

CORPORAL GEORGE EAGLES

PLY/16006, Plymouth Battalion, Royal Naval Division, Royal Marine Light Infantry
Died aged 19 on 13 July 1915

Remembered with honour on *Helles Memorial, Turkey*; Panel 2 to 7
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross



Helles Memorial, Turkey



1914-15 Star Medal



Royal Marine Light Infantry

GEORGE EAGLES was born on 4 January 1896 in Tewkesbury to Elias Eagles, a self-employed bricklayer, and Matilda Emmeline (formerly Anderson). Elias came from Apperley whilst Matilda (known as Emily) was born in Tewkesbury. In 1901 the family was living in Apperley at Church Cottage No.2 and in 1911 at 6 Gabb Lane, at which time George was employed as a newsboy. The 1911 Census reveals that Elias and Emmeline had five children of whom three were still alive. Subsequently the family moved to Norton where George's mother was living in 1915. Although George was born in Tewkesbury he is only commemorated at the Cross, and not in the Abbey, possibly because his family moved to Apperley shortly after his birth. However, he is honoured in the Abbey as a Volunteer.

George Eagles enlisted at Bristol on 14 January 1913 in the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) on a Continuous Service engagement for 12 years. As a new recruit, he was sent initially to the Royal Marine Depot at Deal, Kent, after which he was assigned to the Plymouth Battalion, one of the four battalions that comprised the Royal Marine Brigade formed in August 1914. After their reservists were mobilised at the beginning of the war, both the Marines and the Royal Navy found they had a surplus of men for whom there were no positions available on board ships of war. Shortly afterwards Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, decided to form two Naval Brigades from the reservists; these would join the Royal Naval Division, serving as infantry. The Brigade was composed of a mix of regular active-service Marines such as George, as well as those mobilised from the Fleet Reserve.

Before George was posted overseas, the Brigade had been involved in the Defence of Antwerp in late 1914 and the Dardanelles campaign in March 1915, where the Plymouth Battalion had landed and destroyed Turkish gun positions. This was prior to the unsuccessful attempt by the British and French navies to force a passage through the Dardanelles Straits and capture Constantinople, and the subsequent ill-fated Gallipoli campaign when the Division disembarked at the end of April 1915 on the peninsula as part of an amphibious landing. During that time, George was serving aboard *HMS Cornwall* where he was promoted to Corporal in January 1915.

George Eagles embarked for Gallipoli on 9 May 1915, joining his battalion on 30 May at Cape Helles, held by the Allies at the southernmost tip of the peninsula. Before his arrival, there had been a number of battles at Helles (including three *Battles of Krithia*), none of them successful, to try to capture the dominating heights of Achi Baba. A follow-up attack by British and French forces was planned for 12-13 July and three battalions were committed to an assault on the afternoon of 13 July. Some limited progress was made, but at great cost; the Royal Naval Division suffered some 600 casualties.

Corporal George Eagles died on 13 July 1915, according to his medal records; he was reported as '*missing, assumed killed in action*'. His body was neither recovered nor identified, and he is commemorated instead on the *Helles Memorial*, on the Gallipoli Peninsula. He was awarded the '*1914-15 Star*' medal which was issued to his father, Elias, along with the *British and Victory* medals.