

PRIVATE WALTER KING

8642, 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

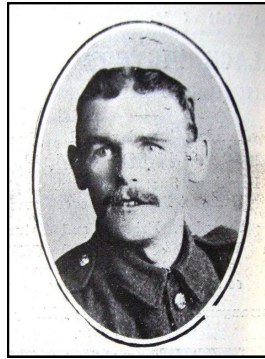
Died aged 25 on 12 May 1915

Remembered with honour at *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium*; Panel 22 & 34

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial



Private Walter King



Gloucestershire Regiment

WALTER KING was born in Tewkesbury in 1890 to Harry King and Emma (formerly Sutton). Harry was also born in Tewkesbury and Emma came from Forthampton; Emma died on 16 May 1890, shortly after Walter's birth. In 1891 Harry was living in Smith's Lane with four of his children but Walter, aged just one, was living with William and Lydia Burrows at 8a Oldbury Road. At that time, Harry was working as a brewery engine driver. In 1893 Harry married Elizabeth Lawler from Oxford and by 1901 they were living in Crouch's Passage with a further three children of their own. Walter was educated at the Abbey School. In 1908 Walter, along with Basil Williams, Martin Hopton, Robert Hopton, Frank Williams, and Frederick Green, was charged with unlawfully killing a partridge. (Many were future members of the Gloucesters!)

Walter enlisted in Tewkesbury as a regular soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1908, judging by his service number. In 1911 he was with the 2nd Battalion in Malta; in 1914 the Battalion was stationed at Tientsin in China, as part of an international force which included French and German troops. The Battalion returned to England on 8 November 1914 when it became part of the newly created 27th Division, and six weeks later moved to France, landing at Le Havre on 18 December 1914.

Although he must have been one of the more experienced members of the Battalion, Walter was not part of the original contingent sent to France. Instead he arrived in France on 27 April 1915, in a replacement draft. By then the Battalion had been involved in the *Battle of Neuve Chapelle*, the first large-scale organised

attack undertaken by the British army during the war. On 7 April the 27th Division was then transferred near Ypres. On 22 April 1915 the Germans launched the first of the four battles which constituted the *Second Battle of Ypres*; the offensive lasted from 22 April to 25 May and was used primarily as a means of diverting Allied attention from the Eastern Front and of testing the use of chlorine gas. Following a tactical withdrawal, when they were pursued by the enemy, the 2nd Battalion was holding positions in 'Sanctuary Wood' for nearly four weeks. The 11 and 12 May were characterised by regular attacks by German troops against the Brigade who retaliated with their own counter-attacks, some at bayonet point.

Private Walter King was initially posted as missing and his step-mother published a message in the *Cheltenham Graphic*: '*Mrs. Elizabeth King ... would be grateful for any information regarding him*'. However, nothing was heard of Walter so he was presumed to have been killed in action in Flanders by 13 May 1915. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists his date of death as 12 May 1915 and it seems clear from the War Diary that he was killed during the exchanges of 11-12 May.

Private Walter King's body was never recovered nor identified and he is commemorated instead on the *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial*. He was awarded the '*1914-15 Star*' medal, although it is possible his medals were never claimed. They were included on a list in July 1920 of items the Army was planning to dispose of. At that time his step-mother was noted as living at 3 Walls Court, High Street.