

Private Arnold Ewart Rudram©
Regimental number: 45978
1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment

born: 1898–died: 22 April 1918

Arnold Ewart Rudram was only 19 when he died after fighting in the Givenchy trenches. He had been in France for just 99 days.¹

Arnold was the third of five children born to Walter Rudram and Sarah Cushing. Walter, the son of James and Elizabeth Rudram, was born about 1870 in Mundesley, Norfolk, England. James was an agricultural labourer.² Sarah, the daughter of William and Rebecca Cushing, was born November 1870 in Tibenham, Norfolk. William was a labourer.³ Walter and Sarah married in the summer of 1893 in Norwich, Norfolk.⁴

All of Walter and Sarah's children were born in Winfarthing, a parish and village in Diss, Norfolk. There is a curious tale about a relic called "the good sword of Winfarthing," and it is even mentioned in a poem published in 1837 by Niccolo Machiavelli. The sword was said to be efficient in the recovery of lost property and stolen horses, but was most important in shortening the lives of inconvenient husbands! To obtain this benefit, the wife was simply required to attend church every Sunday through the year and set up a lighted candle before the relic. The sword was originally left by a robber who, after taking sanctuary in the churchyard, escaped leaving his sword behind. Eventually the parson struck on the idea of proclaiming it as a relic and made a handsome revenue as a result.⁵

The first child of Walter and Sarah was James William, who was born in the second quarter of 1894.⁶ Little is known about James William, although in 1911 at the age of 17 he was living with his grandparents James and Elizabeth Rudram in Mundesley and working as an agricultural labourer.⁷

Leonard George, born in the summer of 1895, was the second child of Walter and Sarah.⁸ During WW I Leonard enlisted with the Royal Field Artillery as a driver.⁹ He survived the war and in late 1929 he married Frances E. Lister in Depwade, Norfolk.¹⁰ In 1939 Leonard was a master builder and farmer, living in Depwade with Frances.¹¹

The fourth child and only daughter of Walter and Sarah was Kathleen, who was born in the second quarter of 1903.¹² In 1931 she married Ernest B. Eke in Depwade¹³ and in 1939 they were living in Norwich, Norfolk. Ernest was a grise miller.¹⁴

The final child of Walter and Sarah was Alfred, who was baptized on 7 April 1907. His father was noted as a carpenter.¹⁵ In the summer of 1933 Alfred married Lilian M. Allen in Depwade,¹⁶ and in the 1939 Register the family was living in Swaffham, Norfolk, where Alfred was a horseman on a farm.¹⁷

As noted above, Arnold Ewart was the third child of Walter and Sarah. He was baptized on 2 October 1898 in Winfarthing.¹⁸ In the 1901 Census the family, then with just the three eldest boys, was living in Winfarthing and Walter was a carpenter and wheelwright.¹⁹ In the 1911 Census, the family, except for James, was shown living at Winfarthing, where Walter and Leonard were carpenters and doing farm work. At the age of 12, Arnold was a scholar.

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;²⁰ however, Arnold's records were saved. He enlisted on 19 March 1917 at Bury St. Edmunds in the infantry: 3rd Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment. He was quite short, only 5' 5" tall and his occupation was groom. He remained in England, training, until 13 January 1918.

He appears to have been a bit awkward with the gun, as he was injured twice: he was admitted on 24 September 1917 with a laceration of the tendon on his left hand, and again on 29 September 1917 for a bayonet wound on his left hand, perhaps due to the lacerated tendon. The first injury was considered serious but was not expected to interfere with his future efficiency as a soldier. His arm had been sutured and placed in a splint. Several days later, when he was readmitted, it must have been determined to be a more serious injury as he spent 27 days in hospital before being released.

Arnold accompanied his regiment to France, embarking from Folkestone and disembarking in Boulogne on 25 January 1918. He was then transferred to the 1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment.²¹ The war diary for this Regiment indicates that Arnold arrived on January 25 with 49 ORs (other ranks, or non-officers). He was immediately involved in company training in the morning and specialist training in the afternoon.²²

On 8 February the regiment travelled to Wieltje, Belgium, via rail, marching from there to the front line. There was little shelling and the weather conditions were getting better. The trenches required wiring and shelters needed to be erected, so they set to work. Though the sector was quiet, soldiers were still wounded or killed by snipers. On 20 February they were relieved and proceeded to Hospital Camp Elverdinghe, where the men were able to bathe and clean up. They finished up February with additional training and inspections.

Early in March they returned to the Front at Hill Top Farm, near Ypres, Belgium. There was little shelling in the area, though plenty could be heard nearby. They worked on the battle zone positions. On 16 March the regiment listened to a lecture by Mr. E. McGegan on Industry after the War. Throughout the month the regiment continued to form working parties to work on the trenches and shelter, and one company went to reconnoiter a pillbox suspected of being the point of origin of a machine gun that wounded the Brigadier General. They found it was occupied, so on the night of 21 March, a patrol set out to deal with the enemy in the pillbox. They got close and as they waited, saw a German soldier exit the pillbox. The company followed the enemy soldier to an enemy post where he was joined by two other soldiers from the pillbox. On a whispered word from the patrol leader, the group made a rush for the pillbox, throwing a bomb into it. The three enemy soldiers bolted away but a fourth quickly emerged from the pillbox with his hands in the air. The patrol seized the prisoner and quickly returned to their post. Though they were fired upon, no one was injured and the prisoner was delivered to the brigade.

The next day they were relieved and moved back into support. On 25 March, "A" Company's headquarters was shelled during the morning, killing one officer and two ORs, and wounding four others. Nightly patrols were upped, and on one evening the patrols encountered two enemy patrols, one of 14 men and the other of 30. Both sides were shelling sporadically throughout the next several days and nights. As the shelling continued, the men were spread out over a larger area.

On 7 April 1918 the regiment was again moved up to the front at Cuinchy. On 9 April, under heavy bombardment with gas shells and under cover of heavy fog, the enemy attacked north of La Bassee Canal and succeeded in establishing itself in Givenchy. Once the fog cleared, the 55th Division was able to counterattack and drive the enemy back to its former position with Lewis guns and rifles fire.

On 13 April they were relieved and returned to Cambrin. Some of the men were beginning to show effects from the gas shelling. After working on defence strategies for Cambrin, on 17 April the regiment returned to Verquin. Early the next morning a very heavy bombardment commenced north of the canal and gradually spread south of the canal to Cambrin.

On 20 April, battle headquarters and companies "A" and "C" moved from Cambrin to Givenchy trenches. They formed up at 4:30 a.m. and moved forward to attack as dawn was breaking. They reached their final destination at 5:30 a.m. and the enemy retired on the approach, although many were killed and over 20 prisoners were taken. The enemy opposed the advance with heavy machine gun fire and continued sniping. Even though this had been new territory for the companies, they completed the operation extremely well. During the evening the trenches were heavily bombarded.

Of course, the company suffered many casualties that day, including Arnold. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to both arms and his left leg.²³ A casualty clearing station (CCS) is a military medical facility behind the front lines that is used to treat wounded soldiers. A CCS would usually be located just beyond the range of enemy artillery and often near transportation facilities (e.g., a railway). The CCS receives battlefield casualties from regimental aid posts located in the combat zone. Casualties that cannot be adequately treated in the CCS are stabilized there before being transported to a field hospital or military hospital.²⁴

Arnold succumbed to his injuries on 22 April 1918 and was laid to rest in the Pernes Military Cemetery the same day in Plot 1, Row D, Grave 5.²⁵ Pernes British Cemetery was not opened until April 1918, when the 1st and 4th Canadian CCSs pulled back to Pernes, driven back by the German advance in Flanders. There are 1,098 First World War burials in Pernes.²⁶

His mother was advised of Arnold's death by a telegram sent on 30 April.²⁷ She requested the following inscription to be placed on Arnold's grave marker:

THIRD SON OF
WALTER AND SARAH RUDRAM
OF WINDFARTHING
DISS, NORFOLK



Gravestone of Private Rudram
Source: Find a Grave

Arnold was posthumously awarded both the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁸

Although no doubt devastated by Arnold's tragic death, his parents both lived long lives: Sarah lived until early 1958, dying at the age of 87,²⁹ and Walter lived until early in 1967, dying at the age of 96.³⁰

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- ⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Sarah Cushing, Registration district: Norwich, Inferred county: Norwalk, Volume: 4b, Page: 192
- ⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. *Belfegor [a verse adaptation of N. Machiavelli's Novella di Belfegor]* (London: Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1837), page 126
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- ¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Rudram, Kathleen, Volume: 04B, Page: 235
- ¹³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Kathleen Rudram, Registration district: Depwade, Inferred county: Norwalk, Volume: 4b, Page: 409
- ¹⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Ernest B. Eke, Schedule number: 120, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration District: TPNV, Registration District: 225-2
- ¹⁵ "Norfolk, England, Transcripts of Church of England Births and Baptisms, Marriage and Burial Registers, 1600–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Alfred Rudram
- ¹⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Alfred Rudram, Registration district: Depwade, Inferred county: Norwalk, Volume: 4b, Page: 587
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