

## SERGEANT RALPH HARTELL, M.M.

1523, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 54 on 13 October 1932 in Cheltenham General Hospital

Buried with a Military Funeral at Bredon Church but not commemorated by CWGC

Nor is he commemorated in Tewkesbury except in the Abbey as a Volunteer



'Peace from Pain', Bredon Church



Sgt. R. Hartell, M.M.



Gloucestershire Regiment

**RALPH HARTELL** was born in Bredon in 1878 to James Hartland (a Labourer) and Ann (formerly Grubb), both from Bredon. James died in 1887 and Ann in 1894. There are several spellings for this name, which may have originated as Hartland. In 1891 Ralph was living with his widowed mother in Bredon and, at the age of 12, was working as an Agricultural Labourer.

On 30 December 1895 Ralph enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment as a regular soldier for 7 years in the Colours and 5 years on Reserve. During 1897-1904 he served overseas with the 1st Battalion in India, South Africa and Ceylon. During the **Boer War**, in October 1900, they took part in the *Battle of Ladysmith* with disastrous results: about 450 men were surrounded and taken prisoner. Casualty records show Ralph as 'Missing' but released on 30 October. He was awarded the *South Africa Clasp*.

On completing his time in the Colours, Ralph was transferred to the Reserve on 16 January 1904 and in December he married Bertha Minnie Day. He continued in the Reserve until December 1911. The family, including four children, was then living in Dark Lane, Bredon, and Ralph was a Railway Labourer. The family grew to 12 children, including a son born in 1916 who was named Kitchener Hampshire (no doubt in honour of Lord Kitchener and the ship *HMS Hampshire*). In January 1912 Ralph (now 34 and a Gardener) re-enlisted as a Special Reservist in the 3rd Battalion, becoming Sergeant in May 1913. On the outbreak of war he was mobilised on 8 August 1914 – but continued on Home Duties, probably in a training role.

In March 1917, however, Ralph was sent to

France to join the 1st/4th Battalion. His service record shows that he was invalided twice, firstly on 26 April 1917 due to 'Shell Shock'. After Home Leave he returned to the 3rd Battalion in September. On 31 March 1918 he was posted back to France, firstly to the 8th Battalion and then the 2nd/5th Battalion, part of the 61st Division. In April the Division was part of a stubborn defence against *Operation Georgette*, the second phase of the German Spring Offensive. On 24 April Ralph sustained a 'GSW' (Gun Shot Wound) to the head, resulting in his return to Home Duties. He was finally discharged as 'No Longer Fit for Service' on 7 December 1918. Ralph was awarded the *Military Medal*, but it is not clear in which action, and also a *Silver War Badge* on 21 December 1918.

Upon his discharge, Sgt. Hartell received a pension of £1.34p a week – when the rent for his home at 11 Lynworth Lane, Twyning, was 53p a week. His youngest daughter recalls only an invalid with a serious head wound for a father, and economically her childhood was very hard.

Ex-Sgt. **Ralph Hartell** died on 13 October 1932 at Cheltenham Hospital aged 54 and his Death Certificate recorded: '*rt. sided hemiplegia (war wound)*'. His death was reported by his eldest son James, also a professional soldier. Ralph was accorded a very dignified Military Funeral by former comrades who marched behind his coffin from his home in Twyning to his final resting place at **Bredon Church**. However his death, brought on by his severe war wounds, came seven years too late for his name to be included on an official war memorial or recorded by the CWGC.