

PRIVATE ALBERT GEORGE HODGES

61795, 39th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Died aged 22 on 19 October 1918

Buried with honour in *Tehran War Cemetery, Iran*; IV G 3

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Tehran War Cemetery, Iran



1914-15 Star Medal



Machine Gun Corps

ALBERT GEORGE HODGES was born in Tewkesbury in 1896 to Richard Hodges, second husband of widow Elizabeth Matty (formerly Grocott). Richard was a Bricklayer employed by Coutts & Howell. A pupil of Trinity School, in 1911 Albert was an Errand Boy for a watchmaker, living at 22 Spring Gardens with five siblings.

Albert enlisted as a volunteer in September 1914 in Tewkesbury, with his father who served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers. Albert was posted to the 7th Battalion of the Gloucesters, which was formed at Bristol in August 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army; it came under the command of the 13th (Western) Division, which arrived in Gallipoli in July 1915. Albert joined his battalion on 7 December 1915, qualifying for the '1914-15 Star' medal. In January 1916 the Division was moved to Egypt, then to Mesopotamia, where it fought until the Armistice with the Ottoman Empire on 31 October 1918.

Albert was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, almost certainly during 1916 as part of a reorganisation within infantry brigades. At the start of the war, each battalion had a Machine Gun Section with two guns. In 1916 these sections were detached from their battalions to form a Brigade Machine Gun Company. It is likely that Albert was originally a member of the Machine Gun Section of the 7th Gloucesters and then transferred to the Brigade's 39th Machine Gun Company as part of the re-organisation. (CWGC records link Albert, erroneously, to the 39th Machine Gun Battalion, which only served on the Western Front.)

In July 1918 the 39th Infantry Brigade was transferred to the North Persia Force where it was involved in the *Defence of Baku* (26 August-

15 September 1918). It was part of a British Mission known as *Dunsterforce* that occupied the then Russian city of Baku to prevent the port and oilfields from falling into Turkish hands. The British evacuated Baku the following month due to the superior numbers of the Turkish force but returned to the city after the Armistice as an occupying force until September 1919.

Private Albert George Hodges died on 19 October 1918, and on 9 November the *Register* reported that: 'Mrs. Hodges of 17, Jeynes Row, the wife of Sapper Richard Hodges, now serving in France, has received information that their eldest son ... died at Basra on 19th October, from pleurisy and pneumonia. The deceased was only 22 years of age ... an old pupil of Holy Trinity Schools, and before enlisting was in the employ of Mr. Charles Anderson. He joined up ... in September 1914, and in May 1915 went to the near East with [his] Regiment. He served in ... Gallipoli ... [and] Mesopotamia, and had been once wounded, and had suffered a severe attack of fever. He was a very steady, respectable lad, and a smart soldier, and his parents have much sympathy in their bereavement.'

Private Hodges is buried in *Tehran War Cemetery* at Gulhek in Iran. There is some confusion over this: on 19 October 1919 the *Register* recorded his death in Russia, but the original 1918 notice reported his death in Basra (in modern Iraq). The records suggest that he died of wounds or illness but possibly not in Basra, otherwise he would have been buried there.

Albert's father, Richard, survived the war and died in 1943. His brother-in-law, **Sapper A. C. Wilkinson** [†] of the Royal Engineers, died in an accident on 30 March 1918.