

# Geoffrey Ernest Tudor

Private

3513586

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Manchester Regiment



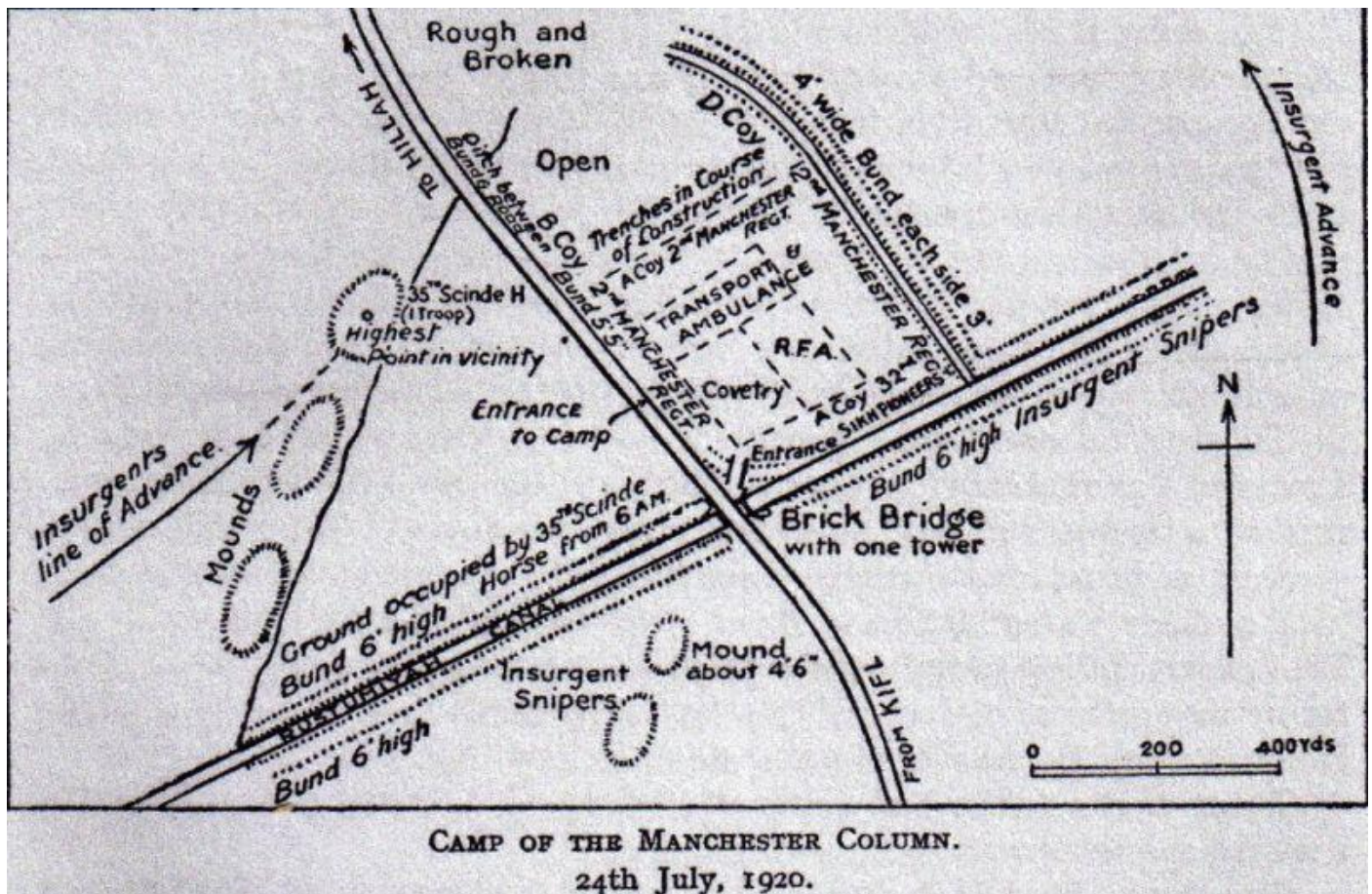
For many servicemen the armistice of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 was not the end of the fighting. The guns may have fallen silent on the Western Front but elsewhere the fighting continued and men were still dying. Such was the case for Geoffrey Ernest Tudor whose war continued until his death in the middle east on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1920. Ernest, as he preferred to be known, was born in Kington in 1897, the fifth child born to William and Harriet Tudor. William and Harriet were both Kington born and bred and were married in Kington parish church, St. Marys, in 1887. A couple of years later their first child Edith arrived. Edith was followed by Albert (1891), Harold (1893), Lillian Amelia (1895), and the focus of this biography Geoffrey Ernest in 1897. Sadly, little Lillian died while still an infant, aged just one year old. William Tudor was a mason and in 1901 the family were living at 21 Sunset but by 1911 had moved slightly closer to the town centre, at 21 Victoria Road. Ernest's preferred name appears on Kington War Memorial but also on Kington Boys' School role of honour scroll. This beautiful document was designed and executed by Miss Lois Maxwell, a member of school staff, and provides a unique and respectful memorial to those "Old Boys who went to the Great War and did not return", thirty-nine in total. All three services are represented and down the sides Miss Maxwell included the insignia of all the regiments the boys had served in.



Sadly, few of Ernest's military records survive but from those that do, a reasonable insight into his military career can be revealed. Ernest had joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Manchester Regiment as Private 88606 Tudor. When is unclear but his service number would suggest it was at the latter end of the war. The second battalion had served on the Western Front throughout the war but in 1919 were sent to India.

Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq, had been a source of conflict throughout the war but on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918 the Armistice of Mudros was signed between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire. The armistice should have brought conflict in the region to a halt and resulted in the British reducing its military footprint in the region as soldiers were returned to British shores. The League of Nations was established on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1920, following the Paris Peace Conference which formally ended the First World War. Initially, the newly formed League of Nations awarded Mesopotamia to Britain until such times as a formal administration in the region could be organised. The British administration in India was considered an excellent model for Mesopotamian rule, unsurprisingly local Arabs found this abhorrent and resented being under foreign rule, tensions started to grow. One of the prerequisites of the armistice was that all current positions should be observed. However, keen to secure oil supplies from the region, Britain did not respect the armistice and marched into the oil rich fields of Mosul Province. Such flagrant abuse of the armistice created an international incident. Sunni and Shia clerics organised what became known as the Arab Rebellion, an insurrection against British Rule. Due to the reduction of military forces in Mesopotamia, those who remained were ill prepared for the rebellion. As a result, more troops were shipped back into the area, the India based 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Manchester Regiment being one such. The regiment were to be billeted at Hillah, south of Baghdad.

An incident occurred on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1920 when insurgents attacked Kifi station, some thirty-two miles south of Baghdad. The local Political Officer requested a show of force and three companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Manchester Regiment were despatched to restore order. The Manchester's were accompanied by Royal Field Artillery units, two squadrons of the 35<sup>th</sup> Scinde Horse, a company of Sikh Pioneers and the 24<sup>th</sup> Combined Field Ambulance, the whole being called the Manchester Column. Conditions were very hot and water was in short supply, the men suffered terribly. The attached medical officer recommended a halt in the advance to Kifi station so the men could recover. This prudent recommendation halted the column and led to a camp being established at the Rustumiva Canal. Meanwhile, the 35<sup>th</sup> Scinde Horse were sent ahead to reconnoitre Kifi station. They returned with the alarming intelligence that 10,000 insurgents were advancing on the Manchester Column. This figure was in fact grossly exaggerated, the actual number being closer to 3000. Artillery was used to halt the advance, none-the-less some insurgents were able to get to within 150 yards of the Manchester Column's defensive compound. The great fear was the Column would be surrounded and hence isolated from the bulk of the allied forces in Hillah, the Political Officer advised a retreat. As the column embarked on an organised retreated back towards Hillah, the insurgents watched and waited. The Column started out for Hillah at 20:40, however, what started as an orderly retreat was thrown into disarray when horses from the transport teams



bolted and stampeded through the column. Any hope of an organised withdrawal was shattered, the insurgents took full advantage of the disarray and attacked. Due to the chaotic nature of the fighting many Manchester's got lost in the darkness and fell into the hands of the Arab insurgents. Many were killed at the time while some were kept as prisoners only to be killed at a later date. But, the irresistible lure of looting the abandoned transports of weapons was too much for the insurgents and as they set about acquiring booty many of the Manchester Column were able to escape back to Hillah. 20 men were killed in the attack, 60 wounded and some 318 were recorded as missing. Many of the missing had been captured, later 160 were released but the rest perished at the hands of the Arab insurgents, the final death toll being 180. History records that 100 of the Manchester's were taken to Najaf where they were later executed. The Arab Rebellion was only brought under control with a massive influx of British and Indian troops. The last insurgency action took place in February 1921.

What happened to Ernest is unclear but news of him being missing was conveyed to the people of Kington in July 1920. Sadly, he was not one of the fortunate prisoners released by the insurgents and confirmation of his death was reported in the 9th April 1921 edition of the Kington Times. Kington Memorial was dedicated on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1921, Ernest's name was too late to be included on the memorial but was added at a later date. Those involved in the Mesopotamian Arab Rebellion between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> November 1920, were awarded a General Service Medal with IRAQ clasp. Ernest Tudor was posthumously awarded his on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1924. He was also awarded the Victory and British War Medals. Ernest is recorded as having died on **24<sup>th</sup> July 1920**. His final military account was made up in Basra and on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1920 his father received

£36 16s 2d. This was followed a year later with a further 9s 6d. Ernest's mother, Harriet, made a pension claim which was granted at the rate of 5/- per week from 5<sup>th</sup> October 1920.



*Original location of Basra Memorial on the quay of Maqil naval dockyard*

The name of Geoffrey Ernest Tudor is recorded on the Basra Memorial, panels 31 and 64. This huge memorial commemorates the deaths of 40641 members of commonwealth forces who died during operations in Mesopotamia between autumn 1914 and August 1921 and whose burial sites are unknown. Originally the memorial was located on the main quay of Maqil naval dockyard on the west bank of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway about five miles north of Basra. However, due to sensitivities, and by Presidential decree, in 1997 the memorial was moved in its entirety, an impressive logistical and engineering feat, twenty miles along the road to Nasiriyah.



*Basra Memorial now stands in glorious isolation in the Iraqi desert*

The distress caused by the drip feed of information about Ernest's fate can only be imagined. But life for the Tudor family continued. Both Ernest's older brothers served with the colours. Albert Tudor served with the Herefordshire Regiment having attested in April 1908, well before the war, and was fully embodied on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1914. As an experienced soldier he made Sergeant and served with the Herefords during their campaign at Gallipoli, where he was wounded and spent time in hospital in Egypt. Albert was discharged service on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1916 having served for eight years, his period of engagement concluded. Harold Tudor also served with the Herefordshire Regiment, having enlisted on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1910. He was discharged from military service on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1915, being medically unfit for further service. The family continued to live at 21 Victoria Road, Kington. Coincidentally both William and Harriet shared the same birthday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, William 1862, Harriet 1860. William is recorded as having died in Hereford in the first quarter of 1948, he was 85. Sadly, Harriet did not survive him long but died just a couple of months later in Kington, she was 87.

Ernest may not have died during the war but he did die serving his country. His sacrifice must never be forgotten, his memory never allowed to fade.



Biography researched and produced by  
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