Private Arthur Helm Irving©
Regimental Number: 46394
1st Battalion, South Wales Borderers

born: 1898 – died: 19 April 1918

Arthur Helm Irving was born about 1898 at Padiham, Lancashire, England. He was the first child of John Irving and Mary Ann Helm, which accounts for Arthur's middle name.[1] John, a tailor, and Mary Ann were married in the spring of 1897 at Burnley, Lancashire.[2] There were three additional children born to John and Mary: Harold, who was born about 1901; Jessie, who was born about 1903; and Annie, who was born about 1907.[3]

At the time of the 1911 England Census, Arthur's family had moved to Blackpool and also included his paternal grandparents, David Irving and Hannah Haslbuck. David had been born about 1839 in Carlisle, Cumberland, while Hannah had been born about 1838 in South Shields, Durham. David was a retired army engineer.[4]

Regrettably, only about 30% of UK service records still exist due, to a fire resulting from a 1940 air raid on the Army Records Office in Walworth, London,[5] and it appears that at least some of Arthur's records were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of Arthur's military experience were not obtainable.

Because Arthur received a war gratuity of £4,[6] it is estimated that he enlisted in March 1917.[7] The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WWI for a period of at least six months, or for home service for any length of time if the man had served overseas.[8]

Arthur served with the 1st Battalion of the South Wales Borderers. This was a line infantry regiment of the British Army fighting during the Great War at France and Flanders. The Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh (Brecon) published a fact sheet about the 1st Battalion, South Wales Borderers. In particular, from March 1917 to April 1918, it summarizes the battalion's actions at the 3rd Ypres:

> In March 1917, when the Germans retired 'according to plan' to the Hindenburg Line, the First Division found itself detailed for a spell of road-making: this was followed in April by a transfer to Flanders and before long by its selection for employment in that descent 1917-–18 on the Flanders coast in which it was hoped the Ypres offensive of 1917 would culminate. This involved its seclusion behind the barbed-wire of the 'Hush Hush' camp at Le Clipon, with its rumours of awful epidemics and its training for the descent which never came off. Not till the very end of 1917, when it was employed in the closing stages of the "Third Ypres," was the I SWB again in action, and then the main difficulty was that of movement, of reaching the Germans rather than of defeating them. Mud foiled the attack of 10th November 1917, along the Goudberg Spur, and in the mud of 'the Salient' the 1st Battalion spent the winter and early spring, moving down to the Givenchy area in April in time to come in for the second of the great German 'pushes' of 1918 and to distinguish itself greatly by its stubborn and highly successful defence of Loisne Chateau on 18th April, another notable achievement of vital importance.[9]

It was on 18 April 1918, at the age of 19, during that highly successful defence of Loisne Chateau, that Arthur was fatally wounded. He was admitted that day to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his left arm, but he succumbed to his wounds the same day. He was buried the next day at Pernes British Cemetery in Plot I, Row C, Grave 28 with the Reverend G. C. d'Easum presiding as chaplain.

Pernes British Cemetery was not opened until April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations pulled back to Pernes, driven back by the German advance in Flanders. There are 1,098 First World War burials in Pernes.[10]

Arthur's belongings, war gratuity and medals were provided to his parents. Arthur posthumously received both the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Allied Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).[11]

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[1] "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Arthur Irving, Registration district: Burnley, Sub-registration district: West Ward, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 41, Household schedule number: 13, Piece: 3874, Folio: 87, Page: 2

[2] "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for John Irving, Registration district: Burnley, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 565

[3] See Endnote 1

[4] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for John Irving, Registration district: Fylde, Registration district number: 477, Sub-registration district: Blackpool, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 43, Household schedule number: 173, Piece: 25445

[5] "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/: accessed 30 May 2017)

[6] "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Arthur Helm Irving

[7] "Gratuity Calculator," *The war gratuities of WWI* (https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/: accessed 6 October 2017)

[8] "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/: accessed 6 October 2017)

[9] "South Wales Borderers, World War I, 1st Battalion, Fact Sheet 3-B07-01," *Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh (Brecon)* (http://www.royalwelsh.org.uk/downloads/B07-01-SWB-WW1-1stBattalion.pdf: accessed 6 October 2017)

[10] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Irving, A., Service No: 46394

[11] "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 10 October 2017), entry for Irving, Arthur H.