

William Richard Brown WAY, M.M.

Born 28 April 1881, Dawlish
Private 27046

Died 14 February 1918, Flanders, aged 36
7th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry

The **Way** family has been recorded in some detail from Peter Way (1754-1836) and Patience Bishop with eight children, including Francis Way (1778-1854) who married Elizabeth Baker in 1800.

The line then passed via Mary Ann Way (1809-1893) to Francis Way (1827-1910) who married Grace Baker in 1849. (See Appendix to profile for Frank Morrish)

Francis Way was an agricultural labourer and had been born in Bow, between North Tawton and Copplestone. Clannaborough lies between Bow and Copplestone and is presumably the location for the birth of two boys, John and William, since Clanaborough lies in South Devon between Modbury and Kingsbridge.

Census entries record their family in 1861 as living at Hills Buildings, Bow Village with their first six children:

Richard Way,	son, (1846-)	born	Spreyton
Ann Way,	dau, (1851- 1925)		South Tawton
Mary Way,	dau (1853- 1926)		Bow
Frank Way,	son (1855- 1886)		Bow
John Way,	son, (1857- 1935)		Clanaborough (sic)
William Way,	son, (1858- 1898) *		Clanaborough "

By 1871 the family was living in Bow and there were four additional children:

Bessie Way,	dau, (1861-1936)	born	Bow
Lucy Way,	dau, (1864-1891)		Bow (Cripple left leg)
Alfred H Way	son, (1866-1934)		
Frederick R Way	(1868-1946)		Bow

The census recorded the childrens' handicaps.

William Way* was born in the Oct-Dec quarter of 1858 (GRO ref Crediton, vol 5b, p 374) and married Matilda Jane Brown (born in Bridford, Devon in 1856) on 26 September 1880 (GRO ref Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 259). The marriage was conducted at the Register Office in Newton Abbot and neither partner was able to sign their names. Their addresses were given as Park Street, Dawlish and their fathers were labourers. The Bride entered her name simply as Jane Brown and her father as Simon Brown.

Simon Brown was born ca 1829 and married Elizabeth Mardles(Marles)(1830-1908) in April 1851. They lived at Bridford in 1861, Bovey Tracey in 1871 and Chudleigh in 1881 and 1891. Census returns suggest that they had eight children:

Richard Brown,	1852-1940	born	Doddiscombeleigh
Louisa "	1854-		Bridford
Matilda Jane	1856- 1914		"
Emily	1858 -		"
James	1860 -		"
Samuel	1860 -		"
Anne	1864 -		Christow
Eliza	1868 -		Bovey Tracey

Simon Brown died in October 1891 and his widow Elizabeth died in 1908.

William Way and Jane were living 'back of 5 Queen Street, Dawlish' in 1881 and William was an agricultural labourer.

William Richard Brown Way was born on 28 April 1881 at Queen Street, Dawlish. He was baptised at St Gregory's Church, Dawlish on 9th May 1881 and his birth was officially registered by his mother on 30th May.

By 1891 the family had moved to 2 Stacey(?) Cotts, Temperance St, Tormoham, Torquay and their family was recorded there as:

William Way,	Head,	35,	(1858-1898)	a general labourer	
Jane Way,	wife	37,	(1856-1914 (?))		
William Richard Way ,	10,	(1881-1918)	born	Dawlish	
Alfred Simon Way,	son,	7,	(1883-1957)	"	
Albert (Bertie) Way,	son,	5,	(1886-)	"	
Frederick Way,	son,	2,	(1888-1959)	"	

In March 1896 **William Way** enlisted with the Devonshire Regiment, 3rd Battalion at Plymouth. The 3rd Devons were part of the Special Reserve. Once known as the Militia, the Special Reserve consisted of civilians with military training who undertook to attend regular training events with the army and to rejoin it if mobilised for emergency or war.

Mobilised at the outbreak of war, the 3rd Battalion took up positions along the South West coastline to defend Britain against invasion.

William Way's enlistment papers show that he was examined by personnel from Staddon Point (Battery) and Agaton Fort, Plymouth on 13th and 14th March 1896, when he was actually just over 15, but declared himself 17 years and 1 month old. The record also shows that he transferred from the Devons on 3rd August 1896 to the Royal Navy. This may have been influenced by his aunt, Bessie Way (1861-1936) who had married George Shelston, a naval Petty Officer and was living in Devonport. George Shelston retired and ran the Carpenters' Arms in Dawlish until his death in 1913. His widow is referred to in the first report by the *Dawlish Gazette* (see Documents).

There is a Naval Service Record for **William Way**, born in Dawlish and with the occupation of errand boy. He entered as a Boy Seaman, 2nd Class on 4 August 1896, and gave his birth date as 12 July 1880. He was sent to H.M.S.IMPREGNABLE, the Boy Seaman's training ship moored in the Hamoaze. He was shown as having dark brown hair, grey eyes and with a dark complexion. He was 5' 5" tall, weighed 8st 2 lbs and had a tattoo on his left arm. At the (theoretical) age of 18 on 12 July 1898 he passed to Ordinary Seaman while serving aboard H.M.S.SHARPSHOOTER, a torpedo gunboat.

On reaching 18 years of age, he signed on for 12 years but on 5 January 1900 he was invalided to Plymouth Hospital, and the service record ends there. No trace has been found of a birth that matches the given date of July 1880, and it is a reasonable assumption that it is **William Richard Way**, having only a vague idea of his birthplace and date.

By 1901, William senior had died and his widow Jane was still living in Tormoham, this time at 4 Spring Steps, Spring Place, Pimlico with **William**, now 20, and Frederick, 13. Jane Way is shown as a general hawker, **William** as a porter and Frederick as a paper boy/hawker.

William Way appears in the 1911 census, still in Torquay, as a mason's labourer, and living as a boarder at 7 Madrepore Road. His brother, Frederick, was 21 and a fisherman and married to Defiance Way (nee Orchard) in the Oct-Dec quarter of 1910 (GRO Ref Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 313), and living with her parents at Hackney Cottage, Kingsteignton. Their mother may be the widow, Jane Way, living at 3 Perretts Buildings, Pimlico, Torquay, and shown as a charwoman and living with four people listed as hawkers. There is a possible death record for Jane Way in Jan-Mar 1914 in Newton Abbot district (GRO ref vol 5b, p 232).

William Way enlisted at Torquay and was originally attached to the Devonshire Regiment, again, (Private 21068). After initial training he may have been sent to France and then re-allocated to the Somerset Light Infantry if their numbers had been depleted in action. The 7th Battalion Somerset L.I. was part of the 61st Brigade, 20th (Light) Division in early 1918 on the front line near the Menin Road. The War Diary shows that at the beginning of February they relieved the 7th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and spent two days improving front line trenches. At dusk on the 3rd they were relieved by the '12th King's' and returned to support line at Canada Tunnels. On the 4th they 'proceeded by Decauville (French narrow gauge portable railways) from LAMBTON SIDING to FEUZEVILLE, thence by route march to CHIPPEWA CAMP'. Here they reorganized, had kit inspections and drills and were held in reserve until the 7th when they returned to LAMBTON and then to the front line relieving the 11th Rifle Brigade on the Menin Road sector.

The War Diary records that, "front line boys came under fairly heavy fire from Trench Mortar batteries" on the 9th and 10th February. It was quieter on the 11th and at dusk they were relieved by the 7th D.C.L.I. and moved to support line at CANADA TUNNELS (roughly one mile to the south-east of Zillebeke Lake and 2 km south-east of Ypres).

On the 12th February 1918 they were in support but there were working parties carrying to the front line, and there were 2 casualties, of which **William Way** was one.

He is shown on the Devon Roll of Honour to have been awarded the Military Medal, although this does not appear on the website of the CWGC. His Medal Rolls Index Card shows only that he was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal, and so further research is needed. The extract from the *Dawlish Gazette* in 'Documents' also refers to him as holder of the Military Medal. Military records give the date of death as 14th February, not the 19th as quoted by the *Dawlish Gazette*.

The letter quoted from his commanding officer states "I cannot say too much for him, as he was one of my best men."

He is listed in The London Gazette dated Tuesday 18th December 1917 among those in Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch of 7th November 1917 "deserving special mention, published in a Supplement to The London Gazette of Friday, 14th December 1917."

William Way, M.M. appears on the Devon Roll of Honour, but no date or location of death are shown. He is also on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: WAY W. (M.M.) PTE SOM L.I.

Devon Heritage War Memorials site info:

27046 Private William Richard Way of the 7th Battalion, the Somerset Light Infantry. Son of Jane Way and the late William Way. Born in Dawlish in 1881. Died 14 February 1918 aged 37.

Last known address: 7 Madrepore Road, Torquay

Next of kin: brother, Frederick Way

The Death Grant of £7. 2s. 10d. Was paid to Frederick, brother & sole legatee, as was the War Gratuity of £8. 10s. 0d.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: WAY, WILLIAM Private 27046
14/02/1918 Age: 37 Somerset Light Infantry, 7th Bn.
Panel Ref: Panel 42A. [Tyne Cot Memorial](#), Flanders
Son of William Way.

Historical Information

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 TYNE COT MEMORIAL now bears the names of almost 35,000 officers and men whose graves are not

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known. The memorial, designed by Sir Herbert Baker with sculpture by Joseph Armitage and F.V. Blundstone, was unveiled by Sir Gilbert Dyett on 20 June 1927.

References:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission site cwgc.org.uk

Way and Ford family tree by June Snell and the Wedlake family – see under Frank Morrish

The London Gazette

Frank Morrish, Life story, q.v.,

Edward Doble, life story, q.v.,

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/diaries/lavacquerie.htm>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/diaries/ypres3osborn.htm>

Marriage and Birth certificates from General Record Office

Free birth, marriage and death refs

Keepmilitarymuseum.org

Decauville (French narrow gauge portable railways) - wikipedia

Refs via subscription website;

- Census records

- UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War

- UK, Army Register of Soldiers' Effects

- Medal Rolls Index Cards

- Somerset Light Infantry, 7th Battalion War Diary

- JervisVosperBeable family tree – Ancestry

- Mardles Ashburton family tree - Ancestry