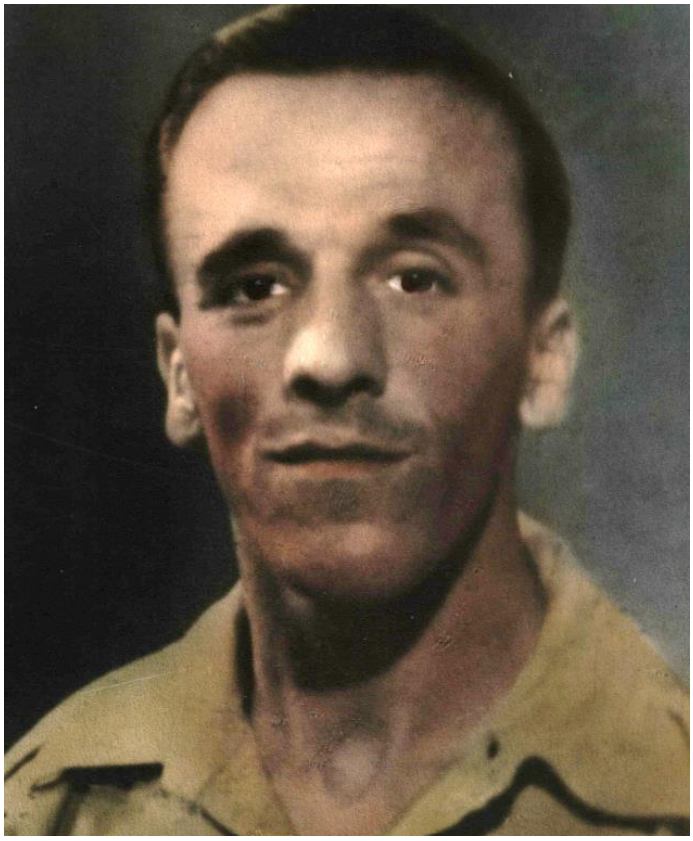
FARRANT, Bertie Reggie



1828108, Private
6th Battalion, The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)
Place of Birth: Haverhill
Killed in Action: Wednesday, 15th November 1944
Cemetery: Faenza War Cemetery
Aged: 29 years



Bertie Reggie Farrant was born on 21st February 1915, at 42 Eden Road Haverhill. He was the fourth child of George Robert Farrant and his wife Laura Anne nee Mason and he grew up with his brothers George, Arthur and Harry, and a sister Lily.

Bertie's father George was employed in the building trade and worked locally.

The children were lucky to have their grandfather, also named George Farrant, not far away living in Mill Road until his death in 1922.

The family moved to newly built 12 Helions Park Avenue.



Bertie's sister in law, Ann Farrant, remembers him as "a very shy person who loved the outdoor life, gardening and keeping chickens. In the entry for 12 Helions Park Avenue in the 1939 Register we learn that Arthur and Bertie were both employed as Public Works Contractor labourers.

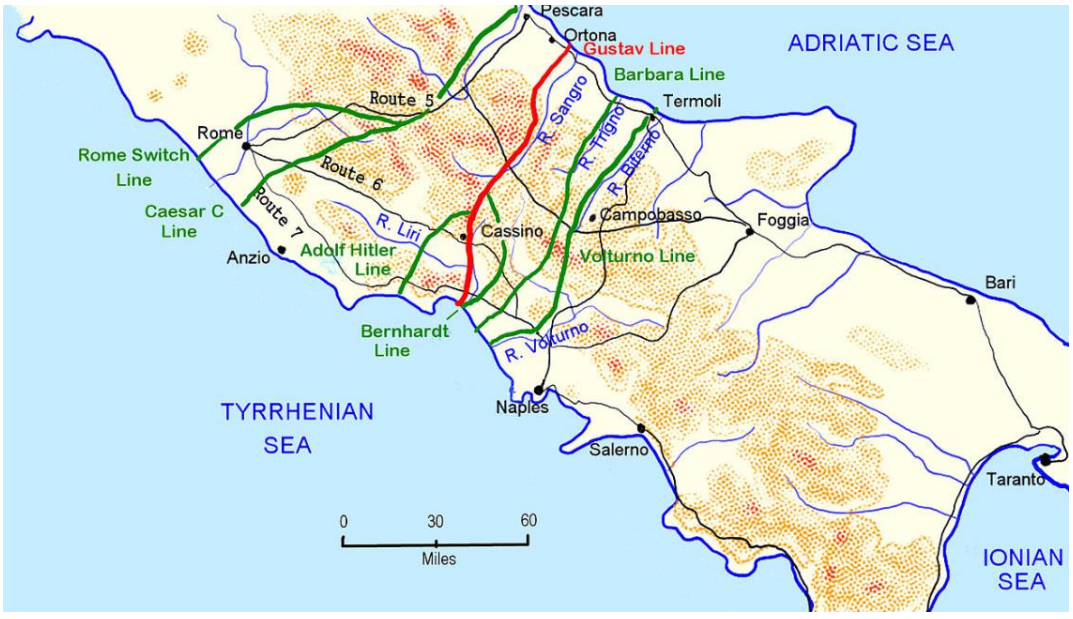
Ann recalls that on leaving school "Bert worked on the land, and was actually exempt from the forces due to the work he was doing but he wanted to serve his country." She was unsure when Bertie enlisted but

records of his military service gained in 2000 show that he enlisted on 26th June 1941 as a member of various Royal Artillery Regiments and Batteries. On 29th December 1941 he joined the 495 Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery, stationed at Gloucester. Ann was in the A.T.S. attached to the Royal Artillery and it was whilst on leave that she met her future husband, Harry who was Bertie's brother. It was a small world for Ann and Bertie discovered that they were both based in the same camp. On 28th October 1943, Bertie was transferred to the Suffolk Regiment and posted to No 3 Infantry Training Centre and the 8th Battalion Suffolk Regiment. On 27th May 1944, he was posted to the 6th Battalion, Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Deemed to have been enlisted into the Royal Artillery embodied Territorial Army	26.06.41
Posted to the 10th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery	26.06.41
Posted to 205 (Mixed) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Training Regiment	25.11.41
Posted to 495 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery	29.12.41
Posted to 143 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment	02.02.42
Permanently attached to 51 Primary Training Wing	07.10.43
Transferred to the Suffolk Regiment and posted to No.3 Infantry Training Centre	28.10.43
Posted to 8th Battalion	01.02.44
Transferred to the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment and posted to the 6th Battalion	27.05.44

From 2nd May to 16th July 1944, Bertie served overseas with the North Africa Force, followed by two months in the Middle East. From 7th September 1944, his battalion saw action with the Central Mediterranean Force.

As the Allies moved up from the toe of Italy, Bertie saw action at Monte Cassino, which was fought over four main battles between 17th January and 18th May 1944.

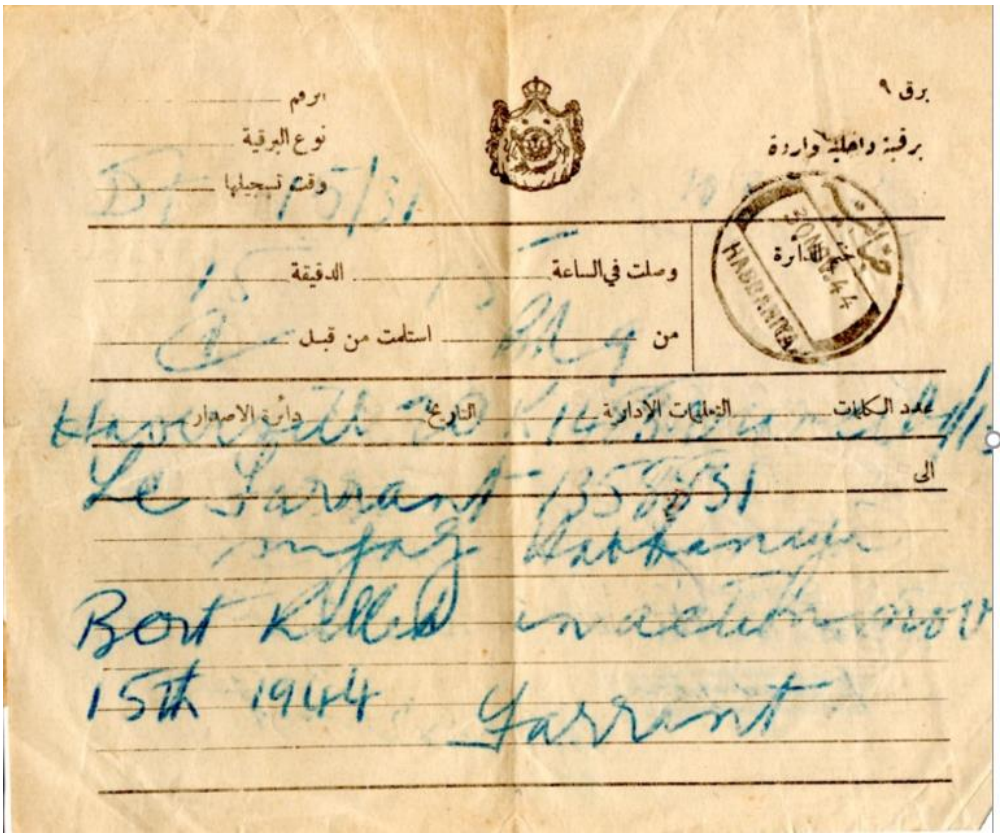


Fighting was intense as they tried to break through the German lines before moving north to Rome and beyond.

In the period from June to August 1944, the Allies advanced beyond Rome, taking Florence and closing up on the Gothic Line. This last major defensive line ran from the coast some 30 miles (48 km) north of Pisa, along the jagged Apennine Mountains range between Florence and Bologna to the Adriatic coast, just south of Rimini. During the advance from Rimini to Forli and beyond in September-November 1944, advances crossed one flooded river after another in atrocious autumn weather.

Bertie Reggie lost his life on 15th November 1944. Sister in law, Ann, recalls that Bertie and two companions were in a trench when it was hit by enemy fire. The graves of Bertie and Pte Fullarton, both of the 6th Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, are in the Faenza War Cemetery near Florence. They both died on the same date so it is likely that they were together in the trench.

A treasured family momento is this telegram that the family received informing them of Bertie's death. It was sent on 30th November from Royal Air Force Station Habbaniya, (originally RAF Dhibban). This was about 55 miles (89 km) west of Baghdad in modern-day Iraq, on the banks of the Euphrates near Lake Habbaniyah. It was sent by the future husband of Bertie's sister Lily, Doctor (known as Don) Stevenson, who was serving here when he learnt of the family loss.

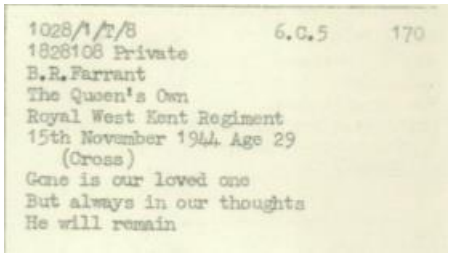

برق ٩
برقية داخلية واردة
الرقم
نوع البرقية
وقت تسجيلها
ختم الدائرة
وصلت في الساعة
الدقيقة
من
استلمت من قبل
عدد الكلمات
التعليمات الادارية
التاريخ
دائرة الاصدار
الى
Le Farrant 1358831
Bert Killed in action nov
15th 1944
Farrant

The South West Suffolk Echo of 15th December reported:

Officer Tribute – The parents of the late Pte B Farrant of the Royal West Kent Regiment, whose death on active service in Italy was reported in a recent issue, have this week received a letter from his Platoon Officer, Lieutentant L T Brooker, dated November 29th, giving fuller details of his death. The letter states that Pte Farrant was killed by a mortar bomb on November 15th and that death was instantaneous. He was buried by friends on a small hill called Cassetta, about three miles north of the village of Apollinaro, which is north of Castel Del Rio. A white wooden cross, erected by the writer marking his grave. The letter goes on to say, I had a great liking for your son. We had gone through good and bad times, and recently been in some of the hardest fighting imaginable. He was a very steady and reliable soldier, and took all hardships as they came and never lost his temper. He was very popular in his platoon."



This photo shows the original cross that marked Reggie's grave.


1028/1/T/8 6.C.5 170
1828108 Private
B.R.Farrant
The Queen's Own
Royal West Kent Regiment
15th November 1944 Age 29
(Cross)
Gone is our loved one
But always in our thoughts
He will remain

Reggie was finally laid to rest in Faenza War Cemetery.

When the original cross was replaced, his family had the following inscription added to his headstone:

GONE IS OUR LOVED ONE
BUT ALWAYS IN OUR THOUGHTS
HE WILL REMAIN



photos: Commonwealth War Graves Commission



With sincere thanks to Ann Farrant and her daughter, Lauraine MacPhee, for sharing their memories, photos and information about Bertie Reggie Farrant.