

## Charles EDWARDS



**Born:** 1886, St Issey, Cornwall  
**Occupation:** Cowman  
**Enlisted:** Padstow: 11th Dec 1915 (Volunteer)  
**Unit:** Devonshire Regt. (Also Labour Corps)  
**Rank/number:** Private: No.24030  
**Death:** Died: 1st October 1918  
**Detail:** In February 1918 Charles was declared unfit for war service in France. He was posted back to an army labour unit in Britain and allowed to work on a farm near his home in Padstow. But Spanish Flu, a pandemic that killed millions, hit the town in September and both Charles and 6-year-old son Alfred died.

**Age at death:** 32

**Military info:** Like many Charles did no rush to volunteer and by late 1915 conscription loomed for those not in protected jobs. But unwilling to introduce compulsion the government opted for a compromise - the Derby Scheme. This let men aged 18 to 40 enlist voluntarily in the Army Reserve but with an obligation to come if called up later. To 'encourage' recruits it was hinted conscription would soon to be introduced. Charles enlisted that December. His call up came five months later and on 30th May 1916 Charles was posted to the Devonshire Regiment. After training he was judged unfit for frontline service and 4 months later posted to 13th Devons, a works unit at Plymouth. On 26th February 1917 he was sent to 5<sup>th</sup> Labour Company in France. The men of the Labour Corps were the unsung heroes of the war, a vast army of khaki navvies that kept Britain's fighting soldiers in the field and the road to victory well maintained. Charles was with 5th Labour Company until May when he was posted to 170th Labour Company. But 6 months later, health deteriorating, he was sent to Plymouth. On 25th Feb 1918 he was posted to 650th Labour Company, an agricultural unit, and sent to work near Padstow. But as the war ended Spanish Flu struck Britain and Charles and his little son Alfred perished.

**Grave/memorial:** Charles is buried at Padstow Cemetery, and is commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow on the Padstow War Memorial.

**Family info:** Father: Charles Edwards, agricultural labourer, born Egloshayle, Cornwall in 1855. He married Jane Wareham in 1881 and had two daughters. Jane died in 1886. Mother: Elizabeth (maiden name unknown), born Padstow, Cornwall in 1848. She married Charles soon after his first wife's death and had three children. Only two survived. Wife: Charles wed Florence Dunn in August 1911. They both worked on a farm at Trevose. They had three children.



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](mailto:smithpeter24@gmail.com)

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