

Gerald Fred Parsons Age 23

Gerald Parsons was born on the 6th March 1892 in Bridgwater, the first child of Frederick William and Elizabeth Parsons. The family were closely connected with the village and Gerald was baptised here on 31st March. Frederick is described in the church register as a 'Yeoman' although the previous year, the census lists him as a Dairyman.

By 1901 the family were living at Specklington Farm, Yeovilton and Gerald had been joined by three brothers and three sisters. The household also included a governess. Later, probably around the time of the war, the family moved to Long Sutton Manor.

Gerald joined the Dorset Yeomanry, possibly in the Cavalry. After embarking from England, the Dorsets arrived in Egypt and then on to Gallipoli

The campaign in Gallipoli was fought in an attempt to force Turkey out of the war, to relieve the deadlock of the Western Front and to open a supply route to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. The Allies first landed at the end of April 1915, and on 6th August, further troops including the Dorset Yeomanry were put ashore at Suvla, just north of Anzac. The aim had been to secure the sparsely held high ground surrounding the bay and salt lake, but confused landings and indecision caused fatal delays and allowed the Turks to reinforce.

Green Hill and Chocolate Hill were captured on 7th August 1915, but no further advance was then made. On the two following days, unsuccessful efforts were made to push on along the ridge. Again, on 21st August, an attack to take Scimitar Hill, although pressed with great resolution, left the front line where it had been. Gerald Parsons was killed in action that day, age 23.

The **Western Gazette** gave extensive coverage to the attempted advance in which Gerald was killed, because many local men were involved. Several letters home from survivors were reprinted on the 10th September describing their experiences. Harry James, in his letter to his parents, mentions his last sighting of Gerald during the battle.

'We have been through hell, and some of us were lucky enough to reach the other end.....Captain Gray, my troop officer is believed to be wounded. He led us like a trump up a hill shouting 'Come on boys,' but he must have dropped out as no-one seems to know anything about him.....Eddie Perry, Ralph Hunt and Gerald Parsons are missing; no-one seems to have seen them drop out. Gerald was about twenty yards behind me when I last saw him before we got to the top of the hill.'

Gerald Parsons is commemorated in Green Hill Cemetery which was made after the Armistice when isolated graves were brought in from the battlefields of August 1915 and from small burial grounds in the surrounding area. Among these was the cemetery at Scimitar Hill, containing 520 graves, almost all unidentified.