

Captain Lancelot Raimes[©] **5th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry (Territorial Force)**

born: 2 April 1887–died: 1 June 1916

Lancelot Raimes was a scholar, an Anglican minister and a soldier. Born 2 April 1887 at 2 Westborn Street, Stockton-on-Tees,¹ Durham, North East England, he was the third child of Frederick Raimes (1851²–1913³) and Maria Dresser (1853⁴–1936⁵), who married on 28 August 1879 in York St. Maurice Parish, York.⁶ Their first child, Elsie, was born in 1881,⁷ followed by Alywn Leslie in 1885,⁸ Lancelot, Frederick Donald in 1890⁹ (he sadly died in 1891¹⁰) and finally Marjorie in 1895.¹¹

Lancelot's father, a general merchant,¹² prospered. In 1891, he recorded his occupation as an oil merchant.¹³ By 1911, he was living at Hartburn Lodge, Stockton-on-Tees,¹⁴ a large house with a cottage that he probably acquired in 1903.¹⁵ Although he listed his occupation as “independent means” and “employer” in the 1911 Census,¹⁶ Frederick Raimes was by then actually chairman of Raimes & Company (Limited), manufacturers, Stockton-on-Tees and a prominent member of the Methodist Church.¹⁷

In 1901 both Lancelot¹⁸ and his brother Alywn¹⁹ were students at the Leys School in Cambridge (about 320 km from Stockton-on-Tees) which had been founded in 1875 for the sons of lay members of the Methodist Church.²⁰ At the time, 148 students attended the school under the care of the Reverend Dr. Barber.²¹ Lancelot studied there from age 13 to age 18 and did well, becoming a prefect, a cadet, then a sergeant and winning first colours in football.²²

After Leys, Lancelot was admitted to the University of Cambridge, Caius College, on 1 October 1906. He seemed to be following in his big brother's footsteps; Alywn earned a BA at King's College of the University of Cambridge in 1907.²³ While at Cambridge, Lancelot had a minor incident with the town officials. He was fined 8 March 1908 for riding his bicycle on the Ferry footpath.²⁴

In 1909 he earned a BA in Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos²⁵ and was “runner up” for the Winchester reading prize.²⁶ After a year in business, he enrolled at Ripon College and was ordained as a deacon of the Church of England in 1911.²⁷ He was assigned the curacy at the parish church, Chipping Barnet,²⁸ located in the London Borough of Barnet.

At Chipping Barnet Lancelot maintained his interest in poetry and was an original member of the Poetry Society, London.²⁹ He was active in his community, performing clerical duties as well as teaching scripture to the students at Barnet School on Wood Street.³⁰ He appeared to be part of the modernization movement in the Church of England, writing an article entitled “Church and Stage” for the first volume of the journal *Modern Churchman* in 1911³¹ and editing, with the Rev. J. H. Ward, a parish magazine entitled *Yesterday, To-Day, and For Ever* (1914).³²

Then war was declared on 4 August 1914. Earlier in his life, Lancelot Raimes had obtained a commission in the 5th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry (DLI) (Territorial Force), which was staffed by part-time volunteers. On 4 January 1910 he was appointed a 2nd lieutenant. He resigned his commission on 5 August 1911,³³ probably because he was to be ordained. His brother Alwyn also had a commission in the same battalion and was promoted to captain in 1912.³⁴

On 3 October 1914,³⁵ Rev. Lancelot Raimes rejoined his old unit as a priest combatant, against the policy of the Archbishop of Canterbury.³⁶

Before the First World War began, the DLI consisted of nine prewar battalions: two were in the regular army (1st and 2nd), two were Special Reserve (3rd and 4th) and five were Territorial (5th–9th). By the end of the war in November 1918, the DLI had grown to 43 battalions, 22 of which

were sent overseas.³⁷ Of the approximately 120,000–132,000 DLI troops engaged in combat, 12,557 were killed and another 54,000–70,000 were wounded.³⁸

The 5th Battalion DLI (formed in 1908 from the old 1st Volunteer Battalion DLI) was a Territorial Force battalion with headquarters in Stockton. When war was declared, the battalion's volunteer part-time soldiers formed into four companies and trained for nine months at Ravensworth and Gateshead.

On 18 April 1915, the 1st/5th DLI, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert Spence, landed in Boulogne, France. Within days, it was fighting at the Second Battle of Ypres, from 22 April to 25 May. The battalion became part of the 150th Brigade of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division on 14 May.

Lancelot Raimés did not go with the 5th Battalion to the Front on 18 April 1915, although Alwyn, now a major, did so.³⁹ Because of the large number of new recruits, there was a great demand for trainers. As a lieutenant and then (as of 1 January 1915) a temporary captain,⁴⁰ Lancelot trained new recruits for 20 months,⁴¹ which must have been frustrating, because arms, clothing and equipment remained in short supply.⁴² When no chaplain was available at the religious service, he filled in, keeping his sermon brief because of the inclement conditions.⁴³

Lancelot requested reassignment to the Front in 1916, and it was granted, though it appears that his temporary promotion to captain was relinquished on this “alternation in posting.” (The order was issued on 14 May 1916 but not published until 24 June 1916.)⁴⁴

By 11 May 1916, he was with the 5th Battalion DLI at Kemmel, Belgium. Lieutenant Colonel Spence recorded in the regiment's war diary that “on the night of 31st [May] Captain L. Raimés who had only been with us a fortnight was wounded in the head while with a working party at Kemmel and died at the C.C.S. [Casualty Clearing Station] Bailleul the following morning.”⁴⁵ The 1st Canadian CCS admitted 134 patients on 31 May 1916;⁴⁶ Lancelot was one of them. He and two other soldiers died the following day.⁴⁷

Captain Lancelot Raimés was buried at Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave/Memorial Reference ii. D. 52).⁴⁸ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgium border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several casualty clearing stations, including 1st Canadian CCS, were quartered there for considerable periods.

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.

Lancelot Raimés was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).⁴⁹

His brother Major Alwyn Raimés was more fortunate. He survived in spite of being injured at least three times. He was wounded in January 1916⁵⁰ and again in April 1916⁵¹ when his regiment was holding the “Glory Hole” at the junction of “Suicide Road” and “V.C. Road.”⁵² He fought with the 5th Battalion until the end of the war, earning a Distinguished Service Order award in 1918 for conspicuous gallantry. Although wounded by a rifle bullet in the thigh, he “organized and led a counter-attack holding the enemy up for some hours.”⁵³ The family reported that in 1931 he wrote the definitive history of the battalion, *Fifth Battalion, the Durham Light Infantry, 1914–1918*.

Captain Lancelot Raimés has not been forgotten. There are recent tributes to him on the *North East War Memorials Project—Every Name a Story*⁵⁴ and at the Leys School.⁵⁵ He is listed on honour rolls and on a number of memorials. One at Holy Trinity Church, Ancaster Malbis, North Yorkshire, (his

parents are buried in the church's cemetery),⁵⁶ is personal and touching: "To the dear memory of Lancelot Raimes . . . He was born in 1887 and after an unselfish life was mortally wounded whilst serving in Flanders and died at Ballieul on Ascension Day 1916."⁵⁷

After his death, his family collected some of Lancelot's sermons and published a book entitled *Six Soldier Sermons; Dedicated to the Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and Men of the 5th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry* (1916) "as a tribute to his memory and to serve as a memento to his friends and comrades."⁵⁸

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