

Ernest John CRIDEFORD

Born Dawlish, Q2 1893 Died 25 September 1915, aged 22
Private 10811 Devonshire Regiment, 8th (Service) Battalion

Ernest John Crideford (also spelled Criddeford) was one of nine children of Thomas Crideford and Anna Maria Dart who were married in Q4 1881. Thomas was a farm labourer, born in Teignmouth, and the couple had seven children surviving by 1911. They were William (b 1882), Kate (1886-1914), Henry Thomas (1888-1962), Lily (b.1890), **Ernest**, Reginald Charles (1897-1973) and May (b.1901). They lived at 15 Queen Lane, Old Town Street.

In 1911 **Ernest** was shown as a Gardener and Reginald Charles was a Butcher's errand boy. It is recorded that Ernest enlisted at Exeter.

Reginald enlisted with the 4th Wessex Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, service no 3022, on the 16th August 1915 at Exeter. (see enlistment record)

Ernest's death is not the straightforward "Killed in action", for the entry in the Army Register of Soldiers' Effects is "death occurred 25.9.15 on or since, death presumed". This statement is repeated in the British Army Medal Rolls index card.

The implication is that he was reported missing and could have been captured or killed by shell blast in such a way that he was unidentifiable and his body was not recovered. (Other entries in this Register use the term "disembodied", leaving little to the imagination)

The Dawlish Gazette

SATURDAY, October, 9th, 1915

" The 8th, Devons (Buller's Own), which includes a number of Dawlishians, was in the forefront of the recent fighting in Flanders and contributed honourably to the great victory secured. The casualties, however were heavy. Of the Dawlish men, besides the three announced as wounded in last week's issue, who are all in England in hospital and we understand doing well, we regret to state that news has been received of the death of **Pt Ernest Crideford**, of Queen Lane. The deceased was 22½ years of age, and before joining up was in the employ of Mrs Wilford, of Oak Cottage. The sincere sympathies of the community will be extended to the parents in their loss."

However, reports of his death in the Press were confused and appear to have raised false hope for his family.

The Western Times, Tuesday 12 October 1915

" Pte E.Criddeford, of the Devon Regt., has been killed, and three other Dawlish men have been wounded."

The Western Times, Friday 29 October 1915

"News was received at Dawlish, Wednesday, from the War Office to the effect that Pte. Ernest Criddeford, second son of Mr & Mrs T Criddeford, of Queen Lane, Dawlish of the 8th Devons, was wounded. About three weeks ago his parents received a letter from his chum stating that he had been killed in action."

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

DAWLISH MEN IN "BULLER'S OWN."

MORE DEATHS REPORTED

A JOYFUL MESSAGE TO ONE FAMILY

"Fears for the untimely fate of other local men of the 8th Devons who took part in the fighting of Sept. 25th have been only too sadly confirmed this week. At the same time one Dawlish family has had the great joy of having a relative officially notified as wounded whom they mourned as dead. This was in the case of Pte Ernest Criddleford (*sic*), whose parents received a letter from a Non-com. of the Regiment, a friend of their boy's, early in October, stating that he was killed in the charge. At the same time some photographs and other things found in the lad's pocket were forwarded to them. The almost unbelievable news contained in the official notification, which simply stated that he was wounded, came to hand on Wednesday."

A War Gratuity of £3.1.5d was paid to his mother, Anna, in June 1919.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: CRIDDEFORD, Ernest John E, Private, 10811, 25/9/1915
Age 22, Devonshire Regiment, 8th Battalion(Service), Panel 35 – 37 Loos Memorial
Son of Thomas and Anna Maria Crideford of Queen Lane, Dawlish

He is recorded in the Devon Roll of Honour but no date or site of death is shown. He appears on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: CRIDDEFORD E.** PTE. DEVON REGT.

Devon Heritage site info:

10811 Private Ernest John Criddeford of the 8th Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment. Son of Thomas and Anna Criddeford of Queen Lane, Dawlish. Born in Dawlish in 1893. Died 25 September 1915.

**The surname is variously spelled with one 'd' or a double 'd'. The CWGC, birth and parents' marriage certificates all are spelled with a single 'd' in Crideford.

Last known address: (1911) – Old Town Street, 15 Queen Lane

Next of kin: Father, Thomas Crideford

References:

Free Birth Marriage Death records

Refs via subscription sites:

1891 and 1911 census entries

British Army Register of Soldiers' Effects

WW1 Medal Rolls

FEAR family tree (ancestry.com)