

PRIVATE HERBERT GEORGE ROWLEY

29339, 7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 22 on 15 January 1917

Buried with honour in *Amara War Cemetery, Iraq*; XXIV C 22

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross, in the Abbey
and on the Post Office Memorial at the Royal Mail Sorting Office, Northway



CWGC Rolls of Honour*



Amara Cemetery



PO Memorial, Northway



Gloucestershire Regiment

HERBERT GEORGE ROWLEY was born in Tewkesbury in 1884, the eldest son of George Rowley of Highnam in Leicestershire and Rachel Jane (formerly Smith) of Tewkesbury. George ran a bakery from the family home at 6 Church Street. They had six children: one died in infancy and they would lose three more to the war. After George's death in 1909 Jane kept a shop at 88 High Street (now the shopping centre); the family home in 1911 was at Malvern View, Mill Road. According to his obituary, Herbert was 'an old Abbey School Boy, and 19 years ago he entered the postal service as a messenger: in 1903 he was appointed postman at Aberdare, whence he was transferred to Tewkesbury two years later.' In 1910 Herbert married Edith M. James in Upton-on-Severn and they had two children: Edna in 1913 and Eileen in 1915 (who died in 1916). In 1911 the family was living at 'South View', Ashchurch Road.

Herbert was conscripted in mid-1916 into the 7th Gloucesters, formed in August 1914 as part of Kitchener's Army, coming under the command of the 13th Division. The division fought in Gallipoli in 1915 against Turkey and, after being evacuated in early 1916, sailed to Egypt where it defended the Suez Canal briefly. The division then joined the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force in modern-day Iraq in order to relieve the garrison at Kut al Amara to which British units had retreated. However, the relief effort failed and Kut fell to the Turks in April 1916. The British forces were reinforced and Private Rowley was a likely replacement. Another attempt was launched in December but it still took two months to capture Kut.

Private Herbert George Rowley was

reported as killed during the offensive, on 15 January 1917. The *Register* of 3 February 1917 reported: 'Another Local Postman Killed: The subject of this notice bore an exemplary character, and the steady and obliging way in which he performed his duties earned the respect and goodwill of everyone. ... The sympathy evinced towards his widow, mother and other members of his family is widespread and sincere'. Herbert's body was recovered and he was buried in *Amara War Cemetery*, Iraq, probably from wounds as Amara was the site of a major hospital centre. In 1933 all the headstones were removed due to salt deterioration. Instead a screen wall was inscribed with the names of those buried in the cemetery.

Herbert's younger brother, **Private Harold Ernest Rowley** [†], was killed on 3 July 1916 whilst serving with the 8th Gloucesters on the Somme. His youngest brother, **Private Arthur Harry Rowley** [†] of the Durham Light Infantry, died in 1921 possibly as a consequence of his being wounded and gassed. The Rowley family, therefore, lost as many sons as Mrs. Letitia Didcote, who was accorded the honour of inaugurating the War Memorial in May 1922. Herbert's widow Edith was awarded a War Gratuity of £3 in October 1919. All the Rowley family seem to have left the town by 1939.

*In 2014 the CGWC advises that it is not possible to visit Memorials in Iraq. The photograph caption is:

'The Rolls of Honour held at the Commission's Head Office commemorating by name all the Commonwealth casualties who died in Iraq during the two World Wars'