

PRIVATE ALBERT EDWARD FLETCHER

10388, 7th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 28 on 8 August 1915

Remembered with Honour on Helles Memorial, *Turkey*; Panel 102 to 105

Albert Edward Fletcher was born in September 1887 in Tewkesbury to William Fletcher and Sylvia Fletcher (formerly Sweet). However, 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 this sibling 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, a town lamplighter who was living at 5 Gravel Walk in 1911. Edward was a 23 year old labourer.

Edward is recognised under that name as a volunteer in 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 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 and seizing control of the peninsula. The 7th Battalion launched their attack on a feature known as Chunuk Bair on 8 August, as part of the plan to break out of the cove, where the Anzacs had been held since the 25 April. The *Battle of Chunuk Bair* (6-10 August 1915) was one of a number of battles in what was known as the August Offensive. Although the plan was sound, previously-taken 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 which also displayed a photograph. It is possible that, because he was one of the 190 missing (according to the number in the Battalion War Diary) after the battle, Albert Edward's 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 Medal. On 23 April 1917 a gratuity of £2/13/11d [£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 in 2018.

Private FREDERICK GEORGE GREEN

K/26, 22nd (Service) Battalion (Kensington), Royal Fusiliers Regiment

Died aged 34 on 11 June 1916

Son of William and Sarah Green of Tewkesbury

Buried with Honour at *Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery*, Souchez, near Arras; 1 A 36

Commemorated in Tewkesbury neither in the Abbey nor on the War Memorial

Frederick George Green has only recently been identified as a Tewkesbury casualty of the Great War; he was never commemorated on any memorial in the town and, consequently, escaped earlier recognition. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) records, Frederick George Green was the son of William and Sarah Green of Tewkesbury (although they misspelt his forename as Fridrick). However, his family background was unusually complex and little of that information is true. Frederick George's birth was not registered with the surname of Green, he was not the son of William and Sarah and he did not originate from Tewkesbury. Nevertheless, as documented in this biography, there is ample evidence to prove that he had a strong connection to Tewkesbury, more than enough to justify recognising him as one of the town's early volunteers.

Frederick George was born in Rugby, Warwickshire in 1880; his birth was registered in the June quarter under the name of Frederick George Griffiths. His mother was Emily Griffiths, a single woman, who had herself been born out of wedlock to Sarah Ann Griffiths in Stroud in March 1857. Emily also had an older child, Ellen Sophia Griffiths, who was born in Tewkesbury in 1878.

The connection between the Griffiths and the Green surname materialised prior to Frederick George's birth when Emily's mother, Sarah Ann Griffiths, married William Green in the June quarter 1863 in Tewkesbury; they went on to have at least six children. In 1871, the Green family, other than William who was absent at the time, was living in Cares Alley in the High Street. Five children were listed on the census return, including Alice M.M. Green and Emily Griffiths aged 14 (described as 'step-daughter' since William was still regarded as the head of the household, even though he was not at home).

By the time of the 1881 Census, Emily Griffiths had left the Green family and was living in Double Alley, as head of the household, with the infant Frederick George and Ellen Sophia. For Frederick George, however, life change significantly soon afterwards. At the end of 1882, his sister, Ellen Sophia Griffiths, died; this was followed in early 1885 by his mother, Emily Griffiths, at the age of 28; both deaths were registered in Tewkesbury. It is reasonable to assume that, around this time, Sarah Green stepped into the breach and absorbed Frederick George into the mainstream of the Green family; he was after all her grandson (not her son as suggested by the CWGC records).

In 1891, Sarah, by now a widow, was living in North East Terrace, with five children, including Frederick George Griffiths and Alice Maud Mary Green, her eldest daughter with William. On this census Frederick George was described, quite correctly, as Sarah's grandson. By 1901, Sarah was living at 48 Barton Street with only Alice Maud. Sarah Green died seven years later in Tewkesbury; her death was registered in the September quarter 1908. In the March quarter 1910, Alice Maud married Thomas Hardiman, a widower, in Winchcomb (as it was then known). On the 1911 Census, Thomas and Alice were living in Hailes Street, Winchcombe with two children from Thomas' previous marriage. There is no obvious trace of Frederick George Griffiths or Green around this time: he surfaces next at the outbreak of war in 1914.

According to Frederick George's casualty record, he enlisted at Shepherd's Bush in London in the **Royal Fusiliers (City of London) Regiment** under the surname of Greene (although the CWGC records use the spelling of Green as found on earlier records such as census returns). His reason for using that surname instead of Griffiths is unclear, but, given that he was raised within the wider Green family, it may have been a natural choice. The casualty record also identified his birth place as Tewkesbury, even though he was actually born in Rugby and his place of residence as Winchcombe. It is quite feasible that Frederick George was unaware of his true place of birth; his mother died before he was five years old and he had lived in Tewkesbury since he was a baby with every reason to believe that the town was his 'home'. Since Frederick George gave his place of residence as Winchcombe it is probable that he was living with Alice Hardiman and her husband Thomas sometime prior to volunteering for military service.

After enlistment, Frederick George Greene was posted to the 22nd (Service) Battalion (Kensington), Royal Fusiliers. The battalion was formed at the White City in London, on 11 September 1914, by the Mayor and Borough of Kensington. Frederick George's regimental number (K/26) suggests that he must have been one of the earliest volunteers and may well have been working in the Kensington area at the time. Initially, the battalion moved to Roffey Camp in Horsham, Sussex, for training before transferring to Clipstone Camp in Nottinghamshire where it joined the 99th Infantry Brigade of the 33rd Division. The battalion was then mobilised for war and landed in Boulogne in November 1915. Frederick George's medal records show that he arrived in France on the 15th November. Soon afterwards, the battalion was transferred with the 99th Infantry Brigade to the 2nd Division.

The battalion did not take part in any major actions in the relatively short time that Frederick George served in France. It spent time rotating between training, resting in billets and holding trench lines where casualties were occasionally suffered. At the beginning of June 1916, the battalion was in billets at Estree Cauchie in the Vimy Ridge sector, near Arras. The Battalion War Diary entry for 10 June 1916 reported that: *'The Battalion moved into front line trenches at Carency relieving the 1st King's Liverpool Regiment'*. The battalion remained in the front line trenches for four days before moving back into billets. During that time, three men were killed including **Private Frederick George Green(e)** on 11 June. He was a casualty of trench warfare and accordingly his body was recovered and buried in Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez, near Arras.

Frederick George was entitled to the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal - although a note on his medal records suggests that they were not claimed by his family after the war.

In October 1919, a Gratuity of £8 was awarded to Mrs. Alice Maud Mary Hardiman (formerly Green) who had been named by Frederick George, not only as his next of kin, but also as his sister. It is, perhaps, a reflection of the complexity of the family relationships that Frederick George referred to Alice as his sister when, in reality, she was his half aunt! Having been raised together as children, it is of course quite possible that Frederick George genuinely thought Alice was his sister. It was undoubtedly Alice who provided the factually incorrect notation to the CWGC that Frederick George was the son of William and Sarah Green. Maybe she believed that to be the case but, if she was aware of the true situation, to have attempted to explain it to the CWGC would have caused a great deal of confusion! However, this particular item of information ultimately proved to be the key to unlocking the details of Frederick George's background and to accumulate the evidence that he had a significant connection to Tewkesbury - and entitles him to be commemorated in the town.

Researched and Written by Malcolm Waldron