

**Private Richard George Beddoes**  
**Date of death 14 August 1917 Age 37**

George was born in the summer of 1880 - the eighth child of George and Mary Beddoes who in 1881 lived at The Woodlands, Little Stretton. George and Mary were both born in Wentnor and he worked as a railway platelayer. George Jnr would have had a stable childhood as his parents had a steady income from a secure job on the railways and The Woodlands is surrounded by woodland providing an ideal playground. There may have been tough times as well as the 3 sisters just ahead of George in the Beddoes production line, recorded on the 1881 census, are not recorded on the 1891 version.



The Woodlands April 2018.

The building is made up of two semi-detached houses with the original parts in the centre and a much later extension added at each end together with a conservatory on the right hand house.

By 1901, when George was 20, he worked in Shrewsbury at 3, Wyle Cop as a butcher's assistant. On the census for 1901 there are 2 slaughtermen and two other butcher's assistants all about the same age as George and all were living at 3, Wyle Cop. Maybe

there was a slaughter house or butcher's shop large enough to employ 5 young men and provide accommodation. Whatever the details of his employment it was a good preparation for what came later.

In 1911 George had recently married Wilhelmina, 2 years his junior at 28. They lived at 3, The Crescent, Newtown, Montgomeryshire and he worked as an 'assurance superintendant'. Who he assured and about what has not been established but it sounds to be a step forward from butcher's assistant. As his wife had been born in Newtown it is possible that George had moved there prior to them meeting.

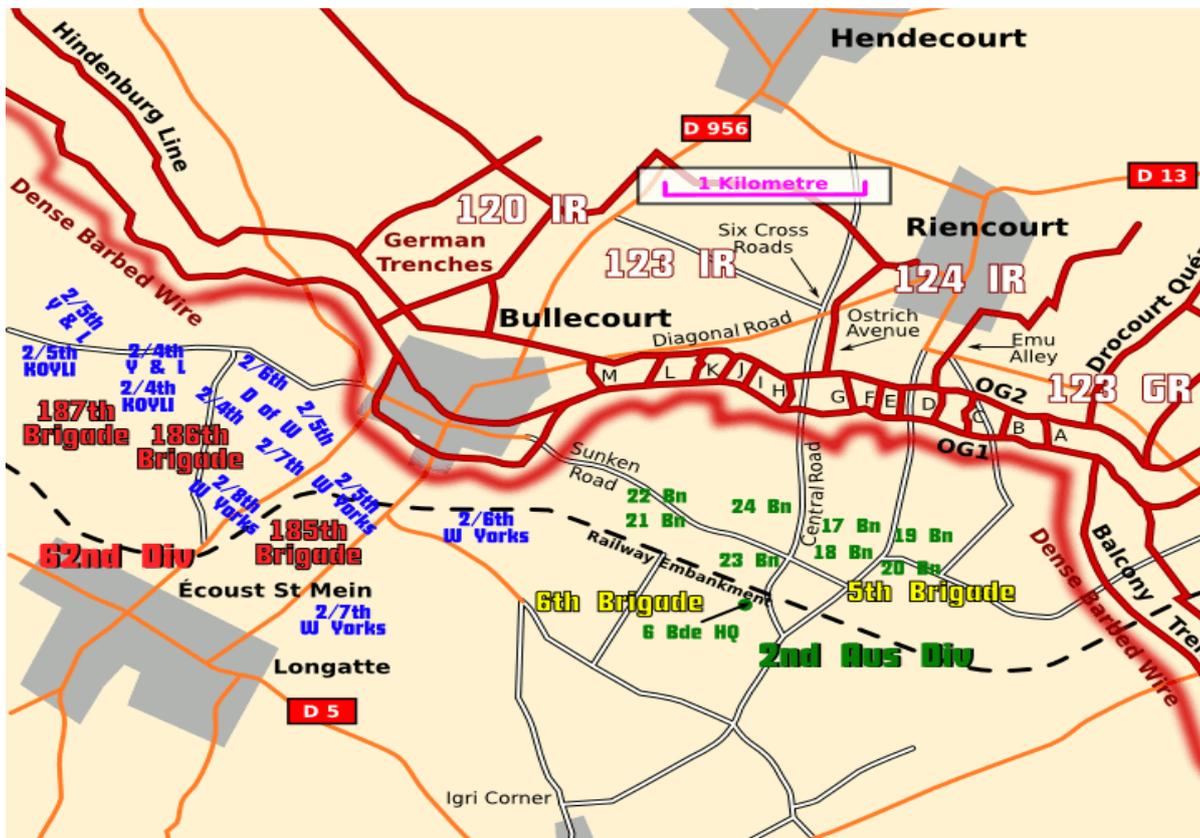
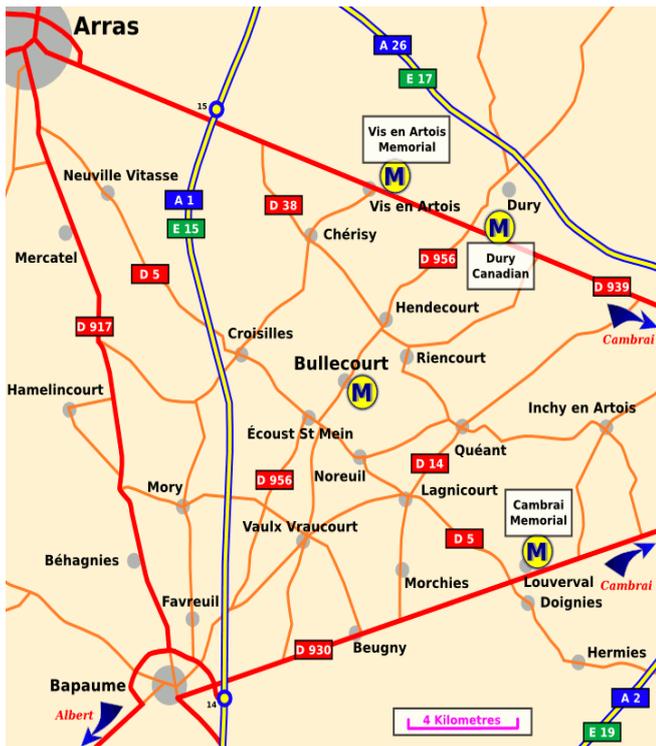
Conscription for married men was introduced in the first half of 1916 and whilst it is possible that George chose to enlist prior to this no evidence has been found to confirm this. We do know that he was enlisted into the Princess Alexandra West Yorkshire Regiment at Welshpool.

At the time of his death, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1917, he was in the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the regimental war diary records that the battalion was in the area of Bullecourt.

The following images and maps are courtesy of The Imperial War Museum Collection.



Allied troops at Bullecourt.



Allied troops facing Bullecourt or Bellcourt as it is named on modern maps, confronted The Hindenburg Line. The aerial photograph below shows Bullecourt – or rather where

the village used to be before being obliterated by artillery fire. The complexity of the trench systems is clear to see.



The Hindenburg Line was a complex system of defences prepared by the Germans and then retreated to in March 1917. The system included well equipped concrete structures going 40 feet below ground giving total protection from artillery barrages. Some of the dugouts were lit electrically. Machine guns were placed to enable overlapping fields of fire and the complex system of trenches had very dense barbed wire as a first line of defence. The Bullecourt Salient was directly in front of George's regiment and was the target they had been given.

The entry for 13 August 1917 in the regimental war diary states:

'Wiring was carried out on both sub sections and the wire in the strong point was strengthened. Five new Lewis guns emplacements were made and the trenches improved. Slight shelling with pipsqueaks caused two men to be wounded at dusk. Otherwise very quiet.'

The 14 August entry records:

'During the night 14/15 the battalion was relieved by the 2/5 West Yorkshire Regiment. Relief was complete by 2.30AM. On being relieved battalion went into reserve temporary in ECOUST ST MEIN. 1 Company B in Vaulx (Vaulx Vraucourt) our two companies at Battalion Headquarters between L'Homme Mort and Mory.'

No record of casualties was made on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August – the day of George's death – so we have to assume that he was one of the two casualties on the 13<sup>th</sup> and died the next day. George was 37 and is buried at the Ypres (Leper) Cemetery at West-Vlaanderen in Belgium. His name is listed on The Menin Gate Memorial.

His wife, Wilhelmina Caroline, was granted probate at Shrewsbury on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1917 and George's estate amounted to £121-10-1 which was a significant sum when in 1918 the average wage was £1-10-6 for a 52 hour week. In addition Wilhelmina received £3-16-2 on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1918 and a further £3-0-0 on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1919 from The Soldiers' Effects funds.