

Private Frederick Charles Stidder[©]

Regimental number: 41084

7th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry

born: 1899–died: 10 May 1918

Private Frederick Charles Stidder (known as Charles) was the son of a soldier. His father, John Francis Stidder,¹ first served in the British army at the age of 17.² He was born on 21 July 1873³ in Earlswood, Monmouthshire, Wales⁴ and first enlisted in the South Wales Borderers (regimental number: 1224) in September 1884. He remained in England until October 1887, when he was posted—possibly to Burma—where he remained for just over a year. In November 1888, he was posted to India, then came home in April 1892 and again served in England for four years.

During his time at home, he married the former Augusta Louisa Pritchard (known as Louisa), who was born 19 July 1866⁵ in Gatton, Somerset.⁶ They married at St Luke church in Barton Hill, Somersetshire, on 1 October 1893, but Charles and his two siblings were born in the Bristol, Gloucestershire, area in the following years. Francis William (known as Frank) was born on 9 January 1894 in Barton Regis,⁷ Louisa Ethel on 5 December 1895⁸ in Bedminster⁹ and Charles in 1899 in Bristol.¹⁰ A fourth child, John Henry, was born quite a few years later, on 17 December 1912 in Bristol.¹¹

Charles' father was discharged from his term of service in September 1896 but re-enlisted for another four years with the Army Reserve. He appears to have been posted to South Africa in January 1900, for he was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with the clasps: "Johannesburg," "Cape Colony," "Orange Free State" and "South Africa 1901."

In the spring of 1901, while John was in South Africa, Louisa and the children were living at 57 Stevens Crescent in Bristol. Her aunt, Mary A. Milton, and sister-in-law, Mary E. Stidder, John's sister,¹² were living with the family.¹³

John was again discharged at the end of his term of service in September 1901. In 1906, he was living at 57 Stevens Crescent.¹⁴ By 1911, the family had moved to 2 Jubilee Place, Redcliffe in Bristol, where John was a general labourer for the Great Western Railway. Two children were employed: Frank was a baker's deliverer and Ethel was doing inter-leaving for a bag manufacturer and printer. Charles was still at school. Louisa's father, William Pritchard, a widower, who was a foreman and platelayer¹⁵ with the Great Western Railway, was living with the family, as was Louisa's sister, Ethel Pritchard.¹⁶

As an experienced soldier, Charles' father enlisted again to serve in the Great War. He was then a platelayer and living at 4 Redcliffe Parade E. in Bristol when he enlisted as a private in the 4th Gloucester Regiment (regimental number: 347746) on 15 May 1915. He was 48 years old and enlisted for the duration of the war. It is not totally clear where John served, but it appears that he was initially sent to the Royal Defence Corps when it was formed in March 1916. This corps was established for soldiers who were too old or medically unfit to serve at the Front but who provided security and guard duties in the United Kingdom.¹⁷

At the end of 1917, John was with the Royal Engineers (possibly at the Railway Troop Depot). His service appears to have been specifically related to his occupation as a platelayer—in July 1918, he

passed from a “proficient” to “skilled” as platelayer. He was probably serving as a sapper with the Machine Gun Corps at the time of his demobilization in July 1919.

Charles’ father had had a long and positive military career—his military file indicates that his military character was “exemplary.” Charles only turned 19 (the age of enlistment) in 1918 and, as a result, he enlisted in the last year of the war.¹⁸ He enlisted in Bristol¹⁹ as a private in the Somerset Light Infantry.²⁰ The 7th Service Battalion of the regiment was formed in September 1914 and went overseas in July 1915,²¹ but Charles joined the Western Front much later. On 9 May 1918, he was fatally injured. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station the same day with gunshot wounds to his right side, thigh, leg, elbow and back and to his left thumb. Charles died the following day and was buried that day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 23) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.²²

His mother, still living on Redcliffe Park, was notified of his death.²³ His father, who was still serving when his son died, received the monies owing to Charles from the army upon his death, including a £3 war gratuity.²⁴ He had the following inscription placed on his son’s gravestone:

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
HE LIVES IN OUR MEMORY²⁵

Charles was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁶

Charles’ older brother Frank also served in the Great War—in fact, he had a long career in the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI). Royal Marines hold army ranks (private, corporal etc.) but were part of the Royal Navy. They were a fighting force on board ship, with about one marine for every four seamen on board, but also had disciplinary and security duties:²⁷

They were stationed on the fo’c’sle and quarter-deck with their muskets to fire on enemy ships ... To repel boarders and when boarding other ships . . . Marines took part in shore raids and cutting-out expeditions (where an enemy ship was cut off from shore). On board they provided sentries at the captain’s door, at the slow match by the galley (the only authorized light for smokers), at the scuttle-butt (the barrel of drinking water by the main hatchway) and, during action, at the hatchways (to prevent sailors from running and hiding in the hold) and magazines (store for arms, ammunition and provisions) . . .²⁸

Frank enlisted in the RMLI (register number: 15483) in Bristol on 17 October 1911.²⁹ He was only 17 years old, so he was recorded as being underage until his 18th birthday in January 1912. He was first posted to the Receiving Depot in Deal (Kent), where on 18 December 1911 he was tested to ensure he was able to swim.

Unlike some members of the RMLI, who served on land, Frank appears to have always been either at a naval base or on board a ship. He was probably serving on HMS *Berwick*, an armoured cruiser, when it captured a German merchant ship just after the beginning of the war. After that he was probably patrolling the North Sea on HMS *Carysfort*. At the end of the war, he was serving on the depot ship HMS *Blake*.

After the war Frank married Clara Gibbs on 15 September 1919 in the registry office in Tendring, Essex.³⁰ The following year, he was living at 6 George Street in Harwich, Essex, but was away from home, still serving on HMS *Blake*.

After serving two periods of engagement in the RMLI, Frank was discharged on 8 January 1933—just the day before his 39th birthday. He joined the Royal Marine Police on 26 June 1933 and, in 1939, he was an RM Constable living at Admiralty Terrace in Strood, Kent.³¹

He received the same two medals as his brother—the British War Medal and the Victory Medal—but, because he was serving early in the war, he also received the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915). In addition, he received the Royal Navy Long Service and Good Conduct Medal 1925–1930.³² Through out his career, his character was described as very good.

In 1939, Charles' parents and their youngest son John were living at 85 Cumberland Road, Bristol, with their daughter Ethel, who had married Ernest William Mills in 1919.³³ Charles' father John was retired from the Great Western Railway but his son-in-law Ernest was still working in maintenance for the railway. Charles' brother John was an assistant buyer with the Bristol Aeroplane Company.

The following year, on 30 April 1940, Charles' father died in Bristol's Royal Infirmary from terminal pneumonia and haematemesis from a gastric ulcer.³⁴ His wife died the following year and was buried on 2 April 1941 at St. Mary-Redcliffe church in Bristol.³⁵ Two years later, on 19 March 1943, their daughter Ethel buried her husband Ernest in the same graveyard.³⁶ Ethel remarried four years later—she wed William G. Jennings in 1947³⁷—and probably died in 1959.³⁸

Charles, his father and his brother all gave great service in the military, but only Charles gave his life.

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Stidder, Frederick Charles, Service No. 41084

² "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 April 2019), entry for John Stidder. Unless otherwise specified, all information about John's military service comes from this source.

³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta L. Stidder, Ref: RG101/4985B/005/44 Letter code: OACY

⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 April 2019), entry for Charlie Stidder, Registration district: Bristol, Registration district number: 319, Sub-registration district: Bristol Central, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 19, Household schedule number: 319, Piece: 14880

⁵ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta L. Stidder

⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 April 2019), entry for Charlie Stidder

⁷ "Copy of an entry of a birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 14 April 2019), entry for Francis William Stidder

⁸ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta L. Stidder

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 20 April 2019), entry for Stidder, Ethel Louise, Registration district: Bristol, Volume 06A, Page 597

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 10 20 April 2019), entry for Stidder, Frederick Charles, Registration district: Bristol, Volume 06A, Page 12

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- ¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 20 April 2019), entry for Stidder, John Henry, Registration district: Bristol, Volume 06A, Page 52; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta L. Stidder
- ¹² "1871 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2019), entry for John Francis Stidder, Registration district: Chepstow, Archive reference: RG10, Piece number: 5294, Folio: 50, Page: 12
- ¹³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2019), entry for Charles F Stidder, Registration district: Bristol, Sub-registration district: Bedminster, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 49, Piece: 2364, Folio: 66, Page: 34, Household schedule number: 243
- ¹⁴ "UK, City and County Directories, 1766–1946," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 April 2019), entry for John Francis Stidder
- ¹⁵ A platelayer inspects and maintains the permanent way of a railway installation. ("Platelayer," *Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platelayer>: accessed 8 April 2019))
- ¹⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2019), entry for Charlie Stidder
- ¹⁷ "Royal Defence Corps," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Defence_Corps: accessed 8 April 2019)
- ¹⁸ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Frederick Charles Pedder [sic]
- ¹⁹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2019), entry for Frederick Charles Stidder
- ²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2019), entry for Frederick Charles Stidder
- ²¹ "Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry)," *The Long, Long Trail* (<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/prince-alberts-somerset-light-infantry/>: accessed 29 March 2019)
- ²² "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Stidder
- ²³ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Stidder
- ²⁴ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Frederick Charles Pedder [sic]
- ²⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 26 March 2019), entry for Stidder, Frederick Charles
- ²⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2019), entry for Frederick Charles Stidder
- ²⁷ "England Royal Marine Records for Family History (National Institute)," *Familysearch* ([https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Royal_Marine_Records_for_Family_History_\(National_Institute\)](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Royal_Marine_Records_for_Family_History_(National_Institute)): accessed 20 April 2019)
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ "Stidder, Francis William, Royal Marine Light Infantry: Plymouth Division," *The National Archive* (<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7823220>: accessed 20 April 2019). Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Frank's military career comes from this source.
- ³⁰ "UK, British Army and Navy Birth, Marriage and Death Records, 1730–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 April 2019), entry for Frank W. Stidder
- ³¹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 June 2019), entry for Francis W. Stidder, Schedule number: 242303, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: DJSQ, Registration district: 45/2

³² "UK, Naval Medal and Award Rolls, 1793–1972," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 March 2019), entry for Francis William Stidder

³³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta L. Stidder, Ref: RG101/4985B/005/44 Letter code: OACY

³⁴ "British Army Service Records 1914–1920," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2019), entry for John Stidder

³⁵ "England, Select Deaths and Burials, 1538–1991," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Augusta Louisa Stidder, FHL film number: 1849424, Reference ID: p 39

³⁶ "England, Select Deaths and Burials, 1538–1991," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Ernest William Mills, FHL film number: 1849424, Reference ID: p 54

³⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Winifred A. White, Registration district: Portsmouth, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 1142

³⁸ "England & Wales Deaths 1837–2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2019), entry for Louise E. Jennings, District: Blackburn, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8E, Page: 326