

PRIVATE JOSEPH BROADWELL

41823, 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died aged 18 on 21 March 1918

Remembered with honour on the *Arras Memorial, France*; Bay 6

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery



Worcestershire Regiment

JOSEPH BROADWELL was born in Tewkesbury in 1900, the son of John Broadwell and Mary Ann (formerly Walker) who had married in 1884. The Broadwell family had been 'Watermen', living for many years in Cares Alley (44-45 High Street: in 2014 alongside Halford's the Butcher). In 1911 the family was still living in Cares Alley but John was now working as a 'Corn Porter' whilst Mary was a 'Charwoman'; Joseph was a schoolboy at the time and there was a daughter named Ellen. However, the 1911 Census also reveals that John and Mary had had a total of 13 children of whom only seven were alive at that time. Over the years the couple had lost six infant children, including one during a measles epidemic in 1887.

Joseph enlisted initially in Birmingham in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, although he transferred subsequently to the 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. In August 1914 the battalion was stationed in Tidworth, Wiltshire, as part of the 7th Infantry Brigade in the 3rd Division. The battalion was sent to France soon after the outbreak of war and landed at Rouen on 16 August 1914.

On 18 October 1915 the battalion was transferred with the rest of the Brigade to the 25th Division; shortly afterwards, on 10 November 1915, it transferred to the 74th Infantry Brigade in the same Division. In March 1918 the Division was part of the British Third Army in the Bapaume area of the Somme. As rumours of an impending enemy attack grew, the 74th Brigade moved up closer to the front, at Fremicourt.

The attack launched by the German Army was the start of a campaign which became known as the German Spring Offensive or *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's Battle), which lasted from 21 March to 18 July 1918. This was, in effect, the German Army's last throw of the dice. It stemmed from a realisation that their only remaining chance of winning outright victory in the war was to defeat the Allies while they had a temporary advantage in numbers afforded by the Russian surrender in late 1917, and before the overwhelming human and material resources of the United States could be deployed.

Within the overall campaign, there were four German offensives, codenamed *Michael*, *Georgette*, *Gneisenau* and *Blücher-Yorck*. *Operation Michael* was the primary attack intended to break through the Allied lines, outflank the British forces which held the front line from the River Somme to the English Channel, and defeat the British Army. Although the German Spring Offensive achieved considerable tactical success in many of its phases, it failed to achieve its strategic objectives and created the conditions which led to the defeat of the German Army later in the year.

Private Joseph Broadwell was killed on 21 March 1918, the first day of the *Battle of St. Quentin* (21-23 March 1918) which was the opening phase of *Operation Michael*. Joseph's body was neither identified nor recovered from the battlefield and he is remembered on the *Arras Memorial* in the Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, Arras, France.