

Frank Rogers

Private 9966, 2nd Battalion

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

Frank Rogers was born 1893 in Amersham (Winchmore Hill), Buckinghamshire, one of ten children of parents George Rogers and Mary Ann Hazell, who were married in Amersham in 1874. In the 1881 Census, the family lived in the Amersham District and George Rogers (27), a pot hawker by trade, and wife Mary Ann (25) had two children: Frederick (4), and Sarah (1). George does not appear in any following Census. In 1891, Mary Ann is head of the household and employed as a charwoman, but George must have still been alive because Frank was born two years later. With Mary Ann were her three children: Fred (14), a labourer, Albert (9) who was at school, and Florence aged just 8 months. The family were living in Winchmore Hill at the time.

By the time of the Census in 1901 the family had moved to Tylers Green and Mary Ann was registered as a widow and head of the household. Living at home were some of her children: Fred (24) general labourer, Florence (11), Frank (8), and Sydney (5), all at school, and Ernest (1). George must have died the previous year. Sarah and Albert were residing with their aunt and uncle in Winchmore Hill.

By the 1911 Census of England and Wales, the family home was a four-room house in Tylers Green, Bucks with mother Mary Ann (55), a widow and head of household, plus four sons including Frank (17), a labourer. At this time only seven of the ten children (Frank's siblings) were still alive.

According to the records of the 'Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum', Frank's date of attestation (enlistment) was 1 January 1914 when he was 22, and before the outbreak of war. He enlisted in Oxford and joined the 2nd Battalion, C Company of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (OBLI), at Aldershot, Hampshire.

In August 1914, the 2nd Btn OBLI arrived on the Western Front, as part of the 5th Infantry Brigade. The 2nd Division was one of the first of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to arrive in France. The battalion took part in the first British battle of the war, at **Mons**, where the British defeated the German forces that they encountered on 23 August 1914. The battalion subsequently took part in the 220 mile retreat in exceptionally hot weather that began the following day, not stopping until just on the outskirts of Paris. They then halted the German advance at the **First Battle of the Marne** (5–9 September). The 2nd Btn OBLI later took part in all the subsidiary battles of the **First Battle of Ypres** (19 October – 22 November) that saw the heart ripped out of the old Army with 54,000 casualties being sustained. In the First Battle of Ypres the 2nd Battalion's first engagement with the enemy was on 20 October in an attack on the **Passchendaele Ridge**. The battalion sustained heavy casualties; 4 officers killed and 5 wounded plus 143 other ranks killed or wounded. On 31 October the Germans launched a large scale attack against General Sir Douglas Haig's 1 Corps in the area of Ypres which commenced with a heavy bombardment followed by a mass infantry attack; two companies of the 2nd Btn OBLI took part in the defence and subsequent counter-attack which forced the enemy back to their front line. On 11 November the Germans made another attempt to capture Ypres sending — on the orders of the German Kaiser — the élite Prussian Guard against the British forces. The 2nd Battalion counter-attacked them at **Nonne Bosschen wood**, preventing their advance and then routing them. First Ypres was the last major battle of 1914. The 2nd Btn OBLI sustained 632 casualties during the first five months of the war and by 1915 it was a very different battalion from that which had arrived on the Western Front at the start of the war.¹

¹ The information in this paragraph was taken from the Wikipedia web-site.

In 1915 trench warfare commenced with both sides developing impregnable defences, leading to high casualties in return for minimal gains. At **the Battle of Festubert** (9–16 May) – which was launched in support of the French attack south of Vimy Ridge – the 2nd Btn OBLI was part of the second wave of the 5th Brigade attack and, during the course of the battle, suffered just under 400 casualties.

The Battle of Festubert was the first British night action of the war. The 2nd Btn OBLI was involved in heavy fighting at Richebourg l'Avoue on 15–16 May. At the end of the war there were only 66 personnel of all ranks still serving with the 2nd Battalion, from those that had left Aldershot for the Western Front on 13 August 1914; of these 39 served throughout the war. 5,878 members of the regiment lost their lives during the First World War.

Frank Rogers served and was killed in action on the 16 May 1915 in France and was awarded The 1914-15 Star. He was 22 years old. Coincidentally, the day of Frank's death (16 May 1915) was the same day on which his younger brother Sydney was killed, aged 19. **Private 8332 Sidney Rogers** had enlisted in High Wycombe into the 2nd Battalion OBLI. He had entered the Theatre of War in France on 1 September 1914 and was awarded The 1914 Star with Clasp. He also received The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The Allied Victory Medal.

Frank and Sidney have no known graves but are both remembered on the Memorial at Le Touret, Pas de Calais. The memorial commemorates those whose bodies were never found but who died in the area stretching approximately from the river Lys to the north to Grenay to the south, and who died between the arrival of II Corps in Flanders in 1914 and 24 September 1915. The inscription above the entrance to the memorial is in English and French, and reads:

'To the Glory of God and in memory of 13,482 British officers and men who fell fighting in this neighbourhood from October 1914 to September 1915 whose names are here recorded but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death'.

Above the arches and within the walkways, and elsewhere, are engraved regimental insignia of the units whose men are commemorated here.

The brothers Frank and Sidney Rogers are remembered with Honour on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France – Panel 26

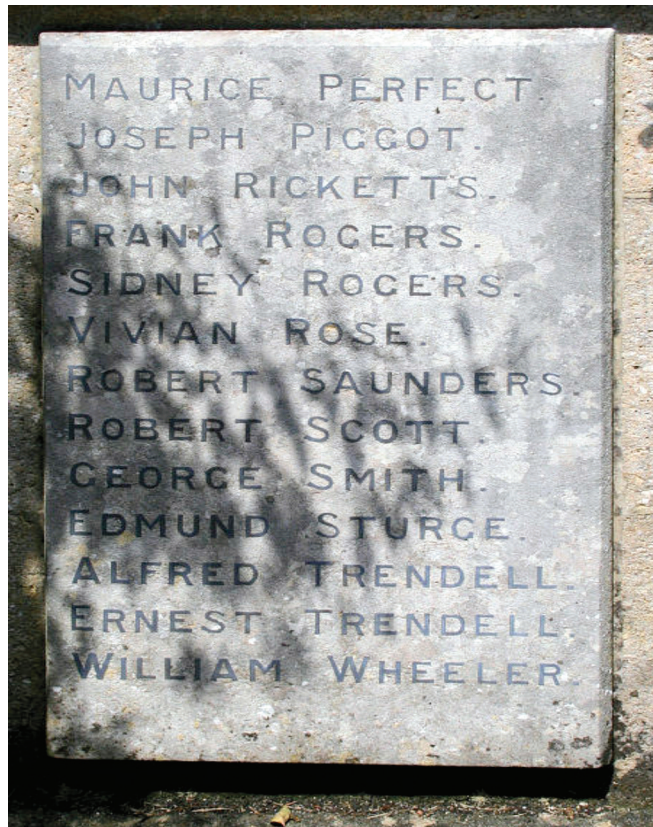
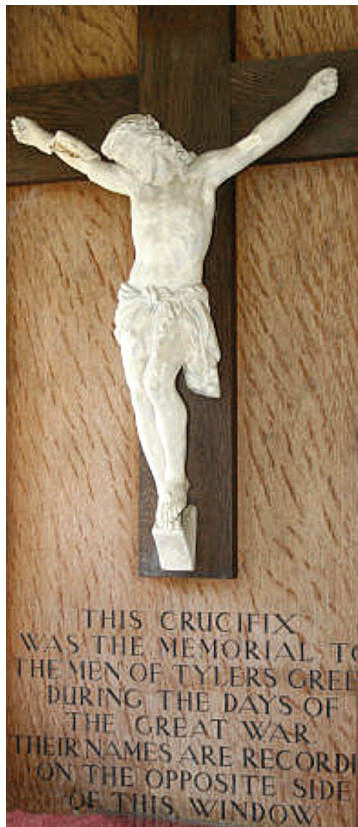
The Memorial is found in Le Touret Military Cemetery, Richebourg-L'Avoué.

Frank Rogers is also remembered on the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church, Amersham, but his brother is not. Both Frank and Sidney are remembered on the memorial in Tylers Green, near Penn, Buckinghamshire.

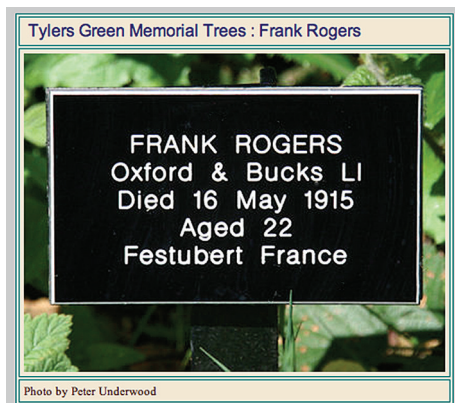
The Memorial in Le Touret Military Cemetery.

(Photograph from The Commonwealth War Graves Commission)





The War Memorial in the Church Porch and the Memorial Panel at Tylers Green²



In Tylers Green, 30 trees were planted in 1937 to commemorate local men who were killed in the First World War. The casualty's name is displayed on a small plaque placed at the foot of each tree. A plan of the location of these trees can be seen at Tylers Green Memorial Trees. The plan was unveiled at a re-inauguration ceremony of the trees on 28 June 2009.

² Images on this page courtesy: Buckinghamshire Remembers.