

# **Sutton Veny**

## **Roll of Honour**



*Lest we Forget*

### **World War II**



**553352 SERJEANT**

**H. S. PICKFORD**

**THE ROYAL WILTSHIRE YEOMANRY**

**ROYAL ARMOURED CORPS**

**2ND NOVEMBER, 1942 AGE 28**

*Rest In Peace*

## Hubert Samuel PICKFORD

Hubert Samuel Pickford's birth was registered in the March quarter, 1914 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire. His mother's maiden name was listed as Tisseman. His parents – George Ashby Pickford & Mabel Sophia Tisseman had married in the district of Frome, Somerset & their marriage was registered in the September quarter, 1907.

Before Hubert's birth, the 1911 Census recorded Hubert's parents as George Pickford (Cattle dealer, aged 27, born Wellow, Somerset) & Mabel Pickford (aged 28, born Bath, Somerset) living at Botany Farm, Warminster which had 9 rooms. George & Mabel had been married for 3 years & had 2 children – George (aged 2, born Corsley) & Bernard (aged 1 month, born Sutton Veny). Also listed with the family was Frederick Pickford – brother of George Pickford (Cattle Dealer, also aged 27), Catherine Lewis (Nurse, aged 26) & Dorothy Ball (aged 15, Servant – Domestic).

The Kelly's Directory for 1939 lists George Ashby Pickford as a farmer living at Greenhill Farm which was noted as being a farm of 150 acres or over.

Hubert Samuel Pickford enlisted with the Royal Armoured Corps of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry. He was given the service number of 553352. His place of birth & residence were both listed as Wiltshire.

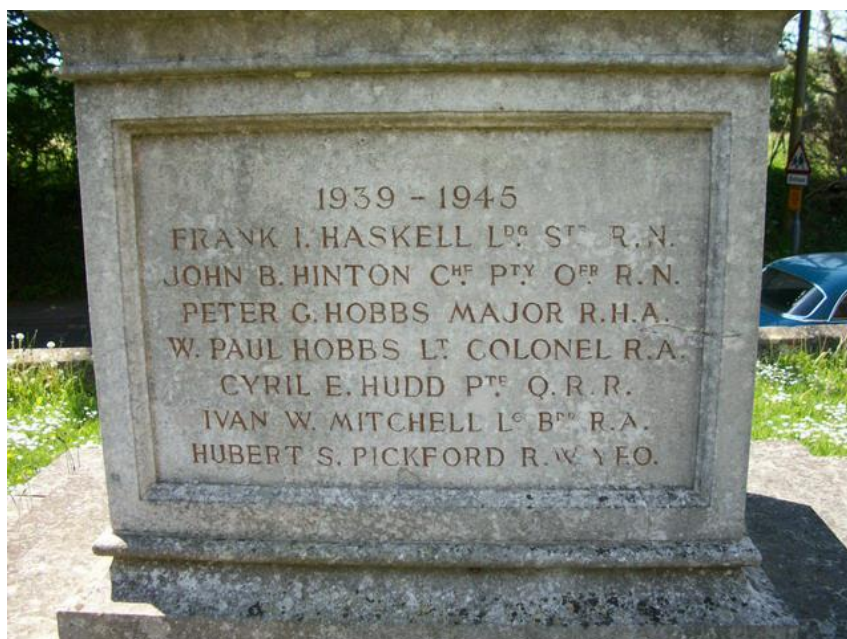
Serjeant Hubert Samuel Pickford died on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1942, aged 28 years.

Serjeant Hubert Samuel Pickford is buried in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt – Grave No. VI. G. 20. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission & UK Army Roll of Honour list Serjeant Hubert Samuel Pickford, 553352, as being the son of George Ashby Pickford and Mabel Sophie Pickford of Sutton Veny, Wiltshire. He was aged 28 & was serving with the Royal Armoured Corps, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry. Theatre of War – Middle East.

Administration was granted at Winchester on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1943 – "Pickford Hubert Samuel of Greenhill Farm, Sutton Veny near Warminster died 2 November, 1942 on War Service". Granted to George Ashby Pickford, farmer Effects £653 14s. 10d.

Hubert S. Pickford is remembered on the Sutton Veny War Memorial, located in the foreground of St. John the Evangelist Church at Sutton Veny.





**Sutton Veny War Memorial** (Photos by Andrea Charlesworth 2012)

#### **NEWSPAPER ARTICLE:**

##### **Wilts Yeoman Who Worked at Bath**

Sergt. Hubert Pickford, of the Wilts Yeomanry, whose home was at Sutton Veny, is reported killed in the Middle East. He was for over a year with Messrs W. J. Holloway and Sons, butchers, of Southgate Street, Bath. He later went to Warminster to take charge of Messrs Chinn Bros., which is owned by his father in partnership with another brother.

Sergt. Pickford went with the regiment to the Middle East in February, 1940, and saw service with them in Persia before the Yeomanry became attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. He was 28 years of age and was the third son of Mr and Mrs G. Pickford of Greenhill Farm, Sutton Veny.

(*Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* – 5 December, 1942)

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**Sergt. Hubert Pickford** - Royal Wilts Yeomanry, Killed in the Battle of Tel Aqqaqir Nov 2 1942. He was driving the C.O.'s Sherman which was hit and he was killed by machine gun fire while bailing out. His C.O. and Captain Thursfield survived (*Photo with Information from Nic Pickford*)

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### **El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt**

Alamein is a village, bypassed by the main coast road, approximately 130 kilometres west of Alexandria on the road to Mersa Matruh.

The campaign in the Western Desert was fought between the Commonwealth forces (with, later, the addition of two brigades of Free French and one each of Polish and Greek troops) all based in Egypt, and the Axis forces (German and Italian) based in Libya. The battlefield, across which the fighting surged back and forth between 1940 and 1942, was the 1,000 kilometres of desert between Alexandria in Egypt and Benghazi in Libya. It was a campaign of manoeuvre and movement, the objectives being the control of the Mediterranean, the link with the east through the Suez Canal, the Middle East oil supplies and the supply route to Russia through Persia.

El Alamein War Cemetery contains the graves of men who died at all stages of the Western Desert campaigns, brought in from a wide area, but especially those who died in the Battle of El Alamein at the end of October 1942 and in the period immediately before that.

The cemetery now contains 7,240 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, of which 815 are unidentified. There are also 102 war graves of other nationalities. (CWGC)



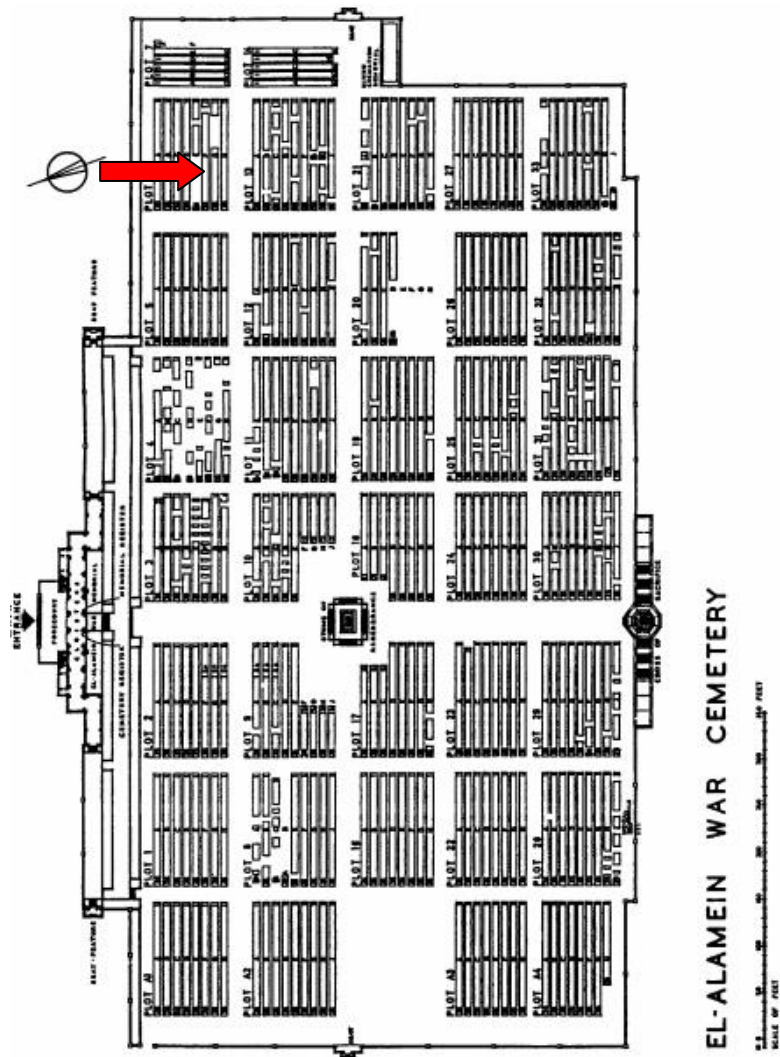
Photo of Serjeant H. S. Pickford's Headstone in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt.



*(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)*



El Alamein War Cemetery (Photos from CWGC)



## **Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry (RWY)**

In the Second World War, the regiment fought in the Middle East, seeing action in Syria against Vichy French forces, as well as operations in Iraq and Iran. It then joined 9th Armoured Brigade, seeing action in North Africa and Italy. With this formation it took part in the Second Battle of El Alamein, spearheading the break-out of the 2nd New Zealand Division during Operation Supercharge on 2 November 1942.

### **El Alamein – Supercharge**

On the night of 1/2 November 1942, the 8th Army attacked again in the north, with 2nd New Zealand Division in the lead. General Freyberg placed 151 Brigade on the right and 152 Brigade on the left. The aim was to attack directly westwards across the Rahman track, with the infantry leading the night assault and 9th Armoured Brigade (now commanded by Brigadier John Currie) again passing through to break the enemy gun line and allow X Corps to break out. The assault went to plan except that opposition on the left was heavier than expected which slowed the advance. As a result, the advancing tanks were highlighted against the dawn sky in the east and began to be picked off by Axis anti-tank fire. The Regiment was in the centre of 9th Armoured Brigade, and the CO lost touch with both his artillery support and close anti-tank support. In the growing light, the B squadron commander (Major M. StJ. V. Gibbs) realised that he was in a ring of enemy anti-tank guns, ahead and to both flanks. He gave the order to 'Charge' and B squadron overran the anti-tank positions, losing some vehicles but destroying the enemy gun line. Meanwhile 21st Panzer Division was counter-attacking A and C squadrons and at 4pm the Regiment (now down to four tanks) was withdrawn. 1st Armoured Division from X Corps were just behind 9th Armoured Brigade but there were no liaison officers between the units and 1st Armoured did not take the opportunity to push on through the broken Axis gun-line.

After the 9th Armoured Brigade's action, Brigadier Gentry of the 6th New Zealand Brigade went ahead to survey the scene. On seeing Brigadier Currie asleep on a stretcher, he approached him saying, 'Sorry to wake you John, but I'd like to know where your tanks are?' Currie waved his hand at a group of tanks around him, replying 'There they are.' Gentry was puzzled. 'I don't mean your headquarters tanks, I mean your armoured regiments. Where are they?' Currie waved his arm and again replied, 'There are my armoured regiments, Bill.'

Nevertheless, the assault of 2nd New Zealand Division had drawn in both 15 and 21 Panzer Divisions, with the result that there was a wide gap in the Axis lines to the south west. Through this gap Montgomery pushed the remainder of his armour, breaking the Afrika Korps line and pushing westwards into its rear areas and supply lines. By 4 November, the battle was won and Montgomery was entertaining the captured Afrika Korps commander, von Thoma to dinner in his caravan.

In an account of the battle published to mark its 25th anniversary, Montgomery wrote:

*I must mention the magnificent fight put up by 9th Armoured Brigade — 3rd Hussars, Wiltshire Yeomanry, Warwickshire Yeomanry.... If the British armour owed any debt to the infantry of 8th army, the debt was paid on November 2nd by 9th Armoured Brigade in heroism and blood...*

*(Wikipedia)*