

## PRIVATE FRED THACKER

207425, 2nd/8th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

Died aged 19 on 2 June 1918

Buried with honour at *St. Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery, Robecq*; II B 20

Commemorated in Tewkesbury as a Volunteer in the Abbey



*St. Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery*



*Worcestershire Regiment*

**FRED THACKER** was born in Erdington, Birmingham, in 1899 to Frank William Thacker and Annie Sophia (formerly Dutton). Frank was originally from Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, and Annie had been born in Forthampton. In 1891 the family was living in Folly Gardens and Frank was working as a Merchant's Clerk; the eldest son, Arthur, and three daughters were all born locally in Twyning or Tewkesbury. By 1899 the family had moved to South Road, Erdington, Warwickshire, and had expanded with the addition of three more sons, including Fred, and a daughter. Frank was working as a Clerk at a Cycle Works. By the time of the 1911 Census the family had increased further with another son and daughter and was living at 1 Beakes Road, Smethwick, Birmingham. Frank was described as a Commercial Traveller in the cycle trade; Fred was still at school but his brother Arthur was working as an Accountant.

Fred seems to have enlisted initially in August 1916 as a volunteer in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the age of 17, too young for overseas service. His medal rolls ignore this, only confirming that he served firstly with the Devonshire and then with the Worcestershire Regiment. He was with the 2nd/8th Battalion at the time of his death. It was formed at Worcester in September 1914 as a home service ('second line'), and in August 1915 became the 183rd Infantry Brigade, 61st (2nd South Midland) Division. In 1916, in view of the coming offensive on the Somme, most second-line units were mobilised for overseas service. The 2nd/8th landed in France on 24 May 1916.

In 1918 the 61st Division was involved in the defence against the German Spring Offensive, and in March was involved in the *Battles of the Somme*. The Division fought a successful withdrawal back over the Somme but, by the time it was relieved after fighting all the way back to Amiens, and having been involved in continuous action since August 1917, it was exhausted. The remnants were moved north to what had been a quieter part of the line on the La Bassée Canal near Bethune. Unfortunately it was near to where the Germans launched the second phase of their offensive on 9 April 1918, *Operation Georgette* (known to the British as the *Battles of the Lys*).

At the close of these battles at the end of April, the 2nd/8th Worcesters were in the area south of the River Lys in the Robecq sector; here they remained until 11 July 1918, alternating between the front line, support and reserve. Apart from a small trench raid at the end of May nothing of note happened during this period, although 10 men were reported killed.

**Private Fred Thacker** must have been one of those casualties as he was recorded as killed in action on 2 June 1918; his body was recovered and he is buried in *St. Venant-Robecq Road British Cemetery* in Robecq, France. As Fred was not a Tewkesbury man, his name is not included on the Cross but he is commemorated as a Volunteer in the Abbey. He is also commemorated on the Birmingham Roll of Honour.

Fred's brother, **Corporal Arthur Thacker** [†] of the Lancashire Fusiliers, was killed on 22 October 1917 and is commemorated on the *Tyne Cot Memorial* in Belgium.