November and December sick soldiers were sent to hospital seemingly on a daily basis. The condition of the SOMME trenches on 10th December was recorded – "Trenches fill in badly, especially FALL and AUTUMN". On 12th December, a morning, which began with a snowstorm, the Battalion moved to SANDPITS CAMP – "an awful camp, no duckboards, muck in tents, only 15 braziers, 8 lanterns and no fuel."⁷ It seems hardly surprising that there were so many sick sent to hospital.

We do not know when Edward was sent to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Amiens⁸, but with his health history he would have been very vulnerable to bronchial pneumonia⁹, which was his cause of death so soon after arriving on the Western Front. He was buried in St Pierre Cemetery, Amiens and was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. His widow, Matilda, was awarded a War Gratuity of £2.14s.9d.¹⁰

ⁱ 1901 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref: RG13, Piece: 1102; Folio: 37; Page: 29

ⁱⁱ England and Wales marriages 1837-2008 transcription – ancestry.co.uk

⁶ Ancestry.co.UK – UK WW1 War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920

⁷ ibid

⁸ Hospital details from The Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum – soldiers' effects record.

⁹ Obituary in Hants & Berks Gazette, 6 January 1917

¹⁰ Ancestry.co.uk – UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929