

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch
of
The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen



Private Reginald Thomas Packer
Grenadier Guards

Reginald Thomas Packer was born in Stroud in July 1895, the son of William and Harriett Packer. In 1901 the family were living at the Police Station in Painswick, where William Packer was Sergeant. In January 1909 the family moved to Cinderford when William Packer was promoted to Inspector in Charge.

Reginald attended Double View Secondary School in the town and afterwards was employed as a brewer's clerk.

On 28 August 1911, giving his age as 18 years and 1 month, when he was actually only 16 years of age, he enlisted in the Grenadier Guards as Private 15437 and was posted to 1st Battalion.

The 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards landed at Zeebrugge on 7 October 1914, but Reginald Packer was absent from the ranks. On 2 October the *Dean Forest Mercury* reported that he was

back in Cinderford on 'convalescent leave', having been wounded at the Battle of the Aisne. He had attended the service at St Stephen's Church on the previous Sunday, his head bandaged and walking with a stick. Interviewed by the newspaper he gave vivid accounts of the fighting he had taken part in, and stated that he was anxious to re-join his comrades at the front. It was all fiction: he had deserted on 26 September.

As the local Police Inspector, his father would have soon been made aware of this, and his record shows that on 15 October he was in confinement awaiting trial by District Court Martial for desertion. He was found guilty and sentenced to 42 days detention and forfeited all previous service. His sentence was remitted on 3 November, and on 9 November he re-joined his battalion in the field.

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The Grenadier Guards were in trenches near Fromelles when Private Reginald Packer was killed in action on 20 December 1914, aged 19 years. A letter to the family gave the location as near VC Corner. He was buried in Ration Farm Military Cemetery, La Chapelle d'Armentieres.

The townspeople of Cinderford, no doubt unaware of his offence, subscribed to a fund to provide a set of memorial gates at St Stephens Church which were dedicated to his memory on 14 November 1915. He is also commemorated on Cinderford town war memorial.



Ration Farm Military Cemetery, La Chapelle d'Armentieres