

## Frank Richards Age 27

Francis George Richards was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1889 and baptised on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1889 at Holy Trinity. He was the son of George and Rhoda Richards of Long Sutton. The 1891 census records George as an agricultural labourer and the family were probably living towards the Langport end of Shute Lane. By 1901 George is recorded as working as a carter on a farm and the family were living in Crouds Lane. Frank is listed as the eldest child, followed by Florence, Edward, Lillian and Gertrude.

Like his father, Frank worked on a farm when he left school.

The newspaper account at his death states that he tried to join up immediately the war started, but was rejected. Subsequent attempts were also unsuccessful, suggesting that Frank was probably unfit or of small stature, despite working in a physical occupation. However, by the early part of 1917, recruitment officers were driven to accept men who were less than A1. Frank joined the Devon Regiment and was sent to Wiltshire, initially being put to work on a farm there. He returned to the barracks at Tidworth and became ill with meningitis. He died on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1917, just seven weeks after leaving Long Sutton.

Frank Richards was brought back to Somerset for burial in the churchyard at Holy Trinity. The flag at the school was flown at half mast and the headmaster played the organ at the funeral.

Frank's gravestone is supplied by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It is of the standard design that commemorates all casualties in an equal and uniform fashion, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.



### THE Langport & Somerton Herald

Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1917

#### LONG SUTTON

**SOLDIER'S DEATH.**—A good deal of sympathy has been expressed in the village with Mr. and Mrs. G. Richards in the loss that has befallen them by the recent death of their son, Pte. Frank Richards, of the 7th Devon Regiment. Pte. Richards, who endeavoured to join immediately on the outbreak of war, but was rejected, as well as on subsequent occasions, joined the Colours only seven weeks previous to his decease. Being a farm hand he was sent for a week or so to work on a farm in Wiltshire. At the completion of his period with the farmer he returned to Tidworth where he became ill, the disease proving to be the deadly cerebro spinal meningitis, and after lingering for a week he passed away at the age of 27 years. The remains were brought to Long Sutton for burial, which took place on Tuesday of last week, at the churchyard. The vicar, the Rev. J. M. Skittery officiated. Deceased being an old scholar of the Long Sutton School, the flag was flown at half-mast. Mr. D. Needham, the headmaster presided at the organ at the service in the church, playing, as the coffin was borne to the grave, Chopin's Funeral March. The mourners present were Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Richards, (father and mother); Mr. E. Richards (brother); Misses Lillah and Gertie Richards (sisters); Mr. and Mrs. E. Williams (uncle and aunt); Mr. and Mrs. T. Richards (uncle and aunt); Mr. F. Burt (uncle); Misses Rose and May Williams (cousins) Miss Ida Burt (cousin); Mr. E. Richards (cousin). The bearers were Messrs. J. and F. Cox, M. and G. Hunt. The coffin was of polished elm, with brass fittings. Mr. W. J. Stuckey satisfactorily carried out the undertaking. On Sunday evening the vicar referred to the sad event in his sermon and Mr. D. Needham gave a feeling interpretation of the Dead March in "Saul."