

From Barry Burnham, "The Forgotten Dead: The Men of Holy Trinity Parish, Oxford, who Died in the Great War" (privately published, copy at the Oxfordshire History Centre).

R. J. Norgrove

Again; we have a man who appeared on the Great War Memorial of Holy Trinity, although it seems, that he had never actually lived within the parish boundary.

Born on Thursday the 13th of May 1897, Reginald James Norgrove was born at the Norgrove family home of 12 Edith Road in an area of Oxford known as Grandpont. Although Reginald never actually lived in St Ebbes, his parents certainly did, as they were both born there. John George Norgrove, (*the son of a baker*), was born at Blackfriars Road in St Ebbes during the autumn of 1864. John began his working life as a clerk for a firm of clothiers and in later life he found himself working in the wholesale distribution of clothing. Reginald's mother was born in the autumn of 1863, as Helena Fletcher Telling, possibly at Cambridge Street, but almost certainly within the parish of St Ebbes. Both John (*living at Newton Road*) and Helena (*living at Speedwell Street*) was in their early thirties when they decided to marry, with a Church wedding taking place at Holy Trinity Church on Thursday the 1st of August 1895. It was very soon after they had married that John and Helena moved into Edith Road in Grandpont, a small mid terraced house where they remained for at least fifteen years.

Unusually for those days, John and Helena only had the three children, Reginald who was born in 1897, his sister Doris who was born in 1900, and a brother named Francis who was born in 1903. Exactly which schools Reginald attended is unknown, but he may have attended the St Matthews Infants School in Marlborough Road, or possibly the schools of St John the Evangelist at Church Lane in New Hinksey. Although Reginald had lived in Grandpont all his life, he was baptised at Holy Trinity in Blackfriars Road on the 13th of June 1897, and it seems that as he grew up, he became very active in the Church, where he was not only a member of the Church Choir, but also for a time, he worked as a Sunday school teacher as well as being involved in some of the Church's youth clubs and other activities. In 1911, the Norgrove family appeared on the census, and they were still living at 12 Edith Road with his father John recorded as forty-six-years-old, and working as a wholesale clothier's warehouseman. John's wife Helena was now forty-seven years old, and the children who were all still at school were recorded as Reginald James aged thirteen, Doris Mildred aged eleven, with the youngest Francis John aged eight. Soon after the census had been taken, a tragedy struck the Norgrove household when his father John Norgrove died during the summer of 1911, aged just forty-seven. His death must have come as a terrible blow to the family, and with Reginald about to leave school, it's likely that he soon found himself employment to help out with the family finances. Very little is known about the life of Reginald Norgrove, especially around the time that he had left school, and unfortunately his Army service records haven't survived either. If he had waited until he was eighteen to enlist, he would have joined the army in the summer of 1915, but as *Legally* you had to be nineteen years or over to serve overseas it's also possible that Reginald had waited and he was conscripted early the following year. Whenever he enlisted, Reginald certainly never served overseas before the beginning of 1916, as he was only awarded the Victory and British War Medals after his death. What is known, it that at some point, Reginald enlisted in Oxford and subsequently joined the 7th (*Service*) Battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps as a Rifleman (*private*), service no R/24058. The 7th Battalion K.R.R.C had been formed in August 1914, and served with the 41st Brigade of the 14th (*Light*) Division, who arrived in France in May 1915, and later saw action in many battles, including the Somme, as well as both the 1st and the 2nd battles of Passchendaele during the second half of 1917.

It seems inconceivable that Reginald Norgrove hadn't seen at least some action during 1917 especially during the second half of the year when his Battalion had seen serious fighting in Belgium. The 14th (*Light*) Division had returned to France the following year, and in February 1918 the 7th Battalion Kings Royal Rifles Corps was transferred from the 41st Brigade to the 43rd Brigade of the same Division. On the 21st March, the 14th (*Light*) Division was stationed near to the town of St Quentin (*east of Amiens*) when the German forces began "**Operation Michael**", (*Kaiserschlacht*), an offensive that was designed to break through the British lines and quickly move north, cutting off the British Forces from behind. On the morning of the 21st of March, the 14th (*Light*) Division was holding a front line that was two and a half miles wide, and soon found themselves facing four German Divisions. The attack had quickly developed to the right of the Division, with the units in the front line overwhelmed by 9am and the enemy reaching the battle zone by 11am. The 7th Kings Royal Rifle Corps was a short way east of Benay, and around six miles south of St Quentin, when eventually, they found themselves surrounded. During this desperate rearguard action on the morning of the twenty-first, the 7th Battalion had suffered horrendous casualties, one of which was possibly Reginald Norgrove.

On Thursday the 21st of March 1918, Reginald James Norgrove died of wounds that he probably received during the German advance of the same day, although it's also possible that he may have been wounded a few days earlier. It is also a possibility that during the confusion which had taken place as a result of the German advance that the grave of Reginald James Norgrove, (*If he had one*) had later been lost, and therefore he is now remembered as yet another name to the missing on the Pozieres Memorial in France. Surprisingly, Reginald is one of those men whose death was not recorded in the local newspapers back home in Oxford as neither the *Oxford Times*, nor the *Oxford Journal Illustrated* carried any report whatsoever on his injuries or his subsequent death. Reginald Norgrove had been an active member of the Church before his enlistment, and following his death, his name appears in the Holy Trinity Vestry Book, with an entry for 1919. The Vestry meeting that year recorded the following summary of the meeting regarding Reginald Norgrove. "*At the time of his enlistment he was a member of the choir, and a Sunday school teacher, plus secretary of the club gleaner's union, and lieutenant in the parish company of the church lad's brigade. It was decided at the meeting, that as he did not live in the parish, his name could not appear on a plaque with the men who actually lived in Holy Trinity*". "*It was intended to erect a separate memorial tablet in the church, to the memory of Reginald Norgrove*". These plans for a separate Memorial tablet must have changed, possibly with the arrival of a new vicar, (*or because of the cost*), as Reginald's name appears with the other men commemorated on the Holy Trinity Memorial. It was also announced at this same vestry meeting that a Bible would be donated by the Norgrove family for use in the pulpit in "*Memory of their respective sons*"

CWGC Details.

Norgrove, Reginald James,
Regiment, 7th Battalion, K.R.R.C.
Rank, Rifleman, Service no R/24058,
Date of Death, 21/3/1918, Aged 20.
Memorial, Pozieres Memorial, France,
Panels 61 to 64.

Son of Mrs H. F. Norgrove, of 82 Swinburne Road, Abingdon.

Living in Edith Road, Reginald Norgrove was also commemorated on the Great War Memorial of St Matthews Church at Marlborough Road, in Grandpont.

Medal Card for R.J. Norgrove.

K.R.R.C, Pte, R/24058
Medals awarded,
Victory Medal,
British War Medal.
Date of Entry, None,
Remarks, None.