

In Memory of Trooper Percy Wilfred Chase

1888 - 1916

(Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, the Blues)

Age: 28

Parents: Jonas Chase & Emma Marie Hazelwood

Conflict: World War I, The Great War

Country Enlisted In: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Country of Death: Département de la Somme, Hauts-de-France, France

Relation: Paternal 4th Cousin 2X Removed



Trooper Percy Wilfred Chase was twenty-eight years old when he gave his life during the First World War. He had enlisted in the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, known simply as The Blues, one of the most prestigious regiments of the British Army and a proud part of the Household Cavalry that had served kings and country for centuries. When Percy joined, the regiment still carried with it the old image of proud horsemen — soldiers who rode into history with reconnaissance patrols, ceremonial duties, and in past wars the thunder of the cavalry charge. But by the time he reached the Western Front in 1916, that world had disappeared. The trench lines of France, strung with barbed wire and swept by machine-gun fire, left no room for cavalry in the old sense. Horse Guards now fought dismounted, trudging through the same mud and danger as every other infantryman.

The summer of 1916 brought the Somme, a battle meant to break the deadlock of the Western Front. On the first of July, the offensive opened in slaughter — tens of thousands of British soldiers fell on a single day, the greatest loss in the nation's history. For weeks the offensive dragged on, tearing up the villages and farmlands of Picardy into a wasteland of broken trees, cratered ground, and unending barrages. Cavalry regiments like Percy's waited for the elusive breakthrough that never came. Instead, the Blues were sent forward in the role of infantry, holding trenches,



*Royal Regiment of Horse
Guards, known as The Blues
AI Generated Image*

reinforcing shattered units, and enduring the ceaseless crash of German artillery.

For Percy, the days were filled with labour and danger: standing sentry in trenches filled with water to the knees, hauling supplies across ground raked by fire, repairing wire and parapets under the glare of enemy flares, and always listening for the whistle of shells that could end a life in an instant. The nights were little better, spent stumbling through darkness with ammunition boxes or digging new firing steps into sodden earth. Men collapsed from exhaustion, yet were roused again by the next bombardment or the cry of “Stand to!” at dawn.

By August, the fighting focused on the villages of Pozières and Guillemont, where the ground shook under unbroken artillery fire. The air itself seemed filled with smoke and dust, and the men lived in a constant haze of sound and fear. In those days the German guns never rested. Trenches collapsed, dugouts caved in, and men were buried alive as the shells fell hour after hour. In the week before the seventeenth of August, the bombardments grew worse, counterattacks more fierce, and the casualty lists longer with each passing day.

It was in that maelstrom that Percy was killed. The manner of his death was never recorded — perhaps a shell fragment tore through the trench where he stood, or a sniper’s bullet struck unseen, or the very walls of the earth collapsed around him. What is known is that on the 17th of August 1916, Trooper Percy Wilfred Chase lost his life on the Somme, one among thousands claimed in that long and terrible summer. Unlike so many of his comrades who were swallowed into the churned fields with no trace, Percy was given a grave. He rests at Forceville Communal Cemetery and Extension, one of the first burial grounds created by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. There, among the rolling fields of northern France, his headstone stands in line with the others, watched over by the Cross of Sacrifice and the quiet larks above.



*Forceville Communal Cemetery and Extension
Département de la Somme, Hauts-de-France, France
Find a Grave 17072800*

The ground that once shook with gunfire is now peaceful, tended with care, each stone a testament to lives cut short.

Percy's story is one of tradition transformed by war. He had joined a regiment whose history was written in cavalry charges, yet he died as an infantryman in the mud of France. At twenty-eight his life ended far from home, but his name and his grave endure. His sacrifice is remembered not only within the proud history of the Royal Horse Guards, but also within the greater story of the Somme, where countless men endured horror with steadfast courage. Today, among the rows of white stones in that quiet place, Trooper Percy Wilfred Chase remains — honoured, remembered, and part of the enduring legacy of the Great War.