

Charles Dyer

Private 27179, 5th Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

Charles Dyer's parents, Gabriel Dyer and Emma Glenister, married in 1870 in Hertfordshire and by 1871 were lodging with her mother, Ann Glenister, a beer seller at "The Bricklayers Arms", Bovington, Herts. In 1881 Gabriel Dyer was a wheelwright and publican at "The Cricketers", Sarratt Green, Herts. His wife, Emma, sadly died in 1880, leaving him with four children recorded in the 1881 Census as Ann (9), Gabriel (7), Walter (4) and Charles (2). On the same Census return a niece, Georgina Glenister, was housekeeper to Gabriel and three of the children. Two-year-old Charles was living nearby with his aunt and uncle, Ann and William Wingfield, at 54, Sarratt Green, William being a farmer of 17 acres. The following year Gabriel married Georgina Glenister and a daughter, Pamela, was born in 1884.

Gabriel and Georgina continued to run "The Cricketers" on Sarratt Green, until at least 1911.

In 1906 Charles married at Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, Matilda Brown, born 1884, Buckland Common (Aylesbury Registration District), and by 1911 the couple were living at Milesfield Cottage, Plantation Road, Amersham Common with Charles working as a house painter.

Charles would have been 35 at the outbreak of WW1 and he served as a private in the 5th Btn Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in France and Flanders, having enlisted in Amersham.¹ The usual problem of destroyed Enlistment Papers from WW1 does not allow the discovery of the actual date of enlistment but it is known he died on the 2 October, 1917, aged 38. Considering the age of Charles and the fact that he was married, it is likely that he was conscripted into the army after January 1916.

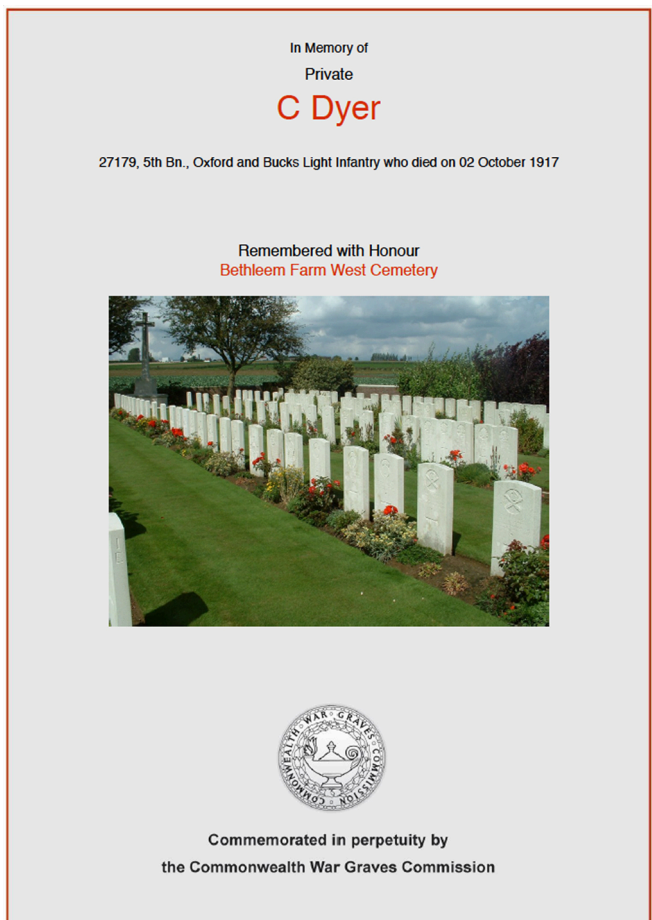
The 5th Battalion of the OBLI was a Service Battalion, which was one that provided combat service support to the brigade group and its elements. It was able to fight in a defensive role as well as provide the vital logistical support to sustain the operation of the other units within the brigade group.

"*The Chronicles of the Oxfordshire and Bucks Light Infantry 1917-18*"² includes the War Diaries for the 5th Battalion and gives some insight into where the battalion was serving on the Western Front and the actions they were engaged in:

"Recuperated after its strenuous exertions and heavy losses in the attack on Vis en Artois, the Btn moved north in the late summer of 1917 and came in for further fighting in August on the Ypres-Menin Road, in the neighbourhood of **Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood**, and again in October its losses were heavy." Some places

¹ *UK Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919* (www.ancestry.co.uk)

² *The Chronicles of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry: Record of the 5th Battalion; 1917-18*. Volume in the Local Studies section of High Wycombe Library.



mentioned in the *War Diaries* for September 1917 include **Armentieres, Neuve Eglise** and **Doulieu**.

After a period of training with Lewis guns and having gas demonstrations, combined with relaxation, the 5th Battalion was called to relieve the 6th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) at Bristol Castle on the front line, in the trenches. The enemy fired shells and bombs intermittently and on 1 October one of the company HQs was blown up. The *War Diary* includes the following entry:

2 October 1917: "A very quiet and gloriously fine day. D Company had two more men killed this morning by trench mortar. The men have done a lot of work on the trenches during this tour, and luckily the weather has been perfect. The Btn was relieved by the 9th R.B. [Rifle Brigade] and returned to Bristol Castle. Relief complete by 11.15 pm."

One of the fatalities so casually mentioned in this entry must have been Private Charles Dyer.

He received The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.

Private Charles Dyer is remembered with Honour
in the Bethleem Farm West Cemetery, Mesen, West Vlaanderen, Belgium
(Grave ref. E 4)

Charles's wife, Matilda, was the sole beneficiary of his estate, totalling £700.³ It is possible he worked for himself prior to enlistment and therefore made a reasonable living as a house painter as £700 was quite a large sum to have accumulated in 1917. His final address in Amersham was given as Grimsdells Lane, Amersham Common.

Yet more sadness was to follow as Matilda, aged 34, died on 17 December 1918, just over a year after her husband. The date of her death and her young age suggest that her death may have been hastened by Spanish Flu which was rampant throughout Europe, and indeed the world, at that time. Charles and Matilda did not appear to have had any children and Probate of Matilda's will was granted to her brother, Frank Brown, a bailiff. Estate: £727.

³ England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966 (www.ancestry.co.uk)