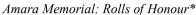# PRIVATE JOHN JAMES PARNELL

26622, 7th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment
Died aged 26 on 10 February 1917
Remembered with honour at *Amara War Cemetery, Iraq*; XXIX B1/40
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Amara Memorial: Rolls of Honour\**



*Amara War Cemetery*



*Gloucestershire Regiment*

JOHN JAMES PARNELL was a Tewkesburian by residence rather than by birth. He was born in Tincleton in Dorset to John Parnell and Ruth Andrews (formerly Davis) who were married in the June quarter of 1890. His birth was registered in Dorchester in late 1890 and he was baptised on 8 February 1891. John senior was a dairyman from Butterwick in Dorset while Ruth came from Marshfield, near Chipping Sodbury in Gloucestershire. In 1891 the family was living in Affpuddle in Dorset but they had moved to Liss in Hampshire by 1901. John senior died six years later in Lymington in 1907 at the age of 67.

The *Register* described John as *'the second son of Mrs. Parnell of East Street, Tewkesbury'* and noted that *'he was 26 years of age and only came to Tewkesbury with his mother in about 1911'*. In the Census he was described as a general workman for an ironmonger, living with his widowed mother at 66 Barton Street. He was employed successively by Mr. T. B. Milner, then Mr. A.E. Edwards and, finally, by Mr. J. Walker. The *Register* noted that *'he was a steady respectable man and the mainstay of his widowed mother, who had another son serving with the Canadian army'*.

John James Parnell enlisted at Tewkesbury in the Gloucestershire Regiment in February 1916, probably under the Derby Scheme judging by his age and date of call-up. He was posted to the 7th Battalion which was formed in August 1914 as part of Kitchener's Army and of the 13th (Western) Division. The division fought in Gallipoli in 1915 against Turkey and, after being evacuated from the peninsula in early 1916, sailed to Egypt to defend the Suez Canal.

The division soon joined the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force (in modern Iraq) to relieve the garrison at Kut al Amara, to which British units had retreated following an unsuccessful attempt to capture Baghdad. However, the relief effort failed and Kut fell to the Turks in April 1916. The British forces were built up and reorganised and it is likely that Private Parnell then joined his battalion as a reinforcement. Another, ultimately successful, attempt was made to capture Kut and to press on to Baghdad. The British attack was launched in December 1916 but it took two months to capture Kut.

**Private John James Parnell** was reported as killed in action on 10 February 1917, evidently during the offensive. His body was recovered and he was buried in *Amara War Cemetery*, Iraq; he had probably died of wounds at Amara, as it was the site of a major hospital centre. In 1933 all the headstones were removed from the cemetery when it was discovered that salts in the soil were causing them to deteriorate. Instead a screen wall was erected and inscribed with the names of those buried in the cemetery.

His mother was still living in Tewkesbury in 1919, having been awarded a War Gratuity of £2 in November 1917. When the commemorations were organised for those who died in the war, Private Parnell's name was therefore included on both the Tewkesbury memorials.

\*In 2014 the CGWC advises that it is not possible to visit Memorials in Iraq. The photo-graph caption is:
*'The Rolls of Honour held at the Commission's Head Office commemorating by name all the Commonwealth casualties who died in Iraq during the two World Wars'*

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*Military history written by Malcolm Waldron with  family history assistance from Derek Benson*