

## 2<sup>ND</sup> LIEUTENANT JOHN FREDERICK GEORGE REW (1892 - 1916)

John Rew was born in 1892, the elder son of Harry and Cordine Rew at that time living in Chiswick. Harry was the eldest son of John and Sarah Rew of Lake Farm Newton St Cyres. In 1881 John Rew was farming 160 acres employing five men and a boy. He was succeeded at Lake by his second son Robert. Robert and his wife Jane had no children of their own and after 1919 the Rews left Lake Farm and retired to Churchills.

Meanwhile Harry was conducting business in Chiswick as a tapestry merchant and by 1911 had moved house to Hampton Hill where his house had nine rooms. Son John was working as a warehouseman.

2<sup>ND</sup> Lieutenant John Frederick Rew of the Eighth Battalion the Devonshire Regiment died on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July 1916. This was the first day of the battle of the Somme and the middle day of the middle year of WW1. The 9<sup>TH</sup> Devons were part of a line to advance northwards towards Mametz. The 8<sup>th</sup> Devons were to form the reserve.

Unfortunately directly to their left was Mansell copse beside a steep valley in which the road and railway ran and which was heavily guarded by German machine guns. The English preliminary bombardment was much less effective than they realised as the German gun emplacements were so deep. The 9<sup>TH</sup> Devons lost many of their officers as they advanced through the Mansell Copse route and they were to be replaced by the 8<sup>TH</sup> Devons. It is not known who gave the order for Captain Geoffrey Tregelles to advance but he did so through this dreadful Mansell Copse route. He and all his company officers including John Rew were killed or wounded.

The Devonshire Regiment began the advance at 7.30 am with three full strength battalions: less than twelve hours later the equivalent of one full strength battalion had disappeared. Although Mametz was entered that day the Somme battle continued until the middle of November 1916. British losses in the first fortnight are estimated at 90,000 men.

The headstones placed in the Devonshire cemetery at Mametz do not mark actual graves. Accounts vary but these men were buried where they had fallen late in the evening of July 1<sup>st</sup> or, alternatively four

days later, by a working group led by the Padre, The officers of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion included 2<sup>ND</sup> Lieutenant John Frederick Rew aged 25 yrs.



He is remembered on the stained glass memorial window in Newton St Cyres Church and by a brass plaque also in the Church.

Jean Wilkins