

PRIVATE SAMUEL IRVING PREECE

306447, 1st/8th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment

Died aged 24 on 5 March 1917

Buried with honour at *Warlincourt Halte Cemetery, France*; V C 14

Commemorated on Tewkesbury Grammar School Memorial



*Warlincourt Halte Cemetery,
Arras, France*



*Nottinghamshire &
Derbyshire Regiment*

SAMUEL IRVING PREECE was born in 1892 in Cookham near Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire, one of three children of Harry John Preece and Annie Elizabeth (formerly Blinks). Harry Preece was a Baptist Minister, born in Cookham, and pastor of the Baptist Church in Barton Street from 1898 to 1908. His wife Annie, from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, was a governor of Tewkesbury Grammar School; the family lived in Tolzey Lane. The minister's work appears to have kept him away from home: in both 1901 and 1911 he was recorded as a visitor on Census returns in Reading and Shaftesbury respectively.

Samuel was at Tewkesbury Grammar School from 1900 to 1908 and in 1911 he was boarding at Kelham Hall School, Newark. This was the home of an Anglican religious order, the Society of the Sacred Mission, founded in 1893. Clearly, he was following in his father's footsteps and he became a Brother of the Society at Kelham Theological College. His obituary records that he also attained a horticultural diploma at Reading, then attended missionary school.

According to his obituary in the *Tewkesbury Record*, Samuel enlisted in November 1915 with fellow students, joining the 'Sherwood Foresters' (D Company, 1st/8th Battalion of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment), a Territorial battalion, which suggests he was already a member of the Territorial Army. The Battalion was mobilised on 5 August 1914 and sent to France on 25 February 1915, as the first complete Territorial Division to arrive in a theatre of war, serving on the Western Front for the duration. It was renamed the 46th North Midland Division on 12 May 1915.

Based on his date of enlistment and medal records, Samuel probably joined his battalion in France by the middle of 1916, perhaps in time for the start of the Somme campaign. On 1 July 1916, the opening day of the *Battles of the Somme 1916*, the Division had taken part in a diversionary attack at Gommecourt, otherwise it did not engage in any significant actions for the rest of the year. On 4 March 1917 the Division was involved in a relatively low-key action known as the *Occupation of the Gommecourt Defences*, the village which the Division had assaulted the previous year and from which the Germans were now ejected as they retreated to a new defensive fortification known as the Hindenburg Line. The battalion suffered only minor casualties of seven killed and 17 wounded.

Private Samuel Irving Preece died on 5 March 1917. Losses occurred when the Germans fought back with 'bombing encounters' and there were small-scale attacks. The Battalion Diary claimed that 'very little happened on March 5th', except for a night attack on 'Kite Copse'. According to the *Record*, Private Preece was a company runner and his Commanding Officer was quoted as saying 'He was with me at the time, acting as my runner when he was sniped. He will be a great loss to me, he was a gallant soldier'. He died of his wounds, possibly after being treated in one of three casualty clearing stations in the area, and is buried at *Warlincourt Halte Cemetery*, Saulty, near Arras. He is commemorated in Kelham on the St. Wilfred's Church War Memorial. His brother, Howard Blinks Preece, served in the Royal Navy and survived the war.