

# Reginald Thomas Mainwaring

Private

1382

1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment



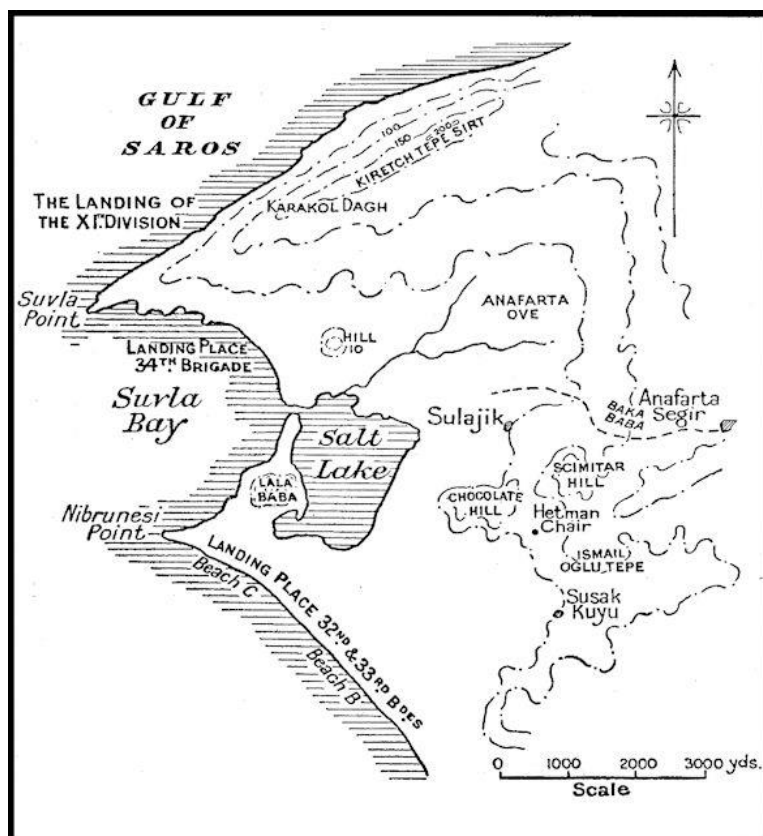
Reginald Thomas Mainwaring (Reggie) was born in 1896 in Newport, South Wales. He was the oldest of four children born to Thomas and Mary Annie Mainwaring. Thomas was employed as a threshing machine driver and appears to have travelled the countryside to where work was available. In 1901 the family lived at Pembers Oak near Kingswood and later were to move down into the town living at 3 Mill Street. Reggie went to Kington Boys School and in the 1911 census, aged fourteen, was employed as an Ironmongers Porter, this might strongly lead us to believe he worked for the Meredith family at their ironmongery business in the High Street.

Sadly Reggie's service records do not survive but from his low service number it would appear he enlisted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Herefordshire Regiment fairly early in the conflict. He signed up in Kington and became Private, 1382, Mainwaring. By consulting the very excellent *Manu Forti, History of the Herefordshire Regiment 1860 - 1967*, by Lieutenant Colonel T.J.B.Hill, we discover that in 1914 the regiment were training around the country and served as a home defence regiment in Pembroke Dock,

Oswestry, Northampton, Colchester and Rusden. Considered fully trained and ready for overseas service on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1915 the regiment embarked aboard the SS Euripides at Devonport, Plymouth and sailed to join the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. The ultimate destination of the battalion was kept a secret but the men on Euripides had no doubt where they were heading, Gallipoli.



The Gallipoli campaign of 1915 was fought in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war and to open a supply route through the Dardanelles into the Black Sea in order to support the beleaguered Russians. The Allies had originally landed on the peninsula on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April 1915 but the expected advance up the peninsulas was soon bogged down with bitter trench warfare ensuing. To relieve the stalemate a plan was devised to land troops at Suvla Bay on the north side of the peninsula. This new assault was designed to join up with the original assault and then for the whole to break the stalemate and to advance up the peninsula. At 7:20am on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1915 the 1/1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment landed on a beach just below Nibrunesi Point in Suvla Bay. Communications between the invading forces was poor, the distribution of Turkish forces was unknown and the terrain was appalling and heat oppressive. The regiment soon became disorientated but fought on gallantly. Sir Ian Hamilton, the Commander



in Chief of the landings, later wrote. "Some of the units which took part in this engagement acquitted themselves very bravely". The Divisional Commander spoke with appreciation of one freshly landed battalion of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, a Hereford battalion, presumably the 1/1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment, "which attacked with impetuosity and courage between Hetman Chair and Kaslar Chair, about Asmak Dere, on the extreme right of the line". For their part in the landings at Suvla Bay on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1915 the regiment was mentioned in dispatches and forever immortalised in a painting by Charles Dixon which for many years hung on the wall of the stairway in the

Shire Hall, Hereford. This painting is now in the safe hands of the regimental museum and is located in the drill hall of the Herefordshire Cadet Corps where young recruits can be inspired by their forebears.



Herefordshire Regiment Landing at Suvla Bay, 9th August 1915

Reggie, along with many other Herefordshire men, landed at Suvla Bay on the 9th of August 1915. As we know the landing was not a great success and communications between Regiments and battalions poor. In the confusion of that day it appears Reggie went missing, only later was it discovered that he had in fact been taken prisoner by the Turks. A letter published in the Kington Times, penned by a comrade, Private A. J. Lewis, refers to the plight of Reg.

### **Kington Men at the Dardanelles**

*Private A. J. Lewis of 'A' Company, 1st Herefordshire Regiment, writing from the Dardanelles August 25th, to his mother, who lives in Burton Lane, Kington, says, "I expect you have been looking forward to a letter for a long time but really we have had no time for anything. Times are very different now. It's hard luck when you have to give 2s 6d for a packet of Woodbines. I have given 1s. for half a pint of water. Bert Dowling and Ted Hamlet are wounded. Reg Mainwaring has been missing from the first day. Well mother, I hope I have the good luck to come home to you and the kiddies again. I am living in the hopes of being home for Christmas. If I live I want to spend a few days at Irchester again. We have had some very heavy thunderstorms here. The rain is much heavier than it is in England.*

Another letter from a Harry Lister of Presteigne informs that he too had been taken prisoner. He states he was the only prisoner from Presteigne but a further six prisoners were from Kington. In the 18<sup>th</sup> September edition of the Kington Times a short line



from Reg to his mother was published. The paper simply stated, *Private R. Mainwaring of the 1st Herefords has written to his mother at Kington saying that he is a prisoner in the hands of the Turks, but is being treated well.* No further evidence of Reggie's captivity nor his wellbeing was forthcoming at that time. However, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> February edition of the Kington Times the following statement was issued.

### **Kington Territorials Death**

*Information has been received that Private R. Mainwaring of Kington, who was taken prisoner after the landing of the Herefordshire Regiment at Suvla Bay, has died in Turkey from malarial fever whilst a prisoner of war.*

Reggie had died in captivity on the **5th November 1916**, it is believed somewhere on the Gallipoli Peninsula. By this date the Gallipoli campaign had collapsed and the allied troops had been removed from the peninsula. The Herefordshire Regiment were by then fighting in Egypt and perhaps Reggie knew his pals had gone. We can only imagine how this affected him. Where he was originally buried is unknown but we do know that he now lays at rest at Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery, grave reference XXI.B.6. In 1914 Baghdad was the headquarters of the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia. It was a



**Entrance to Bahgdad 'North Gate' War Cemetery**

key objective of the Indian Expeditionary Force and finally fell in March 1917. The cemetery was started shortly after and many burials were brought into the cemetery from outlying battlefields and cemeteries. Many deceased Turkish prisoners of war have now been moved into the North Gate Cemetery.

Official records show that sometime after Reggie's death the family appear to have moved from Kington and contact was made at 33 Cornwall Street, Hereford. Reggie's financial effects were forwarded to Annie, his mother, at Cornwall Street. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1917, £14 17s 3d was passed to her with a further £10, War Gratuity on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1919. After the war Reginald Thomas Mainwaring was posthumously awarded the 1915 Star, British War and Victory medals. They too were dispatched to and received by his grieving mother. Reggie's war had lasted one day, but his captivity lasted for the rest of this life.



Researched and developed by Mark Wheatland