

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR WILLIAM HENRY PRICE, M.S.M.

12614, 9th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 34 on 19 November 1918

Buried with honour in *Busigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France*; VIII C 19

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Busigny Communal Cemetery Extension



Meritorious Service Medal



Gloucestershire Regiment

WILLIAM HENRY PRICE was born in 1884 in Tirley to William Thomas Price, a self-employed Waterman, and Emma (formerly King) from Tewkesbury. In 1901 William senior was a Hay and Coal Merchant. By 1891 the family, including six boys and one girl, had moved from Gravel Walk to Trinity Street. William Henry married Agnes Elizabeth Hodges in 1906 in Tewkesbury and they had two children: Florence (1906) and Doris (1907). In 1911 the family was living at Mayall's Court; William was then a Platelayer for the Midland Railway Company.

The 1901 Census lists William and Walter Ernest, his younger brother, as serving in the 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, one of its two regular battalions. According to his attestation papers, however, William only managed to enlist on 13 March 1901 at Devonport by overstating his age. He was only 16, not 18 (the minimum age), and was '*Discharged under age*' on 6 May 1901. There is no evidence of further efforts to enlist although his attestation papers refer to prior service in the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. Reserve battalions were responsible for training recruits and absorbing men returning to duty after recovering from medical care or other reasons. He may have returned to the Reserve or even enlisted as a regular when he was old enough.

William's service number indicates that he enlisted in September 1914 as a volunteer in the Gloucestershire Regiment. He was posted to the 9th (Service) Battalion, formed at Bristol in September as part of Kitchener's New Army, and under the command of the 26th Division. The battalion landed in France on 21 September 1915, entitling William to the '*1914-15 Star*'

medal. According to the *Register*, he had been promoted to Sergeant by 24 October 1914 – a clear pointer towards previous military experience. The battalion was in France for two months and did not see any major actions.

In November 1915 the Division embarked for Salonika, and joined the Anglo-French force in Macedonia, to support Serbia against Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria. By then William had been promoted to Company Sergeant Major (the second highest non-commissioned rank). The battalion spent over two years in Salonika; in 1916 they took part in the *Battle of Horseshoe Hill*, and in 1917 the *Battles of Doiran*. However, the harsh climate was the greatest threat and sickness killed far more than enemy fire. On 4 July 1918 the battalion left the Division and returned to France, where it was attached to the 66th Division, finally becoming the Pioneer Battalion to that Division. The battalion was involved in several actions in the campaign known as the '*Last Hundred Days*', which saw the Allies inflict a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the Armistice.

Company Sergeant Major William Henry Price was '*mentioned in despatches*' on 28 November 1917 whilst serving in Salonika. He was also awarded the *Meritorious Service Medal* which was presented to his widow in March 1919. On 19 November 1918, a week after the Armistice, William died of pneumonia, probably after catching influenza in the pandemic. He is buried in *Busigny Cemetery* in France. His brother, **Walter Ernest**, tried to enlist under age (at 14) but became a pre-war regular; the 1911 Census records him as serving in India. He was an Abbey Volunteer and survived the war.