

PRIVATE RALPH CECIL FLETCHER

G/17078, 12th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment (2nd South Downs)

Died aged 19 on 20 October 1917

Buried with honour at **Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension**; II A 8

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Grammar School Memorial
and at Alderton in St. Margaret's Church and the War Memorial



Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extn



L/Cpl. R.C. Fletcher [Graphic]



Royal Sussex Regiment

RALPH CECIL FLETCHER was born on 31 August 1898 in London to Phillip Teale Fletcher and Rebecca Collins (formerly Payne), and was christened in St. Paul's Cathedral. Phillip came from Alderton and Rebecca from Alderley. In 1901 the family, including Ralph's older brother, Phillip, was living at 16/17 Devonshire Square, Bishopsgate, where Phillip senior was House-keeper. The family later moved to Alderton to run the 'Hobnails' public house. In 1911 they were living in Alderton and the occupation of Phillip, father and son, was given as 'Closer Canning Factory'. Ralph attended the local school, and Tewkesbury Grammar School from 1910 to 1913. He was subsequently apprenticed to Mr. Slade, Outfitter, Cheltenham.

Ralph enlisted as a conscript in Cheltenham in February 1917 and joined the 12th (Service) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, a Kitchener's Army unit which had been raised originally in Bexhill in November 1914. The Battalion was part of the 39th Division and landed at Le Havre in March 1916. By the autumn of 1917 the battalion was engaged in a number of the actions which constituted the *Third Battle of Ypres* (31

July-10 November 1917).

Private Ralph Cecil Fletcher died on 20 October 1917 of wounds sustained four days previously, probably as a result of the normal trench warfare commonplace in the Ypres Salient as there were no major battles taking place at the time. During the *Third Battle of Ypres* three Australian Casualty Clearing Stations were based in Outtersteene, near Bailleul, and it is almost certain that Ralph was treated in one of them. When he died, Ralph, probably an acting (unpaid) Lance Corporal, was buried at nearby **Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension**.

The *Register* described him as '*a steady worthy lad, who was much liked by all who knew him*' and reported that '*the brave lad was wounded on 16th October, and a kindly letter from the sister of the hospital supplemented the official notice of his death. She said his wounds were bad, and he quietly passed away*'.

Private Ralph Cecil Fletcher is only commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Grammar School Memorial. He is also remembered on Alderton War Memorial and in St. Margaret's Church. *[Photographs by Wendy Snarey]*



St. Margaret's Church, Alderton



Family Grave, Alderton



War Memorial, Alderton