

# Connected to Figheldean



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**203341 PRIVATE**

**P. PIKE**

**WILTSHIRE REGIMENT**

**31ST MAY, 1918 AGE 28**

*God Holds The Key  
Of All Unknown*

## Percy PIKE

Percy Pike was born in early 1891 at Woodborough, Wiltshire, to parents Thomas & Harriet A. Pike (nee Mabbett). His birth was registered in the March quarter of 1891 in the district of Pewsey, Wiltshire. Thomas Pike had married Harriet A. Mabbett in 1889 in St. Thomas a Beckett Church, Tilshead, Wiltshire.

The 1891 Census recorded Percy Pike as a 2 month old living with his parents at Woodborough, Wiltshire in a 3 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Thomas Pike (Gardener – Domestic servant, aged 29, born Figheldean) & Harriet A. Pike (aged 29, born Tilshead).

The 1901 Census recorded Percy Pike as a 10 year old, attending school, living with his family at Enford, Pewsey. His parents were listed as Thomas Pike (Gardener (not domestic), aged 39) & Annie Pike (aged 39). Percy was the eldest of 4 children listed on this Census, all born at Woodborough – Ellen (Attending school, aged 8), Annie (Attending school, aged 6) & Rose (aged 3).

The 1911 Census recorded Percy Pike as a 20 year old, Stable Lad (Domestic), living with his family at Coombe, Enford, Pewsey, Wiltshire in a 4 roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Thomas Pike (Groom – domestic, aged 50) & Annie Pike (aged 50). Thomas & Annie Pike had been married for 21 years & had five children in that time, all still living. Percy was the eldest of four children listed on this Census – Ellen (aged 18), Rosie (At school, aged 13) & Willie (aged 9, born Coombe).

Percy Pike enlisted with the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry at Salisbury, with the rank of Private & a service number of 2011. His place of residence was listed as Codford at the time he enlisted (UK Soldiers Died in the Great War). He was later transferred to the Wiltshire Regiment with a service number of 203341. (\*Note – Percy most probably was not a resident of Codford but of Chitterne. The postal address of Chitterne was written in that era as “Chitterne, Codford, Wiltshire”. This is probably how the “Codford” place of residence was used when compiling the information for UK Soldiers Died in the Great War).

Percy Pike married Ellen E. J. Churchill in 1916 at St. Denys, Warminster. Their marriage was registered in December quarter, 1916 in the district of Warminster. Apparently Percy & Ellen were first cousins – both their mothers were sisters. Percy & Ellen Pike lived at 79 Bidden Lane, Chitterne. Ellen’s parents lived at 77 Bidden Lane.



**Percy Pike & Ellen Churchill on their Wedding Day**

*(Photo with permission from David Bamford on [Chitterne Now & Then Blog](#))*

A birth was registered in the June quarter, 1917 for Ronald P. Pike, with the mother's maiden name of Churchill, in the district of Warminster.



**Ronald Pike & his mother Ellen Pike – on left outside 79 Bidden Lane, Chitterne**

*(Photos with permission from David Bamford on [Chitterne Now & Then Blog](#))*

Private Percy Pike was killed in action on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1918. He was attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment at the time of his death.

Private Percy Pike's body was exhumed from his original burial location (Jonchery Sur Vesle) & relocated to Chambrecy British Cemetery, France – Plot II. C. 7. His previous burial location would have been in an unmaintainable grave & the decision to move the burials into established war grave cemeteries was so the CWGC could ensure proper commemoration. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Percy Pike, aged 28, 203341, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn., Wiltshire Regiment, as the husband of Ellen E. J. Pike, of "Hill View", Shrewton Rd, Chitterne, Codford, Wilts.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment**

### **1916**

The 2nd Battalion started 1916 in the area of Amiens. They remained in this general area reliving units in trenches and training for an offensive that was going to take place in July. On the 1st July they were in support in the area of Montauban, followed by two days of attacks. They remained in this area for most of July. On the 8th July they played a leading part in the attack on Trones Wood and at one point bayoneted their way through what remained of the German defenders in the wood. They suffered 240 casualties in this action but were awarded plus 23 decorations for gallantry. Further attacks followed in the Somme and Flers areas and they ended the year just South of Arras.

### **1917**

The 2nd Battalion spent the first three months around Arras. On the 9th April they took part in the attack on the Hindenburg Line Very few men reached the objective and those that did found that the German wire was undamaged. On the 11th April they came out of the line weaker by 16 officers and 363 other ranks. After ten days rest they returned for a further weeks fighting in the same area. They then spent a month training before a long

march north to the area of Ypres. For most of July they were in training. On the 31st July they took part in the Third Battle of Ypres near Hooze. In Late August they relieved the Australians on the newly capture Messines Ridge. They remained here for three months digging deeper and taking part in many trench raids. In November they moved to the Gheluvelt area, where they ended the year of 1917.

## 1918

In January, 1918 the 2nd Battalion together with the rest of the 30th Division moved South to relieve the French and took up positions in the trenches South of St Quentin. In February they were out of the line preparing for a German offensive that was known to take place sometime in March. In the middle of March they took over redoubts west of St Quentin. On the 21st March the German attack started and the battalion was very quickly out flanked and were soon completely surrounded. The battalion lost 22 officers and 600 other ranks. The battalion's battlefield reinforcements were themselves engaged in a desperate rear guard action, not knowing what happened to their comrades. They joined a composite battalion. By April the battalion had been reformed and they were again fighting the Germans near Ypres. They later transferred to the 19th Division and absorbed some of the 6th Battalion after their disbandment. They then assisted in training the newly arrived Americans. They then came under the control of the French and took up positions on the River Marne. On the 29th May near Bligny whilst acting as outposts they came under severe German attack, whilst their comrades in the 1st Battalion were at Faverolles only five miles away suffering the same fate. They fought for several days very nearly being encircled. Again casualties were heavy and they then formed part of a composite battalion known as the 58th. On the 7th June they withdrew after 10 days continuous fighting. In August they moved to the Loos sector by now fully up to strength again and moved into outposts in the Givenchy sector. Here they took part in trench raids. On the 3rd September they attacked in the area of Neuve Chapelle being relieved on the 1st October. On the 20th October they captured Haussy sustaining about 120 casualties; unfortunately most of these were from British shells falling short. On the 4th November they captured the high ground in front of Eth, near Bavay. They were relieved on the 9th November returning to Eth where they were resting on the 11th November 1918 at the cessation of hostilities.

### War Diary – 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

*(War Diary from 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1918 – not available from The Wardrobe records)*

1<sup>st</sup> June, 1918

Location France, In Action near Chambrecy

*Liaison was established with the French on our Left, and it was agreed that each should inform the other of any orders regarding withdrawal if ordered. The enemy attacked the French heavily in the morning, and about 2pm the French informed us that they were ordered to withdraw, thus exposing our left flank. The Battalion, having received no orders, hung on, and about 4.30pm enemy machine guns crept up on our left and came into action, firing into the rear of our lines and enfilading the Battalion Headquarters. About 7.30pm the Battalion was ordered to withdraw and take up a position in front of the BOIS d'ECLISSE, joining up with the ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS on the Right and the 8th GLOUCESTERS on the Left. This withdrawal was effected in small numbers and with covering fire under great difficulty, some 30 casualties being sustained. The Battalion then re-assembled and proceeded to take up the line as ordered, joining up with the ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS on the road CHAMBRECY - BLIGNY, and with the 8th GLOUCESTERS on the Left. The Battalion dug in on one line and carefully camouflaged the positions. The night was quiet except for shelling of back areas.*

*(2nd Battalion information from [The Wardrobe](#) – Home of the Infantry Regiments of Berkshire & Wiltshire)*

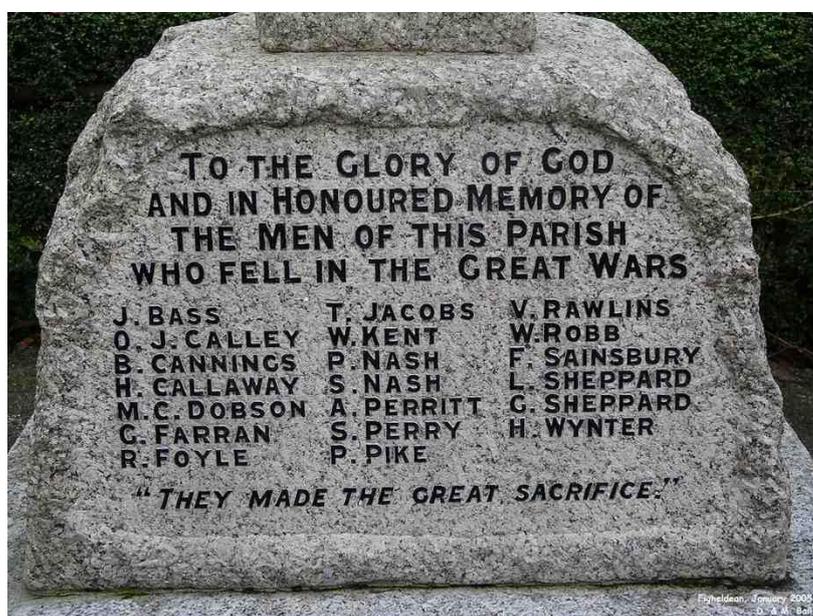
Private Percy Pike was entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal. His Medal Index Card does not show a date or place he first entered a Theatre of War.



**British War Medal & Victory Medal**

P. Pike is remembered in Casualties of WW1 from the Diocese of Salisbury Memorial book for the parish of Figheledean, Wiltshire.

Percy Pike is not remembered on the Chitterne War Memorial, however P. Pike is remembered on the Figheledean War Memorial. The Pikes were a large Figheledean family with Percy's father & grandfather who were both born at Figheledean, Wiltshire.



**Figheledean War Memorial** (Photos by D & M Ball, 2005)



## Chambrecy British Cemetery

Chambrecy is a commune 19 kilometres west of Reims.

The cemetery was made after the Armistice, by the concentration of graves from the surrounding battlefields and from Courlandon Hospital (French Military) Cemetery.

There are now over 400, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, nearly half are unidentified and a special memorial is erected to a British N.C.O. buried at Courlandon. The graves are almost all of May/July, 1918, and largely of the 19th (Western) and 51st (Highland) Divisions.

The cemetery covers an area of 1,579 square metres and is enclosed by a low stone rubble wall.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*



**Chambrecy British Cemetery**



Photo of Private P. Pike's CWGC headstone in Chambrecy British Cemetery, France.



*(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)*

