

## **Ernie Fynamore**

I'm Ernest Fynamore, my friends call me Ernie.

I was born in St John in 1892. My Dad John was from St Giles in Devon and my Mum Emma was from Plympton. My parents originally lived in Sheviock, but then moved to St John.

I didn't really know my Mum. I don't remember her. When I was two she died in the mental home in Bodmin, so I was brought up by my Dad.

I had a sister called Louisa who was eleven years older than me.

When I was nine I lived for a while with my uncle in Stoke Climsland.

I had an interest in the military from a young age. I joined the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry as a territorial, and for a short while lived in Falmouth.

When the War broke out in 1914 I was twenty-two and already had military training, so I was in demand when Kitchener called the country to arms.

I was transferred to the Grenadier Guards. I couldn't believe it! I was transferred to the most senior of all the line regiments in the British Army, and I was also put into the First Battalion.

I was quite proud!

Our Battalion embarked for Flanders in 1914, in time for the first battle of Ypres. We were part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Brigade and we were in the thick of the war during 1914, 1915, and 1916. Our Battalion suffered heavy losses during these years and we were recorded as having the highest casualties of any regiment of the British Army during the war.

In September 1916 we were in the Battle of the Somme in France. It was a busy and cruel month for us.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September we attacked the Germans at the Battle of Flers Courcellette. I'd seen tanks before but this was the first battle where we used massed tanks as an offensive weapon. We suffered heavy casualties as much of the enemy's barbed wire was not cut by our bombardment, but we won the day and the Guards made an advance of over a mile. This was a great victory for us.

So we were feeling good, when after a brief rest we were ordered to attack Morval on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

We moved up into the line on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> September.

We waited until all the barbed wire had been blown up by our massive bombardment, which lasted all morning.

At 12.35 pm we went over the top, we were confident as we were in better, much flatter ground. The weather began to turn autumnal that morning, bringing some rain and making the ground difficult, and stretching us to our limits.

But there was some uncut wire hidden by crops, that held us up badly, the Germans opened their barrage just a minute after our advance started and we were faced with a terrible onslaught.

We suffered 2280 casualties that day at Morval.

I was killed in that onslaught, my body was never found and my name is included on the Thiepval Memorial to the 72,000 missing soldiers whose bodies were never identified.

I was the fourth man, and the second professional guardsman from the village to die in the Great War.

I was twenty-four years old.