

## War Memorial – The Green, Castle Bromwich

### World War II 1939-1945

#### Private Albert Tonks (1909-1944) 14505589 Army Catering Corps. died aged 35



Albert was born on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1908 to parents William and Milly Tonks (née Tongue). By 1911, the family including parents and elder brothers Edward and William were living at 179 Grove Cottages, Cotterills Lane.

The 1939 Electoral Register has Albert living with the Potter family at 902 Kingsbury Road, Birmingham and working as a wholesale and retail fruitier. He married Margaret Dora Smith in 1941.

Albert joined the Army Catering Corps who were responsible for the feeding of all Army units. It was originally formed in March 1941 as part of the Royal

Army Service Corps.

January 1944 in Italy, as the Allied offensive was facing the formidable obstacle of Monte Cassino, an amphibious assault to the north at Anzio, codenamed Operation Shingle, was designed to open the way to Rome. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1944 Allied forces landed almost without opposition. The British 1st Division, supported by Commandos, landed to the north, with the US 3rd Infantry Division, along with US Rangers, to the south. Meanwhile, eight German divisions rushed to close off Anzio, surrounding the Allied forces.

A long-awaited attempt to break out from the beachhead began on 30 January. By then, German defences were well-prepared, and concentrated mortar, artillery and machine-gun fire held back the assault, while exhausted Allied soldiers clung on in hastily constructed forward positions, subjected to frequent counter-attacks. Constant tension and deteriorating weather conditions took their toll on the battle-weary soldiers, now fighting an unexpected defensive war in trenches and dugouts. Nowhere was beyond the range of German artillery and the Luftwaffe, which continuously harassed Allied shipping and soldiers alike, particularly at night.

Albert died on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1944 aged 35. It was reported to the War Office Casualty Branch on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1944 (list no 1415) that he died of his wounds.

He is remembered at Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio Citta Metropolitana di Roma Capitale, Lazio, Italy, the cross is inscribed *"Never forgotten by his everlasting wife Margaret, mother and father-in-law. Death hides but cannot divide."* He is also commemorated at the war memorial at The Green, Castle Bromwich.

*Prepared by Alan Fewtrell 2019  
alan.fewtrell1957@gmail.com*



*Anzio harbour February 1944*