

## CHARLES W JOHNSON

Charles William Johnson was born in 1884 in Partney. His father Albert was the innkeeper of the Red Lion Inn.

In 1901 he was living in the Red Lion Inn with his widowed mother, Lucy Annie, who was now the innkeeper. He was working as a groom. By 1911 he had moved to live with the Booth family in Gosberton, near Spalding. John Booth was a horse breaker and Charles was employed as a servant, assisting in the business.

On 13 September 1913 Charles married Victoria Sellars in the Parish Church at Gosberton. Their son Joseph Albert was born in Spilsby on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

In August 1916 Dr Burgess of Spilsby certified that Charles was unfit for military service due to haemorrhage from the bladder caused by stones.

Charles eventually enlisted for service in the First World War on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1916 at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He was living in Scremby Road, Partney at the time and working as a horse breaker. He was 34 years and 4 months old, weighed 118lbs, stood 5' 5½ " tall and had a 34" chest.

His wife Victoria moved back to Gosberton, living in the High Street. Charles' brother Harry Burgess Johnson also served during the First World War.

After initial training with the Royal Field Artillery, Charles was transferred to the Yorks and Lancs regiment and sent to France on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1917, sailing from Folkestone to Calais. Charles was granted leave from 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1917 to 16<sup>th</sup> December 1917.

He was killed in action on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918.

According to the War Diary of the 9<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> April 1918 the Battalion was held in reserve in hutments at Langabisa in northern Italy. During this period training in hill fighting was carried out in its various phases. However, from 28<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> March they had relieved the 28th Italian Regiment in the line. The whole of the town was very quiet - little work was done apart from cleaning up and improving sanitary conditions which were very bad. Two patrols were sent out nightly, sometimes three; on two occasions they came in contact with the enemy; much useful information was obtained both by patrols and observation. It may be that Charles was wounded during these patrols and died later.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1918 the Charles' effects were forwarded to his widow, Victoria. They amounted to a letter, receipt, tobacco pouch, 2 pipes, wristwatch, strap and

protector, 2 notebooks, noticecard, photos, belt cigarette case and his cap badges.

With effect from 28<sup>th</sup> October 1918 Victoria was awarded a pension of 20 shillings and 5 pence a week.

Charles William Johnson is remembered at the Menin Road South Military Cemetery in Belgium. The Menin Road ran east and a little south from Ypres (now Ieper) to a front line which varied only a few kilometres during the greater part of the war. The position of this cemetery was always within the Allied lines.

Between August 1914 and January 1920 1,150,000 Memorial Death Plaques commonly called the 'Dead Man's Penny' were sent by the British Government to the next of kin of soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War. The penny was a 12-centimeter disk cast in bronze gunmetal, whose design incorporated an image of Britannia and a lion, two dolphins representing Britain's sea power and the emblem of Imperial Germany's eagle being torn to pieces by another lion. Britannia is holding an oak spray with leaves and acorns. Beneath this was a rectangular tablet where the deceased individual's name was cast into the plaque. No rank was given as it was intended to show equality in their sacrifice. On the outer edge of the disk, the words, 'He died for freedom and honour'.

We were very pleased and privileged to exhibit the Plaque sent to Victoria Johnson at the 2007 Partney History Exhibition.