

## George Carter WEST

Born Dawlish, Q2, 1877

Died France, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1917, aged 39

Gunner 543

2<sup>nd</sup> Divn, Heavy Trench Mortars, Australian Field Artillery

**George Carter West** was the cousin of Albert Henry West (q.v.) who died in Flanders near Ypres on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917.

Their joint grandparents were Edward and Fanny West. Edward West (1813-1874) was born in Kenton and was a gardener. He married Fanny Pike (1817-1892), who was born in Exeter, on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1835.

In 1861 they lived at 9 Regent Street, Dawlish with six children:

William Charles West (1841-1921)

Mary Ann West (1846-1924)

Frederick Pike West (1849-1923) father of **George Carter West**

Thomas Pike West (1851-1931) father of Albert Henry West

George Edward West (1854-1902) worked for the Post Office, Dawlish, 1911

Robert John West (1856-1919)

The eldest daughter, Frances West (1839-1893) was living away as a servant, a position she held in various households over the following thirty years.

They lived at 15 Regent Street in 1871. Frederick was then 22 and working as a coachman.

Frederick P West married Nancy Carter (1850-1901) in 1873. (Newton Abbot 1873 Jan-Mar vol 5b, p 168)

By 1881 they were living at Bay View Cottage, Richmond Place and had five children, Roseina, 7, Edward, 6, Sydney, 2, and Emily, 11 months. **George Carter West** was born in Dawlish in 1877 (N.A.district, April-June, Vol 5b, page 116).

For the census **George C West, 4**, was a visitor to William and Kate Carter at North Street, Otterton. William was a butcher and the son of a farmer, and it is interesting to note that **George** learned butchery before joining the army. No clear relationship has been found between Nancy West (nee Carter) and William Carter but they were both born in Harpford.

By 1891 Frederick and Nancy had moved to Manor Place. Frederick followed his father as a gardener and Edward, now 16, had been invalided out of the Royal Navy. There were three more children, Charles D, 8, Herbert P, 6, and Keturah H, 2.

There are no entries to be found for **George** in 1891 or 1901 in UK census data and it seems likely that he was in the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars where he served a 12 year term, probably from ca. 1895-1907.

Nancy West died early in 1901 and does not appear with Frederick in the census at 5 Manor Hill, with Rose, 27, a domestic/cook, Emily, 20, Herbert, 16, a labourer, and Lena, 12. There is no mention of the invalid Edward J West.

In 1911 Frederick is shown as living at 5 Manor Place which is the address given for his next of kin on **George's** enlistment. Only Herbert, 26, ex-naval invalid, and Helena (Lena), 22, were still at home.

It is not known when **G C West** sailed for Australia. It appears that he worked as a butcher at "Meat-works" in Brisbane before he joined up.

His enlistment papers show that he joined the Australian Imperial Force on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1914 at Townsville, Queensland for the duration of the War. **G C West** had previously completed a 12 year term with the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars. His civilian trade was as a butcher.

When the United Kingdom declared war on Germany at the start of World War 1, the Australian government followed without hesitation. By the end of the war, almost 20% of those who served in the Australian forces had been born in the United Kingdom, even though nearly all enlistments had occurred in Australia.

The Australian government had pledged to supply 20,000 men, organised as one infantry division and one light horse brigade plus supporting units.

Departing from Western Australia on 1 November 1914, the Australian Infantry Force (AIF) was sent initially to British-controlled Egypt to pre-empt any attack by the Ottoman Empire, and with a view to opening another front against the Central Powers. The AIF had four infantry brigades with the first three making up the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. The 4th Brigade was joined with the sole New Zealand infantry brigade to form the New Zealand and Australian Division. \_

**George C West** served first with the infantry in the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Brigade. He was appointed on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1915 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rein (*sic*) 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He was a Private and attached to the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade when he embarked at Brisbane by *H.M.A.T.AENEAS* on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1915.

#### Australian soldiers landing at ANZAC Cove

The combined Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), commanded by British General William Birdwood, went into action when Allied forces landed on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915. The Battle of Gallipoli would last for eight months of bloody stalemate. By the end of the campaign, Australian casualties were 8,700 killed and 19,000 wounded or sick. Allied forces were withdrawn from the beaches of Gallipoli by the first week of January 1916, without further casualties.

**West** embarked at Alexandria on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1915 to join the M.E.F. on the Gallipoli peninsula. He was promoted to Corporal on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and appears on the casualty list on the 19<sup>th</sup> at Beauchops Hill.

**West** was taken to hospital at Mudros and thence to Alexandria where he arrived on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1916. He left Alexandria on the 14<sup>th</sup> March to sail to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the Western Front and disembarked at Marseilles on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1916 he transferred from the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Heavy Trench Mortar Battery. **West** was disciplined with a reprimand on the 21<sup>st</sup> July for quitting the ranks without permission while on the march.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 1916 he reverted to the rank of Gunner at his own request and became a batman.

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1917 he was detached for duty with the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade HQ. He was batman to Captain Christie at a Brigade HQ at Bullecourt when, on 15<sup>th</sup> April, a shell landed on the HQ and he was killed outright. At some point he held the rank of Sergeant.

## Dawlish World War One Project

A fellow soldier, Gunner Higgins, stated that "He was called 'Westie'. He was about the gamest man I ever saw and the best N.C.O. in the Battery. All the boys will tell you that."

His father, Frederick, received a package on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917 conveying the effects of "543 Gnr West G.C., V2 A.T.M.Bty, A.I.F."

**G C West** is shown on the Devon Roll of Honour, but with an incorrect date of death. He is also on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: WEST G.C. CORPL. AUSTRAL; I.F.

Devon Heritage site info: G.C.WEST 543 Gunner George Carter West of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, The Trench Mortar Battery of the Australian Field Artillery. Parents not yet identified. Born in the June Quarter of 1877. Died 15 April 1917 aged 40. He was an Australian Citizen.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: WEST, G C Gunner 543 15/04/1917 Australian Field Artillery 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. T.M.Battery FRANCE - VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MEMORIAL The memorial is the Australian National Memorial erected to commemorate all Australian soldiers who fought in France and Belgium during the First World War, to their dead, and especially to name those of the dead whose graves are not known.

Next of kin: Father, Frederick P West, 5 Manor Place, Old Town Street, Dawlish

### References:

Free Birth Marriage Death index

Australian War Memorial, Red Cross Records

Declaration by Gnr Higgins Aust Corps, H.T.M.Battery

Via subscription website, Ancestry:

Australia WW1 Service Records, 1914-1920 - WEST, George Carter

Census records England