



# PRIVATE PHILIP WILLIS

SERVIVE NO. TR/8/11646

## 53<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION, DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT

### DIED 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1918 AGED 18

Philip, the son of Levi, a shepherd in 1901<sup>1</sup> and a waggoner in 1911,<sup>2</sup> and Sarah Willis, was born in Odiham on 6 November 1899<sup>3</sup>. He had three older brothers, Sydney, Levi and Harry, and two older sisters, Sarah<sup>4</sup> and Rhoda<sup>5</sup>. At the time of his death his father was a gardener at Broad Oak House and the family lived in The Cottage in the grounds<sup>6</sup>.

Perhaps because his three brothers were all serving at the Front<sup>7</sup> shortly after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday Philip joined the 53<sup>rd</sup> (Young Soldier) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment on 29 December 1917. This Battalion had been formed at Sutton Mandeville from the 35<sup>th</sup> Young Soldier Battalion as part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Reserve Brigade<sup>8</sup>. Sadly, within a month this "bright young fellow and a favourite with everyone" had died of cerebrospinal meningitis in Tidworth Military Hospital<sup>9</sup>. His coffin was brought to Odiham Cemetery for his funeral and burial – see CWGC headstone below. He was one of several Broad Oak residents to lose his life while serving his country.



<sup>1</sup> Source - 1901 census, Odiham, ref. Class: RG 13; piece: 1102;Folio: 78; page: 13

<sup>2</sup> Source - 1911 Census, Odiham – ref: RG14PN6248 RG78PN296 RD109 SD1 ED14 SN60

<sup>3</sup> Source – London Road Board School Admissions Register

<sup>4</sup> Source - 1901 census, Odiham, ref. Class: RG 13; piece: 1102;Folio: 78; page: 13

<sup>5</sup> Obituary, Hants & Berks Gazette, 2 February 1918

<sup>6</sup> Source – CWGC casualty certificate

<sup>7</sup> Source - ibid

<sup>8</sup> Source – Forces War Records

<sup>9</sup> Source - ibid.

