

PRIVATE RALPH FREER PEACH

39777, 4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died aged 24 on 12 October 1916

Remembered with honour on *Thiepval Memorial*; Pier and Face 5A and 6C
Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Memorial Plaque in the Royal Mail Office only,
and in Kemerton on the War Memorial and in St. Nicholas Church



Thiepval Memorial, France



Memorial Plaque, R.M. Office



Worcestershire Regiment

RALPH FREER PEACH was born in Kemerton in 1892, the youngest of four children, to John Peach and Ann (formerly Stallard) of Westmancote. John was from Bredon and died in 1892 aged 46. In 1901 the remaining family was living in Westmancote and the eldest son, Albert, was working as a bricklayer's labourer. By 1911 Ralph and his mother had moved to nearby Kemerton; he was working as a postman, presumably based in Tewkesbury. Although the Post Office archives in London have been investigated without any success, it is evident that this huge national employer of the day encouraged its workers to volunteer.

Ralph enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment, probably around November 1914, and was posted to the 2nd/1st Worcestershire Yeomanry. This was a Territorial Force cavalry unit formed as a home-based 'second line' training and reserve unit in September 1914 to provide replacement drafts for the active service regiment, the 1st/1st Worcestershire Yeomanry, which served overseas. According to Ralph's medal records he was not actually transferred to the 1st/1st Worcestershire Yeomanry, probably because the need for mounted troops had diminished with the advent of static trench warfare. Instead, he was posted to the infantry 4th Worcesters. As he did not qualify for the '1914-15 Star' medal, it can be assumed that he did not join the 4th Battalion in France until 1916. A Regular battalion stationed in Burma in 1914, it returned to England, in 29th Division, but was promptly despatched to Gallipoli.

After evacuation from Gallipoli and a short

time in Egypt, the battalion returned to France on 20 March 1916 and spent the next three months preparing for the *Battles of the Somme 1916*. On the first day, the 29th Division was tasked with capturing the fortified village of Beaumont Hamel but the battalion was in reserve, charged with carrying out a follow-up attack to exploit the expected early success; however, the order was cancelled when it was realised that the initial assault on Beaumont Hamel had been a complete failure. During the morning the battalion suffered 101 casualties from the German counter-bombardment.

During October the fighting was affected by atrocious weather; the Somme ridges '*melted into knee deep mud*'. On 12 October the battalion was in reserve, north of High Wood, and witnessed an attack on German trenches during the *Battle of the Transloy Ridges*, an attempt to reach higher and drier ground. The War Diary noted that: '*Objectives were gained but the whole was not kept*'. In the evening, carrying parties struggled up to the front line with ammunition and it was reported that one officer was killed and 12 other ranks wounded.

Private Ralph Freer Peach was recorded as killed in action on 12 October 1916, probably one of those initially reported in the diary as wounded. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated instead on the *Thiepval Memorial to the Missing*.

He is also remembered in Kemerton on the War Memorial and in St. Nicholas Church; on the Memorial Plaque at Royal Mail, Northway; and on the Regimental Roll of Honour.