

Percy George PRENTICE (1895-1915)

Percy George Prentice's connection to South Lopham is by birth and residency.

Percy George PRENTICE, son of Charles Garnham PRENTICE (c. 1850-) and Mary Ann BRADSTREET (c. 1853-), was born on 17 February 1895 in South Lopham, Norfolk.^{1 2} He was baptised on 5 May 1895 in South Lopham, the ceremony was conducted by Rev. J F BATEMAN, Rector - parents Charles (labourer) and Mary Ann¹

At the time of the 1901 Census, Percy was living at The Street in South Lopham - 6, scholar, living with parents Charles (51, stockman on farm) and Mary A (48), and siblings Charles (15, yard boy on farm), Ethel (13) and Jessie (10, scholar)³

On 2 Apr 1911, (the 1911 Census), he was living at Rectory Road in South Lopham - 16, carpenter, living with parents Charles (62, cowman on farm) and Mary Ann (59, house duties), and brother Fred (38, woodman)⁴

Percy died on 13 August 1915 - he drowned when the H.T. Royal Edward was sunk.

He is commemorated in South Lopham churchyard - "In loving / memory of / CHARLES / PRENTICE / died August 25 1918 / aged 72 years. / Also MARY A PRENTICE wife / died Feb 1928 aged 76 years / At rest. / Also PERCY G PRENTICE son / lost by the sinking of the Royal Edward [sunk 13 Aug 1915]."

He is commemorated at Helles Memorial, in Turkey - Stone Number 232, H. T. "Royal Edward", Essex Regiment. CWGC: PRENTICE, Pte. Percy George, 20673. 1st Bn. Essex Regt. (formerly Pte. 17571, Norfolk Regt.) 13th Aug., 1915.

On 11 August 1916 there was a newspaper report in the Diss Express and Norfolk and Suffolk Journal:

DEATHS. KILLED IN ACTION.

In loving memory of Percy Prentice, 1st Battalion Essex Regiment, youngest son of Charles and Mary Prentice, of North Lopham, drowned by the sinking of "The Royal Edward," August 13th, 1915.

*'Tis hard to watch the parting breath, to soothe the heaving breast,
And gaze on those we fondly love, as they calmly sink to rest;*

*But, ah! 'tis harder far to see the loved ones leave the shore,
To be dashed within an ocean grave, to meet on earth no more.
This is the fate of him beloved, his memory is held dear,
No spot to mark where he repose, or shed on his grave a tear;
The tangled sea-weed is his shroud, it clings around his form,
Calmly he rests in his ocear bed, unmindful of the storm.
The storm king on him has no power; wild waves your revels keep,
You cannot break his rest, it is his last eternal sleep.
But we hope to meet him once again, where we shall happy be,
And praise our God unitedly, to all eternity.
From father and mother, brothers and sisters*

No service records for Percy have been found. He is listed in the C.W.G.C. fatalities, and has medal records.

Percy was 'lost at sea' but was a soldier. He was being transported to Gallipoli as part of reinforcements, made up of British and Canadian soldiers, and medical staff.

On the morning of 13 August 1915, in the Aegean Sea, the H.M.T. Royal Edward passed the British hospital ship H.M.H.S. Soudan, heading in the opposite direction. The German submarine UB-14 was off the island of Kandelioussa and saw both ships. The Soudan was allowed to pass unmolested, and attention was focussed on the unescorted Royal Edward. One of the of UB-14 's two torpedoes was fired from about one mile away and hit Royal Edward in the stern. She sank by the stern within six minutes. Different sources reported different numbers of casualties, as many as 1,386, Percy George being one of them. (Also lost in the same incident was another Lopham man, Herbert Sidney EMMS.).

Sources

1. *PR - Baptism*. South Lopham, Norfolk. Cit. Date: 5 May 1865.
2. *CR Birth*. 1895 Q2 Guiltcross Norfolk Vol 4B Page 259. Cit. Date: Q2 1895.
3. *1901 Census*. RG13 Piece 1866 Folio 20 Page 4 Schedule 30. Cit. Date: 31 March 1901.
4. *1911 Census*. RG14 PN11746 RD239 SD2 ED19 SN52. Cit. Date: 2 April 1911.