

PRIVATE WILLIAM FRANK HODGES

7693, 1st Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 31 on 29 May 1916

Buried with honour at *Maroc British Cemetery, Grenay, France*; I H 44

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Maroc British Cemetery, Grenay



1914 (Mons) Star & Clasp



Gloucestershire Regiment

WILLIAM FRANK HODGES was born in 1885 to Charles and Mary (formerly King) of Tewkesbury; they had a total of 15 children, 13 of whom survived in 1911. In 1901 the family was living in two adjoining houses in Compton's Alley; Charles was working as a bricklayer's labourer whilst William was an errand boy. In 1909 William married Florence Nellie Green. In 1911 they were living in Mill Street with their daughter Elise Mary, along with Florence's daughter, Florence Elizabeth, born in Walsall in 1907. In 1912 a son, William C., followed.

William Hodges enlisted on 5 December 1903 at the age of 18 in the Gloucestershire Regiment and joined the 3rd Militia Battalion, having already served in the 2nd Volunteer Battalion. However, on 5 August 1904 he enlisted in Bristol as a regular soldier, probably with the 2nd Battalion (in May 1910 a Private W. Hodges of the 2nd Battalion took part in a local procession). On completing his time with the Colours William would have been transferred to the Army Reserve and reverted to civilian life.

As a reservist William was recalled to the Colours on the outbreak of war, rejoining the Regiment at Bristol. He was posted to the 1st Battalion, initially with the rank of drummer, as his original battalion was stationed in China and did not return to Britain until November 1914. His medal records show that he was part of the original British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who landed in France on 13 August 1914 (and therefore an *'Old Contemptible'*). The battalion was part of the 1st Division which was involved in most of the major actions in 1914 and 1915,

including the battles of *Mons*, the *Marne*, the *Aisne*, *First Ypres* and *Loos*. It remained in the Loos area near Maroc in May 1916, shortly before moving south to take part in the joint Anglo-French Somme offensive.

Private William Frank Hodges was killed in action on 29 May 1916, according to a report of 17 June 1916. Although this is the date shown on the modern CWGC database record, examination of the original Imperial War Graves Commission documentation from 1920 clearly shows that William was actually killed on 21 May. This is supported by other casualty information and by the War Diary which indicates that the battalion was in reserve in the middle of May, engaged mainly in digging new trenches. The entry for 21 May noted: *'Left Reserve. Fair amount of shelling around Maroc. At 4pm the houses and FOSSE 5 were heavily shelled with field guns for 2.5 hours ... 1 killed, 5 wounded'*. The diary entries for 29 May and the rest of the month make no reference to any fatal casualties, just one man wounded.

The evidence clearly points, therefore, to the fact that **Private Hodges** was the soldier killed in the random shelling on 21 May 1916. His body was recovered and he is buried in a marked grave in *Maroc British Cemetery*, near Bethune. William was awarded the *'1914 (Mons) Star and Clasp'*, to recognise that he had served under fire. He is also commemorated on the Roll of Honour in the Memorial Hall in Birmingham. His widow, Florence Nellie, was awarded a War Gratuity of £10 in August 1919, then living in 2 Back of 20 County Street, Saltley, Birmingham.