

PRIVATE JOHN GREENING

G/36762, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)

Died aged 28 on 27 September 1918

Remembered with honour on *Vis-En-Artois Memorial, Arras, France*; Panel 7
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross, in the Abbey and on the Grammar School Memorial



Vis-En-Artois Memorial, France



Queen's Own (Royal West Kent)

JOHN GREENING was born in 1889 in Upton-on-Severn, the second of three sons of Jesse Greening, a Baker who died in 1896 at the age of only 28, and Elizabeth (formerly Murray). Jesse was born in Tewkesbury and Elizabeth came from Upton-on-Severn. The family moved to Tewkesbury in about 1890 and the boys were raised by Elizabeth, a Charwoman who rented a home in Fish Alley, Barton Street. In 1911 Elizabeth was still in Fish Alley with the two younger sons and John was working as a Salesman for a Fishmonger. By 1918, however, she had moved to 79 Church Street as a Green-grocer with her eldest son, William. John attended the Council Schools in Chance Street, after which he was employed by shopkeeper Arthur Macdonald. He was also a prominent and active member of the White Rose Lodge of Oddfellows (a Friendly Society) and was involved with the Baptist Sunday School.

John was conscripted in September 1916 and sent to France in January 1917. Initially he joined the Army Service Corps, Remounts Service. This was the branch of the ASC which was responsible for the acquisition and training of horses and mules for all other army units. Animals were obtained during the war by compulsory purchase in the United Kingdom and by purchasing from North and South America, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, India and China.

In 1918 John was transferred to the infantry, firstly to the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment and then to the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment). At the time of his death he was on attachment to the 2nd/20th (County of London) Battalion (Blackheath and

Woolwich), a Territorial Force Battalion in the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, the same Division which contained a number of Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) units; hence there was potentially some logic in John's re-assignment.

The 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, including the 2nd/20th Londons, was part of the Third Army which was in the forefront of the campaign known as *'The Last Hundred Days'*, which saw the Allies inflict a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the Armistice. The Third Army was involved in the *Battle of the Canal du Nord* (27 September-1 October 1918), one of the phases of the overall campaign known as the *Battles of the Hindenburg Line*. In two days, an advance of six miles was made on a twelve-mile front; 10,000 enemy prisoners and 200 guns were taken. This *'spectacular success'* represented a vital preliminary to the attack on the Hindenburg Line scheduled for 29 September.

Private John Greening was killed in action on 27 September 1918, the first day of the *Battle of the Canal du Nord*. According to a short obituary in the *Record*, he was *'killed instantly by a shell ... fine soldier who did some fine work during a successful attack, playing a great share in the capture of some prisoners'*. His body was neither recovered nor identified and he is commemorated on the *Vis-En-Artois Memorial*. This bears the names of over 9,000 men who fell in the period from 8 August 1918 to the date of the Armistice, in the Advance to Victory in Picardy and Artois, between the Somme and Loos, and who have no known grave.