

PRIVATE FRANK PERKINS

3000, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars

Died aged 21 on 11 November 1916

Buried with honour at *Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery, Iraq*; XXI M44

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery



R.G.H. Memorial



Royal Gloucestershire Hussars

FRANK PERKINS was born in Derby in 1895, the son of John Perkins and Alice (formerly Long), both from Worcestershire; John was a railway guard with the Midland Railway. Their first three children were born in Derby but, by 1901, the family was living in Ashchurch. Frank went to the Council School and for a time worked for Mr. Green of Stalls Farm, Shuthonger, and a Mr. Clutterbuck. He was *'in a situation at Cheltenham'* in April 1915, when he enlisted.

Frank enlisted in Tewkesbury in the Gloucestershire Yeomanry, a pre-war Territorial Force cavalry regiment. After training he was posted to the 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, liable for overseas duty. The Hussars served in Gallipoli in 1915 as dismounted infantry and by the end of October they had a strength of just 81 men. In December 1915 the Brigade withdrew from Gallipoli and moved to Egypt; in January 1916 it was reunited with its horses and armed with sabres, becoming part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Based on his medal records Frank did not join the regiment in Gallipoli, but went direct to Egypt, arriving on 7 December 1915, probably as part of a replacement draft sent to bring the regiment up to strength. He received the *'1914-15 Star'* medal (although his medals were disposed of as 'not claimed' after the war).

In Egypt, the regiment's role was to defend the Suez Canal against attack by Turkish forces. In April 1916 the Hussars were scouting in the desert. On 23 April a strong enemy force, with artillery, attacked and inflicted heavy casualties on their 'A' Squadron (of 101 men) based at Katia. The survivors surrendered and Frank was one of those taken prisoner; they were then subjected to an 800-mile forced march with no

food and very little water. Many did not survive the journey and died of maltreatment or, like Frank and **Trooper W. E. Greenwood** [†], of disease. The luckier ones went to Jerusalem but Frank was taken to Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). In July 1916 he was declared *'wounded and no longer missing'*; he was being held as a prisoner and was suffering from dysentery. However, the sacrifice of these men held the Turkish attack long enough for a proper defence to be organised, and the Canal – Britain's supply life-line to India and the rest of the Empire – was kept open.

Frank's parents knew nothing of this but, somewhat surprisingly, heard from him up to the last three months or so before his death. However, in February 1917 the *Register* reported that Mrs. Perkins had received a letter from Miss Lloyd Baker, Hon. Sec. of the Duchess of Beaufort's Fund for transmitting parcels to prisoners. The letter brought the *'sad news'* that information had been received, through the Red Cross in Switzerland, that her son had died from typhus. A few days later Frank's parents received the translation of a report, signed by two British Officers; this stated that, after six months in captivity, **Private Frank Perkins** had died on 11 November 1916 at Anon Karahissar in Turkey, where he was buried in a grave marked with a distinctive sign. Frank's body was re-interred after the war in the *Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery* in Iraq. The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Yeomanry War Memorial in Gloucester does not include his name, but lists an E.J. Perkins for whom there is no record on any casualty database. It seems likely that this is a case of mistaken identity and that the entry on the memorial should refer to Frank Perkins.