

Personal Stories

from World War I



Private 10299 Frederick James Hoddinott A company 3rd Wiltshire Regiment

Having been borne and educated in Ringwood moved to Winterslow his father James went to work for George Bright at Roche Court Old Farm. Along with his father and mother Rose he lived in Farm Cottage in East Winterslow. Soon to come to Frederick's attention was Evelyn Seager, also 19, who lived with her parents in College Street in Salisbury and was to become his sweetheart and correspond with James when he joined up.

On the 18th September 1914 Evelyn received a letter from Frank letting her know that he was now in the army and, being the first none reservist from Winterslow to volunteer, was now in Weymouth. In his letter he said "I rather like being a soldier. I am billeted with five other soldiers, we all get on very well, there is a good allowance of food and we have a bed to sleep on".

On 14th October Evelyn received a letter in which he identified that he liked being billeted in Weymouth, but they were not allowed into the town without a pass, and he was having his photograph taken in uniform so she could see how smart he looked.

Another letter arrived on 14th December and Evelyn found out that Frederick was now acting as an officers batman and he had to be up at 6:30 to start his duties, having been moved to a hotel from his billet. Within days he wrote telling her he was off to France and quickly followed that with another dated 28th January. He was now in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle was the first major British offensive, with the 2nd Battalion the Wiltshire Regiment moving up to the front line on 10th March. Other units were engaging the Germans first, which meant that Frederick's Battalion was not ordered to move into action until 1 p.m. The engagement lasted a total of four days with advances, retreats and much confusion before the troops were moved to the rear in the reserves on 13th March. Frederick was one of the casualties of those actions (11/3/1915) which in total saw 58 NCOs and soldiers killed, 162 wounded and 56 reported missing.

In early April Frederick's parents received the official War Office letter dated 13th March indicating that their son of just 20 years had been killed.



"Dear Mr and Mrs Hoddinott, it is with the deepest regret and sympathy I have to reports to you the death of your son Private Hoddinott". James and Rose contacted Evelyn with the sad news and placed a short announcement in the Salisbury journal on 12th April.

(For more details and what the future held for Evelyn see "One Pound of Love")

Frederick is commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Memorial at Le Touret, Pas de Calais.