

PRIVATE FREDERICK JOHN COLLINS

9437, 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 22 on 4 February 1915

Remembered with honour on *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial*; Panel 22 and 34

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial,
Belgium*



*Pte. F. J. Collins
[Graphic 27/2/1915]*



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

FREDERICK JOHN COLLINS was born in Tewkesbury in 1893, the fifth of eight children but the eldest son of Frederick Johnson Collins and Margaret Annie (formerly Payne). His father was a bricklayer, born in 1865 in Twynning, and Margaret, usually known as Annie, was from Chipping Campden; they both moved to Tewkesbury and married in the town in 1890. In 1901 they lived in Oldbury Road, Frederick (Fred) being a pupil of Holy Trinity Church Schools.

In 1910 Frederick enlisted in Tewkesbury as a regular soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment. In the 1911 Census he was serving with the 1st Battalion at the Cambridge Barracks, Portsmouth. By the time war broke out, however, he had been posted to the 2nd Battalion, stationed at Tientsin in China; the Battalion was part of an international force that also included French and German troops. The Battalion returned to England, landing at Southampton on 8 November 1914, when it became part of the newly created 27th Division. On 18 December the Battalion landed at Le Havre, France.

In his obituary the *Register* reported: *'He returned to this country in December 1914, when he spent four days leave at home before going to the front. He wrote to his parents frequently when in France, where he was serving with a machine-gun section. His letters were cheerful. He asked that a large envelope might be sent him, as he was anxious to send home, for safety, Princess Mary's Christmas card and message, which he very much prized, and was afraid would get soiled if he kept them with him. These Mr. and Mrs. Collins received in due course.'*

Private Frederick John Collins was the first Tewkesbury casualty of 1915, killed on 4 Feb-

ruary. The *Register* continued: *'Mr. and Mrs. Collins have heard from the friend of a comrade, who saw their son killed, that he was struck by a piece of shrapnel, and death was instantaneous'*. The War Diary records that the battalion was holding the line near Ypres on 4 February with *'Very heavy artillery fire all day'*. The casualties were listed as two Other Ranks killed and seven wounded. Unusually, the Diary names them all, including Other Ranks (even describing their injuries). Frederick is listed as one of the two men killed, confirming that he was serving in B Company with the other fatality, Private Edwin Wilkins; both were buried at 'Ferme du Confluence', probably a nearby battlefield cemetery. Frederick's Captain confirmed the circumstances of his death: *'It is with the deepest sympathy I am writing to tell you your son, No.9437 Pte. Collins was killed. He was buried at a place I am unable to tell you at present owing to the Censor, but I know it and have it recorded. I read the burial service over him myself, and put up a wooden cross to him. He was a splendid soldier, and is deeply regretted by officers, non-coms and men of my regiment'*.

However, Private Frederick Collins' grave was evidently destroyed in subsequent fighting which saw constant trench warfare for nearly another four years; instead he is commemorated on the *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial*. He was awarded the '1914-15 Star' medal.

The family had three others 'serving their King and country' but they survived: **Jesse** on *HMS Colossus* at the *Battle of Jutland* in 1916, **Charles** in the County's 5th Battalion (was gassed in 1917), and **Thomas** in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.