

Private Arthur Edward Wallace[©]

Regimental number: GS/6346

1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)

born: 25 November 1897– died: 1 June 1916

“Nothing in my hands I Bring, Simply to thy cross I Cling” is engraved on the cross marking Private Arthur Edward Wallace’s grave in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension Nord, Grave/Memorial Reference II. B.125.¹ He was 18 years old.

Arthur Edward Wallace was born on 25 November 1897 and baptized in the Church of England on 5 August 1898² in St. Helier, Bailiwick of Jersey, which is the largest of the Channel Islands off the French coast of Normandy. Although these islands were not part of the United Kingdom, Jersey and the Bailiwick of Guernsey (consisting of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and some smaller islands), were Crown dependencies. The United Kingdom was responsible for defence and international relations. Arthur Edward may have been the only child of Louisa Jane Richards and Francis Wallace.

His mother Louisa was born in 17 June 1877 in Grouville, Jersey,³ one of two daughters born to Mary Jane Mallet and Reuben Richards, who had married 3 December 1876.⁴ Her mother’s family, the Mallets, were an established family in Jersey.⁵ However, her father Reuben was born 15 September 1855 in Woolwich, Kent, England.⁶ He was a sailor in the British Navy enlisting for two 10–year terms from 1873 to 1893.⁷ While he was at sea, Louisa Jane, her sister Eliza Annie (b. 1879) and her mother Mary Jane lived at 3 Colomberie Place, St. Helier, Jersey. At the age of 14, Louisa Jane was working as a dressmaker’s apprentice.⁸

Arthur Edward’s father Francis was born in Boston, Lincolnshire, England, in the last quarter of 1876,⁹ the son of Jonathan Wallis, a gardener, and Martha Penman. The spelling of Francis Wallace’s surname on various documents changed over the years, perhaps because it was being spelled phonetically. At his birth, he was registered as Francis Wallis.¹⁰ In the 1881 Census, his family was living in Lincoln St. Marks, Lincolnshire, and the family name was spelled Woolas.¹¹ In the 1891 Census, the family name was recorded as Wollas.¹² For the 1901 Census¹³ and on his marriage certificate, Francis spelled his surname as Woolas.¹⁴ By 1911, the family name was spelled Wallace¹⁵ and would remain so.

For the first four years of his life, Arthur Edward lived with his maternal grandparents, Mary Jane and Reuben Richards, in St. Helier at 3 Colomberie Place. ¹⁶ In 1901, his mother Louisa was working as a downstairs servant for Arthur Henley, a Church of England minister in St. Peter Port, Guernsey.¹⁷ At the same time, his father Francis was employed as a gardener in St. Peter Port.¹⁸ Perhaps the couple reconnected or perhaps Francis was finally free to marry, for on 16 October 1902 Louisa and Francis married in the Church of England, St. Helier, Jersey. On the wedding certificate, Francis gave his current status as widower. Arthur Edward Richards was acknowledged as the couple’s child.¹⁹ Probably for a number of reasons, the family moved to England and in 1911 was living in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire. Here Francis Wallace made a living as a market gardener, and Louisa Jane kept house while Arthur Edward attended school. No other children or family members were listed in the 1911 Census.²⁰

Sometime after 1911, the family seems to have relocated to the County of Middlesex, possibly near Staines, 107 km from Chipping Norton. When war was declared on 4 August 1914, Arthur Edward would have been 16 years old. Like many others at the time he was probably caught up in the

patriotic fervour that swept the country. He enlisted in the 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) at Staines, Middlesex²¹ (now Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey).²²

The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) was a line infantry regiment of the British Army and by 1914 in continuous existence for 283 years. It was known as the 7th Regiment of Foot until the Childers Reform of 1881. At the outbreak of the Great War there were four regular battalions, of which the 1st Battalion (City of London Regiment) was one, and three special reserve battalions. However, the number of battalions increased rapidly. By January 1915 it had increased to 24 battalions, each 1,000 strong.²³

By targeting various segments of the population, the regiment was very successful in its recruiting efforts. An advertisement in the *Western Times* of 14 December 1914 announced that with Kitchener's sanction, the regiment was accepting fit men up to the age of 45; the original maximum age had been 38 years. The advertisement called upon those who enjoyed an outdoor life, or were artists, actors, bankers, clerks, farmers, doctors, engineers, shop assistants, or students to join the Royal Fusiliers. The recruiters promised that those who enrolled would be soldiers of the regular army; that their dependents would receive a separation allowance; and that a generous kit and a uniform measured and fitted individually would be provided.²⁴ The names of some of the new regiments created verified the success of this marketing effort. The 10th Regiment was known as "the Stockbrokers," the 18th to 21st as "the Public School," the 23rd and 24th as "the Sportsmen," the 26th as "The Bankers," and the 33rd to 37th as "The Labourers."²⁵ Before the armistice of 11 November 1918, approximately 235,467 men wore the badge of the Royal Fusiliers in 59 battalions.²⁶

At first, the regiment had problems accommodating, equipping and training the vast number of volunteers.²⁷ Arthur Edward Wallace would have been one of them. Given the war gratuity of £7 10s paid to his mother on 18 June 1919,²⁸ he might have enlisted as early as October 1914.²⁹ He probably received training and "hardening" at Hounslow with the 5th (Reserve), 6th (Reserve) or 7th (Extra Reserve) battalions and assigned to man defensive positions.³⁰ He would have heard rhetoric similar to that delivered by Lieutenant-Colonel N.R. McMahon to the 4th Battalion on the eve of embarkation: that a Royal Fusilier did not fear death or wounds but only disgrace.³¹ By June 1915, the 5th Battalion (Reserve) had sent 80 officers and 3,000 men to the Fusilier battalions at the Front.³² Arthur Edward arrived at the Front on 2 June 1915.³³

By then the 1st Battalion had been engaged in the conflict for almost a year, landing at St. Nazaire, France, in September 1914 as part of the 17th Brigade of the 6th Division. It transferred with the 17th Brigade to the 24th Division on 14 October 1915 and spent the duration of the war engaged in various actions on the Western Front, such as Aisne Heights (1914), Hooge (1915), the Somme, (1916), Vimy Ridge (1917), St. Quentin, and Cambrai (1918).³⁴

Arthur Edward would have experienced day-to-day trench warfare, shelling, sniper fire and small skirmishes followed by rest periods behind the lines. During the month of November 1915, the war diary for the 1st Battalion listed seven men killed and 22 injured.³⁵ In December there were no casualties, although a private (P. Couling) died of natural causes on 25 December 1915.³⁶ He was buried at Bayenghem-lès-Éperleques, northern France, where the battalion was stationed. Christmas Day was wet so the church parade was cancelled. However, in the afternoon of 27 December 1915, Sir Douglas Haig addressed the battalion.³⁷

Field Marshall Douglas Haig was Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), a position that he had assumed on 10 December 1915 and held until the end of the war. Under his

command, between 19 December 1915 and 30 May 1916 (before the Battles of the Somme), the BEF conducted 63 raids of from 10 to 200 men, of which 47 were successful. The German forces made 33 raids on the British Front, of which 20 were successful.³⁸ The cost in human life for the BEF was high: 5,845 officers and 119,196 men of other ranks were killed between 19 December 1915 and 30 June 1916.³⁹

How, when or where Private Arthur Edward Wallace was injured was not recorded. He was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) at Bailleul, France. He might have been one of the 134 injured men admitted on 31 May 1916 or one of the 140 existing patients.⁴⁰ He was one of the three men who died 1 June 1916. The chaplain recorded that he had no papers on him to identify next of kin.⁴¹

Private Wallace was buried at Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord Grave/Memorial Reference II. B. 125.⁴² Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several casualty clearing stations, including No. 1 Canadian CCS, were quartered there. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918; they occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when soldiers' remains were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.

Louisa Jane, who was living at Vine Cottage, Marsh Road, Pinner, Middlesex, in 1923 was eventually notified of her son's death and chose the inscription for his cross. She also received Arthur Edward's medals. He was awarded posthumously the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre), the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the 1914–15 Star (for serving in a theatre of war between 4 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).⁴³

At Bailleul, France, on 4 November 1914, Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien praised the Royal Fusiliers for their gallantry and promised that "when this war is over, you will have special mention made when you go home."⁴⁴ More than 21,941 Royal Fusiliers died in the conflict.⁴⁵ Their sacrifice was commemorated by the Royal Fusiliers War Memorial, a life-sized statue of a First World War soldier, which was unveiled on 4 November 1922 on High Holborn Street, London, England. Their names were recorded on a Roll of Honour stored in a Gothic Oak Memorial Cabinet now housed at the City of London Headquarters.⁴⁶

Arthur Edward Wallace is also remembered on the digital *Jersey Roll of Honour*.⁴⁷ At some point after 1923, his parents, Louisa and Francis returned to Jersey, perhaps to be closer to family. Louisa's sister Eliza Annie and her family were living there. When German troops occupied the Channel Islands in 1940, Louisa and Frank [sic] Wallace were living at 36 Midvale Road, St. Helier. They were documented by the invaders on 25 January 1941.⁴⁸

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- ¹⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 March 2017), entry for Francis Arthur Wallace, Registration district: Chipping Norton, Registration district number: 157, Sub-registration district: Chipping Norton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Household schedule number: 17, Piece: 8261
- ¹⁶ "1901 Channel Islands Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 24 April 2017), entry for Arthur Richards, Registration district: Jersey, Sub-registration district: Jersey, Enumeration district, institution or vessel: 12, Household schedule number: 255, Piece: 5311 Folio: 173, Page: 33
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- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, entry for 27 December 1915
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