

GUARDSMAN JOHN WILLIAM TIMMS

29066, 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards

Died aged 20 on 28 March 1918

Remembered with honour at *Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery*; Bay 1

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Arras Memorial



Grenadier Guards

JOHN WILLIAM TIMMS was not a Tewkesburian but he worked here before the war and his sister, Ellen, married into a well-known local family. He was born in 1898 at Stow-on-the-Wold, one of nine children of John Timms, a Railway Carrier's Labourer, and Sarah Jane (formerly Fisher). John senior was born in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, and Sarah came from Stow. John William, known as Jack on the 1911 Census, was one of twin boys; his brother was Cecil Edward. John senior died in September 1901 at the age of 33. Sarah remained in Stow and in 1911 was living in Sheep Street, working as a Charwoman. Jack's occupation was given as a 'Fishmonger between school hours'! His obituary commented that he had worked for Haywards, the Cutlers, in the High Street, and that he was the brother-in-law of the late **CSM Charles H. Attwood** [†] of the Gloucestershire Regiment, killed in action in August 1917.

In 1917 Jack joined the 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, most likely as a conscript as he had reached the age of 18 the previous year. His service number indicates that he was called up in February 1917, and he would have been sent to France later in the year as part of a replacement draft. His battalion was a pre-war regular battalion, originally part of the 4th (Guards) Brigade, 2nd Division, although it was later transferred to the 1st Guards Brigade, Guards Division. The battalion was part of the original British Expeditionary Force and landed in France on 20 August 1914; it served in France and Flanders throughout the war, taking part in most of the major battles and campaigns on the Western Front.

Guardsman John William Timms was

reported to have been wounded sometime before 10 November 1917 but he recovered from his wounds and returned to duty. He was subsequently killed in action on 28 March 1918, in the early stages of the British Army's defence against the German Spring Offensive (*Kaiserschlacht* or Kaiser's Battle). On that day the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards, as part of the Third Army, fought in the *First Battle of Arras 1918* (one of the battles known to the British as the *First Battles of the Somme* (21 March-4 July)). John's body was not recovered or identified and he is commemorated on the *Arras Memorial to the Missing*, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery.

In May 1918, the *Record* reported an '*unfounded rumour*', which was said to be '*absolutely incorrect*' – presumably that he was still alive, even though it had already been reported that he had died of wounds (in reality, he was probably killed in action). John's twin brother, Cecil Edward, and his elder brother, Horace John, also served in the war but they both survived. Cecil enlisted in 1916 but was not mobilised until January 1917 when he was posted to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and sent to Egypt, where he served for the rest of the war. He was demobilised in February 1920 and married Elsie M. Cumberlin in Tewkesbury in 1923. Horace was in Uckfield, Sussex, on the outbreak of war and enlisted in August 1914 in the Royal Sussex Regiment. He went to France in 1915 and to Italy two years later; he was demobilised in February 1919 but died in Tewkesbury in 1921. None of the family is buried in Tewkesbury. After the war their mother Sarah moved to Abingdon, Berkshire.