

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR CHARLES HERBERT ATTWOOD

240015, 1st/5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 35 on 6 August 1917

Buried with honour at the *New Irish Farm Cemetery, Ypres*; XIV B 6

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



New Irish Farm Cemetery



CSM C.H. Attwood [Mary Burkett]



Gloucestershire Regiment

CHARLES HERBERT ATTWOOD was born in Tewkesbury in 1882 to James Attwood of Pamington and Sarah (formerly Herbert) of Cheltenham. According to census returns they had at least seven children. In 1891 the family was living in Parker's Court but by 1901 had become somewhat scattered. James was still living at Parker's Court but Sarah and her eldest daughter were working as domestic servants in Malvern. At the same time, Charles was living with one of his older brothers, Edward James, and his family in Gloucester and was working as a machinist in an iron punching mill. Charles married Ellen Timms in Stow-on-the-Wold in September 1910 but by 1911 they had moved to Oldbury Road, Tewkesbury, and Charles was an insurance agent. Charles and Ellen had two sons: Horace C. in 1911 and Jack J. in 1913.

Charles served for a long time in the Militia and Territorial Force, possibly since the age of around 14. An earlier army service number suggests that he was a founding member of the 5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, created in April 1908 when the Territorial Force was formed to consolidate existing volunteer units into a single organisation. By 1914 Charles had risen through the ranks to become a Company Sergeant Major. Shortly after the outbreak of war, Charles volunteered to serve overseas and was posted to the 1st/5th Battalion. He landed with the battalion on 29 March 1915 at Boulogne when they became part of the 48th (South Midland) Division. The first campaign in which

it participated was the *Battles of the Somme* (1 July-18 November 1916). By the spring of 1917 the battalion was in pursuit of the Germans as they carried out a strategic withdrawal from the Somme known as the *German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line*. Charles enjoyed leave on two occasions: in 1915 for seven days when he returned home fully equipped (even with gas respirators) and then, ten weeks before his death, he spent ten days leave in Tewkesbury.

The battalion spent most of July 1917 near Arras undergoing training for the next phase of the Flanders Offensive, the attempt to breakout from the Ypres Salient, known as the *Battles of Ypres 1917*. At the start of the battle, the 48th Division was in reserve and the battalion was in camp north-west of Ypres, so they were not involved in the first phase of the offensive, the *Battle of Pilckem* (31 July-2 August 1917). On 5 August, however, the battalion moved into the line to relieve other units during '*Hostile shelling very heavy*'. The shelling persisted the next day and the War Diary noted: '*Hostile shelling continued and casualties*'.

Company Sergeant Major Charles Herbert Attwood was one of those casualties, killed on 6 August 1917; he died instantly when a German shell struck his dugout and exploded. His body was recovered and he was buried at *New Irish Farm Cemetery*, Ypres in Belgium.

Charles was awarded the '*1914-1915 Star*' medal and his widow, Ellen, received a War Gratuity of £20.10s. in December 1919.