



## GEORGE TUCKER

**Lance Cpl. 5261, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment**

**Died of wounds on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 1914, Bailleul, France**

Not one of George Tucker's two brothers and three surviving sisters was born in the same place, which says much for his father's restlessness before he finally settled down in Pirbright. John Tucker (*right*) was born in 1851 at Blackborough in Devon, married Eliza Salter in 1876 in that county and their first child, William, was also born there, but when George was born in 1879 the family had moved to Laleham in Middlesex and again to Datchet by the time of the 1881 census, John then being a poultry dealer. In 1891 he was a butcher at Broadwater, Worthing, with two more children, one born at Slindon, Sussex and the other at Worthing. Daisy, the last, was born at Chobham in 1894. Three years later John had become a farmer when the family came to Springfield Farm, Pirbright, at the foot of Hasle Acre Hill, off Mill Lane.



We know from George Tucker's medals (*see photo later*) that he was in the Second Boer War in 1901 and 1902 in the West Yorkshire Regiment. The clasps show that he was in the Transvaal, the Battle of Tugela Heights and at the Relief of Ladysmith, which caused such wild rejoicing in Britain at the time. Whether he served just for the duration or signed on for a short service engagement is unknown, as his service record has not survived. However, by early 1911 he is helping his father at Rails Farm, at the very farthest end of Mill Lane, which John rented from 1905 from Henry Halsey. The 31 year old George would have been



courting Eva Caroline Etherington at the time, a pretty 19 year old from Slyfield Green, near Guildford, as they were married on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1911 at Stoke Parish Church.

*Above – Rails Farm in 1906*

*Right – George, Eva and Winnie at Rails Farm Cottage c1912*



The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Prince of Wales' Own, (West Yorkshire Regiment) landed in France on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1914. A mere nine days later, out of the original 959 other ranks, barely a quarter, just 250, were left, a testament to the bitter fighting at the onset of the war; therefore the need for replacements had become desperate. George Tucker had re-enlisted at Aldershot, probably in August, before being hurriedly equipped and sent to France, arriving on September 20<sup>th</sup> and probably joining the regiment on the Aisne just before it was sent north (20 men to a bus, records the War Diary) to the Franco-Belgian border at Hazebrouck, an important railhead about 15 miles south west of Ypres ('Wipers' to the Tommies). There they harried the German retreat south and eastwards to defensive positions east of Ypres, a bulge known as the Salient, to be the scene of bitter fighting and countless deaths throughout the rest of the war.

What became the First Battle of Ypres started when Germany, sensing her opportunity to break out to the Channel ports was slipping away, flung untrained volunteers into mass attacks, starting on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Here are two contemporary descriptions :-

*"A great grey mass of humanity was charging, running for all God would let them, straight on to us not 50 yards off..."*

*"... we simply mowed them down, our fire was terrific during this time, the enemy were simply running into death.....very few got back as far as we could make out"*



*British trenches near Armentieres*

5 p.m. as "very precarious". Casualties on the 20th, however, were relatively light, with 2 killed and 34 wounded, but there were

42 more wounded up to October 28<sup>th</sup>, by which time the British line had been forced back almost two miles to lower ground. George Tucker would almost certainly have been one of the wounded during that time and been evacuated, first to a Regimental Aid Post, then to an Advanced Dressing Station and finally some miles back to one of the many Casualty Clearing Stations at Bailleul, where he died on October 28<sup>th</sup> and was buried at Bailleul Community Cemetery.



*Moving wounded at a Bailleul Casualty Clearing Station.*



*Alfred Fry marries Eva Tucker,  
1916 Pirbright*

For Eva Carrie, a 21 year old widow with two young children and a tiny war widow's pension, life would have suddenly become difficult. Salvation came with Alfred George Fry, a 31 year old bachelor farmer from Stanford Farm, who married her in July 1916 (*photo left*) and the couple then went on to have five children, first at Stanford, then Vines Farm, near Springfield Farm, where John and Eliza Tucker had first lived in Pirbright. Alfred and Carrie Fry brought up the two Tucker girls with their own family. Winifred married a local man, Jack Avenell, a milkman for Fred Cherryman at Causeway Farm. Sheila Tingay, their late daughter, kindly allowed us to copy these family photos. Win's sister Bessie married Fred Bayliss, who had a woodyard at Stanford.



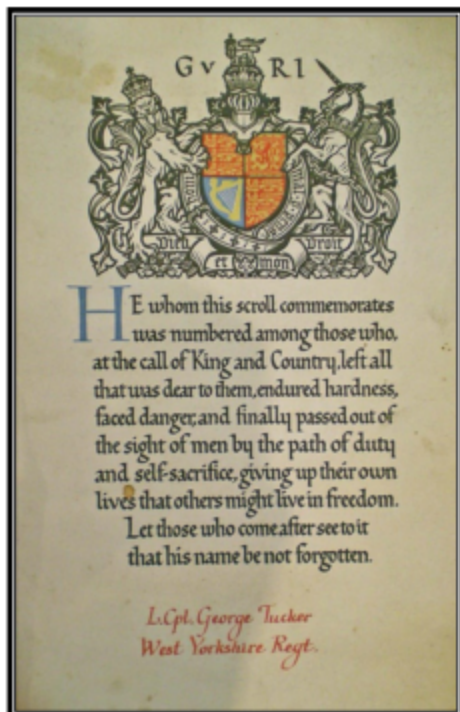
*Tucker & Fry children  
at Vines Farm c1929*



*Winifred Tucker*



*Bessie Tucker*



**George Tucker's medals**

Top l & r - Queen's South Africa Medal

Top centre - 1914 Star

Bottom - Victory and British Medals