

In Memory of

Private MONTAGUE ROWLAND BRIDGEMAN

**8003, B Company, 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment
who died age 27 on 12 March 1915**

**Husband of Gertrude L Bridgeman
and son of Frederick Edward and Myrah Urania Bridgeman
of 11 Dodford Cottages, Christian Malford, Wiltshire**

Remembered with honour YPRES (MENIN GATE) MEMORIAL



The Memorial is situated to the eastern side of the town Ypres (now Ieper) in West Flanders. The Menin Gate is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient. Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war. The Salient was formed during the First Battle of Ypres in October and November 1914, when a small British Expeditionary Force succeeded in securing the town before the onset of winter, pushing the German forces back to the Passchendaele Ridge. The Second Battle of Ypres began in April 1915 when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines north of Ypres. This was the first time gas had been used by either side and the violence of the attack forced an Allied withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence. There was little more significant activity on this front until 1917, when in the Third Battle of Ypres an offensive was mounted by Commonwealth forces to divert German attention from a weakened French front further south. The initial attempt in June to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was a complete success, but the main assault north-eastward, which began at the end of July, quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly deteriorating weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele. The German offensive of March 1918 met with some initial success, but was eventually checked and repulsed in a combined effort by the Allies in September. The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces with no known grave would have to be divided between several different sites. The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. Amongst those of other Commonwealth nations, it commemorates United Kingdom casualties before 16 August 1917. It now bears the names of more than 54,000 officers and men whose graves are not known.

Battalion War Diary - 12 March 1915: Left billets at Locre 2.45a.m. and marched via Kemmel to the section of the trenches ... in front of Spanbroek Molen. The Battn arrived in position at dawn about 5.30a.m. and occupied four lines of trenches on the reverse side of the hill ... The morning was dull and very misty, so that the Artillery bombardment which was to precede the assault on Spanbroek Molen had to be delayed. At 1p.m. the mist began to clear and by 2.30p.m. it was clear and the Artillery bombardment began and continued with a slight pause till 4.10p.m. It consisted of field guns firing shrapnel to cut the hostile wire, and large quantities of heavy HE to beat down the

German parapets and blow in his trenches ... but it was afterwards observed that the enemy's front line trenches were almost intact. At 4.10 the Infantry assault was launched ... A Coy rushed forward crossing the trench ... by means of flying bridges, which had been placed in position early in the morning, and, passing through our barbed wire by means of gaps which had been made opposite the bridges: as soon as A Coy had got across the bridges the enemy opened a very heavy fire on them, and only a few small isolated parties succeeded in getting up to the enemy's wire, a distance of about 200 yds. B Coy also came under a very heavy fire and were unable with the remainder of A Coy to get more than 50 yds. B Coy endeavoured to crawl forward, but, were unable to get very far, and gradually, starting about 5p.m. began to fall back suffering considerably in doing so. ... At about 7p.m., the Battn withdrew. It was observed that the enemy were holding this position very strongly. Casualties: Officers 4 killed, 3 wounded; Other ranks 29 killed, 45 wounded and 12 missing.

From the Parish Magazine: Mr and Mrs Bridgeman have heard from the War Office, without any details, of the death of their son Montague, in March. This is the second son of whom the War has robbed them, and we grieve with them, while we honour their patriotism, and are proud of their sons.