

CORPORAL ALBERT HENRY ASKEW

3777, 2nd/5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 28 on 31 August 1916

Buried with honour in *Laventie Military Cemetery, La Gorgue, France*; II F 12

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Laventie Military Cemetery,
France*



Cpl. A. H. Askew
[Devereux & Sacker]



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

ALBERT HENRY ASKEW was born in 1888 in Cheltenham to Henry Askew and Fanny (formerly Young). Henry came from Gloucester whilst Fanny was born in Kempsey, Worcestershire. On both the 1891 and 1901 Census returns, Fanny and Albert were living in Cheltenham with Fanny's father, a wheelwright from Southampton. In 1891 Henry was working as a lamplighter but, in 1901 and 1911, he was listed as a patient in hospital, in Horton Road, Gloucester; he died eventually in 1940 at the age of 79. Henry was not mentioned on Albert's CWGC commemoration on which his mother was styled, as if widowed, Mrs. F. Askew of 75 Upton Street, Gloucester. Although Albert was a Cheltonian, he was remembered in Tewkesbury because he worked for six years with Alexander Moore, Dental Surgeon, of Abbey View House. In 1911 he was a dental assistant living at 48 Burton Street, Cheltenham, with his mother and sister. He was not recorded as a Volunteer in the Abbey but is commemorated in Tewkesbury on the usual memorials, in Gloucester on the Cenotaph, and in Cheltenham on the War Memorial and the Parish School Roll of Honour.

Albert enlisted in Gloucester in the Gloucestershire Regiment, sometime in December 1914 judging by his army service number. He was posted to the 2nd/5th Battalion, a Territorial unit formed in September 1914 when the pre-war 5th Territorial battalion was split into two; the 'first line' unit (1st/5th) contained those men who agreed to serve overseas whilst the remainder were assigned to the 'second line' (home service) unit (2nd/5th). The 2nd/5th Battalion became part of the 61st (2nd South Midland)

Division which suffered for some time from lack of equipment.

With the introduction of conscription through the Military Service Act 1916, all 'second line' units became available for overseas service. The 2nd/5th Battalion landed in France on 23 May 1916, shortly before the *Battles of the Somme 1916*. The 61st Division was not involved in the main offensive but was one of two divisions used in an attack further north at Fromelles to try to divert German attention from the Somme. This action was a disaster and some 5,500 Australians and 1,500 British troops were lost. However, the 2nd/5th Battalion was in reserve and did not take part in the assault; consequently the casualty return in the Battalion War Diary for 19-20 July records just two wounded men.

Although the Division did not suffer as badly as the Australians in terms of casualties, it had damaged its reputation to the extent that it was only used for holding trench lines until 1917. The battalion remained in the Fromelles sector during August near Laventie. Both sides engaged in trench raids and the Gloucestershire poet, Lieutenant Frederick William Harvey, was captured on 17 August 1916 in the German front-line trench whilst on a lone reconnaissance patrol (another eminent local poet, Private Ivor Gurney, also served in the battalion).

Corporal Albert Henry Askew was killed on 31 August 1916. The Battalion War Diary is not very informative on the activity that day and simply notes that the unit was in trenches and suffered '*one Other Rank killed and three wounded*'. Albert's body was recovered and buried in *Laventie Military Cemetery*.