

Bought for the week

Richard Hagan, Minister, Emmanuel Church, Canterbury

Weekend we had our church at the seaside, playing cricket and laughing at us during Emmanuel's Got

Day we had a visiting who gave a talk about

us all in different ways, it? Worries can wake us up in beds at night and even in the middle of day make knots in our brains. Sometimes we can feel like Atlas, the world on our shoulders. A speaker pointed us to a powerful that we have been eating it to one another in church ever since. A postle Peter wrote: "Cast anxiety on him, because he carries you." (1 Peter 5:7). Lord God carries the weight on his shoulders. Do you know what? Blessings for all of his creatures, they are a little sparrow, a bee or a wounded soul. Blessing for us is seen in all that we do, we are worth living, but there is a blessing where his care just takes us away. Blessings for his world so much came to earth to save us, he cares how all live - and why there is a final judgment after we die. He cares so much that Jesus fought hell on the cross so don't have to when we die, to adopt us as his own, welcoming us into heaven.

# The story of Percy, who went to war by bicycle

## Way we were



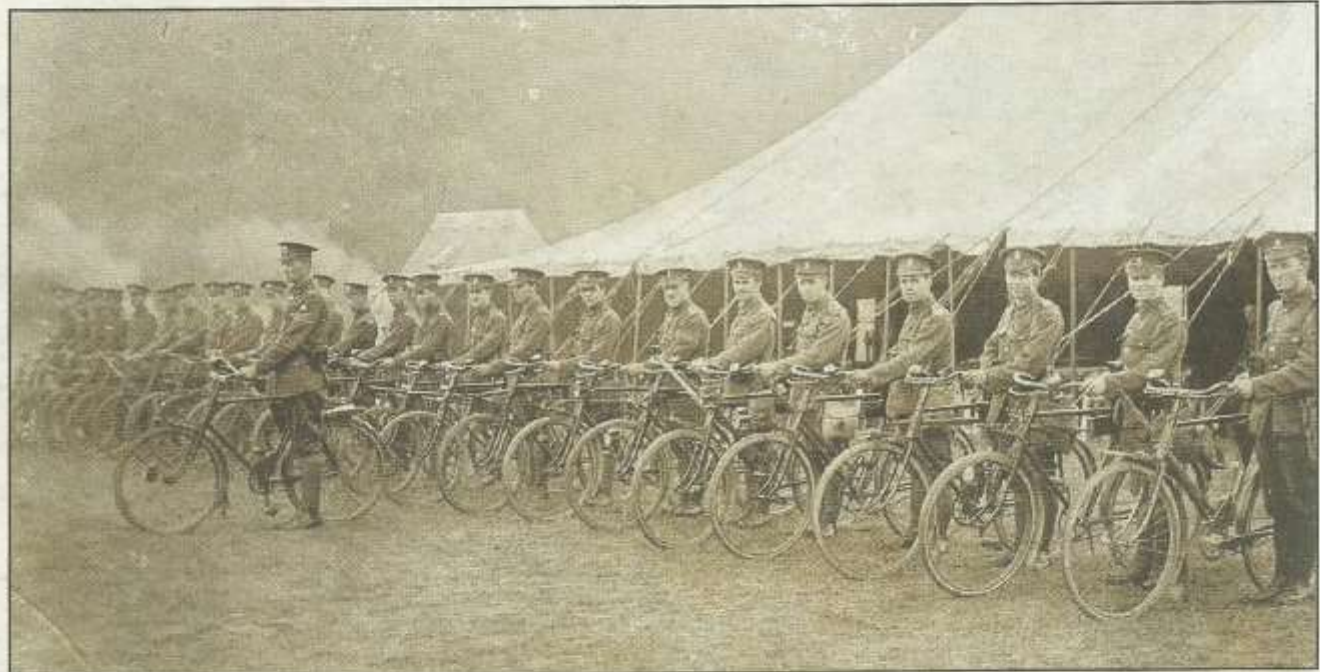
David Lewis  
Canterbury  
Historical and  
Archaeological  
Society

PERCY James Fairbrass was born in Canterbury in 1898, second son of George Fairbrass, a platelayer on the railways. His mother Mary Ann died in 1902 aged 34, and by 1911 Percy had acquired a stepmother, Jane, at their home in St Jacob's Place off Wincheap Road (now rebuilt as Priory of St Jacob).

On May 12, 1916, Percy, aged 18 years and three days, walked into the new Drill Hall off St Peter's Lane (built in 1912) and signed up with the Kent Cyclist Battalion "for the duration of the war". Percy may well have seen advertisements inviting those fond of cycling to "cycle for the King". Recruits had to be at least 5ft 2ins tall, but apparently (according to this poster) "bad teeth no bar".

He could not have known this would lead to his death two years later in India, recorded for posterity on a memorial in Canterbury Cathedral.

The battalion had been formed in 1908, one of ten original Territorial



ON PARADE: The cycle battalion in Bridge in June 1916. However, the unit was less effective abroad and became infantry later that year

cyclist battalions. Recruits were part-time but took part in an annual 15-day camp and were responsible for patrolling the Kent coastline. A grant of £1 10s 6d (£1.52) a year

was made for cycle maintenance. Surviving post cards show their rifles secure in special clips on each bike. Parade instructions were precise: a cyclist at attention will "grasp the left steering handle with his left hand and place the right hand at the point of the saddle, elbow to the rear".

The cycling element, no doubt effective for running messages and patrolling Kent lanes, proved of less value in foreign battlefields.



drowsy bed of a wounded soldier. His care for us is seen in all that makes life worth living, but there is one place where his care just takes our breath away.

He cares for his world so much that he came to earth to save us. Yes, he cares how all live - and that is why there is a final judgement after we die.

But he cares so much that Jesus went through hell on the cross so that we don't have to when we die, offering to adopt us as his own children, welcoming us into heaven.

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On November 5, 1918, just six days before the end of the war, he died in the military rest station of Dagshai, not of war wounds but of pneumonia.

In 1920 a memorial tablet was placed in the military church at the nearby garrison town of Ferozapore.

It contained 41 names, including Percy's. Other records suggest that 14 men (including Percy) died from pneumonia, 14 from "unknown disease", four from influenza, three from fever, two from heatstroke and two from malaria. One drowned and only one died from war wounds.

By 1950 there were concerns that the church might be destroyed - the memorial was brought to England by the Battalion Old Comrades' Association and placed on the south wall of Canterbury Cathedral nave.

Meanwhile, the Drill Hall (now



**BAD TEETH NO BAR:** The recruitment poster



**BATTALION REMEMBERED:** The memorial on the south wall of the Canterbury Cathedral nave

Westgate Hall) renovation is under way, and we look forward to a new community hall and Curzon cinema.

When you enjoy your first Curzon film later this year, do please spare a thought for brave Percy and his family.



**READY FOR ACTION:** The troops relaxing in St Lawrence Road Canterbury, Easter 1916



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