

PRIVATE LEONARD FRED DEVEREUX

15131, 10th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Died age 19 on 2 March 1916

Remembered with honour on *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial*; Panel 22

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial



1914-15 Star Medal



Royal Welsh Fusiliers

LEONARD FRED DEVEREUX was born on 8 June 1896 to Frederick James Devereux and Elizabeth Martha (formerly Rodway). Frederick, who worked as a corn porter, was born in Tewkesbury and Elizabeth came from Haresfield. They married in 1886 and had a total of six children, all of whom were surviving in 1911. The family lived first of all in Chance Street and then in Swilgate Road. Leonard was educated at Holy Trinity Schools and, in 1911, was working as an errand boy for Messrs. Allen Bros. at the Cross (then a Grocer's Shop, in 2015 *'Burger Star'*). Leonard then left Tewkesbury to find work as a labourer probably in the Rhondda Valley, South Wales.

Leonard volunteered soon after the outbreak of war; he enlisted on 4 September 1914 in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in Porth, Glamorgan, although he is also commemorated in Tewkesbury Abbey as a Volunteer. He was allocated to the 10th (Service) Battalion, a Kitchener's New Army unit, probably on its formation at Wrexham in October 1914. The battalion was part of the 76th Brigade, 25th Division. The battalion spent the next 11 months in the Hampshire area undergoing training before being sent to France, landing at Boulogne on 27 September 1915. The 76th Brigade was then transferred to 3rd Division, one of the original regular divisions of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Accordingly, Leonard was awarded the *'1914-15 Star'* medal.

At the end of 1915 and into early 1916, the battalion was stationed near Ypres. As part of a local diversionary attack, the Germans captured an important position known as *The Bluff* on 14 February 1916. The British were determined to recover the position, which was a spoil-heap created when the nearby canal was excavated, because it provided an unusual observation advantage across the Salient.

The 76th Brigade was one of two brigades that began an intensive training exercise to prepare for a frontal assault, planned to take place at dusk on 29 February 1916. All troops were equipped with the new steel helmets. The bombardment eventually opened on 1 March, destroying the German defensive works, and the infantry attacked in the early hours of 2 March. The attack achieved complete surprise and the infantry captured all their objectives within the hour and consolidated their gains.

Private Leonard Fred Devereux was killed in action on 2 March 1916, one of the 1,620 British casualties, killed, wounded and missing during the attack. The *Register* reported that Leonard was *'instantaneously killed by a fragment of shrapnel'*. His body was never recovered or identified and he is commemorated instead on the *Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial* in Belgium.

His death was remembered by the family on the anniversary *'In Memoriam'* in the *Registers* of 1918 and 1929.