

Howard Frank Creasey

Gunner 911249, 98th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

(Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry)



Howard Frank was born in Shipley on 29th June 1906 at Dragons Green. He was the second child of Harry and Annie Elizabeth Creasey; his older sister Dorothy was born in 1904 a second sister, Annie Mildred, in 1918 and a third, Mary, in 1927. Howard, known in the family as Frank, Dorothy, and later, Annie attended Shipley School.

The family home at this time was Pannetts Cottage, Smithers Hill Lane. By the time Mary started school the family had moved to Foxcroft, Coolham where they lived from 1926 to 1950. The move resulted from Harry losing his job at Butterstocks where he tended the hop vines. Butterstocks had lost the contract with Gale's the Brewers in Horsham, leaving many agricultural workers unemployed.

Howard won a scholarship to complete his education at Collyers in Horsham and served an apprenticeship with Rice Brothers, a Horsham garage where he worked for 17 years. He joined

the Territorial Army, The Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry, and as such was called up for full time service at the outset of war in 1939. By this time Howard had been promoted to foreman with Rice Brothers and was an experienced driver.

The 98th Field Regiment deployed to Belgium in September 1939 as part of the British Expeditionary Force. His nephew Charles, to this day, has a letter from Howard dated November 1939, written in France, regretting that his Christmas leave was to be postponed until March. He arrived home on 10th March, married on 18th March at Shipley Church and returned to France 10 days later.

His bride was Helen Mary MacPherson, a school teacher who lived with her mother, the district nurse for the Shipley area, at 1 Church Gate Cottages, Shipley. Helen and her mother had previously lived in the cottage on the corner of Red Lane and School Lane Shipley.

Late afternoon on 25th May 1940 two patrol vehicles set out towards Steenbecque in Northern France led by Lord Cowdray and supported by Major Egerton. Finding Steenbecque was deserted and abandoned equipment littering the village, the patrol turned east, this time Major Egerton, driven by Howard, taking the lead.

Major Egerton's vehicle was ambushed, killing the driver and injuring the occupants. Three men were seen to jump or fall from the vehicle before Lord Cowdray's vehicle was hit, shattering his left arm and killing the other occupants.

Lord Cowdray managed to drive the vehicle back to safety with one arm. French civilians later reported that booby traps had been set up with the bodies of three British soldiers as decoys. Howard was reported as missing and his name, along with others, was circulated to Prisoner of War camps in efforts to trace missing personnel.



It was not for another year, in May 1941, that his death on 25th May 1940 was confirmed on Casualty List 518. He was 33 years old and had been identified by his identity disc. Family history tells that Howard's wallet was found and later returned to his mother by French civilians. Howard's regiment was evacuated from Dunkirk along with other regiments of the British Expeditionary Force at the end of May 1940.

The rout suffered by Allied forces across Northern France in the prelude to the Dunkirk evacuation explains the delay in identifying missing personnel. The last letter Howard wrote to his mother was dated 21st May. It was posted to his mother on 25th May by the censor, ironically the day Howard died. Howard was awarded the War Medal 1939 – 1945 and 1939 – 1945 Star.

Howard's widow Helen was granted administration rights at Lewes in September 1941. She was then living at Why Not, Southwater. Helen never remarried, and when her mother retired they both moved back to their native Scotland. She passed away in 1984 in Perth.

Howard is buried at Steenbecque Churchyard, France. This was later incorporated into Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille administered by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The inscription reads "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends".



Wedding reception at Andrew Hall

The lady in the wheelchair is Howard's sister Dorothy, known as Dot, who was disabled by polio when a child. Behind Dorothy is Aunt Bertha, next to Dorothy is sister Mary, behind Mary is sister Annie Mildred (just her hat visible), the small boy is Charles Creasey, Howard's nephew now in Australia, next to Mary is mother Annie, then father Harry, Howard Frank, Helen Mary, Nurse MacPherson, Helen's mother, Helen's sister Jean. (All names and relationship are given in terms of their relationship either to Howard or Helen) Additional family memories contributed by Charles Creasey, Howard's nephew, now in Australia. *(Both photos from Martin MacDonald on Ancestry)*



Left: War Medal 1939 – 1945



Right: 1939 – 1945 Star

In Memory of

Gunner

Howard Frank Creasey

911249, 98 (The Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry) Field Regt., Royal Artillery who died on 25 May 1940 Age 33

Son of Harry and Annie Elizabeth Creasey; husband of Helen Mary Creasey, of Southwater, Horsham, Sussex.

Remembered with Honour

Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission