



# PRIVATE JOHN MCAVOY

## SERVICE NO. 7157

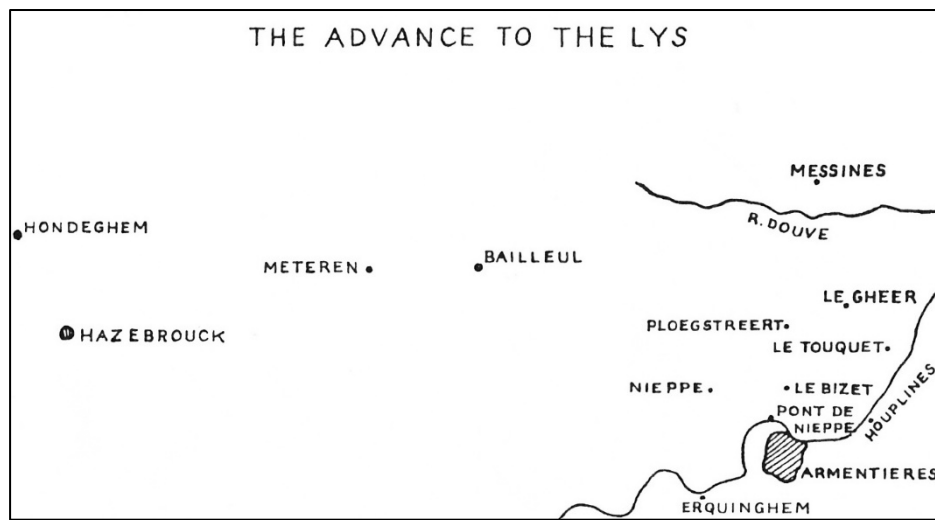
### 1<sup>ST</sup> BN., THE HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

### DIED 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 1914 AGED 28

John McAvoy was born on 16 November 1885<sup>i</sup> to Mary, the daughter of James, a brickyard labourer, and Eliza Wooldridge of Potbridge, Odiham and John McAvoy, a Private with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders based at North Camp, Farnborough. John was baptised at All Saints Church, Odiham on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1885<sup>ii</sup> and was subsequently raised by his grandparents in Potbridge. He grew up living near Frederick Porter and his family. John attended the London Road Board School from 4 April 1892 until 12 June 1897, when he 'left for work'<sup>iii</sup>. Possibly he immediately worked as a navvy on the railway, as this was his given occupation in 1901<sup>iv</sup>. Like Frederick he enlisted in the Army, joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. The Hampshire Regiment a little earlier, judging by his given service number. In May 1906 John extended his service for a further nine years<sup>v</sup> and in June 1906 he was granted a First Good Conduct Badge<sup>vi</sup>. However, he apparently lost this for in November 1909 we find that this badge was restored<sup>vii</sup>. In 1911 John was stationed with his battalion at Badajos Barracks, Wellington Lines, Aldershot<sup>viii</sup> until, as we have seen above, they moved to Colchester in the autumn of 1913.

After war was declared John and Frederick would have shared many of the same experiences, both having entered the France and Flanders theatre of war on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1914. Frederick's death so soon after arriving at the Western Front must have been painful for John to bear, but there were many more battles to be fought. As the Hampshires retired from the battlefield to reform near Ligny on the 26<sup>th</sup> August, one officer recorded that it seemed "as if every gun and rifle in the German Army had opened fire"<sup>ix</sup>. By 9.00 pm, they reached Serain, some twenty miles from Briastre, to rest for a few hours, refreshed by hot water and bread supplied by the villagers. It had been a long day with heavy losses all round. Before dawn on 27<sup>th</sup> August a march southward towards the Marne and Aisne trenches and battlefields began.

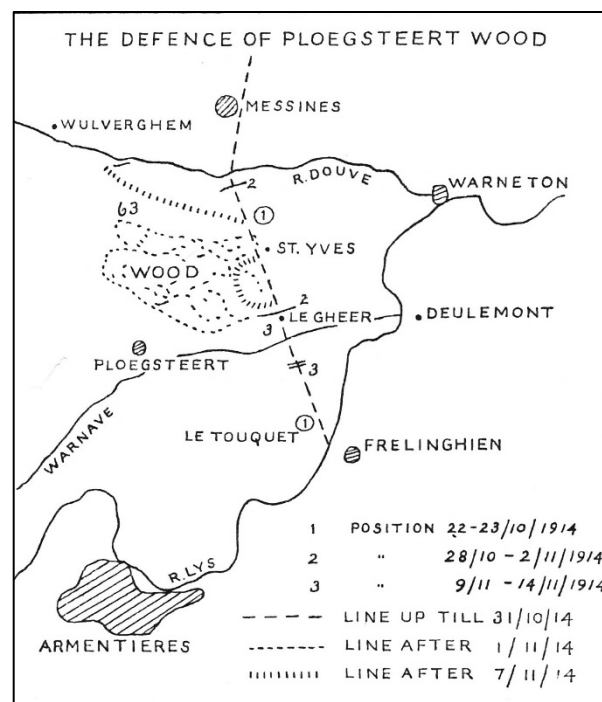
At 7.00 pm on 6<sup>th</sup> October the move to Flanders began with a march to Ville-Montoire and billets for the night, en route to take part in the battle of Armientieres and the defence of Ploegsteert Wood. The next few days were spent mainly advancing towards the Lys during the afternoons or evenings. They reached Bailleul as advanced-guard to the Division on 14<sup>th</sup> October<sup>xix</sup> (see Fig.4).



**Fig.4: The advance to the Lys - Significant places**

Source: *Regimental History of the Royal Hampshire Regiment, Vol.2, T Atkinson, p.28*

The Germans were substantially reinforced on 20<sup>th</sup> October and three Hampshire Companies sent forward to trenches east of Armentieres to support the Division's line (See Fig.4) and in so doing came under heavy shelling. The next day most of the Battalion marched to billets in Ploegsteert and from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October all Companies were either occupying reserve trenches or digging reserve trenches. On 28<sup>th</sup> October, the Battalion relieved the Somerset Light Infantry in the line 1100 yards opposite the parallel German trenches (see Fig.5 for positions)<sup>xi</sup>



**Fig.5. The Line and positions during the defence of Ploegsteert Wood**

Source: *Regimental History of the Royal Hampshire Regiment, Vol.2, T Atkinson, p.3*



Early in the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> October the Germans subjected them to a major bombardment. This continued until 4.00 pm, and was followed by an advance by the enemy infantry which continued until darkness fell. This action was repeated the next day with all but one member of a platoon of C Company being lost. On November 1<sup>st</sup> the heavy bombardment with German attacks along the entire Battalion line continued. On this day, twenty other ranks were killed, nineteen were wounded, three were missing in action<sup>xii</sup>. John McAvoy was one of those missing in action, for his grandmother was not officially notified of his death until the end of January 1915<sup>xiii</sup>. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal<sup>xiv</sup>. He is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial and in The Hampshire Roll of Honour book in Winchester Cathedral.

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<sup>i</sup> London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885

<sup>ii</sup> Odiham Parish register of baptisms

<sup>iii</sup> London Road Board School Register of Admissions from 1885

<sup>iv</sup> 1901 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, ref. Class: RG13; Piece: 1102; Folio: 64; Page: 12.

<sup>v</sup> Source – The Hampshire Regimental Journal, Vol. 1, May 1906, p.127

<sup>vi</sup> Source – The Hampshire Regimental Journal, June 1906, p.146

<sup>vii</sup> Source – The Hampshire Regimental Journal, November 1909, Vol. 4, p.223

<sup>viii</sup> Source - 1911 Census, Aldershot, Hampshire, ref: Class: RG14, Piece: 3123; Schedule Number: 9999.

<sup>ix</sup> Source - Regimental History of the Royal Hampshire Regiment, Vol.2, T Atkinson, p.11

<sup>x</sup> Sources – *ibid*, p.27 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Hampshire Regt. War Diary, ref: M1889, October 1<sup>st</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup> 1914

<sup>xi</sup> Source – The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Hampshire Regiment War Diary, ref: M1889, October 16<sup>th</sup> to October 28<sup>th</sup> 1914.

<sup>xii</sup> Source – The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Hampshire Regiment War Diary, ref: M1889, October 28<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> 1914

<sup>xiii</sup> Source – Hants and Berks Gazette, 6 February 1915

<sup>xiv</sup> Source - British Army WW1 Medal Rolls and Index Cards, 1914-1920. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)