

Private 240613 William Charles Morrish (Willie)

Houseman, Servant of Penvose Mill, St. Tudy

1/5th Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

Born: 1895

Killed in Action: 31st March, 1917, aged 23

William Charles Morrish was born in St. Tudy village in 1895.

He was known as Willie, and was the second child of John and Mary Jane Morrish.

Willie's father, John, was also born in St. Tudy and worked on a farm in charge of a team of horses. His mother, Mary Jane Neal, was born in Michaelstow, and married John there in 1888.

They were a large family of 12 children, 10 survived, and moved to Penvose Mill sometime between 1901 and 1911.

His brothers and sisters were: Thomas (1890), Frederick Henry (1897), Elizabeth Jane (1899), Bertha (1901), Charles (1904), Gladys (1906), John (1907), Arthur (1908), Florence May (1910) and Violet Mary (1911).

In 1911 Willie was working as a Houseman or Servant at Vearndor Farm, Tetcott, Holsworthy for a widowed Mr Woodley, who was a farmer.

He enlisted in February or March 1916, aged 21, and joined the 1/5th Battalion Territorial Force of the DCLI.

His brothers, Thomas and Frederick, also joined the DCLI, and survived.

In April 1916, the Battalion became a Pioneer Battalion of the 61st Division.

On the 22nd of April 1916, they were mobilised for war and landed at Le Havre, engaging in various actions on the Western Front including the attack at Fromelles in 1916, the operations of the Ancre, the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, the Battle of Langemark and the German counter attacks in 1917.

At midday on the 23rd March 1918, the 1/5th DCLI was ordered to mount an immediate attack on the village of Varlaines.

As they lined up readying themselves for the order to advance, the band of the 7th Battalion stepped up and played them Trelawney in support. It was so unusual for the musicians to have their instruments in the front line because they were the stretcher bearers. Many consider this is possibly the last occasion that a British Military Force was played into battle.

The 1st/5th DCLI did successfully take Verlaines, but at the loss of 800 men. Such was their valour that Sir Douglas Haig mentioned them specifically in his account of The Great War which was almost unheard of for a Battalion.

It as at the Battle of Hangard Wood, in the St. Quentin area, some eight days later, on the 31st March 1918, that Willie Morrish was Killed in Action, aged 23.

He is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial, Panel 45.

