

GUNNER RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW SWEET

835348, 'A' Battery, 210th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

Died aged 21 on 8 October 1918

Buried with honour at *Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery, France*; IX A 15
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey, and in Birmingham



Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery



Royal Field Artillery

RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW SWEET was born in Birmingham in 1897 to George Sweet and Elizabeth Sarah (formerly Bennett), both born in Tewkesbury, as were Richard's four siblings. In the family he was known as '*Birmingham Dick*'. In 1911 the family was living at 81 Ladywood Road, Birmingham; George's occupation was Carpenter and Richard was still at school, although the Census return is annotated with the comment 'just leaving'. By September 1914, Richard's residence is listed as Tewkesbury so the family must have returned to the town and at one time lived at 3 Parkers Court, Barton Street.

Richard enlisted before the war as a Territorial Force volunteer in Birmingham on 20 May 1914 at the age of 17 years and 2 months; he joined the Royal Field Artillery in the 3rd South Midland Brigade. He was 'embodied' (became full-time) on 5 August 1914, in line with general mobilisation, but not posted overseas until 24 May 1916, after he had reached the age of 19.

During 1915 and 1916, Richard was promoted several times, eventually reaching the rank of Acting Sergeant. However, his military career suffered vicissitudes: during the week 15-22 May 1916, he was reduced at his own request to the rank of Acting Bombardier as punishment for going 'absent without leave' for a period of five days. He then applied to revert to the rank of Gunner and had to sign a declaration that he was not doing so in order to avoid a court martial (presumably for going absent without leave). These events were probably linked to the fact that, two days later, Gunner Sweet was sent abroad to serve with a number of units within the

Royal Field Artillery until, on 22 June 1918, he was posted to 'A' Battery, 210th Brigade, one of the artillery brigades in the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division. This division was a pre-war formation of the Territorial Force and was mobilised for full-time war service on 5 August 1914; it was the first Territorial Force Division to move overseas and had seen service in Egypt and Gallipoli before moving to France in 1917.

In October 1918 the Division was part of the Third Army which was in the forefront of the campaign known as '*The Last Hundred Days*' that saw the Allies inflict a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the Armistice. In the first half of the month the Division was engaged in two actions, the *Battle of the Canal du Nord* (27 September-1 October) and the *Pursuit to the Selle* (9 October-12 October).

Gunner Richard Bartholomew Sweet died of wounds on either 8 October or 10 October. The *Record* reported that he suffered '*a penetrating wound to the abdomen and a wound in the right arm. He was very weak ... he sank gradually into an unconscious condition and passed away very quietly.*' It is reasonable to assume that Richard was wounded either in the build-up to the *Pursuit to the Selle* or in the early stages of the battle itself. He was buried in *Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery*, Manancourt in the Somme region.

Richard is also commemorated in the City of Birmingham War Memorial and his name is recorded in a Book of Remembrance housed in the Hall of Memory.