

Sidney Harold KERSWELL

Born Q1 1894, Dawlish Died 14 October 1915, Hospital ship ex-Gallipoli, aged 21
Private 3008 London Regiment, 3rd (City of London) Battalion, (Royal Fusiliers)

Sidney Harold Kerswell was a younger son of James Kerswell (1837-1908) and Frances/ Fanny Little Rickard (1857-). They had eleven children (eight surviving by the 1911 census). The second oldest was James Edwin Kerswell (1879-1918) (*see separate casualty record sheet*).

Their father had been born in Crediton, became a seaman and he married Frances (Fanny) Little Rickard in Dromore West, Sligo, Ireland in 1875. Fanny was born in Looe, Cornwall. Many of the children were born in Ireland where James may have been posted in the Coastguard Service. James was a Naval pensioner when he lived and died in Dawlish, on November 19, 1908.

By 1911 Fanny was a widow and living at 20 Hatcher Street and **Sidney** was 17 and an apprentice grocery worker, living at home with his mother, brother James Edwin and three sisters, Isabella, Edith and Olive Edna. He moved to London and was working in Chiswick when war broke out, and he joined up in November 1914. His medal record card show that he arrived in Egypt on 19th April 1915 and it is probable that his regiment was carried there by troopship to acclimatise before being thrown into action at Gallipoli.

The record of the **2/3rd (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers)** is formed in London in September 1914. By December 1914, had moved to Epsom Downs and Tonbridge and placed under orders of 2/1st London Brigade in 2/1st London Division. 31 December 1914 : left the Division and relieved the 1/3rd Bn in Malta.

27 August 1915 : moved to Egypt, before landing at Cape Helles, Gallipoli, joining the 86th Brigade in 29th Division.

Sidney's death from wounds was the result of becoming a casualty at Gallipoli, who was then transferred to the Hospital ship NEVASA for treatment in Malta. He died on board before arrival in Malta.

The wounded from Gallipoli were often transferred to the Greek island of Mudros for treatment before being transferred again to hospitals in Malta or Alexandria.

The experience of the wounded in Gallipoli is recorded in diary entries by Aubrey Herbert, M.P. who was attached as an Intelligence Officer, writing from the beachhead.

"*May 1st*. I woke to hear the howitzers that have been haunting men's minds here droning over us, and watching great columns of water when they hit the sea. Then there came the sigh and the snarl of shrapnel, but that to the other is like the rustle of a lady's fan to the rumble of a brewer's dray. A lot of men were hit all round and it has been difficult to wash one's face in the sea."

By August the heat and stench of dead mules had brought dysentery and a plague of flies. Conditions on the beach were terrible.

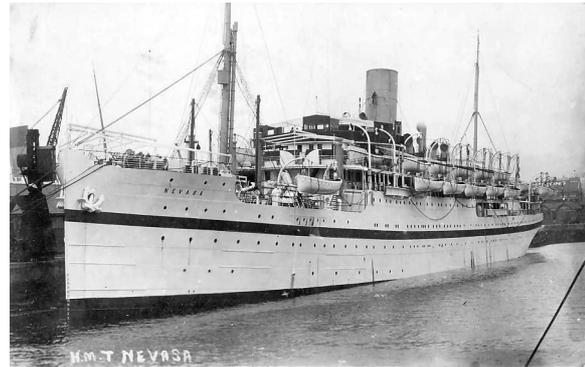


Sunday August 8th, " I went back outside the hospital, where there were many wounded lying. I stumbled upon poor Critchley-Salmonson (a schoolfellow), who had been wounded about 3am the day before, and had lain in the sun on the sand all the previous day. He recognized me, and asked me to help him, but was light-headed. There were fifty-six others with him; Macaulay and I counted. It was awful having to pass them. A lot of the men called out: 'We are being murdered.' The smells were fearful and they had not been cleaned."

"I came to a field hospital, situated where the troops were going through. While I was there shelling was bad. Several of the wounded were hit again. One man was knocked in on the top of me, bleeding all over." (Mons, Anzac and Kut – A Herbert publ 1919)

www.roll-of-honour.com/Ships/HMTroopshipNevasa.html

From the spring of 1915, the hospitals and convalescent depots established on the islands of Malta and Gozo dealt with over 135,000 sick and wounded, chiefly from the campaigns in Gallipoli and Salonika, although increased submarine activity in the Mediterranean meant that fewer hospital ships were sent to the island from May 1917.



The failed attempt by joint naval forces to open a route to the Black Sea through the Dardanelles led to the army's invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula in April 1915, but the disastrous casualties without gaining territory led to withdrawal in January 1916.

Reported in the *Western Times*, Friday 15 October, 1915,

"Pte. Sidney Kerswell, 3rd City of London Royal Fusiliers, son of Mrs Kerswell, of Penlee, Dawlish, has been dangerously wounded while fighting in the Dardanelles."

The Dawlish Gazette - Saturday, October, 23, 1915

"The war continues to take its toll of Dawlish's sons. We much regret to announce that official information was received on Tuesday last of the death of Pte Sydney Kerswell, 3rd City of London Fusiliers, previously reported dangerously wounded in fighting at the Dardanelles. Deceased was only 20 years of age, died on the hospital ship bound for Malta. He is the youngest son of Mrs Kerswell, of Penlee, Dawlish, for whom and her family the keenest sympathy is felt. When the war broke out deceased was a grocer's assistant in Chiswick. He threw up his situation and joined up nearly 12 months ago."

The Death Grant of £3.6s.10d was paid to his mother "Fanny L", as was the War Gratuity of £4.0s.0d.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: UK Soldiers died in the Great War – Residence, Dawlish – death 14 October 1915 – Gallipoli – enlisted Edward Street (London) – Private, London Regiment, 3rd(city of London) Battalion,, (Royal Fusiliers) – no 3008 - died of wounds Pieta Mill Cemetery, Malta



Dawlish World War One Project

Dawlish War memorial inscription:

KERSWELL S.H. PTE. ROYAL FUS.

He is included on the Devon Roll of Honour and on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour, although identified as being with 'Engineers'.

Devon Heritage site info: 3008 Private Sidney Harold Kerswell of the 3rd Battalion, the London Regiment (the Royal Fusiliers). Son of Fanny Kerswell of 20 Hatcher Street, Dawlish, and the late James Kerswell; brother of James. Born in Dawlish in 1894. Died 14 October 1915 aged 38(*sic*). [*He was 21 at time of death- ed*]

Last known address: 20 Hatcher Street, Dawlish

Next of kin: Fanny Little Kerswell - mother

References:

Free Birth Marriage Death records

Dawlish Gazette extracts in collection of Dawlish Museum

Mons, Anzac & Kut by Aubrey Herbert (1919)

refs via subscription sites:

Census records

UK Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919

Medal rolls

Forces War Records

All Ireland, Civil Registration Marriages Index

Painter family tree- Ancestry.co.uk

KERSWELL & RELATED FAMILY TREES – private doc

KERSWELL S H text

rev 28/9/15 rbv