



On Christmas Day 1875 Henry Edwicker married Charlotte Collins in Hove near Brighton. By 1881 the couple were living in Upperton where Henry was a domestic gardener and they had two children. They moved to Selham Rectory Cottage between 1887 and 1890 when Henry became a coachman/domestic servant. According to his school records Charles Harry Edwicker was born on 14th July 1898 and christened at Selham Church a month later. He first attended Dunton School when the family moved there around 1901. Curiously he attended Tillington School for a short period in 1909/1910 (Admission No 132) but left when the family moved to Grove Street, Petworth.

| BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <i>Selham</i><br>in the County of <i>Sussex</i> in the Year 18 <i>98</i> |                        |              |          |        |                               |                                    |
|---|------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| When Baptized   | Child's Christian Name | Parents Name |          | Abode  | Quality, Trade, or Profession | By whom the Ceremony was performed |
|   |                        | Christian    | Surname  |        |                               |                                    |
| August 14 <sup>th</sup><br>No. 178.   | Charles Harry          | Henry        | Edwicker | Selham | Coachman                      | S. Hamble                          |

Baptism entry in Selham Church Records

**16th August**

**THE BATTALION PARADED IN FIGHTING KIT, AND MARCHED TO THE TRAINING GROUND. COMPANIES WERE AT THE DISPOSAL OF CO. COMMANDERS FOR CARRYING OUT COMPANY TRAINING, SPECIAL ATTENTION BEING DEVOTED TO P.T., MUSKETRY AND EXTENDED ORDER DRILL.**

**REINFORCEMENTS: A DRAFT OF 55 O.R. WERE POSTED TO THE BATTALION DURING THE DAY.**

As soon as he reached 18 years, Charles probably joined the Sussex Yeomanry at Chichester (his elder brother Herbert joined them in 1914) and after training he was posted to the 8th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment 55th Brigade, 18th Division, with the service number 33344. The 'Surreys' were already in Belgium fighting close to Ypres where they encountered formidable resistance, suffered heavy casualties and were in desperate need of reinforcements. The War Diary of the 8th Battalion records that they received a draft of 55 reinforcements on August 16th 1917 and it is likely that Private Edwicker 33344 was amongst them.

The Battalion Diary for October 10th 1917 records that the 55th Brigade was preparing to take over the front line near Poelcapelle, six miles north east of Ypres, and would carry out an attack on the 12th.

This was to be the beginning of the Battle of Passchendaele. Zero hour was at 5.35 am which was preceded by a British artillery barrage. Sadly the barrage was not sufficiently heavy and left several enemy machine gun posts untouched. These machine guns continually strafed the allied troops struggling to move forward in the sodden conditions and it soon became clear that little progress had been made at the cost of many casualties. At 2.30 am on the October 13th the Battalion Headquarters (a large shell hole with sand bags and two sheets of corrugated iron) received a direct hit, killing five and wounding two personnel. By the time the Battalion was relieved at 5.30 pm on the 14th, this gallant yet rather futile attempt to break through the German lines had cost the lives of 56 British soldiers, wounded 143 and 42 were missing.

The mud was so bad that any question of moving rapidly from shell hole to shell hole was quite impossible, and most of our Officer and N.C.O. casualties were incurred in attempting to lead advances by short rushes after the barrage had been lost. The rifles also got covered with mud, and even after they had been cleaned it was difficult to keep them in action for more than a few rounds without cleaning out the breech again, as the men's hands were plastered with mud, and each time that a fresh clip was put in some mud went in with it.

| Name                       | Corps           | Rank    | Regt. No. |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| EDWICKER                   | 6. Surre R      | Private | 33344     |
| Charles #                  |                 |         |           |
| Medal                      | Ref.            | Page    | Remarks   |
|                            | E/1103/13, 2504 |         |           |
| Theatre of War Endorsed in |                 |         |           |
| Date of entry therein      |                 |         |           |

Medal Card showing medal entitlement



It is likely that sometime on October 12th, at the beginning of this furious battle, Private Charles Edwicker was seriously wounded. He would have been taken to the nearest 'Forward Medical Station', which had been established at Gloster Farm to the south of Poelcapelle and just behind the British front line, and then on to a Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem. Undoubtedly he received the best medical treatment that the time and conditions allowed, but sadly Charles died of his wounds at the age of 19 years on October 14th 1917.

Private Edwicker was buried at the nearby Dozinghem Military Cemetery, where he lies today with over 3,000 other soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

*The blood of heroes never dies,  
But lends a lustre to the red  
of the flower that blooms above the dead  
In Flanders Fields.*

*We shall keep the Faith - Moina Michael*