



Second Lieutenant Frank Esmund Alexander



Machine Gun Corps (infantry)

Died 27 July 1916

Age 27

Frank Esmund Alexander died aged 27 in France whilst serving with the Machine Gun Corps (MGC). The Machine Gun Corps, formed in October 1915, was one of the few 'war raised' units, having no existence prior to the conflict, and suffered the ignominy of being disbanded entirely in 1922.

In its short history, the MGC gained an enviable record for heroism as a front line fighting force and 7 members were awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War. A total of 170,500 officers and men served in the MGC, suffering 62,049 casualties, including 12,498 killed, earning it the nickname 'the Suicide Club'.

There is a memorial to the MGC at Hyde Park Corner, known as 'The Boy David Memorial'. The memorial was originally erected in 1925 next to Grosvenor Place but was dismantled in 1945 due to roadworks and rededicated in its present location in 1963. The statue is flanked on either side by a real Vickers machine gun, encased in bronze and laurel-wreathed. The inscription reads 'Erected to commemorate the glorious heroes of the Machine Gun Corps who fell in the Great War', with the additional words from the bible (1 Samuel 18:7): "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands".

Frank was born in 1889, the second youngest of 5 children of Henry and Caroline Alexander. In 1911 the family is recorded in the census as living at 300 Upper Richmond Road, Putney when Frank is listed as being a Coachhouseman and his father a Box-Salesman. By the time of Frank's death in 1916 the family were living at 33 Erpingham Road, Putney.

Frank is buried in the St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen in grave reference: Officers A.5.9.

SERVICE NUMBER: Unknown