

GUNNER WILLIAM BALL

73488, 10th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery
Died aged 36 on 25 September 1917
Buried with honour at *Bedford House Cemetery, Ypres*; 2 I E 44
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Bedford House Cemetery, Ypres



William Ball [Paul Carter]



Royal Garrison Artillery

WILLIAM BALL was born in Chaceley in December 1880, the second son of Christopher Ball and Hester (formerly Allen), living at Upper Lode, Tewkesbury, in 1917. He had five brothers and three sisters. He was educated at Chaceley School for a short period and then at Bushley. On leaving school he worked briefly for his father, a Hay and Coal Merchant, and then on Brockridge Farm, Twynning, for seven years. In his obituary in the *Tewkesbury Register* he was described as being of a '*shy, retiring disposition, and never caring for social life, but always being engrossed in his work, and particularly attached to his home and parents. Always steady, reliable, honest, he was beloved by his family, respected by his friends and neighbours*'.

In 1910 William Ball sailed for West Australia where he stayed for about three years. As an indication of the respect in which he was held, he was presented with testimonials by three prominent residents in Tewkesbury just before he left. However, he returned in 1913 as he found the climate was detrimental to his health and resumed working with his father.

On 4 April 1916 he enlisted, aged 35, and after eight months training in England he sailed for France on Christmas Day.

William was posted to the 10th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, which had originally landed in France on 16 February 1915.

Siege Batteries were equipped with heavy howitzers which sent large-calibre high explos-

ive shells in a high trajectory over considerable distances. They were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strong-points.

Gunner William Ball died of wounds on 25 September 1917 during the *Third Battle of Ypres*, sometimes referred to as *Passchendaele*. It actually comprised a series of set-piece battles and William died on what was classified as the final day of the third phase, the *Battle of the Menin Road Ridge*; this was a particularly successful action.

William Ball's obituary in the *Tewkesbury Register* quotes in full a letter dated 5 October 1917 from his Commanding Officer:

'Dear Mr. Ball, your son, Gunner Ball, who was in my battery, and who was wounded ... died of his wounds the same day at some casualty clearing station. ... At the time he was wounded he was assisting the battery as a cook, and had gone up to rather an unhealthy spot for this purpose. It was a matter of the most unfortunate circumstances that he should have fallen, for he was in the safest place he could be at the time.'

Gunner William Ball is buried in *Bedford House Cemetery*, near Ypres. His younger brother, **Private Tom Ball** [†], was also killed in action less than three weeks later whilst serving with the Grenadier Guards in the Ypres Sector. He is commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing at *Tyne Cot Cemetery*, Ypres.