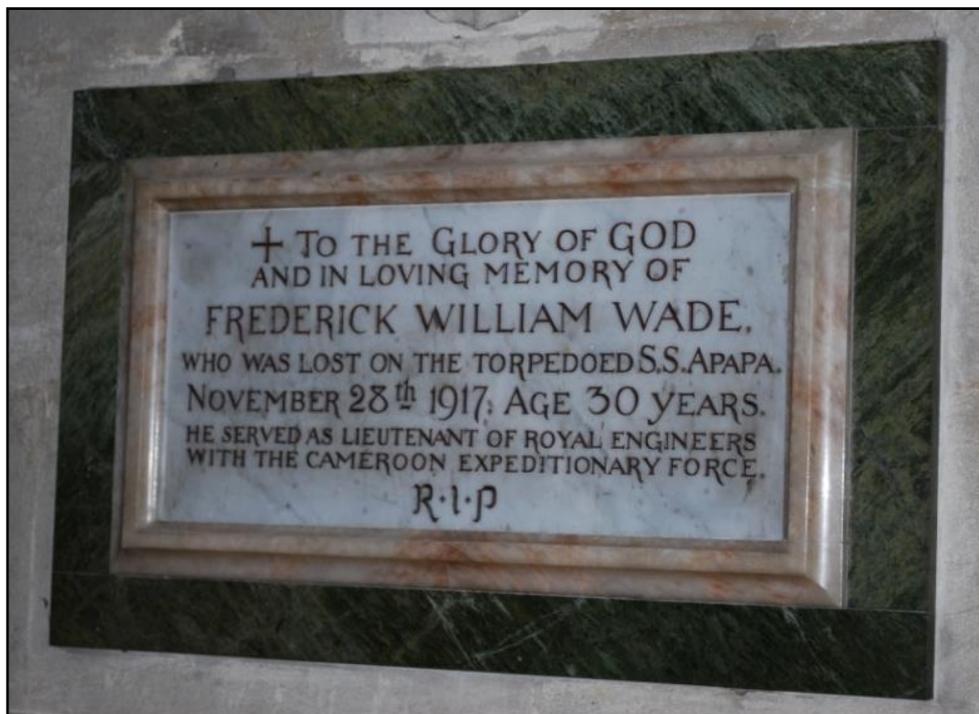


THE MONUMENTS OF St MARY'S CHURCH, FAIRFORD - 13

FREDERICK WILLIAM WADE (1887-1917)

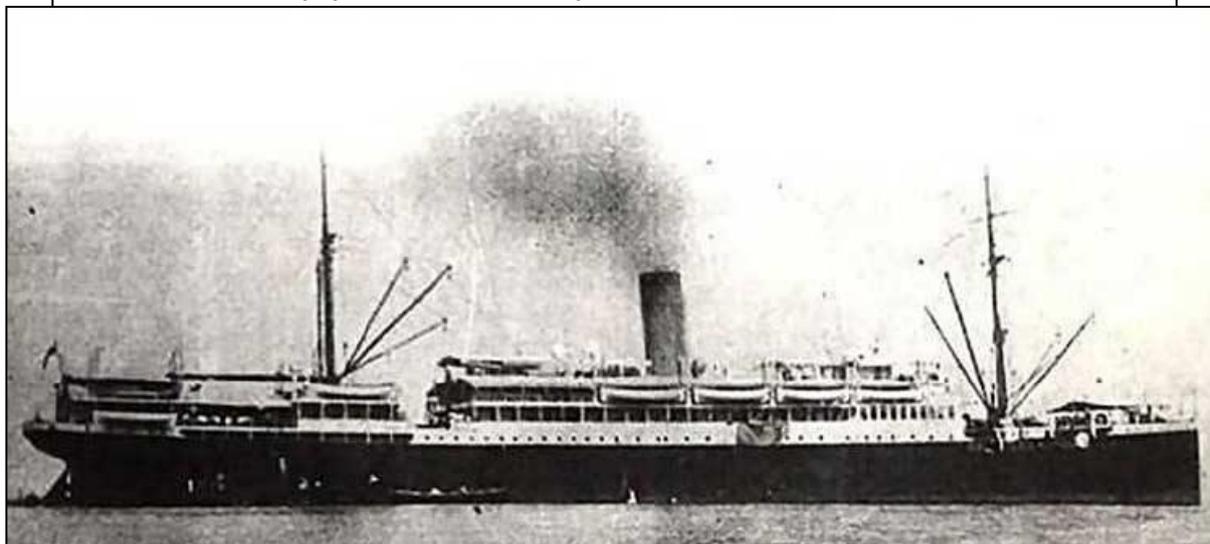


Frederick William Wade was born in Cheltenham on 5 February 1887, the eldest of the four children of John Wade and his wife Mary Jeanetta Clifton. John Wade is recorded in the 1881 Census as a clock and watch maker working for his father in Kineton, Warwickshire but by 1891 John had become one of Fairford's police constables living in Milton Street. John Wade resigned from the police force in January 1894 after seven years' service and became the relieving officer for the Cirencester Poor law Union and the registrar for births, marriages and deaths for Fairford.

In March 1901 at the age of 14 Frederick joined the Great Western Railway Company and worked at first in the telegraphic department in Oxford. Later appointments with the GWR included positions at Rogerstone (Monmouthshire), Stourbridge, Reading, Windsor and Paddington. In 1909 he was appointed traffic superintendent of the Nigerian Railway, an arduous job in a difficult terrain and climate. In September 1914, soon after the outbreak of the Great War, he was commissioned as a Temporary Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers attached to the Nigerian Regiment and he accompanied an Anglo-French force to the German territory of Cameroon as railway traffic superintendent. Lieutenant Wade commanded a troop of men from the Nigerian Railway and took command of the railway stations at Doula and Bonaberi. The few railway lines in existence in Cameroon were vital for the movement of troops and supplies during the campaign and needed constant repair and maintenance. Frederick Wade received a mention in dispatches by Lieutenant General Sir Charles Dobell, the commander of the Cameroon Expeditionary Force, for his work in Cameroon. On 11 August 1915, during one of his periodic visits to Britain, Frederick married Miss Emily Frances Isobel Wargent whose late father had been the wine butler in the Royal Household at Windsor Castle. His new wife remained in England while Frederick returned to Nigeria to continue his work with the railway.

Following the end of the campaign in Cameroon in 1916 Frederick Wade returned to his civil duties on the railway in Nigeria and relinquished his commission on 4 October 1916 but retained his rank as a Lieutenant under the West African Frontier Force in case further service was required. In November 1917 Frederick embarked on the SS *Apapa*, a 7,832-ton Elder Dempster passenger liner, to return home to Britain for a spell of leave. The vessel was sailing on its regular route to Liverpool and had almost reached port safely when at 4:10 on the morning of 28 November it was torpedoed by a German U-boat, the U-96, and sank three miles northeast of Lynas Point, Anglesey. Frederick's actions during the event are recorded by a fellow passenger, Mr C Carnegie Brown, who survived to write a long, detailed letter to Wade's mother, telling her of her son's gallant actions. When the torpedo struck, Mr Brown went along to the cabin of a missionary, a Mr Babcock, and his family as the missionary had been unwell and was unable to assist his wife and children. There Mr Brown found Frederick Wade already assisting Mrs Babcock and her two small children and baby. Frederick led the family to their lifeboat and made sure they were safely on board before heading to his own assigned lifeboat on the other side of the ship. Soon afterwards a second torpedo struck the *Apapa*, which began to list badly and Frederick's lifeboat could not be launched. Happily, the entire Babcock family survived the ordeal and Mr Brown credits their survival to the selfless actions of Frederick Wade. A total of 38 passengers and 39 crewmen died in the incident but 178 were saved. Unfortunately, Frederick was not one of the survivors and his body was never found.

The SS Apapa – launched 30 September 1914, sunk 28 November 1917



A memorial plaque in a variety of coloured marble was erected in the Corpus Christi Chapel of St Mary's Church, Fairford in 1918 to commemorate the life of Frederick William Wade. Curiously, Frederick Wade is not recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission nor is he listed in the book 'Officers Died in the Great War'. This might indicate that Frederick's commission in the Royal Engineers had ceased having been temporarily granted only during the period of service with the Cameroon Expeditionary Force, although the London Gazette records his re-appointment as a Temporary Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers on 13 July 1917. In contemporary newspapers Frederick's address is given at his death as 26 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester (the same street where Frederick's father died in 1930) so he and his wife must have left Fairford after their marriage. However, the address in the probate announcement was given as 33 Adelaide Square, Windsor but this was probably because Frederick's wife had returned home to her family after her husband's death. Although Frederick William Wade is not listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission his name is carved on the war memorial in the churchyard along with 33 other men from Fairford who died during the First World War.