

ERNEST RICHARD DRING (1897-1903)



Date of Birth	5 August 1887
School Information	None
Career Information	Corn Merchant
Date Of Death	22 September 1918
Cause of Death	Killed in action
Location	Iran
Cemetery	Tehran Memorial, Iran Panel 4 Column 1
Rank	Private
Branch of Service	7 th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment

Sadly we have not yet been able to obtain a photo of his grave in Tehran

The following has been written by John Haygarth as part of his work written about the men who died in The Great War, and whose names are inscribed on Framlingham War Memorial.

Ernest, who was born in 1888, attended Framlingham College. He was in Scarlet House. He was the eldest son of Richard & Ellen Betsy Dring who lived at Boundary Farm, Framlingham. On the 16th, 23rd, & 30th, November 1913 the Banns of marriage were read at St. Michael's Church, Framlingham for Ernest and his fiancée Gladys Molly Affleck of Haverhill. They married in the following month. Their only son, Richard, was born on 21st. August 1915 and baptized at St. Michael's, and the family lived in Station Road.

Ernest worked in West Suffolk before his marriage for a firm of corn and seed merchants. After he returned to Framlingham he quickly built up a large egg collecting agency for Messrs. Sainsbury which handled some millions of eggs annually. He also dealt in pigs.

War service was to take Ernest away from this enterprise. He sent letters home from Rugeley Camp, Staffordshire where the North Staffs. were in training, in the early summer of 1917. In July he was at a Northumberland Camp for further training. He believed he would be sent to France but orders came for him to join the 7th. North Staffs., who were in Mesopotamia - the land between the Rivers Tigris & Euphrates.

The Battalion had been in the East for most of the war fighting Turkish forces. In September 1917 the Battalion's strength was 900 and the men were experiencing quiet spell training for further conflict. They were issued with steel helmets in November 1917 but could only wear them until April when it became too hot. Ernest was in "B" Company, No. 6 Platoon.

Christmas was spent in tents at Abu Tamar. A football tournament was played on Christmas Day followed by songs around the camp fire. Ernest sent a Battalion Christmas card to the family in Framlingham and he wrote a letter to his mother, whose birthday was on 1st. January, assuring her that he was well.

In April the 7th. North Staffs. moved to Abu Saida on the River Diyala. The temperatures were extremely high here but the men could cool off in the river. Then came intelligence of problems further east and in July the 39th. Brigade were under orders to move quickly into Persia. Ernest's Battalion was to lead. The soldiers were allowed the basic minimum equipment, such as one blanket per man, and on the 10th. July 1918 they entrained in Ruz. Once there, they loaded themselves and their limited rations onto trucks and drove to the Kurdaruz Pass.

They were climbing all the while over mountain and pass for a number of days. News of Turkish troop movements and those of a German Division disturbed plans and it was decided to try and reach Baku on the West coast of the Caspian Sea, which lay open to Turkish invasion.

The Battalion had crossed over 400 miles of inhospitable terrain by truck and also marched 140 miles. The last leg was by sea. The transport ships sailed into Baku harbour in August.

The British Army had been invited there by the ruling council but the decision was not unanimous and the town was seething with rumour of armed uprising. Baku was an important centre of the oil industry filled at the time with Tartars, Russians, Cossacks and Armenians, most of who were armed to the teeth. The Turks were at the gates. There was clearly a problem of food supply as Ernest wrote home that although he was well, he was very hungry. The water pipe was later cut by the enemy.

The North Staffs. members of the Dunsterforce, made their defensive preparations with little help from the local militias. A few exploratory skirmishes were tried, to ascertain the enemy's strength. Once troop movements were spotted by the enemy they immediately shelled the attackers. The situation in the town gradually deteriorated as the unhealthy conditions began to cause sickness in the ranks.

On 26th. August, the first Turkish assault took place on the volcano position and was successful by noon. After that they focussed on Stafford Hill but were repulsed by the North Staffs. However, on the 31st. August Stafford Hill was lost and it seemed that Baku could be taken. Both sides received some reinforcements and by Saturday, 14th September, fierce fighting erupted across the outskirts of the town. "B" company were in the thick of things at Wolf's Gap soon after midnight. They had to withstand hours of continuous bombing and gunfire.

Further incursions were made into the defensive posts and by the evening the orders to withdraw to the harbour were issued. The Battalion managed to get aboard by 9.20 p.m. and the two ships, S.S. Kursk and S.S. Kruger slipped anchor and made for open waters before midnight.

It is not known if Ernest was wounded, but he was to die of sickness shortly afterwards. He had contracted dysentery. The War Diary states that a number of men went to the field ambulance from the time they disembarked at Kazian on 15th. September. On 20th. September 50 men reported sick, mostly with dysentery. On Sunday 22nd. September Ernest died. There is no grave for Ernest, and so his name is recorded on the Teheran Memorial, Iran on Panel 4, Column 1. He is one of 3,500 men who died in Iran and also have no known grave."