

Thomas Richard Place

Thomas Richard Place was born in 1893 in Wanstead, Essex. He was the son of Richard and Sarah Place.

Richard was born in West Row, Mildenhall, in Suffolk in 1866 and was the (illegitimate?) son of Sarah Place born in 1844, and grandson of Mary Ann and Thomas Place who was a carpenter and agricultural labourer. West Row is a small hamlet near the market town of Mildenhall. This area suffered greatly during the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century.

In 1881, Richard Place, aged 15, was employed as an agricultural labourer, living with his grandparents and his mother in Jermain Lane, Mildenhall, Suffolk.

Sarah Place (whose maiden name was Reed), was born in 1868 in Isleham, Cambridgeshire. Her father was Robert Reed, born in West Row, Mildenhall, Suffolk in 1837. Robert was employed as a Head Groom; his wife Elizabeth Reed, nee Pamment, was also born in West Row in 1837. Elizabeth was the daughter of Clemence and Thomas Pamment, who was also an agricultural labourer. In 1881, when Sarah was aged 13, the family were living in Mill Street, Isleham, in Cambridgeshire.

Richard and Sarah were married on 7th August 1891. At the time of their marriage, Richard aged 25 was a boarder with the Higgins family, who lived at "Rose Cottage", George Lane, Wanstead. Richard's cousin, Eliza Higgins, nee Place was born in 1862. She married John Higgins, a domestic gardener, born in Woodford, Essex, in October 1870. Richard Place had left Suffolk in search of employment. He went to live with the Higgins family and found a job,

also working as a domestic gardener in Wanstead, possibly with John Higgins.

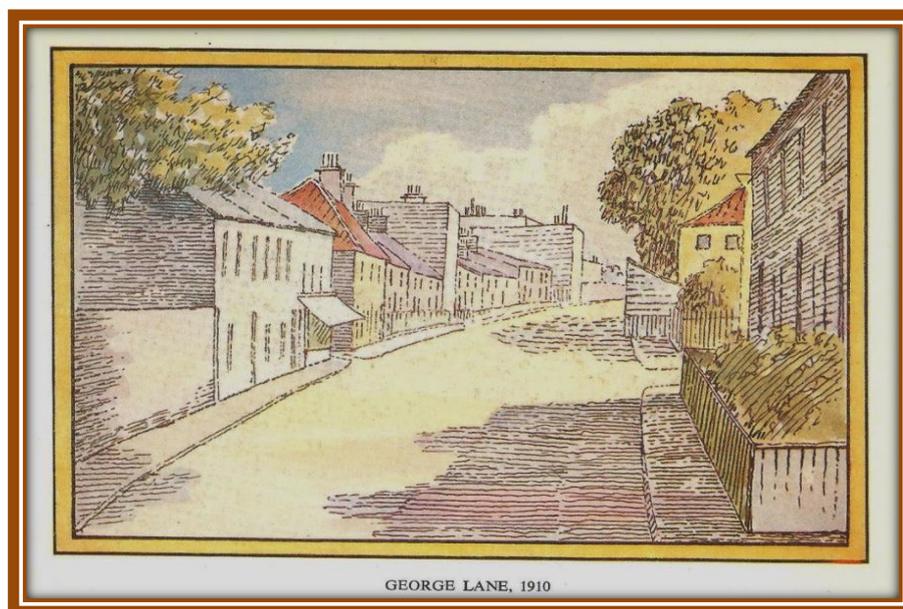


Illustration by Arthur Parsons from the collection held at Redbridge Library.

In 1901, Richard and Sarah were living at 1, Clarkes Cottage, George Lane, Wanstead. In her book 'Wanstead through the Ages' Winifred Eastment describes the cottages as a "neat, aloof row standing back from the Woodford Road and fronted by their long, straggling front gardens."

Richard was also listed in the 1896 Kelly's Directory as a Domestic Gardener. In 1896, the couple had 3 children, Thomas Richard born in 1893, Ellen Maud born in 1894 and George William born in 1896.

By 1911, Richard and Sarah had been married for 19 years and Sarah had given birth to 6 children, although sadly one had died. Thomas Richard, aged 17 was employed as a Blind Maker (Blind Manufacturer Worker); Ellen Maud aged 17 was a general domestic servant; George William born 1896 and aged 15 was an office boy for

a tea merchant; Florence May born 1902 aged 9 and Robert Herbert born 1905 aged 5 were both still at school.

Church archives record that Ellen Maud (known as Nellie by the family) of 80, George Lane, Wanstead became a member of Wanstead Congregational Church on 1st January 1913. Florence May Place of 80, also of George Lane, Wanstead, became a church member on 5th January 1919. Their brother Robert Herbert Place became a member in January 1925.

Thomas enlisted soon after war was declared and he became 17513 Private Thomas Richard Place, 2nd Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. His battalion disembarked in France on 1st April 1915.

The 2nd Battalion DCLI were in reserve on 21st April 1915. On the 23rd, the 2nd day of The Battle of Gravenstafel Ridge, which was the first action in the 2nd Battle of Ypres, they were in action. The Germans made extensive use of Poison Chlorine Gas during the battle. This was the first use of this deadly new weapon.

By midnight on 22nd April the Allies had lost a significant amount of ground in the north part of the Ypres salient. At about 8.30 pm the German infantry stopped its advance and held an advantageous position on the high ground of the Pilckem Ridge. German artillery then subjected Ypres and the surrounding area to a heavy artillery bombardment during the late evening. The intention was to hinder the Allies in their attempt to bring reinforcements into the area overnight.

The War Diary records that the 2nd Battalion had moved up to the Front Line trenches on 5th April. On the 22nd April they were bivouacked in fields north of the Ypres-Brielen road near Reigersburg

Farm. The French Zouaves (a light infantry unit) had to fall back because of the asphyxiating gas.

On 23rd April they moved forward via Ypres to Potijze Chateau. They later took up positions at Wieltje Farm, then took part in an attack on Turco Farm. 'B' and 'D' Companies led, moving via View Farm, and then reached their objective. Casualties - 2nd Lieutenants Lunnow, Morris and Stewart; 46 other ranks killed; one of these was Thomas Richard Place.

So Thomas was killed in action on the 23rd April 1915 aged 22. He had been on foreign soil for just 3 weeks.

Campaign :—		1914-15.		(A) - Where decoration was earned
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	(B) Present situation.
PLACE	DofCom LD	Pte	17513	Roll on which included (if any) MEDAL ROLL VICTORY BRITISH 15 STAR
T.R.		"	"	4/1/101 B10 do 9/1/48
THOMAS R. on taken				kin a
THEATRE OF WAR.	(1) France			
DECEASING DATE.	1/4/15			
46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 WV(P 4 K608				[Ov

Medal Record Card for Private Thomas Richard Place

Thomas was buried in grave III J 5 at the New Irish Farm Cemetery in Belgium. He earned the War and Victory Medals with the 14/15 Star. Thomas is commemorated on the war memorial inside Wanstead United Reformed Church and on the Wanstead War Memorial in Wanstead High Street.



The grave of Private Thomas Richard Place in the New Irish Farm Cemetery in Belgium.

Thomas's father Richard Place died in Wanstead aged 64 in December 1930. His mother Sarah died a few months earlier aged 62 in March 1930.

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Margaretha Pollitt Brown for Wanstead United Reformed Church.