

PRIVATE TOM BALL

27935, No.2 Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards

Died aged 24 on 13 October 1917

Remembered with honour at *Tyne Cot Memorial, Ypres, Belgium*; Panel 9

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Tyne Cot Memorial, Ypres



Pte. Tom Ball [Jeff Ball]



Grenadier Guards

TOM BALL was born in Deerhurst in 1893, one of nine children of Christopher Ball and Hester (formerly Allen), living at Upper Lode, Tewkesbury, in 1917. He had five brothers and three sisters. On the 1911 Census Tom was described as an 'Assistant in Business'. In 1915 he married May Wood, daughter of William and Annie Wood, in Tewkesbury.

Tom's army service number indicates that he joined the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, in late December 1916. This was one of the three regular battalions of Grenadier Guards at the outbreak of war. The battalion landed at Zeebrugge in Belgium on 7 October 1914.

Guardsman Tom Ball was killed in action during the *Third Battle of Ypres*, sometimes referred to as *Passchendaele*. In fact the *Third Battle of Ypres* comprised a series of set-piece battles and he was killed during the penultimate phase, the *First Battle of Passchendaele*, which took place on 12 October 1917.

The Guards Division was attached to General Gough's Fifth Army which provided flank protection on the left of the main, but ultimately unsuccessful, assault towards Passchendaele by General Plumer's Second Army.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website comments that:

'Despite advances on the northern extremity of the battlefield where the Guards Division repeated their efficient progress of 9th October (the Battle of Poelcappelle) and succeeded once more in gaining their final objective on the edge

of the Houthulst Forest, the high ground around Passchendaele, the principal objective, remained firmly in German hands.'

The combination of continuing bad weather and atrociously waterlogged battlefield conditions proved decisive in ruining the prospects of this attack; inadequate artillery support was also a key factor in its failure. The attack was soon called off with the intention of resuming the advance towards Passchendaele when the weather improved.

There is some uncertainty about the actual date of Tom Ball's death but the *Tewkesbury Register* reported news of Guardsman Ball on 3 November 1917. The article stated that:

'On Tuesday morning Mrs. T. Ball, who is residing with Mr. and Mrs. C. Ball, ... received the sad news that her husband ... was killed in action on the 13th October.'

The news had arrived in a letter dated 26 October from the deceased's officer, who wrote as follows: *'Dear Mrs Ball, ... I ... deeply regret that I have bad news for you. Your husband was killed in action about 5.30, and buried in the field.'*

Despite this, **Guardsman Tom Ball's** body was never recovered after the war and he is commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing at **Tyne Cot Cemetery**, Ypres.

His older brother, **Gunner William Ball** [†], serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery, was killed nearly three weeks earlier and is buried in **Bedford House Cemetery**, near Ypres.