

PRIVATE WILLIAM EDGAR GREENWOOD

2090, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars

Died aged 23 on 19 September 1916

Remembered with honour at the *Angora Memorial, Baghdad, Iraq; 75*

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Grammar School Memorial, also in Awre and in Gloucester



*Baghdad (North Gate)
War Cemetery*



*RGH Memorial,
Gloucester*



*Royal Gloucestershire
Hussars*

WILLIAM EDGAR GREENWOOD is not by any means a Tewkesburian, except that he attended the Grammar School. He was born in March 1894 in St. Tudey, Cornwall (not in Awre as listed on *'Soldiers Who Died'*), the son of Isaac Greenwood and Ann Williams (formerly Mably). By 1901 the family had moved to Ware in Hertfordshire where his brother John was born. In 1905 William was a boarder at Tewkesbury Grammar School and his home address is given as Berrow (his uncle Thomas lived at Pendock Court at this time and later at Northway Court). In 1908 he is listed in the *Tewkesbury Register* as a Form 3 prize-winner at the School Prize Day, but he is not included on the Tewkesbury Grammar School register after 1909. In *Kelly's Directory* of 1910, Isaac (his father) is listed as a farmer living at Box Farm, Awre; in 1911 the brothers were living there with their parents, and William was described as 'Working on Farm'.

Both William and John enlisted in Gloucester in the Gloucestershire Yeomanry, a pre-war Territorial Force cavalry regiment. William joined the 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, a unit liable for overseas duty, and the younger John joined the 2nd Battalion, a home service unit. The 1st Battalion served in Gallipoli in 1915, operating as dismounted infantry; by the end of October 1915 the regiment had a strength of just 81 men of all ranks. In January 1916 the Brigade was reunited with their horses and, armed with sabres, became part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Based on his medal entitlement, William did not serve overseas until 1916

and was most probably posted to Egypt as part of a replacement draft. The unit's role was to defend the Suez Canal against attack by Turkish forces.

In April 1916 the Hussars were scouting in the desert near the oasis of Katia. On 23 April a strong enemy force, with artillery, attacked and inflicted heavy casualties on the regiment's 'A' Squadron of 101 men. The survivors surrendered and William was taken prisoner on Easter Day 1916. They were then subjected to an 800-mile forced march with no food and very little water. Many did not survive the journey and died of maltreatment or disease. The luckier ones went to Jerusalem but William was taken to Turkey.

Private William Edgar Greenwood died of cholera on 19 September 1916 in Ankara, the Turkish capital. His body was not recovered or identified after the war and he is commemorated on the *Angora Memorial, Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery*, in Iraq.

However, the sacrifice of these men enabled a proper defence of Suez to be organised, and the Canal – Britain's supply life-line to India and the rest of the Empire – was kept open.

William's brother, **Private John L. Greenwood** [†], also died in the war but in France on 10 May 1917, serving with the infantry.

Both are commemorated on the Grammar School Memorial in the Town Hall; on the Awre War Memorial and on a framed illuminated scroll in the village Church; and on the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Memorial at College Green, Gloucester.