

## Frank Charles COTTON

Born Dawlish, June 1889  
Lance Sergeant 10043

Died 25 September 1915, Battle of Loos, aged 26  
Devonshire Regiment, 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion

**Frank Charles Cotton** was the second youngest child of Arthur Constant Cotton (1848-1922 ) and Susan Wollacott (1849-1926). They had eleven children, of which nine were still alive at the 1911 census.

Arthur Constant Cotton was the second son of Albert and Caroline Cotton. Albert had been a boot maker and Arthur followed in his trade initially. They had lived at 4 Manor Row. Susan Wollacott had been born in Hatherleigh and she and Arthur married in March 1875. In the 1891 census he is shown as the Town Crier, and they had eight children ranging in age from 14 years to 3 weeks.

Arthur was one of the most notable fishermen in Dawlish and in 1901 the family lived at the rear of Brookdale Terrace. By 1911, only the father and **Frank Charles** were recorded at Brookdale Cottage and both were fishermen. The mother, Susan, was working as a Sick Nurse to a family at 13 Strand, South View House, Dawlish.

**Frank Charles Cotton** married Polly Jane Heyward (1889-1951) in St John's Church, Sampford Peverell on December 26, 1914. She had been born in Somerset and her family were living in Devon. After Frank's death Polly Jane Cotton did not remarry and may have returned to live near her family. Her death is registered in the Tiverton district in 1951. ( Heyward family tree)

An item appeared in the *Devon & Exeter Gazette of July 16, 1915* under the heading "Serving their country" which showed five of Arthur Cotton's sons in military service. **Frank Cotton** was then a Corporal. He may have been a regular soldier attached to the new volunteer regiment to assist with training. The Devonshire Regiment, 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion landed in France in July 1915 and were soon brought to readiness.

Little is certain about the circumstances of his death. He was at first reported 'missing' but was eventually added to those who were killed in Action at the Battle of Loos. He was one of a number of Dawlish men in the who died in this action.

The Dawlish Gazette, SATURDAY, October, 20th, 1915

We deeply regret to know that fears regarding Sergt. Frank Cotton, of the 8th Devons, who was reported missing after the fight on Sept. 25th, have been only too sadly confirmed. His wife received official notification of his death on Thursday. The deepest sympathy will be felt with the widow and deceased father and mother (Mr and Mrs A C Cotton) and the other members of the family. A keen pang of regret will be felt by numerous friends, and indeed by all who knew him, at the untimely end of a smart young man and really good fellow. He was aged 26.

The *Western Times, Thursday 28 October* reported,

"Mrs Cotton, of Dawlish, has received news that her husband, **Sergt. F.C.Cotton**, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Devons (Buller's Own), has been missing since September 25<sup>th</sup> last. He is the son of Mr and Mrs A C Cotton, of Brookdale Cottage, Dawlish, and enlisted in August 1914."

The Dawlish Gazette, SATURDAY, October, 30th, 1915

DAWLISH MEN IN "BULLER'S OWN."  
MORE DEATHS REPORTED

..... Considerable anxiety is felt in the case of Sergt F C Cotton, the other Dawlishian in the 8<sup>th</sup> Devons who remains unaccounted for. He is posted as "missing," and official notification of this has been received from the War Office. Of fine physique, hard as nails, and full of fun and life, "Frank" was a great favourite in Dawlish, and his many friends can only hope and trust that at the worst he is a prisoner. He is married and is the sixth son of Mr A C Cotton, billposter, etc.

His wife has received the following letter, dated Oct 20th, from Second-Lieutenant C Pepys, of the 8th Devons:—

"I am sorry indeed to say that I can get no further information regarding your husband, Sergt Cotton, than that he is missing.

He went into action on the morning of Sept 25th in charge of No. 6 platoon, B Company, and since then I can find out nothing about him. None of No. 6 platoon have returned. They are all either killed, or wounded, or missing.

I am sorry indeed that I can give you no news. I am still trying to find out things of the men who are missing and hope to do so, and I especially want to find out about your husband, as he was my platoon sergeant and one of my favourite and trusted men.

I dare not give you much hope as so many were beyond recognition after the shell fire, but there is a slight chance. I cannot say how sorry I am for you and how much I sympathise with you in your trouble and I do hope he may be alright."

A Death Grant of £3.12s.11d was paid to his widow Polly Jane Cotton and in 1919 a War Gratuity of £5.0s.0d was paid to her.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: COTTON, FRANK CHARLES Lance Serjeant 10043

Died 25 September 1915 aged 26 Devonshire Regiment Loos Memorial

Dawlish War memorial inscription: COTTON F.C. SERGT. DEVON REGT.

He is included in the Devon Roll of Honour and is shown on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll Honour.

Devon Heritage site info:

10043 Lance Sergeant Frank Charles Cotton of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment. Son of Arthur and Susan Cotton, of Dawlish. Husband of Polly J Cotton of 9 Regents Park, Exeter. Died 25 September 1915

Last known address: Brookdale Cottage, Dawlish (1911 census)

Next of kin: Wife, Polly J Cotton (nee Heyward) (1889-1951, (Tiverton)

References:

Free Birth Marriage Death records

Extracts from Dawlish Gazette from collection in Dawlish Museum

Headstone of A C Cotton in Dawlish cemetery

## Dawlish World War One Project

Refs via subscription sites:

Forces War Records

Census returns

Heyward Family Tree(Ancestry.co.uk)

Images: taken from the National Newspaper Archive, item of *Devon & Exeter Gazette*, with photo of Corporal Frank Cotton.

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