

## Pte G.Bridger – The Worcestershire Regiment

George Bridger was born in 1886 in Pond Cottage, Ripley, the son of George and Mary Bridger who moved to Chapel Lane, Westcott in 1901 and later lived in St John's Road. George was an agricultural labourer in civilian life until he joined the Regular Army in 1908 when he enlisted in the



Worcestershire Regiment. He went to France with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on 12th August 1914 as part of the British Expeditionary Force (the BEF).

The Battalion advanced into Belgium in October 1914 and over the next 2-3 months fought several battles during the retreat from Mons. January and February 1915 were spent in the trenches north of the River Lys on relatively high ground facing the Messines Ridge, which was held by the Germans, or in billets behind the line about Locre or Dranoutre.

The conditions in the trenches were utterly miserable. The Regimental History records that *'in that heavy clay soil the greater height of the land had but little effect on the drainage of rain-water and the trenches tended to dissolve into a welter of sticky slime. At one point in the line the muddy slush was so deep that the sentries had to be stationed in barrels which almost floated in the liquid mud. In those barrels they would remain marooned for the whole day.'* Battalions holding the line were regularly relieved. During January the reliefs could be made every four days, but in February the period had to be extended to seven days.

Sniping and shelling drew a steady toll of casualties and between the New Year and the first days of March, the Battalion lost nearly a hundred killed and wounded. We do not know when George Bridger was hit; he died of wounds on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1915 and is buried in Loker Military Cemetery, about 10 miles south west of Ypres.

Although George's relatives do not have a picture of him, they have very kindly sent us pictures of his medals, shown above. We are very grateful to them. The medals are, from left to right, the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal. The reverse of the 1914-15 Star, bearing George's name and regiment, is shown on the right. The other two medals bear his name on the rim.