

**Bandsman John Edward Richards**  
**Regimental Number: 16203**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Devonshire Regiment**

**born: unknown - died: 16 November 1918**

John Edward Richards, born in London, was the son of Henry Thomas and Eleanor Ann Richards.<sup>1</sup> His father, also known as Henry Thomas Kirk-Richards, was born about 1865 in Westminster, London.<sup>2</sup> His mother, Eleanor Ann Hayes, was born in Lambeth in 1865.<sup>3</sup> Henry and Eleanor were married at All Saints Church, South Lambeth, Surrey on the 18 October 1890.<sup>4</sup>

In 1901, his parents were living at 23 Stockdale Road, Battersea, London.<sup>5</sup> John Edward was not there, but three of his siblings were: Herbert (born about 1891), Henry (born about 1893) and Maria Eleanor (born about 1896). His father was an advertising clerk.

Limited records were found that reflect John's military service. He served as a Bandsman in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment.<sup>6</sup> "The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was awarded the French Croix de guerre for its gallant defence of Bois des Buttes on 27 May 1918, the first day of the Third Battle of the Aisne."<sup>7</sup> A few months later, on 12 November 1918, the day after the signing of the Armistice, John was admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with influenza.<sup>8</sup> He died of his illness four days later and was buried the following day at the British Military Cemetery in Auberchicourt (Grave 23, Plot 1, Row A) with the chaplain W. F. O'Neill Fisher presiding. The chaplain also notified his sister of his death. His sister had married John W. Pollard in 1916,<sup>9</sup> was then living at 2 Alkerton Buildings, Archer St, Piccadily, London W.<sup>10</sup>

The day John was admitted, the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS was very busy, with a lot of wounded still arriving and it continued that way until the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS left Auberchicourt on 23 November.<sup>11</sup> Sixty-seven people (soldiers and civilians) died at the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS in November 1918. The work of the Centre had shifted from being primarily surgical to medical, to deal with the influenza pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Influenza accounted for most deaths at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station after the Armistice. In spite of the horrific number of soldiers killed in World War I, the influenza pandemic, which affected the whole world and scourged Europe in 1918-1919, killed more people than the war itself.<sup>13</sup>

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 kilometres to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918.<sup>14</sup> The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919 while the 6<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were located nearby.

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<sup>1</sup>"Commonwealth War Graves Commission," ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); accessed 3 December 2015), entry for Richards, John Edward

<sup>2</sup>"1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 28 March 2015), entry for Eleanor A. K. Richards, Registration district: Lambeth, Sub-registration district: Kennington Second, ED, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 404, Folio: 143, Page Number: 13; "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 28 March 2015), entry for Henry Thomas Richard, Registration district: Wandsworth, Sub-registration district: East Battersea, ED, institution, or vessel: 33, Piece: 445, Folio: 53, Page Number: 10, Household schedule number: 60

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- <sup>3</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 6 April 2015), entry for Eleanor Ann Hayes, Registration district: Lambeth, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 371
- <sup>4</sup> "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1921," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 6 April 2015), entry for Henry Thomas Kirk Richards, Parish: All Saints, South Lambeth, Borough: Lambeth, Register Type: Parish Register
- <sup>5</sup> "1901 England Census," entry for Henry Thomas Richards
- <sup>6</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 719
- <sup>7</sup> "Devonshire Regiment," *Wikipedia* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devonshire\\_Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devonshire_Regiment); accessed 2 April 2015)
- <sup>8</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 719
- <sup>9</sup> "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), accessed 2 April 2015), entry for Maria E. Richards, District: St Martin, County: London, Volume: 1A, Page: 1139
- <sup>10</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 719
- <sup>11</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G))
- <sup>12</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G); accessed 15 December 2014)
- <sup>13</sup> "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," (<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>; accessed 3 February 2015)
- <sup>14</sup> "Auberchicourt British Cemetery," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/59509/AUBERCHICOURT%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 3 February 2015)