

Richard William Pearce was born in Brentford on 5th January 1899 and was baptised in St Paul's Church on 25th January that year. His father Joseph was a steam engine driver, himself born in Boxmoor Hertfordshire in 1857. Richard's mother Lucy Selina Pearce (nee Wood) was born in 1861 in Northamptonshire. Richard's parents were married on 13th April 1884 in St. Lawrence Church, New Brentford. Richard's paternal grandfather was a lawyer and his maternal



6 Albany Road, Brentford

grandfather was an engine driver. Joseph and Lucy's marriage produced five children: Charles, Florence and Ada were senior to Richard, whilst Edward was his junior. All the children were born in Brentford and the family lived at 6 Albany Road. In 1911 brother Charles was a foreman on a steam tug and Ada was a printing machinist. The two youngest boys were still at school.

Richard enlisted in Hounslow and joined the 7th Battalion, East Kent Regiment commonly known as The Buffs (from the original buff-coloured lining of their tunics and waistcoats). The date of his enlistment is not known. In 1918 his battalion fought in many battles in France and Flanders – St. Quentin; The Actions at the Somme Crossings; Rosieres; the Arve; Cambrai and more. Regimental records for August 1918 tell us that *“during the night 6/7th Aug hostile artillery continued to be active.....later that day the enemy opened a bombardment.....at 9pm the enemy sent over a number of gas shells”*.

It is very possible that it was during these operations, near the Bray Corbie Road, that Private Richard Pearce (G/24857) was 'killed in action'. 21 soldiers lost their lives on this day, 51 were wounded and another 126 were missing - Richard being one of them. In the Army Registry of Soldiers Effects (1901-1929) Richard left £11.15s 5d to his father Joseph; at that time the Registry showed Richard's death as 'assumed' – indicating that no body had been found at that time.

In 1917 Fabian Ware (founder of The Imperial War Graves Commission) felt that the huge losses of the Somme battles where dead soldiers were left to rot and disappear into the mud, was totally inappropriate and insensitive. Public outrage at the treatment of the fallen was high too and this eventually led to proper identification and burial of as many soldiers as possible. The map reference where Richard's body was eventually found was 62c.d.3.c.4.5.

Richard is commemorated at Peronne Communal Cemetery on the Somme (Grave Ref IV.K.7.), having been exhumed and re-buried by the 712 Labour Company. He was 19 years old.

Richard was awarded Victory and British War Medal. He is also remembered on the Memorial in Brentford.

