

Private Percy Reginald James Ward – 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, No. 3/7689



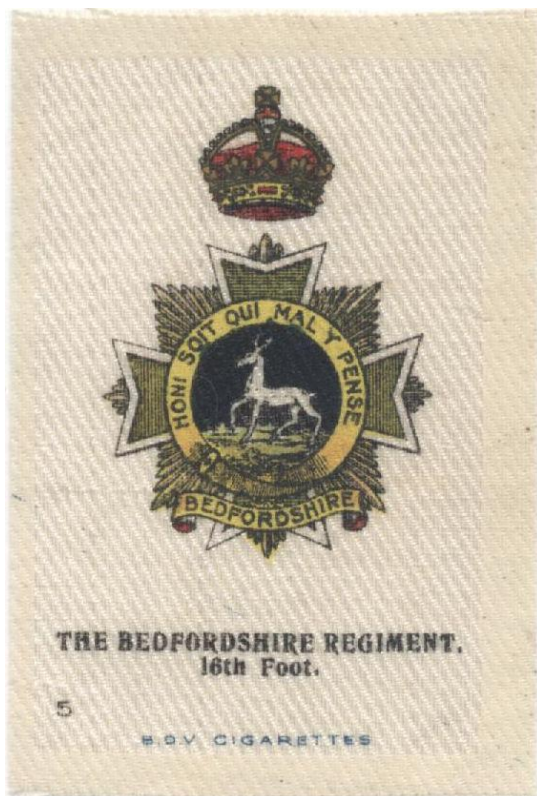
Percy Reginald James Ward was born in Lavendon in early 1898. His parents were James Ward and Elizabeth Holmes who married in 1892. Percy was one of eight children, although by 1911 three of them had already died. George was the eldest child, Percy second eldest and Alfred, Louisa and Florence were all younger. At that time, Percy was working as a Farm Labourer (at age 13), as was his brother George (age 17) and also father James. The family lived in Olney Road, two doors along from the then Wesleyan Chapel where Tustings factory is now situated.

Before long Percy enlisted with the Bedfordshire Regiment in Bedford town. He joined the 3rd Battalion which was a reserve training unit originally based at Bedford. However within a few days of the beginning of the war the Battalion moved to Felixstowe, manning the Harwich Garrison to defend the coastline. The Battalion remained in the UK throughout the war but also provided drafts for



Above: A corner of the New Cemetery at Felixstowe where the military burials are located.

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the front line Battalions. Thus, like many raw recruits of a relatively young age Percy found himself in the training battalion at Felixstowe ahead of a likely posting to the front line.

Sadly, Percy died during this period of training on 4 May 1915 whilst in camp with his Battalion. His death certificate records that he was *"A Private in the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment stationed at Felixstowe. Formerly a Farm Labourer of Lavendon."*

Although Percy's age is shown on the death certificate as 18 years, in reality he was little more than 17 years old. He is buried at the New Cemetery in Felixstowe together with some 63 other WW1 service personnel.

The base of Percy's gravestone is inscribed:

**"For Ever in our Thoughts
from his Loving
Father and Mother."**

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### Postscript:

Percy's elder brother, George William Ward, was more fortunate. He joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment and saw various actions on the Western Front early in the war, as evidenced by his entitlement to the 1914-15 Star. He returned to Lavendon at the end of the war and his service is described in the following account from the National Roll:

**WARD, G. W., Private, 7th Northants. Regiment.**  
Volunteering in September 1914, he proceeded to France after a period of training, and was in action at the Battles of Loos, the Somme, Arras and Cambrai. He also did duty in connection with the transport of food and ammunition to forward areas and rendered valuable services during the Retreat and Advance of 1918. Demobilised in March 1919, he holds the 1914-15 Star, and the General Service and Victory Medals.  
Olney Road, Lavendon, Bucks. Z2288.

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