

William Henry CREWS



- Born:** 2nd July 1892, Padstow, Cornwall
- Occupation:** General labourer
- Enlisted:** Bodmin: 14th December 1914 (Volunteer)
- Unit:** 6th & 10th Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry
- Rank/number:** Private: No.17219
- Death:** Died of wounds, 15th May 1918
- Detail:** In May 1918 the 10th DCLI, a pioneer unit, were repairing roads and trenches in the 2nd Division's sector near Boiry St. Martin, south of Arras. The sector was constantly shelled. On 9th May four men in the Battalion were killed and seven wounded, and on the 13th William was hit and taken to No.3 Canadian Hospital, Doullens and died 2 days later.
- Age at death:** 24
- Military info:** William enlisted on 14th December 1914 along with eight other Padstonians, three of whom would die in the war. He was posted first to the 2nd DCLI, then to the 6th DCLI, which was part of 43rd Brigade, 14th Division. By Spring 1915 they were ready for war. William was part of the advance party and arrived in France on 12th March 1915, the rest of the Battalion landing on 22nd May. They fought at Hooge in the Ypres Salient and became the first division to be attacked by flamethrowers. In 1916 they saw action on the Somme at Delville Wood and Flers-Courcelette, during which period William was wounded and invalided home. In 1917 he returned to France and fought at Arras and Passchendaele, serving briefly with 10th DCLI and 9th Devons. Early in 1918 the army, due to manpower problems, was forced to reduce the number of battalions and on 20th February the 6th DCLI was disbanded. William was again posted to the 10th DCLI, a pioneer battalion in the 2nd Division. On 21st March the Germans launched a last-ditch offensive and the 10th Battalion, like many units, retreated eastwards. By April the German advance had slowed and on the 14th the battalion moved to Boiry St. Martin where they mended roads and dug trenches. On 13th May William was hit by a shell fragment, his fifth wound of the war, and he died two days later.
- Grave/memorial:** William is buried at Doullens Communal Cemetery Ext. No 2 in France, and commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and on Padstow War Memorial.
- Family info:** Father: William Crews, born St Columb, Cornwall in 1860. Agricultural labourer. Mother: Sarah Catherine Kent, born Little Petherick in 1862. They married in 1883 and had eleven children, two of whom died.
- Additional info:** The few possessions sent home after William's death brought his grief-stricken family no comfort - a bloodstained army uniform, a shrapnel-torn wallet and, wrapped carefully in stained lint, the jagged lump of metal that killed their son.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com.

+Lest we forget+