



Henry Charles Champion
Private 23762, 6th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment

Henry Charles was born in on the 27th January 1900 in North Bradley, to Charles and Mary Jane Champion, his birth being registered in the March Quarter of 1900 in the Westbury Registration District. He was baptised at St. Nicholas Church, North Bradley on 30th September 1900. His father is recorded in the baptisms register as a plate layer of the Rank, North Bradley.

Although baptised as Henry he often went by the name of Charles.

The 1901 Census at The Rank, North Bradley records the family as:

Charles, Head, Age 25, Railway Worker, Born in Trowbridge; Mary, Wife, Age 25, Glover, Born in Trowbridge; Florence, Daughter, Age 4, ; Charles H., Son, Age 1. Both children born in North Bradley.

The family moved to Trowbridge sometime between 1903 and 1906.

The 1911 Census at 11 Newtown, Trowbridge records the family as:

Charles, Head, Age 37, GWR Platelayer, Born in Trowbridge; Mary, Wife, Age 32, Born in Wingfield; Florence Hay, Daughter, Age 13, Born in North Bradley; Charles Henry, Son, Age 11, Scholar, Born in North Bradley; William George, Son, Age 8, Born in North Bradley; Louisa Doris, Daughter, Age 5, Born in North Bradley; Ernest Sidney, Son, Age 4, Born in Trowbridge; Alfred Reginald, Son, Age 1, Born in Trowbridge.

Henry had wanted to join the army when war broke out and was rejected for service 6 time previous to being accepted in January 1916 when he finally enlisted at Devizes, he was barely 16 at the time.

13 months later in February 1917 Henry was deployed to France. It should be noted that Henry was at this time too young to be deployed for combatant service.

Henry Charles Champion was killed in action on 7th June 1917 aged just 17 whilst serving with the 6th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment on the first day of the Battle of Messines. He is buried at Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium in Plot No. II. B. 14.

A report of his death appeared in the local newspaper, it reads:

Local Men's Sacrifices

We have this week to record further losses of local men in the war.

Private Henry Charles Champion was a fine example of the spirit which animates our lads. As a boy he had been desperately keen to join the Navy, but an affection of the throat debarred him. When the war broke out, though he was only 16 years of age he tried repeatedly to join the ranks, and after no fewer than seven applications he was accepted. For a year and four months he had served in the Army, the last four months in France, and last weekend his parents, who live at Anstie's Court, Mortimer Street, received the intimation that he had been killed in action on June 7. This was the date of the blowing up of Messines Ridge and the great victory of the British Second Army. Private Champion was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Champion, and before joining up he worked for Messrs. Salter and Co. Mrs. Champion has received a sympathetic letter from their son's platoon commander, in which he says:-

"He had not been with us very long, but he was certainly one of the most promising of the younger members of the platoon. He was always smart, willing and courageous, and very popular with everybody. He would certainly have been promoted had he been spared longer. I hope that it may be some consolation to you in your bereavement to reflect that he died the death of an honourable and gallant man for his King and country."

Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser, 7 July 1917



Henry is commemorated on the Trowbridge War Memorial and is named in the Holy Trinity, Trowbridge Section of the Diocese of Salisbury Memorial Book in Salisbury Cathedral.