

LANCE CORPORAL CECIL TAYLOR

107042, 32nd Battalion, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Died aged 22 on 23 August 1918

Buried with honour in *Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières, Somme*; V B 5

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières,
Somme, France*



*Family Memorial,
Tewkesbury Cemetery C3A*



*Machine Gun Corps
(Infantry)*

CECIL TAYLOR was born in Tewkesbury in 1897 (based on Census records) to Edwin Thomas Taylor and Mary Ann (formerly Payne). However, there is no record of a Cecil Taylor born in Tewkesbury around that time, although a birth was registered in the March quarter of 1897 of a male Taylor and it is reasonable to assume that he was accorded the name of Cecil soon afterwards. Edwin Taylor was a self-employed Monumental Sculptor from East Dean and Mary was born in Blakeney. In 1901 Edwin and Mary, together with seven (of eventually nine) children, were living at 9 Barton Street. By 1911 the family had moved to 56 Church Street and Cecil was a pupil at the Abbey School. On leaving school, he worked for his father and then became an Auxiliary Postman, reputedly *'very popular'*.

Cecil volunteered in November 1914 and enlisted in Worcester in the Army Service Corps, eventually becoming a Driver. At that time he was too young for overseas service but at some stage he transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, most probably as part of a reorganisation within infantry brigades when the Corps was fully established in early 1916.

At the start of the war, each of the four constituent battalions of a Brigade had a Machine Gun Section with two guns. In 1916 these sections were detached from their battalions and amalgamated into a Brigade Machine Gun Company to provide a larger, specialist unit for each brigade. In February and March 1918, a further reorganisation saw the Companies merged into a Machine Gun Battalion for the Division.

At the time of his death, Cecil was serving in the 32nd Machine Gun Battalion, which had been formed on 21 February 1918 from several companies and was part of 32nd Division. Although he was an early volunteer, he would not qualify for the *'1914-15 Star'* medal because he remained in this country until 1916, after the qualifying date.

In August 1918 the Division was in the Somme sector, and was involved in the campaign known as *'The Last Hundred Days'*, which saw the Allies inflict a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the Armistice. One of the many actions in which the Division took part was the *Battle of Albert* (21-23 August 1918), the opening phase of the *Second Battle of the Somme 1918*, under the command of the Fourth Army.

Lance Corporal Cecil Taylor was killed in action on 23 August 1918, the final day of the *Battle of Albert*, when *'a shell landed and a small piece struck him on the head'*. His family was assured (perhaps out of sensitivity) that he *'would have suffered no pain'*. Cecil was buried either on the battlefield or in one of the nearby battlefield cemeteries; his body was re-interred in *Heath Cemetery* after the war.

There is something of a mystery in that the CWGC database cites L/Cpl. Cecil Taylor as the son of just *'Mrs. Mary Taylor'*; no mention is made of Edwin even though he lived until 1928. Neither was Edwin included on the 1911 Census with the rest of the family although, given the nature of his job, he may have been absent through work at the time.