

Frank England.

Private. No 5083. 1/6th (Territorial Battalion). Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Since the early part of the 18th century, and even beyond, generations of the England family had been born in the Warwickshire village of Ratley, close to the site of the English Civil War Battlefield of Edge Hill. Frank's father, Alfred worked as a Farm Labourer in Ratley when on the 9th August 1873 in the Parish Church of St. Peters, Ratley, he married Martha Hawtin from the nearby village of Radway.



Frank England

Alfred's work later took him and his wife across the County border to the Oxfordshire villages of Epwell and Alkerton before returning to their home county, and the village of Ettingtonⁱ where the family lived at Thornton Cottages and Alfred worked as an Under Waggoner.

Frank, the last of Alfred and Martha's seven children, was born in the latter part of 1889 in Ettington.

Around the turn of the century Frank's father was given the job of a Carter (or Waggoner) for Lady Maudaunt on the Walton estate and the family went to live at Friz Hill.

Frank, aged 21, who worked as a house painter and his brother Harold, 27, a Carpenter, still lived with their parents at the time of the 1911 Census. Their elder, married brother, Owen lived in Wellesbourne and described himself as a house painter and builder. In 1915 Owen was commissioned to build the new Wesleyan Church in Bridge St. Wellesbourne. With Frank's help the church was completed and consecrated on Easter Monday, April 1916.

It is unlikely that Frank attended the consecration. He enlisted at the Warwick, Budbroke recruiting office and was seconded to the 1/6th (Territorial) Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (143rd. Infantry Brigade, 48th. Division).

The major Somme offensive was planned for June 28th 1916 but because of bad weather 'z' day was put back to July 1st.

July 1st – Ill fated day. Wounds and death were the fruit of it and to those who outlived it an accursed memory of horror. Imperishable courage inspired every fighting man, but where, where was Victoryⁱⁱ.

Over a 14 mile front, British forces would move forward in waves against the enemy. At 7.37a.m. four companies of the 1/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, part of the second wave, fully equipped, shoulder to shoulder, at a steady walking pace, totally silent was the order, set out into 'No Mans Land'ⁱⁱⁱ. They would be OK, or so they were told. The Artillery assault would have put paid to the enemy.

'Heavy casualties, about 80 before crossing our own lines'^{iv}..... By 11a.m..... a dwindling number of men of the 6th and 8th was left amongst heaps of dead and dying to man the quadrilateral against counter attacks from both flanks and the pitiless cross fire from the

German machine guns. It was useless to remain, impossible to go forward.... Four companies of heroes by sunset were reduced to the strength of two weak platoons.

Frank's father received the news in early August that his son had been missing since the first of July^v. It was not until November that his parents were to learn of the actual fate of their son. Frank had been injured in the fighting, was captured and made a Prisoner of War. He died from his wounds however on the 6th July 1916.

On New Year's Eve 1916 a memorial service was held in Wellesbourne's Wesleyan Chapel to remember the life of Frank England. In his address the Reverend T.B. Mangold referred to 'the noble and beautiful life' that Frank had led and that he was loved by all who knew him' He also referred to the contribution he made in building the new church in which the service was being held^{vi}.

Frank England is buried in the Caudry Old Communal Cemetery, 13 Km east of. Cambrai. (Grave ref: B5). He is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, St. James's Church, Walton and on the Walton War Memorial. He was awarded the British and Victory medals.



**Frank England's
 (shared) headstone.**



The Memorial Plaque.

Researched by Grey Hudson (Aug. 2014)(grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk)

ⁱ The village, now known as Ettington, was at the time known as Eatington.

ⁱⁱ The History of the 1/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment – Birmingham Cornish Bros Ltd.

ⁱⁱⁱ The 8th battalion were in the first wave and set off at 7.30a.m.

^{iv} 1/6th Battallion Royal Warwickshire Regiment War Diaries (NA. WO95/2755/2)

^v Warwick Advertiser 12/8/1916

^{vi} Warwick Advertiser 6/1/1917

Other sources:

Thanks to Stephen England for the photo of Frank and loan of the Memorial Plaque.