

Bombardier Arthur Edwards[©]

Regimental number: 677030

"B" Battery, 275th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: 24 April 1894–died: 2 May 1918

Bombardier Arthur Edwards was born on 24 April 1894 and baptized on 3 June in St Peter's church in Woolton, Lancashire.¹ His parents, John Edwards and Mary Emma (known usually as Emma) Jones had married on 26 March 1890, at the age of 21, at St James Church at Walton on the Hill, Lancashire. John was a plumber,² born in Garston³ on 2 May 1869,⁴ and his wife was born on 15 January 1869⁵ in Woolton⁶—both just a few miles from Liverpool, Lancashire. Most of their children were also baptized at St Peter's in Woolton:

- Emma (born on 10 April 1890 and baptized on 28 May 1890),⁷
- May (born on 15 March 1892 and baptized on 11 July 1892),⁸
- Nellie (born in 1893, died at the age of 3 months and was buried at St Peter's);⁹
- Arthur,
- John (born on 20 May 1896 and baptized on 2 August 1896).¹⁰ Sadly, John died at the age of 1 and was buried on 29 July 1897 at St Peter's,¹¹
- Letitia (born on 3 June 1898 and baptized on 7 August 1898),¹²
- John Henry (born on 1 October 1901 and baptized on 16 December 1901),¹³
- Alexander (born on 11 April 1905 and baptized on 11 June 1905)¹⁴ and
- Nora (born on 23 November 1909 and baptized on 6 February 1910).¹⁵

When their first child Emma was just a year old, the family was boarding with Louisa Davies, a widow living at 7 Out Lane, Much Woolton.¹⁶ John was still a plumber, but he was about to change occupation because, by 1894 and the baptism of his son Arthur, he was a painter. He would remain a painter for the rest of his working life.

In 1901, the family was living at 6 St Mary Street in Much Woolton.¹⁷ Ten years later they had moved to 47 Woolton Street. Emma's father, Henry Jones, a widower and joiner, was living with them. Arthur was now an apprentice painter.¹⁸

Arthur was the only son old enough to serve in the Great War. He enlisted soon after the outbreak of the war,¹⁹ but did not go overseas until 29 September 1915²⁰ to serve with the B" Battery, 275th Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery (RFA).²¹ The RFA was one of the units created when the Royal Artillery split into the RFA, the Royal Horse Artillery and the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1899.²² "During the first world war a whole new form of artillery was developed to meet the unusual conditions of war on the Western Front: the trench mortar. The lighter weapons being manned by the infantry, the Royal Field Artillery provided the manpower for the heavier mortars,"²³ operating howitzers and medium artillery near the front line.²⁴ A bombardier was a higher rank than a gunner or driver in the Royal Artillery and the equivalent of a lance corporal in the infantry units.²⁵

The time that Arthur spent in England before going to France was likely spent at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, southeast of London.²⁶ After arriving in France, Arthur survived nearly three years before receiving a fatal gunshot wound to his back. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 18 April 1918, but did not succumb to his injury until two weeks later. He died on 2 May and was buried the same day in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row A, Grave 33) with the Canadian chaplain G. C. d'Easum presiding.²⁷

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁸ Arthur was one of 250 soldiers admitted to No. 1 CCCS on 18 April and one of 115 soldiers to die at the station in May 1918.²⁹

Arthur's father received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death³⁰ and he requested the following inscription for his son's gravestone:

OUR HERO BOY³¹

Arthur was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).³²

Just before the Second World War, Arthur's parents were still living at 47 Woolton Street with their daughter, Letitia, who was working in a hosiery factory.³³

Three years earlier, Nora had married James L. Davis³⁴ and, in 1939, they were living at 129 The Heyes in Liverpool. James was a costing clerk for a sugar refiner and, with the approaching Second World War, both Nora and James were Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens.³⁵

May Edwards had married Robert H Cannell and they were living at 34 Speke Road, also in Liverpool, where Robert was a bread baker. A daughter, Elsie (born on 29 February 1920), was living with them.³⁶

Arthur's parents and a number of his siblings died between 1932 and 1973 and were buried in St Peter's, Woolton—the same church in which most of the children were baptized. Arthur's brother Alexander joined his two siblings who died in infancy and was buried at Peter's on 22 January 1932.³⁷ His father John was buried on 12 April 1945.³⁸ His sister May and his mother both died in early 1955—May was buried on 3 January 1955³⁹ and Mary Emma on 22 February 1955.⁴⁰ His sister Letitia was buried at St Peter's on 21 May 1973.⁴¹

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¹ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 July 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards

² "Liverpool, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1932," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 July 2019), entry for John Edwards

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 July 2019), entry for John Edwards, Registration district: Much Woolton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 3008, Folio: 71

⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Letitia Edwards, Schedule number: 100, Sub-schedule number: 3, Enumeration district: NHXH, Registration district: 453-69

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry*, entry for John Edwards

⁷ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Emma Edwards

⁸ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for May Edwards

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- ⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 10 November 2019), entry for Edwards, Nellie, Registration district: Toxteth Park, Volume 08B, Page 210; "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Nellie Edwards
- ¹⁰ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 July 2019), entry for John Edwards
- ¹¹ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 July 2019), entry for John Edwards
- ¹² "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Letitia Edwards
- ¹³ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 July 2019), entry for John Henry Edwards
- ¹⁴ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Alexander Edwards
- ¹⁵ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Nora Edwards
- ¹⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 July 2019), entry for John Edwards
- ¹⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 July 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards, Registration district: Prescot, Sub-registration district number: 456, Sub-registration district: Much Woolton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 22705, Folio: 86, Page: 22, Household schedule number: 143
- ¹⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards, Registration district: Prescot, Sub-registration district number: 456, Sub-registration district: Much Woolton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 22705
- ¹⁹ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>; accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 July 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards
- ²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 July 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards
- ²¹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 13 July 2019), entry for Arthur Edwards
- ²² Royal Artillery," *National Army Museum* (<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/royal-artillery>; accessed 16 July 2019)
- ²³ "Unit History: Royal Field Artillery," *Forces War Records* (<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/5000/royal-field-artillery>; accessed 16 July 2019)
- ²⁴ Royal Artillery," *National Army Museum* (accessed 16 July 2019)
- ²⁵ "A Gunner's Life," *175 Brigade Royal Field Artillery* (<https://sites.google.com/site/175brigaderfa/a-gunner-s-life>; accessed 25 July 2019)
- ²⁶ "Bombardiers," *Imperial War Museum* (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-gunners>; accessed 25 July 2019)
- ²⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 25 May 2019), entry for Edwards A.
- ²⁸ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>; accessed 13 January 2015)
- ²⁹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?module=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=mikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2005082&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=&Operator_2=AND&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10; accessed 28 March 2018)

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- ³³ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Letitia Edwards
- ³⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2019), entry for Nora Edwards, Registration district: Liverpool, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8b, Page: 113
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- ³⁶ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for May Cannell, Schedule number: 85, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: NHXH, Registration district: 453-6
- ³⁷ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Alexander Edwards
- ³⁸ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for John Edwards
- ³⁹ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for May Cannell
- ⁴⁰ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Mary Emma Edwards
- ⁴¹ "Liverpool, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 July 2019), entry for Letitia Edwards