

William Scriven Age 26

William Joseph Scriven was born on 31st May 1890 and baptised on the 7th September at Holy Trinity. His parents were Anthony William and Emma Jane Scriven. The family lived in Upton and the census lists Anthony as a load labourer in 1891, possibly working at the quarry, and as a farm labourer in 1901. William was their only child.

The 1911 census records William working as a grocer's warehouseman. His father was working as a labourer on the roads.

There are no details of William's enlistment or army record. Although the Langport and Somerton Herald report of his death states that he was with the Somerset Light Infantry, the official casualty record shows him with the 1/4th City of Bristol Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. His service number suggests that he may have enlisted in the spring of 1916. If so, he was almost certainly present when the battalion took part in its first action.

Although the battalion had probably first arrived in France in November 1915, it had spent some time away from the front line. When the Battle of the Somme began in July 1916, the battalion was moved into the area. It was not until the 3rd September, 1916 that they took part in their first full action, attacking German positions in an area known as Wedge Wood. This attack required the Battalion to advance in daylight over a distance of one and a half miles, in full view of the enemy. In this brief action one officer and 44 men were killed and another 48 were missing. Six officers and 225 other ranks were wounded. From a total of 913 men, 324 were killed or injured.

The battalion probably over-wintered in the area near Peronne. The winter had seen a prolonged period of exceptional frost, following after a very wet autumn. The ground had been frozen to a great depth. The thaw did not start until the third week of February. William died on 16th February having suffered a severe attack of bronchitis and he died of heart failure. He was 26 years old.

William Scriven is buried in a marked grave in the New British Cemetery at Assevillers, south-west of the town of Peronne. The cemetery was made after the Armistice by the collection and concentration of graves from numerous small burial grounds spread throughout the area.