

Corporal Arthur Brain[©]

Regimental number: 240574

1st/5th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

born: 7 January 1886–died: 19 July 1917



Corporal Arthur Brain

Source: Family

Corporal Arthur Brain was born on 7 January 1886 in Altofts, Yorkshire, the son of John Henry and Mary Jane Brain (nee Beddoes).¹ He was baptized on 10 February at St Mary Magdalene Church in Altofts. Both his parents were born in about 1857 in Staffordshire² and married in Wakefield, Yorkshire, in 1878.³ They had eight children: Harriet Ann (born on 5 February 1879),⁴ Elizabeth (born on 1 August 1880),⁵ Richard (born in 1882, but died at the age of 12),⁶ Arthur, Mary Ellen (born in 1888),⁷ Catherine (born in 1891),⁸ John (born 25 March 1894)⁹ and Muriel Minnie (born in 1896, but died four years later).¹⁰

In 1891, the family was living at 14 Lock Row in Altofts, where his father was a lamp man in a colliery.¹¹ Ten years later, Arthur, at the age of 15, had joined his father in the coal mines, where he was a pony driver. The family was living on the same street. Sadly, his mother died late in 1901,¹² not quite two years after the death of her youngest child and a year after the marriage of her eldest daughter. Harriet had married Richard Lewis on 29 December 1900 at St Mary Magdalene Church in Altofts.¹³

At the age of 23, Arthur married Evelyn Fletcher (born on 25 February 1887¹⁴) in Wakefield, Yorkshire.¹⁵ They married in 1909 and had four children: Ivor (born on 17 June 1909), Arthur Jr. (born on 16 July 1910), Richard (born on 26 October 1911) and Ashton (born on 6 January 1914).¹⁶

Arthur continued to work in the coal mines; in 1911, he was a hewer and was living with his wife and eldest son at Hill Top Farm in Altofts.¹⁷ As he had been for several decades, Arthur's father John was still living at 1 Lock Row and working at the coal mines; however, at the age of 57, he was now working above ground.¹⁸ Arthur many other interests outside his work. He was "... trained pianist, often called upon to play at Lee Brigg Working Men's Club and at Altofts Methodist Chapel. He was trained blacksmith/farrier and also engaged in bare-knuckle boxing."¹⁹

Two of Arthur's sisters married after him—both at St Mary Magdalene Church in Altofts. Mary Ellen married Thomas Henry Kneale on 4 October 1911 and Elizabeth married Harry Craven on 25 September 1912.²⁰



Evelyn Brain and her four sons, about 1915-16

Source: Family



Arthur Brain's platoon. Arthur standing on far right
Source: Family

Arthur was already a member of the Territorial Army²¹ when he enlisted at the very beginning of the war²² in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Normanton, near Wakefield.²³ The 5th Battalion, KOYLI was mobilized at the outbreak of the war in August 1914 in Doncaster, Yorkshire. The battalion left from Folkestone to go to Boulogne on 12 April 1915 and was mostly stationed near Estaires in northern France. Arthur probably

went with them, because his service in France began on 14 April 1915.²⁴ The battalion took part in the Battle of Aubers Ridge in May 1915 and the battles of the Somme in the second half of 1916.²⁵

Arthur, now a corporal, was injured and unconscious when he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 19 July 1917.²⁶ He died of head wounds the same day. The chaplain wrote to his wife, who was living at 27 George Street in Altofts, the next day. She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.²⁷

According to the journal maintained by the chaplains at No. 1 CCCS, Arthur was buried in Adinkerke Military Cemetery. However, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records indicate that he was buried in the Adinkerke Churchyard Extension (Grave Reference: 839).²⁸ At his wife's request, the following was inscribed on his gravestone:

LOVED IN LIFE
TO MEMORY DEAR

Both cemeteries are located just under a kilometre apart in Adinkerke, near Veurne, Belgium—across the border from Dunkirk, France. Commonwealth troops held the Front from the Belgian coast inland for about 70 kilometres from June to November 1917. No. 1 CCCS was at Adinkerke for a short time in June,²⁹ arriving there from Dunkirk just two days before Arthur was admitted.³⁰ The Adinkerke Military Cemetery has 168 Commonwealth Great War graves³¹ and the Adinkerke Churchyard Extension has 67.³²

Arthur was awarded 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).³³ He was also awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal on 16 August 1917. The citation reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During an intense bombardment of our front line he displayed the greatest coolness and courage in patrolling his trench and holding the men together in readiness to meet any enemy raid. Assisted by his platoon commander, he also dug out and saved the lives of three men who had been buried by the bombardment. He set a splendid example to all ranks during a very trying time.³⁴

Arthur's younger brother John also served in the Great War; like his brother, he enlisted at the beginning of the war (30 August 1914) and served overseas.³⁵ He was a gunner with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (regimental number 15509) when he was discharged on 18 September 1917.³⁶ He was probably discharged because of a disability or ill health. He was awarded the Silver War Badge, which was meant to be worn on civilian clothing to signify that, although the soldier was still of military age, he had been honourably discharged. It was, in part, meant to prevent these soldiers from being confronted by those who sought to publicly embarrass them for not being in uniform.³⁷

John married after the war. He wed Laurel Thompson on 17 July 1926 at the Fletcher Memorial Wesleyan Methodist Church in Cross Hall, Morley, in Yorkshire.³⁸ In 1939, they was living at 26 Pawson Street in Morley, where John was a coal miner.³⁹

Two of Arthur's sisters stayed in Yorkshire after the Great War. His eldest sister Harriet and her husband Richard Lewis were living at 642 Wakefield Road in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, in 1939.⁴⁰ Harriet died in 1942.⁴¹ Elizabeth and her husband Henry Craven were living at 25 Patience Lane in Normanton.⁴² She died in 1965.⁴³ Catherine had married Frank Marshall on 25 September 1920—at St Mary Magdalene Church, like her sisters. In 1939, she and Frank were living at 1 Locks Row, Normanton—her parents' former home.⁴⁴

Mary Ellen and her husband Thomas Henry Kneale lived on the Isle of Man, where they had at least two children, John Southward⁴⁵ and Helena Sylvia.⁴⁶ Mary Ellen died there in 1933.⁴⁷

After Arthur's death, all his children received pension payments until they reached the age of 16. His wife remarried at the end of the war. She wed Patrick Shea in 1919 and, in 1939, she and Patrick were living at 16 George Street, Normanton, where Patrick was a builder's labourer. Two of Arthur's sons, Richard, a farm cow man, and Ashton, a lorry driver's mate, were living with them.

Ivor served in World War II and died in 1941 on the Isle of Man.⁴⁸ He was accidentally decapitated by the propellers of an airplane when he was crossing the runway on the airbase.⁴⁹



Gravestone of Corporal Arthur Brain

Source : *Global, Find A Grave Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300s–Current* (<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11852751&ref=acom>: accessed 6 April 2017)

Richard married Nora I. Burton near Lower Agbrigg, Yorkshire, in 1940. Both brothers died in Wakefield—Richard on 30 August 1993⁵⁰ and Ashton in 1962.⁵¹

Arthur Jr. married Ada Wilby at St Peter's Church in Warmfield, Yorkshire, on 15 February 1930.⁵² In 1939, Arthur was a carriage cleaner for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway and the family was living at 10 Midland Terrace in Bradford, Yorkshire.⁵³ He died in Bradford in 1988.⁵⁴

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¹ "West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Sub-registration district: Normanton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 4281, Folio: 125, Page: 19, Household schedule number: 108

³ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 6 April 2017), entry for John Brain, District: Wakefield, County: Yorkshire, Volume: 9C, Page: 46. The name of John's spouse on this record is Jane Biddars. However, this likely reflects an error in recording her surname, which is probably Beddoes. The Beddoes lived next door to the Brain's home in 1891 and the mother's maiden name on the birth indexes for all the children is Beddoes.

⁴ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for Harriet Lewis, Reference: RG101/3411C/013/8, Letter code: KFEH

⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for Elizabeth Craven, Schedule number: 43, Sub-schedule Number: 2, Enumeration district: KNWC, Registration district: 504A/4

⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Brain, Richard, Registration district: Wakefield Union, Volume 09C, Page 21; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Richard Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Inferred county: Yorkshire, Volume: 9c, Page: 15

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Brain, Mary Ellen, Registration district: Wakefield, Volume 09C, Page 27

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Brain, Catherine, Registration district: Wakefield, Volume 09C, Page 18

⁹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for John Brain, Schedule number: 174, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: KNVC, Registration district: 502-2

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Brain, Muriel Minnie, Registration district: Wakefield, Volume 09C, Page 19; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Minnie Muriel Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Inferred county: Yorkshire, Volume: 9c, Page: 15

¹¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for John Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 19, Piece: 3745, Folio: 147, Page: 9

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- ¹² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Jane Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Inferred county: Yorkshire, Volume: 9c, Page: 14
- ¹³ "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 January 2020), entry for Harriet Brain
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 January 2017), entry for Evelyn Shea, Registration district: Pontefract, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 2c, Page: 1318
- ¹⁵ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 6 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain, District: Wakefield, County: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9C, Page: 86
- ¹⁶ "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 January 2020), entry for Arthur Brain, Reference number: 11/W/37761
- ¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Registration district number: 504, Sub-registration district: Normanton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 27425
- ¹⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for John Brain, Registration district: Wakefield, Registration district number: 504, Sub-registration district: Normanton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 27425
- ¹⁹ *1914-1918 Men of Altofts Remembered*, Howard Roberts
- ²⁰ "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for Elizabeth Brain
- ²¹ *1914-1918 Men of Altofts Remembered*
- ²² Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.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 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain
- ²³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain
- ²⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain
- ²⁵ "Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 5th Btn.," *The Wartime Memories Project* (<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmy-view.php?pid=661>: accessed 6 April 2017)
- ²⁶ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Brain, A.
- ²⁷ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Arthur Brain
- ²⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 5 April 2017), entry for Brain, Arthur, Service No: 240574
- ²⁹ "Adinkerke Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 7 April 2017)
- ³⁰ "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=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 23 November 2014)
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- ³² "Adinkerke Churchyard Extension," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 18 April 2017)
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- ³⁵ "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for John Brain, Reference number: 4/MB/No.6521
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- ³⁷ "Silver War Badge," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_War_Badge: accessed 6 January 2020)
- ³⁸ "West Yorkshire, Non-Conformist Records, 1646–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for John Brain, Reference number: MR61/2
- ³⁹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for John Brain
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- ⁴¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Harriet A. Lewis, Registration district: Huddersfield, Inferred county: Yorkshire, Volume: 9a, Page: 828
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- ⁴⁶ *iMuseum* (<https://www.imuseum.im/>: accessed 21 January 2020), entry for Helena Sylvia Kneale
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- ⁴⁹ Family
- ⁵⁰ "Web: UK, Burial and Cremation Index, 1576–2014," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2020), entry for Richard Brain
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- ⁵² "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 January 2020), entry for Arthur Brain
- ⁵³ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2020), entry for Arthur Brain, Schedule number: 245, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: KBKP, Registration district: 498/3
- ⁵⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 January 2017), entry for Arthur Brain, Registration district: Bradford, Inferred county: West Yorkshire, Volume: 4, Page: 560