27. Private Reginald John Medhurst, age 25

Another local soldier who seems to have fought for most of 1916 and the early part of 1917 in Flanders, was Private Reginald Medhurst.  Family records show one John Medhurst born in 1525 at Medhurst Row (between Four Elms and Edenbridge). It appears that, since the 16th-century, the family have been represented in the Penshurst area

Prior to the War, Reginald lived with his parents Ebenezer and Georgina in Wellers Town. In 1911, Ebenezer was aged 47, a house painter born in Chiddingstone around 1864.  His wife was aged 40 and born in Penshurst.  Also born in Penshurst was Reginald John, aged 19 and working as a domestic gardener. It was a large family, with at least seven siblings. Reginald had been a member of the bell ringing team at St Mary's Chiddingstone and it seems likely that he was a cricketer

Reginald was the first to emigrate to Australia just before the War, and was due to be followed by his brothers but the war intervened. In August 1915 he enlisted and passed fit for service in the 11th Battalion of the Australian infantry force at Blackboy Hill, Western Australia giving his next of kin as his father, Ebenezer Medhurst.  At that point he was working as a farmhand. His records describes him as “aged 24, height 5 feet 4 and a half inches, weight 126 pounds, chest 34/36 inches, fresh complexion, grey eyes, light brown hair, religion Church of England, and of good character.”

Records show that Reginald Medhurst formed part of the reinforcements gathered together between September and November 1915, that embarked on His Majesty's Australian Troopship *Ulysses* A38 on 2nd November 1915 from Fremantle, Western Australia.

At the end of March 1916 the battalion sailed from Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* and arrived in Marseilles in April. In mid-May the battalion joined the front line around Petillon in the Fleurbaix sector and by the end of that month the unit saw its first action when late that evening German artillery bombarded the line around the Cordonnerie salient before enemy infantry launched an attack.

Throughout June, the 11th Battalion were placed in support and brought up to strength.  In July they moved to the Somme area and were committed to the fighting around Pozieres (now legendary for the performance of the Australians in that battle).  They arrived in Albert during a gas attack and on 23rd July 1916 attacked and took Pozieres, a costly success.

In early 1917, the Germans fell back towards the [Hindenburg Line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindenburg_Line) in an effort to shorten their lines and move into prepared positions. As the Allies pursued the withdrawing Germans, in late February the 11th Battalion captured Le Barque, conducting mopping-up operations before advancing to Thilloy where they fought a minor engagement before being relieved. Sickness also took a heavy toll during this time due to the bad weather. On 25th February 1917, whilst on a working party at the ammunition dump, at about 8 pm, Reginald Medhurst was wounded in action by shell fire. He was moved later to the 1st Australian General Hospital in Rouen, but died of his wounds on 21st March 1917 aged 25.

A note lists that his effects were sent to Ebenezer Medhurst, Wellers Town. They comprised his identity disc, letters, photos in a paper case, a pocket book, a religious book, a pipe lighter, handkerchief, cards, a mirror, a wallet, diary, 4 coins, a metal pendant, and a small brass ring.