

Ernest John BOWDEN

Born Kenton, Q3, 1892
L/Corporal, Service No: 8687

Died 1st July 1916, aged 23
2nd Battallion, Devonshire Regt,

Ernest John Bowden and **Sidney Charles Bowden** (q.v.) were brothers from a Dawlish family. Their grandparents were John and Mary Bowden who were living at 'Orchard' in the vicinity of Langdon/Shutterton in 1851. John Bowden (1813-1884) was an agricultural labourer, born in Dawlish, and his wife Mary (1814-) was born in Ideford. They had five children by 1851:

Martha (1838-)	dau, 13		born Dawlish
John (1850-)	son, 11	ploughboy	"
Anne (1842-)	dau, 9	scholar	"
James* (1846-)	son, 4		"
Sarah J (1850-)	dau, 1		"

By 1861 John and Mary Bowden had moved to Park Row, Dawlish with:

James* (1846-)	son, 14	scholar	"
Sarah Jane (1850-)	dau, 11	"	"
Richard (1854-)	son, 7	"	"
Thomas (1855-)	son, 6	"	"
John (1860-)	son, 1 mo		"

James Bowden* was born in Dawlish in summer 1846 (GRO ref 1846, Sept, N.A., vol 10, p 142) and he first married Mary Hill (1844-1882) in 1871 (GRO ref 1871, July-Sept, N.A., vol 5b, p 212). She appears in the 1851 census as Mary Heel, daughter of John and Ann Heel but later census entries revert to the spelling Hill. (See document on James Henry Hill, also a casualty).

In 1881 James (37) and Mary Bowden (39) were living at 4 Church Street with three children:

William J (1876-)	son, 5		Dawlish
Alfred George (1876-1964)	son, 4		"
Mary J (1879-1958)	dau, 2		"

James was shown as a labourer.

Mary Bowden (nee Hill) died in early 1882 (GRO ref 1882, Jan-Mar, N.A., vol 5b, p 86) leaving James with three young children.

James married Elizabeth Packer, born in Thorverton, in the second quarter of 1884 (Newton Abbot district, vol 5b, p279).

In 1891 they were living at 27 High Street, Kenton with three children:

Mary J (1879- 1958)	dau, 12	Scholar	Dawlish
Frederick W (1885-1964)	son, 6	"	Teignmouth
Henry J (1887-)	son, 4	"	"

Ernest John was born in St Thomas registration district (Kenton) in 1892 (GRO ref 1892, Sept, St Thomas, vol 5b, p 74).

By 1901 the family had moved to 42 High Street, Dawlish and had one more child, Sidney Charles (1897-1919).

In 1911 the census return for 75 High Street shows that James and Elizabeth Bowden declared five children, but that one had died. The children from their marriage were Frederick William, Henry John, Ernest John, Sidney Charles and one other. Frederick is also shown as a widower, aged 26, and there is another daughter (of Frederick's marriage?) Beatrice (1906-).

Sidney Charles Bowden was 15 and an agricultural labourer, but by 1912 he had joined the Coldstream Guards and was wounded and paralysed in action on 1st October 1914 at Ypres. He was discharged in 1916 and died on 19 January 1919 and is buried in Dawlish cemetery. (*See separate entry*)

Ernest John Bowden was not with his family in 1911. He was already enlisted in the 2nd Battalion, Devonshire Regiment and in barracks in Malta.

The record shows him as a Private aged 21. That may indicate that he enlisted with a false age but as his service record has not survived there is no way to tell. There is little to show of his service beyond knowing that he disembarked in France on 24 March 1915 and served there until his death on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

The 2nd Battalion took part in the Battle of Albert, 1 - 13 July 1916. In this opening phase of the Somme offensive, the British assault broke into and gradually moved beyond the first of the German defensive complexes on the Somme.

Success on the first day in the area between Montauban and Mametz led to a redirection of effort to that area, for the initial attack was defeated with huge losses north of Mametz. There was a stiff fight for Trones Wood and costly, hastily planned and piecemeal attacks that eventually took La Boisselle, Contalmaison and Mametz Wood.

The Register of Soldiers' Effects show that **Ernest J Bowden** was presumed dead on 1 July 1916 and that a Death Grant of £8.13s.7d was paid to Phoebe Harris "sole legatee". The War Gratuity of £10.10s.0d was similarly paid. Phoebe Harris does not appear among relations and there is no sign of a marriage having taken place.

Commonwealth War Graves entry:

BOWDEN, Ernest John Lance Corporal, 8687, 01/07/1916
Age: 23 Devonshire Regiment, 2nd Bn. Pier and Face 1 C. Thiepval Memorial.
Son of James and Elizabeth Bowden, of 63, Manor Row, Brook St., Dawlish, Devon.

Ernest John Bowden is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: BOWDEN E.J. L/CORPL. DEVON REGT.
He is also among those recorded on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Devon Heritage site info:

8687 Lance Corporal Ernest John Bowden of the 2nd Battalion, the Devonshire regiment.
Son of James and Elizabeth Bowden of the High Street, Dawlish; brother of Sidney (q.v)
Born in Kenton in 1893. Died 1 July 1916 aged 23. (*the birth date appears incorrect-ed*)
Last known address: 42 High Street, Dawlish (1901 census)
Next of kin: James Bowden, father, 75 High Street, Dawlish (1911 census)

References:

Free Birth, Marriage, & Death refs

Refs from subscription sites:

Forces War Records.

Census data

UK, Army Register of Soldiers' Effects

Comensoli Smith family tree (Alfred G Bowden) - Ancestry