

PRIVATE REGINALD HALL

43671, 112th Company, Machine Gun Corps

Died aged 19 on 3 May 1917

Buried with honour in *Etaples Military Cemetery, Boulogne*; XVIII H 2

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross, in the Abbey, and on Methodist Church Memorial



Etaples Military Cemetery, Boulogne



Machine Gun Corps

REGINALD HALL was born in Tewkesbury in 1897, one of 13 children of John Hall and Ellen (formerly Smith), who were both from Tewkesbury and had married in 1876. In 1901 John was the Publican at The Foresters Arms, 45 High Street. It is likely that Reginald followed his older brother, Thomas, to Trinity School. By 1911 his father was a Mail Contractor for the Post Office and the home was now in Smith's Lane. At that time Reginald was an Errand Boy for a Corn Merchant, although his obituary also said that he worked for Henry Norman, the 'People's Draper', whose shop was in the High Street (where Barclays Bank now stands). He is commemorated on the Methodist Church Memorial, unlike his brother Thomas, so presumably he or his family were members.

Reginald enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment in Gloucester, sometime in April 1915 judging by his army service number. He is commemorated in Tewkesbury as an Abbey Volunteer who joined the 3rd/5th Battalion. This was a Territorial Force training battalion which was never sent overseas and to which Reginald was probably posted because of his age; he was only 17 when he enlisted. There is no record that he served in any other battalion in the regiment, only that he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps. The Corps was created in late 1915 to make more effective use of the weapon by concentrating resources into specialist units. Initially, there were three Companies per Division, one for each Infantry Brigade. In 1918, a fourth company was added and they were all amalgamated into a Machine Gun Battalion.

According to the CWGC, Reginald was serving in the 112th Battalion at the time he died. This seems to be incorrect for two reasons:

firstly, Machine Gun Battalions were not established until 1918, more than six months later; secondly, there was no Battalion numbered 112. It seems most likely, therefore, that Reginald was serving in the 112th Machine Gun Company, not Battalion. This fits in with the operations of that Company which, in 1917, was attached to the 37th Division. The Division was heavily involved in the *Arras Offensive* (9 April-16 June 1917), which comprised a series of subsidiary battles. The 37th took part in three battles in April, the *First and Second Battles of the Scarpe* and the *Battle of Arleux*, so Reginald must have been wounded in one of these actions.

The *Tewkesbury Register* reported on 7 April 1917 that Reginald had '*sent home a German brass helmet badge*'. However, he was soon reported to have either a 'fractured leg' or a 'serious leg wound' and by late April he was being treated in a Canadian Hospital in France. This makes sense, as the Canadian Corps, with three Casualty Clearing Stations, was present at Arras. His wound was serious enough for him to be transferred to the huge military base at Etaples, near Boulogne. In 1917 the medical facilities there could deal with 22,000 wounded or sick at any one time.

Private Reginald Hall '*died of wounds*' on 3 May 1917 and is buried in the nearby *Etaples Military Cemetery*, near Boulogne. The Chaplain wrote home reassuringly that '*He did not suffer*' and stated that '*He was a good boy and died trusting in God*'.

Two of his brothers also served in the Gloucestershire Regiment: **Sgt. Thomas Hall** [†] (10th Battalion) had been killed at Loos in September 1915, but **L/Cpl. Frederick Charles Hall** (8th Battalion) survived the war.