

Castle, CG

Cecil George was born at Paddington on 20 December 1894 and baptized at St. Barnabas, Kensington on 20th January 1895. He was the son of Frederick William from Oxfordshire, and Ellen Louise Castle. In the 1901 census the family had come to live in Bedford Park, at 40 The Avenue. Frederick was a commercial traveller, dealing with gas mantles. Cecil had a brother, Leslie Edward Frederick who had been born in Bedford Park on 23 February 1900, though his parents travelled to Kilburn to have him baptised at St Barnabas like his elder brother.

Cecil was educated at the Acton County School from 1908 until 1911.

Cecil enlisted at St. Paul's in London by late October 1914. Private 11672, 5th Wiltshire Regiment.

The 5th Battalion saw overseas war service first in the 40th Brigade, 13th Division, joining the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and serving at Anzac Cove from 17 July 1915. Cecil's medal card suggests that he embarked from Britain as late as 12 July 1915, bound for "the Balkans", so it is likely that he would have served and survived in the Dardanelles. The Battalion's War diary states that on the 6th August they took part in a night attack to capture a ridge of hills to assist the British landing at Suvla bay. The following day they took part in the attack at Sari Bair. This was a successful attack, but the response was fast and very violent. They were attacked by a Turkish Division led by Mustapha Kemal. The battalion was overrun with half the battalion never being seen again. The battalion was reorganised, returning to trench warfare with the main enemy being dysentery and jaundice. It evacuated from Cape Helles in January going to Port Said where they were reinforced with 750 men.

The 5th Wilts had received orders to embark for the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamian Relief Force on 14th February 1916 after Cape Helles had been evacuated in January. In February the Battalion went by sea to Basra via Kuwait. At Basra they disembarked in a violent thunderstorm on 4th March 1916. After two week's fitness training they moved up the Tigris in flat-bottomed boats. Early in April 1916 the 13th Division attempted to break through the Turkish Division which was besieging Kut in an effort to relieve the beleaguered garrison there. They went over the top at Aum-el-Hannah before dawn to make a frontal assault on the left bank on 5th April 1916, and advanced in the afternoon, although there were many casualties (some 1,800 men were killed and wounded), and they carried the first and second and third lines of Turkish trenches. The attack was renewed the next day, but the Turks were fully aware of the second attack. On 8th April they moved to advanced trenches for an attack at dawn on the Sannaiyat position. The wounded of the previous days had been collected (a few motor ambulances were available for the first time) and all was ready for a further attack. The night was cold and the men lacked sleep and the Turks in the trenches only a few hundred yards away were waiting. The first line pressed on, the second line momentarily faltered but became overtaken by the third and successive lines. The first line had meantime gained the Turkish trenches but behind was confusion. Before 9am it was clear that the attack and the relief had failed. The British garrison at Kut finally surrendered on 29 April. It was probably in one of these actions that Private Castle was wounded. Cecil's family received his 1914-1915 Star, his British War Medal and his Victory Medal.

He is commemorated at Basra Memorial, Iraq, unfortunately now dilapidated through later war damage.

When he became 18, Leslie Edward Frederick, Cecil's young brother, was conscripted into the 21st. Battalion, London Regiment in June 1918. He had started a career in the woollen

trade. Mercifully, he served only within the United Kingdom. In February 1919 he was promoted to Corporal, and was transferred to 3rd. Battalion East Surrey Regiment. He was discharged to the 'Z' reserve in May 1919 and returned to civilian life.