

Lieut Edward Gerald Palmer FENN

Born: 2nd September 1894, at Grey Friars Colchester.

Died: 19th September 1918.

Killed In Action: Kefe-Kasim Palestine at age 24 Buried: Wadi Rabah



Edward with sister Adria at Grey Friars circa 1899



After enlisting

Edward was killed in action by a sniper on the first morning of General Allenby's successful campaign, known as the battle of Megiddo, which, with Lawrence and the Arab forces attacking from the east, drove the Turks out of Palestine.

Edward and his platoon were attacking a Turkish position at Kefr-Kasim (Kafr Qasim) near Rosh Ha'Ayin in the district of Jiljulie (Jaljulya) about 15 km north east of Tel Aviv. He was first buried in Jiljulie District Military Graves where the Wadi Rabah opens to the plain of Sharon, but later exhumed and reburied at Ramleh War Cemetery 12 Km south east of Jaffa, grave ref. U75.

Photos, letters, war memorabilia, (including the compass being used by Edward when he was shot), are in the possession of E L Fenn, his nephew, now living in New Zealand. A full family history is available on the substantial website www.thekingscandlesticks.com which contains a wealth of social and historical information.

Dick Fenn mentions in a letter to Harry Fenn 5 Feb 1962 that he met Edward in Cairo Dec 1917 when Dick was recovering from a wound and dysentery. Dick wrote "We went out together a good deal and I formed a high opinion of him and was deeply distressed to hear of his death in action in 1918 when I was back in France".

Telegram from War Office (in buff coloured telegram envelope reading no charge for delivery. Seems to be sent to Adria as next-of-kin, who lived with her mother, Dr Fenn having died some years earlier.) Stamped 12.30 24 Sept 18 Nayland

Miss Fenn Alston Court Nayland Colchester

Deeply regret Alexandria report SP (Sept) 21 Second Lieutenant E. G. P. Fenn Royal Welsh Fusiliers killed in action

Army Council express sympathy

Sec. War Office.

In a buff coloured telegram envelope addressed Miss Fenn. Numbered 313:

Post Office Telegraphs

7.5pm Office Buckingham Palace received Colchester 7.4 p.m. 7 Oct 18.

Miss Fenn Alston Court Nayland Colchester.

The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the army have sustained by the death of your brother in the service of his Country their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow. Keeper of the Privy Purse.

Ref: Chelmsford Chronicle - 18 Oct 1918. DEATH NOTICE: Killed in action in Palestine, on September 21st, Edward Gerald Palmer, 2nd Lieut. Royal Welsh Fusiliers, beloved son of Edward Liveing (the late) and Edith F Fenn, of Alston Court, Nayland, Suffolk, aged 24.

NAYLAND PARISH MAGAZINE.

OBITUARY NOTICE:

It is with very deep sorrow, mingled with pride, that we have to announce the noble death of another of the heroic band from Nayland who have made the supreme sacrifice for King and Country, and at the same time we wish to offer the sympathy of all to Mrs. Fenn and Miss Fenn in their heavy loss.

Edward Gerald Palmer Fenn was born at Grey Friars, Colchester, on September 2nd, 1894. His first School (Preparatory) was at Broadstairs; thence he went to Sherborne, and, on leaving School, Matriculated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He received his Commission in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, and as 2nd Lieutenant went to Egypt for 10 months; he was then attached to the 1/5th Essex Regiment, and went to Palestine.

It was when "leading his platoon to victory" that he was hit in the side, which rendered him quite unconscious, and he died a few minutes later. " Our battalion and one other (writes the Colonel) were the first to lead the attack which produced such great results." Those results were nothing less than the deliverance of the Holy Land from the power of the Turk. R.I.P.

From Captain Finn.

26th September 1918

Dear Madam,

I believe Colonel Gibbons has written to you concerning the loss of your son second Lieutenant EGP Fenn. In sending you the latter's Record of Service Book I feel I must also express my sincere sympathy with you in your sorrow. Your son had only been with us a little while, but during that week or two I had come into contact with him frequently. It was recognised by all our Battalion Headquarters that he was a decided acquisition, and we counted ourselves lucky to have him posted to us.

I did not see him hit, but shortly before, Colonel Gibbons and I had gone over to speak to him, to guide him in his advance in the dark, over most treacherous and difficult country. He was in front of one of the leading platoons of his Company, in the fore-front of the attack, and was carrying on in a really excellent manner.

He was buried in the Wadi Rabah, one of the best known of the deep valleys in this part of the Holy Land. The Rev. H. J. W. Knights, C.F., officiated. He is a good friend of mine and I will ask him to write and give you further particulars.

It is a difficult matter to express adequately in a letter one's deep sympathy, but please be assured that all here feel for you. Perhaps you can extract some small amount of satisfaction from the knowledge that your boy fell in a battle that seems to have settled the fate of our enemies definitely in this part of the world.

He has gone the way of thousands of other excellent fellows, but the signs are that his and their sacrifices have not been in vain.

Believe me, yours faithfully,

J. F. FINN (Capt. and Adjt.) 1/5 Bn. Essex Regt.

P.S. All your son's kit has been sent to the Officers' Kit Bureau, Alexandria and his accounts out here are being dealt with by the Committee of Adjustment. G.H.Q.

JFF.

Written on two sheets of graph paper.

From Col. Gibbons. E. E. F., 22/9/18.

My Dear Madam.

I take this, the first opportunity I have had, to write to tell you how grieved I and all the Battalion under my command, are for the loss of your son, 2nd Lieut. E. G. P. Fenn. Your son had only been with us a very few days, and it is very sad to think he should have fallen in his first action.

I beg you to accept my heartfelt sympathy, he struck me as being a most promising young officer. How much more than that he must have been to you I know only too well, and I feel that anything I can say must be very slight consolation.

But you will, I am sure, be proud to know that he died leading a platoon of the Essex. Regt. to victory. He was killed in the early morning of the 19th inst. in our attack on the Turkish position near KefeKasim, Palestine He was hit in the side and died in a few minutes - quite unconcious and without suffering. He also had a slight wound in the throat but this may have been caused by his fall on the rocky ground.

He was buried at the place where the Wadi Rabah runs into the plain of Sharon, about a mile north of the old Crusaders' fortress of Mejdal Yaba, I mention these places in case you have a map of the country. I will try later on to send you a photograph of his grave. His belongings are being carefully checked and will be sent to you in due course. Do not be disappointed if they do not arrive quickly, it generally takes a considerable time, but they will be sent without fail.

You will, no doubt, have seen an account in the home papers of Gen. Allenby's great victory in which your son played such an honourable part. Our battalion and one other were the first to lead the attack, which produced such great results.

Again assuring you of my great regret and sympathy,

Believe me, yours very faithfully,

T. GIBBONS, Lieut. Col.

Written on two pages in pencil from Palestine envelope addressed OAS. Mrs Edith Fenn Alston Court Nayland Colchester England. Stamped Censor 809 and signed.

26 September 1918

Dear Mrs Fenn

I am writing to tell you how sorry I am to learn the news of the death in action of your son Edward. We were very great friends, and it comes as a great blow to me. Having been classified as fit, he left with three others for the line. He joined his new Batt. on the 9th of September and went into action on the morning of the 19th September. He was killed that same morning at the beginning of the new offensive. One of the officers he went with has since written me to say he was killed by a sniper. I did not see him, before he left this Batt., as I was on a course at the time, but he wrote me the enclosed letter, which I thought you would like to see. I think this is about his last letter to anyone here. He was extremely popular, and everyone, officers and men, felt it greatly when the news came through. I am sending you any letters that come for him here and his kit will come to you also, but this will take some time. All his personal belongings were left at the base, excepting his large silver cigarette case and two revolvers, which he carried on him. These three articles may be lost. I am sorry I cannot look after the return of his kit or treasures, as this is all done officially, by his Battalion and special officers at the base, but if you will let me know if you do not get all his kit, I can easily make the necessary enquiries here.

Please do not think it rude of me if I ask that if there is any article of his you would care to let me have, as a keepsake and reminder of him, I should treasure it very much indeed.

When Edward came to this Battalion last year he was posted to the same Company as myself, and we became great friends and shared the same rooms and were always about together. I feel I have lost a brother.

Will you please accept my deepest sympathy in your very great loss.

I am,

Yours faithfully

A W Croft 2nd L

6th Gar K.W.F

R.W.F. att 1/5 Essex Reg.

C/o Cox & Co.

Cairo. 25.12.18.

Dear Mrs Fenn

Please excuse me for taking the privilege in writing you, but I feel it my duty to do so. My sympathy goes with you regarding the death of your dear son. It was felt very keenly in the Essex but more so into this old Batt R.W.F. especially by the officers of the 3rd R.W.F. Hunthe (?) Park I had seen the officers of the R.W.F. since and I dear say you will have had letters from them. If you have not it is because of your address as no officer's death was more mourned for by his brother officers than that of your son. He and I have been together since we were in Cambridge and then we met again in the R.W.F and have been together ever since, even to the joining the Essex Regiment. I was taken ill just before he met his death and when I got to the clearing station and was told of it and I may tell you I really felt heart sick and felt as though I never wanted to see the Batt. again. He was my only pal in the Essex as we had not been with the Batt. long, so that it is the reason why I did not want to rejoin the Essex. He and I were always the best of friends and we used to share the same room in the Citadel. Did he send you a snap which I took whilst travelling in the truck up Palestine I sent one to my dear Mater and told her of his death.

I have three brothers in France and in my last letter from home Mater told me she had not heard from the elder one for one month and it was just the week before the Armistice was signed but I hope they have had word by thus. The reason I have not written before this is I have been in hospital, and now the Batt. has come down in the line.

I hope this finds you all in perfect health and wishing you the Compliments of the Season.

I remain

Yours

Lance Steil Lieut.

Envelope addressed O.E.S Mrs Fenn Allston Court Nayland postmarked Field Hospital, stamped by Censor No 809

Imperial War Graves Commission Ref: SL/13/6021

82 Baker St W1

4 August 1921.

Madam,

With reference to the information already sent to you regarding the burial place of the second Lieutenant EGP then who was buried in the Jijulie District Military Graves Fejja, I am directed to inform you that it has been found necessary to exhume the bodies buried in this area and to re-inter them, and the body of the above-mentioned officer has accordingly been removed and buried in Ramleh Military Cemetery, Plot U, Grave 75, Palestine.

The new grave has been duly marked and is registered in this office. The reburial has been carefully and reverently carried out

I am,

Madam,

Your obedient Servant

E S C Greene (?)

for Principal Assistant Secretary.

In Memory of

EDWARD GERALD PALMER FENN

Second Lieutenant

6th Bn., Royal Welsh Fusiliers

attd. 1st/5th Bn., Essex Regiment

who died on

Thursday, 19th September 1918. Age 24.

Additional Information: Son of Dr. Edward Liveing Fenn, J.P., and Edith Fenn, of Alston Court, Nayland, Suffolk. Native of Colchester.

Commemorative Information:

Cemetery: RAMLEH WAR CEMETERY, Israel

Grave Reference U. 75.

Location: Ramla (formerly Ramleh) is a small town 12 kilometres south-east of Jaffa. From Tel-Aviv, proceed along Route One (Ayalon) towards Jerusalem. Pass the exit to Ben Gurion airport and take the next exit signposted Petah Tiqwa, Ramla, Lod Route 40. Proceed along Route 40 to the T junction with Route 44, signposted Bet Shemesh, Lod. Turn right and follow Route 44 towards Lod until the first set of traffic lights. Turn right towards Ramla (Ramleh) Prison. Before you reach the prison, Ramleh War Cemetery is signposted right along a minor road/track. Turn right and follow the minor road/track for about 200 metres and the cemetery is to be found on the right.

Historical Information:

The war cemetery dates from the 1914-1918 War, when Ramleh was occupied by the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade on the 1st November, 1917. Field Ambulances, and later casualty clearing stations, were posted at Ramleh and Lydda from December, 1917 onwards, and the cemetery was begun by the medical units.

The cemetery retains the name by which it was originally known, although the name of the town itself is now Ramla to distinguish it from Ramleh in Egypt. The 1914-1918 War burials include graves brought in from the battlefields and from Latron, Sarona and Wilhema Military and Indian Cemeteries. During the 1939-1945 War this cemetery was used by the Ramla Royal Air Force Station and by various British General Hospitals posted in turn to the area for varying periods.

There are now over 3,500, 1914-18 and 1,000, 1939-45 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, over 1,000 from the 1914-18 War are unidentified. From the 1939-45 War, a special memorial commemorates a member of the W.A.A.F. buried at Jerusalem (Vaad Hakehilla) Cemetery whose grave is now lost, and bears the quotation "Their glory shall not be blotted out". The cemetery covers an area of 23,895 square metres and the Commonwealth section is enclosed by a stone wall.

Ref: Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

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We are grateful to the Fenn family history website www.thekingscandlesticks.com for sharing this information, and also to Colchester historian Joan Soole, for information and guidance. We can also be contacted through our Facebook page www.facebook.com/greyfriarscolchester