

Sutton Veny

Roll of Honour



Lest we Forget

World War II



5571988 PRIVATE

C. E. HUDD

THE QUEEN'S ROYAL REGIMENT (WEST SURREY)

25TH OCTOBER, 1942 AGE 24

Cyril Ernest HUDD

Cyril Ernest Hudd's birth was registered in June quarter, 1918 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire. His mother's maiden name was recorded as "Hibbard". Frank Hudd married Lily Elizabeth M. Hibberd at Christ Church, Warminster in 1909. Their marriage was registered in the March quarter, 1909 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire. Cyril Ernest Hudd was baptised at Sutton Veny on 26th May, 1918. (His sister - Lily Winifred was baptised at Sutton Veny on 12th November, 1916).

The 1911 Census recorded Cyril's parents – Frank (General Labourer, aged 30, born Warminster) & Lily Hudd (aged 25, born Lockerly) living at 18 Upper Bread Street, Warminster, Wilts in a 4 roomed dwelling with their 2 sons – Leonard (aged 3, born Sutton Veny) & William (aged 1, born Warminster). Frank & Lily had been married for 2 years & had 2 children, none deceased.

Cyril Ernest Hudd enlisted with the Infantry & was attached to The Queen's Royal (West Surrey) Regiment. He was given the rank of Private & a service number of 5571988. His place of birth & residence were both listed as Wiltshire.

Private Cyril Ernest Hudd died on 25th October, 1942, aged 24 years.

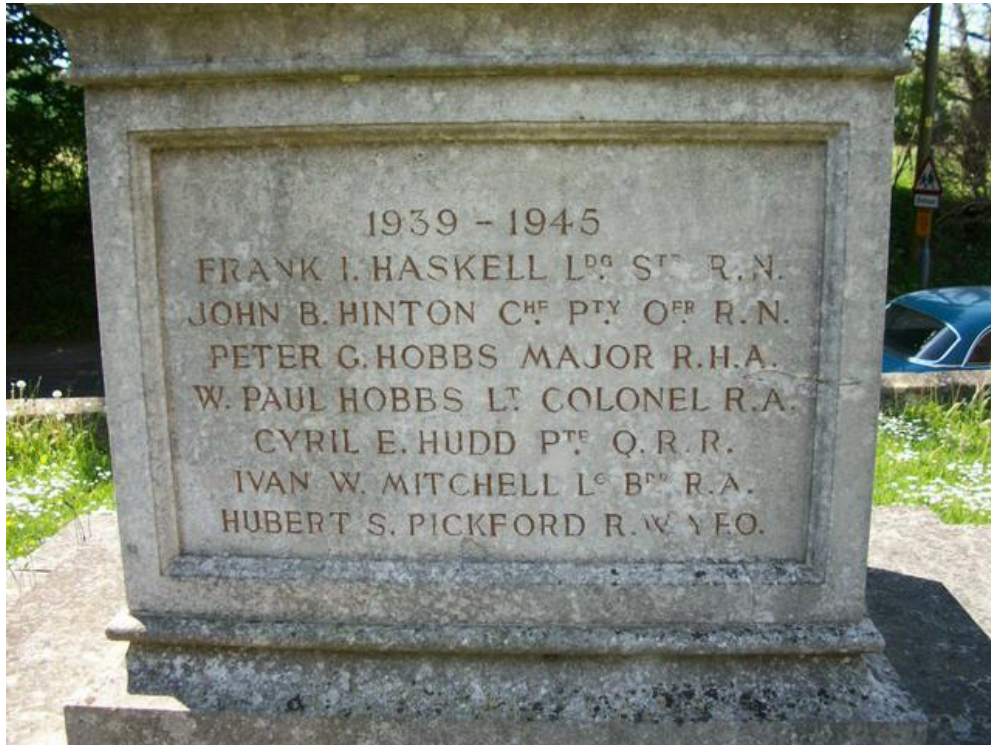
Private Cyril Ernest Hudd was buried in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt – Grave No. XIX. E. 16. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission & the UK Army Roll of Honour 1939 - 1945 list Private Cyril Ernest Hudd, Service number 5571988, of 1/7th Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey), aged 24. No further family details are listed. Theatre of War – Middle East.

Private Cyril Ernest Hudd is remembered on the Sutton Veny War Memorial, located in the foreground of St. John the Evangelist Church at Sutton Veny.



Sutton Veny War Memorial (Photos by Andrea Charlesworth 2012)



El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt

Alamein is a village, bypassed by the main coast road, approximately 130 kilometres west of Alexandria on the road to Mersa Matruh.

The campaign in the Western Desert was fought between the Commonwealth forces (with, later, the addition of two brigades of Free French and one each of Polish and Greek troops) all based in Egypt, and the Axis forces (German and Italian) based in Libya. The battlefield, across which the fighting surged back and forth between 1940 and 1942, was the 1,000 kilometres of desert between Alexandria in Egypt and Benghazi in Libya. It was a campaign of manoeuvre and movement, the objectives being the control of the Mediterranean, the link with the east through the Suez Canal, the Middle East oil supplies and the supply route to Russia through Persia.

El Alamein War Cemetery contains the graves of men who died at all stages of the Western Desert campaigns, brought in from a wide area, but especially those who died in the Battle of El Alamein at the end of October 1942 and in the period immediately before that.

The cemetery now contains 7,240 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, of which 815 are unidentified. There are also 102 war graves of other nationalities. (CWGC)



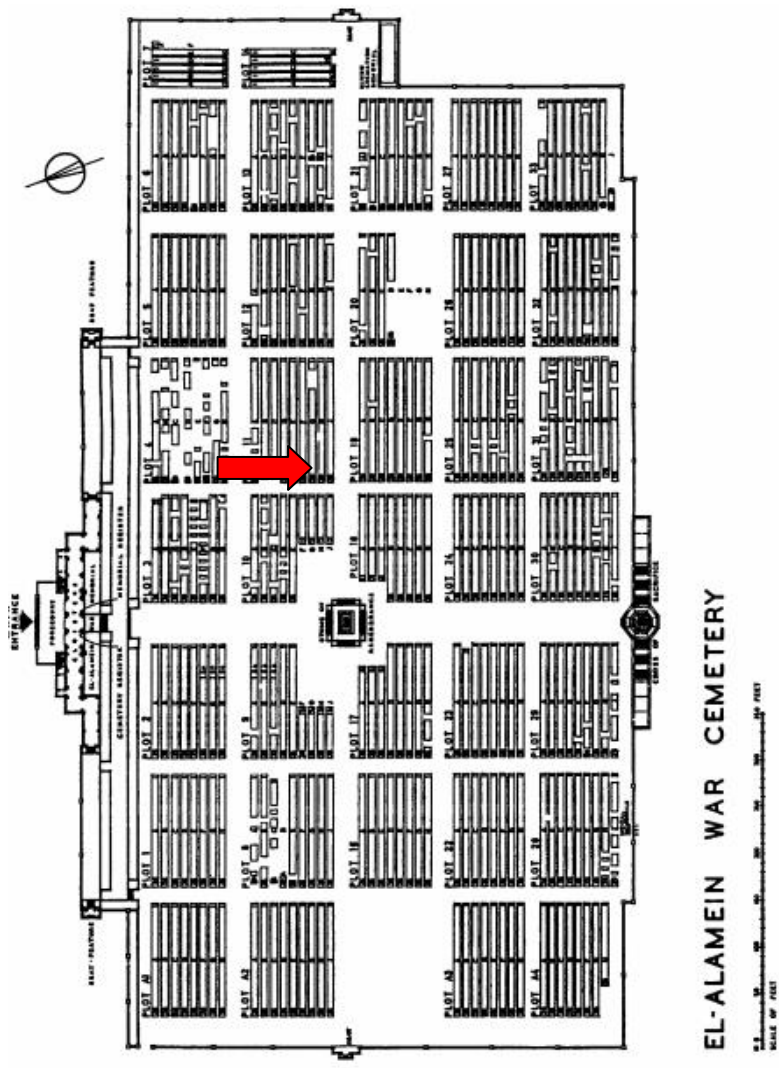
Photo of Pte C. E. Hudd's Headstone in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt.



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



El Alamein War Cemetery *(Photos from CWGC)*



The Queen's Royal (West Surrey) Regiment:

The Territorial Force was disbanded after the First World War, but reconstituted as the Territorial Army (TA) in 1921. In 1938, the TA battalions were ordered to double their strength. The Queen's battalions formed into two brigades; 131 (Queen's) Brigade consisted of 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/7th Queen's and 169 (Queen's) Brigade was made up of 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th Queen's. All six Territorial battalions fought in France in 1940. Two years later, both brigades were ordered overseas and fought in the Eighth Army in the Western Desert. 131 Brigade became the Lorried Infantry brigade of 7 Armoured Division (the "Desert Rats") after the Battle of El Alamein. 169 Brigade joined 56 London Division (the "Black Cats") and took part in the capture of Tunis in May 1943.

BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

In the five weeks after Alam Halfa (30 August – 2nd September, 1942) the 8th Army trained relentlessly, by day and by night. Its strength rose to 1,350 tanks, with over 1,000 of these being with the forward units. The artillery was also strengthened so that 832 guns were available for the coming battle. During this time the Desert Air Force attacked the German and Italian supply bases and routes, but the enemy tank strength still increased by 20-25 per day.

Montgomery favoured a night assault but with all the training needed he was not ready for the full moon in September, so the attack was postponed until next suitable period on the night of 24th October. To take full advantage of this Montgomery opted for the night of 23rd October to begin his assault. This date would also provide a good diversion for the planned landings in Tunisia (Operation Torch) scheduled for 8th November.

Montgomery's plan was to strike in the north, with the 9th Australian and 51st Divisions were to force a gap through which the tanks of 10 Corps could pass. A diversionary attack in the south, by the 7th Armoured and the 44th Divisions of 13 Corps would also take place, just north of Himeimat ridge. Montgomery knew the enemy positions would not be easily overcome, so he planned for "crumbling phase" lasting days or weeks, to erode the enemy strength, followed by a "breakthrough". Meanwhile, the Germans and Italians were preparing for the attack, by digging in, laying mines and building up their tank strength. Rommel and several of his senior commanders were now very ill and he was taken back to Germany for treatment, leaving General Stumme in charge.

General Horrocks' assault plan for 13 Corps was to make four gaps in the British minefields the night before the battle was due to start. Through this the advance guard would move up to the German minefields, codenamed 'January' and 'February' which formed two protective belts of mines one behind the other. There the Sappers would make for gaps corresponding to those made in the British minefields. The plan then was for 1/7th Queen's to breach 'January', keeping level with 7th Armoured Division on its left. The other battalions of 131st (Queen's) Brigade would move forward to the 'February' minefield and take control of them from 1st Rifle Brigade. The Rifle Brigade would then take the lead for 7th Armoured Division, along with 44th Reconnaissance Regiment and once through the minefields 44th (Home Counties) Division would take over the defence of them and the bridgehead to the west of 7th Armoured Division position. In order for this to happen 44th Division would have to help the armour get through the minefields. At this stage of the battle the role of the 7th Armoured was to contain the 21st Panzer Division in the south, during the early days of the battle. If all went to plan, the Division would pass through the two minefields to their front and then swing north towards Daba, with the aim of capturing Himeimat Hill and the escarpment to the west. The 44th Reconnaissance Regiment had been trained in mine lifting for this specific reason would clear the path through the minefield, while the Free French, under the command of the Division, would retake Himeimat. Once this had been achieved the 22nd and 4th Armoured Brigades were to pass through the minefields and establish bridgeheads, which the 44th Division would then occupy. The main task was not to get embroiled in any engagements that would reduce the effectiveness of the Division as a whole.

At 18:45 hours 22nd Armoured Brigade, supported by the Scots Greys, on loan from 4th Light Armoured Brigade, advanced and by 21:00 it was in no man's land between the minefields. The main barrage at El Alamein began at 21:40 on 23rd October 1942 and the night was torn apart as a thundering and crashing barrage of almost 1,000 guns rained down on the enemy positions. This was the first major artillery barrage of the war, with echoes of those from the Western Front during the First World War.

At 23:00 the Brigade with the help of 44th Reconnaissance Regiment and the Sappers was in the process of locating the edge of the 'January' minefield, but they unfortunately located a rogue mine some 800 yards from the real minefield. Here the Scorpions starting flailing, resulting in delay which was to have repercussions later on. With little cover and under heavy fire the lead units started to suffer casualties and on the right 1/7th Queen's became disorganised in the swirling dust and smoke, which has reduced the visibility to only 10 yards in places. However, Engineers attached to the Battalion cleared No. 1 gap and 5th RTR was able to get through. The cost of this part of the action was high with 1/7th Queen's losing 10 officers (including their commanding officer) and 178 men killed, wounded or missing. The delays meant that there was not enough time or equipment to clear the 'February' minefield and as such 1/5th and 1/6th Queen's could not be brought forward.

Further to the south 1st Rifle Brigade had to not only protect the Sappers as they worked but also command and control all the troops in their immediate area in the initial stages, of the assault. It was therefore, for this reason, equipped with a large number of radio sets. Behind them the Signallers were laying line cables for easier communications back to the rear areas. During this work the gaps in the minefields became heavily congested and the defenders concentrated every available weapon, especially machine guns, anti-tank guns and artillery. The Scorpions proved of limited usefulness and the quickly became overheated. Their petrol evaporated in only 200 yards and with most of the minefields being deeper than this, this caused great problems. Also their air filters suffered badly from all the dust thrown up by the flails. This all meant that a number of them broke down while clearing the minefields and needed to be repaired on the battlefield, under fire.

No. 3 gap was reported as impassable because of soft sand, but shortly after this No. 2 gap was secured after a troublesome Italian anti-tank gun was engaged by a platoon of Vickers machine guns and the motor infantry began to try and clear the western ends of No.3 and 4 gaps. However, it was becoming apparent that the second minefield was not going to be breached that night and the lead units were ordered to gain as much ground as possible before dawn, but they were still some 3,000 yards short of Himeimat. At this point in the battle the anti-tank gun that has caused so much trouble in No. 2 gap was found abandoned, with many dead around it. It was then turned around and fired at another strongpoint with considerable effect until all its ammunition expended. 1st Bn. Rifle Brigade took over 300 prisoners that night, but losses to the two lead companies were so great that they had to be amalgamated.

At the southernmost end of the line, the Fighting French were divided into two groups. Soft ground and deep wadis slowed them down, but they reached their forming up points to the south-east of Himeimat in plenty of time. At 02:30 supported by what little artillery had managed to move forward and protected by a smokescreen they advanced against strong opposition. Eventually, the Free French reported that they were in control of the eastern part of their objective, the hill at Himeimat, which overlooked the whole of the division's front. It was essential that this was still in Allied hand at daybreak. Unfortunately the group on the left was counter-attacked by eight captured Honey tanks and lacking any anti-tanks guns they were forced to withdraw. (NB. It was quite common practice in the Desert War for each side to use captured enemy tanks in this way, by just changing the markings on them. In fact at one time earlier in the war an armoured unit supporting an Australian Division was entirely equipped with captured Italian tanks!)

With the attempt to breach the second minefield having failed and with the French having been driven back from Himeimat, it was decided to dig in for the day and wait until night to renew the attack. Although enemy artillery fired on the armoured bridgeheads, no real damage was done and plans for an attack by 131st Brigade were finalised.

The attack by the 131st Brigade, on the night of 24th/25th October, quickly secured a bridgehead west of the second enemy minefield, but they were pinned down, while efforts to clear paths for the tanks to follow proved slow and costly. Once the paths were cleared 4th CLY and 1st RTR moved forward and both lost tanks to either rogue mines or anti-tank fire. 4th CLY lost 14 tanks out of the only Squadron to get through the minefields. With dawn approaching and with the aim of keeping the division in one piece, no more armour went into the bridgehead that night. The next day 25th, October, the attack was called off and over the night of 25th/26th the 44th Division took over the bridgeheads, along with the now detached 4th Light Armoured Brigade, while the rest of 7th Armoured Division went into reserve. During afternoon of 25th the 4th/8th Hussars had also supported the 50th Division, but when they run into minefield and anti-tank fire they did not go any further. Montgomery wanted his armoured divisions in one piece for later in the battle. The Division was to be moved north so that they and the 1st Armoured could pursue Rommel, after the breakout.

[The Desert Rats](#)