

FENNER Charles William



Private : Bedfordshire Regiment : 1st Battalion.

Age: 35 Died of wounds: 07/05/1915

Service No: 7519

Additional information: He appears under Tollesbury in the 1891 census as an 11 year old. In the subsequent 1901 census he is shown as residing at Goldhanger & working as a Horseman On Farm. His service record shows his place of birth & residence as Tolleshunt D'Arcy. He enlisted at Colchester. Husband of Alice Ellen Fenner, of 5, Spring Terrace, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Maldon, Essex.



*1st Battalion behind a pub in Bedford prior to embarking in 1914.*

The 1st Battalion were a "Regular Army" Battalion, who were at Mullingar, Ireland, at the outbreak of war. On mobilisation they left England as part of 15th Infantry Brigade in the 5th Division and went down in history as one of the Battalions of "Old Contemptibles" who outfought the Kaisers armies in the early engagements of the war.

The Division landed in France on 16th August 1914 as a part of Haig's II Corps and fought in the early engagements of the War. They were at Mons in August and fought fiercely at Le Cateau, where 5 VC's were won by the Division. After service on the Aisne, they took their position in Flanders and were also involved in the actions at Neuve-Chapelle and La Bassee. By the end of November the Division had suffered 5,000 casualties and stayed in a purely defensive role that winter. Having moved to around Ypres in early 1915, the Division were engaged at the Second Ypres, defending Hill 60, where another 4 VCs were won in one day. In

May Private Edward Warner of the 1st Bedfords won his VC defending Hill 60, but was awarded the honour posthumously as he died of his wounds the following day.

**WAR DIARY FOR MAY 1915** **1 May 1915** - left of Hill 60 Enemy made sudden attack on trenches to our right with asphyxiating gas & shells, at about 6.30 pm. Our right trenches felt the effects, & all men were violently sick. The enemy did not press home the attack, possibly because some of the fumes blew back towards them. Our casualties were 1 man wounded 1 man died from effects of gas, four other men taken to Dressing Station suffering from gas effects [comment; 1 was Edward Warner, who would be awarded the VC. He died on the 2nd May]; several others ill but remained in trenches. **2 May 1915** Several men admitted to Hospital suffering from effects of gas yesterday - 22 admitted in all, of whom 2 dead [comment; 1 was Edward Warner, VC]. Other casualties - 3 wounded. **3 May 1915** Quiet day. Major [Benjamin Robert] ROCHE & Lieut SMALL joined for duty last night. Mouth pads or bandages issued to all officers & men, together with solution of soda a preventative against effects of asphyxiating gas. **4 May 1915** A 'switch' made in our line, during early hours of morning, so as to shorten it. Result was that left of Battalion rested on corner of trench line, instead of line being prolonged eastwards for half a mile. Enemy soon noticed withdrawal & advanced: spent most of day enfilading our trenches with artillery. Trenches knocked about in places but casualties very small **5 May 1915** At a little after 8 a.m. enemy attacked with asphyxiating gas laid on from two points opposite our trenches. Battn stuck to its trenches, though a few men killed by gas, & all were badly affected. Troops on right, however, were driven out of trenches & enemy captured Hill 60 & trenches on our immediate right. Our left trenches were then attacked but drove back enemy: our right trenches were attacked all day with bombs, rifles & machine guns. Desperate fight all day enemy & selves in same trench, both sides using hand grenades fiercely. Enemy eventually worked round our right flank & enfiladed our right, but men gallantly maintained their position. A Battery of our own artillery spent the whole day firing into our own right trenches, causing many casualties but in spite of everything right trenches held out. Lt [Frederick] WHITTEMORE alone claims over 50 Germans to his own rifle, & he was seen by Artillery observing officer to shoot seven Germans in a couple of minutes. Our casualties in right trenches were heavy. Lt [Eric Arthur] HOPKINS killed, Capt [Sheldon Arthur] GLEDSTANES [died of wounds] & Lt [Frederick] WHITTEMORE wounded. Attack made by 13th Inf.Bde to recapture Hill 60 & re establish line not successful **6 May 1915** Situation practically unchanged. Right trenches held out all day, & drove back enemy with hand grenades & rifle fire whenever they attempted to approach. Right trench was cut off from rest of line by enemy's machine guns, so that no relief of men, or water or rations could be brought up & same exhausted garrison had to carry on. After nightfall a sandbag rampart was made so as to defilade the approach to the trench from the left. **7 May 1915** - hutments near Ouderdom Battalion relieved by Royal Irish Rifles about 2 a.m. & marched back to hutments in reserve. Casualties during two previous days about 3 officers & 290 men.

He died of wounds.



1914 Mons Star; 1914-1920 War Medal; 1914-1919 Victory

Campaign :—		1914		(A) Where decoration was earned.
				(B) Present situation.
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) FENNER	1/Bedf. R.	PTE	4519	MEDICAL R/2/104B-161
(B) <i>charley c.w.</i>	— " —	— " —	— " —	BRITISH <i>do do</i> 14 STAR K/2/3 50
Action taken				<i>D. of W.</i>
<i>Clasp/2/2601</i>				
QUALIFYING DATE.				<i>16. 8. 14</i>

Medal

(6 34 46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608

[OVER.



Casualty Type:  
Commonwealth War Dead  
Grave/Memorial Reference: II.  
A. 126. Cemetery: BAILLEUL  
COMMUNAL CEMETERY  
EXTENSION (NORD)

Bailleul was occupied on 14 October 1914 by the 19th Brigade and the 4th Division. It became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre, with the 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 11th, 53rd, 1st Canadian and 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Stations quartered in it for considerable periods. It was a corps headquarters until July 1917, when it was

severely bombed and shelled, and after the Battle of Bailleul (13-15 April 1918), it fell into German hands and was not retaken until 30 August 1918. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made at the east end of the communal cemetery and in April 1915, when the space available had been filled, the extension was opened on the east side of the cemetery. The extension was used until April 1918, and again in September, and after the Armistice graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields. BAILLEUL COMMUNAL CEMETERY contains 610 Commonwealth burials of the First World War; 17 of the graves were destroyed by shell fire and are represented by special memorials. BAILLEUL COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION contains 4,403 Commonwealth burials of the First World War; 11 of the graves made in April 1918 were destroyed by shell fire and are represented by special memorials. There are also 17 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and 154 German burials from both wars. Both the Commonwealth plot in the communal cemetery and the extension were designed by Sir Herbert Baker. No. of Identified Casualties: 4343

Last updated 09/03/2008



Saint Mary's Tollesbury