

# Connected to Codford



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



6877 SERJEANT

**W. FELTHAM**

HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT

4TH OCTOBER, 1917

## Walter FELTHAM

Walter Feltham was born at Chitterne St. Mary, Wiltshire around 1886. (possibly 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1886). (Hannah Elizabeth Feltham was probably his mother, father unsure).

Hannah Elizabeth Feltham married John Toomer in the December quarter, 1890 at All Saints & St. Mary Church, Chitterne. Their marriage was registered in the district of Warminster.

The 1891 Census recorded Walter E. Feltham as a 5 year old living with his family at Chitterne Rd (Cheapside) Codford St. Mary, Wiltshire in a 4 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as John Toomer (Agricultural Labourer, aged 23, born Compton Chamberlayne) & Hannah E. Toomer (aged 23, born Chitterne St. Mary). Walter was the only child listed on this Census & he was listed as "Son" of John Toomer. (John Toomer may have been his stepfather or his father with his birth registered under his mother's unmarried name).

The 1901 Census recorded Walter Feltham as a 15 year old Groom on a Farm living with his family at New Barn, Twyford, Hampshire. His parents were listed as John Toomer (Stockman on a Farm, aged 33) & Elizabeth (aged 33). Also living with the family was William Feltham (Carter on a Farm, aged 14, born Warminster) listed as a nephew of John & Elizabeth Toomer & Mary A. Coles (Mother-in-law of John Toomer, aged 69, born Sutton Veney).

The 1911 Census recorded Walter Feltham as a 25 year old, married Cowman on Farm living with his wife – Evelyn Feltham (aged 27, born Southsea, Hants) at 2 London Road, Crawley, Sussex in a 4 roomed dwelling. They recorded that they had been married for 1 year & had 1 child but the child was not listed on the Census.

The 1911 Census recorded Walter's mother – Elizabeth Toomer (aged 43) living with her husband John Toomer (Aged 43, Farm Labourer) & their daughter Ellenor Toomer (aged 8, born New Barn, Twyford, Hants). Elizabeth & John Toomer had been married for 24 years & listed one child from the marriage.

Walter Feltham enlisted at Winchester. His place of residence at that time was Twyford, Hants.

According to the Medal Index Card, Lance Corporal Walter Feltham first entered a Theatre of War on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1914.

Serjeant Walter Feltham was killed in action on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1917. He was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Hampshire Regiment at the time of his death.

Serjeant Walter Feltham is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium – Panel 88, as he has no known grave. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Serjeant W. Feltham, 6877, of 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Hampshire Regiment. No family details are listed.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Hampshire Regiment

1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment were in Colchester with 11th Brigade, 4th Division when war broke out in August 1914. This Division was held back from the original British Expeditionary Force by a last minute decision to defend England against a possible German landing. The fate of the BEF in France and the lack of any move by the Enemy to cross the channel, reversed this decision and the 1st Hampshires moved to Harrow to prepare to proceed to France. They landed at Le Havre on the 23rd of August 1914 arriving in time to provide infantry reinforcements at the Battle of Le Cateau, the Divisional Artillery, Engineers, Field Ambulances and mounted troops being still en-route at this time. They were in action at the The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne and at The Battle of Messines in 1914. In 1915 they fought in The Second Battle of Ypres and in 1916 moved south and were in action during the Battles of the Somme. In 1917 they were at Arras, in action during the The First and Third Battles of the Scarpe, before heading north for the Third Battle of Ypres, where they fought in The Battle of Polygon Wood, **The Battle of Broodseinde – 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1917**, The Battle of Poelcapelle and The First Battle of Passchendaele.

Serjeant Walter Feltham was entitled to 1914 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal. According to his Medal Index Card he was also entitled to the Clasp. The Clasp was awarded with the 1914 Star which was sewn onto the ribbon, bearing the date '5th AUG. - 22nd NOV. 1914' which indicated that the recipient had served under enemy fire during that period.



**1914 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal**



## **Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium**

The Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing forms the north-eastern boundary of Tyne Cot Cemetery, which is located 9 kilometres north east of Ieper town centre, on the Tynecotstraat, a road leading from the Zonnebeekseweg (N332).

The names of those from United Kingdom units are inscribed on Panels arranged by Regiment under their respective Ranks.

The Tyne Cot Memorial is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient. Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war.

The Salient was formed during the First Battle of Ypres in October and November 1914, when a small British Expeditionary Force succeeded in securing the town before the onset of winter, pushing the German forces back to the Passchendaele Ridge. The Second Battle of Ypres began in April 1915 when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines north of Ypres. This was the first time gas had been used by either side and the violence of the attack forced an Allied withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence.

There was little more significant activity on this front until 1917, when in the Third Battle of Ypres an offensive was mounted by Commonwealth forces to divert German attention from a weakened French front further south. The initial attempt in June to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was a complete success, but the main assault north-eastward, which began at the end of July, quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly deteriorating weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele.

The German offensive of March 1918 met with some initial success, but was eventually checked and repulsed in a combined effort by the Allies in September.

The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces with no known grave would have to be divided between several different sites.

The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their

way to the battlefields. It commemorates those of all Commonwealth nations, except New Zealand, who died in the Salient, in the case of United Kingdom casualties before 16 August 1917 (with some exceptions). Those United Kingdom and New Zealand servicemen who died after that date are named on the memorial at Tyne Cot, a site which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until nearly the end of the war. Other New Zealand casualties are commemorated on memorials at Buttes New British Cemetery and Messines Ridge British Cemetery.

The TYNE COT MEMORIAL now bears the names of almost 35,000 officers and men whose graves are not known. The memorial forms the north-eastern boundary of TYNE COT CEMETERY, which was established around a captured German blockhouse or pill-box used as an advanced dressing station. The original battlefield cemetery of 343 graves was greatly enlarged after the Armistice when remains were brought in from the battlefields of Passchendaele and Langemarck, and from a few small burial grounds. It is now the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world in terms of burials. At the suggestion of King George V, who visited the cemetery in 1922, the Cross of Sacrifice was placed on the original large pill-box. There are three other pill-boxes in the cemetery.

There are now 11,956 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in Tyne Cot Cemetery, 8,369 of these are unidentified. *(Information & photos from CWGC)*



**Tyne Cot Memorial surrounding Tyne Cot Cemetery**

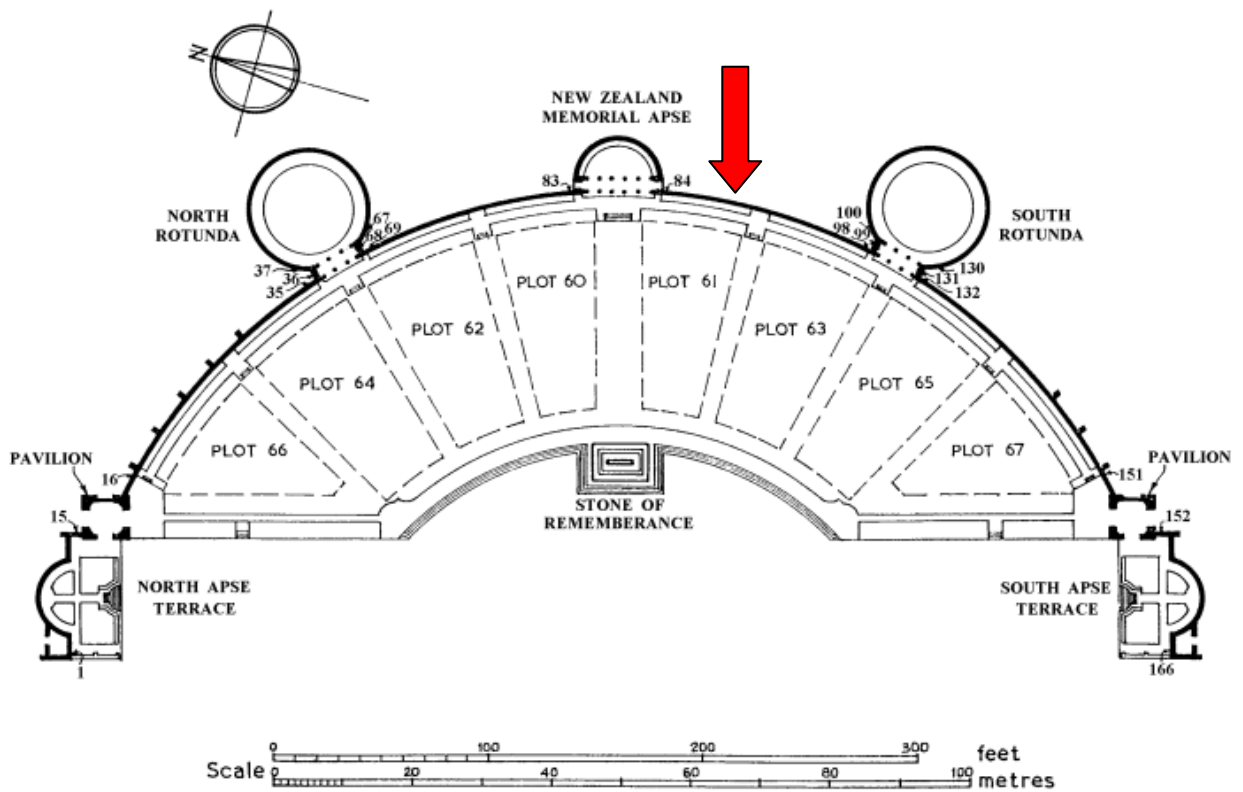






**Panel 88 Tyne Cot Memorial**

*(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)*



LAYOUT OF THE TYNE COT MEMORIAL PANELS