

## **Herts at War**

([www.hertsatwar.co.uk](http://www.hertsatwar.co.uk))



**Name:** Joseph Corkett

**Rank:** Private

**Service Number:** 14707

**Date of Death:** 3rd May 1917

**Age:**

**Regiment/Service:** 7th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

**Award:** M.M.

**Grave/Memorial Reference:** I. E. 8

**Cemetery/Memorial:** BUCQUOY ROAD CEMETERY, FICHEUX, FRANCE.

**UK Cemetery/Memorial:** Hitchin War Memorial, St Mary's Church. Panel C  
St Mary's Church Memorial Book, Hitchin (*not confirmed*)  
Town Hall Memorial, Hitchin

### **Pre War:**

Son of Joseph and Emily Corkett and Brother to May, Ethel, Rose and Violet Corkett. His parents lived at Hall's Yard, Tilehouse Street, Hitchin.

Before joining the army he had worked in Letchworth and played for the St. John's Football Club. He was born and resident in Hitchin, enlisted there.

### **Wartime Service:**

Joseph was allocated the Regimental Number 14707. He served in the 7th Battalion of the Bedfords which was part of the 54th Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division of the VII Corps in the 3rd Army. He died in France having been brought to a field hospital suffering from a severe wound in the abdomen and he died the same evening.

He was almost certainly wounded in the Somme sector between Arras and the River Ancre. This was during the Third Battle of the Scarpe and was considered by the British to have been one of the blackest days of the war. The 18th Division had been brought into the line opposite Cherisy. Zero hour was 3.45am when the British attacked, an engagement which was described as "*one bloody great balls up*". No one knew what they were supposed to be doing and it was the old story of uncut wire and unrelenting German machine-gun fire. It was pitch dark when the British attacked on the opening of their barrage, which commenced badly being irregular. There was a ground mist in the low-lying ground, touch and direction were lost and there were large gaps in the line. They were attacking in extended order about twelve paces apart, which meant that they could hardly see each other. The attack was a disaster with 14 officers and 242 other ranks from the Bedfords alone lost in the one day. Problems were aggravated by the Division on the right of the 18th not having synchronised their watches with the 18th, causing the Battalion to lose direction. Also three of the four tanks allotted to assist, failed to do so. The uncut wire was in front of Fontaine Trench. The whole attack reflected badly on the generalship of Haig and Allenby with their total disregard for the lives of their soldiers.

His award of the Military Medal was probably made some time after his death, as there was no mention of it at the time when he was killed.

### **Additional Information:**

In the 'Herts Express' dated 19th September 1914 his name is spelt 'CAWCUTT'.

### **Acknowledgments:**

Adrian Dunne, David C Baines, [www.hitchinatwar.org.uk](http://www.hitchinatwar.org.uk)