

PRIVATE ALFRED NEWTON

9573, 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Died aged 29 on 21 October 1914

Remembered with honour on *Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium*; Panel 2 and 3
Commemorated in Tewkesbury in the Abbey and in the Memorial Hall in Birmingham



*Ploegsteert Memorial,
Belgium*



*1914 (Mons) Star
& Clasp*



*Royal Warwickshire
Regiment*

ALFRED NEWTON may not have been born a Tewkesburian, which explains why his name is not included on the Cross. However, Ada Hampton, daughter of William Hampton, a labourer of 9 Jeynes Row, married an Alfred E. Newton in Birmingham by special licence on 6 August 1914. There is a birth record for an Alfred Ernest Newton in Birmingham in 1885, the same year in which Ada was born. In 1891 Alfred was living in Ladywood, Birmingham, with Charles and Elizabeth Herbert; he was described as their ‘adopted son’, of unknown parentage. In 1901, he was still living in Ladywood with an Elizabeth Adams, a widow; at that time he was described as her ‘nephew’ and he was working as a brass tube maker in Birmingham.

In June 1903 Alfred enlisted in Birmingham in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment for a six year term as a part-time soldier in the 5th Battalion of the Militia. Evidently he then applied to become a regular soldier, probably later that same year. In the 1911 Census he was serving with the 1st Battalion at Forts Brockhurst and Elson, near Gosport in Hampshire. His occupation was described as ‘Assisting discharge at the Discharge Depot’.

By the time war broke out, Alfred had almost certainly completed his service and been posted to the Army Reserve. He appears to have been recalled to the Colours during the first month of the war which might explain the rushed nature of his marriage. He was sent to France on 12 September 1914 to join the 1st Battalion, probably as part of a reinforcement draft that

arrived on 20 September. The Battalion was part of the 4th Division, an original unit of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) but it was one of two regular divisions retained in England to defend against a possible German landing. When it became clear that there was no threat, the Division was despatched to France. The infantry component disembarked at Boulogne on 23 August 1914 and arrived just in time to play a valuable part at the *Battle of Le Cateau* on 26 August.

When Alfred joined his Battalion the 4th Division had already been involved in the *Battles of the Marne* (7-10 September) and the *Aisne* (12-15 September). At the end of the month the BEF moved north to Flanders to protect the Channel ports as part of the ‘Race to the Sea’. A succession of indecisive clashes occurred in October. The 4th Division took part in just one of these actions, the *Battle of Armentières* (13 October-2 November).

Private Alfred Newton was killed in action there on 21 October 1914. The War Diary reported that there were ‘*Battles raging all around – heavy shelling*’ on that day. His body was neither recovered nor identified and he is commemorated on the *Ploegsteert Memorial* in Belgium. He was awarded the ‘*1914 (Mons) Star and Clasp*’ to recognise that he had served under fire in that year.

There was no obituary for Alfred in the local newspapers, but he is commemorated in Tewkesbury in the Abbey and on the Roll of Honour in the Memorial Hall in Birmingham (as “Private A. E. Newton, Royal Warwickshire Regiment”).