

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch
of
The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen



Second Lieutenant Charles Francis Hutchings MM
Royal Garrison Artillery

Charles Francis Hutchings was born at Redditch, Worcestershire on 24 June 1883. His parents were Ion John and Hannah Sarah Hutchings (née Sloman) and he had four sisters - Ethel Lavinia, born 1885; Alice Mabel (1887); Annie Elizabeth (1893) and Louisa (1878). Charles received his education at Board Schools at Redditch and Ashchurch. On 26 March 1910 Charles married Annie Elizabeth Charlotte Collard at Bristol and the couple had two children, Mabel Beatrice, born in 1911 and Victor Charles in 1913.

The census of 1891 shows Charles to be living at Aston, near Tewkesbury, that of 1901 has him at Ashchurch, Tewkesbury and at the one taken in 1911 he and his wife were living at 37 Saxon Road, St Werburghs, Bristol.

After leaving school Charles had become a Police Constable, serving in Bristol and it was there that he attested for military service on 26 April 1915 - his medical record indicates a height of 6 feet 2 inches, which was significantly over the average height of the time.

He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA) and was initially given a number of 62 but this soon became 291609. He saw rapid promotion. After joining as a Gunner, he became a Bombardier on 27 May, a Corporal on 6 July and a Serjeant on 10 August 1915. For some reason he reverted to Corporal at his own request on 4 February 1916. His posting was to 129 (Heavy Battery), whose role was to operate 60 pounder (or 5 inch) guns in counter-battery fire or the shelling of enemy targets to the rear of the front line.

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On 27 March 1916 Charles went with 129 (Heavy Battery) to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. On 15 November he was promoted to Acting Serjeant and back to full Serjeant on 11 January 1917. On 17 September 1917 the *London Gazette* announced that he had been awarded the Military Medal.

He remained in France until 12 October 1917, when he was back in the UK for a posting to No 2 Depot, RGA at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport. On 2 January 1918 he was accepted for admission to No 2 RGA Officer Cadet School at Maresfield Park, Uckfield, Sussex and this eventually led to him being commissioned as a Temporary Second Lieutenant on 4 August 1918.

The *Western Daily Press* of 22 August 1918 reported that he had been *presented with a sword by the Chief Constable, Bristol at Bridewell Street*

(Police Station), *upon being commissioned previously as a Constable in 'A' Division.*

It would appear that upon returning to the front he was wounded and that he subsequently died of wounds at Beaufort War Hospital, Bristol on 15 January 1919. He returned to be buried at Ashchurch in the north Gloucestershire area, where he spent much of his early life. A CWGC headstone now marks his grave in Ashchurch (St Nicholas) Churchyard, where he is the sole Great War casualty buried.

His widow may have re-married in Bristol in 1921.



Ashchurch War Memorial