

# Frederick James Morgan

Private

3822

1<sup>st</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment

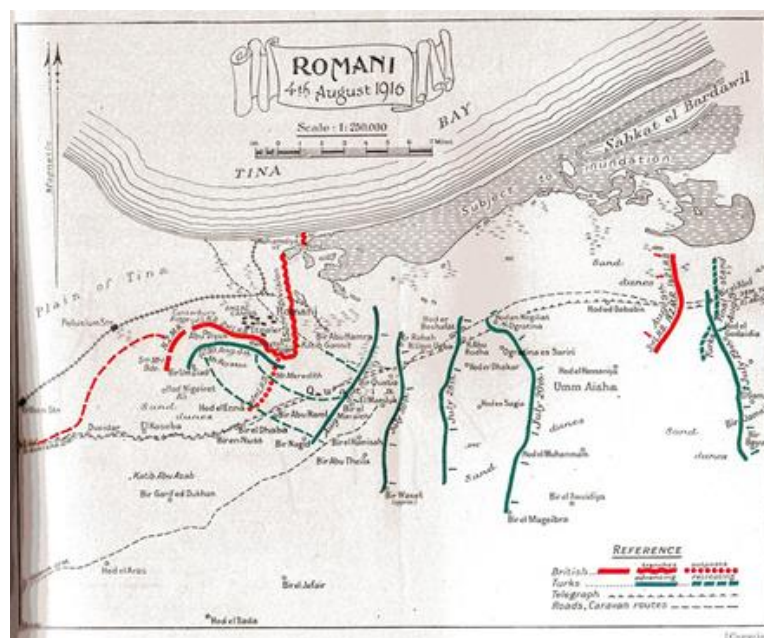


Frederick was born in Kington towards the end of 1896. He was the only son of Frederick Morgan, a tailor from Pembridge. Frederick senior had married Elizabeth Price, a Lyonshall girl, in 1894. Their first child, Elizabeth Florence was born the following year with Fred junior arriving toward the end of 1896. Two further girls were born, Rose Ellen in 1898 and Grace Morgan in 1900. At the time of Fred's birth the family were living at 1 Bores Yard at the bottom of Church Street. Young Fred was educated at Kington Boys School at Gravel Hill and by 2nd April 1911, the date of the 1911 census, he was working at the Post Office as a messenger, aged just 14. In this census we find Frederick had moved the family to Engine Cottage in Crooked Well. At some point Fred junior moved jobs and became a porter for the Great Western Railway at Kington Station. When war came in August 1914, Fred answered Lord Kitchener's call to arms and at the end of 1914 enlisted into 'D' Company of the 1<sup>st</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment, as Private 3822 Morgan. This information comes from the Kington Times and we find that a whole raft of Kington men volunteered at that time, were inoculated and pronounced fit for the adventure of Foreign Service.



When the Herefordshire Regiment had landed at Gallipoli in August 1915 they were 750 strong, but during the conflict their numbers were decimated. When the Herefordshire Regiment was withdrawn from the beaches of Gallipoli on 11th December 1915, there were just 100, weary, dirty, disillusioned men left. They were evacuated to Alexandria in Egypt arriving on the 22nd of December, their final destination being Wardan, some 40 miles north of Cairo. While at Wardan they were able to recuperate and regroup with new drafts of men arriving all the time to replenish their depleted numbers. The Kington Times reports that Frederick James Morgan was in one of those drafts which left home shores in March 1916. The regiment were to be based in Wardan for six months and formed part of the Suez Canal Defence Force.

By consulting the excellent *Manu Forti, a History of the Herefordshire Regiment*, by Lieutenant-Colonel T.J.B. Hill, we are able to discover what happened during the next phase of the Herefordshire's World War One efforts. On the 3rd of June 1916 the Battalion were paraded at Abdin Palace in Cairo on the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty King George V. Following this they went into intensive training culminating at the end of June with divisional exercises. By the 21st of June the battalion were fully worked up and ready to re-join the fray. They were moved by train to Moascar where the division was gathered ready to face an Ottoman/German force approaching from the east. Throughout July Turkish and German troops advanced westwards through the Sinai desert converging on Oghratina. From here they began to press the Mediterranean town of Romani just 23 miles east of the Suez Canal. It was clear they intended to fight and so, to counter the enemy aggression, allied forces were moved forward from the Suez Canal. On the 19th of July the Herefords were entrained to Kantara and on the 22nd the whole Brigade, including the 1st Herefordshire Regiment, again entrained to Romani and prepared to confront the advancing enemy. The 1st Herefordshire Battalion were met by officers of the 52nd Division who split the battalion into garrisons for five posts, each containing about 150 men. The end of July was spent strengthening and improving these garrison posts, ready to repel the enemy. They remained in these positions until the 4th of August, on which day the Battle of Romani began.



The five garrisons were numbered 6, 7, 7a, 8 and 9 with 6 being on the extreme right of the British defensive line. Post number 6 was garrisoned by 'D' company, predominantly the men of Kington. At 3.30am on the 4th the Turks started firing at No. 6 garrison and planes began bombing the post. It was clear their objective was to encircle and envelop the extreme right of the line. About 160 bombs were dropped on the post but at that time no casualties were reported. The Turks then started to shell the post with heavy artillery and to advance infantry. No. 6 post was the only post held by the Herefords to come under attack by Turkish forces. With the honour of the regiment at stake, whenever the enemy came into range, they fired upon and repelled the enemy advances. No direct attacks were made on the post but later in the morning the post again came under heavy bombardment by enemy 6" guns. The Turks continued to bombard the garrison throughout the afternoon but with little effect and at no time did they make a concerted infantry advance. Each time the enemy threatened they were forced back by defensive fire. Many accounts of the battle appeared in The Hereford Times, 26<sup>th</sup> August edition, all telling of the ferocity of the assault sustained by 'D' company. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August one officer wrote of his experiences of the previous day and of his pride for the men of Hereford.

*'That's your "Whitefaced Hereford", with a heart as red as the setting sun'. He continued, 'The colonel came up and spoke to the men, thanking them for what they had done, and TOLD THEM THEY WERE ALL HEROES'.*

Another officer wrote,

*'I have been in it. Unfortunately the Turks big guns, 6" H.E. took it into their heads to wipe out Captain C's post, and for just over 24 hours they dropped shell after shell in and around the place. From where we were, about 100 yards away, it seemed as if nobody could be alive at all. The explosions were terrific and deafening, clouds of smoke obliterated the place for a short while each time'.*



Kantara War Memorial Cemetery

Sixteen men were killed during the bombardment and Fred Morgan was one of them. After the bombardment, eighty nine shell craters were counted inside the post, this gives some indication of the ferocity of the assault. The Turkish artillery did its worse on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1916 but the British line, and particularly the men of 'D' company, Herefordshire Regiment, held their ground. The following day the British counter attacked killing many Turks and taking some 4000 prisoners.

Frederick Morgan was 'killed in action' during the Battle of Romani on the 4th of August 1916, aged just 19. He is buried at the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery, grave reference E116, on the eastern side of the Suez Canal some 30 miles from Port Said. Kantara was a major military base and hospital facility for the area and was an important point in the defence of the Suez Canal against the Turkish Army. For his bravery and endurance in unimaginable circumstances, Fred was awarded the Victory and British War medals.

Sadly, as was repeated so often during the conflict, a mother and father lost their only son to a war fought in a land far, far from his home soil. Fred's father continued working in Kington as a tailor and the Kington Times records his death in 1933. His mother Elizabeth, no doubt devastated by her only son's death, also survived into old age.

