

Percival Ernest ABELL

Born Q2, 1896 Winkleigh Died 10th April 1918, aged 21
Private 37527 Gloucestershire Regt, 8th Service Battn

Percival Thomas Abell and Sidney Thomas Abell (q.v.) were sons of Thomas Wyborn Abell (1860-1940) and Mary Ann Murrin (1860-1940).

Thomas Wyborn Abell (birth ref Okehampton 1860 July-Sept, vol 5b, p356) was the son of Henry and Sarah Abell who were farming 280 acres at Meeth, a small village about 13.5 km north-west of Okehampton.

Mary Ann Murrin (birth ref Okehampton 1860 Apr-June, vol 5b, p353) was also a daughter of farming parents at Meeth, John and Jane Murrin.

Thomas and Mary married early in 1885 (GRO ref Okehampton 1885 Jan-Mar vol 5b, p 590). They were both born in Hatherleigh, a short distance from Meeth.

By 1891 census Thomas Wyborn and Mary Ann Abell were living at Down, Winkleigh where he was a farmer.

Percival Thomas Abell was born at Winkleigh early in 1896 (GRO ref Torrington, 1896, apr-june, vol 5b, p458).

By 1901 they had moved to Woodcoteswell Cottage, Cullompton where he was a farmhand, and they had three children, Sidney Thomas, 10, Jenny, 9 and **Percival E**, 4.

In 1911 census the family had moved to the Strand Hill Dairy, Dawlish with five children:

John Henry Abell 1886-1976

Sidney Thomas Abell 1890-1919

Jenny Murrin Abell 1892-1957

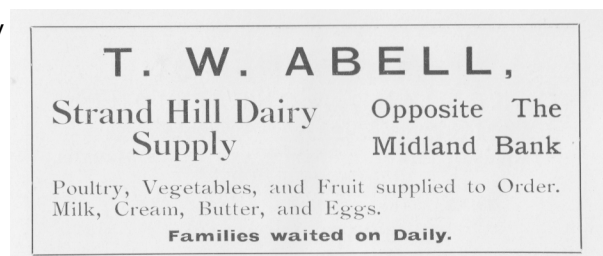
Percival Ernest Abell 1897-1918

William E Abell 1905 - ?

The Strand Hill Dairy employed Sidney and Jenny as assistants in 1911 at the time of the census.

The older son, John Henry, had taken work as a blacksmith. Percy was then 14, without an occupation.

(image taken from ca 1923 guide to Dawlish)



Thomas Wyborn Abell died on 1 November 1940 and his wife survived him by eight days to die on 9 November 1940.

It is not clear when **Percy Abell** enlisted but there are references to first being attached to the Cavalry Reserve Regiment, service no 29612, before joining the Gloucestershire Regiment 8th Service Battalion.

Seventeen reserve regiments of cavalry were formed when the army mobilised in August 1914. Most of them had two or more of the active cavalry regiments affiliated to them and the intention was for the reserve to supply drafts to the affiliated regiments. Men who enlisted into the cavalry, either as volunteers or conscripts, served with the cavalry reserve to carry out their basic training. Many were not, however, posted to a cavalry regiment overseas but were converted into infantry or other corps before being sent there. It is rare to see a cavalry reserve unit being mentioned in a man's medal records, even if the man had trained with them.

The Gloucestershire Regiment 8th Battalion was sent to relieve Australian troops in front of Messines, south of Ypres on the 1st April 1918. The diary shows no activity for the following days when they were in Front Line trenches.

On the 10th April at 3.30am "Enemy sent up a very heavy barrage which lasted about 5 hours. This followed by a very heavy attack which resulted in the battalion being out flanked and compelled to fall back to a line nearing STINKING FARM."

There is no record of the number of casualties or missing in this account, but the presence of his name on memorial panels at Tyne Cot Cemetery suggests that his body was not recovered. The inscription on the cross on the family grave in Dawlish Cemetery records that he was reported 'missing'.(see photo)

Percival Abell is shown as part of Trench Mortar Battery on the Devon Roll of Honour.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: ABELL, PERCIVAL E. Private 37527
10/04/1918 Age: 21 Gloucestershire Regiment, 8th Bn.
Panel Ref: Panel 72 to 75. [Tyne Cot Memorial](#), Zonnebeke, Flanders
Son of Mr. T. W. and Mrs. M. A. Abell, of Strand Hill Dairy, Dawlish, Devon.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: ABELL P.E. PTE. GLO^{UC}T.M.B^{TT}

Devon Heritage site info: 37527 Private Percival Ernest Abell of the Gloucestershire Regiment, 8th Service Battalion. Formerly, 29612 The Cavalry Reserve Regiment. Son of Thomas and Mary Ann Abell of the Strand Hill Dairy, Dawlish; brother of Sidney (q.v. 1/2/1919). Born in Winkleigh in the June Quarter of 1896. Died 10th April 1918 aged 22.

Last known address: Strand Hill Dairy (1911 census)

Next of kin: Thomas Wyborn Abell, father (Meeth, 1860- 1940) married Mary Ann Murrin (1860-1940) in 1885.

References:

The Long, Long trail – Cavalry Reserve Regiments
CWGC

refs via subscription sites:

- Regimental diary of the Gloucestershire Regiment, 8th Battalion.
- Census records
- Birth, marriage, death refs