

**In Memory of  
Rifleman JAMES HENRY WEARN  
R/29096, 18th Bn., King's Royal Rifle Corps  
Who died, age 21, on 31 July 1917  
Son of the late James Henry Wearn;  
Husband of Annie Mary Akers (formerly Wearn),  
of Great Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks.  
Remembered with honour  
YPRES (MENIN GATE) MEMORIAL**



**Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

The Menin Gate is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient.

Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war.

The Salient was formed during the First Battle of Ypres in October and November 1914, when a small British Expeditionary Force succeeded in securing the town before the onset of winter, pushing the German forces back to the Passchendaele Ridge.

The Second Battle of Ypres began in April 1915 when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines north of Ypres. This was the first time that gas had been used by either side and the violence of the attack forced an Allied withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence. There was little more significant activity on this front until 1917, when in the Third Battle of Ypres an offensive was mounted by Commonwealth forces to divert German attention

from a weakened French front further south. The initial attempt in June to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was a complete success, but the main assault north-eastward, which began at the end of July, quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly deteriorating weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele.

James Henry Wearn, one of four children, was born in Southwark, London, in 1890, to Alice Wearn. In 1911 he was living with his grandmother and working as a Barristers Clerk. In 1914, he married Annie Mary Luker in Faringdon. Annie, born 1891, was the daughter of John and Martha Sophia Luker of Great Coxwell. James took Annie back to Southwark where they had two children: James Leonard, born in 1914 and Kathleen L M, born in 1916.

In 1919 Annie remarried; her new husband, Percy N Akers, was also born in Great Coxwell, but three years her junior. Annie had three more children with Percy: Nancy born 1920, Cyril born 1923 and Joyce born 1927, but the very same year Percy himself died, age 35.

James enlisted in the 18th Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Corps (known as the Arts and Crafts battalion) in 1916. 18th KRRC were tasked with attacking the village of Hollebeke, SSE of Ypres. The attack started at 3:50am in heavy drizzle and mist, with the leading companies becoming caught heading in the wrong direction and then finding themselves in uncut wire. Many of the strongpoints that were supposed to have been dealt with by artillery fire were still active. By midday it was found that most men's rifles and all the battalions Lewis guns were out of action due to the mud.

James was killed sometime during the attack; his body was never recovered/identified and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Sadly, James Leonard, a Private in the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry was also killed in action at Salerno on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1943 during the allied assault on southern Italy. He was 29.

Wearn Road, off Coxwell Road, is named after father and son.