

PRIVATE WILLIAM HARRY BASTABLE

266964, 1st/7th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Died aged 27 on 11 August 1917

Remembered with honour on the *Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium*; Panel 8

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres



Royal Warwickshire Regiment

WILLIAM HARRY BASTABLE was not a Tewkesburian but was evidently adopted by the town as one of its very own heroes. He was born in Somerset, the only son of Henry Edwin Bastable and Elizabeth (formerly Meadon). Henry was a Blacksmith and Shoeing-smith of Manston, Sturminster Newton, Dorset. William did have the benefit of a good education and became a student at Exeter College of Education. After graduation, in 1911 he was an assistant schoolmaster boarding at Lindum, Bournemouth Road, Parkstone, Poole, but was then recruited by the Abbey School, a new school opened in 1911 in Oldbury Road (in 2014 Century Court flats). According to the *Tewkesbury Record's* obituary, he became a '*much beloved*' member of the choir and a Sunday School teacher.

William was conscripted in May 1916 and for a short time was stationed in the town, lodging with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Williams, Barton Road. He was drafted, for no obvious reason, into the 1st/7th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, a Territorial battalion which had been formed in 1914. The battalion landed in France on 22 March 1915, becoming part of the 143rd Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division, which contained a number of Gloucestershire Territorial battalions.

William Bastable does not have his own medal roll on-line, so it is assumed that, after the by now usual six weeks' training, he was sent out to France as a reinforcement. The battalion was involved in the *Battle of the Somme*, in particular the *Battle for Pozières Ridge*. On 31 July 1917 the *3rd Battle of Ypres* started – *Passchendaele*. The weather deteriorated, the heavy rain transforming the battlefield into a sea of mud. It is said that there were '*many failures in attack due to poor planning and preparation*'.

Little is known precisely of the battalion's exploits on 11 August – it must be assumed that Private Bastable lost his life during aggressive trench warfare. The fact that his body was never found suggests that the cause might have been shell-fire.

Private William Harry Bastable's name is one of the 54,322 commemorated on the *Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing* – one of the last names before space ran out on 16 August when a new, much enlarged, memorial was created at Tyne Cot Cemetery.

The Somerset-born teacher is commemorated on both War Memorials in Tewkesbury. His own pupils also commemorated his sacrifice in December 1917 by mounting his photograph in the Abbey Boys School.