

Private Francis Leslie Colgrave

Regimental number: 234146

2nd Battalion, City of London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)

born: 1898 - died: 28 September 1918

Private Francis Leslie Colgrave was born in 1898¹ in Forest Gate,² near West Ham, London. He was the youngest child of Nathaniel and Eleanor Colgrave. His father, Nathaniel, was born in about 1861³ and his mother, Eleanor (formerly Frances Eleanor King), in about 1862. Both his parents were born in Bedford, Bedfordshire and they married there in 1886.⁴ Nathaniel and Eleanor had seven children, five of who survived childhood:⁵ Jane (born in 1887),⁶ Charles (born in 1888),⁷ Winifred (born in 1889),⁸ Annie (born in 1891)⁹ and Francis.

In 1891, the family was living at Channel End, Colmworth, Bedford, where Nathaniel was farming. Ten years later, the family had moved to West Ham where Nathaniel was a porter in a provision warehouse.¹⁰ The family was living at 337 Cann Hill Road in Cann Hall, near West Ham. In 1911, Nathaniel was a gardener and florist and the family was living at 270 Cann Hall Road.¹¹

Francis enlisted in the 1st Battalion, City of London Regiment in Stratford. At the time, he was living in Leytonstone, Essex. At some point he transferred to the 2nd Battalion.

In late September 1918, the 2nd Battalion was stationed south-east of Arras in northern France.¹² On 24 September, Commanding Officers were notified of a secret operation to take place in two or three days time. The next day, battle equipment was issued and attack schemes carried out. It was expected that the operation would be part of operations from the sea to Switzerland. Orders were issued to each Company. Attack schemes continued the following day, aided by "most excellent aeroplane photographs shewing details of the enemy defences in the area to be attacked, together with numerous maps of the same area."¹³ On 27 September, the plan of attack was explained to all the men "who were very enthusiastic over the matter."¹⁴ The attack began mid-afternoon and by late afternoon the village of Sauchy Lestrée had been captured. There was little opposition, with the exception of German machine gun nests near Sauchy Cauchy, just to the north of the village. It took five attacks to capture all the German guns. By 3 a.m. on 28 September the Battalion had achieved all objectives for the operation. But it came at a cost. Four officers were wounded, six Other Ranks were killed and another 61 wounded. Francis may have been one of these.

Francis was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his abdomen.¹⁵ He died the following day and was buried in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Grave 24, Plot 7, Row A) with the chaplain W. Fisher presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.¹⁶ The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.¹⁷ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

Francis' father was his next-of-kin and was notified of his death.¹⁸ He also received the monies owing to Francis from the army after his death.¹⁹

Francis was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁰

Sadly, in the decade following the war, Francis' father experienced three more losses. His wife died at the age of 55, just three months after Francis' death.²¹ She died in December 1918 in West Ham. Then his eldest daughter, Jane, who had married Joseph W. Jones in West Ham in 1916,²² immigrated to Australia. In October 1921, she and Joseph, left London to sail to Melbourne.²³ Four years later, his second daughter, Winnifred, followed in their footsteps, sailing from London to Melbourne in October 1925.²⁴ Nathaniel was left with two children in England – his son, Charles, and his youngest daughter, Annie, who had married John A. Fletcher in 1916.

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¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Francis Leslie Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Inferred County: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 319

² "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Francis Leslie Colgrave

³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2016), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: West Ham, Sub-registration district: South Leyton, ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 1611, Folio: 115, Page Number: 21, Household schedule number: 131

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Frances Eleanor King, Registration district: Bedford, Inferred County: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 567

⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Frances Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Registration District Number: 188, Sub-registration district: South Leyton, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Household schedule number: 301, Piece: 9625

⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Jane Colgrave, Registration district: Bedford, Inferred County: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 332

⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Charles Jane Colgrave, Registration district: Bedford, Inferred County: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 40

⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Winnifred Colgrave, Registration district: Bedford, Inferred County: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 342

⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Annie Colgrave, Registration district: Bedford, Inferred County: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 354

¹⁰ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Francis L. Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Sub-registration district: South Leyton, ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 1611, Folio: 115, Page Number: 21, Household schedule number: 131

¹¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Frances Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Registration District Number: 188, Sub-registration district: South Leyton, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Household schedule number: 103, Piece: 9625

¹² "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2016), Regiment or Unit: London Regiment, Sub Unit: 2nd (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers), Division: 56th Division, Diary Dates: 1915 Nov 1 - 1917 Dec 31, Piece Description: Piece 2960/1-5: 169 Infantry Brigade: 1/2 Btn London Regiment (City of London) (1915 Nov - 1919 Apr), Piece Number: 2960

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2016), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 680

¹⁶ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)

¹⁷ "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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)

¹⁸ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 680

¹⁹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Francis Leslie Colgrave

²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 January 2016), entry for Francis L. Colgrave

²¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Frances E. Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Inferred County: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 613

²² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Jane Colgrave, Registration district: West Ham, Inferred County: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 810

²³ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Mrs. Jane Jones

²⁴ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 February 2016), entry for Winnifred Colgrave