

PRIVATE FRANK THOMAS PRICE

24322, 12th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 30 on 8 May 1917

Remembered with honour on *Arras Memorial, France*; Bay 6

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Arras Memorial, France



Pte. F.T. Price [D. Round]



Gloucestershire Regiment

FRANK THOMAS PRICE has rather mysterious origins. He was born around 1886 to Ellen Price – but there is no record of a birth registered in his name in Gloucestershire. Ellen had already had a daughter, Margaret, in 1880 but in 1881 she was working as a domestic servant in King's Norton. By 1891 she had moved to Dulwich, London, still working as a domestic servant. On both dates Margaret was living with Ellen's parents in Tewkesbury but there was no sign of Frank on the 1891 census in either Tewkesbury or Dulwich. However, it is evident that Ellen returned to Tewkesbury soon after the 1891 census, as Margaret was baptised at the Abbey in September 1893. In 1901 Frank was living with Ellen on Mill Bank and he was baptised at the Abbey on 29 March 1903. Ellen was still living on Mill Bank in 1911 with her elderly parents, Charles and Elizabeth, but she died in October 1914 aged 61.

Frank was educated at the Abbey School and was 'a well-known footballer [as depicted in his photograph], and a respectable hard working young man, in the employ of Messrs. Collins and Godfrey, before leaving Tewkesbury'. Frank had married Mabel Sircombe in 1908 and they had three children: Frank Thomas in 1909, Harold Raymond in 1911 and Bessie in 1915. In 1911 Frank and Mabel were also living on Mill Bank; in 1914 they lost their son, Harold Raymond, at the age of three when he accidentally fell from the nearby Abbey Mill hoist.

Frank's military service started in January 1905 when he briefly joined the Militia. He volunteered in September 1915, initially joining the 11th Battalion of the Gloucesters, a home-

based training reserve unit. He was then posted to the 'Kitchener' 8th (Service) Battalion, part of the 19th (Western) Division, which landed in France on 18 July 1915. The division took part in a number of phases of the *Battles of the Somme* (1 July-18 November 1916). In 1917 the *Register* reported that 'in July last year [Price] was wounded in the hand, whilst engaged in the great push (Somme)'. Frank returned to France in early 1917 at which time he was probably transferred (a common practice after recovery) to the 12th Battalion of the 5th Division.

In the spring of 1917 the Division took part in the *Arras Offensive*, designed to attract German reserves away from the major French *Nivelle Offensive*. Considerable success was achieved in the early stages at Arras but the *Nivelle Offensive* failed, leading to widespread French mutinies. As a result, the British Expeditionary Force was compelled to continue at Arras longer than planned to keep pressure on the German forces. During the *Third Battle of the Scarpe* on 5 May, the Canadians captured the village of Fresnoy but ferocious German counter-attacks inflicted heavy losses on the battalion.

Private Frank Thomas Price was reported as killed in action on 8 May 1917. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated instead on the *Arras Memorial*. His obituary in the *Register* expressed that 'much sympathy is evinced towards the widow, who is left with two young children'. Mabel's brother, **Private Albert Edward Sircombe** [†], served with the South African Brigade and died of wounds on 29 September 1917. Mabel Price remarried to Tom Green, future Town Crier, in 1919.