



PRIVATE WALTER JAMES WHITE
SERVICE NO. 31960
2ND BATTALION, WILTSHIRE REGIMENT
DIED 9TH APRIL 1917 AGED 27

Walter White was born in Odiham on 7 December 1889¹. It appears that he was brought up in Up Street, North Warnborough by his grandparents, George, a grocer and coal merchant ², and Mary Ann White³, as well as his mother, Emily White, who lived at the same address. Walter's education started at Buryfields School in Odiham in 1894⁴ and in November 1898 he transferred to London Road Board School⁵. From the 1911 census it appears that Walter's grandfather, George, had died and Walter, aged 21 was working as a 'carman in coal business', and still living with his grandmother, MaryAnn 'a grocer' and Emily, her daughter, aged 40, who was 'assisting in the Business'⁶.

It is not certain when Walter enlisted, but it is likely to have been some time in 1915. It is also not clear where he enlisted, for Ancestry records this as Odiham and Findmypast as Winchester. However, he joined the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire Regiment)⁷. 1915 was also the year that Walter married Gertrude Louisa Fitcher during the July to September quarter⁸. Early in 1916 Walter and Gertrude's daughter, Ivy, was born⁹.

Early in 1916 the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Wiltshire Regiment was in the area of Amiens, where they stayed relieving other regiments in the trenches and training for the next offensive. At the beginning of July they had moved to the environs of Montauban, and were involved in the attack on Trones Wood, suffering some 240 casualties, but receiving 23 gallantry decorations in the process. During the rest of the year they were involved in attacks in the Somme and Flers battles, finally being south of Arras in December¹⁰. They remained in the area around Arras during the first quarter of 1917 but after German troops began to retreat to the Hindenburg

¹ London Road Board School Admissions and Withdrawals Register

² 1901 Census, Odiham, Ref' RG13, Piece No, 1102, Folio 43, Page 3

³ London Road Board School Admissions and Withdrawals Register

⁴ Hampshire Archives, ref. 130M87/A5Folio/page no, 4, National School Admission Registers & Log- Books 1870-1914

⁵ London Road Board School Admissions and Withdrawals Register

⁶ 1911 Census Odiham, Ref- RG14PN6246 RG78PN296 RD109 SD1 ED12 SN114

⁷ Findmypast and Ancestry Soldiers Died in the; Great War 1914-1919.

⁸FreeBMD. *England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915*

⁹ Ancestry.com Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916-2005

¹⁰ The (Duke of Edinburgh's) Wiltshire Regiment 1881-1920



Line in February the Battalion was involved in the attack on that line on 9th April 1917. This attack was ill-fated with much loss of life – 16 officers and 363 other ranks. Walter White was one of those other ranks. The few who actually reached their objective found that the German wire was undamaged¹¹. Walter's obituary in the local paper reported that 'A letter received by deceased's wife from a comrade states that he was killed by a piece of shell, death apparently being instantaneous. He was a nephew of Mr A J White, coal merchant. He leaves a widow and one child to mourn his loss.'¹².

Walter qualified for the Victory Medal and the British War Medal by virtue of his service¹³. He is buried in the Neuville-Vitasse Road Cemetery. A War Gratuity of £2.6s.2d was awarded to his widow, Gertrude, on 31 July 1917¹⁴.

¹¹ ibid

¹² Hants and Berks Gazette, Saturday May 12, 1917

¹³ British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920 – Ancestry.co.uk

¹⁴ National Army Museum, Chelsea: Soldiers' Effects Records, 1901-1960

