

Private Alfred Fletcher Wright

Regimental number: 26424

"A" Company, 1st/6th Battalion, Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

born: about 1886 - died: 21 September 1918

Private Alfred Fletcher Wright was probably born in about 1886 in Plymouth, Devon.¹ All Wright's military records refer to him as Alfred Fletcher Wright. However, with the exception of his marriage record, it would appear that in his civilian records, he was known as Arthur (Thatcher) Wright.

Alfred (or Arthur)² was the son of John Rodney Wright.³ His mother was Mary Ann (née Lee).⁴ John and Mary Ann were married in Plymouth in 1876.⁵ Arthur probably had two siblings: Catherine (born in about 1878) and William (born in about 1883).⁶ However, his parents had had two other children who had died by 1911.⁷

Alfred's father, John, was a labourer⁸ and died in 1902.⁹

On 1 March 1903, Alfred Fletcher married Fanny Bendle at Trinity Church in Plymouth.¹⁰ Fanny was born in about 1884 in Plymouth,¹¹ the daughter of Samuel and Mary Bendle.¹² In the church register, both Alfred and Fanny were identified as being 19 years old. However, although Fanny was 19,¹³ Alfred was probably only 17. One witness at their marriage was William Wright, who was probably Alfred's older brother.

Alfred and Fanny went on to have eight children: Samuel Rodney Charles (born on 15 May 1903), Arthur Fletcher (born on 19 March 1906), James Edwin Robert (born on 19 July 1907), Thomas Edward John (born on 10 February 1909), William Stanley (born on 29 May 1911), Catherine Mary (born on 29 November 1913), Phyllis Violet (born on 16 January 1916) and Rosina Ethel (born on 21 April 1917).¹⁴

In 1911, Alfred and Fanny and their first four children were living at 2 Salem Street, Plymouth, where Alfred was a marine shop dealer. That year, his mother was a lodger, living in Plymouth in the home of James and Catherine Brown.

Alfred enlisted in the Royal Berkshire Regiment in Plymouth¹⁵ in 1915,¹⁶ at the age of 29. He later transferred to the Labour Corps and then to the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).¹⁷ He joined the Front in France on 14 July 1916.¹⁸

He survived more than two years on the Front. In late September 1918, the 6th Battalion was stationed near Arras, in northern France.¹⁹ On the 20th, some Companies of the Battalion took part in tactical exercises, during which Roclinourt was attacked and captured. That day Alfred was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his left shoulder and left buttocks.²⁰ The shots penetrated his abdomen. He was buried two days later in the Duisans British Military Cemetery (Grave 31, Plot 6, Row H)²¹ with the chaplain A. D. Reid presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.²² The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.²³ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

His death was noted in the Battalion's war diaries among those of "A" Company soldiers who died, according to the war diaries, on 22 September. His wife was identified as his next-of-kin and was notified of his death. At the time she was living at 22 Higher Street, Plymouth. She and three of their sons (Samuel, Arthur and James) received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.

Alfred awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁴

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2016), entry for Arthur Wright, Registration district: Plymouth, Registration District Number: 276, Sub-registration district: Plymouth South East, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 477, Piece: 12967

² Since his military records refer to him as Alfred, that is the name that will be used in this biography.

³ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2015), entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright, District: Plymouth, County: Devon, Volume: 5B, Page: 393

⁴ "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2016), entry for John Wright, Registration district: Plymouth, Archive reference: RG13, Piece number: 2092, Folio: 137, Page: 4

⁵ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2016), entry for John Rodney Wright, District: Plymouth, County: Devon, Volume: 5B, Page: 510

⁶ "1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2016), entry for John Wright, County: Devon, Registration district: Plymouth, Archive reference: RG12, Piece number: 1726, Folio: 27, Page: 48

⁷ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2016), entry for Mary Ann Wright, Archive reference: RG14, Registration district: Plymouth, Registration district number: 276, Enumeration district: 19, District number: -, Sub district: Plymouth South West, Sub district number: 3, Census reference: RG14PN1295 RG78PN749 RD276 SD3 ED19 SN359

⁸ "1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census," entry for John Wright

⁹ "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 10 January 2016), entry for John Rodney Wright, District: Plymouth, County: Devon, Volume: 5B, Page: 176

¹⁰ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright

¹¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2016), entry for Fanny Bandle, Registration district: Plymouth, Inferred County: Devon, Volume: 5b, Page: 264

¹² "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2016), entry for Fanny Bendle, Registration district: Plymouth, Archive reference: RG13, Piece number: 2092, Folio: 137, Page: 4

¹³ "1911 England Census," for Arthur Wright

¹⁴ "British Army Service Records 1914-1920," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2015), entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright

¹⁵ "Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2015), entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright

¹⁶ "British Army Service Records 1914-1920," entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright

¹⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2015), entry for Alfred F. Wright

¹⁸ "British Army Service Records 1914-1920," entry for Alfred Fletcher Wright

¹⁹ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2016), Regiment or Unit: Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, Sub Unit: 1/6th Battalion, Division: 49th Division, Diary Dates: 1915 Apr 1 - 1915 Dec 31, Piece Description: Piece 2801/1-4: 147 Infantry Brigade: 1/6 Bttn Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) (1915 Apr - 1919 Jun), Piece Number: 2801

²⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2016), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 664

²¹ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 10 January 2016), entry for Wright, A. F., Service No: 26424

²² "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)

²³ "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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)

²⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," entry for Alfred F. Wright