

PRIVATE ALBERT EDWARD FLETCHER

10388, 7th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 28 on 8 August 1915

Remembered with honour at *Helles Memorial, Turkey*; Panel 102 to 105

Commemorated in Tewkesbury only on the Abbey Volunteer Memorial



Helles Memorial, Turkey



1914-15 Star Medal



Gloucestershire Regiment

ALBERT EDWARD FLETCHER was born in September 1887 in Tewkesbury to William Fletcher and Sylvia Fletcher (formerly Sweet). He was difficult to find on the census returns with those forenames as he preferred to be known as simply Edward. In the 1891 census he was living with his 72-year-old grandmother, Susan Sweet, in Glovers Alley with some of his siblings and cousins. In 1901 he was living with his parents in Bishops Alley; his father was a 66-year-old labourer. His mother died the next year, followed by his father in 1904. He was then cared for by his uncle, William Fletcher, of 5 Gravel Walk in 1911. Edward was then a 23-year-old labourer.

Edward is recognised under that name as a volunteer on the Abbey Volunteer Memorial but he was never commemorated on any memorial in the town and consequently escaped earlier recognition. He enlisted under his full name in the Gloucestershire Regiment soon after the outbreak of war, probably in August 1914 judging by his army service number. He was posted to the 7th (Service) Battalion, the first Kitchener battalion raised by the regiment. It came under the command of the 39th Infantry Brigade in the 13th (Western) Division. After completing training in England, the Division left from Avonmouth in June 1915 and sailed via Egypt to land on 19 July in the Helles sector on the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula.

The climax of the Gallipoli campaign came on 6 August 1915, when a final attempt was made by the British to end the deadlock by breaking out of the Anzac perimeter. The 7th Battalion launched their attack on a prominent feature on 8 August, as part of the plan to release Anzacs, trapped since 25 April. The *Battle of Chunuk Bair* (6-10 August 1915) was one of several battles in what was known as the *August*

Offensive. Although the plan was sound, aerial photographs were deceptive, as they did not reveal timber-reinforced overhead protection on the Turkish trenches, or a steep gully interrupting the line of advance. The fighting was bloody and confused and both sides inflicted 'friendly fire' casualties. Despite that, elements of the battalion reached the crest of Chunuk Bair and, as Turkish reinforcements arrived, repulsed repeated attacks throughout the day. The dwindling band of survivors was relieved on the evening of 8 August but, two days later, the position was lost to a major Turkish offensive. The 7th Battalion alone lost every officer and sergeant and over 350 other ranks.

Among the battalion's casualties was fellow Tewkesburian, L/Cpl. W. G. Prosser, whose death was announced in both the *Tewkesbury Record* and the *Cheltenham Graphic*.

It is possible that, because Albert Edward Fletcher was one of the 190 missing after the battle (according to the number in the Battalion War Diary), his name was not formally announced amongst the dead. Indeed, the loss of this local man has only recently come to light. Like his comrade, however, he was entitled to the '1914-1915 Star' medal.

On 23 April 1917 a gratuity of £2.13s.11d. [£2.69p] was awarded to Elizabeth Chamberlain. Born in 1882 she was a box-maker at the [Eagle] shirt factory and was living with her widowed mother at 20 East Street in 1911. We think that Elizabeth went on to marry John Woodard in 1919 and they had seven children. In 1939 she was living at 39 Chance Street and she died there in 1948.

Hopefully, the name of **Private Albert Edward Fletcher** will be added to the Town's War Memorial at the Cross in 2018.