

**In Memory of  
Serjeant MERVYN 'PERCY' POWELL  
7752, 8th Bn., Royal Berkshire Regiment  
born in Faringdon who died, age 27, on 25 September  
1915**

**Son of the late William and Louisa Powell;  
Husband of Emily Louisa Powell,  
of 49, Oak Cottage, Marshfield Rd., Chippenham, Wilts.  
Remembered with honour  
Faringdon War Memorial and  
LOOS MEMORIAL**



**Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

‘News has reached Chippenham that Sgt Powell of the Berks Regt has been killed in Flanders. Sgt Powell was the son of a former rural surveyor of Chippenham and is married to the daughter of Mr Smart of this town.’ From The Wilts Times, 30 October 1915.

#### **Battle of Loos**

5:50AM. The intensive Bombardment, preparatory to the attack on the German position SOUTH of the HULLOCH ROAD, began, the enemy's artillery at once replying, though they inflicted little damage and caused few casualties in our front-line trenches. Simultaneously with the bombardment, the gad company began to operate the gas cylinders which were in the front-line trench, and there then occurred several casualties from poisoning, caused it supposed, by leakages in the cylinders.6:28AM. The gas now ceased, and smoke bombs were

thrown from the front-line trenches, proving entirely successful in screening our Advance.6:30AM. The fire of our artillery lifted, and Battalion advanced in quick time, to assault the first line Enemy Trenches, the 10th Gloucester Regt being on the right, the 2nd Gordons on the left. The advance was opposed by heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, while the wire in front of the German trenches was found to be scarcely damaged, and it was in cutting a way through this obstacle that most of the regiment's heavy casualties occurred. Shrapnel and machine-gun combined to play havoc in our ranks, and an additional disaster was the blowing back of our gas, by the wind, into our own ranks. However, after a struggle, the German first line was penetrated, and the trench found to be practically deserted, the enemy apparently, having deserted it earlier in the day, merely leaving behind sufficient men to work the machine-guns. Mainly overland, but with some men working up the communication trench, our line advanced successively to the 2nd and 3rd German lines, and met with but slight opposition. From the 3rd line a further advance was made, and an Enemy Field Gun captured. A 4th line German trench was also seized, but being in so incomplete a state that it afforded little cover from rifle fire and none whatever from shrapnel. COLONEL WALTON ordered the line to be withdrawn to the 3rd German line trench, and this position was occupied until the Battalion was relieved.

In a letter from Mervyn to his brother and sister, published in the Faringdon Advertiser on Saturday December the 12th, "I have had a few days in Hospital with the "screws", caused by the wet and cold. So far all our Town fellows belonging to the Regiment are well; no one hit; but some of the chaps in the other battalion were not so lucky. I was "baptised" on my birthday with "sighing Sarahs" and shrapnel, but now they are things that pass by or burst with no notice taken of them. We had rain to start with, then frost and snow, rain again, and then mud up to our eyes. The frost was rotten, but the rain and mud far worse. Our trenches are quite near to the Germans, and I can tell you that they don't show themselves much. They are very fond of sniping, and are fair shots, but I take it that they don't tell off their third class shots for the job. The nights are long now and we often turn night into day and day into night. In the day time we make all sorts of dishes which you couldn't find in a cookery book, but they are grand. A Turkish bath would be a treat now. I chanced a cold bath in our last billet and it was a quick one I can assure you. We suffered much with cold feet when the frost was about. Our feet were wet and then having to stand up and keep "eyes on" all night, made one think that he was trying to imitate an icicle. We were served out with skin coats that haven't been shaved, and we wore them under our great coats. Anyone would take me for a heavy-weight when I have all my comforts on. My boots are two sizes too large, but then there is a system in such madness, as I can wear three pairs of socks. Tell any chaps coming out to do the same, and to carry every bit of warm clothing that they can, and bring fag papers with gum on; these French ones haven't any on-- Expeditionary Force, Dec. 2nd, 1914.