

Private Albert Joseph Eaton

Regimental number: 71016

9th Battalion, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters)

born: 1883 – died 1918

Private Albert Joseph Eaton was born in the spring of 1883, in Woodham Ferrers, Essex (registered at Chelmsford, Essex).¹ He was the son of Robert James Marshall and Sarah Ann Eaton. Marshall, as his father was known, was also born in Woodham Ferrers, in 1848, and was a carpenter by trade.² Sarah Ann, née Mulley, was born in nearby Springfield around 1846.³ They were married in 1876,⁴ and had seven children: four boys (Sydney Marshall, Frederick George, Albert Joseph and Charles Herbert) and three girls (Beatrice Harriet, Lucy Elizabeth and Lily Kate).⁵ Beatrice only lived until 1893, age 12.⁶

By 1901, Albert was already working at age 18 as a carpenter,⁷ following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. In 1888, when Albert was 5, his grandfather (Robert) died in an accident, falling off a ladder while working on a job at the Rettendon Rectory, at age 74. According to the report in the *Essex Newsmen* on the inquest, his work was on the ground, but he was asked to bring up a coat to a man on the roof, which he did. He then apparently stepped on a temporary ladder that was not secured, lost his balance and fell. He died instantly. A verdict of “Accidental Death” was returned.⁸

Albert’s father Marshall died at age 55 in 1904,⁹ and in 1911 at age 28 Albert was still living at home with his mother and brothers Sydney, a harness maker, and Charles, a bricklayer.¹⁰

When the First World War came, Albert enlisted, at Chelmsford, Essex, with the Leicestershire Regiment.¹¹ He was 31. His brother Charles was also a private in the Leicestershire Regiment¹² and appears to have enlisted at the same time, as their regimental numbers are 6958 (Charles) and 6960 (Albert).¹³ The two oldest brothers, Sydney and Frederick, who would have been 38 and 36 respectively at the start of the war, do not appear to have done military service, as no records could be found for them. Sydney worked as a boot repairer in Bycknacre, Essex,¹⁴ while Frederick, who was married with six children by the start of the war, was a shopkeeper.¹⁵

At some point Albert transferred to the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters), where he now had the regimental number 71016. He was with the 9th Battalion, serving in France.¹⁶ On June 18, 1918, with the end of the war not far away, the 9th Battalion was involved in a raid on the German lines near Mazingarbe, France.¹⁷ Albert was severely injured, with serious chest wounds, and subsequently died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.¹⁸ He was one of eight fatalities on that raid, along with three other privates, two lance corporals, and two second lieutenants.¹⁹

Albert was buried the next day at the Pernes British Cemetery, Plot 5, Row B, Grave No. 19.²⁰ The inscription, requested by his mother, reads “I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE.” The cemetery lies one kilometre west of Pernes-en-Artois, in the region of Pas de Calais, and contains the remains of 1096 soldiers from the two world wars.

Albert received the Victory Medal and the British War Medal for his service.²¹

Albert's brother Charles remained with the Leicestershire Regiment for the duration of the war as a private. He survived the war, and in 1939 was single and living in Chelmsford, Essex, with his older brother Sydney, also single and still a boot repairer, and his two sisters Lucy, now a widow, and Lily, also single. Charles was once again a bricklayer and the local air raid warden.²²

Brother Frederick was living not far away in Maldon, Essex, with his wife and five children, one of whom, born six months after the death of his uncle, was named Albert Joseph, presumably in his memory.²³

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¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 17 May 2018), entry for Albert Joseph Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 331

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 June 2018), entry for Marshall Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Sub-registration district: Ingatestone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 05, Piece: 1668, Folio: 48, Page: 06, Household schedule number: 31

³ "1851 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 May 2018), entry for Sarah Ann Mulley, Registration district: Chelmsford, Sub-registration district: Writtle, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1a, Household schedule number: 139, Piece: 1776, Folio: 398, Page: 32

⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 May 2018), entry for Robert James M Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 223

⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 27 May 2018), entry for Marshall Eaton, Registration district: Ingatestone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 1384, Folio: 44, Page: 6

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 21 June 2018), entry for Beatrice Harriett Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 219

⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 June 2018), entry for Albert Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Sub-registration district: Ingatestone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 05, Piece: 1668, Folio: 48, Page: 06, Household schedule number: 31

⁸ Essex Newsman, Saturday September 29, 1888, Page 2, British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk: accessed 5 August 2018)

⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 21 June 2018), entry for Robert James M Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 401

¹⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 June 2018), entry for Albert Eaton, Registration district: Chelmsford, Registration district number: 194, Sub-registration district: Ingatestone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Household schedule number: 28, Piece: 10045

¹¹ *The Royal Leicestershire Regiment* (www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk: accessed 5 June 2018), entries for Eaton, Albert Joseph; In one record his service number is given as 5098 (*The Royal Leicestershire Regiment* (www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk: accessed 5 June 2018), entries for Eaton, Albert J).

¹² "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 June 2018), entry for Charles Herbert Eaton

¹³ *The Royal Leicestershire Regiment* (www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk: accessed 5 June 2018), entry for Eaton, Charles H

¹⁴ "UK, City and County Directories, 1766–1946," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 June 2018), entries for Sydney Marshall Eaton, 1914 and 1917

¹⁵ "UK, City and County Directories, 1766–1946," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 20 June 2018), entry for Frederick George Eaton, 1910

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- ¹⁶ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 8 May 2018), entry for Albert Joseph Eaton
- ¹⁷ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 12 May 2018), entry for Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire) Regiment, Sub-unit: 9th Battalion, Piece description: Piece 1815/1-4
- ¹⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 July 2018), entry for Heaton, A. J. [sic]
- ¹⁹ "The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire) Regiment Casualty Roll in Chronological Order June 1918," (www.the-sherwood-foresters.co.uk: accessed 3 June 2018), entry for Tuesday 18 June 1918
- ²⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 September 2018), entry for Eaton, Albert Joseph, Service No: 71016
- ²¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 June 2018), entry for Eaton, Albert J.
- ²² "1939 Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 July 2018), entry for Charles H Eaton, Schedule number: 122, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: DDEI, Registration district: 194/1
- ²³ "1939 Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 July 2018), entry for Frederick G Eaton, Schedule number: 91, Sub-schedule number; 1, Enumeration district: DDQK, Registration district: 196/1