

## William Hunt Age 19

William Alfred Hunt was born in 1898 in Long Load. His parents were Alfred and Clara Hunt. In the 1901 census the family are listed as living in Long Load, with Alfred working as a general labourer and Clara (formerly Dyer) as a glove machinist. William was the only child. Later the family moved to Long Sutton Hill.

It is believed that William joined the Wiltshire Regiment towards the end of 1916 or early 1917. The regiment had landed in France in July 1915 and amalgamated with the Wiltshire Yeomanry, becoming the 6th (Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry) Battalion in September 1917.

The battalion was probably involved in action throughout most of 1917. By March 1918, the battalion was in France and under pressure with the German army launching an offensive that resulted in British troops retreating, albeit temporarily. William was killed in action on 22<sup>nd</sup> March as his unit fought a heroic rearguard action.

Part of the Wiltshire Regiment war diary covering the retreat is shown below. All units in infantry battalions were obliged to keep war diaries once they were on active service overseas. They are the most detailed surviving contemporary record of the movements and activities of a unit. The diaries were sometimes written under pressure and entries were sometimes very brief.

The diary describes the action the unit was fighting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March when William was killed. They had been cut off by the enemy advance, coming under fire from both sides and eventually making their retreat. The commanding officer added the following note at the end of March when the situation had improved and he had more time to assess the events of the previous week.

From Commander of 6th Bn. Wiltshire Regt. 31st March, 1918.

*The stand made by the Battalion at MORCHIES from 4p.m on the 22nd March to 5p.m on the 23rd and all that it meant, is a glorious episode in the history of the Wiltshire Regiment. It is a heroic record of self sacrifice stemming the victorious rush of a superior enemy and a model lesson of a rearguard fight. The subsequent retirement from FREMICOURT through BAPAUME to GREVILLERS and thence to BAYENCOURT was only one endless and stubborn fight. Suffice it to say that only one Officer, 1 Sergeant, and 18 Other Ranks came out the struggle, and that officer had also been wounded.*

William Hunt has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Arras memorial. William's parents, Alfred and Clara Hunt are buried in Holy Trinity churchyard and his name and death are also recorded on their headstone.

