

Rifleman Arthur Raymond Brightling[©]

Regimental number: 23/1002

1st Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade

born: 1889–died: 20 July 1916

Arthur Raymond Brightling was born in the spring of 1889 in Christchurch, New Zealand.¹ He was the youngest child of John and Harriet Brightling.² The others were Mary Jane (b. 1868), Alice (b. 1869), Jessie Florence (b. 1871), Frank William (b. 1872), Ada (b. 1875), Leonard (b. 1879), Rose (b. 1881), May (b. 1884), Marion (b. 1885), and Albert (b. 1886).³ Mary Jane and Jessie Florence both died young: Mary Jane at age 6 and Jessie Florence at 15 months.⁴

Their British father, John Brightling, was born in Sevenoaks, Kent, in 1843 and came to Christchurch in 1866.⁵ His 1928 obituary, describing him as a pioneer, states that he worked as a contractor for the sixty-odd years he was in Christchurch; it also notes that he was a Mason and a member of the Oddfellows' Order and the Orange Order. He was involved in building and road work, and he had brick works erected.⁶ He was responsible for building the first tram line in Christchurch, to North Beach, and also took over the running of the four-horse trams on that route.

In 1867 John married Harriet Blanche Tarrant,⁷ who sadly passed away in 1896.⁸ A widower with several young children, John remarried a year later, to Ellen Brown.⁹

Arthur was 7 when his mother died. According to one site, he later became a member of the Life Saving Club at one of Christchurch's best-known beaches, called Taylor's Mistake.¹⁰ By 1911 Arthur had left Christchurch and was living in Merton, near Dunedin,¹¹ as was his brother Albert;¹² both were employed as sheep farmers.

On 29 May 1915 Arthur enlisted in Dunedin and was assigned to D Company of the 1st Battalion of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, initially known as the Trentham Regiment (Earl of Liverpool's Own).^{13, 14} His medical form shows he was 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighed 125 pounds, and had brown hair and brown eyes.

After spending the summer in training, Arthur left New Zealand with his battalion on 9 October 1915 on the transport ship *Maunganui*, arriving at the city of Suez on 15 November. In Egypt the 1st Battalion was attached to the Western Frontier Force, which had been raised to counter an invasion by the Senussi (a religious order of Arabic nomads) from Libya.¹⁵ The battalion fought two actions near Matruh as part of a mixed force, on Christmas Day 1915 and 23 January 1916. These were successful and ended the invasion.

On 6 April 1916 the 1st Battalion embarked at Alexandria for France on the SS *Arcadian*. The battalion arrived in Marseilles about a week later,¹⁶ made its way by train to Hazebrouck, then travelled on to Steenbecque. After a few weeks of training, the battalion entered the front line on 22 May 1916 just east of Armentieres.¹⁷ It was a relatively quiet time on that part of the front line: total casualties for the month of May were five killed and 55 wounded.



Pte A. R. Brightling of Christchurch

Died of wounds

Source: *Auckland Weekly News*, 1916

On the night of 19/20 July 1916 the battalion conducted a raid, involving two officers and 60 other ranks.¹⁸ They entered the German trenches and killed 33 of the enemy. New Zealand casualties were light, with six men wounded, mostly as they were leaving the parapet.

However, one of these was Rifleman Brightling. He suffered gunshot wounds to the shoulder and was admitted first to No. 1 New Zealand Field Ambulance, then to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul, where he died of his wounds on 20 July 1916. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, at grave reference II. F. 3.¹⁹ There is no inscription on his headstone.

Bailleul Cemetery lies in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the Nord department of the Hauts-de-France region; it contains the remains of 4344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Rifleman Arthur Raymond Brightling received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) for his service. He also received the 1914–15 Star, for service in any theatre of the war in 1914–15.

Arthur's oldest brother, Frank, married Louisa Johnson in 1896.²⁰ At that time he was a clerk,²¹ but he went on to become a contractor like his father.²² There is no evidence that he served in the Great War (he would have been in his forties), but he did appear on the army reserve rolls in 1916–17.²³ He died in 1944, at age 72.²⁴

Arthur's brother Leonard, also a shepherd, did serve in the war.²⁵ He enlisted on 5 June 1917 and was assigned to the 33rd Specialist Company, which left New Zealand on New Year's Eve 1917 and disembarked in Glasgow, Scotland, on 25 February 1918. The next day it arrived at Larkhill Camp in Wiltshire, where the Royal School of Artillery was stationed near Stonehenge.²⁶

Leonard does not appear to have seen any action and returned to New Zealand on 2 July 1919. Like Arthur, he received the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. In 1920 Leonard married Blanche Reade²⁷ and became a farmer in Cave, on the South Island.²⁸ By 1938, though, he was back living in Christchurch²⁹ and Blanche was listed at a different address. Leonard died in 1975.³⁰

Albert Brightling remained in Merton, near Dunedin, and became manager of the sheep station "Moana."³¹ He was on the army reserve rolls but does not appear to have been called up. He retired to Dunedin in 1949³² and died in 1965.³³

Arthur's sister Alice married Walter James Stanley-Joblin in 1905.³⁴ Their son, John Tarrant Stanley-Joblin, was killed in action in Egypt in 1942 while fighting with the New Zealand Engineers in World War II.³⁵ Walter died in 1924 and Alice in 1956.³⁶

Alice's younger sister Ada was a dressmaker in Christchurch in 1900.³⁷ In 1904 she married William Norton Taylor.³⁸ He enlisted on 25 June 1918, near the end of the war, but never left New Zealand.³⁹ He was a lecturer in psychology and health specialist who died in 1960.⁴⁰

Rose Brightling was also a dressmaker, working in Canterbury in 1905 and living with her sister May.⁴¹ In 1913 she married Edward Sidney Heckler,⁴² who the 1911 Census described as a farm assistant.⁴³ They settled in Pahiatua, where he worked as a sheep farmer.⁴⁴ Rose died in 1940 and Edward in 1962.⁴⁵

Arthur's sister May worked as a saleswoman⁴⁶ before her marriage in 1916 to Walter Main Campbell.⁴⁷ Walter became a farmer in Greenpark⁴⁸ before he moved back into Christchurch to become a foreman.⁴⁹ Walter died in 1943⁵⁰ and May 20 years later.⁵¹

The youngest sister, Marion, married Alexander Hazleton, a telegraphist, in 1906,^{52, 53} and they lived in different parts of Christchurch.⁵⁴ He had retired by 1931 (when he was 49).⁵⁵ Alexander died in 1944⁵⁶ and Marion 28 years later.⁵⁷

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