

PRIVATE FRED DEE

40230, 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died aged 20 on 8 November 1916

Buried with honour in *St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen*; O I H 10

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey, and at Twyning



*St. Sever Cemetery
Extension, Rouen*



Pte. F. Dee
[Graphic 18/11/1916]



*Worcestershire
Regiment*

FRED DEE was born in Tewkesbury in 1896 to William Henry Dee and Mary Ann (formerly Wakefield) who married in 1887. The Dee family ran the Berkeley Arms Public House from 1893 to 1963. William was a butcher from Twyning and started the dynasty: after his death in 1906 at the age of 50 he was followed by his widow, Mary Ann, from 1906 to 1933, and then Fred's older brother, Frank. Fred was an apprentice carpenter with the local builders, Collins & Godfrey, but it was said that, aged 19, he was '*eager to serve his country*' and was an '*enthusiastic patriot*'.

Another brother, Harry Webb Dee, enlisted in 1915 in the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, a Territorial Force cavalry unit, before becoming an Acting Sergeant in the Machine Gun Corps (Cavalry). Fred followed his brother into the Hussars in January 1916 and was posted to the 2nd/1st Battalion, a home service unit which remained in the UK for the duration of the war.

However, Fred was soon transferred to the infantry in the Worcestershire Regiment and joined the 2nd Battalion in France in September 1916, two months into the *Battles of the Somme 1916*. At that time, the battalion was part of the 33rd Division. The autumn was particularly wet: the heavy rain, which became more continuous, caused '*the countless shell-holes [to become] slimy pools; the churned soil of the Somme ridges melted into knee-deep mud, which made movement more and more difficult*'. On 5

November 1916 the battalion carried out an attack on a German position known as *Boritzka Trench* near the village of Transloy in an effort to gain higher, drier ground before the final days of the campaign. The attack took place during a thunderstorm, accompanied by lightning, whilst '*through the rain came German shells but in that slough many of them failed to explode*'. The trench was captured but the battalion's casualties amounted to some 200 killed and wounded.

Private Fred Dee was almost certainly wounded in this action as the battalion was taken out of the line next day. He was evacuated to one of the base hospitals in Rouen but died of his wounds on 8 November 1916. He was buried in the nearby *St. Sever Cemetery Extension*. The *Register* reported '*another Tewkesburian killed*' as the *Battles of the Somme* petered out to end on 16 November. Fred's Company Commander, Lieutenant Eugene Paul Bennett, another Gloucestershire man, was awarded the *Victoria Cross* for his part in the action.

Fred's mother, Mary Ann Dee, of 7 Church Street, was awarded a War Gratuity of £3 on 9 December 1919. His older brother, Harry Webb Dee, was injured by shrapnel in the shoulder and was hospitalised in Brighton. He was awarded a *Silver War Badge* and discharged from the Army on 2 August 1918, not because of wounds but from 'malaria' suggesting that he had, perhaps, served in the Middle East. He survived to run the Berkeley Arms with his brother, Frank.