

John William Robinson

67405, The Queens(Royal West Surrey Regiment). KIA 21 September 1918 aged 19

John was born in 1899 in Warboys, the son of Frank and Frances (nee Reed). She was the sister of **Charles Reed** on the War Memorial. John was the third of their 7 children and a cousin of the **Baldock brothers**. He was also a cousin of **Herbert King Falconer** a casualty of WW2.

The family lived in Popes Lane, Little End and then Ramsey Road, Warboys. Frank worked as a labourer both on a farm and in the brickyard.

When John went to war he joined the 1st Battalion of the Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment which was part of the 19th Brigade and the 33rd Division serving in France.

On 18th September 1918, the Battalion was at Manancourt and on the next day moved to the front line where they occupied a series of trenches west of Villers Guislain and east of Epehy. On 20th September the order was received that they would attack the next day. They spent a quiet night and it was raining. Battle orders for the day were detailed and comprehensive but as the Division's history explains,

“It was apparent from the outset that the taskwould be peculiarly difficult. (The Division) was thrown into battle with no chance of surprise or with a carefully prepared artillery barrage.”

The attack was launched at dawn against the Alpine Corps who had a reputation for good fighting. German machine gunners and snipers inflicted heavy losses on our troops and the day was one of attack and counter attack. Part of the terrain was a sunken road called “Gloucester Road” Again the Division's history explains,

“Our own men, mostly young, appeared to have lost their mastery over the rifle and although armed with bomb and bayonet were mercilessly mown down by machine gun fire or picked off man by man by snipers. Gloucester Road was choked with dead, Germans showing bayonet wounds and our men in most cases having been shot stone dead through the head. The time was one of the greatest strain on all ranks especially on the Regiments in the 19th Infantry Brigade.

John died on that day aged 19 and is buried in Pigeon Ravine Cemetery Epehy with 14 comrades from his Battalion who also died then. This cemetery is one of a number made in that area by the 33rd Division's Burial Officer to bury casualties from 21st September. For his headstone his parents chose the words;

UNTIL THE DAY BREAKS AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY

His parents continued to live in Warboys. Frank made a loan (believed to be £200) to the Women's Institute for their new hall in George Lane which he opened in 1929. Frances died in 1937 aged 67 and Frank, aged 76, in 1947.

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