

# Connected to Codford



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**10287 L/CORPORAL.**

**G. PRETTY**

**WILTSHIRE REGIMENT**

**18TH OCTOBER, 1916**

## George PRETTY

George Pretty was born at Stockton, Wiltshire around 1894 to parents Charles & Elizabeth Pretty (nee Nash). His birth was registered in the March quarter, 1894 in the district of Warminster. George's parents had married in 1886 at St. John the Baptist Church, Stockton, Wiltshire.

The 1901 Census recorded George Pretty as a 7 year old, living with his family at Stockton, in a four roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Charles Pretty (Gardener & Labourer, aged 39, born Isle of Wight) & Elizabeth Pretty (aged 41, born Stockton). George was one of 4 children listed on this Census, all born at Stockton – Violet (aged 10), Rosalie (aged 9), then George & William (aged 5).

A death for Elizabeth Pretty, aged 50, was registered in the March quarter, 1910 in the district of Warminster.

The 1911 Census recorded George Pretty as a 17 year old Under Carter on a Farm, living with his family in a 3 roomed dwelling at Stockton, Codford St. Mary. His father was listed as Charles Pretty (Widower, aged 49, Shepherd on a Farm). Charles listed that he & his deceased wife Elizabeth had a total of 8 children, 3 having since died. George was one of 3 children listed on this Census – Emily Edith Pretty (aged 24), then George & William (Shepherd boy in a farm, aged 15).

George Pretty enlisted at Salisbury, Wiltshire with the Wiltshire Regiment. According to UK Soldiers Died in the Great War, his residence at the time of enlisting was Codford St. Mary. This may have been correct although it is also possible that his address was Stockton, Codford St. Mary & only the "Codford St. Mary" was recorded.

The Medal Index Card for Lance Corporal George Pretty records that he first entered a Theatre War on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1915 in France.

Lance Corporal George Pretty was killed in action on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1916. He was attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment at the time of his death.

Lance Corporal George Pretty was originally buried at Warlencourt Eaucourt, France but all the burials from here were exhumed from their original burial location and reburied in Warlencourt British Cemetery, France - Plot VII. C. 33. The concentration of cemeteries allowed otherwise unmaintainable graves to be moved into established war grave cemeteries where the Commission could ensure proper commemoration. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Lance Corporal G. Pretty, 10287, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn., Wiltshire Regiment. No family details are listed. (A death for Charles Pretty, father of George Pretty was registered in September quarter, 1917 in the district of Warminster).

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment**

#### **1915**

The 2nd Battalion started 1915 in the Fleurbaix area remaining in the waterlogged trenches when they were relieved by the Canadians in March. They were removed from the line to prepare for a major assault at Neuve Chapelle which started on the 9th of March. By the 14th March the battalion had suffered nearly 400 casualties. After a few days rest they returned to the line at Laventie where they resumed trench warfare. In May the battalion took part in the battle of Festubert where they suffered 158 casualties for one mile of ground taken. This was followed by a rest period in the Bethune area where they were reinforced. In June they were one of the leading battalions in the attack at Givenchy where after taking significant casualties the operation was cancelled. This was followed by many months of trench warfare in different sectors leading up to the Battle of Loos in September where their casualty figure was 400. Rest and reorganisation followed and in early December they were again redeployed to another Division, the 30th ending the year at Autheux.

## 1916

The 2nd Battalion started 1916 in the area of Amiens. They remained in this general area reliving units in trenches and training for an offensive that was going to take place in July. On the 1st July they were in support in the area of Montauban, followed by two days of attacks. They remained in this area for most of July. On the 8th July they played a leading part in the attack on Trones Wood and at one point bayoneted their way through what remained of the German defenders in the wood. They suffered 240 casualties in this action but were awarded 23 decorations for gallantry. Further attacks followed in the Somme and Flers areas and they ended the year just South of Arras.

### War Diary – 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

18<sup>th</sup> October 1916

Location – Trenches, France

*The artillery shelled heavily the enemy positions until 2.40am when the bombardment was intense. Previous to this hour C & D coys were formed up in waves, each company having two platoons in the first wave and two in the second wave. Both of these were in advance of the front line. A coy formed the third wave, lying behind the parados of our front line, and B coy were ready to move up from support line. At 3.40am the 21st Brigade attacked, the 2nd Wilts on the left, the 18th Kings L'pools in the centre and the 2nd Yorks on the right, with the 19th Manchesters in support. Very little information forthcoming. Apparently C & D coys reached their objectives but failed to take them. 2/LT EW WARE wounded and missing, 2/LT SG HINE wounded; LT FN VERRAN and 2/LT DI LYALL missing, all of D company. 2/LT EB GARNETT missing, 2/LT IC TRENCH, VW VENABLES, AEL CRAVEN wounded, all of C coy. A coy advanced but were held up by wire and were eventually driven back. 2/LTS HT Newton and HL REEVES wounded. B coy advanced but lost direction and part of the coy under Capt VH CLAY crossed the SUNKEN ROAD and got into the first German lines. They bombed up a communication trench, but were driven back before a block could be made. They again bombed up the trench but were again driven back on account with shortage in bombs. On being reinforced by the Camerons of the 26th Brigade 9th Division this trench was captured and a block made. The first line trench captured in conjunction with the 9th Divn, of which we held a part, and was consolidated. Capt VH CLAY was killed during the consolidation, and 2/Lt JH THOMPSON was killed during the advance. 2/Lt EA CARRINGTON volunteered to seek information as regards the position of our companies some while after the attack started. He did not return and parties sent in search afterwards found no trace of him. 2/LT RL SCULLY who acted as liaison officer was buried by a shell and consequently had to be sent down suffering from the shock. Information did not arrive and it was understood that the attack had failed on the whole of the 21st Brigade front but that the 9th Division had gained all their objectives. Our estimated casualty report read: 14 officers 350 other ranks. The remainder of the Battalion held the old British front line from the SUNKEN ROAD to the junction of TURKLANE and FRONTLINE. The trenches were by this time in an appalling state owing to the bad weather. The 19th Manchester Regt took over the front line from TURKLANE to the right.*

(Information on 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion & War Diary from [The Wardrobe](#) – Home of the Infantry Regiments of Berkshire & Wiltshire)

Lance Corporal George Pretty was entitled to 1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal. His Medal Index card does not state killed in action, etc just the word "Died".



1915 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal

G. Pretty is remembered in Casualties of WW1 from the Diocese of Salisbury Memorial book for the parish of Stockton, Wiltshire

George Pretty is also named on the Stockton War Memorial, Wiltshire.



**Stockton War Memorial** (Photo by Michael Day 2015)



### **Warlencourt British Cemetery, France**

Warlencourt British Cemetery lies on the east side of the D929, to the south-east of Warlencourt village and 5 kilometres south-west of Bapaume.

Warlencourt, the Butte de Warlencourt and Eaucourt-L'Abbaye were the scene of very fierce fighting in 1916. Eaucourt was taken by the 47th (London) Division early in October. The Butte (a Roman mound of excavated chalk, about 17 metres high, once covered with pines) was attacked by that and other divisions, but it was not relinquished by the Germans until the following 26 February, when they withdrew to the Hindenburg Line.

The 51st (Highland) Division fought a delaying action here on 25 March 1918 during the great German advance, and the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division recaptured the ground on 25 August 1918.

The cemetery was made late in 1919 when graves were brought in from small cemeteries and the battlefields of Warlencourt and Le Sars.

The largest burial ground moved into this cemetery was:-

HEXHAM ROAD CEMETERY, LE SARS, on the West side of the Abbey grounds. (Hexham Road was the name given to the road leading from Warlencourt to Eaucourt. Le Sars was captured by the 23rd Division on 7 October 1916, and again by the Third Army on 25 August 1918.) This cemetery was used from November 1916 to October 1917, and contained the graves of 17 soldiers from the United Kingdom and 13 from Australia.

The cemetery now contains 3,505 Commonwealth burials and commemorations of the First World War. 1,823 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to 55 casualties known or believed to be buried among them. Other special memorials commemorate 15 casualties buried in Hexham Road Cemetery, whose graves were destroyed by shell fire.

*(Information from CWGC)*



**Warlencourt British Cemetery** (Photos from [In Memory](#))



*(Photo from CWGC)*

