

## **Etienne Geoffrey MILWARD**

Born 23 January 1896, Bromsgrove  
Temporary Captain

Died 2 September 1916, aged 20  
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

**Etienne** was the grandson of Robert Harding Milward (1839-1903) a solicitor practising in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Robert and Harriet Harding married and had ten children, the second son being Geoffrey (or Jeffrey) Lionel Milward who also studied Law and became a Barrister.

From the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette of Friday 19 April 1895,

"On Wednesday the marriage of Miss Katherine Sparkes, daughter of Mr. Weston Joseph Sparkes, of Oak Cliff, Dawlish with Mr Geoffrey Lionel Milward, of The Linthurst(sic), Bromsgrove, Barrister, took place at the Parish Church of St Michael's (now St Gregory's) Dawlish."

**Etienne Geoffrey Milward** was born 23 January 1896 at Ayresdale North, Birmingham, father- Geoffrey Lionel Milward, mother- Katherine Anne Georgie Milward formerly Sparkes, Occupation of father -Barrister at Law." (Copy Birth Certificate)

It is not clear when Geoffrey Lionel Milward was working in Cairo, but a census entry for **E G Milward** in 1901 at Upper Ilsley, Warwicks, (where he is shown, age 5, living with a cousin) suggests that the boy stayed in England for schooling.

It appears that his parents' marriage was unhappy.

His mother's death: -

From the *Gloucestershire Echo* of Saturday 29 February 1908,

"**SUICIDE OF A BARRISTER'S WIFE** - A verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" was returned on Friday at an inquest at Chelsea on the body of Mrs. Katherine Milward, sister-in-law to Sir Ernest Cable, an Indian merchant, in whose residence in Cadogan Gardens the deceased was on Wednesday found dead. She was identified by her husband, Mr Geoffrey Lionel Milward, Barrister, formerly practising at Cairo, who said he had lived apart from his wife for some time. Evidence was given that two blue poison bottles were found in the deceased's room, and a doctor stated that death was due to carbolic acid poisoning." ( She was aged 45 -ed)

**Etienne** was 12 year's old when his mother took her life in this manner.

**Etienne** enrolled later at the University of London and matriculated as a student at the January 1913 examination and was placed in the Second Division having satisfied the examiners in English, Mathematics, Latin, French and Heat, Light and Sound. (*Main subject unknown -ed*)

In August 1914, soon after the outbreak of war, **Etienne Milward** applied for a Temporary Commission and this was granted on 15<sup>th</sup> August.

In applying for a Temporary Commission for the duration of the War he gave his address as Oak Cliff, Starcross, Devon (*It is most probably Oak Cliff at Dawlish Warren, now the centre of a holiday homes business*).

His application was counter-signed by H W Sparkes as Guardian. It also contained a "Certificate of Moral Character" from Charles Francis Benthall, Vicar of Cofton St Mary, Starcross who certified that he had known Etienne Geoffrey Milward for "the last five years". It may therefore be assumed that he had spent much of his time at Starcross after the death of his mother.

Herbert Weston Sheppard Sparkes (1859-1923) was the eldest son among six children of Weston J Sparkes (1827-1903), a Solicitor, and his wife Eliza (1821- ). H W Sparkes was the brother of **Etienne**'s mother, Katherine Anne Georgie Sparkes (1863-1908), and after her death appears to have acted as guardian to **Etienne G Milward**.

### **Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 7th (Service) Battalion**

Formed at Bodmin in September 1914 as part of K2 and came under command of 61st Brigade in 20th (Light) Division.

Moved to Aldershot and Woking but by November 1914 was at Pirbright. Moved to Witley in February 1915 and Amesbury next month.

Landed at Boulogne on 25 July 1915.

(Harry Patch (1898-2009), last British survivor of trench warfare, served with the 7th DCLI. )

On 26 July 1915 the 20<sup>th</sup> (Light) Division completed concentration in the Saint-Omer area, all units having crossed to France during the preceding few days. Early trench familiarisation and training took place in the Fleurbaix area.

**Lieut E G Milward** was first wounded on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1915 and a telegram to H W Sparkes shows that he was "admitted to Endsleigh Place Hospital, Endsleigh Gardens, London on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1915 suffering from gunshot wounds".

The 20<sup>th</sup> Light Division was later engaged in the Battle of Delville Wood between 15<sup>th</sup> July 1916 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Delville Wood was fought over countless times and became choked with the dead of both sides. The Division was also engaged in the following Battle of Guillemont between 3 and 6 September, 1916.

**Etienne Geoffrey Milward** was holding the temporary rank of Captain in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 7th Battalion when he died of wounds on 2 September 1916. A "Field Service" report originates from No 21 Casualty Clearing Station showing cause of death as "died of wounds received in Action."

A War Office telegram was sent on 3 September to "W Sparkes, Oak Cliff" telling him of the death from wounds.

On 4<sup>th</sup> September H.W.Sparkes wrote to the Secretary of State for War.

"Sir, I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram reading as per copy enclosed.

Dawlish World War One Project

2. I beg to observe that the initials of my adopted son(nephew) are E.(Etienne) G. (Geoffrey) Milward,- not **H.E.G.**Milward- as quoted in this telegram but I assume there is no doubt about identity.
3. My wife and I beg to tender our appreciation of the expression of sympathy expressed by the War Office.
4. That in May last he was gazetted Tempy(sic) Captain and acted as the Senior Captain of his Company when 20 ½ years old bears testimony to his being a gallant and efficient soldier of the King – R.I.P.
5. I beg the favour of being acquainted in due course with such particulars as can be properly vouchsafed of the manner of his end.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant

H.W.Sparkes"

*(There is no surviving correspondence in the NA file of a response to item 5 - ed)*

**Etienne's** father, Geoffrey Milward, and his uncle, H W Sparkes, both applied to the War Office for his effects to be forwarded to them. They were also competing to settle a Mess Bill for 126 Francs, the equivalent of £4.10s.4d to clear the deceased's account. His effects amounted to

1 Identity Disc

1 Whistle

1 Fountain pen

2 Collar badges

6 Stars

10 Buttons

1 Stud

1 Tobacco pouch

1Key and were sent to Cox & Co, Shipping Agency Ltd, 16 Charing Cross, London.

The National Probate Calendar shows that his estate was administered by Geoffrey Lionel Milward, who had written to the War Office on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1916;

"...According to instructions received, immediately applied for his effects to be sent to me here.

"Having received no answers to my application and his effects have not arrived, I pray you therefore, to order that my son's belongings may be sent to me without further delay.

"Four months is a long time for a father, who is now a childless widower, to wait.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant

Geoffrey Milward."

A letter was sent by Geoffrey Milward's solicitor in November 1917 advising the War Office that an application had been made for the administration of E G Milward's estate, and requesting that monies due should be sent to them. At some point the cover sheet for the War Office file has H W Sparkes showing as guardian and next of kin, later struck out and Geoffrey Milward is shown.

**Etienne Geoffrey Milward** does not appear on the Devon Roll of Honour for Dawlish but is recorded on the Birmingham Roll of Honour.

Dawlish World War One Project

Commonwealth War Graves entry: **Milward E G** Captain Date of Death: 02/09/1916  
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry 7th Bn. Grave Reference: II. B. 35.  
[LA NEUVILLE BRITISH CEMETERY, CORBIE](#)

Cofton War memorial inscription: Etienne G Milward Duke of Cornwall's Lt Inf 2 Sept  
(There is no record for Cofton War Memorial on the Devon Heritage site.) It may be assumed  
that the inscription at Cofton was requested by his uncle and guardian, H W Sparkes.

Last known address: 9 Manor Road, Edgbaston

Next of kin: Geoffrey Lionel Milward, father

References: Birth Certificate Newspaper references (quoted) BMD and census records  
(Ancestry) Carter family tree UK, Soldiers died in the Great War National Probate  
Calendar National Archive, Kew – Officer's record and correspondence file  
[www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk)

MILWARD E G text 160210 rbv