John Henry Bowden

Private, Anson Battalion, D. Co. Royal Naval Division. Enlisted at Devizes November, 1916. Served in France and Belgium. Wounded and missing at Passchendaele, October, 1917. Assumed killed at Passchendaele, October, 1917. General Service and Victory Medals.

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JOHN BOWDEN WAS born in Twerton near Bath in August 1898. His father was a Corsham man, Henry John Bowden, who worked as a railway ganger, and his mother was Fanny Louisa Langley, originally from Warminster. By 1904 the family had moved to Corsham and in 1911 they were living at Thingley Bridge, with Henry working for the Great Western Railway. John was still at school, as were his brothers George, Ernest and Frederick and sisters Mabel and Gladys.

John seems to have enlisted first for the Territorial Force at the age of 17 and was then transferred to the Royal Naval Division in 1917. He is recorded as being in the Anson Battalion, a unit of surplus sailors not needed on Navy ships. They became infantrymen and part of the British Expeditionary Force, and by August 1917 John was fighting in France. He fought at the Battle of Passchendaele and was reported as missing, presumed killed in action, on 26th October 1917. He was only 19 years old.

John's brother George also served but he survived the war; he was a wireless operator in the Royal Navy. John's parents continued to live locally – his father Henry was living at 12 Pound Pill when he died in 1938.