

GUNNER CHRISTOPHER FRANK

5th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery Service No: 932156



Although part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, the RHA wore their own cap badge in the Second World War as show above. The 'Grenade' badge on the right is the one worn on the collar of the uniform by all RHA and RA units. Photograph IWM of Gunners of 'G' Battery (Mercer's Troop), Royal Horse Artillery, man a Lewis gun in a sandbagged revetment, 29 October 1940. (Mercer's Troop named after General Alexander Mercer who fought at Waterloo.)

Gunner Christopher Frank enlisted on 1st September 1939, per his attestation papers and Casualty Card, and saw service in France with the Royal Horse Artillery.

In 1940 the Regiment formed part of the British Expeditionary Force to France and after Dunkirk moved to North Africa, where it joined 7-Armoured Division. Along with 7-Armoured Division the Regiment fought throughout the Western Desert. 5th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery fought in the Fall of France, as part of 3 Corps, losing E and F troops in the process. When it was reorganised CC Battery was created out of G and K Batteries.

As part of the British Expeditionary Force May 1940, 5th Royal Horse Artillery came under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir R. F. Adam, Bt. and took part in the Battle of France. The Battle of France, also known as the Fall of France, was the German invasion of France and the Low Countries during the Second World War, beginning on 10 May 1940, defeating primarily French forces.

In the first operation, *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow), German armoured units pushed through the Ardennes and then along the Somme valley to cut off and surround the Allied units that had advanced into Belgium. When British, Belgian and adjacent French forces were pushed back to the sea by the highly mobile and well-organized German operation, the British government decided to evacuate the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), as well as several French divisions, at Dunkirk, in Operation Dynamo.

The Regiment was formed as 5th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery in 1939 and consisted of K Battery and G Battery (Mercers Troop) RHA.



The War Diary of CC Battery, Royal Horse Artillery records that G Battery (Mercers Troop) RHA were based at Great Dunmow in Essex and an entry for February 1941 records that Gunner C Frank was one of those posted to CC Battery RHA. The Battery continued training under their commanding officer Major Holman, whilst based at Chilton Foliat (on the Berkshire/Wiltshire border, near Hungerford) and participated in exercises on Salisbury Plain.

In May 1941 the Battery moved on to Wotton House, near Dorking. Training continued throughout the winter of 41/42 although mention is made that this, on some days, was hindered by heavy snow. Gunner C Frank is mentioned again as being part of a group who on 20th March 1942 volunteered to walk 10 miles in 2 hours with equipment. The record shows that he took 2 hours 12 minutes and 58 seconds.

On Friday, 1st May 1942 there was an inspection of all ranks, in the grounds of Wotton House, to wish them "Godspeed". On 6th May the Battery left Gomshall Station for the port of embarkation and the following day 'embarked to an unknown destination taking tropical kit'. Christopher's name is listed as one of this party. The Battery embarked from Gourack (Clyde) on *U.S.A.T. Borinquen*, where conditions were rather crowded, but they occupied some of the best quarters on 'A' Deck. "Being an American Ship, no alcohol was allowed on board, and the food, although

good, was rather different from that to which the men had been used.” Training continued, mostly in the form of lectures, as they travelled to Freetown, crossing the Equator, to St Helena and on to Cape Town. They continued up the east coast of Africa arriving in Aden on 30th June 1942. After sailing along the Red Sea they disembarked, on 4th July 1942, in Egypt and were active in fighting around the areas of El Hamman and El Alamein during the last months of that year. On 23rd October, Gunner Frank was admitted to hospital, although no mention is made in the diaries of the reason. The enemy was now beginning to gradually withdraw and the Battery had moved north to the harbour area south of Sidi Abd El Hahman. Christopher re-joined the Battery on 11th November 1942 and by December, the Battery had moved on to Agedabia, Libya.

On Christmas Day 1942, dinner was served followed by a singsong.

Christmas Day Menu

Turkey with sausage stuffing
Pork.
Beans and Potatoes.

Christmas Pudding and Rum Sauce.

Iced Christmas Cake.

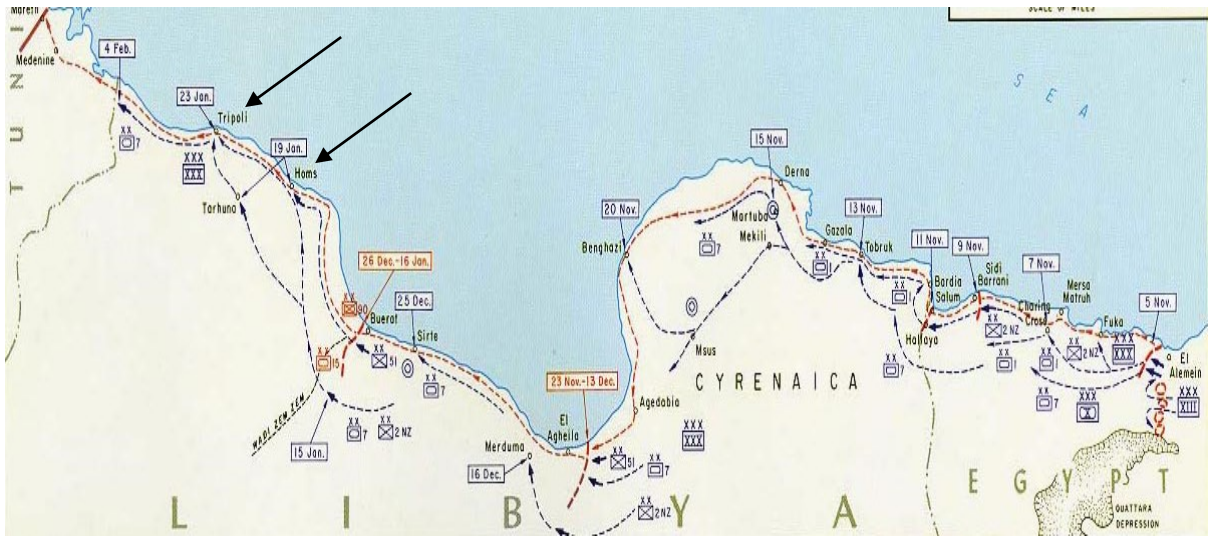
Beer.
Tea and Rum

27th December ‘5 R.H.A. moved with wheeled vehicles of Brigade, by desert route towards Sirte (63 miles)’ In January 1943 preparations were made for the advance to Tripoli and throughout January, February, March and April the Battery continued to move west.

12th May 1943 “Leaguered 2 miles South of Testour and heard on the wireless that all hostilities in North Africa had ceased. Von Arnim and all the remaining Axis forces had surrendered.”

On 24/25th May 1943 the Battery “moved via Sabratha-Zavia - by passing Tripoli onto Homs road to leaguer 23 kilos short of Homs. Distance approx. 130 miles, congestion and traffic blocks being caused by numerous diversions. Moved about ½ mile to more favourable positions in the sea shore.”

“Parties daily visited Homs, where Lt. R.E. Stone. M.C. "CC" Battery R.H.A. in charge of Div. entertainments, had arranged cinema performances, concert parties and W.Os, Sgt and O.Rs clubs.”



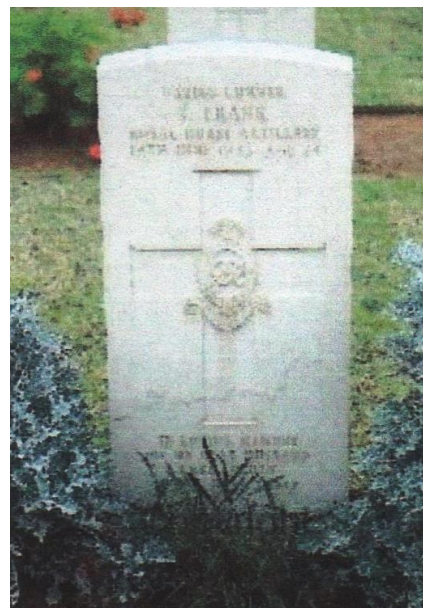
The War Diary, June 1943, of CC Battery Royal Horse Artillery records the death of Christopher. The Commanding Officer Major W.H. Holman made the following entries

14th June 1630 hours: Gnr Frank was drowned while bathing in the sea to the North of the Battery area.

15th June: The body of Gnr Frank was washed ashore. He was buried on the cemetery at HOMS where the funeral service was taken by Capt. Synnott. MC. (C of E Padre).

Gunner Christopher Frank was originally buried at the cemetery in Homs and, as the information below reflects, his body was re-buried on 12th January 1945 in Tripoli War Cemetery, Grave 11.F.23. His headstone includes the words:

"In loving memory of my dear husband Christopher. We'll meet again"



LIBYA 61-52E

LIST OF CORRECTIONS No.85 (PRECEDING LIST DESPATCHED 1.9.45.) SHEET:17/34

C/1318/ 24

CORRECTIONS IN RESPECT OF BURIALS, ETC. REPORTED A.G.13 ON NOMINAL ROLLS.
Concentrations into TRIPOLI (LIBYA) MILITARY CEMETERY. TRIPOLITANIA.

NO.	RANK	NAME(S)	UNIT	REPORTED		CORRECTIONS & REMARKS	DATE OF RE-BURIAL.
				EST	SHEET		
✓ 10680	Pte.	PAYET, A.	Seychelles Par. Corps	51	100	Plot 9, Row C, Grave No.12 Concentrated into TRIPOLI (LIBYA) MIL. CEM. From TRIPOLITANIA: I.S.	12.1.45
TRIPOLITANIA: I.S.							
67.1 ✓	3194270	Pte. GRIERSON, J.	Seaforth	46 CL.44	70 32	Plot 11, Row F, Grave No.22	12.1.45
67.5 ✓	932156	Gnr. FRANK, C.	R.H.A.	86 CL.44	105 32	Plot 11, Row F, Grave No.23	

DEATHS 1939 - 46 (ENTRY FORM)

FORM RH 88

REGT OR CORPS TO WHICH THE PERSON BELONGED AT TIME OF DEATH } B.A. (5th REGT R.H.A.)

Part I	Army No (1)	Rank (2)	Name in full (Surname first) (3)	Age (4)	Country of birth (5)	Date of death (6)	Place of death (7)	Cause of death (8)
	932156	Gnr	FRANK CHRISTOPHER	24	ENGLAND	14/6/43	SOUTHERN TUNISIA MIDDLE EAST	ACCIDENTALLY DROWNED ON DUTY NOT TO BLAME

Part II

1 DECORATIONS - ENTER one in each space

2 PARENT CORPS } i) at time of death B.A. For War Office use 3000
OR REGT } ii) on 1 Sep 1939 R.A. 3000

3 RANK held at time of death Gnr 52

4 PLACE OF BIRTH PICKERING, YORKSHIRE 210

5 PLACE OF DOMICILE HUTTON-LE-HOLL, YORKS 210

6 DATE OF DEATH (in figures, e.g. 11/12/44) Enter in boxes .. DAY MONTH YEAR
14 6 43

7 THEATRE OR COUNTRY WHERE FATAL WOUND SUSTAINED OR DEATH OCCURRED M.F.N.A. For War Office use 3040

Record Office Stamp NB - FOR INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION & DISPOSAL OF FORM RH SEE WOCM 19/GEN/1252/AG 1(Records) DATED 5 SEP 46.

RA RECORD OFFICE (Field Branch)
FOOTE CLAY
KENT

The Cemetery is in the Mansura district of Tripoli, 2.5 kilometres west of the city centre.

During the North African campaign, Tripoli was an important Axis base until taken by Montgomery's forces on 23 January 1943. It then became a hospital centre, and the burials in the war cemetery were almost entirely from the hospitals, which included Nos 2, 48 and 133 General Hospitals from March 1943, and No 89 General Hospital from April 1944.



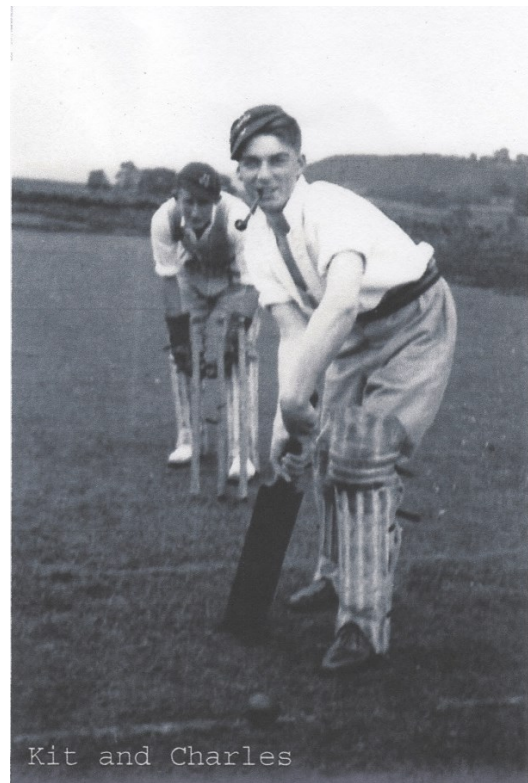
Family History

Christopher, whose birth was registered in Helmsley in the third quarter of 1918, was the son of Herbert and Margaret Ann Frank (nee Swales). Herbert who came originally from Harome, was a farm labourer, and he and Margaret, who was born in Spaunton, were married at St Mary's ,Lastingham, in 1908. Margaret's family were ironstone mine workers and before her marriage to Herbert, she was employed as a parlour maid for the vicar of Beadlam, Rev. Rees. At the time of Christopher's birth the family lived in Hutton le Hole at what is now known as Sunnyside Cottage.

Christopher had four brothers, Leonard, Raymond, Bertram and Harold, and a sister Annie Doreen. Leonard, who played cricket for the village, is pictured on page 62 of the 'History of Hutton le Hole', married Hilda Fletcher in 1932, and died in 1992 at the age of 83. Raymond married Mabel Spenceley in 1930 and died in 2004, at the age of 93.

Christopher attended Hutton Le Hole village school and the photograph below is taken from the school group of 1929, which is shown in the 'History of Hutton le Hole'. Doreen, who was two years younger, is also on the photograph.

Christopher, known as Kit to his family and friends was a keen cricketer and is shown below with his friend, Charles Farrow.



Christopher married Winifred Enid Last at All Saints Church, Springfield, Essex, on Wednesday, 20th November 1940. She was the daughter of Mr and Mrs F Last of 4 Railway Street, Chelmsford. They met whilst he was working as a sawyer and she as a cook for the Gray Family at Gernons, in Springfield.

Entry from the 1939 Survey:

GERNONS	"	"	156	1	GRAY PERRY H	M	1 NOV 69	WV BREWER
	"	"	"	2	ALISON F	F	25 JULY 09	✓ MAID DOMESTIC DUTIES
	"	"	"	3	STEWART DELCIE	F	11 SEP 14	✓ DOMESTIC SERVANT
	"	"	"	4	FRANK ASHCROFT	M	23 MAR 18	✓ - DO -

NRB30 25/10/47
DBP
1.7.46/MC
DDA

H.P.P. Dulson



Winifred, later married William Ashcroft, in Braintree Essex in 1946, and died in June 1960 at the age of 42 years.

Death: Jun. 14, 1943
Inscription:
Royal Horse Artillery
Note: 932156 Burial:
[Tripoli War Cemetery](#)
Tobruk, Libya
Plot: 11. F. 23.



12 November 2011

The representative of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Libya has praised all sides in the recent fighting for not damaging the graves of fallen war heroes.

The war cemetery in Tripoli has been left intact, even after the fierce fighting which raged close by.

The BBC's Karen Allen reported from the Libyan capital.