

LANCE SERJEANT JOHN MATTY

7831, 9th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 30 on 17 March 1917

Buried with honour at *Karasouli Military Cemetery, Greece*; F 1358

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Karasouli Military Cemetery



1914 (Mons) Star & Clasp



Gloucestershire Regiment

JOHN MATTY (or 'Jack') was born in 1886 to John Matty and Charlotte (formerly Hampton) from Tewkesbury. John senior worked as a labourer in a brickyard and in 1891 the family was living in Mill Bank. However, Charlotte died in 1895 aged 50, followed three years later by John senior, also aged 50, who died in 1898 in a drowning accident in the River Severn, near Lower Lode. John was a pupil of Holy Trinity School and in 1901 was a coal haulier, boarding with Rose Hathaway in Double Alley.

John was working as a farm labourer when he first volunteered for the Gloucestershire Regiment at the age of 18 in October 1904; initially he joined a Militia battalion but became a regular soldier in December. He was following in the footsteps of his older brother, William Henry, who enlisted in 1902, also at the age of 18. In 1911 John was serving with the 1st Battalion at the Cambridge Barracks in Portsmouth, whilst William was stationed in Malta with the 2nd Battalion. Both transferred to the Reserve on completing their time with the Colours.

In a public presentation when John returned home on leave in July 1915, it was reported that, after being orphaned, he became '*an old soldier ... he served years in India, and three months in the Boer War*'. After that experience he left the Army and '*came to Bream a few years ago, and worked at the Princess Royal Collieries*'. During the June quarter of 1914 John married Florence Collins in Tewkesbury.

As a reservist, John Matty was recalled at the outbreak of war to the 1st Battalion, one of the units of the original BEF, and thus an '*Old Contemptible*'. Part of the 1st Division, it landed

at Le Havre on 13 August 1914 and both brothers followed on 27 August 1914. Their battalion took part in several actions in 1914-1915, including the battles of *Mons*, the *Marne*, the *Aisne*, *First Ypres*, *Aubers* and *Loos*. John was awarded the '*1914 (Mons) Star with Clasp*' to acknowledge service under fire. He was on leave in July 1915, just before the battalion fought at Loos in the Autumn. As a result of his experience, he was promoted to Lance Corporal and transferred to Kitchener battalion, the 9th Gloucesters. Part of the 26th Division, it landed in France on 21 September 1915; thus John was awarded the '*1914-15 Star*' medal.

Two months were spent on the Western Front without any action before the 9th was transferred to Salonika in Greece in November 1915, initially to provide support for the Serbs against German and Bulgarian forces. In 1916 the theatre was relatively quiet with health and living conditions the main enemy; large numbers of men succumbed to malaria or dysentery. The battalion was involved in the *Battle of Horseshoe Hill* (10-18 August) when the Allies unsuccessfully tried to capture Bulgarian positions near Lake Doiran. After that, there was little activity except around the lake where '*the line was adjusted several times by each side*'.

Lance Sergeant Matty was killed in action on 17 March 1917. Initially he was declared a prisoner-of-war but probably died of his wounds. His body was recovered and he was buried in *Karasouli Military Cemetery* in Greece. In 1917 Florence was working in a Munitions factory '*in the Midlands*'; her brother, **Pte. F. J. Collins** [†], was killed in February 1915 near Ypres.