

# George SKINNER

**Born:** 1886, South Molton, Devon  
**Occupation:** Soldier, Devonshire Regt.  
**Enlisted:** At South Molton around 1904  
**Unit:** 1st & 2nd Bn Devonshire Rgt.  
**Rank/number:** Private 7895  
**Death:** 9th May 1915  
**Detail:** George was killed in action during a disastrous attack by the British near Fromelles in Northern France. His Battalion, the 2nd Devons, never got further than the British front line and was cut down by machine-guns and heavy artillery. The battle was lost before it begun, with his division suffering 4,500 casualties, of which Pte George Skinner was one.



Alamy

**Age at death:** 29

**Military info:** George joined the army aged 18 in 1904 and served for 7 years. When war broke out George, aged 28, was living with the Latimer Saunders family at Trevone House, near Padstow, though whether as friend, servant or gardener is unclear. When hostilities loomed in 1914 George as a Reservist reported for duty at the Devonshire Regimental Depot at Exeter. He was drafted into the 1st Devons, a first-ranked Regular Army battalion which would form part of the first wave of the British Expeditionary Force. The battalion crossed to Harve, France on 22nd August, 18 days after war broke out. The 1st Devons, part of 3rd Division, 14th Brigade, headed north-east to meet the advancing German threat, but they soon found themselves in retreat in the face of the enemy's overwhelming numbers. Punishing route marches soon took its toll and in late September George returned to England with water on the knees. Following treatment at Netley Hospital in Southampton George headed back to France where he was posted to the 2nd Devons, part of 8th Division, 23rd Brigade. The division was sent to the Laventie sector, south of Ypres and on the 10th -13th March 1915 was involved in a successful attack around Neuve Chapelle. Later that month the division took over the line near Bois Grenier and on 9th -10th May was involved in a large pincer attack near Fromelles. But the well prepared Germans inflicted a costly defeat on the British. The 8th Division suffered 4,500 casualties, the 2nd Devons, which never reached their own front line, suffered 243. Pte Skinner was one of those who died.

**Grave/memorial:** George is buried at Le Trou Aid Post Cemetery, France.

**Family info:** Father: John B. Skinner, born Chittlehamton, Devon in 1835. Carpenter and wheelwright. Mother: Grace Seldon, born North Molton, Devon in 1849. Dressmaker. Parents married in 1878. George was seventh child of eight.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow in the Great War. Additional information supplied by Richard Higman. Anyone wishing to correct errors or offer information can write to Peter at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW, phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com