

Charles William Atkins

Private 17875, 2nd Battalion, Hampshire Regiment

Charles William Atkins was the second son and fourth child born to George and Emma Atkins in the October to December quarter of 1879 and he was baptised in Amersham on 9 November 1879. His father, George Atkins, was born in Amersham in about 1848 and married Emma Shirley in the April to June quarter of 1872. Emma gave her place of birth as Little Missenden in the 1881 Census. George and Emma had two more sons, Henry born in 1883 and John born in 1884. In the 1891 Census George was a domestic gardener and the family lived in Amersham High Street near to Swan Yard. George, the eldest son was a groom, Rose, born in 1877, was a domestic servant and the younger children attended school, probably St Mary's Church of England School in School Lane, Amersham. Charles' father died in 1894 and his mother died in 1911.

Early in 1908 Charles married Annie Bryant in Amersham and according to the 1911 Census they had a son, William aged 8 months. Unfortunately two other babies had not survived. Charles was working as a brewer's labourer and they were living in Amersham High Street. They had two further sons, James born in 1913 and John born in 1915.

Charles's attestation papers have not survived but he enlisted in the 2nd Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment in London with the rank of private. His Medal Index card states that he first served in the Balkans arriving on 5 October 1915 and therefore qualified for the 1915 Star medal. In March 1916 the Battalion moved to France to serve on the Western Front in the Battle of the Somme.

A major Allied offensive commenced on 15 September 1916 around the town of Gueudecourt, held by the Germans and surrounded by defensive trenches. The 88th Infantry Brigade including the 2nd Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment arrived at Longueau from Hupoutre on 8 October and from there marched to Corbie. On 10 October they were in bivouacs between Pommiers Redoubt and Montauban trenches. (A redoubt was a shelter with a circular trench round it, where messages are received from general headquarters. Redoubts were mostly guarded by about twenty men who were not allowed to let anyone enter the shelter. They were usually just behind the front firing line, and it was the duty of the twenty men to hold that position, even if the troops were forced from the trench in front of it.)

From the *War Diary* it is clear that a major attack began at 2.00 p.m. on 12 October when two battalions advanced on the German front line "Hilt Trench" behind a creeping barrage (this was an offensive massed artillery fire which moved forwards in front of the advancing troops) and engaged in hand to hand fighting, successfully taking the position. This was known as the **Battle of Transloy**. By the end of the day the 2nd Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment had moved up in support of the Essex and Newfoundland Regiments.¹ During this battle Charles William Atkins was killed in action. His body was never identified.

Charles left a hand-written, short-form, will which only came to light at the end of August 2013.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18 in addition to The 1914-15 Star.

**Charles William Atkins is remembered with Honour
The Thiepval Memorial, (pier and face 7C)**

For details of the Memorial and the engraving, see the chapter on the Memorials to the Missing.

In 1921 Annie, Charles' widow, married Frederick Gladman in Amersham.

¹ *War Diary* of 2nd Battalion Hampshire Regiment, TNA Ref. WO 95/2308.