

Lance Corporal Walter Leonard Yardley

Regimental number: 13716

8th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment

born: 1887 - died: 29 April 1916

Lance Corporal Walter Leonard Yardley was born in late 1887 and baptised on 9 December 1887 at Christ Church in Summerfield, Warwickshire.¹ He was the son of Albert and Flora Yardley. Albert was born in about 1846 in Tipton, Staffordshire and Flora (formerly Foxley) was born in about 1856 in Aston, near Birmingham. Albert and Flora were married at Saint Peter's Church in Dale End, near Birmingham on 3 March 1873.² They had ten children, all of whom survived childhood.³ There were five daughters and five sons: Rosina (also known as Rose) (born in 1873/74),⁴ Ann Maria (also known as Minnie) (born in 1876),⁵ Albert Edward (born in 1878),⁶ Fred (born in 1881),⁷ George (born in 1885),⁸ Walter, Florence Mary (born in 1891),⁹ Alice May (born in 1892),¹⁰ Jessie Beatrice (born in November 1893)¹¹ and Walter William (born in 1898).¹²

In 1881, the family was living at 12 Wenman Terrace in King's Norton, Worcestershire where Albert was a Chelsea Pensioner (gun action filer)¹³ and Flora was a corset maker.¹⁴ In 1891, the family had moved to Birmingham and was living at 62 Norman Street, where Albert was a travelling porter.¹⁵ In 1901, he was still a porter, but the family was living in Handsworth, Staffordshire.¹⁶ Then, in 1911, the family was back in Birmingham, at 38 Milk Street. Albert was now a drapers' porter and his son, Walter, was a silversmiths' porter.¹⁷

Walter enlisted in the South Staffordshire Regiment in Birmingham. He served in the 8th Service Battalion and joined the British Expeditionary Force when the Battalion went to France on 14 July 1915.¹⁸ He died less than a year later.

At the end of April 1916, the 8th Battalion was stationed in Armentières, France. In spite of having a number of relatively quiet days, a few soldiers were wounded or killed each day. On 27 April the enemy shelled the subsistence line but did little damage, although four soldiers were wounded. On 27 April, the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Battalion of the Border Regiment.

Walter died of wounds on 29 April¹⁹ at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,²⁰ which was stationed in Bailleul just fifteen kilometres away.²¹ Perhaps he had been wounded in one of the events of the previous days. A total of 45 patients died at the 1st CCCS in the month of April.

Walter was a member of the Church of England²² and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II. Row D, Grave 117).²³ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, 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, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.²⁴

A letter was sent to his sister, Minnie, who was then living at 112 Dymock Street in Highgate, London, to notify the family of his death, as his mother and father had both died in the first quarter of 1915 – just weeks or months before their son.²⁵

The monies owing to him from the army after his death were distributed to his siblings,²⁶ including Fred, George, Florence, Minnie,²⁷ Jessie²⁸ and Rose,²⁹ and, at the request of his brother, Albert, to his sister-in-law, Louisa, who had married Albert in 1904.³⁰

Walter was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).³¹

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¹ "Birmingham, England, Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Walter Leonard Yardley, Reference Number: EP 21/2/2/1, Archive Roll: 11

² "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Albert Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6D, Page: 155; "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Albert Yardley, Registration district: Kings Norton, Sub-registration district: Hythe, ED, institution, or vessel: 30, Piece: 2950, Folio: 90, Page Number: 6

³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Walter Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Registration District Number: 384, Sub-registration district: St Martin, ED, institution, or vessel: 43, Piece: 18146

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 August 2015), entry for Rosina Violet Yardley, Registration district: Aston, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 397

⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 August 2015), entry for Ann Maria Yardley, Registration district: Aston, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 421

⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 August 2015), entry for Albert Edward Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 152

⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 August 2015), entry for Fred Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 103

⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for George Alfred Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 24

⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Florence Mary Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 195; "Birmingham, England, Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Florence Mary Yardley, Reference Number: EP 21/2/2/1, Archive Roll: 11

¹⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Alice May Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 189; "Birmingham, England, Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Alice May Yardley, Reference Number: EP 21/2/2/1, Archive Roll: 11

¹¹ "Birmingham, England, Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Jessie Yardley, Reference Number: DRO 39, Archive Roll: 528

¹² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Walter William Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 102

¹³ This was the person who filed the gun action which, in a breech-loading gun, was the "body around which the lock(s), stock and barrel(s) are integrated." "The Wolverhampton Gunlock Makers," C. V. Clark 2004, <http://www.wolverhampton-gunlocks.fslife.co.uk/>; accessed 18 August 2015).

¹⁴ "1881 England Census," entry for Albert Yardley

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- ¹⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2015), entry for Waller Gardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Sub-registration district: All Saints, Registration District Number: 28, ED, institution, or vessel: 28, Piece: 2399, Folio: 70, Page: 9
- ¹⁶ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2015), entry for Walter Jones, Registration district: West Bromwich, Sub-registration district: Handsworth, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Piece: 2710, Folio: 117, Page Number: 45, Household schedule number: 336. There is no plausible reason that the family should be registered as Jones, but all details of the family (children, ages, occupations etc.) match those of the Yardley family.
- ¹⁷ "1911 England Census," entry for Walter Yardley
- ¹⁸ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Walter Leonard Yardley; "The South Staffordshire Regiment," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.1914-1918.net/sstaffs.htm>; accessed 18 August 2015)
- ¹⁹ The chaplains' journal records his death at occurring on 30 April. However, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the army record of soldiers who died in the Great War record it occurring on 1 May. "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 72
- ²⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 72
- ²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," entry for Westfield, R., Service No: 6518
- ²⁴ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- ²⁵ "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Flora Yardley, District: Birmingham, County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6D, Page: 272; "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Albert S. Yardley, District: Birmingham, County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6D, Page: 260
- ²⁶ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," entry for Walter Leonard Yardley
- ²⁷ "Birmingham, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1937," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Edith Minnie Yardley, Reference Number: DRO 15, Archive Roll: 594
- ²⁸ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Jessie Yardley, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6D, Page: 1087
- ²⁹ Rose may have married a Mr. Davis. "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," entry for Walter Leonard Yardley
- ³⁰ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Albert Edward Yardley, District: Birmingham, County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6D, Page: 74
- ³¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 August 2015), entry for Walter Leonard Yardley